



*The Uniqueness  
of Christ  
and the Jewish People*

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# MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 56/ 2008*

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# MISHKAN

**A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People**

ISSUE 56 / 2008

**General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen**

**Pasche Institute of Jewish Studies · A Ministry of Criswell College**

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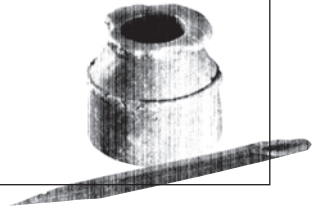
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**Mishkan** is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

# The Berlin Declaration

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



Sponsored by World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), a theological consultation on the uniqueness of Christ and Jewish evangelism today was held in Berlin, August 18–22, 2008.

In this issue of *Mishkan* we bring some of the papers presented in Berlin – some in full, others in part. WEA plans to publish all contributions in book form. Preceding the papers we bring *The Berlin Declaration*.

This declaration is a clear statement on the Holocaust, Jesus, mission, and Jewish believers – spoken from Berlin and seen with the eyes of history. Participants included Christians from Germany and Messianic Jews.

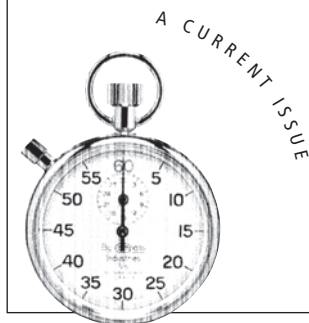
Without a doubt this declaration will be labeled as an expression of triumphalism by the majority of those involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue today. Even if the declaration distances itself from the misdeeds done in the name of Jesus and from the sad record of European Christian history on the "teaching of contempt" vis-à-vis Jews and Judaism, it will not be regarded as *kosher* in those circles. And for several reasons:

First of all, because it maintains that Jesus of Nazareth is unique, so unique that Jews need him for salvation.

Secondly, because it maintains that "love is not silent" and that Jewish evangelism is legitimate and necessary – even after the Holocaust.

Thirdly, because it maintains that Jewish believers in Jesus have the right "to practice those traditions that affirm their identity."

In contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue, these points are *non-kosher* – and an expression of Christian supersessionism. We have to live with that. World Evangelical Alliance cannot be thanked enough for their willingness to put their name and reputation behind such a clear statement on Jewish evangelism.



# Amsterdam 1948 – Berlin 2008

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

A little more than three months after the foundation of the State of Israel, in May 1948, the World Council of Churches (WCC) held its first assembly in Amsterdam at the end of August and the beginning of September.

The Europe that had been bombed to pieces was still in the process of being rebuilt. It was only three years after the war in which six million Jews had been killed in concentration camps in so-called Christian countries. From the Netherlands, 110,000 Jews had been taken away to be murdered in the death camps. It goes without saying that the Jewish question could not be ignored at the meeting in Amsterdam – nor the church's position on Jewish mission.

In the introduction to the statement from the Amsterdam meeting, it is said: "A concern for the Christian approach to the Jewish people confronts us inescapably, as we meet together to look with open and penitent eyes on man's disorder and to rediscover together God's eternal purpose for His Church."

The first paragraph, *The Church's Commission to preach the Gospel to all men*, is a clear call to Jewish evangelism:

All of our churches stand under the commission of our common Lord, "Go ye into all the worlds and preach the Gospel to every creature". The fulfilment of this commission requires that we include the Jewish people in our evangelistic task.

In the second paragraph the following is said: "In the design of God, Israel has a unique position. . . . The Church has received this spiritual heritage from Israel and is therefore in honour bound to render it back in the light of the Cross." But still it is maintained that "in humble conviction" it must "proclaim to the Jews, 'The Messiah for whom you wait has come'."

Paragraph three has the heading *Barriers to be Overcome*. Here it is said, among other things, that "[w]e must acknowledge in all humility that too often we have failed to manifest Christian love towards our Jewish neighbours, or even a resolute will for common social justice." There is a clear dissociation from anti-Semitism: "Antisemitism [*sic*] is a sin against God and man."

Paragraphs four and five have the headings *The Christian Witness to the Jewish People* and *The Emergence of Israel as a State*.

Towards the conclusion of the statement it is said, under the heading *To the Member Churches of the World Council We Recommend*:

That they seek to recover the universality of our Lord's commission by including the Jewish people in their evangelistic work;

That they encourage their people to seek for brotherly contact with and understanding of their Jewish neighbours, and co-operate in agencies combating misunderstanding and prejudice;

That in mission work among the Jews they scrupulously avoid all unworthy pressures or inducements;

That they give thought to the preparation of ministers well fitted to interpret the Gospel to Jewish people and to the provision of literature which will aid in such ministry.

I do not know how the WCC is going to mark its 60-year anniversary. But I do know that concerning Jewish evangelism, their tone has died down since 1948. Already at the WCC's second assembly in Evanston, Illinois, in August 1954, significant contrasts were voiced. The Swede Göte Hedenqvist, then director of the International Missionary Council's Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews, could not hide his disappointment in a report from the meeting, printed, for example, in the journal of the Danish Israel Mission (April 1955):

The experience from Evanston has made it clear that there are still many men of the Church who believe that the difference between Jewish and Christian faith is so insignificant (after all, it is only Christ who is the subject of discord!) that we should instead devote ourselves to more important mission work.

To this we can add: Experience also shows that when mission to the people of Israel is disregarded, it often has a negative impact on Christian mission to other peoples. Now it is often said that the difference between Christian faith and other faiths is so insignificant – "after all, it is only Christ who is the subject of discord!" – that we should refrain from missionizing and instead focus on building a better world together.

Although Jewish evangelism is being criticized severely today, there are, luckily, evangelical individuals and organizations that still support this cause, for example the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). In connection with the recently held consultation in Berlin, David Parker, executive director of WEA's Theological Commission, said the following in his opening statement:

We are met together to consider the Uniqueness of Jesus in relation to Jewish evangelism from an evangelical biblical, theological, historical and missiological perspective. Our aim is to produce a short



but incisive statement for churches, missions, seminaries and other interested people reasserting the importance of and the rationale for presenting Jesus Christ to Jewish people as Saviour, Messiah and Lord. The papers to be presented and discussed here this week will also be published in appropriate ways with the aim of strengthening the cause of Jewish evangelism and the lives of Jewish believers and churches in the light of current issues and in relation to developments since the publication of the Willowbank Declaration in 1989.

Between Amsterdam 1948 and the predominant way of thinking about Jewish evangelism in 2008 there is great discontinuity. But between Amsterdam 1948 and Berlin 2008 there is great continuity. The people of Israel's "unique position" does not eclipse the uniqueness of Christ, according to either the Amsterdam or the Berlin statement.

For Jesus of Nazareth is not a minor matter.



# The Berlin Declaration on the Uniqueness of Christ and Jewish Evangelism in Europe Today

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An international task force of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance met on the issue of the uniqueness of Christ and Jewish evangelism in Berlin, Germany, from August 18-22, 2008. We met to consider how our community might express genuine love for the Jewish people, especially in Europe. Participants included Christians from Germany and Messianic Jews.

## **1. Love is not Silent: the Need for Repentance**

We deeply regret the all too frequent persecution of Jewish people in Jesus' name. We do not for a second deny the evil it represents. During the genocide of the Holocaust, when the Jewish people were in their greatest peril, most Christian believers were silent. Many, such as The Stuttgart Confession of Guilt right after World War II, have apologized for the failure to speak out and for not doing more to demonstrate genuine Christian love to the Jewish people. Some of our brothers and sisters in the European Christian community suffered as well for resisting the anti-Semites and perpetrators of the atrocities. Many more today feel embarrassment and shame for the general failure to protest. As a result, there is an evident insecurity about relations with Jewish people. Also, there is a tendency to replace direct gospel outreach with Jewish-Christian dialogue.

We believe that genuine love cannot be passive. Jesus taught that authentic love could not be unfeeling when other human beings are in misery and need. Honest love must include an expression of Christ's good news in word and deed. Therefore, Christians everywhere must not look away when Jewish people have the same deep need for forgiveness of sin and true *shalom*, as do people of all nations. Love in action compels all Christians to share the gospel with people everywhere, including the Jewish people of Europe.

## **2. Beyond Genocide: the Problem of Sin**

We acknowledge within the sad record of European Christian history the "teaching of contempt," intolerance toward Jewish people and Judaism, abhorrent acts of coercion, anti-Semitism in attitude, word and deed. The historical events of the Holocaust developed within a climate of anti-

Semitism. The German Evangelical Alliance out of concern for that history has expressed shame and responsibility for Christian silence and too few attempts to stop the horror.

Jewish people interpret Christian failure to speak out as complicity in their genocide during World War II. However, there were some valiant Christians who did speak up, risking and sometimes losing their own lives to save Jews.

In light of rising European anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism vigilance is necessary now. Jewish people are not the only victims of genocide as evidenced today. The Holocaust survivor, Primo Levi, warned, "It has happened. Therefore, it can happen again." The source of all genocide is sin. This sin affects all humanity, both the persecutor and the sufferer. God's response to sin is the gospel. Therefore, this grace must be proclaimed to every human being.

### **3. The Solution for Sin: the Uniqueness of Christ**

We recognize that genocide illustrates the enormity of sin. God is not responsible for genocide; we humans are. God has provided the solution.

It is often seen as unacceptable to challenge another's religious views. Nevertheless, we regard failure to share the gospel as ignoring the problem of sin. No one should ignore Jesus' assessment of human sin. Everyone needs what God offers by his grace: forgiveness of sin and a transforming divine presence in those who respond. Jesus did not seek to dominate, but gave himself on the cross as sacrifice for sin. His death cleanses from the guilt of sin and provides a new relationship with God. This benefit is neither earned nor entered into by birth. It is received through acknowledging our deep need for God to supply what we lack.

Confessing Jesus as Messiah affirms Jesus' uniqueness as a person, especially to Jews, because Messiah (or Christ) is a Jewish concept. He is sent as the Word, anointed as Messiah and vindicated by God to sit at his right hand. Through resurrection Jesus shares in the divine glory, task, and authority. Jesus of Nazareth is more than a prophet or a religious teacher. Rather, he is the unique Son of God, mediating and administering God's promise. By his divine authority, Jesus extends his offer to all. He exercises the divine prerogatives of forgiving sin and receiving worship. This is why we confess Jesus as both human and divine.

God calls believers to take the gospel to the world. Everyone needs to hear this message including the Jewish people. Proclamation to Israel was Jesus' priority. It also reflects the apostles' practice of going to the Jew first. Nothing has occurred since Jesus came that changes the need for Israel and the nations.

### **4. The Call to Action: Jewish Evangelism**

Christians are called to share this good news, with sensitivity and humility. Witness to the gospel should be motivated by heart-felt love and

expressed in practical ways. So, we stand in solidarity with the Jewish people, opposing anti-Semitism, prejudice and discrimination. This sinful behavior is irreconcilable with the calling of Christ's disciples.

Most of all, we invite Jewish people and all others to consider the claims of Jesus. We share this gospel with Israel and all nations, not as an attack on the integrity of others. We uphold everyone's right to freedom of speech, freedom of religion and an open forum for all. While respecting the views of others, we still challenge them to consider the message of the Messiah.

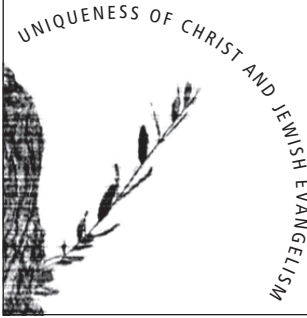
Christians have much to learn from the Jewish people. We recognise our need to hear Jewish concerns. We affirm the importance of dialogue in promoting mutual understanding and sympathy. Dialogue provides an opportunity to share deeply held beliefs in a context of mutual respect. Dialogue and evangelism are not mutually exclusive. We reject the notion that evangelism is deceptive in claiming that Jews can believe in Jesus. We also reject the accusation that evangelism is the equivalent of spiritual genocide. We affirm the right of Jewish believers in Jesus to practice those traditions that affirm their identity, reflect God's faithfulness to his people and uphold the Messiahship of Jesus.

We recognise the important role of Messianic Jews in the work and witness of the Church. Their special contribution gives testimony to the Jewish origins of Christianity and brings understanding of our Jewish roots. They remind us of the Jewishness of Jesus and of the first Christians. They also point to the fulfillment of God's promises to save his people. We encourage them to stand firm in their identification with and faithful witness to their people. The Lord is also glorified in the visible demonstration of reconciliation of Jew and German in the body of Christ.

### **The Next Step**

Therefore, as Christians concerned for the well being and salvation of the Jewish people, we call for:

- Respect for religious conviction and liberty that allows frank discussion of religious claims
- Repentance from all expressions of anti-Semitism and all other forms of genocide, prejudice and discrimination
- Recognition of the uniqueness of Christ as the crucified, resurrected and divine Messiah who alone can save from death and bring eternal life
- Reconciliation and unity amongst believers in Jesus
- Renewed commitment to the task of Jewish evangelism



# Messianic Jewish Reflections on the Holocaust and Jewish Evangelism

by **Michael L. Brown**

In the early 1990s, I did a lot of reading on the Holocaust, some of it historical, some of it anecdotal. Not surprisingly, the anecdotal literature had a more profound effect on me, as the accounts of almost unimaginable suffering were far more moving than bare statistics and historical facts.<sup>1</sup> I still remember being totally overwhelmed some nights after hours of reading, to the point of falling asleep shaking and crying. And then, in the midst of the tears, an awful thought would hit me: “Are they forever lost? It is horrific enough that these Jewish people died such cruel, prolonged, agonizing deaths, but are they now separated from God for eternity? Are they now in a worse hell than the Holocaust?”

At that point, my mind and emotions would short-circuit, and I simply had to dismiss the question and try to find refuge in a good night’s sleep. Yes, the thought of a fate worse than the Holocaust – and an endless one at that – was too disturbing even to contemplate, especially for people whose fate at the hands of the Nazis seemed totally undeserved. Succinctly stated, if Jewish guilt could not justify the Holocaust, how could it justify hell?

To put this into focus, consider the words of Alexander Donat, who survived both the Warsaw Ghetto and the concentration camps:

What had we done to deserve this hurricane of evil, this avalanche of cruelty? Why had all the gates of Hell opened and spewed forth on us the furies of human vileness? What crimes had we committed for which this might have been calamitous punishment? Where, in what code of morals, human or divine, is there a crime so appalling that innocent women and children must expiate it with their lives in martyrdoms no Torquemada ever dreamed of?<sup>2</sup>

1 Among those many books, two in particular stand out in my memory: Martin Gilbert’s *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Collins, 1986), and the Albert H. Friedlander collection, *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature* (New York: Schocken, 1976).

2 Cited in Barry Leventhal, “Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust,” *Mishkan* 6/7 (1987): 16.

What kind of Torquemada-like God, then, would be so cruel and demented as to fashion an eternal hell for Jews who simply did not believe in Jesus?

Indeed, simply implying that Jewish guilt brought on the Holocaust – let alone hell – has seemed more than obscene to many. This is expressed in the bold and now classic formulation of Rabbi Irving Greenberg:

. . . summon up the principle that no statement should be made that could not be made in the presence of the burning children. On this rock, the traditionalist argument [viz., that the Holocaust was a divine judgment] breaks. Tell the children in the pits they are burning for their sins. An honest man – better, a decent man – would spit at such a God rather than accept this rationale if it were true. If this justification is loyalty, then surely treason is the honourable choice. If this were the only choice, then surely God would prefer atheism.<sup>3</sup>

In reality, however, as acute as the question of hell is for many believers, the Holocaust does not really affect this question, since divine punishment in the world to come is a question in its own right. That is to say [for example], if a person enjoyed a long, healthy life in this world but died of old age as an unbeliever, [then] is the question of divine punishment any less acute than if that person had died of cancer at the age of forty or, for that matter, died horribly in the Holocaust? Does the difference of a few years or the nature of one's death make the reality of hell any more or less bearable?<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, there is no doubt that many of the Jews who died in the Holocaust had not lived observant Jewish lives and would gladly have renounced their Jewishness, along with the God of Israel, if that would have saved them. How then can martyrdom be conferred on them (as is done in much contemporary Jewish thought) if they really did not die for

3 Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* (New York: Ktav, 1976), 34, cited in Leventhal, 28–29. For my own approach to the Holocaust in terms of Jewish apologetics, see Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Vol. 1, General and Historical Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 177–96, where these quotes from Donat and Greenberg are also referenced. Cf. further Irving Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004).

4 One could potentially cite Abraham's words to the rich man in Hades in Luke 16:25 as standing against my point here ("Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish"), but that would be to misuse a statement in the midst of a story (or, more probably, parable) for the purpose of elucidating doctrine. If there is a corollary doctrine in the New Testament to the "bad life now, good life later" concept, it is that if we suffer with and for the Lord in this world, we will experience his glory and reign with him in the world to come (see, e.g., Matt 5:10–12; Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12a; 1 Pet 4:12–13; Rev 2:10a). For rabbinic parallels to the story of Dives and Lazarus, cf. *y. Sanh.* 6:9, 23c; *y. Hag.* 2:2, 77d; *Ruth Rab.* 3.3.



*Kiddush HaShem* (sanctification of the Lord's name)?<sup>5</sup> Thus, the fact that their tragic fate was to die in the Holocaust does not address the question of their own relationship with God or their own sin, unless one argues that they suffered enough in this world to pay for their sins, a distinctly non-Christian viewpoint.<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, the very concrete, hellish nature of the Holocaust brought the more abstract concept of hell into sharper focus, since Jewish people, automatically consigned to hell by so many professing Christians, were suffering in so many ghastly ways. Not surprisingly, this generated sympathy and compassion from the same Christians who seemed completely unbothered by the presumed eternally lost state of these very same people. The Holocaust, then, was a reality check for many Christians, forcing them to reevaluate their beliefs in divine punishment.

Yet the question of hell is not the primary concern that has arisen in terms of Christian evangelism of the Jewish people in light of the Holocaust. Rather, it is the issue of corporate Christian shame over the history of church anti-Semitism that paved the way for the Holocaust. As stated famously by Eliezer Berkovitz, the Nazis, although anti-Christian themselves, were the children of Christians – at the least, of Christians in name.<sup>7</sup>

Thus Michael Wyschogrod noted, “Even without the Holocaust, it is not unlikely that Christian scholarship would have been forced to deal more seriously with the Jewish roots of Christianity.” He continued, however, with these telling lines:

But this was not to be. The Holocaust occurred, and instead of an organic development prompted by scholarly and theological considerations, a world historical evil event of unprecedented proportions intervened and cast Jewish-Christian relations, and many other things, in an entirely new light. The Christian side in the dialogue

5 As explained by David Novak, *Talking with Christians: Musings of a Jewish Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 152: “So I would say that any Jew who was murdered in Auschwitz, who at the moment of death accepted being a Jew, one of the elect of God, and was able to die with the affirmation of the uniqueness of God and the uniqueness of Israel His people asserted by the *shema* on his or her lips, such a person is definitely a martyr.” He continues, however, “And since we refuse to believe that any Jew in his or her heart of hearts would not be grateful to God for the election, despite our humanly unbearable suffering in this world, when we Jews mourn the dead of the Holocaust, we refer to all of them, religious or irreligious or even antireligious in life, as *qedoshim*, as ‘saints.’”

6 For the concept of death as an atonement, in particular the atoning power of the death of the righteous, which is richly attested in rabbinic literature, see Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Vol. 2, Theological Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 153–67.

7 The significance has not been missed by atheistic, anti-Christian diatribes; see, e.g., Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 79: “The Holocaust is relevant here because it is generally considered to have been an entirely secular phenomenon. It was not. The anti-Semitism that built the crematoria brick by brick – and that still thrives today – comes to us by way of Christian theology. Knowingly or not, the Nazis were agents of religion.”

found itself burdened with a heavy guilt. While Nazism was hardly a Christian phenomenon, there was widespread agreement that two thousand years of the Christian teaching of contempt prepared the ground for the “final solution.” Christianity was forced to face up to the implications of its teaching which were taken to insane extremes by the Nazis but which also built on Christian foundations.<sup>8</sup>

By what right, then, can Christians today, in particular European, Gentile Christians, urge Jewish people to believe in Jesus? This view was recently expressed by Willem J. J. Glashouwer in his widely-translated and sensitively-written book *Why Israel*, in which he explicitly expresses his faith in God’s sovereign ability to reveal Jesus to Jewish people. That being said, he states,

We can leave it [namely, Jewish evangelism] to the Lord, and to our messianic Jewish brothers and sisters who, like Paul, feel an urge to speak to their Jewish brothers and sisters. We Gentiles (and we are Gentiles, no matter how full of faith we may be!) stand at a distance, often with the heavy load of church history hanging around our necks. . . .

But if we were to evangelize the Jews, their response would be similar to what we would have expected from the Dutch had Germans returned to Holland after the Second World [War] to tell the Dutch that they needed to be converted. We would expect the Dutch to say: “Get out! Go back to your own country. Get your own house in order first!” We Christians fail to recognize how much guilt is on our heads. Some Jews even argue that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because there is so much Jewish blood on the hands of his followers, the Christians. He must be some kind of false god, lusting after Jewish blood.<sup>9</sup>

So then, if there is to be evangelism of the Jews, it must be left to the Lord’s sovereign hand and to Messianic Jews.

Understandably, the Holocaust brought with it a tremendous sense of guilt for many European Christians, most notably in Germany, and, for some, that guilt remains even to this day. Basilea Schlink expressed this with real pathos barely a decade after the Holocaust, and because of the passion of her expression, which reflects both her nearness to the Shoah and her love for Jesus and his people Israel, I will quote her at length:<sup>10</sup>

8 Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham’s Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. and with an introduction by R. Kendall Soulen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 149–50.

9 Willem J. J. Glashouwer, *Why Israel?* (Eng. trans., Mineke Spencer; 2nd ed.; Nijkerk, The Netherlands: Christians for Israel International, 2005), 141–42. For some very strong Jewish statements that back up Glashouwer’s last two sentences, see Michael L. Brown, *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1992), 88–91.

10 Basilea Schlink, *Israel, My Chosen People: A German Confession before God and the Jews* (Eng. trans., Old Tappan, NJ: Chosen, 1987; originally published in German in 1958).



Can we Germans really continue to walk under the open sky of our fatherland, in daytime in the sunshine and at night beneath the stars, enjoying it all without feelings of shame? Must we not remember that not long ago, under that same sky, in the midst of our people, gigantic flames ascended from the burning bodies of millions of people day and night? Were not these flames like a cry of desperation and a raised finger of accusation? (38)

We Germans were Satan's henchmen. In the midst of our people this hell was created. After reading the reports of those who survived it, we can only confess that never before in the whole span of history has a civilized nation been guilty of a crime such as has been committed here in Germany, a Christian country, a land of culture. . . . Within a few years, millions of people were murdered, gassed, burnt alive or tortured to death in every conceivable way. Who can still eat his fill at a nicely laid table without visualizing the emaciated forms of the thousands of victims in the extermination camps? (39–40)

We are personally to blame. We all have to admit that if we, the entire Christian community, had stood up as one man and if, after the burning of the synagogues [on Krystallnacht], we had gone out on the streets and voiced our disapproval, rung the church bells, and somehow boycotted the actions of the S.S., the Devil's vassals would probably not have been at such liberty to pursue their evil schemes. But we lacked the ardor of love – love that is never passive, love that cannot bear it when its fellowmen are in misery, particularly when they are subjected to such appalling treatment and tortured to death. Indeed, if we had loved God, we would not have endured seeing those houses of God set ablaze; and holy, divine wrath would have filled our souls. . . . Oh, that we as Germans and as Christians would stand aghast and cry out ever anew, "What have we done!" At every further evidence of our guilt may we repeat the cry. (42–43)

Oh, how can we now look upon German children playing happily and not think of the many, many thousands of children who screamed in anguish and terror when they were burnt alive or when they, either with or without their parents, choked to death in the gas chambers! May we not close our eyes but face up to what we have done, for these are the plain facts, and innocent blood cries for retribution: "If any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain" (Revelation 13:10). Thus says Holy Scripture. (44)

Is it reasonable, then, to expect Jews to believe in Jesus after the Holocaust?

How are the Jews to believe in Jesus? Have not we ourselves blindfolded them? They cannot see Jesus because of our conduct. They cannot believe in Him, because in our lives we have not presented



to them the image of Jesus; rather we have shown them the image of mercilessness. "Your deeds in Germany talk so loud that I cannot hear your words," a Jew of our times comments. Our words about Jesus must cut Jews to the heart, considering the cruelties we have perpetrated against them in the name of this Jesus from the time of the Crusades up to the present day. And not only that. How many acts of love have we neglected to do? Thus we share in the horrible guilt of our people in murdering six million Jews. This guilt still hovers over us like a cloud. (36–37)

For some Christians, the Holocaust even called for the "radical reconstruction" of their faith. As explained by Alice Eckhardt,

Even more than my focus on Israel, it was the *Shoah* that compelled me to question and rethink fundamental issues of faith. . . . It led me in 1974 to write an extensive article focusing on the ways a number of Jewish and Christian thinkers have been rethinking their faith in response to the *Shoah*. I saw "a church in vast apostasy, . . . still linked to a supersessionist theology that bears the genocidal germ . . . [and] without credibility because of its failure to understand Auschwitz." I saw the Jewish people as having "experienced resurrection in history through the rebirth of the State of Israel and a new vitality in its various Diaspora communities." At the same time I saw "a Christianity that continues to insist that the world's redemption has already occurred" [and] "that by and large maintains a triumphalism which strives for a religious genocide [of Jews] through conversion."<sup>11</sup>

This "radical reconstruction," then, was aided and abetted by a fresh appreciation for Judaism, the result of a recognition of the power of a Jewish faith that could survive a Holocaust and then rebuild after it, as well as of firsthand contact with Jewish scholars and leaders, opening up a new world to many Christian theologians and ministers. The result was a repudiation of *supersessionism* that was so comprehensive that it *expressly affirmed dual covenant theology*.

Thus the first point in "A Statement by the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations" affirms:

God's covenant with the Jewish people endures forever. For centuries Christians claimed that their covenant with God replaced or superseded the Jewish covenant. We renounce this claim. We believe

11 Alice L. Eckhardt, "Growing into a Daring, Questioning Faith," in *Faith Transformed: Christian Encounters with Jews and Judaism*, ed. John C. Merkle (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 25, with reference to her article "The Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Responses," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (September 1974): 454, reprinted in Naomi W. Cohen, ed., *Essential Papers in Jewish-Christian Relations in the United States* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1990), 210–11.



that God does not revoke divine promises. We affirm that God is in covenant with both Jews and Christians. Tragically, the entrenched theology of supersessionism continues to influence Christian faith, worship, and practice, even though it has been repudiated by many Christian denominations and many Christians no longer accept it. Our recognition of the abiding validity of Judaism has implications for all aspects of Christian life.<sup>12</sup>

This, then, is the crux of the matter and the ultimate question that must be addressed: Can followers of Jesus hold to “the abiding validity of Judaism” – meaning, quite specifically, that the Jewish people have a fully legitimate, spiritually complete religion *without Jesus* – while at the same time remaining true to the teachings of the New Testament? Has the Holocaust truly forced such a wholesale reconsideration of the Jewish people and the gospel?

Before answering these questions, let me summarize briefly the principle reasons why some Christians feel that they can (or should) no longer share their faith with Jewish people in the post-Shoah era:

1. An embarrassment over and even reconsideration of the subject of hell, since very few Christians think that Jews deserved the inhuman horrors of the Holocaust, forcing them to ask, “How then do Jewish people who reject Jesus deserve an eternal hell?” It is one thing to talk about an abstract, future, invisible realm; it is another thing to look at concrete, present, visible suffering. The reality of the latter forces us to reevaluate our beliefs about the former.
2. A sense of shame and inferiority that basically says, “Can I really say that my Christianity is superior to your Judaism? It was my professedly Christian forbears who opened up the floodgates of Nazism and your Judaism that sustained you through it. What do I have to offer you?” Related to this was the reevaluation of Judaism as an entirely valid, complete faith in and of itself.
3. An openness to dual covenant theology, since many theologians recognized that it was supersessionism that led to “Christian” anti-Semitism and, therefore, only the complete and total repudiation of supersessionism would be righteous in God’s sight.

12 In Merkle, 203. Note that this claim of “the abiding validity of Judaism” closely resembles the language of Messianic Jewish scholar Mark Kinzer, who states: “Our thesis – the legitimacy, value, and importance of rabbinic Judaism – remains intact. That thesis is crucial. If rabbinic Judaism is not valid, then no Judaism is valid.” See Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 260; I have taken strong issue with this statement, most particularly in my paper, “Is a Postmissionary, Truly Messianic Judaism Possible?” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism North American chapter, San Antonio, TX, 18 April 2007), esp. 6–7. For the online version of this paper, see <http://www.realmessiah.com/postMissionary.htm>. It should be noted that Dr. Kinzer explained to me privately in October of 2007 that I misunderstood his references to “rabbinic Judaism” when I took him to mean Orthodox or traditional Judaism. Rather, he was referring to all forms of “Judaism,” from ultra-Orthodox to Reconstructionist.

4. A sense that Christian outreach to Jews was a form of spiritual genocide, a charge echoed by counter-missionaries today who exclaim, "Hitler wanted our bodies. You want our souls."

In his article "Jesus the Pacifist," Prof. John Howard Yoder encapsulated some of these sentiments:

In its scale and style, the Nazi genocidal project surpassed in qualitative impact the many other pogroms and massacres of Jewish memory. It has provoked a round of theological debate such as had not been experienced since the beginning of the age of assimilation.

Only a few thinkers believe that the old answer, namely that the suffering of God's people is 'for our sins', can be stretched to fit this new level of tragedy. . . .

Even if Christianity as the ideology of oppressive Christendom had not been behind 'the Holocaust', Christianity as conversational partner in the battle for the minds of the children of Western Jews has become less interesting.<sup>13</sup>

How then should we respond? The answer is shockingly simple: The Holocaust, despite its monstrous evil, has actually changed nothing. Either the New Testament message – that Jesus came to fulfill what was written in Moses and the Prophets – is true, or it is not (see, e.g., Matt 5:17; Luke 24:25–27, 44–45; John 1:45; Acts 3:18–26; Rom 16:25–27). Either Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel and therefore the Savior of the world, or he is not (see, e.g., Matt 1:21; 28:18–20; Luke 1:31–33, 68–79; 2:29–32; 24:46–47; Acts 4:12 [spoken to the Sanhedrin!]; Rom 10:9–13 [in the midst of Paul's discussion of Israel]; 11:25–32). Either there is a place of judgment known as hell or there is not (see, e.g., Dan 12:2; Mark 9:42–49; Rev 20:11–15). Either Jewish people, in some very real sense, "need Jesus," or they do not, the law being unable to save (see, e.g., Acts 13:38–48; 28:16–28; Rom 3:9–31).

What *has* been shaken is the confidence in "Christendom" (a term used by some in distinction from the real Christian faith), and that confidence needed to be shaken. All too often the professing church has fallen terribly short of God's standards, and this has been true on both the Catholic and Protestant sides of the fence. It was altogether necessary, then, that post-Holocaust Christians asked themselves searching questions, wrestling with the Jewish blood that was on "Christian" hands through the centuries, wrestling with the anti-Semitism that helped prepare the way for the slaughter of the six million, wrestling with the toxic words of Hitler's *Concerning the Jews and their Lies* that were resurrected by Hitler and his henchman, wrestling with the demonization of the Jews by some of the Church Fathers, and ultimately wrestling with the decisive

13 John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 87.



question, namely, was the New Testament itself the source of this poisonous stream? For some, the answer to that last question has been “Yes,” hence the writing of many books by authors professing Christianity, devoted to identifying and repudiating the “anti-Semitism of the New Testament.”<sup>14</sup>

In all candor, however, it must be asked: If the New Testament is, in fact, the source of “Christian” anti-Semitism, how then can its message be trusted? If some of the authors of our foundational documents had already taken a stance displeasing to God – in those very documents! – how could we possibly call their writings “the Word of God”? More pointedly still, if the primary thesis of the New Testament was untrue – namely, that God’s promises to Israel were now realized in and through Yeshua – what remains of “Christianity”?

Frankly, these are the kinds of questions that many of us faced as Jewish believers from our first days in the Lord, questions about what happened to our non-believing (and deceased) loved ones, questions about the Crusades and Inquisition (which would have been asked even without a Holocaust), questions about the veracity of the New Testament, not least regarding its alleged anti-Semitism (or anti-Judaism). As a brand new believer in Jesus, freshly delivered from an abusive, drug-filled lifestyle and barely seventeen years old, I was given a copy of Malcolm Hay’s book *Europe and the Jews* by the local Conservative Jewish rabbi.<sup>15</sup> Included in the book was this handwritten note, which I still have:

Dear Mike:

I’m lending you this book so that as you read its pages you can share in the thousands of years of agony your people have undergone for the sake of the Almighty G-d of Israel and His absolute unity. Perhaps it will touch a note in your heart which will help you realize what your destiny on earth is to be. As you read it please keep three verses in mind:

“. . . the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.” (Isa 25:8)

“And the LORD will be King over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.” (Zech 14:9)

and finally, together with millions of your martyred brethren, “Hear O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is one.” (Deut 6:4)

14 For a representative sampling, see the works cited in Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Vol. 1, 240–41, n. 169.

15 Malcolm V. Hay, *Europe and the Jews: The Pressure of Christendom on the People of Israel for 1900 Years* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960); Hay’s book has been published under other titles, including *The Foot of Pride* (with the same subtitle; 1950) and *The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism* (1984).

I pray our G-d give you the inner strength to face the truth no matter what the consequences.<sup>16</sup>

These challenges have been with me since early 1972!

Just this month (July 2008, as I write) I was speaking to a dear friend who is an ultra-Orthodox rabbi, a learned, devoted man with whom I try to interact once a week by phone for an hour or more. I asked him how connected the Holocaust and Christianity are perceived to be in his circles. He replied at once, "Totally," explaining to me that these religious Jews do not know that there is a difference between professing Christians and true Christians, and that the only kind of Christianity they know is the anti-Semitic brand. He then recounted to me the story of a Slovakian Jew who helped rescue Jews from the Nazis – and was opposed in his efforts by some Catholics – and who wrote that the Pope was glad that at last, one of his disciples succeeded.

This conversation simply underscored what many Messianic Jews have known all their lives: "Christianity" has often been a massive stumbling block to our people, obscuring the face of Jesus-Yeshua, and making it much more difficult for *klal Yisra'el* to recognize their Redeemer. As the great, nineteenth-century Old Testament scholar Franz Delitzsch observed,

The Church still owes the Jews the actual proof of Christianity's truth. Is it surprising that the Jewish people are such an insensitive and barren field for the Gospel? The Church itself has drenched it in blood and then heaped stones upon it.<sup>17</sup>

With the Holocaust and its perceived connection with Christianity, a massive boulder was heaped upon this blood-drenched field, but this again was nothing new. It was simply a more extreme act – unspeakably more extreme – but not of an entirely different "kind." After all, hadn't Raul Hilberg long ago presented his damning charts, comparing the restrictive, discriminatory, anti-Semitic actions of the Nazis with the earlier, restrictive, discriminatory, anti-Semitic actions of the church, with the exception of extermination, but including herding Jews into ghettos and forcing them to wear the yellow star?<sup>18</sup>

16 All the verses were written in Hebrew, which I did not understand at that point, so I had to reference them in English. Quite understandably, the letter remains moving to me to this day. Of personal significance to me, this same rabbi, William Berman, formerly an instructor of Bible at Jewish Theological Seminary, penned an endorsement for my work *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood: The Tragic Story of the "Church" and the Jewish People*, stating, "Though strongly disagreeing with the book theologically, I was deeply moved as I read it. I pray that Dr. Brown's message penetrate the souls of Christians everywhere. If his words are absorbed 'like showers on young grass, like droplets on the grass,' glory will indeed be given to God (Deut 32:2-3)."

17 Cited in Brown, *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood*, 92.

18 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (3rd ed., New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2003); it was first published in 1967.



What I am saying is that the Holocaust forced the church at large – in particular, the European church – to wrestle with the very issues that Jewish believers wrestled with before the Holocaust, issues that they would still be forced to wrestle with today even without a Holocaust. The horrors of the Holocaust, to be sure, brought those issues into sharper focus for Jewish believers too, but in our perception, the Holocaust is not something that the Nazis did “to them” but “to us.” Our people – including believers in Jesus – were slaughtered by the Nazis, and our people – including believers in Jesus – were sometimes persecuted by the church. This brings a very different perspective to the questions at hand.

To return to the question of hell, I personally don’t see how anyone can believe in the doctrine of future punishment without considerable anguish of heart, without relating, at least on some level, to Paul’s words in Romans 9:1–5 that he had “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” because of Israel’s “cut off” estate; without understanding, at least in part, the prophetic anguish expressed by Jeremiah, who wished that his head were a fountain of tears because of his slain people (9:1; in Hebrew, 8:23);<sup>19</sup> without feeling, at least to some degree, the same pain that Yeshua felt when he wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–44; see also Matt 23:37–39). If we cannot glibly talk about the Holocaust – God forbid! – how can we glibly talk about hell? How can we make this a mere test of doctrinal correctness without experiencing a broken heart for the lost? To the extent, then, that the Holocaust has forced people to rethink their beliefs in future punishment, all the better, as long as this is done with sincerity before the Lord and with total dependence on the Scriptures.

**“You and I are not their judge. God is their Judge, and the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.”**

To be sure, it is not our part to stand at this distance and offer authoritative pronouncements about the final state of those who died in the Holocaust, and the truest answer remains, “You and I are not their judge. God is their Judge, and the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.” Nonetheless, as I have emphasized, the horrors of the Holocaust force us to preach about the kingdom of God and eternal reward and punishment with much greater sobriety, as is fitting for such extraordinarily weighty topics. Indeed, Paul’s words to the Corinthians, written in a similar life and death context, immediately come to mind: “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor 2:14–16). For Jewish believers, the question of the “fate of the Jews” has never been a mere theological abstraction, and so we are

<sup>19</sup> There is a lively scholarly discussion as to when and where the Lord and Jeremiah alternate as speakers in 8:21–9:3[2], or whether there is one speaker throughout (the Lord or Jeremiah). Although Jeremiah 9:1 is best put on the prophet’s lips, there is clearly a fluidity between the divine and human speakers, making it unclear, so to say, when God ends and the prophet begins (and vice versa). See further the forthcoming work, Michael L. Brown, *Jeremiah*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009). Cf. further Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Eng. trans.; Richmond: John Knox, 1965).

glad when the question becomes more acute for the church at large. Join us as we wrestle through these painful issues together!

How should we respond to the anti-Semitic words and concepts and deeds that have blemished church history and helped prepare the way for the Holocaust? In the same conversation with my ultra-Orthodox rabbi friend mentioned above, he told me that in his yeshiva library, there is a Hebrew book that discusses different world religions and then explains why they are not true. He explained, however, that the section on Christianity was quite short, since all it had to do was recount church history through traditional Jewish eyes. It was disqualified at once.

What then is the right Christian response to this? Is it renunciation of the Christian faith or embracing of dual covenant theology or, at the least, refraining from evangelizing Jews? *God forbid*. Rather, the aberrant must be renounced *in the name of the real* and the counterfeit must be exposed in the light of the true. The bankrupt Christianity that produced the Crusades and Inquisition and made Jews into devils does not negate the glory of the faith that has transformed countless millions of lives, the faith that has sought to emulate the way of the Master, the faith that has sacrificed and served rather than slandered and slaughtered, the faith of the Corrie Ten Booms and others who risked – and sometimes lost – their own lives to save Jewish lives. We must not let shame over past sins blind our eyes today.

Here too Messianic Jews can add a useful perspective, since it is commonplace in our witness to our people to *begin* with a repudiation of “Christian” anti-Semitism, assuring them that this is not a real reflection of Jesus and the New Testament. And if we don’t start with the subject, we are confident that it will soon be raised, at least by traditional Jews and/or Jews who know their history. Even on the level of public debates with rabbis, I have often started with a recapitulation and renunciation of Christendom’s sins against the Jews, knowing that this specter of the past will raise its ugly head quickly if I do not address it first.

We must also be convinced through careful study that the New Testament is not, in fact, the source of anti-Semitism, a task that has become much easier in recent decades with the wide scale philo-Semitism that exists in so many parts of the evangelical church, most notably in America.<sup>20</sup> Yet it is those very Christians who tend to take the words of the New Testament most seriously, reminding us that it is only when the

**The bankrupt Christianity that produced the Crusades and Inquisition and made Jews into devils does not negate the glory of the faith that has transformed countless millions of lives.**

20 For a lively account, see Zev Chafets, *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists, and One Man’s Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance* (San Francisco: Harper Perennial, 2008).



church cuts itself off from its biblical foundations and severs its Jewish roots that it becomes anti-Semitic.<sup>21</sup>

Our message, then, to the Jewish people is simple: “I deeply regret what professing Christians have done in Jesus’ name, and I do not for a second deny the ugliness of it. And as a follower of Jesus today, I apologize for what these hypocritical Christians have done. [This is especially effective when it is a Gentile Christian doing the apologizing!] Allow me to introduce you to the real Jesus, and let me demonstrate to you firsthand what a real Christian is.” All of us in Jewish ministry have heard wonderful testimonies from our Gentile Christian friends who have used this very approach with sincerity and conviction.

Finally, what should be said of the fresh appreciation of Judaism that has arisen in many Christian circles since the Holocaust? In many ways, that too can be a good and healthy thing. For example, Christians have often had a skewed view of Judaism, and this new, more positive assessment is much closer to the truth. Truth is good, and Christians can learn much from Jewish traditions and the observant Jewish lifestyle. Also, it is only to the extent that we realize that the Jewish people, in particular religious Jews, are “so near and yet so far” that we can fully appreciate the tragedy of their lostness and the pain of their missing the Messiah,

thereby entering into their corporate longing for redemption through our prayers and sacrificial acts.<sup>22</sup>

**Judaism without Yeshua is not enough, even in its most committed, devoted, spiritual forms. Our people need our Messiah.**

Yet once more, the Messianic Jewish perspective is helpful, since some of us came from observant backgrounds, and others, who came from secular backgrounds, have helped lead observant Jews to Jesus, and together we lift our voices to say, “Judaism without Yeshua is not enough, even in its most committed, devoted, spiritual forms.<sup>23</sup> Our people need our Messiah, and we either preach what the Scriptures teach, namely the good news that he has already come and died and rose for our sins, or we throw out the Book.”

To reiterate what should be self-evident to all, the gospel is birthed in Jewish soil; it is the story of the Jewish Redeemer; all its main characters are Jews, from Miriam the young virgin to devout Simeon waiting for the consolation of Israel, from old Zechariah and Elizabeth to New Testament authors named Jacob and Judah. And the Messiah’s death and resurrection were first proclaimed to Jews alone, by Jews, and it was Jews

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21 For insights on the theological consequences of supersessionism, see Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology* (Carlisle, UK: Authentic Media, 2004). This represents an abridgement of the Italian original, which, the author informed me, contains far more indicting material.

22 See Brown, *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood*, 107–15 (the chapter entitled “So Near and Yet So Far”), for relevant reflections.

23 Many Jewish believers today who came out of very strict, traditional backgrounds have testified that while there was beauty in their traditions, there was also much bondage, at least for them.



who made up the first thousands and thousands of disciples. Need I even supply Scripture references for these everyday facts? Either the account is true and Jesus is the promised Messiah without whom there is no salvation for our people and for the world, *or* we admit that he or his followers were mistaken. There simply is no middle ground.

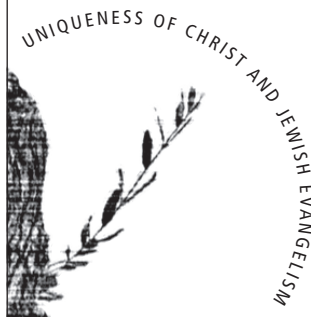
The bottom line is that, outside of Jews living in Israel, most Jewish people will come to faith through the witness of Gentile Christians, in particular their Gentile Christian friends, co-workers, and neighbors, and therefore I implore you, as one saved through these very means: Please do not withhold the water of life from my thirsty people (John 7:37; Rev 22:17). Please do not deprive them of the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Please do not discourage them from finding for themselves the one who is the truth and the life (John 11:24–25; 14:6). Don't you want them to live forever in the presence of our God?

It is my hope and prayer that the memory of the Holocaust will provoke each of you to a more compassionate, fervent, and effective outreach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now is *not* the time to deny God's mercy to them.

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# The Forgiveness of Sin According to Early Christianity and Judaism<sup>1</sup>

by Eckhard J. Schnabel

In the first century, Jews and Christians had more in common than either group had with polytheistic pagans. Jews and Christians – the former including proselytes and godfearers, the latter including Jewish Christians – agreed about convictions such as the existence of one true God, the non-existence of the pagan deities, the significance of God’s revelation in the works of creation, the greater significance of God’s revelation in the Scriptures and in the history of Israel, the reality of God’s future judgment, the need for repentance of sins, the need for obedience to the will of God, and the hope of the restoration of creation in a new world.

There were also disagreements, not only regarding details of the proper interpretation of scriptural texts and of personal behavior, but regarding very basic questions linked with the procurement and the reality of salvation. The disagreements in these areas were so fundamental that John calls the Jews’ rejection of Jesus the Messiah and the resultant Jewish animosity toward the followers of Jesus “satanic” (Rev 3:9),<sup>2</sup> while Jews cursed Christians in synagogue prayers from the late first or early second century onward.<sup>3</sup> The following essay presents the evidence for these disagreements, focusing on the fundamental question of the forgiveness of sin.

## Forgiveness of Sin in Second Temple Judaism

In many Jewish texts of the Second Temple period, forgiveness of sin is connected with obeying the commandments of the law on one hand, and

1 The following essay was part of a paper read at the Consultation on Jewish Evangelism of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, Woltersdorf, Berlin, 18–22 August 2008. The full paper will be published in the conference volume.

2 Cf. Peter Hirschberg, “Jewish Believers in Asia Minor according to the Book of Revelation and the Gospel of John,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 217–38, 223.

3 Cf. Philip S. Alexander, “The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn, WUNT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 1–25, 11, with reference to Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 47, 137; *I Apology* 31; and 1 Corinthians 12:3; Acts 26:11.

with God's covenantal mercy on the other hand. This combination of the causes of forgiveness can be seen in Ben Sira. He writes:

Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his words, and those who love him keep his ways. Those who fear the Lord seek to please him, and those who love him are filled with his law. Those who fear the Lord prepare their hearts, and humble themselves before him. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, but not into the hands of mortals; for equal to his majesty is his mercy, and equal to his name are his works. (Sir 2:15–17)

The Rule of the Community is another example.<sup>4</sup> The Qumran community had a keen sense of sin. They knew that only God can atone for sins, which he does on account of his righteous character and his righteous acts. We read in 1QS XI, 2–5:

As for me, my justification lies with God. In His hand are the perfection of my walk and the virtue of my heart. By His righteousness is my transgression blotted out. For from the fount of His knowledge has my light shot forth; upon his wonders has my eye gazed – the light of my heart upon the mystery of what shall be. He who is eternal is the staff of my right hand, upon the Mighty Rock do my steps tread; before nothing shall they retreat. For the truth of God – that is the rock of my tread, and His mighty power, my right hand's support. From His righteous fount comes my justification, the light of my heart from His wondrous mysteries.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the priests of the Qumran community emphasize that atonement for sin is not available for people who do not repent, nor for people outside the community. They connect the appropriation of the atonement for sins which God procures with the worship and praxis of the community, which function in deliberate analogy to the sacrificial cult of the temple.<sup>6</sup> In 1QS III, 2–9, ritual purity is connected with the atonement for sins:

His knowledge, strength, and wealth are not to enter the society of the Yahad. Surely, he ploughs in the muck of wickedness, so defiling stains would mar his repentance. Yet he cannot be justified by what his willful heart declares lawful, preferring to gaze on darkness rath-

4 For the following comments cf. Markus Bockmuehl, "1QS and Salvation at Qumran," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, et al., WUNT 2.140 (Tübingen/Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck/Baker, 2001), 381–414.

5 Translations from Emanuel Tov and Noel B. Reynolds, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library*, rev. ed. (Provo/Leiden: Brigham Young University/Brill, 2006).

6 11QTemple and 4QMMT suggest that the quasi-cultic atonement of sin of the Qumran community is not meant to replace the sacrificial cult of the temple in Jerusalem, but functions in deliberate analogy to it; cf. Bockmuehl, 401.



er than the ways of light. With such an eye he cannot be reckoned faultless. Ceremonies of atonement cannot restore his innocence, neither cultic waters his purity. He cannot be sanctified by baptism in oceans and rivers, nor purified by mere ritual bathing. Unclean, unclean shall he be all the days that he rejects the laws of God, refusing to be disciplined in the Yahad of His society. For only through the spirit pervading God's true society can there be atonement for a man's ways, all of his iniquities; thus only can he gaze upon the light of life and so be joined to His truth by His holy spirit, purified from all iniquity. Through an upright and humble attitude his sin may be covered, and by humbling himself before all God's laws his flesh can be made clean. Only thus can he really receive the purifying waters and be purged by the cleansing flow.

In one important passage, the Messiah is said to atone for sin: "And this is the exposition of the regulations by which [they shall be governed in the age of] [wickedness until the appearance of the Mess]ah of Aaron and of Israel, so that their iniquity may be atoned for. Cereal [offering and sin-offering . . .]" (CD XIV, 18–19).<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that in the Qumran community, only the true Israel is saved, never the Gentiles.<sup>8</sup> According to the War Scroll (1QM) and the Messianic Rule (1QSa), there will be a battle between "Israel" and the Gentiles, and the Community Rule (1QS) and the Hodayat (1QH) include the Israelites who are not members of the community among the enemies of "Israel." The redactional history of 1QS suggests "a tightening religious practice in which atonement and forgiveness were increasingly limited to the sect itself, and religious authority was concentrated in the hands of Zadokite priests."<sup>9</sup>

Philo asserts that God alone can forgive sins (*Somn.* 2.299), because sin represents a violation of God's law. But human beings receive God's forgiveness only if and when they repent, when they confess their sins, when their conscience exposes the evil thoughts in their soul and seeks divine judgment and forgiveness and divine help in distinguishing good and evil.<sup>10</sup> And forgiveness is possible only when the sacrifices for sin which Moses prescribed are offered. The most appropriate means of divine forgiveness are those sacrifices for sin which are offered daily in the temple in Jerusalem as well as during the festivals, particularly the sacrifices of-

7 Cf. Joseph M. Baumgarten, "Messianic Forgiveness of Sins in CD 14:19 (4Q266.i.12–13)," in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, ed. D. W. Parry and E. Ulrich, STDJ 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 535–44.

8 Cf. Katell Berthelot, "La notion de 'ger' dans les textes de Qumrân," *Revue de Qumran* 19 (1999): 171–216; Bockmuehl, 392 n. 40.

9 Bockmuehl, 411.

10 Cf. Philo *Abr.* 17–26; *Praem.* 15–21; *QG* 1.82. Cf. David Winston, "Philo's Doctrine of Repentance," in *The School of Moses: Studies in Philo and Hellenistic Religion; In Memory of Horst R. Moehring*, ed. J. P. Kenney, Brown Judaic Studies 304 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 29–40.

ferred on the Day of Atonement, when forgiveness is granted both for voluntary and involuntary sins, not just for legal impurity (*Spec.* 2.180–93, 234; 2.193–96).<sup>11</sup>

Jews believed that there was only one temple in which God was present, and thus they believed that there was only one place of sacrifice, one place of forgiveness, linked with the hereditary priesthood. While Jews living in the diaspora could visit the temple in Jerusalem only occasionally, “their awareness of daily sacrifices there for sins may have given them a sense of God’s mercy for themselves, wherever they lived.”<sup>12</sup> After the destruction of the temple in AD 70, the rabbis believed that there were many means at the disposal of the Jewish people to call forth God’s mercy, to make atonement for sins, and to mitigate divine justice which punishes sinners: repentance (*teshuvah*), which involves confession of sin and supplication of the mercies of God; restitution if restitution is possible and performance of good deeds if it is not; punishment, which atones for wrongdoing and restores communion with God; fasting and praying on Yom Kippur, which expiates the sins of the community as a whole; and the sufferings which the righteous undergo gratuitously.<sup>13</sup>

### Forgiveness of Sin in Jesus’ Proclamation

When Jesus heals a paralyzed man in the synagogue in Capernaum, he asserts not only the power to heal but the authority to forgive sin (Matt 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26). The claim to have the authority to forgive sin – apart from the temple and without sacrifices – provokes the first reaction from Jewish leaders, who believe that Jesus’ claims are blasphemy (Mark 2:7). Jesus’ challenge to the scribes – “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Matt 9:6) – probably formulates Jesus’ claim to exclusivity: he is “*the only one* on earth with the power and the right to forgive sins. On this interpretation Jesus has replaced the temple in Jerusalem and its priests.”<sup>14</sup>

During the anointing of Jesus’ feet by a sinful woman, Jesus declares the woman to be in a state of forgiveness, demonstrated through her

11 Cf. David M. Hay, “Philo of Alexandria,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, et al., WUNT 2.140 (Tübingen/Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck/Baker, 2001), 357–79, 377; with reference to Jean Laporte, *Théologie liturgique de Philon d’Alexandrie et d’Origène*, Liturgie 6 (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 93–95.

12 Hay, 377 n. 62.

13 Cf. Philip S. Alexander, “Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, et al., WUNT 2.140 (Tübingen/Grand Rapids: Mohr Siebeck/Baker, 2001), 260–301, 287–88.

14 William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988–97), 2:93. Davies and Allison regard Matthew 9:6 as an editorial aside to the reader; for a defense as a statement made by Jesus cf. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 347.



actions which testify to her love in gratitude for having been forgiven (Luke 7:47–48).<sup>15</sup>

During his last supper with his disciples, Jesus' pronouncement over the cup links his impending, voluntary death with the forgiveness of sins: "Drink from it, all of you; or this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:27–28). Sins are no longer forgiven in the context of the Sinaitic covenant (Exod 24:8) which followed the exodus, celebrated in the Passover. Sins are now forgiven in the context of the new covenant (Luke 22:20), which is now being inaugurated with Jesus pouring out his blood as God's Suffering Servant (Isa 53:11–12) whose death achieves the forgiveness of sins (Isa 53:5–6, 8, 10–12). Jesus' statement recalls the original description of Jesus' mission in Matthew 1:21, to "save his people from their sins."

### Forgiveness of Sin in Peter's Preaching

After Peter's explanation of the language miracle at Pentecost, when they experienced the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh in the last days, he advises listeners who inquire as to what they should do: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The nature of Jesus' exaltation and the gift of God's Spirit which results from Jesus' exaltation involve "such a close identification with 'the Lord' of Joel's citation that Jesus may be presented as the redeemer upon whose name men should call for salvation (2:38–39)."<sup>16</sup>

Salvation is now linked with calling upon the name of the "Lord Jesus the Messiah," i.e. with the acknowledgement of Jesus' messianic dignity, with the understanding that his death on the cross achieved atonement for sins, with the recognition that his resurrection from the dead and his exaltation to the right hand of God inaugurated the new covenant for which God had promised his Spirit. Repentance is linked with an act of purification which demonstrates personal repentance and acknowledgement of Jesus as the crucified Messiah and risen Lord. The confession of Jesus as Messiah and Lord is the reason why the immersion in water is linked with "the name of Jesus Christ." Salvation through repentance and public confession of the need for purification entail reception of God's Spirit and the integration into the people of God's new covenant.

15 The verbal form *apheōntai sou hai hamartia* is perfect tense. Cf. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995/1996), 1:703, 705.

16 Max M. B. Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts*, JPTSup 9 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996), 273. For the following points cf. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1:404–05.

## Forgiveness of Sin in Paul's Theology

For Paul, Jews need forgiveness of sin just as much as Gentiles do.<sup>17</sup> Paul begins his exposition of the gospel in his letter to the Christians in the city of Rome with a succinct statement about the revelation of God's wrath on account of human sinfulness (Rom 1:18), followed by a description of the nature of human sin (1:19–23) and the consequences of sin (1:24–31), thus confirming the legitimacy, the severity, and the scope of God's judgment (1:32). He then argues that Jews are not exempt from the revelation of God's wrath (2:1–3:20). While Jewish readers would have agreed with Paul's indictment of humankind in 1:19–32, they believed that they had a privileged position before God. Paul argues in Romans 2 that while pious Jews may indeed rely on God's kindness in delaying his judgment, they make the mistake of having little regard for the scope of God's kindness in view of the hopeless condition of humankind, unaware that they need as much repentance as the Gentiles do. Jews are not exempt from judgment, because they have failed to recognize that they have a hard and impenitent heart, a condition that will result in God's condemnation. The Jewish claim to covenant privileges is contradicted by the reality of the actions of the Jewish people. Paul argues with Isaiah 52:5 that just as Israel's disobedience in the past brought shame upon God and the exile upon Israel,<sup>18</sup> so now the Jewish people dishonor God by their disobedience (2:17–24). Paul concludes his exposition of the sinfulness of humankind in 3:20 with an allusion to Psalm 143:2 (and perhaps Gen 6:12), asserting that final justification by God does not take place on the basis of obedience to the works prescribed by the law. No "flesh" has the ability to obey the law.<sup>19</sup> The law may have indeed provided various mechanisms for the atonement of sin, such as the burnt offerings and the sin offerings described in Leviticus 1 and 4–5 (cf. Exod 34:7; Num 14:18–19). These provisions of the law can no longer compensate for sin, because God has provided a new place of atonement.

**The Jewish claim to covenant privileges is contradicted by the reality of the actions of the Jewish people.**

This is what Paul argues in 3:21–5:21, explaining the revelation of God's saving righteousness for Gentiles and Jews in Jesus the Messiah. In 3:21–26, he explains the significance of God's action in the death of Jesus Christ, providing atonement for sins and redemption. Paul emphasizes with the opening adverb *nyini de* in 3:21 ("*But now* a righteousness from

17 Paul does not use the term "forgiveness" much, but since forgiveness is connected with justification, it belongs to the center of Paul's theology. Cf. Simon J. Gathercole, "Justified by Faith, Justified by his Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3:21–4:25," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. 2: The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 105–45, 159–60.

18 Cf. the larger context in Isaiah 50:1–3.

19 In 8:3–4 Paul argues, as he did in 2:13–14, 25–29, that the Spirit provides for the Christian believer the power to fulfill the law.



God, apart from law, has been made known") a twofold contrast. He contrasts the time of Gentile idolatry and immorality with God's provision of righteousness for sinners. And he contrasts Jewish efforts to find salvation through the law in the old covenant with the revelation of God's righteousness in the new covenant. Paul asserts that now God's saving action takes place independently of the Mosaic law, both for Gentiles who do not have the law, and for Jews who do not obey the law. God saves the ungodly and the disobedient, the very people who assaulted his glory and who did not obey his will. Paul clarifies that this new reality is scriptural: the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.<sup>20</sup> The gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ that Paul proclaims – the fulfillment of God's

promises for the new covenant – is not a new religion.

**The gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ that Paul proclaims – the fulfillment of God's promises for the new covenant – is not a new religion.**

In 3:22–26, Paul explains the revelation of the saving righteousness of God as follows: (1) The means of salvation is faith in Jesus Christ (v. 22). The means of salvation is not the law but trust in Jesus the messianic Savior. (2) The

scope of salvation is universal (v. 22), without distinction between idolatrous polytheists and disobedient Jews, open to all who believe in Jesus Christ. (3) The target of salvation is sinners (v. 23), people whose behavior suppresses God's truth and ignores God's will, people who have lost the glory of living in God's presence.<sup>21</sup> (4) The nature of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is justification (*dikaïoumenoi*), God's acquittal of the sinner who faced condemnation, who is declared righteous and thus set right with God (v. 24). (5) The manner of salvation is that of a free gift (*dôrean*, v. 24). (6) The motivation of salvation is God's grace (*charis*), the undeserved love of God (v. 24). (7) The means of salvation is redemption (*apolytrôsis*, v. 24), deliverance from the hopeless human condition which Paul had described in 1:18–3:20.<sup>22</sup> (8) The facilitation of salvation is bound up with Jesus the Messiah (v. 24). It is in and through Jesus' death and resurrection by which the new epoch of salvation has been inaugurated and by which both idolatrous pagans and lawbreaking Jews are delivered from sin and death. (9) The locale of salvation is the cross where Jesus Christ became the new place of God's atoning presence (*hilastērion*, v. 25). Paul emphasizes the consequences of Jesus' death for God's wrath (1:18), for humankind's sinfulness (1:18–3:20), and for the power of sin

20 Cf. Romans 1:2; 4:1–25; 9:25–33; 10:6–13; 15:8–12.

21 Many see in 3:23 ("all fall short of the glory of God") a reference to Adam's fall. In *Apoc. Mos.* 21:6, Adam accuses Eve: "You have deprived me of the glory of God"; cf. also *L.A.E.* 20–21; *Gen. Rab.* 11:2; *b. Sanh.* 38b. Cf. Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 607–94, 618.

22 The Greek term is sometimes used in a general sense, sometimes with reference to a ransom which has been paid (cf. 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; also Mark 10:45); many see an allusion to the OT motif of redemption in a new exodus, a new covenant, and a new creation (Isa 43:14–21; 48:20–21; 52:1–2; Ezek 20:33–38; Hos 2:14–23).



(3:9). Jesus' death redeems the unrighteous from God's wrath, cleanses sinners from sin, and breaks the power of sin. Because Jesus is the sinless sacrifice and dies in the place of sinners, the sinners live. The phrase "God presented him" describes Jesus' death as a public manifestation of God's grace. (10) The effects of Jesus' death are appropriated "by faith" in Jesus Christ (vv. 25–26), i.e. by responding with trust and confidence. (11) Another effect of salvation is the demonstration of God's righteousness (v. 25); God demonstrated his righteousness by providing Jesus as the sacrifice which fulfills the terms of his covenant with Israel. (12) Another effect of Jesus' death is the final, ultimate forgiveness of sins (v. 25). While in the past God's forbearance had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished, Jesus' sacrificial death was God's final answer to the problem of sin, which the sacrificial system of the law was not.

In 3:27–31, Paul argues that when Jews understand the law as commanding obedience to works which leads to justification on the day of judgment, the sequence "works > obedience > justification > boasting" is confirmed. If the law is understood in the context of faith – in the revelation of God's saving righteousness through Jesus Christ (vv. 21–26) – now faith being the means of justification, the sequence is "faith > justification." This means that the pattern which leads from works to boasting is abandoned.<sup>23</sup> In 3:28, Paul contrasts two ways of justification: (1) sinners are justified on the day of judgment by faith in Jesus Christ without the involvement of the law (Paul's conviction) or (2) sinners are justified by works prescribed by the law (the Jewish conviction). Paul had argued in 2:1–3:20 that the latter is not possible. The truth that justification before God is not by obedience to the law applies not only to Jews (who do not obey the law) but also to Gentiles (who do not have the law).

**Since there is only one God,  
there can be only one means  
of justifying sinners.**

In 3:29–30, Paul provides a theological argument for this point. God's final solution to the problem of the reality of sin among Gentiles and among Jews is not justification through obedience to the law, because then only Jews could be saved (only Jews possess the law). This is an unacceptable position since God is not only the God of the Jews but also the God of the Gentiles. The truth is that "there is only one God" (v. 30). This formulation reflects the basic confession of Jewish monotheism (Deut 6:4). Since there is only one God, there can be only one means of justifying sinners. This is what Paul has argued in 3:21–26, read in the context of 1:18–3:20: members of God's covenant people (the circumcised Jews) are justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ, and idolatrous polytheists (the uncircumcised pagans) are justified "through that same faith" (v. 30).

Other important passages of Paul, which cannot be considered here in detail, are Romans 8:3, where Jesus' death is linked with the phrase *peri*

<sup>23</sup> Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 224–25.

*hamartias*, with the implication that Jesus is described as a sin-offering,<sup>24</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, where Paul describes the “ministry of reconciliation” that he has been given, focused on the message that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (v. 19);<sup>25</sup> as well as Colossians 1:14 and Ephesians 1:17.

Are these convictions of Paul anti-Jewish? Daniel Boyarin, a Jewish interpreter of Paul, argues:

There is an enormous difference between the nascent Pauline doctrine of supersession, and those of some other later Christian theologies. Paul’s doctrine is not anti-Judaic! It does not ascribe any inherent fault to Israel, Jews, or Judaism that led them to be replaced, superseded by Christianity, except for the very refusal to be transformed. As in 2 Corinthians 3, it is the denial on the part of most Jews that a veil has been removed and the true meaning of Torah revealed that leads them to become pruned-off branches. I treat Paul’s discourse as indigenously Jewish, thereby preempting (or at least recasting) the question of the relationship between Paul and anti-Semitism. This is an inner-Jewish discourse and an inner-Jewish controversy. The only flaw in the rejected branches is their rejection. Indeed, they still retain their character as Israel, and if they will only return they are assured of a successful regrafting. The point will only be clear if we forget for a moment the subsequent history and imagine ourselves into the context of the first century.<sup>26</sup>

## Summary

As regards the convictions and the patterns of behavior of Jews and (Jewish and Gentile) Christians in the first century, there are both continuity and discontinuity. When compared to their pagan counterparts, one could argue that these two groups possess far more that unites them than that separates them. However, important elements of dissonance divide Jews and Christians in the first century, provoking mutual criticism, suspicion, and (lamentably) hostility. We have explored one area of disagreement, viz. the convictions concerning the forgiveness of sins.

In Second Temple Judaism, forgiveness of sins is linked both with the mercy of God and with the observance of the law. While Jews were under no illusions that they could merit the forgiveness of God by their own deeds, forcing God to forgive, there is a sense in which their own righ-

24 Note the use of the formulation *peri hamartias* in Leviticus 4–5. Cf. Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK 6/1–3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn/Einsiedeln: Neukirchener Verlag/Benzinger, 1978–82), 2:126–28; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, WBC 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 1:422; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), 220–25.

25 Cf. Stanley E. Porter, “Reconciliation and 2 Cor 5,” in *The Corinthian Correspondence*, ed. R. Bieringer, BETL 125 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 693–705.

26 Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, *Contraversions* 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 205.

teousness acts as a causal agent in the procuring of God's grace. Also important is the concept of atonement tied up with the sacrificial practices of the temple and the sacrifice of good works that replaced them after the destruction of the temple in AD 70. Salvation was essentially ethnically located, suggesting that the Gentiles were excluded for the most part from the salvific will of God, unless they became proselytes.

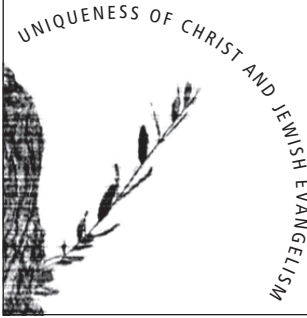
In the teaching of Jesus and of Peter and Paul, forgiveness of sins focused on the person and the mission of Jesus the Messiah. The followers of Jesus emphasized that only Jesus has the authority to forgive sins, as he has been revealed as the new place of God's saving presence on earth. As God grants forgiveness through Jesus' death on the cross, all people stand equally in need of this forgiveness, both Jews and Gentiles. It is not only the Jews who have access to divine mercy, but all people who in repentance and faith come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah.

Although similarities of theological and ethical convictions and practices between Jews and Christians are abundant, the differences outlined here proved to be of such a decisive nature that substantive unity gradually evaporated.

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# Replacement Theology with Implications for Messianic Jewish Relations

by **Darrell L. Bock**

Reaching out to Jews with the gospel has been with us ever since Jesus Christ came to earth to accomplish the mission the God of Israel sent him to perform. Jesus is Jewish (Luke 1–2). His mission with the Twelve and those who followed him was to the cities and towns of Israel (Matt 10). After the resurrection, Peter, James, and Paul all went to Jews and even into synagogues to share the good news that God calls us to covenantal reform and faithfulness through his Messiah, who offers forgiveness of sins (Acts, especially 13:13–43). This is what John the Baptist preached and what Jesus affirmed when he partook in John’s baptism (Matt 3:13–17; Luke 3:15–21). Jesus and Peter proclaimed that God would send the Spirit to his people to give them the needed enablement. God was providing this gift to enable them to share about a renewed and restored relationship with God (Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:4–5; 2:14–41). The gospel is for people of every nation; to exclude the Jewish people would be to exclude those to whom the gospel came first and represents a form of religious discrimination the gospel came to abolish (Matt 28:18–20; Rom 1:16–17).

Replacement theology is an approach to the New Testament that argues that the church has replaced Israel as the people of God, so that Israel (and by implication the Jews) is no longer a participant in the covenant commitments God made to Abraham and his seed long ago (Gen 12:1–3). Abraham’s seed is now any Jew or Gentile who responds to Jesus. This new mixed community, who are beneficiaries of the work of Jesus Christ, are the heirs of the covenant promises (Gal 3:1–4:7). Israel’s unbelief is the cause of her lost position (Luke 13:6–9; 19:41–44). Most often this theology is connected to forms of amillennialism or some expressions of premillennialism, or to postmillennialism. Its roots are often associated with Reformed theology or with covenant theology.

Historically the Messianic Jewish movement and Christians concerned to take the gospel to Jewish people have had important questions about replacement theology. Did God make promises years ago to Abraham and his physical seed that he now has stepped away from by substituting new beneficiaries? Does the inclusion of more mean the exclusion of those to whom the promise was originally given? Was the promise only made to the single seed of Abraham (Jesus), or was it to the Jewish people as Genesis

and Exodus argue? Does Jewish rejection in any single period disqualify Jews for all time? What do these questions suggest about God's promises, faithfulness, and the truthfulness of his Word, as well as his commitment to Jews and to us? These questions have led many to reflect on what the implications of replacement theology are for Jewish evangelism.

This essay will try to clarify biblically and missiologically the kinds of replacement theologies that exist, and assess the implications of these views for outreach to the Jewish people. Three questions dominate: (1) Are there kinds of replacement theology? (2) On what basis do some build such a view and how should it be assessed? (3) What implications exist for Messianic Jewish movements? We shall tackle these questions one at a time.

### **Kinds of Replacement Theology**

One of the issues that can bring confusion to this discussion is that there are different kinds of replacement theology.

Note that the choice to speak of replacement is a reflection of the North American scene, where this terminology is often used to dismiss a point of view from the conversation. This labeling and rhetorical move is also made in Europe. However, this is often done with (1) a lack of awareness that there are kinds of replacement views (so my categories are designed to ask what is the ultimate outcome for Jews for the replacement in view); and (2) a lack of clarity about how the term Israel is being used with reference to Jews (is the term national or ethnic?). Both ambiguities need to be noted if we are to be clear.

Others speak of supersessionism and various kinds of supersessionist models to get at the same set of issues. This is another excellent way to raise these issues and think about them. Two recent supersessionist models exist.

One comes from Gabriel Fackre in his *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective*.<sup>1</sup> His supersessionist list includes: (1) Retributive Replacement (God has judged Israel permanently and replaced it with the church); (2) Nonretributive Replacement (God has replaced Israel with Christ but says nothing explicit about Israel's future); (3) Modified Replacement (only Jesus saves, but there is a right of Jews to be protected from injustice and to live culturally as Jews); (4) Messianic Replacement (conversion to Christ for Jews, but with complete retaining of Jewish custom); and (5) Christological Election (Israel has an eternal election, a view tied to Karl Barth). One could challenge whether all but the retributive category are really supersessionist, since they all leave room for a potential future for Israel. Fackre's point in using the word supersessionist is that the church now has the central role in God's program, not Israel. Fackre goes on to name various antisupersessionist views. They are (1) Dispensationalism, which retains a hope

1 Gabriel Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 147-67.



for the majority of Israel in the future; (2) the One People view of Marcus Barth, where Israel is God's representative people of God who have no need to be converted and deserve a state that itself should be rooted in peace and righteousness; (3) the Paradoxical view, which says the covenant with Israel is still in full force, but that the church is still called to call all to Jesus; (4) the Eschatological view, where Jews will meet Jesus in the end and be saved; (5) the Dual Covenant view, where Israel is saved through her covenant and the nations are saved through the new covenant; (6) the Midrashic view, rooted in the work of Paul van Buren, argues that all Scripture must be subject to the portrait of God as revealed in Israel, making all statements about Jesus' deity, the Trinity, and salvation through faith inappropriately supersessionist; (7) the Moral Pluralism view, where one accepts that certain religious views are true for some but not others; and (8) the Cultural-Linguistic view, where all such statements are simply seen as linguistic constructs not communicating a reality. To my eyes, most of these antisupersession models reject the centrality and truthfulness of Scripture in religious discourse (view 1 does not have this failing). This problem applies especially to the last three views Fackre notes.

Another discussion comes from R. Kendall Soulen in *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*.<sup>2</sup> This entire work challenges supersessionism and notes its beginnings in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus in the second century. For Soulen a key point is whether the church can allow Jewish people to come to Christ and maintain their Jewish identity, something the positions of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus lost and lack. He speaks of (1) economic supersessionism, where the value of the previous era was completely overcome in the new economy. A part of this economic way of reading Scripture also affirms (2) a punitive supersessionism, where Israel lost her place because of her rejection of Jesus as Messiah. Finally, there is a (3) structural supersessionism, which argues that the canon is structured in such a way that the Hebrew Scripture is irrelevant for understanding God's purposes. Here is where Soulen sees the major problem, because it is the structural reading of Scripture that leads to the other expressions of supersessionism. Soulen's book challenges this model by claiming supersessionism rejects a key place for the God of Israel in all of Scripture and in God's own purposes. Soulen's options ultimately belong together and are three ways of looking at supersessionism or replacement theology.

I choose to use my own replacement taxonomy. It focuses on how the fate of Israel either as a nation or as people is ultimately seen. There are two key ambiguities of terminology that plague our discussion in this area. First, replacement theology is often a poor and inaccurate term to apply in discussion about the fate of Jews, for reasons the taxonomy below makes evident. Some views of the church replacing Israel still see a future either for Jews or for the nation of Israel, so the term replacement is used not in an absolute sense. Second, the phrase "future for Israel" is

2 R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

ambiguous, because it is not clear whether we mean (1) ethnic Jews or (2) Israel as a nation. Without clarity about which exact form of replacement is meant and how the expression future for Israel is being used, we can talk past one another or, even worse, mislead people about what a position holds. Thus we distinguish between three types of replacement theology, of which only the first is absolute when it comes to the people of Israel in the future.

Some versions are unequivocal that Israel – either as a people or a nation – has no future as the people of God. We might call this *complete replacement*. The church has utterly and totally replaced Israel as God's covenant people. Israel has no special future in God's program. The Jewish people are like anybody else. Older historic forms of replacement theology fall here, starting with the second century *Epistle of Barnabas*, Justin Martyr, and continuing with such people as Martin Luther.

However, other approaches in replacement theology argue that the church has replaced Israel in God's program, but without precluding a role for a majority of Jews in the future who will respond to Jesus, though this view might be more reticent about a future for Israel as a nation. This is a *partial replacement* view. The church is the focus of the kingdom on earth, but God is still committed to his covenantal promises to Israel. In this view it is sometimes argued that heavenly blessing, or the blessing of the new heaven and earth, is the goal in such a program. The eschatological work of Anthony Hoekema fits here. In such cases, the argument is that although the church has replaced Israel as the covenant recipients through Jesus, God will keep his word to the Jewish people by restoring them to faith in Jesus as Messiah in the end, but the end is still part of an amillennial hope. Some "replacement" theologians read Romans 9–11 this way. Some have even apologized for these chapters having been read in the past in a way that excludes hope for Jewish people. For example, C. E. B. Cranfield, in his famous commentary on Romans in the ICC series, says in commenting on Barrett's view that there is an election "of a new Israel in Christ to take the place of the old." He continues, "And I confess with shame to having also myself used in print on more than one occasion this language of replacement of Israel by the church."<sup>3</sup> In his own exposition, he warns against "the ugly and unscriptural notion that God has cast off His people Israel and simply replaced it by the Christian church. These three chapters [Romans 9–11] emphatically forbid us to speak of the Church as having once and for all taken the place of the Jewish people."<sup>4</sup> In other words, although the church is the current locus of blessing for God's people, its presence does not represent a final judgment on the role of Israel or the Jewish people either now or in the future, since Jews can come to the Messiah now (Messianic Jews), and one day God will act to restore the people as a whole.

A third kind of replacement view can be called the *temporary replace-*

3 C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 2:448 n. 2.

4 *Ibid.*



*ment* (current replacement but future eschatological inclusion) view. This approach argues that the church is now the focus of God's work in the world, but there will be a day in the future when ethnic Israel, with whom God continues to have a covenant relationship, becomes the focus of God's work. This is the approach of some who hold to various forms of historical premillennialism, a view most often associated with George Ladd. People in this approach are less than clear if the nation of Israel has a future, or whether Jews are incorporated into the church in the future, or whether God turns back to Israel and completes promises for them as he sets up the millennium (so Daniel Fuller; the initial two descriptions apply to Ladd). Regardless of these details, the view argues that Jews will again respond to the gospel.

In noting this distinction within certain expressions of the Reformed view or covenant theology as it relates to replacement theology, I have not even included those Christians who speak of two completely distinct plans of God, one for Israel and one for the church, and so have no room at all for any replacement of Israel at any time in God's program (also known as classical and/or revised dispensationalism). This dispensational view does not hold to replacement theology at all. Still other dispensationalists are comfortable saying the church functions like a "new Israel" today, but not at the expense of hope for ethnic Jews or the nation of Israel in the future (progressive dispensationalism), while others avoid such equative language between Israel and the church. None of these dispensational views question that God will keep his promises to the original national recipients of those promises, so that Israel is still in the program of God.

These distinctions mean that when one speaks of replacement theology as a view incompatible with a future for Israel or for Jews, the only form that totally fits is that which gives no place in the future of God's program to Israel or to the Jewish people (i.e., the complete replacement view). The concern is that such a reading appears to ignore Paul's key point about the future of the people of Israel in Romans 9–11, as well as the point about God being a God of the patriarchs who keeps his promises (Acts 3:13–26). In addition, although other replacement views do not deny doing evangelism to the Jewish people, there is a sense and a momentum to this view in all its forms that does not anticipate much in terms of response, except perhaps at the end. As a result, the practical effect is that Jewish evangelism becomes a less than vibrant concern. Another way to say this is: Because of their rejection of Jesus, the Jewish people no longer have any covenantal uniqueness or significance, which therefore makes Jewish evangelism simply another type of evangelism. There is no greater significance to Jewish evangelism, because Israel has been "replaced." In fact, for some, the nation as a whole stands permanently under the curse of God for having engaged in covenantal unfaithfulness. So the saving of Jewish individuals becomes a kind of gracious exception to the rule. One need only look at church history to see how some replacement theology has very easily slipped into a kind of anti-Semitism. As one famous example, one need only read how Martin Luther spoke of the Jews to see



how easy it is to slip theologically in this regard. The seeds reflected there are something the world still sees all too often, even experiencing a mammoth and inhumane lack of concern for Jewish people in the last century.

If I were to turn it around, I would state the case of Jewish evangelism this way: If one believes that the Jewish people still have some type of covenantal uniqueness, then Jewish evangelism is both the same and yet somehow different from evangelizing other types of people. It is a reconnection with the roots and original promises of the faith, made in faithfulness to the Jews, and resting on God's commitment and character. It is clear from the Bible that Jews were the corporate chosen seed of Abraham, since part of the point of Genesis and Exodus is to demonstrate this idea and tell the story of how the promise to Abraham resulted in a blessed nation called to honor God. If one day God is going to restore the Jewish people to his purposes through the national Jewish acceptance of Christ (see Rom 11:25 ff), then the Jewish acceptance of Jesus and restoration to covenantal favor makes evangelizing Jewish people significant. First, it provides for a remnant that reaches back to the original promise. Second, it represents the gracious commitment of God to fulfill his promise. Such outreach is no more important than reaching other people for Jesus, but it does represent a kind of connection to our Christian roots and to the roots of the founding of Christianity that shows God's ultimate commitment to faithfulness, grace, and his promises. Here we see realized the eschatological promise of Zechariah 12:10: "I will pour out on the kingship of David and the population of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look to me, the one they have pierced. They will lament for him as one laments for an only son, and there will be a bitter cry for him like the bitter cry for a firstborn," as well as Romans 11:12, 15, and 25–27. These texts seem to suggest a commitment to Israel (or at least to the Jewish people) by God.

### **On What Basis Does One Build Such a View?**

It is important to ask why so many Christians have such an exclusionary view of Israel and her future. There is an attempt to make a biblical argument for replacement. It rests on at least three ideas: (1) that Christ is the real recipient of the promise; (2) that disobedience led to Israel losing her role; and (3) that the church, rooted in Jesus' selection of the Twelve, now is the recipient of the blessings of promise. Key passages in this discussion are (a) Jesus seen as *the seed of Abraham* into whom both Jew and Gentile are incorporated (Gal 3:1–4:7); (b) the parable of the wicked tenants, where the vineyard – picturing promise to Israel – is given to another (Mark 12:1–12; Matt 21:33–46; Luke 20: 9–19); (c) texts where the nation is judged for disobedience, including the destruction of the temple predicted in the Olivet Discourse and Jesus' warnings that Israel will be judged for covenantal disobedience (Luke 13:6–9, 33–35; 19:41–44); and (d) passages where the church is now seen as the structure through which God works (Eph 2:11–22), and is described in ways that



show she takes up the task Israel once possessed (e.g., 1 Pet 2:4–10; John 2:18–22; 4:20–24; Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30–31).

The point seen in each of the above named passages is there. The question is whether the implication drawn from these ideas means the *ultimate* exclusion or replacement of Israel in God's program. Does fulfillment through the Messiah of Israel's promise and Gentile inclusion, even in a new structure called the church, require the nullification of hope for Israel as a *corporate* people or even as a nation? The most emphatic of replacement theologians would say yes. But others, both replacement theologians and others, would say no. Here is why.

1. The method of evangelism seen in Acts shows that going to the synagogue and preaching Jesus as the fulfillment of expectations from the Hebrew Scriptures was undertaken by those Jesus commissioned. The two key texts here are Acts 3:13–26 and 13:16–41. In both cases it is the exposition of the promise to the nation that is either invoked or traced. In Acts 3, there is an explicit appeal to the Jewish audience as natural recipients of the message about the Christ, rooted in the corporate and national reading of the seed of Abraham (vv. 25–26). In Acts 13, the pivot is the promise to David (vv. 33–34). If there had been a clear understanding of replacement, would Luke have recorded this to his church in the sixties to eighties, when Acts was probably written?
2. Luke-Acts also seems to affirm a restoration of kingdom blessing to Israel. Nothing in what Jesus said to the disciples in the forty days after his resurrection precluded them from asking if now Jesus would be restoring the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). More than that, nothing in Jesus' answer says they had asked a wrong question. His reply simply said that they were not to know the times and seasons the Father had fixed for such an act. This reading seems confirmed when we go to Acts 3:21, where Peter says that heaven holds Jesus "until the times of restoration of all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets." The understanding of this text is that the rest of the program has been revealed in the writings of the prophets. In other words, to understand what God is still going to do, just read your Hebrew Scriptures.
3. When Jesus describes Jerusalem under the feet of Gentiles and says the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled (Luke 21:24), this likely implies that there is a time to come when Jews will again have a role in the sacred city. In fact, Jesus' own prediction of woe in Luke 13:34–35 suggests the same thing, since Israel's house is said to be desolate *until* she says, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." This temporal limitation suggests that covenantal unfaithfulness will not be permanent in Israel.
4. Romans 9–11 makes no sense unless it is about ethnic Jews at the least. Everything about these chapters is precipitated by the pain Paul feels because Jews *en masse* are not currently responding to the gospel (Rom 9:1–5). It is the people of Paul's own flesh that he despairs over in these chapters, and nothing he says in them suggests that his concern

for them has been redirected as the result of any judgment. When he contemplates the possibility that God can and will graft the original recipients back into the promise, it is the Jewish people Paul has in mind (Rom 11:25–31). Even a covenant theologian such as John Murray held to such a hope for Israel.

5. This same pattern is reiterated in what Paul says in Romans 1:16–17 (“to the Jew first”), as well as in his own missionary method in Acts, where his first contact was always with Jewish people as he preached the hope of Israel.
6. All of the passages mentioned above were penned in the era of the church, when her identity as a distinct entity from Israel was well in process. If Jesus had proclaimed a judgment excluding Jews from evangelism because of the existence of the church, then none of the above historically noted activities really make sense.

These considerations exclude a replacement theology that argues that because God has brought blessing into the church, Israel is permanently excluded from his plan. It also argues against a view that says that all we need to be concerned about is individual evangelism to everyone, including Jews. In sum, God’s promise is trustworthy. He is quite capable of bringing Israel into covenantal faithfulness, obedience, and incorporation into her Messiah one day, as the texts noted above most naturally read.

### Implications for Messianic Faith

The implications of these patterns we see in the New Testament include:

1. The need to continue preaching to people of every nation, including Jewish people as a special concern of God’s. This can be done in the hope that one day what is currently a minority response will grow into something more significant. This message should be presented in terms like those used by the earliest generation of Jesus’ followers. The promises to Israel point to what God did and does through Jesus. The resurrection is the divine vindication of Jesus, who sits at God’s right hand and mediates his blessings of salvation in restoring our broken relationship to God, whether we are Gentile or Jewish (Rom 1–3).

The examples for such an outreach come from the Great Commission, the practice of the apostles, and, most importantly, Jesus himself. This line of theological emphasis is a key way to respond to issues raised by arguments for either a dual covenant or a covenant of a hidden Christ. If these two models are right, the early church had no need to take the gospel to Jews, and Jesus had no right to challenge the theology of his people in his time. However, the problem is that the thrust of Jesus’ ministry was to call Israel to renewed covenantal faithfulness and embrace of the Messiah God had sent. The example of Jesus is not only that he represents Israel and offers forgiveness to her; he also gives a severe critique of Israel’s spiritual need as one speaking from inside Judaism. This fact is very relevant for the church’s own conversation



- with Israel and Jews today. The claim of the church has been that Jesus was and is Israel's Messiah, who shows us how to engage Torah in a way God desires.
2. The range of practice we see in the first century church is still possible for us today. Those with sensitivities to Jews and a desire to reach out to them may well take on a series of Jewish practices, over which Paul said we should not fight (1 Cor 9:19–23; Rom 14–15). Such sensitivity motivated the Jerusalem Council, where concern for the Jewish audience led to requests that believers be sensitive to Jews (Acts 15). Only when such practices got in the way of fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers did Paul challenge those things that led to an undue separation between the groups (Gal 2).

A justification for this is that although the church exists as the bearer of revelation through Jesus, a hope exists for Israel and Jews extending into the future. The church is “Jew and Gentile” in Christ. This new entity Jesus formed is seen as one, despite its members’ past and present ethnic orientation. Part of the beauty of reconciliation is that God has brought together distinct peoples into one new entity, but this unity need not mean that each entity loses some of the distinctiveness that makes it distinct. We are one, but that does not mean we must be completely the same. If God still has a covenantal relationship with the Jewish people and Israel that will be realized in the future and has not been completely replaced by the church, then it is permitted and even natural for Jewish people to retain their national distinctiveness within the body of Christ. This means that Jews are Jews in every age, and if Jews believe in Jesus they not only remain Jews from a theological perspective, but also serve as a key part of that community Christ has reconciled corporately in his body. They may act as Jews from a practical vantage point. *Therefore, Messianic Jews can live as Jews, but they also need to affirm their oneness with Messiah’s body as a whole. To be so distinct that oneness is not evident is to deny the reconciliation the gospel affirms as a key goal of Jesus’ work.* Of course, this variety of practice can be enacted in many different ways.

Now another implication of replacement theology can be that since the church has replaced Israel once and for all, and the church is made up of Jews and Gentiles, Jews should worship and engage in religious practice like all other Christians. But is this conclusion necessary in the case of Messianic believers? For example, if a replacement theologian does not believe there is any ongoing covenantal uniqueness to Israel and the Jewish people, then they might never encourage Jewish people to live as Jews. Yet if Jews do not live as Jews, at least in some cases, then one could argue that the testimony of these Jewish believers who are part of the present-day remnant will be impaired. Replacement theologians might think through the implications of these options. In addition, those who are not replacement theologians may also need to reflect on this question. Are we called to embrace an ecclesiology that only sees oneness? Is there not a place to appreciate an appropri-

ate kind of diversity in the body, which ultimately also testifies to that reconciled oneness in the midst of diversity? Is this not what is testified to in the permitted diversity of practice among Jewish and Gentile Christians in the early church? Is this not why Paul allows room for various practices in Romans 14–15? Is this not what motivated the advice given to Gentile churches in proximity to Jewish communities at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15?

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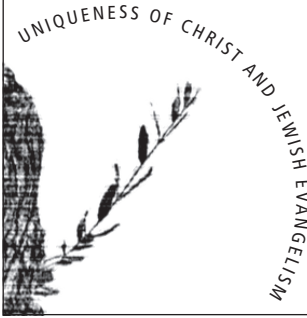
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3. This perspective also has an eschatological impact for the church. If some replacement theologians believe that there will be an end time revival of the Jewish people at some level which precipitates or co-exists with Christ's second coming, then it would be a good idea to suggest that Jewish evangelism is not simply one type of evangelism among many. At least in the Pauline view of things, Jewish evangelism today has eschatological significance, as was suggested in Romans 9–11 in texts noted above. In other words, Jewish evangelism today impacts our tomorrow. This might not change the way in which the church evangelizes the Jewish people, but it could lend some credence to the notion that Jewish evangelism has ongoing and unique theological significance.

Jewish evangelism by those who do not believe in replacement theology grows out of a natural love, affinity, and appreciation for the ongoing role of the Jewish people; as believers they express their hope for, concern to, and share the gospel with their Jewish neighbors. This produces a greater impact for Jewish evangelism because it is rooted in an appreciation for God's ongoing plan and commitment to the original recipients of the promise.

In sum, we have argued that replacement theology can risk minimizing the need to reach out to the Jewish people. It also risks becoming a denial of the Great Commission and the model for mission that the early church itself undertook. It may well understate the eschatological significance of keeping connected to the historical, national Jewish roots of the Christian faith. It may also underestimate the power of a church testimony that possesses diversity even as it expresses its oneness of faith in Jesus the Messiah. Rather, the call of those who follow Jesus is to take the gospel to every nation, Jew and Gentile, because every human being has the same need for restoration before God. In going to the Jews, the church reaffirms its commitment to God's promises – made originally to Jews – and testifies to an appreciation of her own roots, since Jesus came as Israel's Messiah and called that nation to faithfulness, as well as dying for all those who need salvation.





# Engaging Two-Covenant Theology: Drawing Contours

by **Henri Blocher**

The negative stance towards “missions to the Jews” one encounters in contemporary Christendom most commonly finds its *theological* justification in the so-called “Two-Covenant” (or Dual Covenant) scheme. In a nutshell, non-Christian Jews are said to be related to God under the terms of their own covenant, still the channel of divine blessing to them, and Christians who belong to *another* covenant are not to interfere and seek for a change in the Jews’ religious allegiance.

This viewpoint has been predominant in ecumenical circles for decades. The issue is not essentially that of the number of covenants (Paul van Buren started with a one-covenant scheme); neither is it whether one acknowledges or denies a *peculiar* note attaching to Jews who reject the claims of Jesus (all must and do acknowledge some peculiarity). The outcome may be the easiest criterion to handle. The new theology of Israel, now usually a Two-Covenant one, yields as its conclusion that mission to the Jews – Christian proselytism among them – is improper. It is such an interpretation of the Old and New Covenants (biblical names), and the relationships between them, that enough of the Old remains in force in the present era: (a) to provide a way of acceptance with God and final salvation for those who are called “Jews,” while they fail to believe in Jesus as Christ and Lord; and (b) to cast an unfavorable light on endeavors by disciples of Jesus to change the “Jews’” stance towards him. The condemnation of proselytism usually accompanies the commendation of “dialogue,” through which “mutual enrichment” can take place.

Evangelical theology is called to meet the challenges of Two-Covenant tenets, but this is not the place for any extensive or even cursory examination. The objective of the following presentation is to explore some sensitive issues that arise from discussions on Israel and the theology of Israel. As an indispensable preamble and acceptable framework (in this theologian’s eyes), a summary of main scriptural teachings will be offered first.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This foundational part of the original paper (which will be published in the volume coming out of the Berlin WEA Consultation) has been drastically abridged. Readers are reminded that proof, in such treatments, is cumulative, and they should base assessment on the fuller version.

## Recalling the Biblical Framework

In order not to miss the forest for the trees, to see the *data* in the right perspective and proportions, we must remind ourselves of basic scriptural teachings.

The first feature is so obvious, and massive, that one could easily overlook its presence! The realities proclaimed in the gospel and unfolded in apostolic *didakhè* represent the *fulfillment* of everything that had been said and done before. The prophetic hymns in the “infancy” chapters announce that God is about to intervene as he has given his word to Abraham and his seed; he now remembers “his holy covenant” and his oath in favor of Abraham. “The time has come” (Mark 1:15; cf. Paul’s *plèrôma tou khronou* or *tôn kairôn*); Jesus stresses that his disciples are given to see what prophets, righteous people, and kings longed to behold and could not. The *words* are fulfilled, as the things that were foretold now happen. The *events* and *institutions* are fulfilled as the reality they foreshadowed and “pictured” in advance has now arrived.

Yet the reader soon encounters statements of difference, discontinuity, some of them in strong terms indeed. The theme of fulfillment, already, implies some difference with what preceded. But apostolic language goes much farther than that. Types, including the Sabbath ordinance and food regulations, can be described as “shadows” in comparison with the substantial reality (*sôma*) enjoyed by Christians. These are no longer under the law, but under grace; they benefit from the ministry not of the letter which *kills*, but of the Spirit who alone grants eternal life; salvation is not by works of the law (as defined by Lev 18:5), but by faith in God who reckons as righteous the *ungodly*.

The form of the eucharistic words of Jesus according to Matthew and Mark, “This is my blood of *the* covenant,” suggesting the unity of the various covenants made with the fathers, illustrates the conviction of continuity. Hence, the community that shares in the fellowship of that blood, while “sociologically” it appears as one “sect” (*haireisis*) among the several “sects” of first-century Judaism (Acts 24:14), considers itself as the true covenant people, heir to the covenant promises and beneficiary of the long hoped-for “redemption of Israel.” Hence, the disciples who acknowledged in the risen Jesus the Messiah of Israel, Redeemer and Lord, called their gathering *ekklèsia*, the LXX rendering for the *qahal*, the “assembly” of Israel (cf. Acts 7:38). The same claim was made in several other words: the true seed of Abraham, the true “circumcision,” “Jews” rightly so-called, the “Israel of God.” The olive tree is Israel and is the church; the true vine, a frequent symbol of Israel, is Christ and those who are “in him,” that is, again, the Christian church; the church is the bride and the eschatological temple. Peter confers to the Christian community the threefold title that defined Israel’s privilege as God’s covenant-people in Exodus 19:5–6 (1 Pet 2:9).

The presence of many Gentiles in the church does not contradict its claims: Gentile believers in Jesus Christ have been grafted into the olive tree, they have been granted co-citizenship with the “saints.”



Yet important changes affect covenant and people. The form of Jesus' eucharistic words as preserved by Paul and Luke indicates that in his blood the *New Covenant* is established. Eckhard Schnabel draws from his analysis of the New Testament evidence the conclusion that "discontinuity overshadows continuity."<sup>2</sup> The Epistle to the Hebrews uses strong language: speaking of a New Covenant "has made the first one obsolete" (8:13), and the Old is soon to disappear; the first covenant incurs blame (8:7), a "reformation" was needed (9:10). Paul can speak of the "end" of the law, so essential a component of the older disposition. The new temple is spiritual, made of living stones; worshipping there "in spirit and truth" means no longer to be bound to particular places, whether Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim.

In that deeply altered situation, how does the New Testament view "Israel after the flesh" (*kata sarka*)? A distinction must be made between "Israel" and the "Israelites," and then among these. As Scot Hafemann beautifully elucidates,<sup>3</sup> Paul solves the difficulty of the apparent failure of God's promises to Israel by distinguishing between the Elect Community as such and individuals, not all elect: "Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (Rom 9:6, NIV). For unbelieving individuals, he uses the phrase "the rest of them," *hoi loipoi* (Rom 11:7), and avoids for them *laos*, "people," with a tinge of honor, as Denise Judant observes.<sup>4</sup>

**Paul solves the difficulty of the apparent failure of God's promises to Israel by distinguishing between the Elect Community as such and individuals, not all elect.**

The status of the "remnant" Jews like Paul, who were born Jews and confessed Jesus as Lord, is clear: all titles belong to them fully, unproblematically. They inherit all the promises. They constitute the first and foundational component of the Christian *ekklesia*.

The "rest of them," individuals of Jewish descent who do not believe in Jesus, "have been hardened" (Rom 11:7); they fall under God's "severe" judgment (v. 22), they are the object of the divine *apobolè*, a word which strictly means "rejection" (v. 15), the context showing it should be seen as temporary.<sup>5</sup> As Isaiah had foretold, they stumble on the rock and chosen cornerstone, "which is also what they were destined for" (1 Pet 2:8, NIV). Wrath has overtaken them at last (1 Thess 2:16). In Smyrna and Philadelphia, they

2 Eckhard Schnabel, "Die Gemeinde des Neuen Bundes in Kontinuität und Diskontinuität zur Gemeinde des Alten Bundes," in *Israel in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Beiträge zur Geschichte Israels und zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog*, ed. Gerhard Meier, TVG (Wuppertal/Giessen & Basel: R. Brockhaus/Brunnen, 1996), 209 (art. 147–213).

3 Scot Hafemann, "The Salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25–32: A Response to Krister Stendahl," *Ex Auditu* 4 (1998): 38–58; I am using a copy of the manuscript, then with the printer, which Professor Hafemann gave me at the time; the pages are numbered 13–33 (31–33 endnotes). On the point I am making, 19f, 23f.

4 Denise Judant, *Jalons pour une théologie chrétienne d'Israël* (Paris: Ed. du Cèdre, 1975), 18, 69.

5 [adieu] Lovsky (*Antisémitisme et mystère d'Israël* [Paris: Albin Michel, 1955], 492) struggles with the text; he affirms that Romans 11:15 makes its point by reducing it to the absurd: hardly convincing!



are not *truly* Jews, and their synagogue is a synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9; 3:9).

In the imagery of Romans 11, they are *cut off* branches of the olive tree; this, I suggest, corresponds to the branches of the vine which the divine gardener cuts off if they bear no fruit – to a fate of burning (John 15). Paul, however, highlights God’s ability to graft them back if they turn from unbelief to faith (clearly, in Jesus as Messiah and Lord).

To what extent may we say of Israel as a “nation” *kata sarka* what we say of hardened Israelite individuals? As already noted, Paul avoids using *laos*; yet, in his main discussion of the topic, he does not refrain from speaking of “Israel” when he thinks of “the rest of them.” Israel has not reached the law of righteousness (Rom 9:31); Israel is rebuked for unbelief (Rom 10:21); Israel did not obtain what it was seeking (Rom 11:7) and has been partially hardened (v. 25). Paul’s daring interpretation equates the literal (earthly) Jerusalem with Hagar – and her with Sinai – and with her son Ishmael, while Isaiah 54 belongs to the Christian church (Gal 4:24–31). Such elements intimate that the broken branches are not mere individuals, but that a collective dimension warrants calling them “Israel.”

Is the collective dimension to play a role in the “grafting back” operation? If one expects a future massive conversion (I do), it is rather easy to fit in the perspective. Anything beyond? Eckhard Schnabel’s thorough examination finds no pronounced evidence in the New Testament that a national, probably political, restoration was thought to be in store for “Israel”<sup>6</sup> (the oft-quoted question in Acts 1:6 can be read in various ways).

One thing should be agreed upon: no one can ever hope to be saved eternally, to receive eternal life, who rejects the faith of Jesus Christ. Whoever refuses to believe (*apeithōn*) in the Son shall not see life: on the contrary, the wrath of God rests on him (John 3:36; John certainly intends this for his fellow-Jews first).

### **Delicate Issues Regarding non-Christian Jews**

Moving in a firm framework of biblical truth gives us a chance to untie some subtle knots regarding non-Christian Jews today (who would be “non-Jews” by the standards of Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, and Romans 2:28). Since we have basically inquired so far about New Testament data, a further and still preliminary remark is needed: contemporary and even historical Judaism should not be confused with Second Temple Judaism, much less Old Testament religion. Judaism was born, through the work and debates of several generations, of the victory of one party over the others (basically the Pharisaic party) in the radically changed situation

6 Schnabel, 174 (“Hope of a restoration of the political independence of Israel plays no role in the preaching of Jesus”); 177; 184 (“Jesus, apparently, expected no earthly-literal fulfillment of the national promises for Israel”); 196 (mission into the whole world takes the place of the “land”); 203; 207; 211.



created by the ruin of the temple. (I was struck, in modern accounts of Judaism such as Isidore Epstein's,<sup>7</sup> by the minimal attention paid to the sacrificial system.) As a historical phenomenon, it is contemporary with early Christianity, a rival interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. They are heterozygous twins, like Jacob and Esau, as Alan Segal perceives.<sup>8</sup> To some extent, the Mishnah is the counterpart of the New Testament. If one treats Judaism as the legitimate heir of Moses, David, and the Prophets, he/she *ipso facto* surrenders the original Christian claim.

*Are Jews still "God's People"?* Indications, I must admit, point both ways. Paul, as was seen, avoids labeling non-Christian Israelites *laos*, as he remembers, maybe, Hosea's judgment prophecy: "*Lo-Ammi*, for you are not my people" (Hos 1:9).<sup>9</sup> But he calls them "Israel," and the import seems to be the same. He questions their right to be called Jews (Rom 2:28), but frequently calls them by that name. The same duality obtains in the tense dialogue between Jesus and the "Jews" in John 8: Jesus grants that they are Abraham's descendants (v. 37), and then denies it (v. 39) and charges them with having the devil for their father (v. 44). As "sons of the kingdom," they are cast out in darkness (Matt 8:12): do they lose their title or retain it? The logic of Romans 9:3–5 implies that they are "anathema" and "cut off" (hence the apostle's unceasing grief, v. 2), and yet to them still belong<sup>10</sup> the filial status, the glory, the covenants, everything which goes with being the people of God. Of the *broken* branches of the olive tree, he says that they are still beloved for the sake of their fathers, since God's gifts of grace and calling are not revoked (Rom 11:28f), and he stresses a specific *holiness* that still pertains to them (v. 16). Karl Barth's eloquence is here on target:

This is certain: This people as such is the holy people of God, the people with which God has dealt in his grace and in his wrath, in whose midst he has blessed and exercised judgment, enlightened and hardened, accepted and rejected. In one way or another (*so oder so*) he has accepted it and never ceased to do so, and he will accept it and never cease to do so. They are all in one sense sanctified through him, sanctified by nature (*von Natur*) as the ancestors and relatives of the only Holy One in Israel, as no gentile is by nature, not even the best among the gentiles, and not even the gentile Christians, also

7 Isidore Epstein, *Judaism: A Historical Presentation* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1959).

8 Alan Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); as cited in Harvey Cox, *Many Mansions: A Christian's Encounter with Other Faiths* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 105.

9 Paul quotes from the following verse – the announcement of the reversal of grace, not-my-people become my-people – and applies it to the Gentiles grafted into the church (Rom 9:25f; also 1 Pet 2:10). Some readers are embarrassed by this use, since Hosea seems to have in mind Israelites (*kata sarka!*), first condemned and then restored by pure mercy. Yet, the logic is unimpeachable: if Israelite sinners are no longer the people of God, there is no difference remaining with sinners from other nations, and, therefore, the promise of grace cannot distinguish between them – it must also avail for the goyim.

10 The present tense seems to be required by the logic of the passage and its use in the first clause: they *are* (*aisin*) Israelites.

the best among them, despite their belonging to the church: despite the fact and in the fact that they are also sanctified by the Holy One of Israel and have become Israel.<sup>11</sup>

I suggest that, despite *Lo-Ammi*, non-Christian Jews may be called the people of God as those who continue in some way<sup>12</sup> that part of the people constituted before Christ, who refused to recognize him when he came, and yet retained enough of their older prerogatives still to bear the name "Israel." The proper way to account for the paradoxical formulations of Scripture is to acknowledge the contradiction in the reality itself: these Jews are, in God's sight, living contradictions; as they refuse to believe the Word of their God and turn their back on him, they deny their very identity; their "truth" or "essence" is being the people of God, and they live alienated lives, their "existence" is that of enemies, with suicidal consequences for themselves.

*Is the Mosaic covenant still in force for Jews?* The question is interested in the objective truth of the matter, *coram Deo*, for it is obvious enough that it is *subjectively* so in the conviction, tradition, and practice of many Jews – but are they *right* in God's eyes? The strong language of the Epistle to the Hebrews would seem to settle the issue: disappearance (*aphanismos*, 8:13), abrogation (*athetèsis*, 7:18), and many other statements we already reviewed. The frequent occurrence of the phrase "for ever" (*I'olam*) in Old Testament texts is no objection: because of its indefinite meaning (it may mean "as long as the overlord does not decide a change"); because of conditional clauses associated; and above all because the Old Testament is fulfilled, rather than made null and void, in the New (circumcision and Sabbath, though abrogated as "fleshly ordinances," are fulfilled in their antitypes).<sup>13</sup> Paul's polemics against the Judaizers testify that Old Testament stipulations that are not taken up "in Christ" are obsolete, no longer binding, on Christians (Phil 3:2f, legal

- 11 Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik III/2* (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1946), 315f; my translation (since I had no access to the English translation). It is striking that Jacques Ellul (*Un Chrétien pour Israël* [Monaco: Ed. du Rocher, 1986], 78) quotes from this page (from the French translation) omitting all the references to judgment, rejection, etc. There is no echo of Barth's statement (p. 316) that "on the left hand side, it is Israel sanctified only by God's wrath." However, Ellul's universalism is ultimately faithful to Barth's more dialectical progress.
- 12 The qualifier *quodammodo* is of frequent use in theology: sometimes as an easy way out of difficulty (a cheap facility), yet sometimes indispensable. Since the Jewish identity is a complex and even elusive reality (with genealogical, cultural, and religious components, and, maybe, a dose of free identification), the criteria for its continuation are hard to pinpoint.
- 13 Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, trans. William Crookshank (London: T. Tegg & Son, 1837 edition), II, 387 [Bk IV, chap. 4 § 17]. Witsius argues that *katalusai* in Matthew 5:17 does not mean "abrogate" but "destroy," and writes: "That abrogation of ceremonies, which we say was made by Christ, is their glorious consummation and accomplishment, all their signification being fulfilled; not an ignominious destruction, which our Lord justly disclaims." He distinguishes (p. 402f) eight stages in the process of abrogation, from the death of Christ (veil rent) to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple [§ 54].



circumcision is no longer *peritomè*, but only *katatomè*, incision with a pejorative note); there is no hint that they would keep their force and carry divine authority for those outside of Christ, although the opposite is not expressed in explicit terms. The emphasis falls on the change of the times, for all: true and acceptable worship, from the “hour” of Christ’s mission, is *no longer* offered in the form that bound it to specific places, to Jerusalem, as the Old Covenant stipulated it (John 4:21).

Yet, other elements warn about possible complexity. While Jeremiah 31:32 charges the Israelites with *breaking* the covenant (hence God will establish a new one), the Lord has solemnly declared that he would never do so himself (Lev 26:44) – not in simple leniency, for he *will* punish with dreadful blows rebellions and betrayals (v. 14–39). We keep in mind that God does not revoke his gifts and calling (Rom 11:29). Is the import of these texts exhausted with the thought that the covenant is confirmed and fulfilled as the New Covenant (so God did not break it) and re-entrance (being grafted back) is offered to the cut off branches? One helpful insight may be that covenant *sanctions* proceed from the covenant itself and manifest its force: being “cut off from one’s people” is the supreme sanction for covenant-breakers. Being cut off from the Israel of God, non-Christian Jews may be considered covenant-breakers under Old Covenant sanctions (Jesus tells his unbelieving hearers that they are indicted *by Moses*, John 5:45). These sanctions may apply as a residual consequence of an arrangement belonging to a previous stage of God’s historical design. This is the case for the creational covenant, the arrangement made with Adam (whose re-publication was one component of the Mosaic covenant<sup>14</sup>), which, though superseded by the new creation in Christ, still entails that “all die in Adam.”

If the Old Covenant is still in force for non-Christian Jews “residually,” as its sanctions apply, are there also some *positive* elements one could discern in the residuum? I venture to advance a cautious “yes.” When undergoing the punishment of exile, the Israelites were invited to contribute to the *shalom* of the pagan city and empire, and so to improve their own condition (Jer 29:7); something similar may be ascribed to the world dispersion of non-Christian Jews, some benefits attached to the form of the sanction. The honor and special holiness of Abrahamic descent *kata sarka* cannot be separated from what remains of Old Covenant status. Punishment itself is a form of recognition on the part of God: it pays respect to responsibility (and this is why it is infinitely more loving than

14 I have developed this view elsewhere. Geerhardus Vos, for instance, could write (*Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation. The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin [Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980], 255): “. . . the older theologians did not always clearly distinguish between the covenant of works and the Sinaitic covenant. At Sinai it was not the ‘bare’ law that was given, but a reflection of the covenant of works received, as it were, in the interests of the covenant of grace continued at Sinai.” Hence Paul’s use of Leviticus 18:5.

indifference<sup>15</sup>). Following this insight, the extraordinary *permanence* of a Jewish identity, still marked by Mosaic traits, is an impressive sign. It will look even more positive if one accepts the perspective of a future massive conversion of Israel *kata sarka*.

*Does what is "left over" from the Old Covenant include possibilities of salvation?* Once it is granted that the Old Covenant (as such) still generates some effects among non-Christian Jews, and not entirely negative, the question arises whether salvation (life eternal) could possibly be one of them. Undoubtedly, under the Old Covenant, many were saved (the 7,000 remnant!): they were not saved if they relied superstitiously on the intrinsic efficacy of rites and sacrifices, they were not saved if they relied on their *own* righteousness (Rom 10:3), they were saved by virtue of Jesus Christ's atonement which alone does away with human sin (Rom 3:25f; Heb 9:15; 10:4), they were saved through faith in the God of grace, that is the God of Jesus Christ. Some may have received a deep insight into the form of the then-future saving grace, as Abraham did, who "saw" Christ's day (John 8:56) – how precisely, we are not told; it is reasonable to imagine that most such believers exercised a little-informed faith: prompted, indeed, by the revealed teachings and promises, but yet vague and frail, as through the fog of ignorance and inadequate representations. Is it allowable to make room for similar exercises of faith *after Christ* among officially non-Christian Jews?

The New Testament does not consider this possibility. If animal sacrifices had provided atonement – this only in a typological way and towards cleansing of the "flesh" (Heb 9:13) – even this does not avail any more: "there is no more sacrifice for sins" in Judaism (Heb 10:26). There seem to be only two categories among the people of Israel: those believers who had set their hope in advance on Christ and were waiting for the consolation of Israel: they hailed the longed for Savior when they saw him, together with the other elect who came to a similar faith at this time; and the unbelievers. The former are the fruit-bearing branches of the vine (who undergo pruning with the change from Old to New Covenant); the latter, the cut off branches. The complications of the human heart, however, and those further complications which a painful history has produced through bloody centuries, make it permissible to conjecture a situation in which a Jew would be gripped in his/her heart by the gospel as already revealed in the Tanakh, and be led to trust, "through the fog," in the God of grace, the God of Jesus Christ – and yet, because of ignorance, because of misinformation, that person would not know or recognize that this God is

**There seem to be only two categories among the people of Israel: those believers who had set their hope in advance on Christ . . . and the unbelievers.**

15 I elsewhere pursued this thought by means of an interpretation of a remark by George Steiner: There is something more terrible than to fall into the hands of a living God: to fall into the hands of a *dead* God.



the God of Jesus Christ. Normally, he/she should overcome this ignorance when presented the clear and explicit truth of Jesus Christ – but do things always work “normally,” even when grace is at work? I introduce this admittedly speculative possibility, which is parallel to one of the positions held among evangelical theologians (since the reformer Zanchi in the 16th century) on the fate of “those who’ve not heard” among all humankind,<sup>16</sup> in order not to encroach on the sovereign freedom of God’s grace. It envisions a salvation that happens, by God’s grace, in spite of the religion that goes by the name of Judaism: in spite of its dominant pattern, basic stance, and claim to provide a way to life with God. Rightly understood, it will not dampen but deepen the zeal of Christian missions to the Jews.

*Should gospel witness to the Jews take on a special form?* If non-Christian Jews bear specific marks and find themselves in a particular situation, the principle of missiological adaptation quite obviously applies: in the service of the true gospel, not watering down the Word of God (2 Cor 2:17). Paul himself, at the risk of being misunderstood and the target of slander, made himself like a Jew under the law to win as many as he could (1 Cor 9:20). While making room for a variety of missionary callings and personal leadings of the Lord, two recommendations

**Words, such as “conversion,” which cannot be heard in their true sense in most Jewish contexts, should be replaced by less objectionable equivalents.**

will be the object of a ready consensus. A special *sensitivity* is required, that will avoid all appearance of Gentile “boasting” and remember the wounds of hurtful memories; words, such as “conversion,” which cannot be heard in their true sense in most Jewish contexts, should be replaced by less objec-

tionable equivalents. The message, as the sermons in Acts exemplify, can properly emphasize the *fulfillment* of the older promises, if possible using admissions, here and there, that revered teachers of the Jewish tradition were led to make.

I dare add two thoughts less common. Efforts could aim at *dis-joining* components of Jewish identity, especially culture and historical memory on the one hand, and religion on the other; against the spurious claim of a clear-cut identity, one strategy could highlight the diversity and the antagonism within contemporary Judaism, for instance the fierce condemnation of Zionism by at least some orthodox Jews. The other reflection is attached to Paul’s hope that Gentile Christians might arouse his brothers *kata sarka* to jealousy or envy (Rom 10:19; 11:11, 14). In the original context, Deuteronomy 32:21 is a word of judgment, and the object of envy is worldly victory by barbarians; Paul is able to transpose this to the

<sup>16</sup> I develop it in my “Le christianisme face aux religions: une seule voie de salut?” in *Conviction et dialogue. Le dialogue interreligieux*, ed. Louis Schweitzer (Meulan: Edifac; Cléon-d’Andran: Excelsis; Saint-Légier: Institut évangélique de missiologie, 2000), 156–70.

New Covenant on a spiritual level, and envy becomes the motive of emulation. How could we arouse to sound, noble envy the Jews around us? I suggest that a fuller and more rigorous knowledge of the Tanakh is often an efficient element of witness; Franz Delitzsch deserved the title of “the Christian rabbi,” and I believe he did arouse a few to jealousy! Exemplifying the fear of the Lord, its beauty, and the sense

of the Lord’s reality could be a most relevant witness, as the contrast is so telling between the canonical Word and what leading thinkers of Judaism commonly write. Levinas can preach “loving the Torah more than God” and claim: “His majesty does not provoke fear and trembling, but fills us with higher thoughts”<sup>17</sup>; God fades behind the ethical imperative. And then again, the theme of fulfillment – our being fulfilled Christians would bring out the truth of the fulfillment *in Christ* of the most precious gifts of the Old Covenant, so conspicuously lost in Judaism: atonement for sin and God’s residence in the midst of his people.

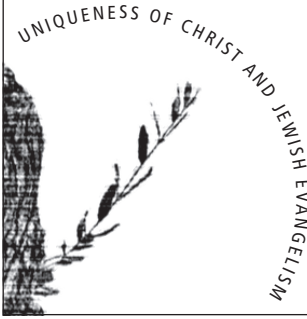
If fulfilled Christians can arouse Jews to jealousy or envy, it is because there cannot be an ultimate separation – “Is God only the God of Jews?” (Rom 3:29). The mystery of Israel is that of being chosen as the representative humanity: in grace and in judgment, in sin and salvation, and in mission. Whatever may be said of Israel may be extended to all humankind: God’s original children and the objects of his tender love, ungrateful and stiff-necked, living contradictions as they exist contrary to their true being, the family in which Christ was born – who is God above all, eternally blessed! – children who must convert and thereby find fulfillment in Jesus the Jew, in Jesus the Man!

God *will* bring this solidarity and unity to light – and presently uses Christian missions to the Jews to further this ultimate purpose of his.

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17 Frans Josef van Beeck, *Loving the Torah More Than God? Towards a Catholic Appreciation of Judaism* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1989), 40.



# Karl Barth, the Jewish People, and Jewish Evangelism

by Eckhard J. Schnabel

The negative stance towards missionary outreach to the Jewish people has many reasons. Karl Barth's views have been and continue to be influential among Christian theologians. Most recently, Mark Kinzer has suggested a "post-missionary" Messianic Judaism which represents a construction of Jewish and Jewish-Christian identity that takes up some of Barth's ideas. The following essay analyzes the basic outlines of Barth's "theology of Israel."

## Introduction

Karl Barth's theology of Israel has received much attention. This is not so much due to the place that this question occupies in Barth's theological work. Rather, the attention to this question arises from the significance of the Jewish-Christian dialogue, particularly since the 1960s. Major studies of Karl Barth's views of the Jewish people are those of Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt (1967), Alan T. Davies (1969), Bertold Klappert (1980), Lothar Steiger (1980), Dieter Kraft (1984), Stephen R. Haynes (1991), Katherine Sonderegger (1992), Eberhard Busch (1996), Manuel Goldmann (1997), and Mark R. Lindsay (2001, 2007).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologien Israel im Denken Karl Barths*, Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog 1 (München: Kaiser, 1967); Alan T. Davies, *Anti-Semitism and the Christian Mind* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 108–30 (Chapter Six – Protestantism: A Mind Divided; 1. Karl Barth); Bertold Klappert, *Israel und die Kirche. Erwägungen zur Israellehre Karl Barths*, Theologische Existenz heute 207 (München: Kaiser, 1980); Lothar Steiger, "Die Theologie vor der 'Judenfrage' – Karl Barth als Beispiel," in *Auschwitz, Krise der christlichen Theologie. Eine Vortragsreihe*, ed. Rolf Rendtorff and Ekkehard Stegemann, Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog 10 (München: Kaiser, 1980), 82–99; Dieter Kraft, "Israel in der Theologie Karl Barths," *Communio Viatorum* 27 (1984): 59–72; Stephen R. Haynes, *Prospects for Post-Holocaust Theology*, American Academy of Religion Academy Series 77 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 47–102 (Chapter Two – Karl Barth: Radical Traditionalism); Katherine Sonderegger, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew: Karl Barth's "Doctrine of Israel"* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Eberhard Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes. Karl Barth und die Juden 1933–1945* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996); Eberhard Busch, "The Covenant of Grace Fulfilled in Christ as the Foundation of the Indissoluble Solidarity of the Church with Israel: Barth's Position on the Jews during the Hitler Era," *SJTh* 52 (1999): 476–503;



Karl Barth has been accused of having been indifferent to the plight of the Jewish people during the Nazi period. This is incorrect. Eberhard Busch argues that Barth played a crucial role in establishing the theological basis for the insistence that the church had to stand in solidarity with the Jewish people and that the church had to resist Hitler's anti-Semitic agenda.<sup>2</sup> Mark Lindsay rejects the assumption that Barth was indifferent to the Jewish plight and suggests that his resistance was at least as comprehensive as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's.<sup>3</sup> Manuel Goldmann asserts that Barth's structural and material proximity to the anti-Jewish Christian tradition is prevented from developing momentum on account of his christological focus.<sup>4</sup>

A criticism that has more justification is the observation that Barth's theological language at times betrays "an ignorance of the Judaism of his day."<sup>5</sup> Katherine Sonderegger thinks that Barth had only a superficial knowledge of contemporary Jewish thought, revealing "in his own magisterial way the Christian obsession with Judaism, marked, as all obsessions are, by the controlling ambivalence of deep hostility and deep, unshakeable attachment."<sup>6</sup> Karl Barth has been accused even by sympathetic interpreters such as Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt that Jewish self-understanding is either missing entirely or treated as a *quantité négligeable*.<sup>7</sup> Manuel Goldmann agrees that Barth did not really engage in a real dialogue with the Jewish tradition.<sup>8</sup> Some critics go further. Michael Wyschogrod says that "reading Barth, one would gain the impression that there is nothing but faithfulness on God's part and unfaithfulness on

Manuel Goldmann, "Die grosse ökumenische Frage". *Zur Strukturverschiedenheit christlicher und jüdischer Tradition mit ihrer Relevanz für die Begegnung der Kirche mit Israel*, Neukirchener Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie 22 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1997), 23–127 (Teil I – Symptome der Strukturverschiedenheit jüdischer und christlicher Tradition: Israel in der Theologie Karl Barths); Mark R. Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity: The Theological Basis of Karl Barth's Opposition to Nazi Antisemitism and the Holocaust*, Issues in Systematic Theology 9 (New York: Lang, 2001); Mark R. Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus: Karl Barth's Theology of Israel*, Barth Studies (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007). Marquardt's study is a dissertation written at the Kirchliche Hochschule Berlin (Helmut Gollwitzer, Karl Kupisch); Haynes' book is an Emory University dissertation (Robert Detweiler); Sonderegger's study is a Brown University dissertation (Wendell Dietrich); Goldmann's study is a dissertation submitted to the University of Heidelberg (W. Huber); Lindsay's 2001 work is a University of Western Australia dissertation.

- 2 Eberhard Busch, "Karl Barth und die Juden 1933/34. Auch ein Beitrag zu einem umstrittenen Aspekt der 'Theologischen Erklärung' von Barmen," *Judaica* 3 (1984): 158–75; Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes*.
- 3 Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity*.
- 4 Goldmann, *Ökumenische Frage*, 107–08. He speaks of a "christologische Domestizierung des theologischen Antijudaismus" in Barth's theology of Israel (108). Goldmann does not discuss CD IV/3.2 §72.4.
- 5 Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus*, 17.
- 6 Sonderegger, 3.
- 7 Marquardt, 296; cf. Klappert, 27.
- 8 Goldmann, 110–24.



Israel's."<sup>9</sup> Even though Wyschogrod is generally sympathetic to Barth, he argues that Barth suffers from "the traditional anti-semitism of European Christendom . . . and the anti-semitism of Christian theology."<sup>10</sup> Alan Davies accuses Barth of "religious totalitarianism in which Jews are not permitted to know anything concerning their own identity except what they are taught at the gates of the church."<sup>11</sup> Theodor Adorno goes a step further and accuses Barth of anti-Judaism.<sup>12</sup> Such an accusation, however, is indicative of a thorough misunderstanding of the Israel passages in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (CD).

The sources for a thorough exposition of Barth's "theology of Israel" include the following texts: (1) Karl Barth's commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans.<sup>13</sup> (2) His sermon on Romans 15:6–14, preached on December 10, 1933, in an advent worship service at the University of Bonn.<sup>14</sup> (3) His first lectures on systematic theology in Germany after the war, held in Göttingen in 1947,<sup>15</sup> and his last academic lectures of 1961/62.<sup>16</sup> (4) His radio address on "The Jewish Problem and the Christian Answer" of 1949;<sup>17</sup> the paper "The Hope of Israel" which was intended as a supplement to the World Council of Churches document "Christ and the Hope of the

- 9 Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. R. K. Soulen, Radical Traditions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 223; Michael Wyschogrod, "Why Was and Is the Theology of Karl Barth of Interest to a Jewish Theologian?" in *Footnotes to a Theology: The Karl Barth Colloquium of 1972*, ed. M. Rumscheidt (Waterloo: Corporation for the Publication of Academic Studies in Religion in Canada, 1974), 95–111, 109.
- 10 Wyschogrod, "Theology of Karl Barth," 107; cf. Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus*, 24–25. One should note that Wyschogrod believes that "it is not for gentiles to see the sins of Israel. It is not for gentiles to call Israel to its mission, to feel morally superior to it and to play the prophet's role towards it. It is for gentiles to love this people if need be blindly, staunchly, not impartially but partially and to trust the instincts of this people whom God has chosen as his own" (Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise*, 224).
- 11 Davies, 120; cf. Haynes, 80.
- 12 Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "Elemente des Antijudaismus. Grenzen der Aufklärung," in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Gesammelte Schriften 3 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), 192–235, 203.
- 13 Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1919), zweite Auflage 1922; cf. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ed. E. C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity*, 281–85. On Barth's exegesis of Romans 9–11 in CD II/2, cf. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes*, 401–35.
- 14 Karl Barth, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi*, Theologische Existenz heute 5 (1933), 11–19; cf. Karl Barth, "The Church of Jesus Christ. Sermon on Romans 15:5–13 (1933)," *Letter from the Karl Barth Archives* 1 (1998), [http://pages.unibas.ch/karlbarth/dok\\_letter1.html#barth](http://pages.unibas.ch/karlbarth/dok_letter1.html#barth) [accessed August 29, 2008]. Cf. Marquardt, 86–97; Busch, "Karl Barth und die Juden"; Goldmann, 23–31.
- 15 Karl Barth, *Dogmatik im Grundriß im Anschluss an das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis* (München: Kaiser, 1947), 85–87; cf. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, ed. G. T. Thomson (London: SCM Press, 1949), 72–80.
- 16 Karl Barth, *Einführung in die evangelische Theologie* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1962), 28–33; cf. Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. G. Foley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).
- 17 Karl Barth, "Die Judenfrage und ihre christliche Beantwortung," *Judaica* 6 (1952): 67–72; Karl Barth, "Die Judenfrage und ihre christliche Beantwortung (1949)," in "Der Götze wackelt". *Zeitkritische Aufsätze. Reden und Briefe von 1930 bis 1960*, ed. K. Kupisch (Berlin: Vogt, 1961), 144–49; cf. Karl Barth, "The Jewish Problem and the Christian Answer," in *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946–1952* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 195–201.

World" (Evanston, IL, 1954); and his response to the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra aetate*) of Vatican II of 1967.<sup>18</sup> (5) Several sections in Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (*KD*):<sup>19</sup> his discussion of revelation in *CD* I/2 §14 from 1938;<sup>20</sup> his discussion of the doctrine of election in *CD* II/2 §34.1 from 1942;<sup>21</sup> his discussion of God's rule in *CD* III/3 §49.3 from 1950;<sup>22</sup> his discussion of reconciliation in *CD* IV/1 §59.1 from 1953;<sup>23</sup> and his discussion of the ministry of the community in *CD* IV/3.2 §72.4 from 1959.<sup>24</sup> Time and space permit only a summary of Barth's theology of Israel.

### Barth's Christological Focus and the Existence of Israel

Karl Barth insists that the mission and the existence of Israel have a christological structure – the prophetic, priestly, and royal mission of the people of Israel is identical with the will and work of God which has been carried out and revealed in Jesus Christ. The emphasis of this christological context has serious consequences for his understanding of "the rejection of Israel." Barth asserts with regard to Israel *post Christum* that the "Old Testament Gestalt" of the community has no theological right to exist.

In view of the act of Judas there can be no further doubt about the rejection of this people and the seriousness of the typical rejection of all these individuals within it. For it was delivered up to the Gentiles for death the very One in whom it is elect. This Judas must die, as he did die; and this Jerusalem must be destroyed. (*CD* II/2 §34, p. 505)

This and similar statements of Barth need to be understood in the context of his christological conviction according to which both rejection and

18 Karl Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1967), questions 6 and 7; cf. Karl Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968).

19 Marquardt, 101–360.

20 Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik II/2. Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes. Prolegomena zur Kirchlichen Dogmatik. Zweiter Halbband* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1938), 50–133 (Die Zeit der Offenbarung). Cf. the English translation: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (1936–69), I/2 §14, p. 45–121 (The Time of Revelation). Cf. Goldmann, 34–38.

21 Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik III/2. Die Lehre von Gott. Zweiter Halbband* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1942), 215–226 (Israel und die Kirche); cf. *CD* II/2 §34.1, p. 195–205 (Israel and the Church). Cf. Marquardt, 104–56; Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes*, 401–91; Goldmann, 38–41, 57–109; Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity*, 289–98.

22 Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik III/3. Die Lehre von der Schöpfung. Dritter Teil* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1950), 175–211 (Das göttliche Regieren); cf. *CD* III/3 §49.3, p. 154–238 (The Divine Ruling). Cf. Goldmann, 41–46; Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity*, 298–306; Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus*, 67–83.

23 Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/1. Die Lehre von der Versöhnung. Erster Teil* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1953), 170–231 (Der Weg des Sohnes in die Fremde); cf. *CD* IV/1 §59.1, p. 157–210 (The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country). Cf. Goldmann, 47–53; Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus*, 87–105.

24 Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/3. Die Lehre von der Versöhnung. Dritter Teil*, 2 vols. (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1959), 951–1034 (Der Dienst der Gemeinde); cf. *CD* IV/3.2 §72.4, p. 830–901 (The Ministry of the Community). Cf. Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus*, 100–05.

election are real only in Jesus Christ: he is the hope of those who have been rejected as well, which means that both the rejected and the elect stand in indissoluble solidarity.<sup>25</sup> It can be argued that Barth's understanding of the fulfillment of God's saving will in Jesus Christ "ends in the historical removal of important elements of Israel's history, and even the people of Israel itself."<sup>26</sup>

### The Church and Israel: Barth's Model of Integration

Barth relates Israel and the church largely in terms of the "ecclesiological model of integration," which is dependent upon the substitution model and the illustration model in his interpretation of Romans 9–11 in the *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>27</sup> Barth wants to avoid a traditional supersessionist understanding of the relationship between the church and Israel.<sup>28</sup> This is evident in his conviction that

Jesus Christ is the crucified Messiah of Israel. As such He is the authentic witness of the judgment that God takes upon Himself by choosing fellowship with man. . . . Jesus Christ is the risen Lord of the Church. As such He is the authentic witness of the mercy in which God in choosing man for fellowship with Himself turns towards him His own glory. . . . But precisely as the risen Lord of the church He is also the revealed Messiah of Israel which by His self-giving God establishes as the scene of His judgment, but also as hearer of his promise, as the form of His community determined for a gracious passing. (CD III/2 §34, p. 198)

Barth's christological focus eliminates the lasting significance of Israel's particularity and asserts an integration of Israel into the church. Bertold Klappert argues that in terms of the premises of Barth's theology in which the particular has priority over the universal, it would have been more consistent not to integrate Israel into the church but the church into Israel's history of promise, with Israel retaining its dignity and its form as having been confirmed by Jesus Christ. Klappert calls this the "christologi-

<sup>25</sup> Goldman, 79.

<sup>26</sup> Haynes, 82, with reference to Marquardt, 246. Marquardt formulates more cautiously than Haynes assumes, when he states that "die historische Ablösung so wichtiger Einzelheiten innerhalb der Geschichte Israels, wie sie Propheten, Priester und Könige sind, *kann nur zu leicht* als historische Ablösung des Volkes Israel selbst verstanden werden" (emphasis mine).

<sup>27</sup> Klappert, 38–52; cf. Marquardt, 127–28; Goldman, 85–86. Klappert describes five models which eliminate the distinctive particularity of Israel – substitution, integration, typology, illustration, and subsumption – and three models which preserve the distinctive particularity of Israel – complementarity, representation, and christological-eschatological participation (Klappert, 14–25).

<sup>28</sup> Klappert, 34.

cal model of participation" which he finds in Barth, albeit not applied in a consistent manner.<sup>29</sup>

There seems to be a serious tension at the center of Barth's doctrine of Israel.<sup>30</sup> He is convinced, on the one hand, that the calling and election of the church depend completely and permanently on the calling and election of Israel, whose covenant was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (christological dependence). He is convinced, on the other hand, that the essence and the future of "the synagogue" is tied to the church, which is its end and goal (ecclesiological integration).

### The Witness of the Church to Israel

In the context of the mission of the church to the nations, Barth asserts that the Jewish people take on a "highly singular" aspect.<sup>31</sup> The Christian community can seek to "convert" Jews only in the most qualified sense, because unlike all other nations, Israel has already heard "the awakening call of God." Thus, Barth states,

In relation to the Synagogue there can be no real question of 'mission' or of bringing the Gospel. It is thus unfortunate to speak of Jewish missions. The Jew who is conscious of his Judaism and takes it seriously can only think that he is misunderstood and insulted when he hears this term. And the community has to see that materially he is right. (CD IV/3.2, §72, p. 877)

Barth makes two points. One, the Jewish people are not beholden to false gods. The God whom the church must proclaim to the nations

was the God of Israel before the community itself ever came forth from his people, and to his day He can only be the God of Israel. . . The Gentile Christian community of every age and land is a guest in the house of Israel. It assumes the election and calling of Israel. It lives in fellowship with the King of Israel. How, then, can we try to hold missions to Israel? It is not the Swiss or the German or the Indian or the Japanese awakened to faith in Jesus Christ, but the Jew, even the unbelieving Jew, so miraculously preserved, as we must say, through the many calamities of his history, who as such is the natural historical monument to the love and faithfulness of God, who in concrete form is the epitome of the man freely chosen and blessed by God, who as a living commentary on the Old Testament is the only convincing proof of God outside the Bible. What have we

29 *Ibid.*, 32–34, with reference to *KD* IV/1, p. 182; Goldmann, 86, refers further to *KD* II/2, p. 307, 328; IV/3, p. 1005.

30 Klappert, 38–52; cf. Haynes, 84, and the discussion in Goldmann, 57–109.

31 *CD* IV/3.2, p. 876; cf. *KD* IV/3.2, p. 1005 ("ein schlechthin *singuläres*" Zeugnis).

to teach him that he does not already know, that we have not rather to learn from him? (CD IV/3.2, §72, p. 877)

Two, the Jewish people have rejected Jesus the Messiah and thus denied Israel's election and calling. Barth argues that

meantime the Synagogue became and was and still is the organisation of a group of men which hastens towards a future that is empty now that He has come who should come, which is still without consolation, which clings to a Word of God that is still unfulfilled. Necessarily, therefore, the Jew who is uniquely blessed offers the picture of an existence which, characterized by the rejection of its Messiah and therefore of its salvation and mission, is dreadfully empty of grace and blessing. (CD IV/3.2, §72, p. 877)

Barth asserts that "we certainly can and should hold talks with the Jews for the purpose of information," but then questions whether this will be useful:

But how can the Gospel help as proclaimed from men to men when already it has been repudiated, not just accidentally or incidentally, but in principle, *a priori* and therefore with no prospect of revision from the human standpoint? And in the long run what is the use of conversations? If the Jew is to go back on the rejection of his Messiah and become a disciple, is there not needed a radical change in which he comes to know the salvation of the whole world which is offered to him first as a Jew and in which he thus comes to read quite differently his own Holy Book? Is there not needed the direct intervention of God Himself as in the case of the most obstinate of all Jews, Paul himself? Can there ever be a true conversion of the true Jews, therefore, except as a highly extraordinary event? Can we ever expect a gathering of Israel around the Lord who died and rose again for this whole people of Israel except, as Paul clearly thought in Rom. 11. 15, 25f., in and with the end of all things and as the eschatological solution of this greatest of all puzzles? (CD IV/3.2, §72, p. 878)

This argument fails to answer the question why the Jews' *past* rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ should preclude the possibility of acceptance of the gospel in the future. Why should there be "no prospect of revision"? Why should Jews not come to faith in Jesus Christ in the present or in the future? Paul never gave up hope that his preaching among the Jewish people would convince some of the truth of the gospel.

Barth argues that the only responsibility of the church is the passive witness of the life of the Christian community:

Does this mean that the Christian community has no responsibility to discharge its ministry of witness to the Jews? Not at all! What it

does mean is that there can be only one way to fulfill it. To use the expression of Paul in Rom. 11:11, 14, it must make the Synagogue jealous (*parazelosai*). By its whole existence as the community of the King of the Jews manifested to it as the Saviour of the world, it must set before it the fact of the event of the consolation of the fulfilled Word of God, confronting it with the monument of the free election, calling and grace of God which have not been despised but gratefully accepted and grasped. It must make dear and desirable and illuminating to it Him whom it has rejected. It must be able to set Him clearly before it as the Messiah already come. It must call it by joining with it as His people, and therefore with Him. No particular function can be this call, but only the life of the community as a whole authentically lived before the Jews. (CD IV/3.2, §72, p. 878)

Barth accuses the church of having failed in this task, as the church has not been a convincing witness. This is indeed a valid and important point. The reality of the life of Christians and of Christian churches throughout history has not been attractive for Jews. But Paul does not say in Romans 11:11–14 that the life of the church is the *only* witness to the Jewish people. His own missionary activity demonstrates that he is convinced that the Jewish people need to be won over to faith in Jesus the Messiah by people like him, who are “ambassadors for the Messiah,” appealing to people who do not yet believe to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:11–21).

Several scholars interpret Barth’s position in CD IV/3.2 §72.4 in terms of a rejection of a Christian mission to the Jewish people. They argue that since the crucial issue is the credibility of the Christian church, Barth’s concern is “not any attempt to convert individual Jews.”<sup>32</sup>

## Salvation and Humanity

Barth’s view of the Jewish people cannot be separated from his view of people of different faiths in general. This is not the place to describe Barth’s view of non-Christian religions.<sup>33</sup> Suffice it to say that in CD IV/2,

32 Richard Harries, *After the Evil: Christianity and Judaism in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 135; approvingly quoted by Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus*, 105.

33 Paul Knitter, *Towards a Protestant Theology of Religions: A Case Study of Paul Althaus and Contemporary Attitudes*, Marburger theologische Studien (Marburg: Elwert, 1974), 20–36; Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 23–31; Peter Harrison, “Karl Barth and the Non-Christian Religions,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 23 (1986): 207–24; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 13–27; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Karl Barth and the Theology of Religions,” in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. S. W. Chung (Bletchley/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 2006), 236–57; Geoff Thompson, “Religious Diversity, Christian Doctrine and Karl Barth,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (2006): 3–24.

Barth argues that since God assumed the humanity of all human beings in the incarnation of Jesus the Son of God, the whole of humanity exists in Jesus:

In Jesus Christ it is not merely one man but the *humanum* of all men, which is posited and exalted as such to unity with God. (CD IV/2, p. 49)

Barth believes that God's covenant of grace is not an afterthought, but the reason of salvation. And this means that redemption and reconciliation is universal. Thus there is no sphere in creation, which is a fallen creation, which is alien to the Creator.<sup>34</sup> Barth thus says in the summary of his study on Christ and Adam in Romans 5:

What is said here applies generally and universally, and not merely to one limited group of men. Here 'religious' presuppositions are not once hinted at. The fact of Christ is here presented as something that dominates and includes all men. The nature of Christ objectively conditions human nature and the work of Christ makes an objective difference to the life and destiny of all men. Through Christ grace overflows upon them, bringing them pardon and justification and opening before them a prospect of life with God. In short, 'grace rules,' as it is put in v. 21. And all that is in exact correspondence to what happens to human nature in its objective relationship to Adam. There sin rules, in exactly the same way, and all men become sinners and unrighteous in Adam, and as such must die. The question about what is the special mark of the *Christian* is just not raised at all. What we are told is what it means for man as such that his objective relationship to Adam is subordinate to and dependent upon and included in his objective relationship to Christ. . . . What is said in vv. 1–11 is not just 'religious' truth that only applies to specially talented, specially qualified, or specially guided men; it is truth for *all* men, whether they know it or not, as surely as they are all Adam's children and heirs. The assurance of Christians, as it is described in vv. 1–11, has as its basis the fact that the Christian sphere is not limited to the 'religious' sphere. What is *Christian* is secretly but fundamentally identical with what is *universally human*.<sup>35</sup>

If all human beings are included in the election of Jesus Christ, and if indeed in Jesus Christ all human beings are condemned as sinners, it follows that there is no condemnation left. Since not all human beings are living

34 Kärkkäinen, "Karl Barth and the Theology of Religions," 251.

35 Cf. Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5*, trans. T. A. Smail (New York: Harper, 1956), 88–89.



as elected, it is the task of the church as the elect community to proclaim that such a person

belongs eternally to Jesus Christ and therefore is not rejected, but elected by God in Jesus Christ . . . that the rejection which he deserves on account of his perverse choice is borne and canceled by Jesus Christ; and that he is appointed to eternal life with God on the basis of the righteous, divine decision. (*CD II/2*, p. 306)

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen interprets Barth to assert that “the triune God has bound himself to humankind in an everlasting covenant. This binds humankind into a solidarity rather than into an arrogant ‘sheep’ and ‘goats’ divide.”<sup>36</sup>

Responding to Barth, Emil Brunner raised the following questions:

What does this statement, ‘that Jesus is the only really rejected person,’ mean for the situation of Man? Evidently this, that there is no such thing as being ‘lost’, that there is no possibility of condemnation, and thus that there is no final Divine Judgment. . . . The decision has been made in Jesus Christ – for all men. Whether they know it or not, believe it or not, is not so important. The main point is that they are saved. They are like people who seem to be perishing in a stormy sea. But in reality they are not in a sea where one can drown, but in shallow water, where it is impossible to drown. Only they do not know it. Hence the transition from unbelief to faith is not the transition from ‘being-lost’ to ‘being-saved’. *This* turning-point does not exist, since it is no longer possible to be lost.<sup>37</sup>

Barth makes sin irrelevant when he places Christ “above” and “before” Adam, who is “below” and “second” since Christ “reveals the true nature of man,” claiming that

man’s nature in Adam is not, as is usually assumed, his true and original nature; it is only truly human at all in so far as it reflects and corresponds to essential human nature as it is found in Christ. . . . And so Paul makes no arbitrary assertion, and he is not deceiving himself when he presupposes this unity as simply given even in Adam. He does so because he has found it given first and primarily in Christ. Christ is not only God’s Son; He is also a man who is not a sinner like Adam and all of us. He is true man in an absolute sense, and it is in His humanity that we have to recognize true human nature in

36 Kärkkäinen, “Karl Barth and the Theology of Religions,” 252.

37 Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics. Vol. I: The Christian Doctrine of God*, trans. O. Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), 348, 351, interacting with Barth’s doctrine of election in *CD II/2*.



the condition and character in which it was willed and created by God.<sup>38</sup>

Barth ignores the fact that for Paul sin is indeed the power which negates God and his will. And he thus does not see that for Paul, the “excess” of God’s grace consists in its power to abrogate universal sin.<sup>39</sup>

Kärkkäinen concludes that Barth’s Christology “makes him first an ‘anonymous universalist’ and later, when the implications are spelled out by Barth himself, a ‘reluctant universalist’.”<sup>40</sup>

In the context of Barth’s understanding of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, any active missionary outreach to people of other faiths – whether Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, or otherwise – loses the urgency, the clarity, and the directness which we see in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles.

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38 Barth, *Christ and Adam*, 90, 93–94.

39 For a critique of Barth’s interpretation of Romans 5:12–21 cf. Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer*, 4. Auflage, HNT 8a (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980), 133–34; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK 6/1–3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn/Einsiedeln: Neukirchener Verlag/Benzinger, 1978–82), 1:335–36; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, WBC 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 1:277; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 407–08; sympathetic is C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975–79), 1:294–95.

40 Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism*, 25.

# Implicit Universalism in Some Messianic Jewish Theology

by Richard Harvey



## Introduction

In their taxonomy of universalism in the introduction to *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate*, Robin Parry and Chris Partridge propose three main types of universalism, divided up into several subtypes.<sup>1</sup> “Multiracial universalism” sees the universal relevance of the gospel to all nations, but makes no judgment about their eternal state. “Arminian universalism” states that whilst God desires to save all and offers salvation to all, the exercise of human freewill may prevent God from achieving his purposes of universal salvation. The third type of universalism, “Strong universalism,” is the focus of the typology, and includes a “family of quite different views” rather than a single intellectual position. This view states that not only does God desire all to be saved, but that he will achieve his purpose. Those who hold this position operate within a Christian theological perspective but may be pluralists (Hick) operating from unorthodox Christian beliefs, or those within orthodoxy on other issues who justify their position from Scripture, reason, and tradition.

The type of universalism that is implicit within some Messianic Jewish theology (MJT) does not easily fit any of the above categories. It could best be labeled as an *Israel-focused universalism* or an *Israel-centric eschatological soteriology*. The emphasis of such groups is on the special purposes, nature, privileges, and guarantee of salvation that are extended to Israel (the Jewish people) on the grounds of their ongoing election. The issue of universalism arises not as the question of “what about the eternal fate of the unbeliever?” or even “what of the faithful believer in another religion?” but rather “what of the fate of Israel – those past, present, and future Jewish people who may either choose not to, or not be given the opportunity to, acknowledge their Messiah?” It is possible to be *exclusivist* in one’s position on the salvation of those of the nations who do not believe in Christ whilst being *inclusivist* about the Jewish

1 Robin A. Parry and Christopher Partridge, *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 4.

people because of their special role in the purposes of God.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of such a limitation, we will proceed to discuss some examples of MJT which argue for the salvation of Israel without acceptance of Christ.

## Messianic Judaism

Paul Lieberman, Executive Director of the International Messianic Jewish Alliance, sees a connection between the universalism of Hagee's Christian Zionism<sup>3</sup> and that found in some Messianic Jewish streams.

Dr. John Hagee and Stuart Dauermann may not have set out to be in agreement. After all, Rev. Hagee opposes Messianic Judaism, while Messianic Rabbi Dauermann embraces it. Yet, on the crucial matter of Jewish salvation, they both are deceived and in opposition to the plain words of Yeshua.

“. . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

Let there be no mistake. Our love for Jewish people cannot cause us to compromise. Ultimately, is it really caring if we flinch from telling people the one truth that can solve their dying problem? Our Lord submitted to physical extinction of his earthly flesh so that we would live. Being inoffensive to traditional Jews in this way blocks Heaven's reward. It isn't really caring at all.<sup>4</sup>

When we examine MJT, we recognize several streams of theological reflection within the movement.<sup>5</sup> The issue of soteriology has become a key concern, and a recent issue of *Kesher* reports on two Messianic theological consultations which discussed the issue, the Borough Park Symposium (October 2007), and the Theological Forum on Soteriology (March 2008) hosted by the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC).<sup>6</sup>

Several of the participants spoke of the essential need for salvation through personal repentance and faith in the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). David Sedaca responds to both John Hagee and Mark Kinzer's views:

These two events – the Borough Park Symposium and John Hagee's book – have indeed made the topic of soteriology and the Jewish

2 The pluralist, inclusivist, and exclusivist terminology of such discussions does not readily fit here, and will not be used in this presentation, except to flag up the difficulty in applying it. Cf. Christopher Wright, *Thinking Clearly about the Uniqueness of Jesus* (Tunbridge: Monarch, 1995).

3 A fuller version of this paper also considers universalism in Christian Zionism, focusing on John Hagee's book *In Defense of Israel: The Bible's Mandate for Supporting the Jewish State* (Strang: Frontline, Lake Mary, 2007) and subsequent discussion. For the fuller version contact the author at r.harvey@allnations.ac.uk.

4 Paul Lieberman, "Dual Covenant," *International Messianic Jewish Alliance Magazine* 145 (2007).

5 Cf. Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology* (Ph.D. diss., University of Wales, 2008), noting eight theological streams.

6 *Kesher: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 22 (Spring/Summer 2008); available online at <http://www.kesherjournal.com>.

people very relevant, especially for Messianic Jews who have believed that Jesus is the Messiah and have made his Great Commission their *raison d'être* for their missionary endeavors.<sup>7</sup>

He states clearly:

There are only two possibilities to the dilemma of salvation and the Jewish people; if we stand firm with the principles of salvation as expressed in the scriptures, we then have to consider Jesus as the Messiah as the provider (*soter*) of salvation. Conversely, if we deviate from biblical principles and replace them with man-made systems, albeit they seem reasonable, we may be at risk of having devised a way for salvation that puts in peril our eternal life. Although present day Judaism denies the need for individual and personal salvation, it acknowledges the need for forgiveness, atonement and repentance. I make mine the words of the Apostle Peter, when addressing the people of Israel after their rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah; he declares "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*" I have chosen to put my hope in Jesus the Messiah.<sup>8</sup>

But not all share Sedaca's unqualified assertion of Acts 4:12, nor his assumed distinction between what is "biblical" and what is "man-made." We will consider three more speculative proposals from Daniel Juster, Stuart Dauermann, and Mark Kinzer.

### **Daniel Juster's Narrow, Wider Hope**

Daniel Juster, president of Tikkun Ministries and former president of the UMJC, summarizes the "narrow hope" (NH) views of classical evangelicalism and dispensationalism, wherein

The Jewish people are as lost as any other people. The election of the Jewish nation does not imply their personal salvation which is only attained by the confession of Yeshua and experiencing being born again.<sup>9</sup>

Conversely, the "wider hope" (WH) perspective believes in a broader application of the sacrifice of Yeshua, leading some to universalism, which holds that all human beings will ultimately be saved. Not all WH exponents are universalists, as many believe that "some will have a positive eternal destiny, and others will not." It may be possible to receive the

7 David Sedaca, "Salvation and the People of Israel: Harmonizing a Soteriological Dilemma," *Keshar* 22 (Spring/Summer 2008): 129–36, esp. 132.

8 *Ibid.*, 136.

9 Daniel C. Juster, "The Narrow Wider Hope," *Keshar* 22 (Spring/Summer 2008): 14.



benefits of the atonement of Christ through other means than an “explicit response to the message of the Good News.” Jewish people might, according to this view, be “rightly responding to God and the revelation of God in the Hebrew Bible” without personal faith in Jesus.

Juster is cautious about this and proposes his own “narrow wider hope” (NWH): that there are “ways to respond to God other than by explicit response to the Good News and Confession of Yeshua.”<sup>10</sup> However, because Scripture teaches that “people *do not generally respond positively* to these sources of revelation and truth,” the NWH proponent believes that “it is not wise to put much hope in this possibility.” Our responsibility and obligation to present the gospel does not change, and the NWH proponent holds that

It is generally true that people are destined for a positive everlasting destiny only by their explicitly embracing Yeshua.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst it is possible for Jewish people to be included within the salvation that is in Christ by “rightly responding to the true revelation of God that is contained in Judaism,” and there is “more revelation within Judaism than in any other religion or culture,” such a possibility should not be presumed.

Juster then critiques the weaknesses he sees in both NH and WH approaches, and advocates his own NWH option. NH views are supported by various Scriptures,<sup>12</sup> and Francis Schaeffer, a “moderate Calvinist who asserts both election and human responsibility for a response to God,”<sup>13</sup> proposes this view. But whilst Juster can find no logical objection to Schaeffer, “there may be reasons of the heart to resist such a stark position.” Juster is unwilling to affirm that Judaism should be seen as a “deficient culture” because of the “failure of our ancestors to embrace the testimony of the Apostles to ancient Israel.”

Juster is unhappy with WH positions also. He discusses the accusation of universalism leveled at Karl Barth by Cornelius Van Til.<sup>14</sup> Juster is not convinced by Van Til’s criticism. Barth holds in tension the paradox of the universal hope of salvation for all, whilst also arguing for the “embrace of the Gospel” as the necessary way of salvation. Barth “never resolves the paradox” and this has special relevance to the election of Israel in Romans 11, which fits “the same pattern of his [Barth’s] Wider Hope affirmation.”<sup>15</sup> Juster’s comments on Barth have significance, for although he is reluctant to follow what he sees as Barth’s universalist tendencies,

10 Ibid., 18.

11 Ibid., 19.

12 John 1:12; 3:16; 8:24; 14:12; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:22–23; 6:23; 10:9–10.

13 Juster, 23.

14 Ibid., 26, citing Cornelius Van Til, *Karl Barth and Evangelicalism* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1964).

15 Juster, 26.

he has begun to explore Barth's doctrine of the church and Israel in a way that may prove fruitful to MJT in the future.

For Juster the weakness of both NH and WH views is the "failure to recognize that we live with mystery."<sup>16</sup> C. S. Lewis reflected that "God has not explicitly told us or made himself clear concerning those who have not had the opportunity to embrace the Good News." Whilst unwilling, like Barth, to "embrace contradictory paradox," Juster wishes to avoid the extremes of both NH and WH views. He refers to John Wesley, who holds to the motivation to proclaim the good news "born of a passionate love and desire to minimize the number who would be lost," whilst at the same time "not precluding the possibility of people turning to God through the revelation of Yeshua in nature, culture and conscience."<sup>17</sup> Wesley's notion of prevenient grace, according to Juster, leaves room for mystery and uncertainty about those who cannot be categorized into two groups, of "saved" and "lost," but may be able to embrace Yeshua after they die. This NWH position, according to Juster, is espoused by evangelicals such as Kenneth Kantzer and Billy Graham, as well as others such as Jacques Maritain, C. S. Lewis, and Douglas Harink.<sup>18</sup>

Juster considers the implications of the NWH view for Jewish evangelism. Whilst WH views have never been sufficient to motivate for evangelism, the NWH, according to Juster, is able to motivate effectively.

Only the motivation of compassion to see that people are not lost to eternal death has proven sufficient throughout history. *Only this produces the requisite intercession and anointing of the Spirit to be effective.*<sup>19</sup>

Juster concludes with two key affirmations. First, we are to "act on the basis of the general 'lost-ness' of people, both Jew and Gentile."<sup>20</sup> We cannot be at rest or have confidence in the eternal destiny of anyone until they have embraced Yeshua. But this is held in tension with the second affirmation.

We are also to hold open the possibility of a wider mercy or hope. . . . This hope should be held in a way that does not blunt our zeal to see people embrace Yeshua. At the same time, this hope enables us to give a more powerful theodicy arguing for the justice of God in the face of evil. . . . Indeed, many who claim to hold to no Wider Hope view show that this is not so when they are asked concerning their departed loving grandmothers. Somehow they hope there was some transaction whereby they were received into heaven.<sup>21</sup>

16 Ibid., 32.

17 Ibid., 33.

18 Ibid., 31.

19 Ibid., 36.

20 Ibid., 39.

21 Ibid., 40.



Juster thus cautions that the “holding of our Wider Hope views will eventually produce a decrease in the numbers in our Messianic Jewish movement.”<sup>22</sup> But he is reluctant to espouse the NH position. Reflecting current uncertainty in evangelicalism as a whole, he reflects a “Wider, Narrow Hope” position. As a leading Messianic Jewish thinker, his reliance on the terms of the debate within the classical and evangelical theological traditions demonstrates that the issue is one where the Messianic movement has yet to come to its own clear view. The positions of Stuart Dauermann and Mark Kinzer that follow depart more radically from the evangelical tradition.

### Stuart Dauermann’s Gospel in Times of Transition

Stuart Dauermann calls for a “new paradigm” for the gospel in the light of changing contexts.<sup>23</sup> He is motivated by a concern for his people and a sense of frustration with the prevailing paradigms he sees in Jewish mission circles, which automatically consign Jewish people who do not believe in Jesus to hell. Unhappy with both narrow and wider hope perspectives, he attempts to recast the biblical metanarrative of salvation history into one which includes the election of Israel as a corporate community, where emphasis is given to salvation in communal as well as individual aspects.

In the light of five eschatological signs of changing times, God’s agenda has “began to shift from a focus on the ingathering of the fullness of the Gentiles to the ingathering of the fullness of Israel.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore the old paradigms need changing, one of which is the “bad-news gospel” which fails to see that the gospel is, in fact, “good news” for Israel.

Many will recoil from this aspect of our text [Luke 2:8–11] due to reflexively regarding the Jewish people as fundamentally spiritually lost, eternal losers, and the coming of Christ as not being good news for *the* Jewish people, but at best, good news only for *some* Jews who are exceptions to the rule.<sup>25</sup>

Dauermann uses an anecdotal, autobiographical style to explain his reaction against this approach.

In 2002, I attended the meeting of the ETS at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. Riding from the airport to the hotel, a missionary to the Jews whom I hardly knew, without any foreplay whatsoever

22 *Ibid.*, 36.

23 Stuart Dauermann, “What Is the Gospel We Should Be Commending in These Times of Transition?” *Kesher* 22 (Spring/Summer 2008): 42–78.

24 *Ibid.*, 44. The five signs are the founding of the modern state of Israel; the liberation of Jerusalem; the regathering of the Jews to Israel from the land of the north; the repentance-renewal of the Jewish people evidenced by the rise of the Messianic Jewish movement; and a new concern for Messianic Jewish covenant faithfulness.

25 *Ibid.*, 48.



er, badgered me with one question: "Do you believe that a Jew who does not believe in Jesus goes to hell?" Aside from being put off by his abrasive approach, I was mystified as to why, of all questions he might have selected, he chose *this* one test of my orthodoxy? Why this pre-occupation with the population of perdition?<sup>26</sup>

To Dauermann the "find-heaven-avoid-hell" approach is missing from the apostolic *kerygma* of the eighteen sermons in the book of Acts as a motivation for either the messenger or the hearer. He notes how "current vehemence" surrounding the issue lead some to say his "calling to ease off on this approach is nothing less than an attack on the mission to the Jewish people, through disassembling its engine."<sup>27</sup>

Dauermann's approach does not call for the disassembling of the engine of Jewish mission, but rather the addition of shock-absorbers and silencers, to make the engine run, as he sees it, more effectively. He wants to proclaim a gospel that is truly "good news":

Our people will rightly continue to find an individualistic message of soul salvation which fails to highlight God's continued commitment and consummating purposes for the community of Israel to be stale, irrelevant and foreign – far less and far other than God's invitation to participate in the anticipated vindication and blessing of the seed of Jacob. We must repent and return to this perspective.<sup>28</sup>

But Dauermann is reluctant to propose an alternative soteriology, preferring to state a studied agnosticism.

I argue not *for* the wider hope as *against* the wider ego. It has been decades since I have heard anyone in our circles, speaking on a theological or missiological issue, say, "I do not know."<sup>29</sup>

Dauermann quotes approvingly the caveat of Lesslie Newbiggin on the question of final destinies.

I confess that I am astounded at the arrogance of theologians who seem to think that we are authorized, in our capacity as Christians, to inform the rest of the world about who is to be vindicated and who is to be condemned at the last judgment. . . . I find this way of thinking among Christians astonishing in view of the emphatic warnings of Jesus against these kinds of judgments which claim to pre-empt the final judgment of God.<sup>30</sup>

26 *Ibid.*, 60.

27 *Ibid.*, 61.

28 *Ibid.*, 56.

29 *Ibid.*, 70.

30 Lesslie Newbiggin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 177–78; as cited in Dauermann, 71.



Dauermann does not explicitly state a universalist position. But he is clearly reacting, at an emotional level, to the charged language of some exclusivist positions as applied to the Jewish people. Without proposing a coherent alternative, he raises the significance of doubts, questions, and “mystery” to the point at which they discredit, for him, the viability of any soteriological statement about the final destiny of those Jewish people who do not believe in Yeshua. Rather than label him an “implicit universalist,” it would be more charitable to see him as a “determined agnostic,” as he makes no statement to the effect that his unbelieving grandmother will be in heaven, as much as he would like to hope for that. Rather, he suggests that we are asking the wrong question, or looking for answers that can not be given.

### Mark Kinzer’s Final Destinies

Mark Kinzer’s paper “Final Destinies” is limited to a discussion of what the New Testament writings have to say about the topic. Kinzer realizes this is a severe restriction to impose, as there are major areas of theological discussion that also need consideration.

Relevant theological issues include the meaning and significance of God’s attributes of mercy and justice and the relationship between them; the divinity of Yeshua and his mediatorial role in creation, revelation and redemption; the validity of the traditional doctrine of “original sin,” and its implications for a free human response to God’s gracious initiative; the implications of the paradigmatic cases of infant mortality and those with severe mental limitations; and the nature of Israel’s enduring covenant and the ecclesiological bond between the Jewish people and the Christian church.<sup>31</sup>

Kinzer is well aware of these larger issues. Whilst his survey of biblical materials leads him to the conclusion that the New Testament writers, particularly Peter and James, see moral living circumscribed by Torah-observance as a key constituent in the determination of final destinies, he makes certain theological assumptions about the significance of such statements within an overall theological framework, which is not supplied in that particular article. We will therefore examine Kinzer’s approach to soteriology by supplementing material from his larger work, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, where it impinges on soteriological issues.

31 Mark S. Kinzer, “Final Destinies: Qualifications for Receiving an Eschatological Inheritance,” *Keshar* 22 (Spring/Summer 2008): 87–119; 88 n. 4.

## The Hidden Messiah of *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*

Mark Kinzer's *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism (PMJ)* proposes that Jesus the Messiah is hidden in the midst of the Jewish people, already present with them. Kinzer proposes a "bilateral ecclesiology" made up of two distinct but united communal entities:

- (1) The community of Jewish Yeshua-believers, maintaining their participation in the wider Jewish community and their faithful observance of traditional Jewish practice, and
- (2) The community of Gentile Yeshua-believers, free from Jewish Torah-observance yet bound to Israel through union with Israel's Messiah, and through union with the Jewish *ekklesia*.<sup>32</sup>

Kinzer's stress on the inherent "twofold nature" of the *ekklesia* preserves "in communal form the distinction between Jew and Gentile while removing the mistrust and hostility that turned the distinction into a wall." Kinzer argues that a bilateral ecclesiology is required if the Gentile *ekklesia* is to claim rightfully a share in Israel's inheritance without compromising Israel's integrity or Yeshua's centrality.

In Chapter Six of *PMJ*, Kinzer turns to the Jewish people's apparent "no" to its own Messiah. Kinzer argues that Paul sees this rejection as in part providential, an act of divine hardening effected for the sake of the Gentiles.<sup>33</sup> Paul, according to Kinzer, even implies that this hardening involves Israel's mysterious participation in the suffering and death of the Messiah.

In the light of Christian anti-Semitism and supersessionism, the Church's message of the Gospel comes to the Jewish people accompanied by the demand to renounce Jewish identity, and thereby violate the ancestral covenant. From this point onward the apparent Jewish "no" to Yeshua expresses Israel's passionate "yes" to God – a "yes" which eventually leads many Jews on the way of martyrdom. Jews thus found themselves imitating Yeshua through denying Jesus! If the Church's actual rejection of Israel did not nullify her standing nor invalidate her spiritual riches, how much more should this be the case with Israel's apparent rejection of Yeshua!<sup>34</sup>

The Jewish people's apparent "no" to Jesus does not rule them out of God's salvation purposes, any more than the church's *actual* "no" to the election of Israel. Both are within the one people of God, although there

32 Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos/Baker, 2005), 23–24.

33 *Ibid.*, 223.

34 Mark Kinzer, "An Introduction to *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*" (private publication, 2004), 5.

is a schism between them. The New Testament “affirms the validity of what we would today call Judaism.”<sup>35</sup>

Kinzer recognizes that the presence of Yeshua is necessary in order to affirm Judaism.

Those who embrace the faith taught by the disciples will be justifiably reluctant to acknowledge the legitimacy of a religion from which Yeshua, the incarnate Word, is absent.<sup>36</sup>

Judaism’s validity cannot be demonstrated if Jewish people have a way to God that “bypasses Yeshua.” However, Kinzer argues that in some mysterious and hidden way “Yeshua abides in the midst of the Jewish people and its religious tradition, despite that tradition’s apparent refusal to accept his claims.”<sup>37</sup> This divinely willed “disharmony between the order of knowing and the order of being” means that Yeshua is present with his people without being recognized. The *ontic* is to be distinguished from the *noetic*, what exists from what is known. The New Testament affirms that Yeshua is the representative and individual embodiment of the entire people of Israel, even if Israel does not recognize Yeshua and repudiates his claims. Even this rejection testifies to his status as the despised and rejected servant. Echoing Karl Barth’s doctrine of the church in relation to Israel, Israel’s “no” is answered by the church’s “yes” to Jesus, and in Jesus himself both “yes” and “no” are brought together, just as Jesus is both divine and human, and accepted and rejected.

Both church and Israel are “bound indissolubly to the person of the Messiah,” one in belief, the other in unbelief. Therefore “Israel’s no to Yeshua can be properly viewed as a form of participation *in* Yeshua!”<sup>38</sup>

If the obedience of Yeshua that led him to death on the cross is rightly interpreted as the perfect embodiment and realization of Israel’s covenant fidelity, then Jewish rejection of the church’s message in the second century and afterward can rightly be seen as a hidden participation in the obedience of Israel’s Messiah.<sup>39</sup>

This sounds decidedly paradoxical. How are we to understand and respond to it? Kinzer’s argument draws from earlier thinkers like Lev Gillet, the friend of Paul Levertoff.

His entire notion of “communion in the Messiah” presumes that faithful Jews and faithful Christians can have communion together in the one Messiah. In fact, he seems to hold that the Messiah is also hidden for Christians to the extent that they fail to understand or

35 Kinzer, *PMJ*, 215.

36 *Ibid.*, 217.

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, 223.

39 *Ibid.*, 225.

acknowledge the ongoing significance of the Jewish people in the divine purpose.<sup>40</sup>

Gillet views the Jewish people as a "*corpus mysticum* – a mystical body, like the church."<sup>41</sup> The suffering of the Jewish people is to be understood in the light of Isaiah 53, as both "prophetic and redemptive," but Gillet does not, according to Kinzer, lose "his christological bearings."<sup>42</sup> Gillet's aim is to build a "bridge theology" that links the mystical body of Christ with the mystical body of Israel.

The *corpus mysticum Christi* is not a metaphor; it is an organic and invisible reality. But the theology of the Body of Christ should be linked with a theology of the mystical body of Israel. This is one of the deepest and most beautiful tasks of a "bridge theology" between Judaism and Christianity.<sup>43</sup>

Gillet aims to heal the schism between Israel and the church, showing that both Christian and Jew are united in the Messiah.

The idea of our membership in Israel has an immediate application in all the modern questions concerning Jewry. If we seriously admit the mystical bond which ties us, as Christians, to the community of Israel, if we feel ourselves true Israelites, our whole outlook may be modified, and our lives of practical action as well.<sup>44</sup>

However, Gillet's argument relies on "the mystery of the [future] restoration of Israel, who are still, in Paul's words, experiencing 'Blindness in part.'" The Messiah is hidden from them, because of the blindness of unbelief. Whilst he is hidden within his people, he is also hidden from them by their partial hardening.

Kinzer's concept of the "hidden Messiah" derives not from the anonymous Christianity of the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, but from Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig, and later Jewish-Christian relations thinkers such as Paul van Buren. Kinzer also refers to Edith Stein, the Jewish philosopher who became a Carmelite nun, who saw the sufferings of the Jewish people as "participating in the sufferings of their unrecognized Messiah."<sup>45</sup> Thomas Torrance lends support to this christological understanding of the suffering of Israel as participation in the suffering of the Messiah, albeit unconsciously.

40 Ibid., 279.

41 Ibid., 280.

42 Ibid., 281.

43 Lev Gillet, *Communion in the Messiah* (London: Lutterworth, 1942), 215.

44 Ibid.

45 Kinzer, *PMJ*, 227.



Certainly, the fearful holocaust of six million Jews in the concentration camps of Europe, in which Israel seems to have been made a burnt-offering laden with the guilt of humanity, has begun to open Christian eyes to a new appreciation of the vicarious role of Israel in the mediation of God's reconciling purpose in the dark underground of conflicting forces within the human race. Now we see Israel, however, not just as the scapegoat, thrust out of sight into the despised ghettos of the nations, bearing in diaspora the reproach of the Messiah, but Israel drawn into the very heart and centre of Calvary as never before since the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

Kinzer echoes Roman Catholic theologian Bruce Marshall in arguing that the Jewishness of Jesus implies his continuing membership and participation in the Jewish people. God's incarnate presence in Yeshua thus "resembles God's presence among Yeshua's flesh-and-blood brothers and sisters."<sup>47</sup> According to Marshall, the doctrine of the incarnation of God in Christ is analogous to the doctrine of God indwelling carnal Israel, as articulated by Michael Wyschogrod, the Jewish thinker, in his book *Carnal Israel*.<sup>48</sup>

The Christian doctrine of the incarnation is an intensification, not a repudiation, of traditional Jewish teaching about the dwelling of the divine presence in the midst of Israel.<sup>49</sup>

If God is "present in Israel, Yeshua is also present there," and according to Robert Jenson, the "church is the body of Christ only in association with the Jewish people."

Can there be a present body of the risen Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, in which the lineage of Abraham and Sarah so vanishes into a congregation of gentiles as it does in the church? My final – and perhaps most radical – suggestion to Christian theology . . . is that . . . the embodiment of the risen Christ is whole only in the form of the church *and* an identifiable community of Abraham and Sarah's descendants. The church and the synagogue are together and only together the present availability to the world of the risen Jesus Christ.<sup>50</sup>

46 Thomas Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1992), 38–39; as cited in Kinzer, *PMJ*, 227.

47 Kinzer, *PMJ*, 231.

48 Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: God and the People of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1996).

49 Bruce Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 178; as cited in Kinzer, *PMJ*, 231.

50 Robert W. Jenson, "Toward a Christian Theology of Judaism," in *Jews and Christians*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 12; as cited in Kinzer, *PMJ*, 232.

Kinzer is covering much new ground here, painting in broad brushstrokes an ecclesiology developed by postliberal Christian theologians in dialogue with contemporary Jewish thinkers. Much of the discussion draws from Karl Barth's christological doctrine of the election of the one "community of God" as church and Israel, and the doctrine runs the same risks of universalism on the one hand and a continuing supersessionism on the other. Whilst Karl Barth withdrew from participation in Rosenzweig's "Patmos group" because of its perceived Gnosticism, there is also a danger of Gnosticism in this doctrine of the hidden Messiah incarnate in his people Israel.<sup>51</sup> Kinzer relies on a "divinely willed disharmony between the ontic and the noetic," following Bruce Marshall.

For most Jews, Paul seems to say, there is at this point a divinely willed disharmony between the order of knowing and the order of being which will only be overcome at the end of time.<sup>52</sup>

But if the mystery of God's dwelling in Christ is known to the church, it can not be equally true that Israel can know that the opposite is the case, and that Jesus is not the risen Messiah. Whilst Christians recognize a continuing election of Israel (the Jewish people) and thus a continuing commitment of Jesus to his people, they will be reluctant to admit that this commitment is in itself salvific, or that the hidden presence of the Messiah *with* his people is the means by which he is revealed to them. The hidden Messiah of *PMJ* owes more to a Christian re-orientation of perspective on Jesus and the election of Israel than to a Jewish recognition of a hidden Messiah. The hidden Messiah of *PMJ* is more a Christian re-evaluation of the presence of Christ within the Jewish people than a Jewish recognition of the Messianic claims of Jesus. As such, it cannot be an acceptable statement of eternal destinies and gives no guarantee of salvation.

## Conclusion

An old Jewish anecdote describes a man hired by his *shtetl* to sit at the outskirts of town and alert his village should he see the Messiah coming. When asked why he had accepted such a monotonous form of employment, the watchman would invariably reply, "The pay is not so good, but it's a lifetime job." Judaism considers waiting for the redeemer a lifetime job, and Jewish people are obligated not only to believe in the coming of the Messiah but also to yearn for his coming.<sup>53</sup> But waiting and yearning are not enough. Neither is the belief that it is only necessary to announce his coming to one group – the nations, and not another – Israel.

51 Mark R. Lindsay, *Barth, Israel, and Jesus: Karl Barth's Theology of Israel*, *Barth Studies* (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 28.

52 Kinzer, *PMJ*, 234.

53 Meir Soloveitchik, "Redemption and the Power of Man," *Azure* 16 (Winter 2004), <http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=172> [accessed August 31, 2008].



Nor can we say that not knowing is better than knowing and rejecting, or that the failure of the watchman diminishes the responsibility of the hearers. The last thing we should say is that there is no need for a Messiah, because his work has already been done. The good news of the Messiah's coming should be announced with all the urgency we can muster.

Jewish evangelism exists to put the watchman out of business by announcing that the Messiah is here, and we are called to be his disciples. It may still be a lifetime job (unless he returns first), but the job has changed from being a watchman to being a herald of good news. To make the announcement of the Messiah's coming in a half-hearted way, or to imply that he has come for some, but others can wait until he comes again, would be a gross failure to fulfill the job description and divine commission.

The dangers of universalism, in either its stronger or weaker forms, must not cloud our judgment about the urgency of the imperative to preach the gospel to all nations. This not only includes evangelism to the Jewish people, but – in the light of Romans 1:16 – suggests it is a historic and missiological priority. Whilst the survey above has shown some universalist tendencies within the Messianic movement, our responsibility is to proclaim the Messiah until he returns, and no other hope of salvation can be given except through faith in his redeeming work.

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# The Future of Jewish Missions and the Messianic Movement

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT



*Some Random Thoughts to Contemplate*

by **Mitch Glaser**

It was an honor to be asked to share some thoughts and reflections on our current Messianic movement and to suggest some direction for our future. There is no doubt that we should be concerned with passing the gospel baton to a new generation of Messianic Jews, as well as Gentile believers, who will be advocates for Jewish evangelism.

I would like to focus on two critical areas. First of all, I want to point out the great opportunity and need we have, especially in North America, for ministry among the “baby boomer” generation. I also want to take a brief moment and call the attention of our Jewish missions and Messianic community to some of the great needs of “unoccupied” fields of Jewish ministry outside of Israel and North America. In order to effectively address the latter, I want to speak to our general unity as a movement. In particular, I believe it is time to seriously consider the inter-relationships between our Jewish mission agencies and the growing Messianic congregational movement, which I view as partners in outreach.

## **Ongoing Ministry to Baby Boomers**

The baby boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, will be retiring *en masse* within ten to twenty years. More than sixty million baby boomers are alive today. And many among this group are Jewish.

It is important for Jewish ministries to develop outreach to this group for the years ahead. This generation has been extremely open to the gospel in the last three or four decades. The Lord moved among the baby boomers to begin the modern Messianic movement, reestablishing the notion of being Jewish and believing in Jesus. It is possible that more Jewish people came to faith as a part of the baby boomer generation than any other, even beyond the movement of European Jews to Jesus in the 1920s and 1930s prior to the Holocaust. This exploding movement, the high point of which may have been between 1967 and 1980, quickly covered countries across the globe. However, the majority of those who came to faith are located today in areas of greatest Jewish concentration, primarily in North America.

In general, there are two seasons of life when most people are more

open to the gospel – when they are young and when they are old. Jewish people tend to come to faith as young people on college campuses, where they are exposed to ideas they may have been sheltered from as children. Another phase of openness for Jewish people occurs after they have achieved many of their life's goals, but still have not found peace through their various professional and personal pursuits. This might happen at 40, 50, or later!

Many people come to faith later in life, when they start facing their own mortality and ultimate passing from this world. Therefore, the ten to twenty years before they are faced with eternity is a critical season of evangelism for a generation that is already open to questions of faith and has shown a great deal of interest in Jesus. It is vital to develop ministries among this generation. As a mission to the Jewish people, Chosen People Ministries (CPM) is not only interested in Jewish evangelism, but also in ministering *holistically* to Jewish believers.

In old style “Jewish mission work,” holistic ministries to believers were handed over to the evangelical church, but this pattern must change. Most evangelical churches have limited capabilities to serve aging Messianic baby boomers as they face illness, the loss of a spouse, and so on. Aging Messianic Jews will need companionship and Messianic fellowship, and will likely desire to live in retirement communities with other Messianic Jews.

While many Messianic Jewish organizations, both missions and congregations, have focused on cultivating a new generation of Messianic leaders, a loss of heritage haunts the movement today. Uniting older believers' years of knowledge and experience with the energy and vision of the rising generation of Messianic Jews would dramatically enrich the movement. The baby boomers, as the future “grandmas and grandpas” of the movement, need to be programmatically and institutionally tethered to young leaders to encourage these future leaders in their own sense of ministry, maturity, and fruitfulness.

### **Possible Ministries: Advocacy**

Advocacy is a crucial ministry for the benefit of elderly people, as it ensures that they get what is needed to adapt to life's changes. Advocacy could take a variety of forms, such as helping to navigate social services and the medical system, being a voice to Messianic congregations and churches where people are now ignoring the elderly and their needs, and advocating for housing and basic living issues.

It is certain that many Messianic Jewish alliances could create advocacy groups and committees to meet a variety of practical needs. For example, many Messianic Jews do not know where they are going to be buried, and an advocacy group could help find burial sites and rabbis and Messianic leaders to perform the burials.

## The Establishment of Fellowship Groups

We should encourage the establishment of a Senior Messianic Jewish Alliance. Messianic ministries should take tangible steps to accomplish this goal. Papers should be given at annual meetings of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE), the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA), and the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), as well as at more regional Messianic retreats where Jewish believers across the gamut of age and experience gather for spiritual refreshment and community.

In fact, it would be wise for these and other fellowships of Messianic congregations, along with mission agencies like CPM, to sponsor joint retreats for elderly Messianic Jews. Workshops and other programs should be offered on the challenges of aging, coping with loss and loneliness, financial planning, and second career opportunities, as well as other appropriate topics. But most importantly, it would be wonderful to begin building this community now as the boomers begin the process of entering into retirement.

A demographic survey of the Messianic movement would be a good start to assessing these needs in order to meet them in the days ahead. Also, an inter-congregational and mission group task force should be developed within the next few years to think about how we might develop programs such as European and Israel trips for retired Messianic Jews.

## Resources

It is important to consider the resources that should be developed for evangelism and the spiritual nurture of aging Messianic baby boomers. Books or DVDs that deal with aging, questions of the afterlife, and fulfilled prophecy may become more evangelistically potent. Testimonies of how people came to the Lord when they were older, and training materials for younger Messianic Jews on how to care for and reach out to elderly people would be poignant. The proposed task force should consider the development of a specific body of knowledge that can be delivered in books, seminars, workshops, and various Messianic events dealing with the role of aging Messianic Jews in relationship to younger Messianic Jews.

Messianic Jewish baby boomers are first generation “converts,” whereas many of the new and upcoming leaders within the movement are second – or sometimes third – generation believers. This means that the Jewish experience of the baby boomer Messianic Jews and that of the upcoming generation’s leadership is somewhat disparate. Those, however, who have been part of Messianic congregations have had the chance to develop a greater sense of “shared identity and experience” by participating in congregational life.



## Working Together to Reach Difficult and “Under-occupied” Mission Fields

One of the intriguing discussions encountered in the study of missions history in general, and in Jewish mission history in particular, is the subject described as the “occupation of the field.” In 1927 two great Jewish mission conferences were sponsored by what would eventually become known as the International Missionary Council Christian Approach to the Jews (IMCCAJ). This group, founded by John R. Mott, in some ways is the precursor to the LCJE. There were North American, European, and other international sections that met regularly. In effect, it was a fellowship of Jewish mission leaders representing independent and denominational missions to the Jewish people. Various Jewish mission conferences were organized by this group, as well as a variety of joint ministry projects.

In reading through the documents of the Budapest and Warsaw conferences, one of the subjects that arose regularly is this “occupation of the field.” The concept provides a way to look at mission work among a particular people – in this instance the Jewish people – from a global perspective and not from the vantage point of any particular organization. For example, if one were evaluating ministry to the Jewish people in Brooklyn compared to that in Jerusalem, the conclusion could be drawn that the various ministries to the Jewish people have dozens of workers in Jerusalem, whereas there are only a few in Brooklyn. But twice as many Jewish people live in Brooklyn. The field would therefore need to be re-balanced, and workers from one field encouraged to go to the other. This would challenge the Jewish missions to work together in ways that are unheard of today.

The “occupation of the field” could also challenge the missions to reach different types of Jewish people. If the secular Jews of a particular city or country are being fully served by missionaries, but the more religious community is not, the missions could guide some of their staff to reach out to this group. This might lead to various Jewish missions joining forces in a particular city to reach an un-reached segment of the Jewish community together. I am fascinated by these past approaches and believe that we need to have similar discussions today.

One of the better-known illustrations of Jewish missions working together was the way in which CPM workers in Vienna served as part of the staff of the Swedish Israelite Mission in the pre-Holocaust period. The Swedish Israelite Mission had a large facility and some staff, but needed help reaching the more secular Jews of Vienna. Emmanuel Lichtenstein was an effective worker, and our missions decided to work together. However, the real fruit of this partnership came when the Nazis invaded Austria and the Swedish church was able to save thousands of Jewish people – including many Jewish believers – and Lichtenstein was aided in escaping and establishing a new work among Holocaust refugees in Buenos Aires.

Jewish missions and Messianic congregations tend to think individualistically and are intent on doing “our own thing.” LCJE efforts have

served the field well in bringing Jewish mission workers together, but the idea of actually working together or making field decisions together has been outside the realm of LCJE activities. This makes the LCJE quite different from the IMCCAJ. Nevertheless, the LCJE has provided a forum for developing intermission relationships that could lead to more productive thinking regarding the "occupation of the field."

However, there does not exist any type of fellowship or committee of Jewish missions that would allow for these types of discussions at a serious level. Perhaps we need to actually try and hammer out the ways and means of working together toward a more fruitful "occupation of the field."

Just consider the possibilities of doing more with one another to reach hard-to-reach areas that are currently understaffed and under-resourced. I believe it will take many of us working together to take advantage of the great opportunities provided by the North American Jewish baby boomers!

I am not naïve, and understand that there are territorial and bona fide theological concerns that divide us. But I do not believe we have tried hard enough to cooperate at a deeper level. Unfortunately, this level of cooperation is not part of our Jewish mission and congregational culture to the degree that it was in the past. There are, however, many missions that do cooperate in church planting, seminary training, responding to social crises, etc. We in the Messianic Jewish and Jewish missions world need to heed these excellent examples of cooperation.

For example, there are more than 300,000 Jewish people in Moscow at this time, and it has rapidly become one of the most "Jewish" cities in the world. Moscow has also become one of the most expensive cities in the world. There are a number of good Messianic congregations in Russia, and a few Jewish missions workers in Moscow and other parts of Russia. But if you compare the number of missionaries to the Jews in Chicago or Jerusalem, or even the number of Messianic congregations in southern Florida with those in Moscow, you will see that this field is drastically "under-occupied."

The problem of course is that Moscow is expensive, and the workers are few – and quite frankly, any organizational or institutional religious work in Russia is becoming increasingly difficult. Most North American missions would not want to invest in property in Moscow because of the political frailty of the situation and the great expense that might be incurred. But what if we rented something together? It is going to take all of our combined resources to reach the 300,000+ Jews in Russia, as well as the additional numbers of Jewish people in various parts of the Soviet Union. This task will be far more feasible with a concerted inter-mission and congregational effort.

I lead an organization and certainly take the self-interests of our 115-year-old mission agency seriously. I have seen leaders not take care of their own organizations, which is akin to a mother who wants additional children but is unwilling to care for her own health. If we are not indi-



vidually and institutionally strong, then eventually we will be unable to do this work whether or not we serve in cooperation with others.

But sometime and somewhere, there must be an end to even the noble self-interests of institutions and congregations.

Jewish missions and Messianic organizations must shift paradigms and live in a way that is more reflective of the prayer of Jesus in John 17. We not only need unity in the way we love one another, fellowship with one another, and read papers to one another. We desperately need a greater level of cooperation and unity in various fields where the needs are great and our individual resources are few. Our inability to work together is now impinging on the work to which we've been called.

I believe that Jewish mission agencies and our Messianic congregational movement need to initiate discussions today on how to work together – especially in those fields that are significantly under-occupied and need immediate help.

## Conclusion

We can do more together, but it is going to take a willingness to lay aside our noble self-interests in order to accomplish something greater for the Lord. Certainly, we might not be able to do all of what is suggested together, but we can try to do some! Perhaps those who are more likeminded will rise to the occasion of reaching Jewish boomers, and also tackle the challenges of difficult and under-occupied fields of ministry.

As I look to the future, I am convinced that we will do more together than we will do apart.

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## Comments on Randall Price's Response to My Paper in Mishkan Issue 55

Dr. Randall Price says my critique of Christian Zionism is unbalanced because I disagree with dispensational Christian Zionism, which is his position. He also seems to imply that I am not taking "complex [political] factors apart from theological interpretation seriously." I refer him to the detailed critique of dispensationalism on my website, [www.prayerforpeace.org.uk](http://www.prayerforpeace.org.uk). Here I also write a great deal on the political complications of the situation in the Holy Land.

He asks for definitions of various terms such as "legitimate aspirations," "uncritical support," "kingdom principles," and "the peace process." By "legitimate aspirations," I mean the aspirations of the Palestinian people for their own state. By "uncritical support," I mean simply accepting whatever Israel does. By "kingdom principles," I mean biblical ethical principles. By "the peace process," I mean the movement to end violence and at least to move towards peace with justice for all the people groups involved.

Price is mistaken in one of the most serious criticisms he makes against me. I most certainly do not think – or imply – that believing the Jewish people to be the chosen people (as I do myself) is racist.

I find it disturbing that Price implies that we are to support justice for Israel more than for other people groups.

Contrary to what Price says, I am well aware of the difference between personal ethics and national ethics. But he is justifying Israel oppressing Palestinians simply because they don't reside in Israel. I agree that Israel has to defend her citizens. But he seems to approve the idea that Israel does not need to act justly with respect to those who are at war with her. This could, of course, justify war crimes.

He is mistaken on another point. I do see brief references to the return of Israel to the land in the New Testament – in Luke 21:24 and Acts 1:6. However, I find his implication that Christians should support the renewal of animal sacrifices in a restored temple "under the new covenant" quite bizarre theologically.

I also find Price's idea that God does not love the Arabs in the same way as he loves Israel profoundly disturbing. God's love is fundamentally the same for everyone. He doesn't only love, he *is* love. Love is his essential nature and is unrestricted.

It seems clear in the Old Testament that God's love for his chosen people is his fundamental love, shown to all humanity, applied to a particular calling – namely for Israel to bless the world with the message of salvation. This choice and his covenant of love are based upon this calling and conditional upon Israel's obedience to it. God shows special love to those who love him and obey him, that is, he approves of their obedience and rewards it. God does not actually love Israel more than others. His love is fundamentally the same for everyone because God is love. But he shows his love in special ways, by giving people – in this case Israel – a special calling (and the grace to fulfill it), and by rewarding the obedience of faith.

The New Testament teaches that God loves the whole world enough to send his Son to the cross. As with Israel in the Old Testament, he shows his love in choosing the saints and blesses those who love and obey him. The New Testament reaffirms the truth of the covenant of love made with the patriarchs.

It seems clear that throughout Scripture God's fundamental love, the expression of his nature as love, is the same towards all humanity. But he shows his love in special gifts and callings, particularly through choosing a people through whom he can spread the message of salvation to the

whole world. However, to enjoy the full blessing of his love requires not just calling but obedience. He expresses his love in particular ways to those who love and obey him. So the special *experience* of God's love on the part of Israel or the church is not some distinction in God's basic love, arbitrarily preferring one people group to another or favoring one "deserving" people group over another "undeserving" people group, but results from the faith of an individual issuing in love and obedience to God. Only a remnant are the true Israel "by faith," and even the remnant will not experience the benefits of God's love without repentance, issuing in a life of obedience to God (John 14:21, 23; 15:10; 16:27; Eph 5:25).

*Tony Higton*



## Undercover View of the Messianic Community

"The Baptizing Sect" was the title set in bold letters that filled the cover of the Weekend Magazine of *Yediot Ahronot*, Israel's largest newspaper, on August 8, 2008. Inside, another full-page title read: "The Messianic Code." In this way the Messianic community once again made headlines in the Israeli media. This time a young female journalist had gone undercover, presenting herself as a young Israeli believer; she got involved in the life of a Messianic congregation in Tel Aviv and participated in evangelism campaigns with, among others, Ya'akov Damkani. In the past few months, there has been a lot of media attention focused on the Messianic Jews in Israel. This follows the March bombing in Ariel, a young Messianic girl's participation in the Bible Quiz, and the burning of New Testaments in Or Yehuda in May. These cases have brought mostly sympathetic and positive media coverage and given the Messianic community a certain recognition in Israeli society.

With this latest article focusing on the community, few Israelis can have avoided hearing about Messianic Jews. However, this article, unlike most of the others, tried to present a different picture – a picture of a closed cult-like community that will use manipulation and deceit in "attempting to convert children, IDF soldiers, and Holocaust survivors, and to bring them close to Yeshu." About her experience as "a believer," the young journalist says:

Over several weeks, I was thrown into a parallel universe. I became a fervent member of an ancient sect which combines a confusion of beliefs, symbols, and traditions from different religions. Abraham with Yeshu, the Tanakh with the New Testament, a prayer shawl with baptism, the Jewish festivals with



By **Knut Høyland**

the sacred host, as well as an intimidating Satan in ambush at every corner who also appears in human form, a jellyfish, or the evil impulse. I spend my Saturdays in long ecstatic prayers while weekdays I devote to aggressive evangelism campaigns and congregational social events.

... I master the mysteries of prayer, am present at social events, and am in contact with most of the believers. "To be saved," "to evangelize," "God gave me a message in my heart," became part of my vocabulary. I proved my sincerity, I bought the trust of the believers.

Though she tries to paint the Messianic community as an aggressive and to a certain degree dangerous group, it is debatable whether she succeeds. Even she herself, at a certain point during her assignment, struggled to keep her role as a new believer and her real life as a skeptical reporter apart. She began to ask herself:

Have I become one of them? The crowded meetings, the phone which never stops ringing, the sincere concern for my welfare, the expression of warmth, the physical hugs – they all have a cumulative effect. I notice that

as time goes by I speak of “we” and not “them.”

On my way home [that evening] I feel certain that they changed me, that I changed, and that from now on, no matter where I go, Yeshu will hover over me. I draft a “quitting” nighttime email to my editor. I tell him that I am fearful that I will lose my mind. In the morning, in the daylight, I calm down. When my editor calls, I inform him that I am continuing.

Although she all along questions the true motivation of the believers, she admits that:

The Messianic representatives reach negligible corners, at times unseen, which the Israeli society does not bother to direct its gaze towards: they distribute foodstuffs to the poor, to terror victims and Holocaust survivors, who do not know what they will eat tomorrow, and they speak to them about Yeshu; they wrap in love and holy songs drug-addicted prostitutes in a shelter for the needy which they established in the heart of Tel Aviv; diminish the loneliness of soldiers in training fields, with the help of songs, candies, literature, and volunteers from abroad. The possibility of adding new people to the faith increases amazingly after you show them kindness.

Reading the article and knowing the community, one is struck by the honest portrayal, and even though she tries to present a somewhat sinister picture, there is very little in the piece that reveals any dangerous or damaging activity. On the contrary, a number of comments that have been published in the Israeli press in the aftermath of this “revealing” article have stated:

The article which was meant to expose the wicked acts of the Messianic Jews

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in fact merely demonstrates that here is a group of good, idealistic people who show mercy and compassion to the most far-flung and forgotten corners.

While some sects do exploit their members, Messianic Jews are the opposite. They help Holocaust survivors, prostitutes, and the poor – which the State doesn’t do. Does the Center for Terror Victims help these people? I don’t think so. It is even more disgraceful to read that Orthodox families abandon their children simply because they begin to believe in Yeshu – and it is precisely Messianic Jews who accept them with open arms. So instead of hating Messianic Jews those haters should start accepting the “other” without problems into their society.

What this and previous media attention to the Messianic community shows is that believers are claiming a place in the landscape of Israeli society. Some will oppose this with all means available; others will remain skeptical and suspicious. Thankfully, however, more and more not only acknowledge the Messianic Jews’ rightful place as both Jews and Israelis, but also appreciate, recognize, and are curious about the acts of kindness shown by these people and the message they proclaim about the Savior, the Messiah, the Jew, Yeshua!

*For further quotes from the article see the August 12, 2008, Caspari Center Media Review at [www.caspari.com/media\\_review](http://www.caspari.com/media_review).*

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