

MISHKAN

A THEOLOGICAL FORUM ON JEWISH EVANGELISM

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Editorial

{Inside cover}

Do We Dare to Uphold Our New Testament Hope?

What are our expectations from current encounters between Christians and Jews for the ministry of Jewish Evangelism? We are presently experiencing numerical growth and growth in maturity among the Jewish Messianic congregations in Israel and the US. Evangelistic outreach to Jewish people is also developing with breadth and a speed that few expected some years ago. Jewish believers are themselves taking the lead in this development.

In the light of these developments, and with the apostolic hope for the salvation of all Israel in mind, we must ask ourselves: Dare we envision, pray and work so that the Jewish people, as a national entity, will in our time turn to Jesus and proclaim Him Messiah and Lord? Such a vision carries a number of consequences for our ministries:

First of all, the New Testament perspective of the evangelization of the world foresees the ingathering of a full number from the gentile nations before a national turning of the Jewish people to Messiah. Bible translation today has made it possible - in ideal terms to reach 90% of the worlds population with the Gospel. However, in addition to the many unreached people and nations not yet evangelized, we face a Muslim world which has become a major problem for world evangelization.

Our concern for the salvation of all Israel should therefore also impose on Jewish ministries a particular burden, a vibrant sensitivity for Gospel ministry among the Arab peoples in particular and in the Muslim world in general.

Second, evangelization of the nations should always have the Jewish people in mind. At this point in history there may be good reason to remind ourselves of the apostolic desire: "Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the gentiles. I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them." (Romans 11,13f.)

{145} Next year the Lausanne movement will hold in Singapore its second International Congress on World Evangelization. The theme for this gathering has already been chosen: Proclaim Christ the Lord, the Hope of the World! We would like to propose that the Lausanne movement also brings to expression the integral relationship between the evangelization of the nations and the evangelization of the Jewish people. This relationship is not based only upon our proclamation of Jesus as the Christ, it is essentially linked to our hope for the world.

Third, our hope for a national turning of the Jewish people to the Messiah has a further bearing upon the relationship between the worldwide body of Christ and the Jewish people. As we pray that the Jewish people will open their hearts to the Gospel, the Church is called upon to open its heart to the Jewish people. We cannot avoid the historical context of Christian-Jewish relations. For this reason, and since the Gospel encompasses all areas of life, we should welcome Christian-Jewish co-operation on many levels and in many areas.

The growing recognition of the Jewish roots of our faith is one element of such an openness. An honest analysis and repudiation of anti-Semitic trends in Christian history is another. Co-operation on communal levels, solidarity with the Jewish people in Eretz-Israel and the struggle for the rights of Jewish communities under authoritarian regimes are further examples.

In our ministries, we constantly experience the fact that God is at work beyond our efforts, preparing the ground for the future national turning of the people to Messiah. It is in this perspective we dare to encourage a polyphony of approaches as we seek to strengthen the links between the worldwide body of Christ and the Jewish people.

Fourth, we must at the same time insist on a recurring theme in all these approaches; our witness to Jesus as Messiah and Lord. Evangelism is sometimes viewed negatively as organized initiatives by particular groups of persons. However, evangelism should be regarded as the heart-beat of a normal Christian life-style: The love of Messiah expresses itself through personal witness and sharing of the Gospel in situations of every-day life.

All too often witness to Jesus as Messiah and Lord is avoided in Christian-Jewish encounters. A significant trend in current Christian theology goes to the extent of denying the Messiahship of Jesus. However, the basic witness of the first Jewish believers to their own people was: "He is risen, He is the Messiah". This same confession {146} remains at the heart of our relations to the Jewish community.

Fifth and last, the new openness now evident in the Church towards the Jewish people should particularly welcome the growing congregations of Jewish believers in various parts of the world. Sadly, these congregations, with their outspoken Jewish identity, are often met with reluctance and skepticism. But they have come to stay, as part of the worldwide Body of Christ and as an integral part of the Jewish people. Should we, then, not welcome them?

In the last issue of *Mishkan*, Dan Juster wrote "it is most probable that a Jewish 'people movement' will prove to be one of the factors leading up to a national turning of the people to Messiah". Are we ready for such a development - not only from a missiological point of view, but also to the effect this will have upon the identity of the worldwide Body of Christ?

We pray and hope for the salvation of "all Israel". Do we dare live and work according to this hope - for our time?

Ole Chr. M. Kvarme

{1} His Blood Be Upon Us

An Examination of the Deicide Charge in Matthew 27:25

Michael Rydelnik

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Haim Cohn accurately evaluates the effect of Matthew 27:25 when he writes: “None of the many other charges leveled at the Jews has been held so obdurately against them as unassailable proof of guilt and responsibility for the crucifixion as has this exclamation of theirs, ‘His blood be upon us and our children.’”¹

Beginning with Tertullian (2nd Century) and continuing throughout Church history, this verse was understood as the self-condemnation of the whole Jewish people forever.² Yet this approach contradicts the historical accounts of the Gospels, which cite Roman participation in the crucifixion. Jesus Himself predicted that His death would be a conspiracy of guilt, with the conspirators being both Jewish and Gentile (Mark 10:33-34).

The account of the unnamed disciple’s prayer in Acts 4:27-28 identifies four bearers of human guilt: Herod (a half-Jewish king), Pontius Pilate (the Roman governor), the Gentiles (the Roman soldiers) “and the peoples of Israel” (the Sanhedrin and the mob). The disciple states further that all these acted under the sovereign hand of God.

It seems clear that the New Testament does not teach that the crucifixion was a uniquely Jewish crime. Instead, it affirms that the Jews acted in complicity with the Gentiles. As A. T. Robertson says, “There is guilt enough for all the plotters in the greatest wrong of all the ages.”³

The problem then presents itself: If Matthew, in conformity with the New Testament, did not intend to say that all Jews for all time were guilty of killing {2} Jesus, then what does he mean when he relates the crowd’s cry, “His blood be upon us and upon our children?”

Traditional Interpretation

The 20th century Lutheran scholar Lenski represents the traditional view when he writes:

Something demonical possesses these Jews. As far as the blood with which Pilate dreads to stain his hands is concerned - these Jews make light of it. They offer to take it completely off the governor’s hands and to load it upon themselves. That implies that they assume all the guilt, that they make themselves liable for any punishment that may

¹Haim Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 22.

²Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, p. 8.

³A. T. Robertson, *Harmony of the Gospels*, p. 225.

follow, that they will fact God's justice and will suffer His wrath. And to this sacrilegious declaration they add even their children, all future generations of Jews. Why did these Jews have to challenge God's justice in so horrible a way? Why did they not keep still and let Pilate indulge in his little performance with the water? Was the devil riding them so completely that they cared not what damnation they called down on themselves?

This prophetic word has been confirmed. The curse that the Jews so gaily and so unanimously (note pas ho laos) took upon themselves that morning has turned out to be a curse indeed. They are now a separate people, are scattered over the whole earth, they have no country, no government, no entity and are a disturbing element among the nations. Even this fact shows that Jesus' blood is still upon them ... God is not mocked. The idea that the blood of Christ brings only pardon is true indeed, but this pardon is intended only for the penitent and not for those who trample on the blood (Heb. 10:29). If the blood of Abel cursed impenitent Cain, the blood of Christ must far more curse those who shed it and their children who still consent to that shedding by spurning Christ.⁴

{3} Lenski supports this on three grounds. First he contends that Matthew intended to indicate Pilate's innocence by including the dream of Pilate's wife (27:19) and the hand washing of Pilate (27:24).⁵ However, as Morris says:

...in the last resort he was the man who could say "Crucify" or "Release." All his shifts and his hand washings could not alter the fact he was in the position of responsibility and that, humanly speaking, Jesus' fate hung upon his word. So we read in verse 26 that he delivered up Jesus to be crucified. He and no other.⁶

Pilate clearly was not innocent.

A second line of reasoning used to defend the traditional interpretation is Matthew's alleged deliberate change of terminology in vs. 25 from the previously used word *ochlos* (crowd) (vv) to the phrase *pas ho laos* (all the people). The word *laos* is thus seen as a technical term for the nation Israel,⁷ indicating the whole nation's self-condemnation and invocation of guilt upon itself.⁸

Two objections can be raised against this argument. First, although the word may have a technical sense, its predominant New Testament usage is "crowd," "population" or "people," with no implication of membership in one national unit, distinct from other peoples.⁹ Even Fitzmeyer, who argues for a technical sense, recognizes that Matthew uses *laos* generically in

⁴R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St Matthew's Gospel*, pp. 1096-97. *Some others who maintain the perpetual guilt of the whole nation based on this verse are: A. C. Gabelein, The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 2; Henry Eyster Jacobs, ed.: The Lutheran Commentary, 12 vols.,*

Schaeffer p. 375-376; and Alan McNeil The Gospel According to Matthew, p. 413.

⁵John Quinn, "The Pilate Sequence in the Gospel of Matthew," *DR* 10 (February 1970): pp. 172-173.

⁶Leon Morris, *The Story of the Cross*, p. 91. Also A. T. Roberson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols., 1:228.

⁷Quinn, p. 171. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "Anti-Semitism and the Cry of 'All the People,'" *TS* 26 (April 1965): p. 669.

⁸Stanley D. Toussain, *Behold the King*, p. 310; and McNeile p. 413.

⁹TDNT s.v. "laos," by H. Strathmann, 4 (1967):51.

Matthew 4:23, 26:5, and 27:64.¹⁰ Why should it not be so used in 27:25? Hence Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich's lexicon, as well as Strathmann and Bietenhard, see *laos* in Matthew 27:25 as following the previous reference to *ochlos* and as such carrying the same meaning.¹¹ {4} Secondly, considering the time of the trial before Pilate (sometime before 6 a.m.),¹² the number of people who followed Jesus (Matt. 26:5, Luke 23:27) and the clear statement of the Gospels that this was a crowd selected and assembled by the priests (Matt. 27:20, Mark 15:11), it is difficult to conceive of *laos* referring to the entire nation.

The third argument used to defend the traditional interpretation is that the word *teknon* in this context is generally used to indicate the descendants or posterity of the nation. Therefore, the guilt invoked would thus be permanent.¹³

However, it is possible that the word *tekna* may only mean "children."¹⁴ This would limit the meaning to only one generation and could perhaps be related to the judgment of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which befell the people and their children (Matt. 23:36-39, Luke 19:41-44, Luke 23:28).¹⁵

Even if the crowd did have all their descendants in view, they did not have the authority to bring guilt upon them. Plumtree ably points this out when he writes: "Even in such a case as this, it is still true that 'the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father' (Ezek. 18:20), except so far as he consents to it, and reproduces it."¹⁶ It was no more possible for the crowd to curse its children with their cry, than it was for Pilate to exonerate himself by a declaration of innocence. If Pilate's guilt was not removed by his declaration and his hand washing, neither could the crowd's acceptance of guilt on behalf of its children be anymore binding.

Thus, the permanent guilt of the Jewish nation is not in view here.

{5} Alternative Interpretations

Since the traditional interpretation of Matthew 27:25 has been found wanting, it is necessary to investigate alternatives which have been proposed in order to better harmonize this passage with the rest of Scripture.

¹⁰Fitzmeyer p. 669.

¹¹Strathmann p. 51; DNTT, s.v. "People," by H. Bietenhard, 2(1976): 799; BAG 4th rev. ed., s.v. "laos" p.466.

¹²John 19:14 states that Jesus was delivered up at about the 6th hour (noon, Jewish time), which seems to contradict Mark 15:25 where the crucifixion is placed at the third hour (9 A.M. Jewish time). The solution is that John is referring to Roman time, which starts counting at midnight. Thus Jesus was delivered up at 6 A.M. (A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, P. 284-87; and Jack Finegan, Handbook of Bible Chronology, pp. 8, 12, and 291.) It is hard to conceive of a representative or impartial crowd gathering at this early hour.

¹³Lenski p. 1097; and Homer A. Kent, "Matthew" in WBC p. 982.

¹⁴BAG. 4th rev. ed, s.v. "teknon" p. 808. Although this alternate usage is listed, BAG defines *teknon* in Matt 27:25 as "descendants" or "posterity".

¹⁵However, this thesis will argue that the cry only confirmed the coming judgment, it did not cause it. The nation, through its leaders, had already rejected the messiahship of Jesus. The judgment had been determined previous to the crowd's cry.

¹⁶Charles John Ellicott, ed., Ellicott's New Testament Commentary, 12 vols., vol. 1: The Gospel according to St. Matthew, by E.H. Plumtree, p. 403.

I) An un-historical insertion. One proposal is to reject Matthew 27:25 as unhistorical.¹⁷ The reasons given for this assertion are as follows: a) Matthew's Gospel is the only one that includes this statement; b) Hand washing to demonstrate innocence was a Jewish custom, hence foreign to Pilate (Matt. 27:24); c) This passage is a theological polemic against the Jews; therefore its inclusion is a literary device, not a statement of historical fact.

In response to these objections to the authenticity of this account, the following can be said:¹⁸

a) Although Matthew only mentions this statement, it does not necessarily or logically follow that the passage was not actually said. Each evangelist wrote from a different perspective and included those elements which suited his purpose and audience. Since Pilate's hand washing and the crowd's outcry were both intensely Jewish in form, perhaps Matthew is the only one to mention them as only his Jewish readers could appreciate their significance. Diversity need not imply discrepancy.

b) Though Pilate was a Gentile, and hand washing was a Jewish ritual, it does not necessarily follow that he could not practice it. He had been prefect in Judea for a minimum of four years, and perhaps for as much as seven. It is clearly possible that he learned this Jewish custom in the course of trying other Jews who came before him. He may have used it to make himself absolutely intelligible to the crowd, "who for the most part did not understand his words, which were spoken in Greek."¹⁹

c) It has not been proven that Matthew 27:24-25 is truly a theological polemic. If it were to be the case, it would not disprove the passage's historicity. As Catchpole says "... a narrative in which a *tendenz* may be located is not thereby proved to {6} be unhistorical *in toto*."²⁰ Since there is no substantial cause to question the historicity of this text, such an approach is not a justifiable solution to the problem.

II) An acceptance of the new covenant. A second attempt to explain Matthew 27:25 is to say that the crowd is accepting not the guilt for Jesus' death but the New Covenant.²¹ Bowman writes, "Is it not likely that Matthew wanted to show that not only the people present at His passion, but even their children born and unborn took on themselves the new covenant made through Jesus who was sent by God for their salvation?" Bowman's support for this view is that Matthew is symbolically alluding to the nation's acceptance of the Old Covenant, when blood was sprinkled upon them (Exod. 24:7,8,22)²²

This view contradicts the tenor of the entire passage and all the gospel accounts. The chief priests, the elders and the mob they stirred up were violently hostile to Jesus. Moreover they did

¹⁷Solomon Zeitlin, *Who Crucified Jesus?* pp. 174-75; William Riley Wilson, *The Execution of Jesus*, pp. 50, 80-81; Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, pp. 55-56; Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 347; and Chon, p. 347.

¹⁸Joseph Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus* 'PP. 215-18, ably defends the authenticity of this account.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 218.

²⁰David R. Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus*, p. 265.

²¹John Bowman "The Significance of Matthew 27:25" *Milla Wa Milla 14* (1974): pp. 26-31.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 31.

not believe him to be the promised Messiah (cf. Acts 3:17). This crowd surely could not see any benefit accruing to them from the blood of Jesus.²³

III) A warning not to proceed. A third approach is to see the cry of the crowd, not as an incitement to crucify Jesus, but as a warning to Pilate to stop the proceedings.²⁴ Support for this view is based on the verbs used, which are in the present tense, not future. The crowd would then be saying, “We are all shedding this blood if you crucify Him, and we do not want to shed it.” According to this view, the crowd only cried “Crucify Him!,” until Pilate declared Jesus’ innocence by washing his own hands.

Blinzler accurately appraises this view when he writes, “This interpretation flounders on the parallels and on the context.”²⁵ Furthermore, if the crowd truly were seeking Jesus’ release, their cry would parallel Jeremiah 26:15 which reads, {7} “...if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood on yourselves.” This solution is inadequate.

IV) A local acceptance of guilt. A fourth alternative is to understand the shout of the mob as a local acceptance of guilt. This view can be developed by determining a) the identity of the crowd; b) the meaning of the cry; and c) the effect of the cry.

a) As to the identity of the crowd, it has been previously shown that the phrase *pas ho laos* refers to the *ochlos* (crowd) that gathered before the Praetorium, which does not represent the entire nation. This group was gathered by the chief priests to support their own desire for Jesus’ crucifixion.²⁶ The crowd’s guilt, however, is not automatically transferred to the whole nation.

b) As to the meaning of the cry, it corresponds to an Old Testament idiom, accepting responsibility if death should occur. Three excellent illustrations of this are: 1) Deuteronomy 19:10 “So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land...and blood guiltiness [will not] be on you.” So long as innocent blood is not shed in the land of Israel, the people will be free of guilt. 2) Joshua 2:19, “And it shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if a hand is laid on him.” This is the promise made to Rahab by the spies. They assure her that if she fails to follow their agreement, they will not be responsible for the consequential death of her family. However, if Rahab does keep their agreement and death should befall any of her family, the spies will accept full responsibility. 3) 2 Samuel 3:28-29 contains David’s declaration of his innocence of Abner’s blood (death). In contrast, he stated that Abner’s blood would fall on Joab and his house. In other words, David used this expression to place responsibility or guilt on Joab.²⁷

²³ David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew, NCBC*, p. 35.

²⁴ H. M. Cohn, “*Sein Blut Komme Uber Uns*,” *Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 6 (1903): pp. 82-90. Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, p. 565, argues that if this were historical, it would be a declaration of innocence.

²⁵ Blinzler p. 215, n. 29.

²⁶ The local, as opposed to national, character of the crowd is ably defended by Kosmala, pp. 96-98. The early hour (previous to 6.-cf. note 9), the leadership’s control of the crowd (Matt. 27:20) and the masses who followed Jesus (Matt. 26:5) argue against the mob being representative of the whole nation.

²⁷ Some other representative passages are Num. 35:33, 2 Sam. 1:16, 14:9, and Acts 18:6, 20:26.

A statement of guilt is generally placed in contrast to a declaration of innocence. This is also the case in Matthew 27 where Pilate declared his innocence in vs. 24 and the crowd accepted responsibility in verse 25. Thus, Matthew 27:25 can be safely understood as the crowd's statement of its own responsibility for the death of Jesus.

c) With respect to the effect of the cry, it has been demonstrated above that the word *teknon* need not refer to all the descendants of the Jewish people. The fact that this was a certain kind of crowd argues against such a view. As opposed to understanding the cry as referring to all future Jewish generations, some have limited the fulfillment of the verse to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem {8} by the Romans in A.D. 70.²⁸ Thus, acceptance of guilt caused the judgment that befell the people and their children. The problem with understanding the cry of the crowd as the sole or primary cause of the A.D. 70 judgment is that Jesus had already foretold the coming destruction earlier (Matt. 23:37-39, Luke 19:41-44). The specific cause he then cited for the coming judgment was the people's rejection of himself as the Messiah ("because you did not recognize the time of your visitation"). Hence, the crowd could not be the cause of the judgment in A.D. 70.

A better alternative is to see the cry of the crowd as a confirmation of the previous rejection of Jesus by Israel's leaders. This rejection of Jesus by the nation's leaders would result in judgment for the whole nation.²⁹ In truth, the crowd's cry only served to confirm that decision and thereby confirm the result. The mob's lack of authority is accurately evaluated by Kosmala when he writes "[the cry] came from a crowd assembled in front of the pagan governor's palace in order to force him to carry out the judgment. The crowd did not represent the whole Jewish people nor could it speak in its name."³⁰

Thus the rejection of Jesus by the leaders brought judgment on the people of Israel and their children. Yet the cry of the crowd came from a small body who, under the direction of their leaders, accepted responsibility for the death of Jesus. Their act, infamous as it was, did not constitute Israel a nation of Christ-killers; it merely confirmed the judgment to come.

Conclusion

This article has argued that a view of Matthew 22:25 as laying national and permanent guilt for the death of Jesus is both unfair and inaccurate. This venue describes, rather, acceptance of guilt by a local mob under the direction of a section of Jewish leadership. Their cry confirmed the Sanhedrin's decision against Jesus {9} and the ensuing judgment on Jerusalem. Three concluding remarks must be made concerning the guilt of the crowd.

²⁸Gregory Baum, *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?* p. 106; John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p. 230; H. Benedict Green, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p. 221; and R. E. Nixon, "Matthew" in *rev.ed.*, p. 849.

²⁹*It might be offensive to some Jewish people to understand the Roman destruction of Jerusalem was a judgment for the rejection of Jesus. It must be remembered that such a recognition is not accomplished with glee or recrimination. When God chastens His chosen people, it is exceedingly sorrowful in His eyes and in the eyes of those who love Him. The Rabbis also sought to explain the catastrophe as a result of national sins (although they refused to accept the rejection of Jesus as being that sin). (cf.. TB Shab. 119b Yoma 9b; Barry Leventhal "Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust" p .139).*

³⁰Kosmala, p. 118.

First, Matthew's inclusion of this verse did not have anti-Semitic intent. O'Collins accurately evaluates the effect of Matthew 27:25 when he says it "has done more than any other sentence in the New Testament to feed the fires of anti-Semitism."³¹ Yet Matthew, himself a Jew, and writing to Jews, would not issue a blanket condemnation of the whole nation.³² As Hare says, "...he surely would not have approved the degradation and suffering imposed on Jews by the post-Constantinian church in alleged obedience to Matthew 27:25."³³

Second, it is not accurate to say that the crowd knew that Jesus was the true Messiah and yet called for His death. The fact that they acted in ignorance is made abundantly clear by Peter (Acts 3:17) and Paul (I Cor. 2:8). Thus Blinzler is correct when he says, "It is entirely conceivable that the shouters (or some of them) were honorably convinced of the justice of their cause and had no idea at all that they were guilty: In which case their cry cannot be regarded as a wanton self-execration as it is usually taken to be."³⁴

Thirdly, the nascent church harbored no hostile attitudes even when speaking of the crowd's guilt. For example, Peter addressed them as brothers (Acts 2:29), stating that they acted in ignorance (Acts 3:17) and in complicity with the Romans (Acts 2:33) and offering them pardon if they would repent (Acts 2:38-39, 3:19).³⁵

Only on the surface does Matthew 27:25 present a problem. When properly understood as a local acceptance of guilt and viewed from the perspectives of Matthew, the crowd and the early church, is it impossible to prove a deicide charge against the Jews from this text.

³¹Gerald O'Collins. "Anti-Semitism in the Gospel," *TS* 26 (April 1965): 663.

³²Green, p. 221.

³³Douglas R. A. Hare "The Rejection of the Jews in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," in *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed, Alan T. Davies, p. 38.

³⁴Blinzler, pp. 215-16, n.29.

³⁵Paul Jewett, "Concerning Christ, Christians and Jews," *Jerusalem and Athens*, ed E. R. Geehan, p.221.

{10} Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust

Part one

Barry R. Leventhal

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Introduction

*I believe in the sun when it is not shining
I believe in love even when feeling it not
I believe in God even when He is silent.¹*

These almost tragic words were anonymously inscribed on the walls of a cellar in Cologne, Germany, where several Jews were hiding from the Nazis. In a most profound way they raise the eternal issue of faith in a loving God both during and since the Holocaust. Seymour Cain states the matter succinctly:

Auschwitz, or “the Holocaust,” looms as the stumbling block of contemporary Jewish theology. Whatever may be the case with Christian theologians, for whom it seems to play no significant generative or transformative role, the Jewish religious thinker is forced to confront fullface that horror, the uttermost evil in Jewish history.²

This study, from a Jewish Christian perspective, will seek to confront the horror of the Holocaust, not just from an evangelical posture, but, more specifically, from a dispensational stance.

{11} The Nature of the Study

This study will seek to investigate certain theological perspectives of the Holocaust. It is not possible to investigate all of the perspectives of the Holocaust, for they are multitudinous. Nevertheless, it is imperative that an evangelical response be directed toward this horror.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, it will investigate all of the major religious responses to the Holocaust from within contemporary Judaism. The responses reviewed are from Jewish philosophers, theologians, and rabbis. Second, it will demonstrate that only a consistent and biblical theology can answer the many Holocaust-related questions and problems with which modern Judaism is wrestling. Such a theology must be both evangelical and dispensational. And third, it will demonstrate that only biblical theism can adequately provide the answers to the

¹Eliezer L. Erhmann, ed., *Readings in Modern Jewish History: From the American Revolution to the Present*, p. 232.

²Seymour Cain, “*The Questions and the Answers After Auschwitz*,” *Judaism* 20 (Summer 1971): 263

perennial question of theodicy (a rational defense of the justice of God in view of the presence of evil in the world³), especially in regard to the evil and suffering of the Holocaust.

The Reasons for the Study

There are two especially important reasons for this particular study:

First, one of the major sources to the rise of Nazism in Germany came from within the church. It is only fitting that an evangelical answer be heard from within the church also. It was the growing interest in the evolutionary and destructive higher criticism of the Bible in Germany that fueled the anti-Semitic Nazi war machine⁴. In fact, Germany has had a long history of so-called Christian anti-Semitism, not only from within the Roman Catholic Church, but even from within the Protestant Church. It was Martin Luther, who in his latter years turned upon the Jews with a religious fury, and thus paved the way for an Adolf Hitler to consummate the Reformer's great desires for the elimination of the Jewish people⁵. Is it any {12} wonder that Hitler could say in his *Mein kampf* "Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the Almighty Creator by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting the work of the Lord,"⁶ and then later in the same work cite Martin Luther as one of the great heroes of the German people. The frightening connection seems obvious. This is not to imply that Nazi anti-Semitism was Christian in its core. Quite the contrary, Nazi anti-Semitism was also anti-Christian. But as Jewett rightly acknowledges, centuries of Christian persecution of the Jews certainly paved the way for the Hitlerian extermination of the six million Jews:

Of course Nazi anti-Semitism was not Christian in its essence; in fact it was anti-Christian. Next to the Jews, there was no one Hitler hated more than the Christians. And what resistance the Nazis did encounter was largely inspired by the church But these palliating reminders of Christian suffering and heroism can hardly alleviate the

³Norman L. Geisler, *The Roots of Evil*, p. 43.

⁴See Cyril M. Abelson, "Bias and the Bible," in *Challenge: Torah Views on Science and Its Problems*, pp. 412-20; W. F. Albright, "The War in Europe and the Future of Biblical Studies," in *The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 1662-74; and Williamson, pp. 125-41. Also, for the distorted view of general revelation, with its ensuing evolutionary "survival of the fittest" doctrine, by so-called "Christian" Nazi theologians, see Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues*, pp. 15-16; plus Peter Matheson, ed., *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, pp. 554, 73—75.

⁵See Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 55 vols., Vol. 54: Table Talk, pp. 239, 426; etc. for other discussions on Luther's anti-Semitism see Gordon A. Craig, *The Germans*, pp. 128-29; Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews*, pp. 1552-53; Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism: From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*, pp. 135-36, 216-26, 240-41; Williamson, pp. 101-03, 121; etc. For other discussions directly relating Luther to Hitler, the Nazis and the Holocaust see Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, pp. 2, 8-10, 257, (on pp. 689-90, Hilberg relates how Julius Streicher, the Nazi war criminal, quoted Luther in his own defense at the Nuremberg trials); Franklin H. Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews*, pp. 104-06, (on p. 105, Littell quotes Luther scholar Jaroslav Pelikan in saying "that the time has come for those who study Luther and admire him to acknowledge, more unequivocally and less pugnaciously than they have, that on this issue [Luther's anti-Semitism] Luther's thought and language are simply beyond defense"); William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: a History of Nazi Germany*, pp. 134-35, 326-28; etc. For a response to anti-Luther writings, especially Shirer, see the Lutheran theologian John Warwick Montgomery, "Luther, Anti-Semitism, and Zionism," *Christianity Today*, 22(8 September 1978): 79-80. He maintains that these anti-Semitic statements of the Reformer were indeed violent, but reflected "the irritability that age and disease had brought upon Luther." (p. 79).

⁶(Text in footnote is missing.)

*reproaches which the Christian conscience must feel when it views Auschwitz in the light of all the centuries of Christian persecution of the Jews.*⁷

{13} The second reason is that Jewish mission has suffered a tremendous blow since the evil and suffering of the Holocaust. Many Jewish people are no longer ready to consider the messiahship of Jesus, for they have rejected a personal view of God after the Holocaust.⁸ If God allowed six million Jews to be slaughtered, over one million being children, then He is no longer worthy of personal consideration, let alone able to send His own Messiah to deliver the Chosen People. Why did He not send the Messiah when He really was needed - during the honor of the Holocaust? Therefore, it is hopeful that this paper will supply some of the answers needed in Jewish missions today.

The Method of the Study

In order to investigate the various theological perspectives of the Holocaust this study will confine itself first of all to what Jewish religious leaders (philosophers, theologians and rabbis) have said concerning the Holocaust⁹.

Second, this study will then investigate the major biblical covenants that God initiated with the nation Israel (i.e. the Abrahamic, the Palestinian, the Davidic, the New, and the Mosaic). Since these covenants establish the eternal relationship between God and the Jewish people, they must of necessity contribute to a biblical understanding of the Holocaust.

Third, this work will investigate the nature of Israel as a unique and special people: While the covenants establish the broad parameters of Israel's relationship with God, many other scriptures (the prophets in particular) lay out the details or specifics of that relationship. In order to study these particulars of Israel's peoplehood, three major areas will be surveyed: (1) Israel's election;

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁸ Paul K. Jewett, "Concerning Christ, Christians, and the Jews," in Jerusalem and Athens, p.222. Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg, in his masterful work *The Destruction of the European Jews*, (pp. 1-4), maintains that the Holocaust did not happen in a theological or historical vacuum, but rather was the inevitable result of three consecutive anti-Jewish policies that occurred throughout Western history. He says: "Anti-Jewish policies and anti-Jewish actions did not have their beginning in 1933. For many centuries, and in many countries, the Jews have been victims of destructive action. What was the object of these activities? What were the aims of those who persisted in anti-Jewish deeds? Throughout Western history, three consecutive policies have been applied against Jewry in its dispersion...To summarize: Since the fourth century after Christ, there have been three anti-Jewish policies: conversion, expulsion, and annihilation. The second appeared as an alternative to the first and the third as an alternative to the second... The Nazi destruction process did not come out of a void; it was the culmination of a cyclical trend. We have observed the trend in three successive goals of anti-Jewish administrators. The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The German Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live. These progressively more drastic goals brought in their wake a slow and steady growth of anti-Jewish actions and anti-Jewish thinking. The process began with the attempt to drive the Jews into Christianity. The development was continued in order to force the victims into exile. It was finished when the Jews were driven to their deaths. The German Nazis, then, did not discard the past; they built upon it. They did not begin the development; they completed it.

⁹For a discussion of religious responses from Jewish laymen who are also survivors of the Holocaust see Reeve Robert Brenner, *The Faith and Doubt of the Holocaust Survivor*.

(2) Israel's remnant; and (3) Israel's adversary. These three areas will then be applied to a clearer understanding of the Jewish people in the Holocaust.

{14} Finally, this study will investigate the area of theodicy (i.e. a justification of God's character in view of the evil in the world, and in particular, the evil of the Holocaust). It is posited that if God were a God of love, He certainly would have halted the suffering of the Holocaust. And if He were a God of power, He certainly could have stopped the evil of the Holocaust. But He obviously did not stop the Holocaust. Therefore, is it possible that He is either not all-loving or not all-powerful? These issues deserve a biblical and theological response. It will be seen that only biblical theism produces an adequate response to the evil of the Holocaust.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM

Introduction

The Holocaust has permanently scarred the face of contemporary Judaism. This excruciating experience will probably never heal, and it may last as long as Judaism itself. Every facet of Jewish life feels the pain of this scar, whether it be childhood's simplicity or age's complexity. It is also mirrored in the intriguing thought of a Hassidic rabbi: "For the faithful, there are no questions; for the non-believer, there are no answers."¹⁰

But the complexity of old age is also reflected in the words of Elie Wiesel, himself a Holocaust survivor and storyteller. He says the Holocaust "could not have been without God, nor could it have been *with* God. It cannot be conceived on any level."¹¹

Finding God and losing God

For some the Holocaust was a religiously shattering experience, for others a religiously developing experience. Viktor Frankl, a psychotherapist as well as a survivor, supports this thesis:

The truth is that among those who actually went through the experience of Auschwitz, the number whose religious life was deepened - in spite, not to say because, of this experience - by far exceeds the number of those who gave up their belief. To paraphrase what La Rochefoucauld once remarked with regard {15} to love, one might say that just as the small fire is extinguished by the storm whereas a large fire is enhanced by it - likewise a weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes whereas a strong faith is strengthened by them.¹²

And Wiesel confesses that although both kinds of religious experience occurred, the mystery of the Holocaust remains:

¹⁰Azriel Eisenberg, *Witness to the Holocaust*, p. 628

¹¹Elie Wiesel, "Freedom of Conscience - A Jewish Commentary," *JES 14 (Autumn 1977)*: 643.

¹²Viktor F. Frankl, *The Unconscious God: Psychotherapy and Theology*, p. 16.

Loss of faith for some equaled discovery of God for others. Both answered to the same need to take a stand, the same impulse to rebel. In both cases, it was an accusation. Perhaps some day someone will explain how, on the level of man, Auschwitz was possible; but on the level of God, it will forever remain the most disturbing of mysteries.¹³

Questioning God from different spheres

Before surveying the varying religious responses from within contemporary Judaism, it will prove helpful to review some of the profound and perplexing spiritual questions that the mystery of the Holocaust has raised. These heartrending quests have arisen from many different spheres of contemporary Jewish life, some from those who have survived the Holocaust and some from those who reflect back on it.

Alexander Donat, a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and Hitler's death camps, wrote to his grandson years later concerning his religious questioning:

The Holocaust was for every survivor a crucial religious experience. Day-in and day-out we cried out for a sign of God's presence. In the ghettos and in the death camps, before gallows and the doors of the gas chambers, when confronted with ultimate incredible evil, we cried: "Lord, where art Thou?" We sought Him, and we didn't find Him. The acute awareness of God's puzzling and humiliating absence was always with us. Memory of this experience is always with us...

The far-reaching religious implications of the Holocaust have by no means been explored, nor has the process of coming to grips with its meaning been completed. It implies a profound revolution in the basic tenets of Judaism, and the rise of a new set of Judaic values.¹⁴

Another survivor, Werner Weinberg, explains the two kinds of religious faith he observed in the concentration camp, both of which he personally rejected:

{16} And then there was the question of religious faith in the camp, of belief in God's providence - in one of two forms. One was resignation: all he does is the good; if he has decreed that I be among the dead of this place, so be it. The other was that of invoking personal privilege. God will hear my prayer and save me alive from this hell. I have seen both of these attitudes among believing Jews (I was never imprisoned together with Christians).¹⁵

Again Donat, in his personal memoirs, records the anguish of the thousands trapped in the Warsaw ghetto:

It was an agonizing self-appraisal. We were bitter to the point of self-flagellation, profoundly ashamed of ourselves, and of the misfortunes we had endured. And those

¹³Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time*, p. 20.

¹⁴Alexander Donat "A Letter to My Grandson," *Midstream* 16 (June/July 1970) 43-44.

¹⁵Werner Weinberg, "On Being a Survivor," *CCen* 98, (April 8 1981): 380.

*feelings intensified our sense of being abandoned alike by God and man. Above all we kept asking ourselves the age-old question: why, why? What was all that suffering for? 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?*¹⁶

Michael Brown, Jewish professor of humanities and language studies, likewise admits that the Holocaust has sparked theological questioning which cannot fall back on the explanations of past Jewish generations:

*However much one might regret it, few can fail to sympathize with, and even to participate in, the theological questioning which the Holocaust has sparked. The survivors - and, in a sense, we are all survivors - need ways of understanding. Yet the explanations which past generations have offered for Jewish suffering do not satisfy. Some Jews have been relatively unaffected, but others have lost their belief in God entirely and not regained it. Still others see the Holocaust as the symbol of God's ultimate rejection of Judaism and have become Christian.*¹⁷

{17} LeRoy Howe, professor of philosophy, maintains that the Holocaust is an event that forces each person to examine life if he is to live it:

*Let us... consider Auschwitz as event. A "happening" of the most grotesque kind, it cannot easily be understood, for only the inhumane could contemplate it unfeelingly. Yet it must be comprehended. Whatever else one may learn from the death camps, Auschwitz demonstrates with terrible clarity that it is no longer possible for the unexamined life to be lived, much less to be worthwhile.*¹⁸

Professor of philosophy, Dan Magurshak, maintains that not only does all of life need to be examined, but the very nature of God itself:

*Believers in Israel's God of history or in the Christian God of the resurrection have often asked how God - omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent - could let the children burn under blue and empty sky. The event demands a rethinking of speculations about God's nature, its relationship to humankind, the plausibility of its existence, and its purpose in at least allowing, if not willing, such carnage.*¹⁹

Harold Schulweis, reformed rabbi, probes the dilemma of the Holocaust with penetrating and disturbing questions:

¹⁶Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom: A Memoir*, p. 100.

¹⁷Michael Brown, "On Crucifying the Jews," *Judaism* 27 (Autumn 1978): 476.

¹⁸Leroy T. Howe, "Theology and the Death Camps," *CCen* 86 (February 19 1969): 252.

¹⁹Dan Magurshak, "The 'Incomprehensibility' of the Holocaust: Tightening Up Some Loose Usage," *Judaism* 29 (Spring 1980): 237-38.

That men who sin are punished is understandable; but that millions of innocent should be destroyed is not. What role does God play here? Is His permissiveness morally justifiable? If the monumental catastrophe belongs to man, what relevance does God have if He washes His hands of the whole matter and sets Himself apart as a spectator?²⁰

Even the Hebrew poet voices his perplexity at the lack of answers to the great riddle of the Holocaust. Following a reminder of the miraculous rescue of the three Hebrew children in Daniel three, Shlomo Tana vents his poetic rage at the fact that the six million did not deserve the same miracle:

*Nowadays, bereft of lore and legend
So many have been thrown into the burning pit,
Their bodies were consumed, only ashes remained,
Not even one was saved.
No angel did come.
How great was the betrayal.
And every time we tried to escape or obstruct, {18}
The fumes of fires would kill us at once,
And God's way remains a riddle.²¹*

Having reviewed some of the questions raised from different spheres concerning the Holocaust, a detailed survey of the varying religious responses from within contemporary Judaism will now be elaborated. The religious responses are many and varied. Katz reflects this when he summarizes the many responses into nine configurations:

Out of the still nascent and stilt uncertain conversation on the Holocaust, several general responses, with their various combinations and configurations, have emerged. They can be enumerated as follows: (1) the Holocaust is like all other tragedies and merely raises again the question of theodicy and "the problem of evil", but it does not significantly alter the problem or contribute anything new to it. (2) The classical Jewish theological doctrine of mipenei hata'einu ("because of our sins we were punished") which was evolved in the face of earlier national calamities can also be applied to the Holocaust. According to this account, Israel was sinful and Auschwitz is her just retribution. (3) The Holocaust is the ultimate in vicarious atonement. Israel is the "suffering servant" of Isaiah (ch. 53 ff.) she suffers and atones for the sins of others. Some die so that others might be cleansed and live. (4) The Holocaust is a modern Akedah (sacrifice of Isaac) - it is a test of our faith. (5) The Holocaust is an instance of the temporary "Eclipse of God" - there are times when God is inexplicably absent from history or unaccountably choose to turn His face away. (6) The Holocaust is proof that "God is dead" - if there were a God He would surely have prevented Auschwitz; if He did not then He does not exist. (7) The Holocaust is the maximization of human evil, the price mankind has to pay for human freedom. The Nazis were men, not gods; Auschwitz reflects ignominiously on man; it does not touch God's existence or perfection. (8) The Holocaust is revelation: it

²⁰Harold M. Schulweis, "Suffering and Evil," in *Great Jewish Ideas* p. 217.

²¹Shlomo Tana "Reyach Ha'esh" in *The Voice of My Blood Cries Out: The Holocaust a Reflected in Hebrew Poetry*.

*issues a call for Jewish affirmation. From Auschwitz comes the command: Jews survive!
(9) The Holocaust is an inscrutable mystery; like all of God's ways it transcends human
understanding and demands faith and silence.²²*

{19} For purposes of clarification, this survey will be divided into three major categories: (1) the traditional perspective; (2) the radical perspective; and (3) the moderate perspective. These three categories do not reflect the three major divisions of modern Judaism (i.e. Orthodox, Reformed and Conservative). In fact, there is some overlapping of these divisions in the various responses. The Holocaust is so traumatic to contemporary Judaism that many of the recognized religious boundaries have been obliterated in certain aspects of this topic.

The Traditional Perspective

Several different perspectives are brought to bear on the Holocaust from within the more traditional Jewish religious thought. Many of them reflect former Talmudic and rabbinic ideas and are still thought to be relevant to this present catastrophe. Neusner reaffirms this classical position:

Classic Judaic theology was not struck dumb by evil, and neither changed its apprehension of the divinity, nor claimed in its own behalf a renewed demand on the Jews, on account of disaster. To be sure, important theological issues require careful, indeed meticulous attention. But to debate those issues outside of the classic tradition and under the impact of grief can produce few lasting, or even interesting results.

He then goes on to ask what are the implications of the Holocaust within this tradition:

What then are the implications of the Holocaust? I claim there is no implication - none for Judaic theology, none for Jewish community life - which was not present before 1933 ... Jews find in the Holocaust no new definition of Jewish identity because we need none. Nothing has changed. The tradition endures.

The Hidden Purpose

The first perspective from within the traditional category is that the God of Israel is a rational and purposeful God, and that although the Holocaust appears to be without meaning, it must have a purpose, even though it may not be clearly perceived. Jocz clearly defines this perspective:

...Jewish tradition allows no room for absolute chaos in the order of things. Such a world would contradict the purposefulness of a good and intelligent God. Behind even the most grotesque events in history is some purpose; otherwise life ceases to make sense. The

²² Steven T. Katz, "Jewish Faith After the Holocaust: Four Approaches" in Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book 7975/5 p. 93.

questions about Auschwitz are, therefore, in the last analysis, questions about God. In what sense is he still the ribono shel haolam (“the Lord of the Universe”)?²³

{20} Rabinovitch goes on to say that in light of this unanswerable mystery the only valid response is submissive silence:

Nothing can explain the terrible God-forsakenness of the Holocaust years. It is not given to man to understand “Why dost Thou hide Thyself at times in trouble?” (Ps. 10:1) and so he does not mock the Hiding God by false attribute. Nor can there be any recompense in this world for the rivers of blood shed to sanctify His Name (religious martyrdom). In the face of the terrifying mystery of endless Akedot [“bindings (of Isaac)”], when the Heavens are shut fast against both heartrending pleas for pity and outraged demands for justice, the true believer can only “sit alone in silence ... and put his mouth in the dust” [Lam. 3:28-29]²⁴

Heschel attests to the fact that Israel has a unique destiny, a destiny that will be ultimately fulfilled, even though through many harsh tribulations. Israel is God’s stake in human history:

Our life is beset with difficulties, yet it is never devoid of meaning. The feeling of futility is absent from our souls. Our existence is not in vain. There is a Divine earnestness about our life. This is our dignity. To be invested with dignity means to represent something more than oneself. The gravest sin for a Jew is to forget what he represents.

We are God’s stake in human history. We are the dawn and the dusk, the challenge and the test. How strange to be a Jew and to go as fray on God’s perilous errands. We have been offered as a pattern of worship and as a rev for scorn, but there is more still in our destiny. We carry the gold of God in our souls to forge the gate of the kingdom. The time for the kingdom may be fiat off, but the task is plain: to retain our share in God in spite of peril and contempt. There is a war to wage against the vulgar, against the glorification of the absurd, a war that is incessant, universal. Loyal to the presence of the ultimate in the common, we may be able to make it clear that man is more than man, that doing the finite he may perceive the infinite.²⁵

{21} And finally, Wyschogrod again re-echoes the fact that though Israel must suffer unjustly at times, the Jew himself can trust the God of heaven to eventually redress these injustices:

If, after the Holocaust, we have children who, in turn, beget children, if we can smile and laugh at jokes and satisfy our normal human appetites, if, in short we have not gone mad, it is because we trust in the God of our fathers. He will reward those who have perished

²³Jocz, p. 33.

²⁴Nachum L. Rabinovitch, “The Religious Significance of Israel” Tradition 14 (Autumn 1974): 24.

²⁵Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Earth is the Lord’s: The Inner World of the Jew in Eastern Europe*, p.109.

*and punish those who committed the evil. He watches over this nation even when it does not seem so. We believe this fairly steadily and not only for moments.*²⁶

Kiddush Hashem

The second perspective from within the traditional line of thinking is *Kiddush Hashem*, or “the sanctification of the Name.” This rabbinic concept concerns the holiness of martyrdom, dying for the Name of God and as His servant.

For the religious Jew, during the Holocaust, it became a duty and a privilege to die for the God of the Jews.²⁷ And both during and after the attempted extermination, rabbis were occupied with determining whether a specific *Kiddush Hashem* was valid or not.²⁸ Numerous examples could be cited as examples of *Kiddush Hashem*. Donat graphically portrays the attitude of the pious Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, as they awaited eventual martyrdom:

*Still others were religious Jews, committed to the tradition of Kiddush; Hashem: that is, a martyr's death in the name of God. They believed that, when the enemy came for us, we should be dressed in our prayer shawls and phylacteries, poring over the holy books, all our thoughts concentrated on God. In that state of religious exaltation, we should simply ignore all Nazi orders with contempt and defiance; resistance, violence, only desecrated the majesty of martyrdom in sanctification of the Lord's name.*²⁹

{22} The World to Come

The third perspective from the traditional Jewish viewpoint is life in the world or age to come. Undoubtedly, those who suffered as martyrs (i.e., *Kiddush Hashem*) rested their case on this central concept. Although this life brings much suffering and tribulation, the world to come will find all of this removed and justice made perfect for the faithful.³⁰ Granatstein summarizes this rabbinic concept aptly:

Our formulation of classical Jewish belief can be expressed thus: God reveals Himself to us in the context of our history as the executor of justice, but every such

²⁶Michael Wyschogrod “Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust,” *Tradition* 17 (Autumn 1977): 78.

²⁷Harry Gersh, *The Sacred Books of the Jews*, p.181.

²⁸Pesach Schindler, “The Holocaust and Kiddush Hashem in Hassidic Thought,” *Tradition* 13 (Spring-Summer 1973); Avraham Holtz “Kiddush and Hillul Hashem,,” *Judaism* 10 (Autumn 1961); and Irving J. Rosenbaum, *The Holocaust and Halakhah*, pp.61 ff.

²⁹Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom: A Memoir*, p. 103. For other examples, see Murray J. Kohn, ed., *The Voice of My Blood Cries Out: The Holocaust as Reflected in Hebrew Poetry*, pp. 121 ff. Also, for further examples as well as development of the doctrine, see Peter Schindler, “Responses of Hassidic Leaders and Hassidim During the Holocaust in Europe, 1939-1945, and a Correlation Between Such Responses and Selected Concepts in Hassidic Thought,” Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 133-58.

³⁰For a summary of Talmudic and rabbinic thought on “the world to come” see A. Cohen Everyman’s Talmud, pp. 346-89; also C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, pp. 580-608.

*revelation is a violation of the norm and for this reason, we must conclude that "there is no reward in this world."*³¹

Schlesinger argues that the suffering of the Holocaust victims, even if one can assume that the suffering was designed to elicit a virtuous response, will be more than compensated in the coming world:

*Another question which may be raised: is it fair to the victim to be singled out as the instrument to increase the opportunities for virtuous response to suffering? To this it might be replied that such a person will be amply compensated to his own satisfaction if not in this world - like Job - then in the world to come where opportunities for compensation are limitless.*³²

The Suffering Servant

The fourth perspective from the realm of traditional Jewish thought is that of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Rather than interpreting this passage to refer to a personal messiah, Modern Orthodox thinkers see in it a reference to a national messiah.³³ The nation Israel is seen as the innocent sufferer, the one who suffers at the hands of the unrighteous gentile nations. Greenberg summarizes this concept and relates it to the Holocaust and post-Holocaust traditions:

*{23} The servant suffers because of the evils of the world which are visited on his/her head. Such a model makes clear that after the Holocaust, the correct response is not to justify God, but to challenge the world's evils and sins. Furthermore, this model implies that God allows human freedom and will not prevent the assault on the servant.*³⁴

Berkovits maintains that when the suffering servant experiences suffering, God Himself suffers along with him. This is the partnership between God and man, as history moves towards its messianic fulfillment.

God's chosen people is the suffering servant of God. The majestic fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is the description of Israel's martyrology through the centuries... God suffers not on account of what man does to Him. What could man do to God? He suffers because of what man does to himself and to his brother. He suffers the suffering of His servant, the agony of the guiltless. In all their affliction He is afflicted... God's servant carries upon his shoulders God's dilemma with man through history. God's people share in all the fortunes of God's dilemma as man is bungling his way through toward messianic realization. The status of the dilemma at any one moment in history is revealed by the condition of Israel at that moment.

³¹ Granatstein p. 40.

³² George Natann Schlesinger, "Arguments from Despair" Tradition 17 (Spring 1979): 18. See Matt. pp. 220-21.

³³ For a summary of the history of interpretation of Isa. 53 in the Jewish tradition, including personal messianic arguments, see Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Jesus was a Jew, Pp. 23-47. For a detailed history of interpretation in the Jewish tradition, see S. R. Driver and Ad Neubauer, The Fifty-Third chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters, vol. 2: Translations.

³⁴ Irving Greenberg, "Orthodox Judaism and the Holocaust," Gesher 7 (1979): pp. 60-61. See also Ignaz Maybaum, The Face of God after Auschwitz, pp. 35-37, 67, 77-80.

*God's people is God's challenge to man. God, who leads man "without might and without power," sent His people into the world without the might and power. This is the essence of the confrontation between Israel and the world.*³⁵

The Hiding of the Face

The fifth perspective from traditional Judaism is the concept of "the hiding of the face" (*hester panim*). In the words of Berkovits, this is "God's hiding of his countenance from the sufferer. Man seeks God in his tribulation but cannot find him."³⁶ Soloveitchik summarizes this concept with the fear that accompanies it:

*There are moments in history and in the life of the individual when it seems as if God has relinquished all concern with the course of human affairs. The Torah calls this state Hester Panim (lit. "Hiding the face") and describes such periods {24} as fraught with terrors. Man feels forlorn and helpless in the face of life's fearful possibilities.*³⁷

Having briefly described this "hiding of the face," Soloveitchik gives its biblical basis and then applies its awesomeness to the Holocaust, while maintaining that it terminated in the establishment of the state of Israel.

In Deut. 31:17, the Torah describes the ultimate punishment of *Hester Panim*:

Then My anger will flare up against them in that day and I will abandon them and hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured and many evils and distress shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, "Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not in our midst?"

Hester Panim involves a temporary abandonment of the world, a suspension of His active surveillance,... He turns His back, so to speak, on events and leaves matters to chance. Under such circumstances, the usual vulnerability of the Jew invites the threat of total extermination...

Hester Panim, the Torah indicates, is related to Israel's waywardness and may be regarded as an ultimate punishment. It is terrifying because it signifies rejection...

The Holocaust ... was *Hester Panim*. We cannot explain the Holocaust but we can, at least, classify it theologically, characterize it, even if we have no answer to the question, "Why?" This is how the world appears when God's moderating surveillance is suspended. The State of Israel, however, reflects God's return to active providence, the termination of *Hester Panim*.³⁸

³⁵Eliezer Berkovits, "The Hiding God of History" in *The Catastrophe of European Jewry: Antecedents - History - Reflections* pp. 692, 694.

³⁶Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust*, p. 94.

³⁷Besdin, p. 31.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

The impact of the silence of God during the Holocaust cannot be stressed enough. It has had a paralyzing effect on all of contemporary Judaism. Berkovits calls it “the Exile of the Divine Presence,” the most tragic of all Jewish history:

*In our generation, the generation of Nazism, of humanity's betrayal of all the values without which life itself becomes absurd indeed, the Galut Ha'shkhina (The Exile of the Divine Presence) reached its nadir, its most tragic intensification in history.*³⁹

{25} The Price of Redemption

The sixth perspective from traditional Judaism is the concept of the price of redemption for national rebirth. The Holocaust was “the labor pains of Israel's rebirth as a nation.” Greenberg maintains that the rebirth and present struggle of the nation Israel is a part of the “Messianic life-force”:

*The reborn State of Israel is this fundamental act of life and meaning of the Jewish people after Auschwitz. To fail to grasp that inextricable connection and response is to utterly fail to comprehend the theological significance of Israel. The most bitterly secular atheist involved in Israel's upbuilding is the front line of the Messianic life-force struggling to give renewed testimony to the Exodus as ultimate reality. Israel was built by rehabilitating a half-million survivors of the Holocaust. Each one of those lives had to be rebuilt, given opportunity for trust restored ... The real point is that after Auschwitz, the existence of the Jew is a great affirmation and an act of faith. The re-creation of the body of the people, Israel, is renewed testimony to Exodus as ultimate reality, to God's continuing presence in history proven by the fact that His people, despite the attempt to annihilate them, still exist ... the re-creation of the state is the strongest suggestion that God's promises are still valid and reliable.*⁴⁰

The price of redemption of Israel was the Holocaust itself, when God hid His presence, when He apparently broke His promises. But the nation, alive and thriving, assures the Jew that God and His promises are still a viable option. His honor has been restored. This is Rabinovitch's confident assertion: “There Is one simple basic fact which is there for all the world to see. It is so utterly simple and so totally obvious that thousands of millions of people all over the globe know it and see it. Israel *is*, and it bears God's Name, and it has restored God's crown!”⁴¹

Loving Punishment by God

The seventh perspective from traditional Judaism is the concept of God punishing His people because of His love for them. The suffering of the Holocaust was God's will in that it reflected His loving discipline for Israel. Of course this does echo common biblical theme (cf. Job 5:17, Prov. 3:11-12, etc.).

³⁹Eliezer Berkovits, “Crisis and Faith,” *Tradition* 14 (Autumn 1974): 14. See also Yehiel Ilzar, “Theological Aspects of the Holocaust,” *Encounter* (Spring 1981): 125-31.

⁴⁰Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity aft., flue Holocaust,” Pp. 43,48,50.

⁴¹Rabinovitch p. 24.

Wiesel also weaves this theme into the fabric of several of his novels. In one scene he portrays a father and his young son being herded toward an open ditch where a moment later, they will be shot. The father has one hand on his son's shoulder and the other hand pointing toward the sky. He is explaining the battle between love and hatred. He says to his son, "Know, my son, if gratuitous suffering exists, it is {26} ordained by divine will. Whoever kills, becomes God. Whoever kills, kills God. Each murder is a suicide, with the Eternal eternally the victim."⁴² Or in another scene he portrays a young student questioning his Kabbalistic master, "I can conceive of God's wanting to punish us for reasons that are His and not necessarily ours; but why do entire nations, so many nations, aspire to become His whip, His sword?"⁴³ And yet in another scene he depicts a young rabbi preaching a Sabbath sermon where "he saw a punishment from God in the suffering of the Jews ... God punishes the Jews because he loves them, because he is determined to make them pure and just."⁴⁴ In an interview Wiesel said, "If we were to hate everyone who made us suffer, we would become a people full of hate. who didn't persecute us in history? Even God made us suffer."⁴⁵

Because of Our Sins

The eighth, and final, perspective from traditional Judaism is the most controversial. It is the premise that God brought the Holocaust upon the Jewish people as a punishment for their sins. This concept is closely related to the previous one. However, whereas God's loving punishment was to be remedial and disciplinary in the former perspective, in this view God's action is punitive and retributive. This was not an uncommon religious experience for many as they first entered a concentration camp. Thus, Wiesel reflects on many he encountered, "If I am here, it is because God is punishing me; I have sinned, and I am expiating my sins. I have deserved this punishment that I am suffering."⁴⁶ Once again, this concept is reflected in biblical theology (cf. Lev. 26; Deut. 28-30; Amos 3:2; etc.). So it is not surprising to find it detailed in rabbinic thought.⁴⁷

Likewise, it appears again in the words of the Hassidic masters who suffered during the Holocaust.⁴⁸ The problem in this perspective is defining the cause of the punishment. For what sins was Israel punished? As can be imagined, the answers vary. Under the model called "The First Adam" (i.e., the formula of sin {27} and punishment; Adam, who sinned by violating God's command, is expelled from the Garden of Eden and is punished), Peli summarizes three different views of the type of sins that caused God to punish the Jews (all basically arising out of the

⁴²Elie Wiesel, *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, p. 252.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁴Elie Wiesel, *The Town Beyond the Wall*, p. 157.

⁴⁵Harry James Cargas, *In Conversation with Elie Wiesel*, p. 20.

⁴⁶Elie Wiesel "Eichmann's Victims and the Unheard Testimony" *Commentary* 32 (December 1961): 515. See also Wiesel *Legends of Our Time*, pp. 210, 212; *Moishe Prager Sparks of Glory*, pp. 14-16. For poetic expression of this religious experience, see Murray J.Kohn, *The Voice of My Blood Cries Out: the Holocaust as Reflected in Hebrew Poetry*, pp.122-23, 195-96.

⁴⁷ See C. C. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinical Anthology*, pp. 58-85; Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 293-312; A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, pp. 104-120.

⁴⁸See Peter Schindler, "Responses of Hassidic Leaders and Hassidim During the Holocaust in Europe, 1939-45, and a Correlation Between Such Responses and Selected concepts in Hassidic Thought," pp. 42-109.

Hassidic tradition).⁴⁹ First, there was “the sin of Zionism.” This was the attempt to hasten the final redemption by immigrating to the land of Israel en masse before the coming of the Messiah. Second, there was “the sin of opposition to Zionism.” This is the exact opposite of the first view. God remembered the people of Israel in their exile, and a call went out for them to leave the Exile and immigrate to the land of Israel; yet most Jews did not heed these signs of the coming redemption and stayed where they were. Since the people did not want to end the Exile, the Exile ended them. And third, there was “the sin of assimilation.” There was a direct correlation between the processes of alienation from and denial of Judaism that European Jewry had undergone since the *Haskala* [Enlightenment], and the destruction of that Jewry in the Holocaust.⁵⁰

Again, like the previous perspective, this concept of punishment for Israel’s sins is vehemently rejected by most contemporary Jewish leaders. Berkovits maintains that the exiles of the children of Israel (including the suffering of the Holocaust) are not God-ordained punishments but man-imposed persecutions.”⁵¹ To imply that the Holocaust was a God-ordained punishment is to defame the character of God:

But if God, who was, is, and will ever be, is it possible that at Auschwitz He rejected Israel, He turned away from Israel as a punishment for its sins? To {28} believe this would be a desecration of the Divine Name. No matter what the sins of European Jewry might have been, they were human failings. If the Holocaust were a punishment, it was a thousand-fold inhuman. The only crime of man which such punishment might be conceivable would be the Nazi crime of Germany, and even there, one would hesitate to impose it.⁵²

It is this kind of accusation that forces Michael Brown to challenge that such a kind of God, if He existed at all, would not be worthy of faith at all:

Some Christians still adhere to the traditional doctrine regarding Jewish suffering and understand the Holocaust as one more manifestation of the wrath of God being visited upon the Jews for their 2000 -years-ago sin. One can appreciate the desire of theological conservatives to see all events fitting isle classical doctrine. Still, to an outsider, such an explanation seems unacceptable on its own terms. What kind of

⁴⁹Pinchas H. Peli, “In Search of Religious Language for the Holocaust,” *Conservative Judaism* 32 (Winter 1979): 9-16. For other summaries and responses see also Irving Greenberg, “Judaism and History: Historical Events and Religious Change,” in *Ancient Roots and Modern Meanings*, pp. 157-58; plus Greenberg, “Orthodox Judaism and the Holocaust” *Gesher* 7 (1979): 55-82; Eugene J. Fisher “Ani Ma’ Amin: Directions in Holocaust Theology,” *Interface*, Winter 1980, p. 3; Martin A. Cohen, “The Mission of Israel after Auschwitz” in *Issues in the Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Jewish Perspectives on Covenant, Mission and Witness*, p. 159; Byron L. Sherwin, “Jewish and Christian Theology Encounters the Holocaust,” in *Encountering the Holocaust: An Interdisciplinary Survey*, pp. 409-12; Norman Lamm, “The Ideology of the Neturei Karta - According to the Satmerer Version,” *Tradition* 13 (Autumn 1971): 38-54.

⁵⁰For this same view regarding assimilation see Immanuel Jakobovits, *Journal of a Rabbi*, pp. 435-36; Norman M. Bronznick, “A Theological View of the Holocaust,” *Jewish Education* 42 (Summer 1973): 18-20.

⁵¹Eliezer Berkovits, *God, Man and History: A Jewish Interpretation*, p. 142. See also Emil L. Fackenheim, *God’s Presence in History*, pp. 25-30, 73.

⁵²Berkovits, “The Hiding God of History,” in *The Catastrophe of European Jewry; Antecedents - History - Reflections*, p. 703.

*God would require the degradation, torture and death of a million Jewish children in the twentieth century as atonement for the shortsightedness of their ancestors two millennia ago? How can anyone believe in such a deity?*⁵³

In closing this section, it is appropriate to cite Irving Greenberg once again. He has captured the emotional refusal of most Jews in accepting the premise that “we were punished because of our sins” (i.e. during the Holocaust):

There are Jews who have sought to assimilate the Holocaust to certain unreconstructed traditional categories, to explain destruction as a visitation for evil. To account for the Holocaust as God’s punishment of Israel for its sins is to betray and mock the agony of the victims. Now that they have been cruelly tortured and killed, boiled into soap, their hair made into pillows and their bones into fertilizer, their unknown graves and the very fact of their death denied to them, the theologian would inflict on them the only indignity left; that is, insistence that it was done because of their sins ... this is the devil’s work. God comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comforted, whereas the devil ‘, comforts the comforted and afflicts the afflicted...

*{29} Moreover, 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 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 honorable choice. If this were the only choice, then surely God would prefer atheism.*⁵⁴

The Radical Perspective

The radical perspective falls on the complete opposite end of the spectrum from the traditional perspective. The traditional religious responses will not suffice for such a devastating blow as the Holocaust. New and radical approaches must be found, and several Jewish religious leaders offer their own unique perspectives to the field of Holocaust study. Most of their concepts are rejected to one degree or another by the mainstream of Jewish religious thinkers, but their views are nevertheless allowed free expression. An example of this kind of radical challenge is seen in the poem “Holocaust” by Norman Smith:

*When God in a moment of wrath
Released His torrent of bitterness
On those He chose to call “The Chosen Ones”
His fury so blinded Him*

⁵³Michael Brown, “On Crucifying the Jews,” *Judaism* 27 (Autumn 1978): 477; see also Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, pp 46-58; “Auschwitz and Covenant Theology,” *CCen* 86(21 May 1969): 716-18.

⁵⁴Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust,” pp. 25, 34; see also A. Roy Eckardt, “Is the Holocaust Unique?” *Worldview* 17 (September 1974): 31-35.

*That before His vision cleared
The fruit of His creation
Were being scourged
From the face of the earth
And only the compassion
Of His blinded faithful
Whose love for Him survived the holocaust
Kept the heavens
From being torn asunder.⁵⁵*

The Impotence of God's Omnipotence

Like many of the past philosophers who wrestled with the problem of evil within a theistic framework⁵⁶ certain Jewish religious leaders deny the omnipotence of {30} God during the Holocaust. In the face of the radical evil of the Holocaust, either an omnipotent God was unloving or a loving God was not omnipotent. Rather than reject the whole covenantal framework upon which Judaism itself is built (i.e. which is founded upon the loving election of God; cf. Deut. 7:7-8 etc.), God as an all-powerful Being is rejected.

David Wolf Silverman, writing from within the context of Conservative Judaism steadfastly maintains that after the Holocaust one must recognize that God is not all-powerful:

The Holocaust has, I think, dismissed any easy use of omnipotence as an attribute appropriate to God. After Auschwitz, we can assert with greater force than ever before that an omnipotent God would have to be either sadistic or totally unintelligible. But if God is to be intelligible in some manner and to some extent - then His goodness must be compatible with the existence of evil, and this is only if He is not all-powerful. Only then can we maintain that He is intelligible and good, and there is yet evil in the world...

The Holocaust disclosed the depths to which man had sunk and the degree to which God withdrew.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Norman Smith, "Holocaust," *The Jewish Spectator* 38 (May 1973): 17. For further radical reactions in poetic form see Murray J. Kohn, *The Voice of My Blood Cries Out: The Holocaust as Reflected in Hebrew Poetry*, pp. 98-163 passim.

⁵⁶For further reading in this context see Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, pp. 276-314; John S. Feinberg, *Theologies and Evil*; Norman L. Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 311-403; *The Roots of Evil*; Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, pp. 255-371; C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*; Alvin C. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*; Bernard L. Ramm, *A Christian Appeal to Reason*, pp. 119-35; Linwood Urban and Douglas N. Walton, eds., *The Power of God: Readings on Omnipotence and Evil*; and John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God*.

⁵⁷David Wolf Silverman, "The Holocaust: A Living Force" *Conservative Judaism* 31 (Autumn 1976 - Winter 1977): 24-25. See Harold S. Kushner, "Why do the Righteous Suffer?" *Notes Toward a Theology of Tragedy*, *Judaism* 28 (Summer 1979): 316-23; *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, pp. 113-48; Herbert H. Rose "Auschwitz and God." *The Jewish Spectator* 32 (February 1967): 8-9; and Richard L. Rubenstein, "God's Omnipotence in Rabbinic Judaism," *Judaism* 9 (Spring 1960): 120-28.

The Breaking of the Covenant

A second perspective within the radical responses is that God broke His part of the Mosaic covenant, He promised that if the Jews would keep their part of the covenant, He would keep His, namely, that He would protect them from their enemies. This certainly was not true during the Holocaust - God turned His back on His covenant people. Irving Greenberg, speaking from within Orthodox Judaism asserts that a covenant requires a covenant people and that the Holocaust itself, {31} with its destruction of the covenant people, brings into question the very fact of the covenant itself:

*Since there can be no covenant without the covenant people, the fundamental existence of Jews and Judaism is thrown into question by this genocide ... Yet surely it is God who did not keep His share of the covenant in defending His people in this generation. It is the miracle of the people of Israel that they persist in faith. Surely it is they who should be justified.*⁵⁸

He also asserts, however, that if the Holocaust revealed God's failure to keep His part of the covenant, the establishment of the state of Israel reaffirmed His recommittal to that covenant:

*If the experience of Auschwitz symbolizes that we are cut off from God and hope, and that the covenant may be destroyed, then the experience of Jerusalem symbolizes that God's promises are faithful and His people live on. Burning children speak of the absence of all value - human and divine; the rehabilitation of one-half million Holocaust survivors in Israel speaks of the reclamation of tremendous human dignity and value. If Treblinka makes human hope an illusion, then the Western Wall asserts that human dreams are more real than force and facts. Israel's faith in the God of history demands that an unprecedented event of destruction be matched by an unprecedented act of redemption, and this has happened.*⁵⁹

The Death of God

A third and final perspective from the radical Jewish thinkers is that the Holocaust killed God. This is the most radical response thus far demonstrated. God died during the Holocaust - He can no longer be believed in, or at least, the traditional God of the fathers died and no longer remains a viable object for one's faith. The death-of-God theology has finally blasted its way into Jewish religious thought. By far, the most blatant spokesman for this position is Richard L. Rubenstein. He holds degrees from the Jewish Theological Seminary and Harvard University, but later identified himself with Reform Judaism. At present he is professor of religion at Florida State University. His thinking is steeped in rabbinic Judaism and secular philosophy.

Rubenstein steadfastly maintains that after Auschwitz man lives in the time of the death of God:

⁵⁸Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Holocaust," in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* pp. 8, 33-34.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 32.

No man can really say that God is dead. How can we know that? Nevertheless, I am compelled to say that we live in the time of the 'death of God.' ... when I {32} say we live in the time of the death of God, I mean that the thread uniting God and man, heaven and earth, has been broken. we stand in a cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power beyond our own resources. After Auschwitz, what else can a Jew say about God?⁶⁰

Although Rubenstein has thrown over the traditional concept of God, he does not believe that Judaism has lost its relevance to modern man. Quite the contrary, having been freed from the traditional mold of deity, Judaism is now ready to meet the needs of modern man:

Though I believe that a void stands where once we experienced God's presence, I do not think Judaism has lost its meaning or its power. I do not believe that a theistic God is necessary for Jewish religious life.

...I have suggested that Judaism is the way in which we share the decisive times and crises of life through the traditions of our inherited community. The need for that sharing is not diminished in the time of the death of God. We no longer believe in the God who has the power to annul the tragic necessities of existence; the need religiously to share that existence remains ... I believe the most adequate theological description of our times is to be found in the assertion that we live in the time of the death of God. The vitality of death-of-God theology is rooted in the fact that it has faced more openly than any other contemporary theological movement the truth of the divine-human encounter in our times. The truth is that it is totally nonexistent. Those theologies which attempt to find the reality of God's presence in the contemporary world manifest a deep in-sensitivity to the art, literature, and technology of our times.

Another spokesman for the death-of-God perspective is the previously mentioned survivor and author, Elie Wiesel. Born in a small town in Romania, he was raised in an intensely Orthodox and Hassidic environment. In 1944, the entire Jewish community was deported by the Nazis, and, as an adolescent, Wiesel witnessed and experienced all the horrors of the Birkenau, Auschwitz, Buna, and Buchenwald concentration camps. He is the sole survivor of his entire family. It is not surprising, therefore, that he writes out of the existential reality of total depravity and human suffering. In his autobiographical work, *Night*, he vividly describes his deepest feelings upon arriving at his first concentration camp:

{33} Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.

Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

⁶⁰ Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, pp. 151-53. For a summary and bibliography on "death-of-God Theology" in *God and Contemporary Thought: A Philosophical Perspective*, pp. 775-812.

*Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.*⁶¹

Later on in *Night* Wiesel describes the hanging of a young boy in the camp, with its emotional impact upon his life:

One day when we came back from work, we saw three gallows rearing up in the assembly place, three black crows. Roll call. SS all around us, machine guns trained: the traditional ceremony. Three victims in chains - and one of them, the little servant, the sad-eyed angel.

The SS seemed more preoccupied, more disturbed than usual. To hang a young boy in front of thousands of spectators was no light matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was lividly pale, almost calm, biting his lips. The gallows threw its shadow over him

The three victims mounted together onto the chairs. The three necks were placed at the same moment within the nooses.

"Long live liberty!" cried the two adults. But the child was silent.

"Where is God? Where is He?" someone behind me asked.

At a sign from the head of the camp, the three chairs tipped over. Total silence throughout the camp. On the horizon the sun was setting.

"Bare your heads!" yelled the head of the camp. His voice was raucous. We were weeping.

"Cover your heads!" Then the march past began. The two adults were no longer alive, their tongues hung swollen, blue-tinged. But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive....

{34} For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet glazed. Behind me I heard the same man asking:

"Where is God now?" And I heard a voice within me answer him:

*"Where is He? Here He is - He is hanging here on this gallows..."*⁶²

⁶¹ Elie Wiesel, *Night*, p. 44.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76. For other expressions of the death of God in Wiesel's works see, *The Accident*, pp. 34-35, *The Gates of the Forest*, p. 132; *Legends of Our Time*, pp. 15-16, 141-42; *The Town Beyond the Wall* p. 73.

The Moderate Perspective

In the vast spectrum between the traditional perspective and the radical perspective fall many other Jewish responses to the Holocaust. Religious leaders who cannot fall back into the traditional forms nor leap forward into the radical forms have wrestled with their own unique contributions to Holocaust thought. These moderate contributions emerge from all three major divisions of Judaism (i.e. Orthodox, Conservative and Reform). The following moderate perspectives represent a sample of the cross section of thought falling into this broad spectrum.

The Unanswerable Mystery

The first perspective from the moderate spectrum is that the Holocaust is inexplicable in this life. Like many other severe persecutions of the Jews⁶³ the Holocaust cannot be harmonized with a just and loving concept of God, at least by mere human theodicy.⁶⁴ Therefore, one must submit to its mystery and respond in faith and silence. Philosopher Frederick Sontag addresses himself to this Holocaust “mystery.”

Any God who survives the Holocaust remains largely unseen on the face of history. If we continue to insist on seeing him there, it can only be during times {35} of triumph, not destruction. A holocaust returns a never to be dispelled sense of mystery to life, and we must be careful about thinking that the depth of mystery in our experience of God “explains” anything. At best it postpones understanding, and at worst it destroys it. The rationalist impulse is to get rid of mystery. But such an attempt assumes that all phenomena have an overt and rational explanation, ... Of course, “mystery” simply means that a final explanation now exceeds our powers, whereas the rationalist posture is that nothing exceeds the grasp of a modern scientifically based reason. After the holocaust, we are forced to assert in opposition: To understand how God operates is something one must be God to fathom fully.⁶⁵

Another forceful voice on the mystery of God’s silence is Martin Buber. He speaks of the “eclipse” of God, of something that has passed in between God and man - the Holocaust has eclipsed the God of heaven. He is still there, but He is mysteriously unseen:

⁶³ For a historical survey of Jewish persecution and anti-Semitism see the following: W. N. Carter, *The Shame of Christendom*, Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-three Centuries of Anti-Semitism*; Richard E. Gade, *A Historical Survey of Anti-Semitism*; Paul E. Grosser and Edwin G. Halperin, *The Causes and Effects of Anti-Semitism: The Dimensions of a Prejudice*; Malcom Hay, *Thy Brother’s Blood: The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism*; Franklin H. Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews*; Vamberto Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism*; James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Anti-Semitism*; Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism: From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*; A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, etc. Also, for bibliography as well as history, see: *Anti-Semitism*, Israel Pocket Library; and Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v. “Anti-Semitism,” by Binyamin Eliav, 3:87-160.

⁶⁴For a biblical perspective on “theodicy” see *BDictTh*, “Theodicy,” by Morton H. Smith, pp. 517-18; Feinberg, *Theologies and Evil*; Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 311-403; *The Roots of Evil*; Geisler and Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy*, pp. 321-35; etc.

⁶⁵ Frederick Sontag, “The Holocaust God,” *Encounter* (Spring 1981): 165-66. See also Robert Gordis, *A Faith for Moderns*, pp. 159-89, in particular, pp. 87-89; *Poets, Prophets, and Sages: Essays in Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 314-15, 317; Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 153-54; Charles W. Steckel, “God and the Holocaust,” *Judaism* 20 (Summer 1971): 279-85; *Destruction and Survival*, pp. 95-179 passim.

What is it that we mean when we speak of an eclipse of God which is even now taking place? Through this metaphor we make the tremendous assumption that we can glance up to God with our "mind's eye," or rather being's eye, as with our bodily eye to the sun, and that something can step between our existence and His as between the earth and the sun. That this glance of being exists, wholly unillusory, yielding no images yet first making possible all images, no other court in the world attests than that of faith. It is not to be proved; it is only to be experienced; man has experienced it. And that other, that which steps in between, one also experiences, today...

Something is taking place in the depths that as yet needs no name. Tomorrow even it may happen that it will be beckoned to from the heights, across the heads of the earthly archons. The eclipse of the light of God is no extinction; even tomorrow that which has stepped in between may give way.⁶⁶

{36} God Suffering with Israel

The second perspective from the moderate spectrum is that the Holocaust is only fathomable when one sees God Himself suffering for and with the nation of Israel. Heschel aptly summarizes the biblical data on this theme:

...The central problem in the Bible is not God, but man. The Bible is a book about man. Rather than man's book about God. And the great problem is how to answer, to respond to the human situation.

God is the meaning beyond absurdity. Wherever I go, I encounter absurdity.

You see, there is an old idea in Judaism found in the Bible, strongly developed by the rabbis and very little known. And that is that God suffers when man suffers.⁶⁷

In another place Heschel accounts for the suffering of Israel and the grieving of God in the fact that history is the place where God and His purpose are defied:

Israel's suffering is God's grief ... It is God's involvement in the suffering of man ...that explains this particular concern for the downtrodden and contrite (cf. [Isaiah] 57:15). ... The prophets never taught that God and history are one, or that whatever happens below reflects the will of God above. Their vision is of man defying God, and God seeking man to reconcile with Him.

⁶⁶ Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God*, pp. 164, 167. For other penetrating works by Buber on this, see *On Judaism*, pp. 202-25; "A God Who Hides His Face," in *The Dimensions of Job*, pp.56-65; "The Silent Question," *Judaism* 1 (April 1952): 99-105. Also see Buber's *Good and Evil*. For other works on Buber see: P. A. Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, eds., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*; Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History* pp. 59-66, 78-79; "On the Eclipse of God," *Commentary* 37 (June 1964): 55-64. For other works on the mysterious silence of God see Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*, pp. 3-5, 94-96; Andre Neher, *The Exile of the Word: From the Silence of the Bible to the Silence of Auschwitz*, pp. 44-49,141-47, 210-39; Emil L. Fackenheim, "On Faith in the Secular World," in *Out of the Whirlwind*. pp. 493-514; Leo Baeck, "This People Israel," in *Out of the Whirlwind*, pp. 522-33; Pinchas Peli, "In Search of Religious Language for the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism* 32 (Winter 1979): 23-24.

⁶⁷ Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Reflections on Being a Jew," in *Modern Jewish Thought: A Source Reader*, pp. 204-5.

History is where God is defied, where justice suffers defeats. God's purpose is neither clearly apparent nor translatable into rational categories of order and design. There are only moments in which it is revealed.

God's power in history does not endure as a process; it occurs at extraordinary events. There is a divine involvement and concern, involvement in what is done, for that which is. Even where His power is absent, His concern is present.

{37} There was a moment when God looked at the universe made by Him and said: "It is good." But there was no moment in which God could have looked at history made by man and said: "It is good."⁶⁸

Contending with God

The third perspective from the moderate spectrum is that in the midst of deepest suffering the Jew is to contend with God. It is his responsibility to argue his case with the Almighty. The Jewish sufferer is never to be a passive participant in his plight - he must be an active agent with the God who has brought such a suffering into his life. Shapiro maintains that "to challenge God is within our tradition."⁶⁹ And this is certainly true, beginning with the biblical characters. For example, the following challenged God over differing, but important matters: Abraham (Gen. 18), Moses (Exod. 5:32), Moses and Aaron together (Num. 16), Job, (Job 13), David (Pss. 10;13), the sons of Korah (Pss. 42, 44), Ethan the Ezrahite (Ps. 89), Jeremiah (Jer. 12; Lam. 3), Habakkuk (Hab. 1), and so on. In fact, the innocent suffering of Job has become one of the favorite biblical paradigms of the Holocaust?⁷⁰ It is no wonder that the rabbis followed the biblical pattern as well.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, 2 vols 1:151,168.

⁶⁹ Morris Shapiro, "For Yom Hashoah," *Conservative Judaism* 28 (Spring 1964): 57-58.

⁷⁰ For Job as a working paradigm for the Holocaust see Bernard J. Bamberger *The Search for Jewish Theology*, pp. 41-42; Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*, Pp. 68-70, 93, 113; Nahum N. Glatzer, ed., *The Dimensions of Job* Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man*, pp. 135-56; *Poets, Prophets and Sages*, pp. 294-99; Eli Weisel, *Legends of Our Time*, pp. 210, 221; *Messengers of God*, pp. 225-49; Jose Faur, "Reflection, on Job end Situation Morality," *Judaism* 19 (Spring 1970) 219-25. Robert Gordis, "The Lord out of the Whirlwind," *Judaism* 13 (Winter 1964): 48-63; "The Temptation of Job - Tradition Versus Experience in Religion," *Judaism* 4 (Summer 1955): 195-208; Irving Greenberg "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* pp. 34-36; "Orthodox Judaism and the Holocaust," *Gesher* 7 (1979): 60; Frieda Clark Hyman, "Man Versus God," *Jewish Spectator* 31 (October 1966): 16-18; Max Laserson, "Power and Justice," *Judaism* 2 (January 1953): 52.60; Andre Neher "Job: The Biblical Man" *Judaism* 13 (Winter 1964): 37-47; Richard L. Rubenstein, "Job and Auschwitz," *USQR* 25 (Summer 1970): 421-37; Harold M. Schulwis, "Karl Barth's job" *JQR* 65 (January 1975): 156-67; David S. Shapiro, "The Problem of Evil and the Book of Job," *Judaism* 5 (winter 1956): 46-52; Morris Stockhammer, Job's Problem," *Judaism* 2 (July 1953): 247-53.

⁷¹ See Reuven Kimelman, "Rabbinic Ethics of a Protest" *Judaism* 19 (Winter 1970): 38-58; Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust* pp. 92-94. For examples of contending with God in the hasidic masters, see Elie Wiesel, *Four Hasidic Masters and Their Struggles against Melancholy*; plus *Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters*, For example, in the last work Wiesel states (pp. 198-99): "To blindly submit to God, without questioning the meaning of this submission, would be to diminish Him. To want to understand Him would be to reduce His intentions, His vision, to the level of ours. How then can man take himself seriously? Revolt is not a solution, neither is submission. Remains laughter, metaphysical laughter."

{38} To contend with God is to blast away all personal indifference. Arguing with God is permitted, but apathy never. In a recent television appearance, Wiesel affirmed this position within Judaism:

*For a Jew to believe in God is good. For a Jew to protest against is still good. But simply to ignore God, that is not good. Anger, yes. Protest, yes. Affirmation, yes. But indifference to God, no. You can be a Jew with God; you can be a Jew against God; but not without God.*⁷²

But Wiesel also affirms that any genuine protest against God must come from within the covenant, not without: “I believe that God *is* part of our experience. The Jew, in my view, may rise against God, provided he remains within God.”

The Presence of Two Histories

The fourth perspective from the moderate spectrum is that Jewish suffering in general, and the Holocaust in particular, demonstrate the presence of two histories. They develop side by side and are in conflict down through the ages. One is the history of the nations, the other of Israel. Berkovits maintains that this is the only way to understand the Holocaust, by setting it in its historic dilemma:

*It would seem to us that there are two histories: one, that of the nations, and the other, that of Israel. The history of the nations is self-explanatory. It is naturalistic history, explainable in terms of power and economics. It is exactly on those terms that the history of Israel remains a sealed secret: it defies that kind of interpretation. The history of Israel alone is not self-explanatory; it testifies to a supra-natural dimension jutting into history. Now, if the two could have been neatly divided and separated from each other, things might have worked out quite nicely. There would not have been either anti-Semitism or pogroms, either ghettos or crematoria. But unavoidably, both histories take place in the same time dimension and occupy the same space; together they form the history of mankind. Of necessity, the two histories interpenetrate. Thus, in the naturalistic realm occasionally the Voice is heard and a glimpse is gained of the presence of the supra-natural in this world. On the other hand, the wild unbridled forces of the naturalistic realm ever so often invade - and wreak havoc in - the this-worldly domain in which sustenance of meaning and purpose is drawn from the supra-natural dimension.*⁷³

Ignaz Maybaum, speaking out of the Reform tradition, maintains that this concept of two histories must be taken a step further. It is not only that they develop side by side, but that Israel’s innocent suffering at the hands of the nations is God’s way {39} of driving the gentile world to repentance - their obvious guilt is made manifest through the innocent suffering of Israel. In other words, each holocaust of the Jew brings progress into the world, a progress that leads men back to God.

⁷²Alice L. Ekardt, “Rebel Against God,” *Face to Face* 6 (Spring 1979): 18.

⁷³Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*, pp. 111-12. See also “The Hiding God of History,” in *The Catastrophy of European Jewry; Antecedents-History-Reflections*, pp. 698-703.

Jews are non-Christians; in this gentile world in which they are bidden by God to live as a dispersed people, Jews have a history to which the Servant-of-God texts of the Book of Isaiah provide the pattern. In Auschwitz, ... Jews suffered vicarious death for the sins of mankind. It says in the liturgy of the Synagogue in reference to the first and second churban [the “destruction” of 586 B.C .and A.D. 70], albeit centuries after the event: “because of our sins.” After Auschwitz Jews need not say so. Can any martyr be a more innocent sin-offering than those murdered in Auschwitz! The millions who died in Auschwitz died “because of the sins of others.” Jews and non-Jews died in Auschwitz, but the Jew hatred which Hitler inherited from the medieval Church made Auschwitz the twentieth century Calvary of the Jewish people, the Golgotha of modern mankind is Auschwitz. The cross, the Roman gallows, was replaced by the gas chamber. The gentiles, it seems, must first be terrified by the blood of the sacrificed scapegoat to have the mercy of God revealed to them and become converted, become baptized gentiles, become Christians.⁷⁴

In other words, the catastrophe of the Holocaust is progress through sacrifice, the sacrifice of the innocent scapegoat of Israel brought the anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages to a close.⁷⁵ The Jew now lives in a purged world, not perfect yet, but still progressing, even at the awesome cost of his own precious life and that of his children.

Dialectical Faith

The fifth perspective from the moderate spectrum is that Judaism must now learn to live within dialectical faith, a faith that is stretched into a theological tension. The Holocaust has cast all of Judaism into a monumental tension, a tension caused by the God of the covenant who supposedly did not keep His part of the covenant. This is a tension that most Jewish religious leaders cannot tolerate. They, therefore, try to alleviate the tension, either through affirming the God of the covenant or through denying Him in some way or another. However, some recognize the tension as a valid religious stress in contemporary Judaism. They feel that, in all theological integrity, the tension cannot be cut - there must remain an {40} alternating rhythm between light and darkness, nihilism and redemption. After Auschwitz an untroubled, serene faith in God as the Lord of history no longer seems possible. Jews today must live with a troubled theism. Irving Greenberg affirms this dialectic of the Holocaust by speaking of “moment faiths”:

Faith is living life in the presence of the Redeemer, even when the world is unredeemed. After Auschwitz, faith means there are times when faith is overcome ... we now have to speak of “moment faiths,” moments when Redeemer and vision of redemption are present, interspersed with times when the flames and smoke of the burning children blot out faith - - though it flickers again...

This ends the easy dichotomy of atheist/theist, the confusion of faith with doctrine or demonstration. It makes clear that faith is a life response of the whole person to the Presence in life and history. Like life, this response ebbs and flows. The difference

⁷⁴ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, pp. 86-87. See also *Christianity and Anti-Semitism*.

⁷⁵ Maybaum, *The Face of God after Auschwitz*, pp. 32-35, 62-63.

between the skeptic and the believer is frequency of faith, and not of certitude of position. The rejection of the unbeliever by the believer is literally the denial or attempted suppression of what is within oneself. The ability to live with moment faith is the ability to live with pluralism and without the self-flattering, ethnocentric solutions which warp religion, or make it a source of hatred for the other.⁷⁶

Human Freedom - Human Depravity

The sixth perspective from the moderate spectrum is both a reaffirmation and a reappraisal. After the Holocaust, Judaism reaffirms its belief in the moral freedom of man, a freedom that gives man the choice of committing such an evil as the slaughter of six million Jews. Bemporad states this quite clearly: "Judaism affirms that man has a real choice and is responsible for that choice; it affirms that his choice makes a difference for good or for ill to man himself and to the universe in which man lives."⁷⁷ Prager and Telushkin affirm the same concept and place it within the context of the Holocaust:

God did not build Auschwitz and its crematoria. Men did. Man, not God, is responsible for the Holocaust. Judaism posits that people have freedom of choice. Perhaps we would prefer that people had been created as robots who {41} could do only good rather than as human beings who can also choose evil. But this is impossible; only where there exists the possibility of evil does there exist the possibility of good.⁷⁸

However, with this reaffirmation of man's moral freedom also has come a reappraisal of the degree of evil to which man can go in his moral choices. Judaism has traditionally rejected the concepts of original sin and total depravity. Gordis makes this point quite clear:

At the very outset, it must be emphasized that normative Judaism never maintained the view that man's nature is innately evil. Nor did it seek to buttress it by the teaching that Adam's sin of disobedience in the Garden of Eden placed a hereditary and unavoidable taint upon all his descendants. No such idea is expressed or implied anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. Thus the sin of Cain, like Lamech's exploits (Gen. 4:23) or the building of the Tower of Babel is not attributed to Adam's Fall in the Garden of Eden. On the contrary, the basic Hebrew standpoint is expressed in the

⁷⁶ Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* p. 27

⁷⁷ Jack Bemporad, "Toward a New Jewish Theology," *American Judaism* 14 (Winter 1964-65): 9,50.

⁷⁸ Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*, p. 35. For other articles on the concept of freedom in Jewish thinking, especially after the Holocaust, see Eliezer Berkovits, "Death of God," *Judaism* 20 (Winter 1971); 84; Jerome Eckstein, "The Holocaust and Jewish Theology," *Midstream* 23 (April 1977): 42-43; Emil L. Fackenheim, "Human Freedom and Divine Power," *Judaism* 12 (Summer 1963): 338-43; Robert Gordis, "A Cruel God or None - Is There No Other Choice?" *Judaism* 21 (Summer 1972): 281-82; Yehiel Ilzar, "Theological Aspects of the Holocaust," *Encounter* 42 (Spring 1981): 121, 125, 130; Byron L. Sherwin, "The Impotence of Explanation and the European Holocaust," *Tradition* 12 (Winter-Spring 1972): 105; David Wolf Silverman, "The Holocaust: A Living Force," *USQR* 32 (Spring & Summer 1977): 139.

*admonition to Cain that sin always lies in wait for man, but that he can rule over it (Gen. 4:7).*⁷⁹

Although Judaism has traditionally rejected the doctrines of original sin and total depravity, they have traditionally held that man is born with two impulses or inclinations; a good impulse (*yetzer hatov*) and an evil impulse (*yetzer hara*).⁸⁰

{42} And the direction of a man's life is determined by which impulse he chooses to obey.

However, while not denying this basic twofold impulse, Judaism has become much more skeptical of man's so-called goodness. Borowitz says that "it is no longer possible to make the goodness of man the cornerstone of Jewish faith."⁸¹ In light of the Holocaust, Sontag insists:

*...we must abandon any idea of "progress," or notion of the gradual uplift of humanity in modern times, that moves along a scale of increased sophistication. We now realize that horror comes from the intellectually advanced as well as from the primitive. Destruction knows no time or place. It is as much at home in universities as in primitive villages.*⁸²

One of the most sobering realizations to contemporary Judaism has been the knowledge that the nation that perpetrated the murder of six million Jews was the most enlightened country of its day. How could Germany, with all of its intellectual heritage and prestige, commit so heinous a crime? Berenbaum laments this terrible, but nevertheless true, fact:

Why is the Holocaust an unrelenting event? The Holocaust, by its scope, nature, and magnitude transforms our understanding of human culture and human existence. An unspoken premise of the advocates of culture and education is that the refinements of

⁷⁹Robert Gordis, "The Nature of Man in the Judeo-Christian Tradition," *Judaism* 2 (April 1953): 103. For other Jewish works on the nature of man see Robert Gordis, *A Faith for Moderns*, pp. 190-225; Abraham Joshua Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, pp. 39-41; *Who Is Man? For a biblical and Christian view of the nature of man* see Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols., vol. 2: *Angelology - Anthropology* pp. 125-373; David L. Cooper *Man: His Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Glorification*; Norman L. Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 311-403 *passim*; "Man's Destiny: Free or Forced?" *CSchR* 9(1979): 99-109; Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, pp. 193-206; J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man*; Ulrich Simon, *A Theology of Auschwitz: The Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, pp. 16, 26-27, 55, 156-58.

⁸⁰ For the rabbinic teaching on the two impulses or inclinations, as well as on the nature of man see A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, pp. 67-120; C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, pp. 295-314, etc; Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* 219-92. For contemporary Jewish expressions of the nature of man, in particular, the evil "bent" in his personality see Saul Bellow, *Herzog*, pp. 289-90, etc; Martin Buber, *The Way of Man According to the Teaching of Hasidim*; Arthur J. Lelyveld, *Atheism Is Dead*, pp. 158-84; Milton Meltzer, *Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust*, p. 65 etc; Max Picard *Hitler in Our Selves*; Jack Bemporad, "The Concept of Man after Auschwitz," in *Out of the Whirlwind*, pp. 477-87; S. H. Bergman, "God and Man in Modern Thought: Man as the Heir of God," in *Arguments and Doctrines: A Reader of Jewish Thinking in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* pp. 209-24; S. Daniel Breslauer, "Martyrdom and Charisma," *Encounter* 42 (Spring 1981): 133-42; Maurice S. Friedman, "Martin Buber's New View of Evil," *Judaism* 2 (July 1953): 239-46; Levi A. Olan, "The Nature of Man," in *Great Jewish Ideas*, pp. 165-81. G. N. Schlesinger, "The Problem of Evil and the Problem of Injustice," *Tradition* 13 (Autumn 1972): 42-51.

⁸¹ Borowitz, *How Can a Jew Speak of Faith Today?* p. 51. See also his "Hope Jewish and Hope Secular," *Judaism* 17 (Spring 1968): 142-43.

⁸² Frederick Sontag, "The Holocaust God," *Encounter* 42 (Spring 1981): 163.

*culture and learning somehow make us into better people and intensify our moral worth. Yet the Holocaust was perpetrated not by the least cultured and least sophisticated of nations but by the most cultured and most advanced of societies. Furthermore, the elements within that society that proved capable of perpetrating the evils were not the least cultured, but came from all spectrums of society including philosophers and scientists, musicians and engineers, lawyers and ministers, artists and intellectuals. No segment of German society proved immune ... We see that people could love good music and kill young children. They could be admirable husbands and concerned fathers {43} yet spend their days in constant contact with death and destruction. Human society can be organized and given meaning in such a way that the enterprise of death becomes triumphant. All this is possible in the twentieth century with technology facilitating the process.*⁸³

Once again it is Wiesel who dramatically points out that since the Holocaust all of humanity has been changed:

*After Auschwitz, the human condition is no longer the same. After Treblinka, nothing will ever be the same. The Event has altered man's perception and changed his relationship to God, to his fellow man and to himself. The unthinkable has become real. After Belsen everything seems possible.*⁸⁴

And finally, Charny focuses on the one vital lesson of the Holocaust, a lesson aimed at every living modern Jew: "... we ourselves must come to terms with the horrible violence that has been done to us as a mirror of the violence that lurks within us too."⁸⁵

Israel Must Live - the 614th Commandment

The seventh, and final, perspective from the moderate spectrum involves the re-establishment of the state of Israel. If the Holocaust was the death of Israel, then the re-establishment of the state was its resurrection. Out of the ashes of the death camps has arisen a living and viable expression of the Jewish people, and its battle cry is *Am Yisrael Chai* - "the people of Israel live." Besdin says: "Matching the Holocaust in power and mystery, is the reconstitution of the State of Israel in May of 1948. Only a dogmatic agnostic would fail to see the transcendental overtones of this sudden transformation of Jewish dignity and hope."⁸⁶

Samuels relates what the state of Israel has done for modern Jewish history:

{44} The Holocaust has, indeed, made it very difficult to believe in a God of love, a God of justice and goodness. It has also made it difficult to believe sincerely in a God of history. Until 1948, history, and especially Jewish history, became practically

⁸³ Michael Berenbaum, "Teach It to Your children," *Sh'ma 11* (1 May 1981): 100-101. For other comments on the potential destructiveness of the modern technological and scientific society see Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* p. 15; Samuel Pisar, *Of Blood and Hope*, p. 18.

⁸⁴ Elie Wiesel, "Holocaust: End or Beginning?" *Face to Face 7* (Winter 1980): 4.

⁸⁵ Israel W. Charny, "Teaching the Violence of the Holocaust," *Jewish Education 38* (March 1968): 23.

⁸⁶ Abraham R. Besdin, "Reflections on the Agony and the Ecstasy," *Tradition 11* (Spring 1971): 65.

*meaningless to many Jews, but the establishment of the State of Israel in that year, and the splendid and almost supernatural victory of Israel in June 1967, have helped to make Jewish history perhaps a little more meaningful now.*⁸⁷

Perhaps the foremost spokesman for the radical imperative of Israel's survival, especially following the Holocaust, is Emil L Fackenheim, Jewish philosopher and theologian. This has been a major theme in many of his writings. He asserts that there is a commanding voice of Auschwitz, a voice that demands the attentive ears of both religious and secular Jew. He says:

*Most assuredly no redeeming Voice is heard from Auschwitz, or ever will be heard. However, a commanding Voice is being heard, and has, however faintly, been heard from the start. Secularist Jews also hear it, even though perforce they leave it unidentified. At Auschwitz, Jews came face to face with absolute evil. They were and still are singled out by it, but in the midst of it they hear an absolute commandment: Jews are forbidden to grant posthumous victories to Hitler. They are commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. They are commanded to remember the victims of Auschwitz, lest their memory perish. They are forbidden to despair of man and his world, and to escape into either cynicism or otherworldliness, lest they co-operate in delivering the world over to the forces of Auschwitz. Finally, they are forbidden to despair of the God of Israel, lest Judaism perish. A secularist Jew cannot make himself believe by a mere act of will, nor can he be commanded to do so; yet he can perform the commandment of Auschwitz. And a religious Jew who has stayed with his God may be forced into new, possibly revolutionary, relationships with Him. One possibility, however, is wholly unthinkable. A Jew may not respond to Hitler's attempt to destroy Judaism by himself co-operating in its destruction. In ancient times, the unthinkable Jewish sin was idolatry. Today, it is to respond to Hitler by doing his work.*⁸⁸

{45} This radical imperative, that the authentic Jew of today is forbidden to hand Hitler yet another, posthumous victory, Fackenheim calls "a 614th commandment."⁸⁹

He places Jerusalem right alongside Auschwitz:

Jerusalem, while no "answer" to the Holocaust, is a response; while every Israeli lives that response. Israel is collectively what every survivor is individually: a No to the

⁸⁷Marc E. Samuels, "In Praise of Doubt," *Judaism* 20 (Autumn 1971): 458.

⁸⁸Emil L. Fackenheim, "Jewish Faith and the Holocaust: A Fragment," *Commentary* 46 (August 1968): 32-33. See also his *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections*, Pp. 84-92. For other works on Fackenheim's views see Seymour Cain, "Emil Fackenheim's Post-Auschwitz Theology," *Midstream* 17 (May 1971): 73-80; David Ellenson, "Emil Fackenheim and the Revealed Morality of Judaism," *Judaism* 25 (Autumn 1976): 402-13; Michael A. Meyer, *Judaism after Auschwitz: The Religious Thought of Emil L. Fackenheim*, "Commentary" 53 (June 1972): 55-62; Richard L. Rubenstein, "Emil Fackenheim's Radical Monotheism: Soundings" 57 (Summer 1974): 236-51; "God as Cosmic Sadist: In Reply to Emil Fackenheim," *CCen* 87 (29 July 1970): 921-23; Michael Wyschogrod, "Faith and the Holocaust: A Review Essay of Emil Fackenheim's "God's Presence in History," *Judaism* 20 (Summer 1971): 286-94.

⁸⁹Emil L. Fackenheim et al., "Jewish Values in the Post-Holocaust future: A Symposium," *Judaism* 16 (Summer 1967): 272. See also his *The Jewish Return into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem*, pp. 19-24.

*demons of Auschwitz, a Yes to Jewish survival and security - and thus a testimony to life against death on behalf of all mankind. the juxtaposition of Auschwitz and Jerusalem recalls nothing so vividly as Ezekiel's vision of the dead bones and the resurrection of the household of Israel. Every Israeli man, woman or child - stakes his life on the truth of that vision.*⁹⁰

There are those, of course, who reject any kind of modern comparison between the destruction of six million and the establishment of the state of Israel. For example, Angus says:

*We cannot be content with the old clichés, rehearsing the "sins" of our people and reveling in visions of Messianic Glory. Nor can we point to the "miracle" of Israel as the counterweight to the tragedy of the Six Million. The scales do not balance, however much you try.*⁹¹

Nevertheless, there is both a theological as well as an emotional tie between the Holocaust and the establishment of the State. Greenberg focuses on the theological significance when he says:

*The reborn state of Israel is this fundamental act of life and meaning of the Jewish people after Auschwitz. To fail to grasp that inextricable connection and response is to utterly fail to comprehend the theological significance of Israel. The most bitter secular atheist involved in Israel's upbuilding is the front line of the Messianic life-force struggling to give renewed testimony to the Exodus as ultimate reality. Israel was built by rehabilitating a half-million survivors of the Holocaust. Each one of those lives had to be rebuilt, given {46} opportunity for trust restored...the real point is that after Auschwitz, the existence of the Jew is a great affirmation and an act of faith. The re-creation of the body of the people, Israel, is renewed testimony to Exodus as ultimate reality, to God's continuing presence in history proven by the fact that his people, despite the attempt to annihilate them, still exist.*⁹²

Berkovits sees in the establishment of the state the theological assurance that there will be a messianic fulfillment of history. History is moving towards a messianic goal:

The assurance of the messianic fulfillment of history is beyond any doubt. The most convincing indication of its coming is the survival of Israel. The survival of Judaism and of the Jewish people in all ages, in conditions of utter political and material weakness, in spite of continuous discrimination and persecution, and in defiance of an endless series of the most barbarous and sadistic attempts at their extermination, baffles all explanation. It is the mystery of all ages. The return of Israel to its ancient homeland in

⁹⁰Emil L. Fackenheim, "The People Israel Lives," CCen 87 (6 May 1970): 567.

⁹¹Jacob B. Agus, "God and the Catastrophe," Conservative Judaism 18 (Summer 1964): 14.

⁹²Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire, : Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Holocaust, ' in Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? pp. 43, 48.

*our days, as Israel maintained for numberless generations that it would do, is the incomparable historic event of all times.*⁹³

Conclusion

This chapter has been a detailed survey of the major Jewish religious responses to the Holocaust. Eighteen major responses were surveyed, falling into three basic categories: the traditional, the radical, and the moderate. It has been seen that the responses come from all religious walks of life: the young and the old, the philosopher and the rabbi, the layman and the theologian, the skeptic and the faithful, the simple and the complex, the introverted and the extroverted, the survivor and the observer, the atheist and the theist, and so on. But all of them exhibit the same pains and scars - the Holocaust has permanently changed the {47} nature and character of contemporary Judaism. It will never be the same. Three concluding remarks are made at this point.

First, the survey of Jewish responses has demonstrated that there are no adequate answers within Judaism to account for the terrible suffering of the Holocaust. There are no simple facts or formulae that can adequately formulate and integrate the event itself into a meaningful religious experience. The facts will not even allow for any manipulation, let alone formulation. Even with a survey of 18 major religious responses from within Judaism (plus innumerable others), the Holocaust still defies adequate answers and integrity. The responses, at best, only represent fragmentary solutions to this most complex event. The answers, both from the human and the divine sides, continue to evade the consciousness of contemporary Judaism.

There is no one universal answer that accounts for all of the data. Each response depends upon the starting point of the respondent. The facts and the responses to these facts, are in large part determined by the presuppositions and methodologies used and applied. Different pre-conceptions and different beginnings produce very different conclusions. One's basic assumption about God and man will greatly determine one's corresponding conclusions about both, and their relationship with each other. Added to this is the fact that each of the responses is at best only fragmentary and descriptive. No one of the respondents claims to have the one final answer and solution to the trauma of the Holocaust.

In other words, what makes it so impossible to point to any definitive, or even agreed, results either with regard to a starting point or to conclusions? The answer to these questions revolves around Judaism's view of authority, in particular, biblical authority. Judaism is committed to an open system of revelation, and therefore, is not bound by just the biblical text and truth. The Written Law and the Oral Law hold an equal authority base in Judaism. The Written Law (i.e. the Jewish Bible or the Old Testament) is not the final authority for life and practice in the Jewish religion. It is modified and interpreted by the Oral Law, which is an equal authority in the religious Jew's life. Leon D. Stitskin, writing from within the Orthodox tradition reiterates this

⁹³*Eliezer Berkovits, God Man and History: A Jewish Interpretation*, pp. 153-54. See also his *Faith after the Holocaust*, pp. 70, 112-13, 152-58. Plus his "The Hiding God of History," in *The Catastrophe of European Jewry: Antecedents-History-Reflections*, p. 701.

distinction: “To the Christians the Bible is a self-contained book expounded in accordance with its own sources. To the Jew, however, the Written and Oral Law are one.”⁹⁴

Ernst Simon describes the relationship between the Written and Oral Law, and the implications that must follow such a distinction:

*...Jewish law is based on the still ongoing procedure of finding the truth in each and every debatable problem by means of free discussion which tries to arrive at a consensus of interpreting Holy Writ and the Oral Tradition. Everyone who {48} has acquired the necessary knowledge is not only permitted but obliged to take part in these discussions, whatever his occupation or social status.*⁹⁵

In other words, instead of coming to a completed and written text from God, which therefore carries its own unique and final authority, Judaism comes to the oral tradition about the written truth and must come to its own conclusions about life and truth, about God and man. This is not the case for the conservative evangelical. He comes to a complete and final revelation from God, which, by absolute necessity, carries with it full and ultimate authority.⁹⁶ In other words, he is bound by the text of Holy Scripture alone. That is why he alone can give an authoritative answer to the Holocaust, not necessarily a complete answer (leaving room for “mystery” within the revelation of God), but certainly an authoritative answer. The remainder of this paper shall attempt to do just that.

⁹⁴Leon Stitskin, “A Rejoinder,” *Tradition* 17 (Spring 1978): 91.

⁹⁵Ernst Simon, “The Jews as God’s Witness to the World,” *Judaism* 15 (Summer 1966):312. For a fuller description of the Jewish view of Written and Oral Law see A. Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, pp. 121-58; C. C. Montefiore, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, pp. 115-73, 191-201; Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, Pp. 116-69; Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, pp. 3-73, 272-75.

⁹⁶For a fuller description of the conservative evangelical view of the Bible and its authority see Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols, vol 1: ProLegomena - Bibliology - Theology Proper, pp. 21-125; Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible: An Historical and Exegetical Study*;

J. I. Packer, “Fundamentalism” and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles; Clark H Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation - The Foundation of Christian Theology*; Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*.

{49} Paul and “The Israel of God”:

An Exegetical and Eschatological Case-Study⁰

By S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

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In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, there remains persistent support for the contention that the term *Israel* may refer properly to gentile believers in the present age. Incidental support for this is claimed in such passages as Romans 2:28-29; 9:6 and Philippians 3:3, but the primary support is found in Galatians 6:16 where Paul writes, “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (NASB). The rendering of the NIV illustrates the point, for it has, “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.” It is obvious from this rendering that the term “the Israel of God” is to be equated with “all who follow this rule,” that is, with believers in the present age, whether Jew or gentile.

This rendering of the verse serves quite well the purpose of those who would like to find New Testament justification for the practice of the spiritualization of Scripture, that is, the habit of taking Old Testament texts regarding ethnic Israel and referring them to the New Testament church.¹

{50} I cannot help but think that dogmatic considerations loom large in the interpretation of Galatians 6:16. The tenacity with which this application of “the Israel of God” to the church is held in spite of a mass of evidence to the contrary leads one to think that the supporters of the view believe their eschatological system, usually an amillennial scheme, hangs on the reference of the term to the people the God, composed of both believing Jews and gentiles. Amillennialism does not hang on this interpretation, but the view does appear to have a treasured place in amillennial exegesis.

In speaking of the view that the term refers to ethnic Israel, a sense that the term *Israel* has in every other of its more than sixty-five uses in the New Testament and in its fifteen uses in Paul,

⁰ Reprinted by permission from *Essays in Honor of I. Dwight Pentecost*, ed. by Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).

¹ For a defense of the hermeneutical practice see Albertus Pieters, “Darbyism vs. the Historic Faith,” *Calvin Forum* 2 (May 1936): 25-28; Martin J. Wyngaarden, *The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment: A study of the “Spiritualization” in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955), p.167. Another familiar illustration of spiritualization is found in Oswald I. Allis’s *Prophecy and the Church* (Wayne, Pa.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), p.149, where in the discussion of Acts 15:12-21 Allis refers the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David to the ingathering of the Gentiles in the church age.

in tones almost emotional, William Hendriksen, the respected Reformed commentator, writes, “I refuse to accept the explanation.”²

I am reminded of the comment of Irving Kristol, John M. Olin Professor of Social Thought at the New York University Graduate School of Business. In another connection he once said, “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious.”

It is often said by New Testament and Old Testament scholars that systematic theologians do not pay enough attention to the text and its exegetical details. The claim is too frequently justified, but there is another side to the question. It may also be said that biblical scholars often unwittingly overlook their own theological presuppositions, logical fallacies, and hermeneutical errors. What I am leading up to is expressed neatly by D. W. B. Robinson in an article written about twenty years ago: “The glib citing of Gal. 6:16 to support the view that ‘the church is the new Israel’ should be vigorously challenged. There is weighty support for a limited interpretation.”³ We can say more than this, in my opinion. There is more than weighty support for a more limited interpretation. There is overwhelming support for such. In fact, the least likely view among several alternatives is the view that “the Israel of God” is the church.

I propose to review the present status of the interpretation of Galatians 6:16, then offer an analysis grammatically, exegetically, and theologically of the principal {51} suggested interpretations. A few concluding comments will bring the paper to its termination.

GALATIANS 6:16 IN CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION

View One: “The Israel of God” is the Church

A few words will suffice for the context of the text in Galatians, for there is general agreement regarding it. Whereas others boast of their conquests and their statistics in winning adherents to their legalistic cause, Paul would confine his boasting to the cross of Christ, by which he had been severed from the world and its spirit. In Christ and in the church of Christ the circumcision issue has lost its relevance. He lives in the realm of the new creation where walking by the Spirit prevails. For those who walk accordingly there is the blessing of peace and mercy, and that also touches the Israel of God.

His scars in the service of Jesus, not circumcision, certify and authenticate his confession that his master is the Lord. And, fittingly, picking up the note of grace with which he began his letter (cf. 1:3), a benediction concludes the epistle. So much for Galatians 6:11-18.

Three principal interpretations have characterized the exegesis of Galatians 6:16. The first is the claim that “the Israel of God” is simply a term descriptive of the believing church of the present age. The term is linked with the preceding word, “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them,” by an explicative *kai* (NASB, “and”; NIV, “even”) given practically

² William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), p. 247.*

³ D.W. B. Robinson, “*The Distinction Between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians*”, *Australian Biblical Review* 13 (1965): 29-48.

the sense of apposition. The Israel of God is the body who shall walk by the rule of the new creation, and they include believing people from the two ethnic bodies of Jews and gentiles.

It is well-known that Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* is the first author to claim an identification of the term *Israel* with the church.⁴ Of the commentators, Chrysostom is one of the earliest to identify apparently the church with Israel, affirming that those who keep the rule are “true Israelites.”⁵

{52} Others who follow this view include Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., and Eugene Nida,⁶ Ragnar Bring,⁷ John Calvin,⁸ R.A. Cole,⁹ N.A. Dahl,¹⁰ Donald Guthrie,¹¹ William Hendricksen,¹² Robert L. Johnson,¹³ M. J. Lagrange,¹⁴ Hans K. LaRondelle,¹⁵ R.C.H. Lenski,¹⁶ J.B. Lightfoot,¹⁷ Martin Luther,¹⁸ Herman Ridderbos,¹⁹ Henrich Schlier²⁰ and John R.W. Stott.²¹

⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho 11:1-5, etc.*

⁵ *Commentary on Epistle to the Galatians and Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians of S. John Chrysostom, new rev. ed. (London: Walter Smith (Late Mosley), 1884), p.98.*

⁶ *Daniel C. Arichea, Jr. and Eugene A. Nida, A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Galatians (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975), pp.158- 59. Very disappointing help is provided for the translator here.*

⁷ *Ragnar Bring, Commentary on Galatians, trans. Eric Wahlstorm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg 1961), p.291.*

⁸ *John Calvin, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p.118. Calvin contends that the term Israel of God “includes all believers, whether Gentiles or Jews.”*

⁹ *R. A. Cole, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans , 1965), pp. 183-84 . A cursory treatment in which the author appears to consider the key term as simply another way of saying “the people of God”.*

¹⁰ *N.A. Dahl, “Der Name Israel: 1. Zur Auslegung von Gal. 6, 16, “Judaica 6 (1950):161-70, a two-part article containing a debate with Gottlob Schrenk over the meaning of the term.*

¹¹ *Donald Guthrie, ed, Galatians, The Century Bible (London: Thomas Nelson, 1969),pp. 161-62. Though relating the terms peace and Israel to Ps. 1125:5, where the latter term refers to ethnic Israel, Guthrie says, “Israel seems to refer to the same people as “all who walk by this rule,” that is, the church.*

¹² *Hendriksen, pp. 246-47.*

¹³ *Robert L. Johnson, The Letter of Paul to the Galatians (Austin: Sweet, 1969), pp. 179-80. He has confused the question of the proper punctuation of the text.*

¹⁴ *M. J. Lagrange. Saint Paul Epitre aux Galates (Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, 1950), p. 166. Lagrange, however, denies the explicative sense by which Lightfoot and others understand the kai before *epi ton Israel tou theou*, He understands it as simply copulative, “ouvrant un plus large horizon.”*

¹⁵ *Hans K. LaRondelle, The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation (Berrien Springs, Mich: Andrews U, 1983),pp.108-14. LaRondelle's defense of his position, made ostensibly according to sound hermeneutics, is faulty hermeneutically and logically.*

¹⁶ *R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians (Columbus: Wartburg, 1937), pp.320-21. Lenski takes the kai to express “explicative apposition.”*

¹⁷ *J.B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (London: Macmillan 1896), pp. 224-25. Lightfoot takes kai to be “epexegetic, i.e. it introduces the same thing under a new aspect” (p. 225). Cf. Heb. 11:17.*

¹⁸ *Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, ed. Philip S. Watson (Westwood: Revell, n.d.), p.565.*

¹⁹ *Herman N. Ridderbos, The Epistle of Paul to Churches of Galatia, trans Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1953) p.227 cf. also his Paul: An Outline of his Theology ,trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1975),p.336. In both works Ridderbos, for whose scholarship I have the greatest admiration, admits that Paul does not “generally”, or “in general” (Paul) speak of Israel as inclusive of all believers. In fact, he states that Paul “in general” continues to reserve the names “Israel”, “Jews”, and “Hebrews” for the national Jewish people*

{53} The list of names supporting this view is impressive, although the bases of the interpretation are few and feeble, namely, the claim that the *kai* (KJV, “and”; NASB, “and”; NIV “even”) before the term ‘the Israel of God’ is an explicative or appositional *kai*; the fact that the members of the church may be called “the seed of Abraham” (cf. Gal. 3:29) and the claim that if one sees the term “the Israel of God” a believing ethnic Israel, they would be included in the preceding clause, “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them.”²²

View Two: ‘The Israel of God’ is the Remnant of Israelites in the Church

The second of the important interpretations of Galatians 6:16 and “the Israel of God” is the view that the words refer simply to believing ethnic Israelites in the Christian church. Does not Paul speak of himself as an Israelite (cf. Rom. 11:1)? And does not the apostle also speak of “a remnant according to God’s gracious choice” (cf. 11:5), words that plainly in the context refer to believing Israelites? What more fitting thing could Paul write, it is said, in a work so strongly attacking Jewish professing believers, the Judaizers, than to make it most plain that he was not attacking the true believing Jews?

Judaizers are anathematized, but the remnant according to the election of grace are “the Israel of God.” At the conclusion of *Kampfepistel*²³ the battle ceases, an “olive branch”²⁴ is offered to the beloved saints who are brethren. The epistle after a couple of lines concludes appropriately on the note of grace, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.”

Perhaps this expression, “the Israel of God,” is to be contrasted with his expression in I Corinthians 10:18, “Israel after the flesh” (KJV), as the true, believing Israel versus the unbelieving element, just as in Romans 9:6 the apostle distinguishes two {54} Israels, one elect and believing, the other unbelieving, but both ethnic Israelites (cf. vv. 7-13).

The names in support of this second interpretation are not as numerous, but they are important for scholarly attainment. They include Hans Dieter Betz, the author of a very significant and original recent commentary in Galatians, one destined to be consulted by advanced students of the letter for years to come,²⁵ Charles J. Ellicott,²⁶ Walter Gutbrod,²⁷ Adolf Schlatter,²⁸ and Gottlob Schrenk.²⁹

(Paul, p. 336). Ridderbos’s use of “in general” and “generally” is a bit amusing, since he admits Gal. 6:16 is the only example of such usage (if it is).

²⁰ Henrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), p. 209. Schlier follows Lagrange in his understanding of *kai*.

²¹ John R. W. Stott, *Only One Way: The Message of Galatians* (London: Intervarsity, 1968, 1974), p. 180. Stott takes the *kai* as “even”, but he also adds that it may be omitted, as the RSV does.

²² This is the contention of Anthony A. Hoekema in his well argued *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p.197. It is clever observation but unconvincing especially in the light of Mark 16:7 and its *kai toi petoi* (KJV, “and Peter”). It is clear that the *kai* may single out for special attention someone or something from a larger body or elements.

²³ Schrenk’s decryption of Galatians in his article, “Der Segenwunsch nach der *Kampfepistel*”, *Judaica* 6 (1950):170.

²⁴ Cf. Cole, p.183.

²⁵ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians, Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp.320-23.

View Three: “The Israel of God” is the Future Redeemed Nation

The third of the interpretations is the view that the expression “the Israel of God” is used eschatologically and refers to the Israel that shall turn to the Lord in the future in the events that surround the second advent of our Lord. Paul would then be thinking along the lines of his well-known prophecy of the salvation of “all Israel” in Romans 11:25-27. As F. F. Bruce comments, “For all his demoting of the law and the customs, Paul held good hope of the ultimate blessing of Israel.”³⁰

There are some variations in the expression of their views, but those who hold that *Israel* here either refers to or includes the nation as a whole that will turn to the Lord eschatologically, in line with Romans 11, include F. F. Bruce, Ernest De Witt {55} Burton,³¹ W. D. Davies,³² Robert Govett,³³ Franz Mussner,³⁴ and Peter Richardson.³⁵

²⁶ Charles J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians with a Revised Translation* (Andover: Draper, 1880), p.154. *Valuable for grammatical analysis, his commentaries illustrate the fact that the old is not always to be overlooked.*

²⁷ Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, s.v. “Ioudaios, Israel, Ebraios in the New Testament” by Walter Gutbrod, 3:387-88. *Gutbrod’s comments are quite significant. He points out that Paul “neither could nor would separate the term from those who belong to Israel by descent.” Cf. Rom. 11:17-24.*

²⁸ Adolf Schlatter, *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Kolosser und Philemon* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1963), pp.150-51. *He says Paul refers here in the blessing to the Israel that is a new creation in Christ, just as he is. Paul does not forget his genuine brethren (cf. Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5).*

²⁹ In two important articles Gottlob Schrenk argues persuasively for the second interpretation. His comments on the grammatical usage of kai, as the usage of Israel and peace (cf. Ps.124-5, LXX; 127:6, LXX), are telling. Cf. Gottlob Schrenk, “Was bedeutet Israel Gottes?” *Judaica* 5 (1949): 81-95; “Der Segenwunsch nach der Kampfpistel,” *Judaica* 6 (1950):170-90. *The second article is a reply to Dahl’s response to his first article. I find Schrenk much more convincing.*

³⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p.275.

³¹ De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1921), pp. 357-59. *Burton argues for a change in the common punctuation of the verse, preferring to put a comma after autous (NASB, “mercy”) were taken together, the order is illogical, for the effect would be placed first and the cause afterwards. Further, in countering the claim that the final clause of the verse is explicative of those who walk according to this rule and thus composed of both Jews and Gentiles in the church, he says, “there is, in fact, no instance of his [Paul’s] using Israel except of the Jewish nation or a part thereof” (p.358). Burton takes the “and mercy” to be an afterthought and the final words, “and upon the Israel of God,” to be a second afterthought. He contends that the kai (NASB, “and”) following eleos (NASB “mercy”) is slightly ascensive, introducing the last clause, “and mercy upon the Israel of God” (Burton’s rendering). This last clause refers to “those within Israel who even though as yet unenlightened are the true Israel of God” (ibid). His view would be strengthened, it seems to me, if he had taken the first kai after “them” as copulative or continuative and the second one after “mercy” as adjunctive, rendering the verse, “And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy also upon the Israel of God.”*

³² D. Davies, “Paul and the People of Israel,” *New Testament Studies* 24:4-39. *Davies specifically finds it difficult to see Israel here as the church of Jews and Gentiles, which would be contrary to Pauline usage elsewhere. He says, “If this proposal were correct one would have expected to find support for it in Rom. ix-xi where Paul extensively deals with “Israel” (p.11, note). Davies’s views are not very definite or clear, but he does admit that the desire for peace in verse 16, recalling the Shemoneh Esreh, may refer to the Jewish people as a whole (p.10).*

³³ Robert Govett, *Govett on Galatians* (Miami Springs: Conley and Schoettle, 1981 [orig. ed, 1872]), pp. 233-36. *Govett, the well-known nineteenth century independent scholar, and pastor, referred the clause “and upon the Israel*

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to note simply that weight of contemporary scholarship is opposed to the prevailing interpretation of amillennial interpreters that “the Israel of God” refers to the church, composed of both Jewish and gentile believers, although the subjective nature of this comment recognized by the author. {56} It is based upon the fact that those who hold to the second and third views unite in their opposition to the prevailing amillennial interpretation.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS

View One: “The Israel of God” is the Church

Grammatical and syntactical considerations. It is necessary to begin this part of the discussion with a reminder of a basic, but often neglected, hermeneutical principle. It is this: in the absence of compelling exegetical and theological considerations, we should avoid the rarer grammatical usages when the common ones make good sense.

We do not have the space to discuss the semantic range of the Greek conjunction *kai*. The standard grammars handle the matter acceptably. Suffice it to say, there are several well-recognized senses of *kai* in the New Testament. First and most commonly, *kai* has the continuative or copulative sense of *and*. Second, *kai* frequently has the adjunctive sense of *also*. Third, *kai* occasionally has the ascensive sense of *even*, which shades off into an explicative sense of *namely*.³⁶

The ascensive sense, to my mind, is to be distinguished from an explicative, or epexegetic, sense. It expresses a further, a heightened, identification of a term. For example, I might say, “I visited Dallas, I even visited Dallas Theological Seminary.” The *kai*, then, would be practically an appositional *kai*. It would be called explicative or epexegetical by some. The point I would like to make is that the English word *even* has multiple usage also. In fact, I tend to think that this may account for renderings such as the “even” of the NIV. The genuine and fairly common usage of *even* in the ascensive sense in Greek has been taken over in English and made an *even* in the rather rare explicative or appositional sense. Because the latter usage serves well the view that the term “the Israel of God” is the church, the dogmatic concern overcame grammatical usage. An extremely rare usage has been made to replace the common usage, even in spite of the fact that the common and frequent usage of *and* makes perfectly good sense in Galatians 6:16.

of God” to “the renewed men of Israel, whom God will restore to Himself and to their land in millennial days” (P.235). Cf. Ps 135:5; 128:5-6; Isa. 54:7-8, 10; Mic. 7:20.

³⁴ Franz Mussner, *Der Galatewbrief* (Frieburg: Herders, 1977), p.417. He links the clause with Rom. 11:26. His final comments are, “So deutet der Apostel in Gal 6,16 schon an, was er dann in Rom 9-11 explizieren wird. Paulus hat sein Volk nie vergessen” (p.417). The “Israel of God” is identical with the “all Israel” of Rom. 11:26.

³⁵ Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge U, 1969), pp.74-84 Richardson’s discussion is one of the lengthiest of the treatments of the text.

³⁶ Schrenk lists as examples of the explicative usage 1 Cor.8:12; 12:27f; 14:27; 15:38; 2Cor. 5:15. The usage is often found in conjunction with *kai touto*, as in 1 Cor. 2:2; 5:1; 6:6, 8, 10-11; Rom. 13:11; Eph. 2:8; cf. Heb. 11:12. A cursory study of these instances will cast doubt over the validity of some of the examples. Cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1961), pp. 228-29; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* adapted from the 4th Latin ed. by Joseph Smith (Rome: Scripta Pontifici Instituti Biblici, 1963), pp.152-54. Zerwick is undecided about Gal. 6:16 (p.154).

There are other uses of *kai*, such as an emphatic and an adversative use, but these uses are so rare that we may safely drop discussion of them.

{57} Coming to the problem, the first interpretation referred to above, that in which the term “the Israel of God” is referred to the believing church, involves taking *kai* in an explicative sense³⁷ and the rendering of it as *even*.

There are compelling objections to this view. In the first place, this usage in the light of *kai* in all phases of the literature is proportionately very infrequent, as both G. B. Winer³⁸ and Ellicott acknowledge. Ellicott contends that it is doubtful that Paul ever uses *kai* in “so marked an explicative sense.”³⁹ There is not anything in recent grammatical study and research that indicates otherwise.

Finally, if it were Paul’s intention to identify the “them” of the text as “the Israel of God”, then why not simply eliminate the *kai* after “mercy”? The result would be far more to the point, if Paul were identifying the “them,” that is, the church, with the term “Israel.” The verse would be rendered then, “And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, upon the Israel of God.”⁴⁰ A case could be solidly made for the apposition of the “Israel of God” with “them,” and the rendering of the NIV could stand. Paul, however, did not eliminate the *kai*.

These things make it highly unlikely that the first interpretation is to be preferred grammatically. Because both of the other suggested interpretations are not cumbered with these grammatical and syntactical difficulties, they are more likely views.

Exegetical considerations. Under this heading are covered matters of context, both general and special, and matters of usage, both Pauline and other.

We turn again to consider the first interpretation, namely, that the “them” refers to the present people of God, and the term “the Israel of God” is a further description of the “them.” From the standpoint of biblical usage this view stands condemned.

There is no instance in biblical literature of the term *Israel* being used in the sense of the church, or the people of God as composed of both believing ethnic Jews and gentiles. Nor, on the other hand, as one might expect if there were such usage, does the phrase *ta ethne* (KJV, “the gentiles”) ever mean the non-Christian world specifically, but only the non-Jewish peoples, although such are generally {58} non-Christians.⁴¹ Thus, the usage of the term *Israel* stands overwhelmingly opposed to the first view.⁴²

³⁷ Cf. Lenski, *Interpretation of Paul’s Epistles*, pp.320-21 *Lightfoot*, *Epistle to the Galatians*, p 225 *Hoekema*, p 197.

³⁸ G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek, Regarded as a Sure Basis for New Testament Exegesis*, trans. with additions by W. F. Moulton, 9th English ed.(Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882), p.546.

³⁹ Ellicott, p.154. He also discusses and questions other of the relatively few claimed instances of this usage.

⁴⁰ Cf. Schrenk, “*der Segenwunsch*”, *Judaica* 6 (1950): 177-78.

⁴¹ Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), p49.

⁴² Cf. Davies, “Paul and the People of Israel”, p.11, who with others makes the point that if Israel here should include believing Gentiles, one would expect to find support for this in Rom.9-11. But none is here.

The usage of terms *Israel* and *the church* in the early chapters of the book of Acts is in complete harmony, for Israel exists there alongside the newly formed church, and the two entities are kept separate in terminology.

Occasionally Romans 9:6 has been advanced in support of the view that *Israel* may include gentiles. Paul writes, “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel” (NASB). But that will not do, for Paul is here speaking only of a division within ethnic Israel. Some of them are believers and thus truly Israel, whereas others, though ethnically Israelites, are not truly Israel, since they are not elect and believing (F.W. 7-13). In the NASB rendering the words “who are descended from Israel” refer to the natural descendants of the patriarchs, from Abraham through Jacob, whereas the opening words, “they are not all Israel,” limit the ideal sense of the term to the elect within the nation, the Isaacs and the Jacobs (cf. Rom. 4:12). No gentiles are found in the statement at all.⁴³

A book of recent vintage is that of Hans K. LaRondelle, entitled *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*. It launches a broad-scale attack on dispensational views and lectures dispensationalists for their hermeneutical lapses. In his treatment of Galatians 6:16, Professor LaRondelle, a Seventh Day Adventist, takes a number of unsupportable positions, as well as largely avoiding obvious difficulties with his scheme of things. He misunderstands the general context of Galatians to begin with, contending that it is written by Paul to reject “any different status of claim of the Jewish Christians beside or above that of gentile Christians before God.”⁴⁴ On the contrary, the apostle is concerned with **{59}** correcting the gospel preached to the Galatians by the Judaizers, particularly their false contention that it was necessary to be circumcised to be saved and to observe as Christians certain requirements of the law of Moses in order to remain in divine favor (cf. Gal. 1:6-9; 2:1-31; 5:1-4; 6:11-18). The apostle makes no attempt whatsoever to deny that there is a legitimate distinction of race between gentile and Jewish believers in the church. His statement in Romans 11:5 should have warned Professor LaRondelle against this error. There is a remnant of Jewish believers in the church according to the election of grace. That the professor overlooked Paul’s careful language is seen in his equation of terms that differ. He correctly cites Paul’s statement that “there is neither Jew nor Greek”⁴⁵ (cf. Gal. 3:28) but then a couple of pages later modifies this to “there is neither Jew nor Greek”⁴⁶ *‘within the Church,’*” (italics mine) as if the terms *Christ* and *church* are identical.

This approach fails to see that Paul does not say there is neither Jew nor Greek *within the church*. He speaks of those who are “in Christ.” For LaRondelle, however, inasmuch as there is neither Jew nor Greek within the church and in Christ, there can be no distinction between them in the church. But Paul also says there is neither male nor female, nor slave nor free man in Christ. Would he then deny sexual differences within the church? Or the social differences in Paul’s

⁴³ Cf. Walter Gutbrod, “Israel”, 3:387. He comments, “On the other hand, we are not told here that Gentile Christians are the true Israel. The distinction at R.9:6 does not go beyond what is presupposed in .1:47, and it corresponds to the distinction between loudaios en to krypto and loudaios en to phanero at R.2:28f, which does not imply that Paul is calling Gentiles the true Jews.”

⁴⁴ LaRondelle, p.108.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid p.110.

day? Is it not plain that Paul is not speaking of national or ethnic difference in Christ, but of spiritual status? In that sense there is no difference in Christ.

Throughout LaRondelle's discussion of the text there is no acknowledgment, so far as I can find, of the fact that the term *Israel* is never found in the sense of the church. Is not that very relevant to the interpretation of Galatians 6:16?

Finally, to sum up his position, Professor LaRondelle affirms that since the church is the seed of Abraham and Israel is the seed of Abraham, the two entities, the church and Israel, are the same. The result is a textbook example of the fallacy of the undistributed middle.⁴⁷

Theological considerations. Peter Richardson has pointed out that there is no historical evidence that the term *Israel* was identified with the church before A.D. 160. Further, at that date there was no characterization of the church as "the {60} Israel of God."⁴⁸ In other words, for more than a century after Paul there was no evidence of the identification.

To conclude the discussion of the first interpretation, it seems clear that there is little evidence-grammatical, exegetical, or theological - that supports it. On the other hand, there is sound historical evidence against the identification of *Israel* with believing or unbelieving gentiles. The grammatical usage of *kai* is not favorable to the view, nor is the Pauline or New Testament usage of *Israel*. Finally, if D.W.B. Robinson's article is basically sound, the Pauline teaching in Galatians contains a recognition of national distinctions in the one people of God.⁴⁹

View Two: "The Israel of God" is the Remnant of Israelites in the Church

Perhaps it would be appropriate to confine attention to Hans Dieter Betz, due to the widespread recognition of his excellent commentary. He treats verse 16 as a conditional blessing upon those who walk according to the rule of the new creation mentioned in verse 15,⁵⁰ remarking also on its uniqueness in Pauline literature.

After a discussion of the term "the Israel of God" Betz concludes amid some ambiguity that the sentence refers to a blessing on those who remain faithful Paulinists in the Galatian churches, including both those of gentile extraction and believing ethnic Jews. His final comment is, "Thus Paul extends the blessing beyond the Galatian Paulinists to those Jewish-Christians who approve of his *kanon* ('rule') in v. 15."⁵¹

⁴⁷ LaRondelle's comments on Gal.6:16 indicate little, if any, interaction with Burton, Critical and Exegetical Commentary, the finest old technical commentary on Galatians; Betz, Galatians, the best new technical work in English; Bruce in his excellent work Galatians: Commentary on the Greek text, or with the periodical articles of Dahl, Schrenk, and Robinson. The carefully thought through article by Robinson is particularly appreciate for questions concerning Gal.6:16, as its title ("The Distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers in Galatians") indicates.

⁴⁸ Richardson, p.83. Many amillennialists, including LaRondelle, overlook this.

⁴⁹ cf. especially pp. 47-48.

⁵⁰ Betz, Galatians pp. 320-21.

⁵¹ Ibid p. 323.

Grammatical and syntactical considerations. In order not to prolong the discussion, and also since the final interpretation has many similarities with the second, just a few comments are in order. So far as I can tell, there are no grammatical, or syntactical, considerations that would be contrary to Betz's view. The common sense of *kai* is continuative, or copulative, is followed.

Exegetical considerations. Exegetically the view is sound, since "Israel" has its uniform Pauline ethnic sense. And further, the apostle achieves a very striking climactic conclusion. Drawing near the end of his "battle-epistle" with its harsh {61} and forceful attack on the Judaists⁵² and its omission of the customary words of thanksgiving. Paul tempers his language with a special blessing for those faithful believing Israelites who, understanding the grace of God and its exclusion of any human works as the ground of redemption, had not succumbed to the subtle blandishments of the deceptive Judaizers. They, not the false men from Jerusalem, are "the Israel of God," or, as he calls them elsewhere, "the remnant according to the election of grace" (cf. Rom. 11:5).

Theological considerations. And theologically the view is sound in its maintenance of the two elements within the one people of God, gentiles and ethnic Jews. Romans 11 spells out the details of the relationship between the two entities from Abraham's day to the present age and on to the fulfillment in the future of the great unconditional covenantal promises made to the patriarchs.

View Three: "The Israel of God" is the Future Redeemed Nation

Exegetical considerations. The third view of "the Israel of God," namely, that the term is eschatological in force and refers to the "all Israel" of Romans 11:26, is an extension of the previous interpretation. It too takes the term "the Israel of God" to refer to ethnic Israel but locates their blessing in the future. Their salvation was a great concern of Paul, as his ministry attests (cf. Rom. 9:3-5; 10:1). An impressive array of contemporary interpreters hold this view, although with some minor variations.

Because Peter Richardson, largely following Burton, has discussed the matter at some length, his views will be emphasized. Seeking to overthrow the common misconception that "the Israel of God" refers to the church composed of both believing gentiles and Jews, he makes the following points: First, the unique order of peace and mercy, probably suggested by Jewish benedictions, particularly Benediction XIX of the *Shemoneh Esreh* (Babylonian recension), may be significant. The prayer has the order of peace and then mercy in it, followed by a reference to "us and all Israel."⁵³ Other Old Testament passages, such as Psalm 124:5 (= 127:6), offer more general parallels. In such places "Israel" is used ethnically and, if there is Pauline dependence on them, he probably used the term ethnically.

⁵² The force of 1:8-9 and its "let him be accursed" is very strong, since anathema referred ultimately to that under the divine curse. In Rom. 9:3 Paul says he could pray to be anathema from Christ that is, consigned to Gehenna, if his people could be saved by his sacrifice. In other words, it is almost as if Paul were saying, "If any man should preach a contrary gospel, let him go to hell!" Galatians certainly is a "Kampfepistel!"

⁵³ cf. Richardson, pp.78-80.

Second, the strange order of peace and mercy suggests, as Burton contended, a repunctuation of the text as commonly edited. A comma should be placed after {62} “them,” and the comma after “mercy” found in many English versions⁵⁴ and in editions of the Greek text should be eliminated. The text may then be rendered, *And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy also upon the Israel of God (or peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God).*

Third, Richardson suggests that the future tense in “shall walk” may carry by analogy, its future idea over into the benediction regarding mercy. In other words, it may point to Israel’s future belief, This seems questionable to me.

Fourth, “the Israel of God” is a part of the whole Israel (cf. Rom. 9:6).

Fifth, the *kai* is only slightly ascensive, forestalling any inference that Paul in Galatians is condemning everything about Israel.⁵⁵ Richardson thinks the presence of the *kai* is important and argues strongly against the view that the church is the Israel of God. If it were committed, then that view would be strengthened, but its acknowledged presence is a major signpost pointing in another interpretive direction.

Sixth, just as Mussner, Bruce, and others, Richardson sees the expression as a reference to a hoped-for future conversion of ethnic Israel, a view that Paul expounds in detail in the great theodicy of Romans 9-II.

Mussner’s identification of the phrase with Paul’s “all Israel” of Romans 11:26 is in harmony with Richardson. Thus also Bruce, who concludes his discussion with, “The invocation of blessing on the Israel of God has probably an eschatological perspective.”⁵⁶

Evaluative summary. Grammatically and syntactically this last option is sound, whether we adopt Burton’s repunctuation of the text or not. There may exist some question regarding the exegetical aptness of the eschatological perspective. That certainly has not been one of the major emphases of the Galatian epistle as a whole, but in the immediate context it is very appropriate psychologically, providing a note of hope and expectation after a stern and severe admonition. And, further, the Abrahamic covenant and its benefits have been constantly before the readers, and the whole of the Old Testament as well as previous New Testament {63} revelation testifies to its glorious future consummation. Heirship of Abrahamic covenant blessing and the kingdom of God, mentioned just a few lines previously (cf. 5:21) fit in well with an eschatological note.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Contrast the NASB.

⁵⁵ Cf. Burton, p.358.

⁵⁶ Bruce pp.275.

⁵⁷ Several linguistic matters lend further support to an eschatological perspective. In addition to the mention of the phrase “the kingdom of God”, the frequent use of the concept of promise in the letter (cf. 3:14, 16, 17, 18 [twice], 19, 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28) and the concept of inheritance (cf.3:14, 18, 29; 4:1, 7, 30; 5:21), related as they are to the Abrahamic covenant, accent the future perspective. And, finally, is there significance in the fact that the term inheritance in Romans 11 is related by Paul to God’s saving work toward the nation Israel in the future? The concept is found in 11:30, 31, and 32 in both noun and verb forms. And here in Gal. 6:16 the concept appears also.

Theologically the view harmonizes with the important Pauline teaching that there are two kinds of Israelites, a believing one and an unbelieving one. The teaching is plainly set out in such passages as Romans 2:28-29; 4:11-12; 9:6; and 11:1-36. Galatians 6:16 forms another link in the apostle's teaching.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Reflections on Contemporary Exegetical Methodology

It is not uncommon in our evangelical seminaries to hear exegetes criticize the systematic theologians for the tendency to approach the biblical text with dogmatic presuppositions that predetermine exegetical conclusions. Some of this criticism is justified, I will admit. Theologians do not come to the text without their presuppositions. The measure of the good theologian, such as a Calvin, an Owen, a Hodge, Warfield, a Murray, and a Berkower, is the skill with which one recognizes them, handles them, and avoids their dominion over us.

What is not as common as it should be in our schools, however, is the recognition of the fact that exegetes are exposed to the same perils and at least as often succumb to them. Presuppositionless exegesis is an illusive mirage, and exegesis is finest when it acknowledges the fact and seeks to guard against it. Exegetes frequently are as guilty of false methodology as that financial writer whose logic and unsound premises the *London Economist* once neatly impaled by commenting that he was "proceeding from an unwarranted assumption to a foregone conclusion."⁵⁸

The present study illustrates this. If there is an interpretation that totters on a tenuous foundation, it is the view that Paul equates the term "the Israel of God" with the believing church of Jews and gentiles. To support it, the general usage of the term *Israel* in Paul, in the New Testament, and in the Scriptures as a whole is ignored. The grammatical and syntactical usage of the conjunction *kai* is strained {64} and distorted and the rare and uncommon sense accepted when the usual sense is unsatisfactory only because it does not harmonize with the presuppositions of the exegete. And to compound matters, in the special context of Galatians and the general context of the Pauline teaching, especially as highlighted in Romans 11, Paul's primary passages on God's dealings with Israel and the gentiles, are downplayed. If, as LaRondelle asserts, "Paul's benediction in Galatians 6:16 becomes, then, the chief witness in the New Testament in declaring that the universal church of Christ is the Israel of God, the seed of Abraham, the heir to Israel's covenant promise (cf. Gal 3:29; 6:16),"⁵⁹ then the doctrine that the church of gentiles and Jews is *the Israel of God* rests on an illusion. It is a classic case of tendentious exegesis.

⁵⁸ ⁵⁸ Stewart Chase, *Guides to Straight Thinking:: With 13 Common Fallacies* (New York:Harper & Row, 1956) p. 122.

⁵⁹ LaRondelle, pp.110-II.

Reflections on Logical Failure

This is hardly the place to enlarge upon this theme. It has been done well elsewhere.⁶⁰ Nevertheless I think it is permissible to suggest that exegetes seem particularly prone today to logical fallacies. The case of the undistributed middle, mentioned earlier, underlines the importance of clear thinking in exegetical discussion.

Reflections on Contemporary Theological Positions

A certain rigidity in evangelical eschatological debate emerges again in the discussion of Galatians 6:16. For example, amillennialists seem to strongly desire to equate “the Israel of God” with the church. Some amillennialists, however, think an ethnic future for Israel is compatible with their system. An example of this is found in the fine work of Anthony A. Hoekema on eschatology. He grants that an ethnic future for Israel would with certain strictures be compatible with his amillennial views, but he argues strongly against such an interpretation.⁶¹

Why, then are amillennialists so opposed generally to an ethnic future for Israel? That is not an easy question to answer. It may be perfectly conceivable that an amillennialist would grant that an ethnic future for Israel at the Lord’s return could be fitted into his system. But if such a normal interpretation of the language of the Old Testament is followed in this instance, it is difficult to see how one can then escape the seemingly plain teaching of the many Old Testament prophecies {65} that the nation Israel shall enjoy a preeminence in certain respects over the gentiles in the kingdom that follows our Lord’s advent (cf. Isa. 60:1-4; 62:1-12; Mic. 4:1-5; Hag. 2:1-7; Zech. 14:16-21, etc).

On the other hand, the case for premillennialism does not rest on the reference of the term “the Israel of God” to ethnic redeemed Israel here. Its case against the exegetical practice of the

⁶⁰ Cf. D.A. Carson *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), pp. 91-126.

⁶¹ Hoekema, pp. 146-47. He also adds certain strictures to the common perception of a future for Israel. Referring to Romans 11:26 he says, “There is nothing in the passage which would rule out such a future conversion or such future conversions, as long as one does not insist that the passage points only to the future, or that it describes a conversion of Israel which occurs after the full number of Gentiles has been gathered in” (p. 147). That, of course, is just what Romans 11:25-27 does do. It points to the future, and the conversion of Israelis placed by the apostle after the gathering in of the Gentiles. It, therefore, really is difficult for Hoekema to include an ethnic future for Israel in his amillennial scheme.

spiritualization of the Scriptures would be weakened a bit, but premillennialisms support in the history of the church's eschatological interpretation, in the use of the grammatico-historico-theological method of exegesis, and in the interpretation of Scripture by the prophets and the apostles would still stand firm.

Let the church, then, seek to avoid the practice of rigidly tendentiously defending its systems. Let us listen to the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, and then let us freely and forcibly proclaim what we are taught. After all, His system -and there is such- is the best one.

{66} The Old Testament Background of Matthew 2-4

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This discussion is a halting attempt to understand Matthew's use of the Old Testament, including his allusions to Old Testament events and redemptive history, which profoundly inform his narrative of the Savior's life. I will attempt to uncover Matthew's method in chapters 2-4 and apply that understanding in various ways to our theological structures and to life.

Much of what I am saying has been pointed out before, but, in my opinion, to a lesser extent. To sum up: I think a parallel is being carefully drawn between the Lord Jesus as Israel's Savior and Old Covenant Israel in her redemptive history. Any student of the Bible is necessarily well acquainted with the redemptive history of Israel, and is able to indicate its general outline and most significant events. Matthew repeats this history in the person of the new Israel, the Lord Jesus, who takes up Israel's journey and repeats it as a representative of the old Israel, who was disobedient. This "repetition" parallels Paul's first and second Adam comparison.

The familiarity of these chapters renders it necessary to provoke thought in order to point out the profound depth of these chapters. A simple way to do this is to question Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 in 2:15. Hosea 11:1 is not a prophecy in the traditional sense. Rather it is a statement about God's fatherly and redeeming love for His son, Israel, in His delivering the people from bondage. It is further intended to contrast the ungrateful and idolatrous response of Israel, who worship the Baals, with God's wonderful love. In what sense can the Lord Jesus be said to "fulfill" this state of affairs? Jesus can be said to be similar to the son in Hosea 11:1, in that He was called out of Egypt and was loved by God, but He is certainly very unlike Israel in His response. This indicates that Matthew is setting up a radical contrast between the two sons, just as Paul does with the two Adams. These contrasts help to explain the otherwise strange alternation in Isaiah 40-55 between the blind and disobedient servant, and the obedient servant who ultimately takes the place of both His people and the gentiles.

Micah 5:2 - Matthew 2:1-8

The use of this prophecy and its fulfillment seem so obvious that we might wonder what can be gained from a study of the context of Micah 5. But also here it is {67} important to remember that Matthew, like the rabbis, often have a full Old Testament passage in mind when quoting a single verse.

Micah 5:1-5 is parallel in form and content to Micah 4:8-13. In the former, the Lord promises to redeem His people from exile and to restore their dominion. Note also the parallel between Israel in labor pains in 4:10 and 5:3. In Micah 5 the restoration of kingship is explicitly seen to be due to the coming ruler. The phrase "from of old" may refer either to His divine origin, or, to His beginning over again the old Davidic kingship, i.e. his origins are from Bethlehem, the place where David was born. At any rate this new redemption from bondage, this new exodus, is the

work of God through the new King David. He will not only lead them out of exile, but will also bring them universal dominion and safety.

By way of summary, Micah promises a new David who will restore Israel's dominion by redeeming her from exile. This is described by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Ezekiel as a new Exodus, the making of the New Covenant with the good figs of Israel after all the wicked of the nation have been purged. The real question is whether Matthew intends to have us consider all this in his application of the prophecy to the Lord Jesus.

The rest of the study will confirm such an intention. Only the Ruler whose birth is described will bring Israel out of exile and abandonment. (Compare this birth-language and its results to Rev. 12:2-5.) Does Matthew intend also to say that Israel in his day is in the same sad plight that Israel was in when God redeemed her from Babylon? Does Matthew intend to say that Israel is now in darkness, without its ruler? It is worth noting that Matthew presents a stark contrast between the wicked, paranoid and illegitimate King Herod, and the child-King who will deliver his people from their sins. At the very least we have to think of Israel as "held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed," Galatians 3:23.

Matthew 2:9-12

Many allusions have been mined from this passage: the gold and incense of Isaiah 60:6, the myrrh used in the sacred anointing oil used by the priests, Exodus 30:23, the myrrh and incense used as perfumes for the king on his wedding day in Song of Solomon 3:6-11, etc. None of these should be ignored. The coming of men from the east to honor Solomon at his accession, 1 Kings 4:30, is most significant. While the secular and religious leaders of Israel seek to take the King's life (Ps. 2:2 and Acts {68} 4:27), the nations honor Him, the wise acknowledge worshipful adoration. The glory risen on Israel resides not in her rulers, but in the child-King Himself.

Hosea 11:1 - Matthew 2:13-15: The Deliverer Called out of Danger.

At the command of an angel, Joseph fled with Jesus to Egypt. This action is said to fulfill Hosea 11:1 "My son have I called out of Egypt." Herod threatens God's appointed deliverer, just as Pharaoh did before the Exodus. Herod is a new Pharaoh.

At the very least, this striking use of the Old Testament passage serves to represent the Lord Jesus as making a new beginning. If we have understood Micah 5:2 correctly, then this passage also shows that the Son is beginning a new Exodus. In particular, He is delivered from persecution and danger to a place of safety until God's time to use Him has come.

As mentioned, the use of this verse from Hosea 11:1 establishes a radical contrast between this Son and the son who, after Egypt, worshipped the Baals. None but a new Son can deliver the rebellious old son (Ex. 4:22) from his disobedience.

In addition, Matthew uses history in a typological way. Hosea 11:1 is not predictive prophecy; rather, it is history setting a pattern for the future. Just as creation sets the pattern for the new creation, so the Exodus and the Old Covenant redemptive history set a pattern for the new

Exodus and the New Covenant redemptive history. When the old son failed, (Hosea 11 :2ff.) the new Son will begin again and do all things well. Matthew is telling us the Lord Jesus has taken up the call of God in order to repeat Israel's history: Jesus is the new and obedient Israel who came to save His people from her sins (Matt. 1:21). The history of Israel is looked upon as needing a new and radically different fulfillment from that experienced in the past. If so, we may infer that God had a purpose in Israel's history beyond that which meets the eye: not only are the priesthood and the sacrifices typical of Christ's redemptive work, but the history of Israel has a redemptive structure: bondage, exodus-redemption, testing in the wilderness, inheritance. Jesus becomes Israel, taking her place and repeating her history in order to give her full redemption.

We ought not overlook the context of Hosea 11. These verses find their context in God's promise of sure destruction and exile; note Hosea 10:13-15 and 11:5-7. Even here, however, the Lord cannot bring himself completely to destroy his rebellious child (11:8-9); He is God and not man. Consequently, this passage, along with {69} Micah 5:2, points to exile and judgment tempered with mercy and compassion, which point beyond judgment. It is while the people are under the sentence of death that the Lord declares His compassion for them and His intent to save them. Similarly, Matthew is telling us Israel is under judgment, in bondage, and in need of a redeemer (Gal. 4:3,25 and 3:23). Jesus came as the new Israel, retracing the steps of the old Israel in order to redeem her from under the law.

Jeremiah 31:15 - Matthew 2:16-18: Israel in Exile Should not Weep

Just as Pharaoh sought to kill all the male children of Israel in Egypt, Herod had all boys under two years old put to death (cf. Rev. 12:5, where the dragon stands in front of the woman in order to devour the child the moment it would be born). In both cases the children were destroyed in order to destroy the people. In both cases the deliverer escaped by the faith of his parents.

The death of the innocents would certainly cause mothers in Israel to weep. Matthew tells us that the event fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15 which portrays the mother of Joseph and Benjamin weeping for her children (those of Judah who died by the sword under God's covenantal judgment, Jer. 31:2).

How are we to understand the use of this verse in Matthew? In what way do the events fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15? I suggest that without a contextual study of the verse in Jeremiah, we are likely to misunderstand Matthew's intention. We may understand Matthew to be saying that Jeremiah had prophesied Herod's massacre of the children and mothers' mourning. Is that what Matthew intends to say?

In Jeremiah 31 Israel is described as in exile. In verse 15 she is portrayed as weeping for those slain when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians. Verse 15 is in such striking contrast to its context that it is incumbent upon us to note that context carefully. Jeremiah was told (30:3) that the Lord was going to restore His people from captivity. The message is one full of hope and joy:

The people who survive the sword will find favor in the desert; I will come to give rest to Israel. Jeremiah 31:2

This is good news indeed. Israel will find favor in the desert, where they were formerly disobedient they will come to know God in the New Covenant. Chapter 31 is full of the joy of salvation. The promise is addressed to a weeping people. God's response to their weeping in verse 15 is given in verse 16:

Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded, declares the Lord.

There will be a return from the land of the enemy.

{70} In short, the weeping caused by judgment on the people of God will be relieved by the joy of return to the land. From their exile the people will be led out to the wilderness, there to find God's favor. God had put them to death, divorced them, but now He will bring them back to a covenant relationship (30:22; 31:31ff.).

The people of Bethlehem should not continue in their weeping, because of a "great joy". The new king of Egypt (Herod) did not succeed in destroying Israel's deliverer. The Savior is going to bring His people out of captivity into a new wilderness. The deliverer has been born, He has stepped into Israel's shoes as the new Israel. The royal Son of David will lead His people out of bondage by taking their place.

Matthew's use of Jeremiah 31:15 points a lamenting people to joy and hope, to a New Covenant made possible by the work of a royal child. God is calling His people to meet him in the wilderness, where He will show them His favor. They should be preparing themselves to leave the exile and meet the Lord in the wilderness (Isa. 40:2).

Exodus 4:19 - Matthew 2:19-23 He returns to Deliver His People

The reference to the "Nazarene" is very difficult. Since there is no such prophecy, frequent reference is made to the Septuagint language of Judges 13:5, to which the Greek word "Nazarene" in Matthew is virtually identical. Samson was primarily a deliverer who more brought rest to Israel by his death than by his life (16:30). As a Nazirite he was dedicated to God from birth. His death may be seen as foreshadowing Christ's, as a Nazirite deliverer. This leaves two problems:

1) What is the relationship between the city of Nazareth and the term Nazarene?

2) Jesus was not, in fact, a Nazirite. He drank wine and came into contact with dead bodies (Num 6:6-12). Perhaps, like Israel (Deut. 29:6), Jesus is represented as a Nazirite for just a brief period.

In verse two Joseph is told to take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel "for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." The Greek expression here and in the LXX of Exodus 4:19 is almost identical:

Exodus 4:19	Matthew 2:20
For they have died	For they have died
All	---
The ones	The ones
Seeking	seeking
your	The
Life	life
---	Of the child

{71} In both cases the Lord is speaking, in the first case to Moses, and in the second to Joseph. In both cases the point is that the deliverer may return because the danger has passed. In the first case the king of Egypt has died, in the other it is the king of Israel, Herod, who has died.

But look at the difference. In Exodus, the danger is in the land of Egypt. Moses has to flee to Midian. In Matthew, the danger is in Israel. Jesus has to flee from Israel to Egypt. Israel has taken the place of Egypt as the land of bondage, where a wicked king puts children to death. Israel is the place of danger. Either Matthew did not realize that his use of language was identical to Exodus 4:19 and its context, or, under the guidance of the Spirit, he made careful choice of his terminology. Jesus had been his teacher. He is a mediator in a more profound sense than can be said of Moses. Mediation involves representing the people by retracing their steps and, eventually, leading them through the Red Sea to the wilderness. (See below.)

Isaiah 40:3 - Matthew 3:1-12 Preparation in the Desert

Both the message of John the Baptist and the location of his ministry in the wilderness are in fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3 - the voice of one crying in the wilderness. It is in the desert that John comes to preach his message of repentance, the Gospel of the kingdom. The basis for his call is given as "The kingdom of heaven is near!" The promised coming of God to redeem His people is near, so repent. At the beginning of a new redemptive history, another voice prepares Israel for the deliverer's appearance.

In Isaiah 40:3 God speaks comfort to His exiled people, who have suffered "double for their sins." Now that Jerusalem has completed her hard service (40:2) a voice comes calling in the desert. This call is nothing less than a call for repentance. The Lord has said that the days were coming when He would punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh (9:25). Ezekiel acted as the Lord's mouth when he prophesied:

I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered - with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. I will bring you into the desert of the nations and there, face to face (just as at Sinai, Deut 5:4, the only other occasion of this in the Old Testament), I will execute judgment upon you. As I judged your fathers in the desert of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will take note of you as your pass under my staff, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they {72} will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord. Ezek. 20:34-38

In Ezekiel as in Jeremiah 30:2 *et al*, the message focuses the new covenant hope around a repeated pattern of redemptive history; bondage, exodus, Red Sea crossing, wilderness, judgment, and rest in the promised land. So here, as the prophets called on the people to come out of exile into the desert in order to prepare themselves for the wilderness for the coming of God, so John the Baptist in the wilderness, introduces the penitent to the coming king, warning the Pharisees that the bad figs will be purged out of this new kingdom. John comes to the wilderness, calling for a baptism of repentance in order to present a new people to the Lord.

In 4: 7-12 the religious leaders are separated from the penitent people of God in the wilderness. The axe is already being laid to the root of the tree. God is coming among his people to judge and to purge (Jer. 9:25-26) and the trees which produce fruit for the Lord of this baptism are the new children of Abraham. Any trees not producing fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire, as prefigured in the Exodus wilderness:

You saw with your own eyes what the Lord did at Baal Peor. The Lord your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, but all of you who held fast to the Lord your God are still alive today. Deut. 4:34.

In the first wilderness, the wilderness of exile, and here in Matthew, there is separation and purging. In the case of the latter, the purging takes place either prior to or at the time of the making of the covenant, not during the 40-year period in the desert. This is probably because of the nature of the New Covenant and the better mediator who, for His people, successfully went through testing in the wilderness.

Matthew 3:13-17: New Baptism by the Son in the Desert

In the New Testament, both the flood of Noah and the Exodus are related to baptism. The enemies of God are judged by means of the water and the people of God are protected from the water. In the New Covenant equivalent, the people descend into the water in order to signify their participation in the Savior, whose baptism was our judgment and death. So too, in the redemptive retracing of Israel's history, it is no surprise that the Lord Jesus is baptized, although the act is personally unnecessary for Him. He did so to carry out the righteous demands which God had laid on Israel. He identified Himself with Israel in His baptism, indicating the death-judgment He would undergo in order to deliver His people. {73} Baptism identified Jesus with Israel in her sins and showed how He would deliver her from them. He went through the water of the "Exodus" in order to deliver, not in order to be delivered.

So thorough-going an historical identification between the Old Covenant redemptive history and the work of the Lord Jesus reminds us of the identification of the first and last Adams in Paul. In Matthew, the voice from heaven identifies the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, a title which reminds us of Israel's title in Exodus 4:22 and Hosea 11:1. This identification also calls to mind Isaiah 42:1, showing the Lord Jesus to be the new Son of God, the royal Davidic king and the true Servant of Isaiah 40-54.

In Isaiah 40-54 there is a dual perspective, a transition from the nation Israel as the erring servant of God, to a new Servant who will redeem the nation. (Contrast Isa. 42:18-25 and 48:1-11 with Isa. 49:5-7 and 52:13 - 53:12.) This is why disobedient Israel has hope. The Servant (Isa. 49:5-26) is the basis of hope for those in exile. The hope of God's sinful servant Israel is in another servant who takes her place.

The Lord Jesus is thus shown to take the part of His people in every part of her history, throughout which she always failed. He even suffers a Red Sea baptism unto death on behalf of Israel, the disobedient son, granting Israel life and righteousness.

Matthew 4:1-11: The New Son Tested in the Wilderness

Although the Exodus was redemption for Israel (Ex. 15:13), nevertheless God purposed to lead them into the wilderness to be tested (Ex. 15:26, 16:4, 20:20), and to humble their hearts with hunger and thirst to see if they would live trusting in the Word of God (Deut. 8:2-5).

The number 40 is often found in crucial parts of the Old Covenant history of redemption. What is the exact point of Jesus' 40 days of trial? I will offer a few observations (also cf. Ex. 24:18, 32:30-35, Deut. 9:9, 18, 25, Num. 14:34, and 1 Kings 19:8):

a) The waters of the flood prevailed for 40 days. This would show an association of the number with judgment and chaos. In other places 40 is also associated with judgment, resulting in death for the disobedient and deliverance for the faithful.

b) Moses had to go twice up Mount Sinai to get the ten words. Each time he stayed 40 days and 40 nights. The second time was spent interceding with the Lord on behalf of Israel (Deut. 9:18, 19, 25-29, and 10:10-11). The number is thus associated with receiving the Law as well as with intercession by the covenantal mediator, an intercession which prevented the death of the people. One might also add that the mediator was prevented from giving the full law to the people, including the tablets. (They had only the summary, the Book of the Covenant 20-23, until after {74} the 40 years of judgment.) On the plains of Moab Moses gave the full Law to the people - the covenant of Deuteronomy.

c) The spies spent 40 days in the land (Num. 13:14). God's judgment against Israel for their rebellion - not being willing to trust God and take their inheritance - is 40 years in the wilderness, one year for each of the 40 days the spies spent spying out the land (Num. 14:39). Forty is associated with judgment which was not merely to wander in the wilderness for 40 years; it also meant death for the disobedient; only the faithful were allowed to enter the land.

The spies and the people did not trust the Lord nor His mediator. In Moses' case, intercession prevented death; in the second case there was no intercession and death ensued.

d) Are the 40 days and nights of Elijah merely an identification of the prophet's work and its Sinaitic source, or is a deeper significance involved? The reason for this question is that Elijah is mentioned in the New Covenant in relation to the work of John the Baptist as well as in connection to the three and a half years of the book of Revelation. In my opinion these have as their Old Covenant background the ministry of Elijah during his three and a half years absence from Israel - a sort of half-way curse, a blindness in part which happened to Israel. If three and a half years is an Old Testament cipher for the period between the first and second comings of Christ (cf. Hendricksen's *More Than Conquerors*), it is exactly equivalent to Paul's "blindness in part" for Israel. This is particularly significant in light of the wilderness theme in the book of Revelation.

e) With so complex a background to the idea of 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, it is probably safer to suggest that Matthew had in mind a combination of a 40-day intercessory period and of the 40 years of judgment in the wilderness. The Lord Jesus, like Moses, fasted during this period. Scholars have often referred to the parallel between Matthew's 40 days and nights and that of the giving of the law on Sinai by noting that Jesus enunciated on the mount the law of the kingdom (Matt. 5-7) after the 40 days and nights. What is most significant for the context is that Jesus was tested as a representative of, and substitute for, His people. Intercession was therefore both appropriate and necessary. Because He was not disobedient, He was not forced to remain 40 years in the wilderness to be further tested.

Again, then, we can see in the very place where Israel was tested and failed. There Jesus, the new Israel, was tested and succeeded. Without this new Israel and His obedience, the disobedient Israel can find no favor in the desert. Another Israel had to take its place before God could bring His people into a new covenant relationship, which includes forgiveness and the possession of the Spirit (Jer.31:31-34)

{75} The three trials to which Satan put the Lord Jesus are in themselves part of this old/new structure. In the first we are reminded that Israel ate no bread in the wilderness (Deut. 29:6); they had to trust God for manna (Deut. 8:3). In the same way Jesus had to trust God. Israel failed; the new Israel did not.

In the second trial, when Satan prods Jesus to try the Lord's sworn faithfulness, he cites Deut. 6:16. At Massah (Ex.17:2-17), instead of trusting God *for* water, Israel doubted His care by demanding water, accusing Moses of being unconcerned for their welfare.

In the third test Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:13, which is God's command to serve Him alone. The inheritance was to be obtained by fearing God and serving Him alone. Israel was not to serve the gods of the peoples about her. Inheritance of the land and continuance in it depended on single-hearted service to God. Jesus is called upon to obtain His kingdom (the whole world) by serving the god of this world. He rebukes Satan and secures His kingdom by obedience. The old Israel had failed where Jesus was faithful.

There may even be a contrast implied between the disobedient Moses on top of Mount Pisgah (Deut. 34), and Jesus. Moses was shown all the kingdom of Israel, whereas Jesus is shown all the kingdoms of the world. Note the contrast:

Old Covenant	New Covenant
Old Israel and Moses	Jesus the new Israel
The land	The world
Gods in the land	The god of this world

At least two things should be noted about the quotations Jesus makes to Satan: first they are all taken from the period at the end of Israel's 40 years in the wilderness, prior to their entering the land. They also occur at the end of Jesus' trial in the wilderness. This clearly shows the parallelism of the old/new structure in Matthew. Secondly, the quotes come from Moses' instructions to the Israelites, as they are about to enter the land. Up to this point Israel had been disobedient. Due to the sin of the spies, all perish in the wilderness - except for Joshua, Caleb, and those under 20 years of age.

The new Son of God, the new Israel, has been called out of Israel, delivered from death at the hands of a new Pharaoh, gone through a New Exodus, and successfully endured testing in the wilderness for 40 days and nights. He has been faithful throughout. But what is the outcome of this retracing of the steps of the Old Covenant history? This prophetic repetition of history is placed in a radically new covenant, which sets the old and new in contrast. Isaiah said the "new thing" God was about to do would be so radically different that Israel would no longer mention the old. In Isaiah 43:18ff., the "new thing" is a new exodus from Babylon. For this {76} reason the prophet can say, "Forget the former things" (43:18a). Or, as the Lord puts it through the mouth of Jeremiah (16:14):

However, the days are coming, declares the Lord when men will no longer say, "As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt," but they will say, "As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where He had banished them. Cf. also Jeremiah 23:7, Isaiah 65:17, 66:22.

What is important about this prophetic replay of covenant history is that it serves as the introduction of the New Covenant, the story of Israel's resurrection from the dead (Ezek. 37). Matthew's use of the exilic references to redemptive history indicates the radical newness of Jesus' retracing of that history. He relives the history of Israel. Only due to this can Jesus bring in the New Covenant.

Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:12-17: The Servant Brings Light and Gospel

The Lord had said (Isa. 8:22) that He would cast Israel into outer darkness. To this the prophet contrasts light and honor for Galilee in 9:1. God will judge both Israel and Judah, but He will leave a remnant (Isa. 9:8 - 10:23). Judgment involves exile for Israel (7:8) and Judah (11:12). So also in Matthew 3:11 there is a separation between unbelieving Israel and the faithful remnant, as well as an inclusion of the gentiles.

Clearly Jesus' retracing of Israel's history has redemptive significance. Because of Him, light comes to those in darkness. The Savior now takes the more active role of reaping the fruit of His mediatorial repetition of history. Now that He has acted it out, on behalf of the people, He can and does bring them light. Matthew 4:17 states: "From that time on, Jesus Himself began to preach, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" He has secured the light by His obedience. Now He brings it through His person and through His message to a people living in darkness.

Although beyond the scope of Matthew's purview, it is worth noting that 4:13 states that Jesus moved His residence from Nazareth to Capernaum in order to fulfill the Isaiah prophecy just quoted. Matthew, for reasons of his own, leaves unsaid what Luke describes in detail (Luke 4:14 - 30). Jesus is a prophet without honor in His own home town. He reminds His fellow-townsmen of God's judgment in Elijah's day. The people under Ahab refused to heed the prophet of God; they tried to kill Him. As a result, a covenantal judgment in the form of a drought came upon the land. God also removed the prophet from the country. The covenantal mediator prayed that there be no rain for three and a half years (James 5:17). Israel was under covenantal curse but not yet subject to death (Lev. 26:19, Deut. 28:23, Jer. 14:1-12). Israel was under indictment, ready to perish; the prophet, the {77} means of inquiry to God, was in another land, hiding. Elijah hid in the same general territory in which Jesus spent the majority of His ministry.

If Nazareth refuses the prophet, it is subject to the same covenantal curse that came upon Israel in the days of Elijah. In Nazareth He was rejected, but He brought light to Zebulun and Naphtali when He moved from Nazareth to Capernaum.

Some Final Observations

1. All the Old Testament quotes, except for Deuteronomy 6:13, 16, 8:3, have as their background the exile, the prophetic promise of a new Exodus, favor in the new wilderness and a new covenant. Israel's disobedience serves as a further background. This contrast of Old Covenant disobedience with New Covenant hope forms the rationale for Matthew's use of the Old Testament as applied to Jesus as the obedient new son and new Israel. Matthew is making very specific use of the historical structure, carefully following the Old Covenant order of events. His use of Deuteronomy 6 and 8 are in parallel sequence in both cases in which they are quoted. Matthew is not merely citing a verse, without reference to its redemptive-historical context; his quote is meant to refer to the context as a whole.

2. Prophecy is not merely the fulfillment of straightforward prediction. Matthew's quotes are immersed with the history of Israel as a whole. The servant, Israel, followed the path laid out by the Lord, but did not do so in faith; Jesus stood in Israel's shoes and obediently repeated this history. Israel now has a new hope patterned on her past history. Israel was, as it were, dead in Babylon, under judgment, divorced, about to be cast out to outer darkness. The new Israel

offered His obedience as the foundation of a new kingdom and a new covenant. Those who repented and were baptized unto this new kingdom found favor, while those who revolted were rejected without any right to the inheritance (Matt. 21:43, Jer. 9:25). Redemption is not only re-creation; it is also deliverance for those who had been loved by God in spite of the covenant they had made with death.

3. We are accustomed to speak of Jesus as our substitute, our representative. The material we have reviewed in Matthew serves to emphasize how deeply embedded in the Word of God is the mediatorial work of the Savior. Matthew shows us how thoroughly the Lord Jesus identified with us in every aspect of our sin, throughout its pernicious history. It is my impression that, because we do not properly study the Old Testament, we miss a great deal of the richness of the New Testament as well.

{78} 4. According to Revelation 12 and Hebrews 4, the period between the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost and the second coming of Christ is considered to be the Church's wilderness. This wilderness is similar to, but vastly different from, Israel's wilderness. The similarity is due to the character of this present age under sin, the flesh and the devil! We are constantly subject to temptation and trial (Jas. 1). We are being put to the test so as to humble us, to see what is in our hearts. The difference resides in the difference between the two covenants: Moses was Israel's covenantal mediator, and he was disobedient (Deut. 34). Jesus is our covenantal mediator, who both forgives our past disobedience and gives us effectual grace to live in the new wilderness. In our wilderness, we already have a foretaste of the Sabbath rest of God. First Israel was brought out of Egypt and was cared for by God (Ex. 19:4, Deut. 32: 10-12, 1:31), so God has brought us out on eagle's wings to a place prepared by Him beyond the serpent's reach (Rev. 12:6, 14). John apparently identifies the three and a half years of 11: 2, 3 with the times of the gentiles, when Jerusalem would be trod underfoot (see Luke 21:24 and compare Rom. 11:25k. If this is true, then not only did our Lord Jesus go before us in the pattern of redemptive history, but we may now follow that same path in the Spirit. Of course there are other patterns in the Old Testament to which the New Testament appeals.

It is possible, in the context of Hebrews 3 and 4, to speak of having, to some degree, a present part in the Sabbath rest, since our Joshua has brought us rest. When Israel entered the land, the conquest was not finished until the days of David when all the territory promised to Abraham and Moses was under the power of the Israelite monarchy. Prior to that time, there was a continual struggle against the idolatry of the peoples "still remaining." This is the proto-type of the semi-eschatological reality which we are presently experiencing as believers: In the heavenlies in Christ, but not yet fully there.

A Few Suggested Applications

1. This present evil world is a wilderness similar to that in which Israel was tested (Deut. 1:19, 8:15). Our conflict is with the powers of darkness. Satan is a roaring lion, seeking to devour us. There are dangers on every hand, yet the Lord has promised His support and His protection. There is no apparent nourishment. The Lord even causes us to hunger, to see what is in our hearts. Just as He dealt with Hezekiah (2 Chr. 32:31), God leaves us in order to test us and know everything that is in our hearts. According to 1 Cor. 10:6-11, the wilderness tempts us to idolatry,

immorality, testing of the Lord, and grumbling. So it is that Israel's wilderness experience is given to us as a warning. If we were not in a situation very similar to theirs, such examples and warnings would serve no purpose. Therefore the question is, are you prepared for a life of testing in God's new wilderness? What will the Lord uncover in your heart when He causes you to hunger?

2. The wilderness is a heart discipline (Deut. 8:5). Testing puts a strain on our faith and reveals what is in our hearts, it discloses to us and to others the well-springs of our motivations; it shows just how single-hearted is our devotion to the Lord and to each other. This disclosure, our being driven to the brink, shows our {79} sinful weakness and is God's means of putting the mirror upon our insufficiency and remaining hypocrisy. At such times our theological confessions are seen for what they really are: Either confessions of the heart or mere statements anyone can mouth. Such strains on our weak faith humble us and test our trust. God causes our dependence upon Him to grow. It should be obvious that ignorance of this element in our Christian life is due to a misunderstanding of scripture and could lead to naive overconfidence or to a haphazard life-style which takes God's grace for granted. As a young believer, I was amazed to discover that my life was going to be a life of heart-testing before the Lord. I was deeply depressed for quite some time because I had not expected this. I certainly did not expect such testing to be "the secret of a happy life."

3. The wilderness is the place of God's favor and provision (Deut. 8:15, 16). Only against this background of testing can we see our lives as a victory procession in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). Jesus is a better mediator than Moses. What great unbelief it is to refuse to humble our hearts in the face of God's faithful guidance. He gave His only Son. Will we say in the face of such provision that God is not wise when He sends us into the wilderness? Or will we say that He is not loving when He disciplines us (Heb. 12:5-12)? You can rest assured that God is working to refashion you all over. His all-sufficient grace is kindly securing every good thing for you.

{80} Liturgical Calendar and Annual Festivals in the Synagogue and the Early Church

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Introduction

I can still remember my puzzlement when, as a little boy, I was told how to calculate the date of Easter, which falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. This ingenious method made such an impression on me that I never forgot. I cannot remember whether I was also told it had anything to do with the Jewish calendar, nor can I remember whether or not I was puzzled by the fact that the date of Christmas represented no similar problem. It was much later, in the course of my theological studies, that I discovered the difference in the methods of calculating Easter and Christmas has a deep significance rising out of the historical roots of Christianity.

The backbone of the Jewish calendar is the three annual pilgrimage festivals. Passover, in the middle of the month of Nisan (approximately April); the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost), 50 days afterwards; and the Festival of Tabernacles, in the middle of the month of Tishri (approximately October).¹ Only these festivals are mentioned in the cultic calendar found in Ex 23:14-17. All three are originally harvest festivals, but they all have taken on important references to fundamental events in Israel's sacred history.

Already in the biblical period, Passover and the Festival of Tabernacles were said to commemorate decisive events relating to the Exodus and desert wanderings. Early Judaism associated the Festival of Weeks with the giving of the Law at Sinai. We shall discuss these facts more fully below. Here it is sufficient to indicate the obvious and well-known fact that two of these festivals, Passover and {81} Pentecost, also constitute the backbone of the Christian liturgical calendar. The Festival of Tabernacles was not carried on in the Christian calendar, and we would do well to ask why.

Before answering that question, I would like to add a few words concerning some of the other festivals of the ancient Jewish calendar. One, the Great Day of Atonement, Lev. 16, is included in the cultic calendar of the Torah. Another is the Festival of Purim, which finds its Biblical foundation in the Book of Esther. A third is Hanukkah, the festival of Lights. This festival is mentioned in John 10:22 (with a brief note for uninformed readers: "it was winter"). Hanukkah

¹ For general information on the cultic calendar of the Old Testament, see H.-J. Kraus, *Gottesdienst in Israel* (Munich, 1962, 2nd ed.), pp. 44-112; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Vol. II: Religious Institutions (New York - Toronto, 1965), pp. 468-517.

commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple in 165 BC, after its desecration by Antiochos Epiphanes.

These festivals were all celebrated in the time of Jesus, but none of them were carried on in the festival cycle of the Church. Again, we may ask: Why did the Church re-interpret and adapt none of these festivals, only Passover and Pentecost? There is, I believe, a very simple and obvious answer, and yet, one which is of considerable theological significance. Passover and Pentecost are the only festivals which coincide with important turning points both in the career of Jesus and of the early Christian community.

This indicates a fundamental characteristic of the Christian liturgical calendar: It is a Christ-calendar. This also accounts for the disappearance of some of the major Jewish festivals from the Christian calendar and for the introduction of a new festival, which had no direct Jewish precedent (Christmas). We ought not overlook this fundamental aspect of discontinuity when investigating the Jewish roots of the early Christian calendar. The Christian calendar is not simply a modified version of its Jewish antecedent. It is a Christ-calendar, structurally determined by the most important moments of the Christ-event.

Once this has been stressed, certain qualifications are also called for. First, what I have called “the Church” primarily means the Gentile Christian Church. There is scattered evidence in the New Testament and in the Church Fathers’ writings which clearly indicate that certain Jewish believers - as part of their continued Jewish identity - continued to observe the Jewish festival calendar. Unfortunately no original source material has survived. We have no direct recourse to Judæo-Christian observances of the Jewish festivals.

{82} Secondly, although Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement were not carried on as separate festivals, they can nevertheless be said to be carried on in the main festival of the Church, Easter. With regard to the Day of Atonement, this is self-explanatory. There are also elements of the festival of Tabernacles in the Passion Narratives of the Gospels, especially with regard to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. In fact, my previous statement to the effect that nothing happened to Jesus on Tabernacles needs some modification. There are obvious references to the Feast of Tabernacles in the story about Jesus’ transfiguration on the mount. There never developed a separate festival of the transfiguration to replace Tabernacles, but there is raw material available for the enactment of such a festival in the New Testament. We shall return to this topic later.

Meanwhile I conclude these introductory remarks by stressing that, although the early Christian calendar is basically a Christ-calendar, there are nevertheless many subtle lines of connection between it and the Jewish calendar. This will become more evident as we look closer at the main Christian festivals.

Passover and Easter

First, some remarks on the date of Passover. According to Ex 12:6-8, the paschal lamb is to be slaughtered and eaten on the evening of the 14th of Nisan. As is well known, there is a discrepancy between John and the Synoptics concerning the date of the death of Jesus. According to the latter, Jesus was crucified and died on the first day of Passover, i.e. on the 15th of Nisan, which would mean that his last meal with the disciples was the regular Passover meal. According to John, Jesus died on the 14th on Nisan, at the same time as the paschal lambs were slaughtered in the Temple.

Various attempts have been made to harmonize this apparent contradiction - most of them on the grounds that different calendars were probably used in the time of Jesus. John and the Synoptics may thus both be right.² A recent and most ingenious attempt in this vein is the monograph by A. Jaubert, *La Date de la Cene. Calendrier biblique et liturgie chretienne*, Paris 1957. No solution has so far succeeded in securing general acceptance.

On which day should Christians celebrate their Passover? Should they synchronize their celebration with that of the Jews and, if so, should they follow the Synoptic chronology or that of John? Perhaps they should give preference to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday? These questions gave rise to prolonged and heated debates.

{83} In Asia Minor there were some who thought it right to celebrate Passover on the same night as the Jews. They kept a fast on the eve of the 14th of Nisan and celebrated the resurrection of Jesus at daybreak on the 15th of Nisan, irrespective of what week-day the 15th of Nisan might be. These so-called quartodecimans apparently did not view their paschal eve and night as a commemoration of Jesus' last meal with his disciples, but as a remembrance of Christ's death. In other words, they probably followed John's chronology, for their joyous celebration of Christ's resurrection on the morning of the 15th of Nisan would hardly be compatible with the Synoptic chronology, according to which Christ was nailed to the cross on this day. In a well-known monograph³, Bernhard Lohse has expounded the theory that the quartodeciman Passover was totally dominated by the expectation of Christ's return. Lohse interprets the fast as a vicarious fasting for the unbelieving Jews. He has been severely criticized for his views by Wolfgang Huber and others⁴, rightly so. The content of the quartodeciman Passover celebration was hardly very different from that of the rest of the Church. The debate - which commenced about the middle of the second Christian century, and lasted for some decades - had to do with the date, not the content of a Christian Passover⁵. But Lohse rightly emphasized the close relation between the Christian Passover celebration and the Jewish Passover. The Paschal Homily by Melito of Sardes - himself

² There is a wealth of literature on this issue, also treated in most Gospel commentaries. For a classic discussion see H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, II (Munchen, 1924), pp.812-853.

³ B. Lohse, *Das Passafest der Quartadecimaner* (*Beitr. z. Forderung christlicher Theologie*, 2. Reihe, 54, Gutersloh, 1953).

⁴ W. Huber, *Passa und Ostern. Untersuchungen zur Osterfeier der alten Kirche* (*Beih. ZWN*, 35, Berlin, 1969). There is also an excellent discussion of the quartodeciman question in J. Blank, *Meliton von Sardes: Vom Passa* (*Sophia, Quellen ostlicher Theologie*, Band 3, Freib. im Breisgau, 1963), pp. 26-42.

⁵ Cf. St. G. Hall, *Melito of Sardis: on Pascha and Fragments* (*Oxf. Early Christian Texts*, Oxford, 1979), pp. XXIV f, with further literature.

probably a quartodeciman⁶ - implies that the Christian Passover Haggadah was developed from Ex 12. The paschal lamb typology is dominant. Thus, Melito's homily may be described as anticipated in 1Cor. 5:7: "For Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed."

The other party of the quartodeciman controversy held that Easter should always be celebrated on a Sunday - the first following the 14th of Nisan (in Alexandria), or the first after the 15th of Nisan (in Rome). The difference of opinion among those who advocated a Sunday Easter is not easily explained. It may have to do with {84} different options concerning the Gospel chronology. But one can say nothing on this point with certainty⁷.

What is certain is that the Sunday option triumphed. Some understand this to be a step towards a complete separation between the Jewish and the Christian Passover, but this perhaps should not be overstressed, a fact brought out by an interesting episode from the fourth century. The Church in Alexandria had developed its own method for determining the date of Passover. The 14th of Nisan was never allowed to fall on a date before the spring equinox. It seems that the Jews had no corresponding rule at that time, at least not in the region of Syria. There the Christians followed their Jewish neighbors even if it eventually implied an earlier celebration prior to the equinox. This practice gave rise to heated controversy which prompted the Nicene Council to issue a statement on the issue.

The Syrian Christians were accused of Judaizing practice, but it is interesting to notice that some of their opponents, advocating the equinox rule, also claimed to follow Jewish tradition: They claimed that the equinox rule was an ancient Jewish custom, observed in the day of Jesus and later forgotten. They supported this claim with references to Philo, Josephus, and other early Jewish writers. In other words, while accusing each other of "Judaizing", each claimed to be following the real, authentic Jewish tradition! The Jews eventually accepted the equinox rule themselves; although they did not apply it exactly the same way as did the Church.⁸

In other words, the interrelation between the Jewish and Christian Passovers was not immediately lost. All parties engaged in the debate over dates seem to agree that the Christian Passover should occur within the week of the Jewish, even if some of them did not regard contemporary Judaism as true to the authentic Jewish calendar.

⁶ Huber's argument to the effect that Melito was not quartodeciman does not carry conviction. The ancient sources say that he was, cf. Blank, op. cit., and Hall, loc. cit. Hall's book is an excellent edition of Melito's text, with English translation.

⁷ Huber, op. cit., has a useful discussion of the issue.

⁸ The classic treatment of the many problems connected with fixing the date of Passover in ancient Judaism and in early Christianity is E. Schwartz, *Christliche und jüdische Ostertafeln* (Abhandl. d. Gottinger Akad. d. Wissensch., Philol. -hist. Klasse Neue Folge, 8:6, Berlin, 1905). This is a massive monograph which includes full discussion of the many intricacies involved in ancient calendar making, with copious references to primary sources. For a more recent, easier presentation, see V. Grumel, 'Le probleme de la date pascale aux IIIe et IVe siecles', *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, 18 (1960), pp. 163-178.

This interrelation is also evident in some theological motifs predominant in the Jewish Passover. It may be convenient to start with a rabbinic text, the famous poem on The Four Nights, appended to Ex 12:42 in the *Fragmentary Targum* and the *Targum Neofiti*. I quote the Neofiti version: “Truly, four nights are those that are written in the Book of Memorials. *The first night*: when the Lord was revealed over the world to create it.... *The second night*: when the Lord was revealed to Abraham, a man of hundred years.... And Isaac was thirty seven years when he {85} was offered upon the altar. The heavens were bowed down and descended and Isaac saw their perfection and his eyes were dimmed because of their perfections, and he called it the Second Night. *The third night*: when the Lord was revealed against the Egyptians and his right hand protected the first-born of Israel.... *The fourth night*: when the world reaches its end to be redeemed... and Moses will go up from the desert and the king Messiah from on high⁹ For a full commentary on this interesting poem about the four nights one should turn to Roger Le Deaut’s monograph *La Nuit Pascale* (Rome, 1963).

The Paschal Night is paralleled in this poem with three other nights, the first of them being the night of creation (Gen. 1:2). This idea was probably prompted by Ex. 12:2, where we read that the month of Nisan is to be first month of the year. The year begins in spring, when all creation is renewed. Philo said in this respect, “The month of the azymes, which is the seventh, is the first in number, order and dignity according to the solar cycle. This is why it is the first in the holy books. For truly it seems that the spring equinox is the figure and the image of the beginning in which the world was created. God, in order to remind us each year of the creation of the world, made the springtime in which everything is burgeoning and flowering. This is why it is not without cause that it is named the first in the Law, being the image of the first beginning” (Spec. Leg. II:150).

Spring is seen as the yearly commemoration of creation. It was natural for the Church Fathers to seize upon this idea and to transform it into a Christological symbol: Spring became the figure of the second creation, brought about through the resurrected Christ. Christ not only was the mediator of the first creation, he is also the beginning of a new creation by power of his resurrection. Eusebius emphasized this most beautifully in his treatise on Easter.¹⁰

Melito says that the saving effect of the paschal Lamb’s blood derived from the propitiatory blood of the Christ.

The Paschal Night is also the night in which Isaac was conceived, the idea of his future sacrifice being included. In the *Mekhilta* on Ex 12:13 (“When I see the blood I will pass by”) we read: “‘When I see the blood’: I see the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac. For it is said ‘And Abraham called the name of the place Adonai-jireh’ (Gen. 22:14)... What did he behold? He beheld the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac, as it is said, ‘God will Himself see the Lamb’ (Gen. 22:8)” (*Mekh. de-Rabbi Ishmael, Piska VII: 78-82*). Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac was considered as

⁹ Quoted from the English translation in A. Diez Macho (ed.), *Neophyti 1* (Madrid-Barcelona, 1968-78).

¹⁰ For further Jewish and Patristic material, see J. Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1966), pp. 287-302. I warmly recommend this study as a mine of information on early Christian application of Biblical typology to the main festivals.

securing for {86} all time an imperishable merit, upon which all Abraham's descendants may rely. The blood of the Paschal Lamb reminds God of Isaac's sacrifice.

Most early fathers of the Church replaced Isaac with Christ. Melito says that the saving effect of the paschal Lamb's blood derived from the propitiatory blood of the Christ, the true Paschal Lamb. Addressing the Angel of Death, Melito says: "It is clear that your respect was won when you saw the mystery of the Lord occurring in the sheep, the life of the Lord in the slaughter of the Lamb, the model (type) of the Lord in the death of the sheep, that is why you did not strike Israel but made only Egypt childless" (Peri Pascha 33). When Christ in this way replaces Isaac, the way is open to a typology in which Isaac's sacrifice prefigure that of Christ.

This is briefly hinted at by Barnabas, and broadly expounded for the first time in some fragment from Melito:

"For as a ram he (i.e. Christ) was bound
and as a Lamb he was shorn,
and as a sheep he was led to slaughter,
and as a lamb he was crucified,
and he carried the wood on his shoulders as he was led up to be
slain like Isaac by his Father...." (Fragm. 9, ed. Hall).

A combination of the paschal lamb motif and that of Isaac which is perfectly rabbinic!

The third night in the Targum poem is the Paschal Night itself. Paschal motifs were also taken up by the earliest Fathers. Justin Martyr says: "The mystery of the sheep... was a type of Christ, with whose blood they who believe on Him anoint their own houses, namely themselves, corresponding to their faith in Him...." (Dial. 40:1). "And they that were saved in Egypt, when the first-born of the Egyptians perished, were rescued by the blood of the Passover, which was smeared on either side of the posts and the upper lintel. For Christ was the Passover, who was sacrificed later, as also Isaiah said: 'He was led as a sheep to slaughter'... But as the blood of the Passover saved them that were in Egypt, so also will the blood of Christ rescue them that have believed" (Dial. 111:4). Note especially the close connection between the paschal motif and Christian baptism¹¹. Sometime during the second Christian century, Easter Day emerged as the preferred day for baptism. Many paschal motifs have baptismal connotations. In the Passover Haggadah, the delivery from Egypt is described in terms which transcend the physical delivery from Egypt. They are reminiscent of the terminology used to describe the transition experienced by converts to Judaism:

"Therefore, we are bound to thank, praise, laud, glorify, extol, honor, bless, exalt and reverence him,.... for he brought us forth from bondage to freedom, {87}

from sorrow to joy,

¹¹ *The concept of anointing is clearly baptismal. There are other baptismal motifs in the context of both passages. I have developed this theme more fully in my study The Proof from Prophecy. A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof Text Tradition (Suppl. to Nov. Test. 56, Leiden 1987), pp. 299-303.*

from mourning to holydays,
from darkness to great light,
and from servitude to redemption.”

A similar concept is echoed in several New Testament passages, but the closest is found in Melito’s Paschal Homily, a Christianized version of the Passover Haggadah: “For, himself (Christ) led as a lamb, and slain as a sheep, he ransomed us from the world’s service as from the land of Egypt, and freed us from the devil’s slavery as from the hand of Pharaoh.... it is he that delivered us

from slavery to liberty
from darkness to light,
from death to life,
from tyranny to eternal royalty,
and made us a new priesthood (67/69).

One final point: In the Passover Haggadah, the gift of the land and entry into the land play a dominant role. Keeping in mind that baptism was often associated with the paschal event, one is not surprised to find that in a baptismal midrash (6,8-19), Barnabas uses Ex 33:1 (“Lo, thus saith the Lord God, enter into the good land.... a land flowing with milk and honey”) as a major baptismal text. He says that, through baptism, people enter the land of milk and honey¹².

In the first extensive description of the baptismal liturgy written by Hippolytus at the beginning of the third century, we discover that, at their first Eucharistic meal, the newly baptized were given milk and honey as a symbol of their entry into the Promised Land.

We must now turn to the fourth night of the Targum’s paschal poem, the night of redemption, in which the Messiah comes. In the Mekhiltah on Ex 12:52 we read: “In that night were they redeemed and in that night will they be redeemed in the future” (Piska XIV:113f). Certain ecclesiastical writers speak in a similar vein by saying the Messiah is to return during the Paschal night. I quote from Lactantius: “This is the night which is celebrated by us in watchfulness ... of which night there is a two-fold meaning; because in it He then received life when He suffered, and thereafter He is about to receive the kingdom of the world” (Div. Inst. VII:19). By this eschatological note, the Jewish Passover Eve and the Christian Easter span the whole drama from creation to fulfillment, from the first to the new creation. There is a great abundance of similar material from which I have only gleaned a sampling¹³.

{88} The Jewish Festival of Weeks and Christian Pentecost

¹²Two excellent commentaries on this passage of Barnabas is N.A. Dahl, ‘La terre oil coulent le lait et le miel selon Barnabe 6, 8-19’, Aux sources de la tradition chretienne. Melanges M. Goguel (Neuchatel-Paris, 1950), pp. 62-70, and L.W. Barnard, ‘A note on Barnabas 6, 8-11’, *Studia Patristica Vol. IV:2 (Texte und Untersuchungen)*, 79, Berlin, 1961), pp. 263-267.

¹³ For further material, see L. Morris, ‘The Passover in Rabbinic Literature’, *Australian Biblical Review*, 4 (1954/55), pp. 59-76; R. le Deaut, *La Nuit Pascale* (Rome, 1963); N. Fuglister, *Die Heilsbedeutung des Pascha* (*Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament*, 8, 1963); J. Danielou, *op. cit.*, pp 127-176/287-302.

We have already noted that, among the festivals of the Jewish calendar, only Passover and Pentecost were adapted to the Christian calendar. Many scholars believe such a view requires qualification because the links between the Festival of Weeks and Christian Pentecost are feeble, to some minds non-existent. An excellent introduction to our discussion may be found in the following succinct summary of current opinion concerning the Jewish festival, written by Roland de Vaux. "Like the Passover, the Feast of Weeks was eventually related to the history of salvation, but this connection was made at a far later date. Ex 19:1 says that the Israelites reached Sinai in the third month after they had left Egypt; and since they had left Egypt in the middle of the first month, the Feast of Weeks became the feast commemorating the Covenant at Sinai. 2 Chron 15:10 mentions that under Asa, a religious feast was held in the third month to renew the covenant, but it does not expressly state that this was the Feast of Weeks. The first time the connection is openly mentioned is in the Book of Jubilees, which puts all the covenants it can discover in the Old Testament (from Noah to Sinai) on the day of the Feast of Weeks. The Qumran sect, too, which called itself the community of the New Covenant, celebrated the renewal of the Covenant on the Feast of Weeks, and this was the most important feast in its calendar.

Among orthodox Jews, however, the Feast of Weeks always reminded of secondary importance. It is omitted from the calendar of Ezek 45:18-25, and (apart from liturgical texts) it is mentioned only in late books of the Old Testament, and only in connection with something else (2 Macc 12:31f and Tob 2:1). The Mishnah gives a complete treatise to all the annual feasts except this one, and the idea that it commemorated the day on which the Law was given on Sinai was not accepted by the Rabbis until the second century of our era. The Christian feast of Pentecost had, from the first, a different meaning. According to Acts 2, it was marked by the gift of the Holy Spirit and by the calling of all nations into the new Church. The fact that it coincides with a Jewish feast shows that the old system of worship has passed away, and that the promises which that system foreshadowed are now fulfilled. But there is no connection between the Christian Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Weeks as understood by the Qumran community or, in later days, by orthodox Judaism. The story in Acts contains no allusion to the Sinaitic Covenant nor to the New Covenant of which Christ is the mediator".¹⁴

{89} I believe that the last passage in this otherwise excellent summary is in need of certain major qualifications. Let us begin with some remarks about the celebration of Pentecost in the first three centuries of the Church¹⁵.

During the 'Pentecost' period following Easter, the resurrection, ascension, and giving of the Spirit, are celebrated as one single event.

Christ's ascension is nowadays customarily celebrated on the fortieth day after Easter. Pentecost is celebrated on the fiftieth day, following the chronology of Acts. The early Church acted differently. A separate Festival of the Ascension did not emerge before the fourth century, and even then not in all quarters of the Church. Before this, the ascension was celebrated on the same

¹⁴ R. de Vaux, *op. cit.* (cf. note 1), pp. 494f.

¹⁵ The discussion in the following paragraphs relies heavily on two important articles: G. Kraetschmar, 'Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 66(1954/55), pp. 209-53; J. Boeck, 'Die Entwicklung der altkirchlichen Pentekoste', *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie*, 5 (1960), pp. 1-15.

day as Pentecost, on the 50th day, and in some provinces of the East, ascension was given greater prominence on the day of Pentecost than the effusion of the Spirit as recorded in Acts 2. The earliest festival calendar was not directly derived from Acts.

Another feature claims our attention: Tertullian wrote: “The Passover affords the most solemn day for baptism, for on that day the passion of our Lord, in which we are baptized, was fulfilled After that, Pentecost is a most joyous time for conferring baptisms. During this time the resurrection of the Lord was frequently repeated among the disciples, the grace of the Holy Spirit was given, and the hope of the advent of the Lord indicated in so far as the angels at that time, when he had been received back into the heavens, told the apostles that ‘He would so come, as He had ascended into the heavens’, namely at Pentecost. And, moreover, when Jeremiah says, ‘And I will gather them together from the extremities of the land in the feast day’ (Jer. 31:8), he signifies the day of Passover and (besides) Pentecost, which is really one great feast day” (De Bapt. 19). The decisive point to notice here is that “Pentecost” primarily refers to the whole interval (50 days) following Easter. During the ‘Pentecost’ period following Easter, the resurrection, ascension, and giving of the Spirit, are celebrated *as one single event*. When Tertullian says that even the resurrection was “frequently repeated” (Latin: *frequentata*), he probably has the repeated appearances of Jesus in mind. Because he conceives of the resurrection, the ascension, and the effusion of the Spirit as one event, he can say that, in each appearance of Jesus, the whole series of events leading from the resurrection is repeated, demonstrated or whatever his exact meaning may be. Such an attitude toward and such a celebration of the 50 days following Passover is {90} unlikely to have derived directly from Acts. Where, then, is the background to such a practice?

Let us turn to the Jewish calendar as found in the *Mishnah*. On the day following the first day of Passover (the 16th of Nisan), the first sheaf of barley was solemnly reaped outside Jerusalem and carried to the Temple, there to be waved before the Lord¹⁶ as the first fruit of the year’s harvest. The ceremony marked the official beginning of the harvest season, whence the 50 days leading to the Festival of Weeks was counted. The Festival of Weeks marked the end of the wheat harvest, signified by the waving of two loaves of leavened bread baked from the newly-harvested grains. These loaves are probably to be related as well as contrasted with the unleavened bread of Passover. The 50th day’s Festival marked the final end of Passover as well as of harvest. The rabbis noted this feature by calling the Festival of Weeks “the Closing of the Passover”. One would expect such a period to be one of joy, but rabbinic literature does not treat it as such. It is rather, a time for sorrow and mourning, a fact which probably reflects the post-70 situation, following the destruction of the Temple and the cessation offering of the first fruits. Jewish tradition relates the sad sorrow of these days to a plague that killed many of Rabbi Akiba’s disciples. Possibly before 70 AD, the harvest season was a time of joy, dominated by the idea of the first-fruits gathered from the fields.

The New Testament states:

¹⁶The reader is strongly advised to look up the vivid description of the reaping scene in the *Mishnah*, Menahot 10:2-4 (Danby’s translation, pp. 505f).

“Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). In passing, let us note that, according to John’s chronology, Jesus was resurrected on the 16th of Nisan, the very day of the offering of first-fruits in the Temple! A third passage from the NT applies the concept of first-fruits to the Spirit: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons...” (Rom. 8:22f). None of these passages have expressed reference to the festal cycle of the Church, but the first two are related to the time of Passover. They may indicate motifs present in the Jewish calendar, which could easily be re-interpreted and given a profound Christian significance. Is this not the kind of Christian adaptation which meets in Tertullian, among others? Christ’s resurrection and the gift of the Spirit are both conceived of as first-fruits - celebrated during the 50 days of first-fruits in the Jewish calendar. I believe such a view makes very good sense.

There is more to be said of the 50th day itself, the Festival of Weeks, strictly speaking. Ephesians 4:8 informs us that Christ gave the Church charismatic ministries. It does so while referring to an Old Testament proof-text (Ps 68:18(19)) “When he ascended on high ...he gave gifts to men”. The text is thus a Pentecostal {91} text. It closely relates Christ’s ascension with the gift of the Spirit. Christ ascended and gave the Spirit. In rabbinic sources, we find this text from Psalms applied to Moses: He went up on Sinai and came back with a gift, the gift of the Torah¹⁷ It seems Paul has used a rabbinic proof-text concerning the giving of the Law at Sinai to speak of the giving of the Spirit . Why?

Let us take a look to another text, Acts 2. Two features claim our attention. First the “tongues as of fire” (vs. 3); second, the proclamation of the Gospel message is “split up” in several languages, so that it may be understood by all present. Turning to rabbinic exegesis of Ex 19 (the Sinai theophany), we note that, in the Hebrew text of vs. 16, the theophany of God is accompanied by “thunders”, or, more literally, “voices”. The rabbis fastened on this word. They said that at Sinai God’s voice “split up” into several voices. They further combined this notion with the poem concerning God’s voice in Ps 29. Vs. 7 of this Psalm reads: “The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire”, from which arose the idea that God’s voice split up into seven voices which appeared as flames of fire. Later exegetes further elaborated this. The seven voices became 70 languages (tongues), so that all the 70 peoples assembled at Sinai could understand God’s voice.

The parallel with Acts 2 is very striking. Again we meet the peculiar relation between the Sinai event and Christian Pentecost. Once more we ask, why?

Apparently, there is an obvious answer. The giving of the Law at Sinai was the event commemorated in the Jewish Pentecost. But there is a problem. The Sinai event is not associated with the Festival of Weeks in rabbinic material prior to the middle of the second century AD. This has led some scholars to think that the parallels are, after all, accidental. I find that very hard to

¹⁷ *The rabbinic material for this and the following paragraphs is conveniently found in Kraetschmar’s article.*

believe. Acts 2 and Eph 4:8 are strong arguments in any debate concerning the age of the rabbinic concept of Pentecost¹⁸. One must keep in mind that rabbinic material on the Festival of Weeks is scanty in any case. Nor should one conclude too much from silence. Besides, there's ample proof that Sinai and the festival of Weeks were coupled before the time of Jesus, in the Book of Jubilees and in the Qumran community. True, in these sources the Sinai event was conceived of in other categories, not so much in terms of the giving of the Law as of the renewal of the covenant. Still, there must be some {92} historical bridge from this concept to the rabbinical idea. I suspect the New Testament material proves beyond doubt the existence of such a bridge.

We may safely conclude that, although the sources partly fail us, there is every reason to think that, below the surface level, there are many subtle lines of connection between the Jewish Festival of Weeks and the Christian Pentecost. Hence, some of the Jewish background material might help to enrich our thinking about Pentecost.

Tabernacles

A few brief remarks are called for with regard to this important Jewish festival. The ideas attached to this festival by Judaism have been partly included in the Christian Easter celebration. In the Gospels, the waving of palm branches at the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, his being greeted as Messiah with verses from Ps 118, seem to reflect elements usually connected with the Feast of Tabernacles. If we look in the Gospels for some specific event in the life of Jesus which could serve as a foundation for a separate Christian Festival of Tabernacles, we would most likely look to the story of the transfiguration¹⁹. In Judaism, Tabernacles is a prefiguration of the blessed life in the age to come, during which the just shall live for ever in the dwelling places of the blessed in God's presence. Peter apparently assumed that this eschatological reality had begun when he said: "Let us make three booths (or tabernacles - Greek: skenai)" (Luke 9:33 par.).

However, the strong eschatological note associated with the Jewish notion of the festival - perhaps also the implicit rejection of Peter's proposal - made it less natural for the Church to celebrate a festival of realized eschatology. Tabernacles is most often treated as a symbol of the blessed life hereafter, sometimes more precisely, in the millennium.

One writer, Gregory of Nyssa, did try to establish a connection between the Jewish feast of Tabernacles and the Christian Christmas. This is a very attractive idea because it relates a Jewish festival which has no Christian counterpart, with precisely that Christian festival which has no Jewish counterpart! For a New Testament foundation one might point to John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and erected its tabernacle among us". In a sermon on the nativity of Christ,

¹⁸ I find welcome confirmation of this in an article by M. Weinfeld; "Pentecost as Festival of the Giving of the Law", *Immanuel*, 8 (1978), pp. 7-18. Weinfeld argues that Pss 50 and 81 and 2.Chro. 15:10ff may refer to the festival of Weeks.

¹⁹ Apart from the Gospel commentaries, see i.a. J. Danielou, *op. cit.*, pp. 333ff (with further literature).

Gregory develops the point: “The subject of today’s festival (the 25th of Dec.) is the true {93} festival of Tabernacles. Indeed, in this festival, the human tabernacle was built up by Him who put on human nature because of us. Our tabernacles, which were struck down by death, are raised up again by Him who built our dwelling from the beginning”. J. Danielou comments; “This was an interesting effort, but it was not followed up, and the liturgy has retained no trace of it”²⁰. Perhaps we should regret that. But then, one must always keep in mind that the Christian festivals, like other religious celebrations, are never the property of individuals - not even theologians are free to treat them at will. But I must confess that I have much sympathy for Gregory’s attempt. Perhaps he merits a more sympathetic hearing than that accorded him in his own time.

Concluding remarks

One important conclusion clearly emerges from this summary of our theme: The primitive nucleus of the Christian calendar is the Jewish festival season, beginning with Passover and ending on the day of Pentecost. This is not surprising. Originally, the only annual festival of the Gentile Christian calendar had to do with Passover and Pentecost. In our days, when Christmas has pushed Easter aside, not to speak of Pentecost, we would do well to remember this.

My next point is not as self-explanatory: In the first three centuries, the Church’s calendar was not so much preoccupied with holy days as with holy events. Easter is a prime example. The early Church was not familiar with our concept of the Sacred Week prior to Easter Sunday. They did not, as we do, commemorate Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, his last meal on Thursday, his death on the cross on Friday, and his resurrection on Sunday. They celebrated the entire Paschal event within the time span of one night and the morning following. This is also true concerning the celebration of Christ’s ascension and the giving of the Spirit. In neither case does this mean that the early Christians were ignorant of the Gospel chronology or of the chronology in Acts. Rather, it means that they did not celebrate days, but events. Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension, the sending of the Spirit and the founding of the Church were not different events, but different aspects of one single, complex event. This changed in the fourth century. A great awareness of chronology and consequently of holy days developed. This led to our Good Friday and to our Ascension Day on the fortieth day after Easter, as well as to a new festival of Christ’s nativity on the supposed date of his birth.

Gregory Dix has called this process the gradual sanctification of time, in which the whole year is made to be a celebration of the Christ-event. There are dangers in this development, dangers of disintegration on the level of theology. When a modern Christian has difficulties in holding the cross and the resurrection together theologically, this may have something to do with the way we celebrate Easter. We may have even greater problems in grasping the inner unity of Easter and Pentecost, the ideas of resurrection, ascension, and the gift of the Spirit. We can {94} hardly

²⁰ Danielou, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

reverse history or deny the historical heritage contained in the liturgical calendar which has come down to us. But we should ensure that an organic understanding of the basic unity of the Passover/Pentecost event is brought home to our congregations in all our teaching and preaching.

Appendix: The Jewish and the Christian week²¹

A few summary remarks about the cycle of the week in early Judaism and Christianity: The Church a) took over the Jewish week, but b) not the Sabbath, except in a spiritualized version.

a) The seven-day week of the Jewish calendar was probably the only seven-day week existing in the first Christian century. The Roman planetary week seems to have developed later - possibly under influence of Jewish custom. Whereas, in the Roman calendar, Saturday is the first day of the week, the Jewish and Christian week ends on that day. In the first centuries, Christians used the Jewish names of the week-days: Numerical names for the first days of the week, and then “preparation day” for Friday, and “Sabbath” for Saturday. The only Christian innovation was the new name “the Lord’s Day” for the first day of the week. (Modern German, French, and Italian names for Saturday are derivations from Hebrew Sabbath).

Even the weekly fast-days of the Christian calendar (Wednesday and Friday) may have a Jewish background. In the *Didache* they are given an apparently anti-Jewish motivation: “Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but do you fast on Wednesdays and Fridays” (8:1). This suggests that the Christian days of fasting were chosen in deliberate opposition to the rabbinic fast-days. But it does not explain the choice of Wednesday and we know that Wednesday and Friday were days of prime importance in the Qumran calendar. There is a possibility that the fast days of the Christian week are closer to a Jewish calendar than the words of the *Didache* would lead us to think.

Finally, one should notice the parallel relationship between Passover Eve and Sabbath on the one hand, and on the other hand Easter Day and Sunday. In both cases, the weekly festival day is to some extent a miniature of the yearly festival, having much the same basis and content.

b) The early Christian Sunday is not conceived of as a substitute for the Sabbath or as a New Sabbath. The first Christians did not celebrate the Sunday as a day of rest; it was an ordinary day of work. Broadly speaking, most Jewish Christians {95} continued to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest, while they gathered on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. Gentile Christians

²¹ For an extensive and authoritative treatment of the theme of this appendix, one should turn to W. Rordorf, *Der Sonntag. Geschichte des Ruhe- und Gottesdiensttages im ältesten Christentum (Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments, 43, Zurich, 1962)*.

did not observe the Sabbath at all: “On the day which is called Sunday we have a common assembly of all who live in the cities or in the outlying districts, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, as long *as there is time* (Justin, Apol. 67). The last words suggest a shortage of time. Why should there be such a hurry? Quite simply: because most of the congregation had to go back to their jobs!

Thus, the Sabbath as a day of rest was not transferred to Sunday. Instead, the Sabbath rest was spiritualized, this in two ways.

First, the early Fathers took up the concept that on the Sabbath no hard labor is to be done. What is hard labor? Sin. Therefore Christians observe every day as a Sabbath by abstaining from sin: “If any among you is a false-swearer or a thief, let him cease; if any an adulterer, let him repent; then he has kept the delightful and true Sabbaths of God” (Justin, *Dial.* 12:3).

Second, the Fathers took over the Jewish idea that the Sabbath rest is fully realized in the life to come. The eternal life is an eternal Sabbath (Some even exploited the seventh day as an argument for the millennium).

When Constantine made the Sunday a day of rest for all Roman citizens, he was not inspired primarily by Christian sources or from the Jewish Sabbath. He seemed only to have transferred Roman legislation concerning *dies feriae* to the Day of the Sun, which, in his syncretistic theology, was the supreme day because it was the Day of the unconquerable Sun. Farmers work during harvest was permitted on Sundays, which indicates that not the Sabbath but the Roman *dies feriae* was his model. At first, Christians did not take much notice of Constantine’s law. In the monastic institutions, work went on as usual on Sundays for a very long time. However, once Sunday became a day of leisure it also became somewhat of a problem, a threat to Christian worship, because the day became an occasion for heavy drinking and carousal. Christian theologians therefore began to apply the Sabbath commandment as a means to regulate obligatory leisure on the Church’s day of worship. Thus originated our Sunday.

{96} The Biblical Doctrine of Race - Missiological Implications

By John S. Ross

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1. THE BIBLE TEACHES MANKIND'S UNITY AND SOLIDARITY

The Bible views mankind as one. Because all men are similar, God can and does address Himself through Scripture to all the people of the earth. While taking cognizance of a certain diversity evident in mankind, the Bible fundamentally concerns itself with only one race - the human race. Basic to its anthropology is the fundamental fact that all mankind - Jews included - descended from a single pair of ancestors, Adam and Eve. This truth is established both by explicit reference and indirect inference. The scriptural record of the creation of the first humans is a special and memorable act by which they were invested with the divine image and mandated to "be fruitful and multiply". The Bible demands that we look nowhere else for the founders of the human race. The Genesis genealogies and the statements of Genesis 3:20; 7:23; 9:1,19 and 10:32 make clear reference to the descent of all mankind through Noah, from Adam and Eve. Notwithstanding, the people of Israel's unique position among mankind, the organic, genetically and genealogical unity of the race is clear in holy writ.

Abraham, too, has his origin in Adam. This is clearly indicated in the genealogical table of the nations in Genesis 10. The table does not set out to trace the origin of Israel alone, but to present the fact that all the nations are descended {97} from Noah. South African writer Hugo de Plessis states, "What is given here is the genealogy of the human race ... in spite of God-willed diversity, there is not only the unity of common descent from Noah, but here we also find, at least in principle, complete equality of the generations. All the peoples bear the same relationship to God and are answerable to God in the same way. Here all ethno-centrism is transcended."¹ De Plessis goes on to say, "this majestic vision of the primordial relatedness of all peoples, and their fundamental equality is only found in the Scriptures."

¹ Hugo de Plessis.

Likewise, the New Testament gives eloquent testimony to the common ancestry and the organic unity of mankind. In his Areopagus address (Acts 17:26), the Apostle Paul speaks of the creation of man from “one”. The thought is clear, requiring no addition. F. F. Bruce comments:

*The creator of all things in general is the creator of mankind in particular. The Athenians might pride themselves on being autochthonous - sprung from the soil of their native Attica - but this pride was illfounded. All mankind was one in origin - all created by God and all descended from one common ancestor. This removed the imagined justification that Greeks were innately superior to barbarians, as it removes all imagined justifications for parallel beliefs today. Neither in nature nor in grace - neither in the old creation nor in the new - is there any room for ideas of racial superiority.*²

As John Stott has pointed out, the Apostle used this argument as part of his expose’ of the sin and folly of idolatry, but he could equally have used it to expose the folly and evil of racism. God is portrayed in these verses as the Creator, Sustainer and Father of all mankind, Jews as well as gentiles. Says Stott “If He is the God of all human beings, this will affect our attitude to them as well as to Him”.³

By way of example - despite pressures from certain pseudo-scientific trends in the southern states of pre-civil war America to justify slavery by attempting to assign to the Negro a different racial origin, Dabney and Thornwell - both “racist” in the modern use of that term - insisted on the unity of the human race. Dabney points out the theological import of his stance:

*If there are men on earth not descended from Adam’s race, then their federal connection with them is broken. but more, their inheritance in the proto evangelium ... is also interrupted. The warrant of the church to carry the Gospel to that people is lacking ...*⁴

{98} With equal insistence but greater passion, Thornwell urges:

*Science, falsely so-called, may attempt to exclude him (the black [J R]) from the brotherhood of humanity. Men may be seeking eminence and distinction by arguments which link him with the brute; but the instinctive impulses of our nature, combined with the plainest declarations of the Word of God, lead us to recognize in his form and ligaments, in his moral, religious and intellectual nature, the same humanity in which we glory as the image of God. We are not ashamed to call him our brother.*⁵

² F. F. Bruce The Acts of the Apostles, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Marshall.

³³ John Stott, Issues Faced by Christians Today, Marshall 1984, p. 205.

⁴ Robert Louis Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Zondervan 1972, p. 292.

⁵ James Henley Thornwell, Collected Writings, Banner of Truth Trust 1974, vol. iv, p. 402

It is an historic tragedy that neither theologian seemed able to draw the necessary conclusions and allow biblical principle to triumph over vested interest.

We must not avoid the clear implications of the unity of the human race when thinking of Jewish evangelism. By virtue of creation, God is the Father of all men, all of whom are our brothers. This is no sentimental or romantic liberal doctrine. The familiar words of John Donne are founded upon scriptural truths, which ought to shock us out of any racial pride and insularity:

Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind: And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.

Would to God the Church of Christ truly believed this in the case of the Second World War.

Not only do we share brotherhood with all men, but we are also our brother's keeper. We are obliged in both Old Testament and New to "love our neighbor" (Matt. 22:39) and we are duty bound to "do good unto all men..." (Gal. 6:10). We may not countenance racial prejudice of any kind. Rather, we are called to humble ourselves and like our Savior be servants of all. Consequently, evangelization of the Jews must never serve as a cloak for gentile colonialism, or be done with a view to the conquest of the Jewish nation by a particular brand of religious conviction.

Nazi Anti-Semitism and South African Apartheid

Two most heinous forms of racism have come to expression in our own century. Both cry to heaven for prophetic denunciation according to biblical teaching: Nazi anti-Semitism and South African Apartheid. To be sure, there have been many other {99} attempts to deny the unity of mankind by engaging in the subjugation, or even the destruction, of races; we cannot forget the genocide in Cambodia, Stalin's ruthless destruction of racial minorities, the legacy of slavery in the southern USA and the present suppression of Jews by Syria, Iran and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, both Nazism and Apartheid hold special claim to our attention because they both arose in so-called "Christian" countries and enjoyed the endorsement of large sections of the Church.

At first sight, they may seem very different: despite gross injustice, the South African Government does not engage in an attempt to exterminate the Black population of that country. However, the basic philosophies undergirding these two systems are more or less identical. Both are pre occupied with the ideas of a race which is destined to rule, and both are pathologically concerned to preserve "the purity of the race". The notorious South African Mixed Marriages Act has now been abandoned, but this is largely due to the steady dripping of moral criticism over a period of forty years, rather than to a change of heart in Afrikanerdom. Both Nazis and Afrikaners segregated society, the Nazis by herding Jews into ghettos and the Afrikaner Nationalists by their Group Areas Act, by encouraging family-destroying migrant labor, by

influx control laws and by the creation of pseudo-autonomous Bantustans and “homelands” such as the Transkei and Ciskei. While many white South Africans undoubtedly wish to live in close harmony with blacks, the State policy is to segregate cultures and encourage a “separate development”.

Hitler used a totally untenable scientific theory of race in order to justify his elevation of “the Aryan ideal” and the destruction of the Jews. Paul Althaus championed the cause of “the preservation of the purity of the Volk and of our Race”. Few contradicted him. One of these few was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Edwin Robertson, in his recent biography of Bonhoeffer, *The Shame and the Sacrifice*, reports that on the notorious “*Kristalnacht*,” Bonhoeffer wrote on the date, (9.11.38) beside the verse in Psalm 74 “they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.”⁶ That night of terror should have raised a clamor for justice from the throats of Christians throughout Germany, but it did not. Karl Barth, on reading Eberhard Bethge’s biography of Bonhoeffer in 1967, recalled with shame that Bonhoeffer had spoken out more forcibly and clearly than many others, insisting that the Jews were human beings.⁷ Bonhoeffer likened the events to the antics of a {100} mad driver. It was not enough to bind up the wounds of the victim. Someone had to put a spoke in the wheel. He asked for a statement on the Jewish question to be incorporated in the Bethel Confession, which in turn could well have been included in the Barmen Declaration - the reaction of the confessing church to Hitler’s policies. His request was refused. Consequently, contemporary Jewish writers and thinkers have legitimately criticized the German church’s cowardice and an additional barrier to Gospel witness among the Jews has been raised. Unfortunately, the response of other segments of the Church of Christ to the obvious plight of the Jews was no better.

As the Jewish Christian Jacob Jocz points out, “Faith in the God of Israel, in the God of the covenant, in the God of history, is always a test and a challenge, but after Auschwitz it is an agonizing venture for every thinking Jew.”⁸ How much harder it is for Jews to heed the Church’s message when the Church that now attempts to evangelize remained silent during the Holocaust! Few nations have records like those in Holland, Denmark and Finland, where Christian activity on behalf of the Jews was both courageous and concrete. Under the leadership of their Christian king, the people of Denmark shipped out the whole of the Jewish community from the country (except 52 who were deported prior to the rescue operation) in a clandestine armada of small ships bound for neutral Sweden. The Finnish Foreign Minister declared: “Finland is a decent nation. We will rather perish together with the Jews ... we will not surrender the Jews!” Of Finland’s 2,000 Jews, only four were deported. The record of Christian families in Holland, such as the story told in *The Hiding Place* of the Ten Boom’s, also demonstrate the concern of Christians to speak and act on behalf of the victims of racism and prejudice. The descendants of such people today have greater credibility when they seek to witness to Jewish people. Their daring deeds of love and kindness are not forgotten; they authenticate the Gospel message.

⁶ Edwin Robertson, *The Shame and the Sacrifice*, Hodder 1987 p. 158

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Jacob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ After Auschwitz*, Baker 1984 p. 34.

If Christians fail to speak out for, and identify with, just grievances today, the day will undoubtedly dawn when a barrier of prejudice will be erected, thus rendering Gospel witness extremely difficult. It will fall on deaf ears. The battle must be fought on two fronts; first, we must demonstrate that racist myths are both biblically and scientifically untenable. Second, the struggle for justice and equality must not exclusively be carried out in the realm of debate and discussion, but in concrete demonstration amidst the realities of life.

{101} Talk of love and concern is totally inadequate. Never in the Gospel record do we read of Christ protesting His love for anyone. He did not have to tell people that He loved them; He gave such a powerful demonstration of His love that it was self-evident. The Cross demonstrates a love, a solidarity and a self-sacrifice which not only satisfies the just demands of God, but exerts a powerful moral influence over all believers as they seek to live a Christlike life. We too, must treat all men as human beings, equal in value and equal in human dignity.

Following the example of the Prophets, the Church must denounce tyranny, cost what it may. It is also under obligation to demonstrate truth and love in its fellowship, where the multi racial nature of the Kingdom of God can be seen in action. The Church's concern must be not only with orthodoxy but also orthopraxis - we do not believe what we ought if we do not live the way we should. In its recently published "Church and Society: A Testimony of the Dutch Reformed Church. Pretoria 1986", we read the following:

To fulfill its calling to God, to itself and to society, and to lend credibility to its proclamation, the very existence of the church must be a visible symbol and concrete expression of the Kingdom of God. For all sectors of society, the church must be a living window of what God in his grace accomplishes: how He renews relationships; how He grants reconciliation, mutual understanding and peace; how He transforms suspicion into brotherly love.⁹

The Church must not fail to declare that the persecuted victims of racism and the advocates and perpetrators of such systems are themselves dehumanized by such a doctrine.. Not least among the tragedies of the Holocaust was the barbarism inculcated in a whole generation of 'Reich children.' In relation to Jewish evangelization, this means that we must avoid stereotyping and that we must respect the dignity and integrity of Jewish culture.

2. THE DIVERSITY AND COMPLEXITY OF MANKIND

The Lord has displayed a rich diversity of shape, color and form in creation. The marvelously illustrated field guides to birds, butterflies and flowers are eloquent testimony to this fact. It would be unusual if man, the crown and pinnacle of God's creative acts, was found to be the sole

⁹⁹"Church and Society" A Testimony of the Dutch Reformed Church, Pretoria 1986 p. 35.

victim of dull uniformity. We are not disappointed: rich variety is also reflected in the family of man. While we cannot ascribe strict scientific status to the biblical terms “tribes”, “tongues”, “peoples”, “nations”, “kingdoms” and “multitudes”, they nevertheless convey a distinct impression of ethno-linguistic complexity. In view of what we have already seen concerning the essential unity of mankind, we are forced to ask, “Whence all this diversity?” How do we account for the various “races,” their languages and cultures?

{102} Environmental Factors

Genesis 1:28 spells out man’s primary obligations in terms of cultivating the potential of his environment, increasing the world’s population and ruling over creation. It is clear that man was to utilize every hospitable environment and habitat, from fertile valleys to the less hospitable mountains, deserts and forests. Man’s history and culture would inevitably be influenced by his locality. In relative isolation from other humans and under the special constraints of developing technologies, art forms and communicational needs, language - always a dynamic entity - would adjust and specialize in order to cope with prevailing needs. It is not at all difficult to understand how today’s ethno-linguistic diversity could have naturally evolved, quite apart from the baneful effects of sin.

Judgmentally Accelerated Diversity

However, gentle and natural development did not materialize. Due to the proud and rebellious nature of post-diluvian society, divine judgment was inevitable. Genesis 11 is familiar: The tower builders were dispersed by a confusion of tongues. How many linguistic variants were then produced we do not know. Candlish is undoubtedly correct in his assessment of the tower builders’ sin:

*It was an act of daring rebellion against the Most High; and in particular, against His prerogative of dividing to the nations their inheritance; being avowedly intended for the very purpose of preventing the orderly dispersion which God had manifestly appointed.*¹⁰

The scattering of the family of man at Babel was not done, as is sometimes stated, in confusion; it was a methodical dispersal by way of migration from the plain of Shinar: To the North trekked Japheth and his family, to the South Ham, while Shem settled in the central belt which included the land flowing with milk and honey, later to be apportioned to descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

¹⁰ R.J.Candlish, *Studies in Genesis*, Kregel 1979 p.176

As a result of these great migrations, the earth came to be populated and the cultures of man richly diversified, but - and it is here that judgment is most profoundly expressed - the task of taking the Gospel to all mankind was made the more difficult. It is to this divine ordering of human society that the Apostle refers {103} in his Areopagus address when he states "... that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined ... the exact places where they should live." (Acts 17:26).

Ethno-linguistic Diversity

We may cite examples of the present ethno-linguistic complexity that creates barriers to cross-cultural missionary activity in The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1974 Macropedia vol. 6 p. 1122), which divides Europe alone into 4 major culture areas, 22 cultural provinces, and 158 distinct peoples. Consider further the Caucasian race's 660 languages, the Mongoloid people's 1700 or the Negroid's 1660, each enshrining different cultures and often sub-divided further into dialects, accents and regional characteristics. This variety is one of the greatest obstacles facing the Church as it seeks to communicate the Gospel to the world. What often separates men is not geographical but cultural distance.

It would be folly to disregard ethno-linguistic division and, consequently, to fail in being culturally sensitive. It is naive to believe that the preacher's task is simply to repeat the Word as it is written in Scripture; if so, he might as well stay at home and send Scripture portions through the post. We must preach the Gospel in terms that people can understand and to which they can readily relate. The preacher going forth must become immersed in the life of his fellows so that, through his life and personality, he can bring the Gospel to bear upon a specific people whose outlook, values, attitudes, and aspirations are largely formed by the culture in which they live. In terms of Jewish evangelism this of necessity means a respect for Jewish culture and an ability to relate the Gospel in terms that are both familiar and relevant to the Jewish people.

The Apostles' sensitivity to the diversity of cultures that formed the milieu of their ministry can be seen by the differing emphases in their preaching in relation to where they preached; the arrangement of material and particular stresses of truth differed when they preached to a Jewish congregation compared to a gentile context. Without in any way jeopardizing the message itself, they self-consciously addressed themselves to specific cultural contexts. In a word, the Gospel they preached was "contextualized." To be sure, this is currently a loaded term. To some it expresses the very essence of cross-cultural ministry, while others suspect contextualization to be synonymous with syncretism. But the term itself is neutral and can be helpful in expressing the need for careful adaptation to the prevailing culture and customs of the people whom we wish to address with the Gospel.

Discussion of contextualization has become necessary due to the crass insensitivity and ignorance of many western missionaries. For example, in a survey of over 5000 Christian workers in India, many of whom were western missionaries, Eric Wright {104} points out that

over half claimed it was not necessary to know anything about Hinduism or Islam in order to be an effective Christian worker in India.¹¹

The Homogeneous Unit Principle

One highly significant response to the need for cultural sensitivity is that associated with the name of Professor Donald McGavran and the Institute of Church Growth of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena. Professor McGavran has, for more than 30 years, called the Church to take the diversity of mankind more seriously and to gear its missionary and evangelistic activities accordingly.

The fundamental principle that seems to underlie his teaching is the so-called “Homogeneous Unit” (HU) principle. Put simply, it means that like attracts like. According to McGavran, the task of missions is to win men to Christ and then to incorporate them into congregations without requiring them to cross boundaries from their particular homogeneous unit to the church.

Churches should be, according to McGavran, mono-ethnic, comprised largely of those from a single social and cultural background. McGavran is wary of any approach which implies that becoming a Christian means “leaving our people and joining those foreigners.” Citing the Indian experience he says:

... evangelism will seek to bring those who believe into congregations made up of their own kith and kin, their own caste fellows. Among Nagas it will establish Naga congregations, among Nairs it will set up Nair, and among Kurmis, Kurmi congregations. This may sound impossible to Christians who have been reared in, and know nothing but the conglomerate multiethnic pattern; but any India-wide view at once reveals that most of the growth of the Church there has occurred along these lines. This is the pattern that fits India, is culturally agreeable to the country, preserves Indian ways and customs best, and has most likelihood of surviving and spreading.¹²

On the basis of such assumptions, the support given by Fuller staff and faculty to the modern Messianic Jewish movement is more than understandable.

¹¹ Eric Wright, *Tell the World*, Evangelical Press 1981 p. 94.

¹² Donald A. McGavran, *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from India*, 1979 p. 228

{105} Dr. McGavran's concern is well expressed:

As I read the future, many homogeneous units are fighting a losing battle against the tide of human affairs. They will eventually go. Larger and larger racial and linguistic unities appear likely. But homogeneous units are here now and are likely to be here for a long time. Let the church disciple each of them out to the fringes, operate with them, and preserve the richness of their cultures, and as far as it can, mitigate the antipathy which arises between bodies of men, and promote love and justice between all men. The church working thus with the homogeneous unit, not against it, will liberate the multitudinous ethnic units of mankind into the glorious liberty of the children of God.¹³

While it has become almost fashionable in some circles to dismiss the Church Growth school of thought as seriously flawed - and there are indeed biblical inconsistencies, mistaken emphases and sloppy exegetical procedures - we would do well to ponder some of the many helpful insights Dr. McGavran affords us. Let us form our views of what he is saying from his own works, rather than from those of his critics and detractors. In increasing our sensitivity to cultural realities and to the ethno-linguistic complexity of our world, McGavran has much to teach us. Professor Harvie M. Conn of Westminster Theological Seminary would have the Church thank God for this man, whose "continuous, almost relentless, reminder to us that the business of Missions is the planting of the church."¹⁴

Having entered that caveat on his behalf, we have to say that we believe McGavran encourages the Church in a direction which leads to a misuse of the knowledge with which the science of social anthropology provides us. Instead of using the HU principle to sharpen our perception of target groups, it has been misapplied as a principle of Church development. We must cultivate a biblically informed awareness of the barriers that lie between unconverted men and membership of the Church, in order not to add to the offence of the Gospel. But we must not permit the Church to be imprisoned by any human culture or set of traditions, because all of these are invariably tainted by sin - Jewish culture included.

{106} The goal for the Church, local as well as universal, is summed up in Ephesians 2:11 - 22, where the Apostle tells us that God's purpose is "to create one new man out of the two". The Church, is often depicted in the epistles as a fragile, unstable creation, comprised of members drawn from diverse backgrounds who are to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace". The injunction to "receive one another as Christ received you, to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7) would have little application in mono-ethnic congregations. It has a tremendous meaning in congregations comprised of Jews and gentiles, Greeks and barbarians, slaves, masters, rich and poor. Those congregations in the beginning of the Christian Era which failed to identify with God's multi-cultural objective and which insisted upon a strongly defined mono-cultural context - namely the Jewish congregations - soon ceased to exist.

¹³ Donald A. McGavran, "The Homogenous Unit in Missionary Theory", cited by Arthur F. Glasser in *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth*, ed. Harvie M. Conn, Presbyterian and Reformed 1977 p. 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid* p. viii.

Mono-ethnic congregations tend to become exclusive; they are thus often perceived to be unattractive, even unfriendly to those outside the homogeneous unit. Lacking concern for those without, they become insular and narrow in outlook. The demise of such congregations is never far off for, as Emil Brunner rightly observed, “Missions are the lifeblood of the Church. Suspend them and she swoons. Suspend them and she dies!”

The tendency towards exclusivism is a particular danger that needs to be understood by those who advocate the formation of Messianic assemblies. The urge is to maintain a distinctive Jewish cultural expression in worship in order to serve the needs of the Jewish believer’s sense of identity, as well as to convince the watching unbelieving Jewish world that becoming a believer in Yeshua does not constitute a betrayal of Jewishness.

One cannot but be sympathetic to such concerns. But, I ask, is the idea of such mono-ethnic congregation a truly biblical one? Where does Scripture justify the existence of congregations that exclude others from fellowship on the grounds of race and culture? To be sure, cultural distinctions must be safeguarded. Jewish identity must be preserved, but this must be done within an open fellowship, and in serious recognition of the apostolic teaching and practice. The implications of Ephesians 2:11-22 must be studied and applied consistently in relation to the claims of Messianic Judaism and of the legitimacy of Jewish Christian churches outside of Israel.

Our sympathy for such groups is greatly strained when the terminology used by them is designed to create the impression that Jewish believers stand apart from the “gentile Church.” It can be argued that terms such as “Messianic Jew” and {107} “Messianic Assembly” are fundamentally terms of disaffiliation. If this is so, then such calculated disaffiliation will result in Jewish believers living in a kind of twilight world, midway between Judaism and the Church.

I say to my Jewish brothers, “by all means give Moses his place, but let Christ clearly outshine him!” Speaking as a gentile, I implore my Jewish brethren to use their gifts and express their distinctive contribution within a conglomerate fellowship, even as I implore my gentile friends to move over and make room for our Jewish brothers. Just as the early Church did not require gentiles to become Jewish proselytes, so too today, gentiles must not ask Jewish believers to renounce their Jewishness, but rather safeguard and express it.

Any congregation of Christ must reflect the community in which it is located. Artificial attempts either to include or to exclude members on grounds of language, culture or former religious background are bound to fail because they are artificial. They do not reflect the real world which the grace of God through the Gospel is transforming. For David J. Heselgrave, the elements that define an Homogeneous Unit are secondary matters, not, as McGavran would have them, primary considerations:

The Christian families of the first century were composed of people of different social class and, most likely, color. The believing community at Colossae included both

Philemon and his slave, Onesimus, as brothers in Christ (Philem 16). Certainly there were other masters and many slaves. Simeon Niger of Antioch was probably a black (Acts 13:1). The Apostle Paul made it clear that in Christ “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28a). That does not mean that such distinctions were totally disregarded among early Christians. It does mean that chromosomes, color and class did not bring these communities together. Nor were they allowed to keep the believers of those communities apart.¹⁵

It is imperative that Jewish believers and their gentile brethren learn to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”. What is at stake is far larger than party interests and HU identity. The very credibility of the Gospel in the eyes of a skeptical world is the real issue: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”. (John 13:35) Christ calls His Church to a clear expression of unity in the practice of His truth. For this He labors by His Spirit, and for this He prayed: “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”. (John 17:23)

And yet, however open we may want Christian fellowships to be, the rich diversity of human culture is not to be obliterated or merged into some kind of Christian cultural fusion. It is not monoculture we are to seek, but a true multi **{108}** cultural, multi-racial, multi-national Church. We labor for a Church in which no one is required to break away from their ethno-linguistic, or cultural roots, but one in which all cultures will find acceptance and respect and their distinctive contributions will be welcome. The old cultural self-consciousness, with its chauvinism and alienation, must give way to a culture or race and color which transcends human differences, offering love and acceptance. The Pasadena Report of the Lausanne Movement, 1977, expressed concern over homogeneous unit congregations in the following words:

... a homogeneous unit church can be a legitimate and authentic church. Yet ... if it remains in isolation, it cannot reflect the universality and diversity of the Body of Christ. ... Therefore every homogeneous unit church must take active steps to broaden its fellowship in order to demonstrate visibly the unity and variety of Christ’s Church.

With such a goal in mind the Apostle could write to the Ephesians, “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people, and members of God’s household...” (Eph. 2:19).¹⁶ Somehow, Jewish national and cultural identity must be allowed - indeed encouraged - to find expression within the context of the multi-cultural, universal Church of Christ.

¹⁵ David J. Heseltine, *Planting Churches Cross Culturally*, Baker 1980 p. 272.

¹⁶ *The Pasadena Report of the Lausanne Movement*, 1977.

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The inescapable corollary of embracing the Gospel, and thereby experiencing union and fellowship with God, is that I am united with all other believers and stand with them on an equal basis of equality and worth. I am obligated to labor in extirpating all traces of lingering racism, binding traditionalism or cultural bias that threatens the harmony and peace of the Church. Among the things that I must renounce in becoming a disciple are those ties of blood and kinship which would take precedence over my new identity among the citizens of heaven (cf. Matt 10:37 with Phil 3:4 - 8), all this without losing that distinct identity with which God has gifted me.

3. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The biblical doctrine of race teaches both the unity and the diversity of mankind. Christians seeking to evangelize the human race are obliged to conserve that unity and to respect the distinctions found in the family of man. In a very real sense, the Gospel is never addressed to stereotypes from within the world's cultures; it is {109} addressed to individuals. It is not the human race as such, nor yet the diverse units within the race, that bear the image of God; that image is impressed upon the nature and character of individuals. Though man stands in organic and covenantal solidarity with the rest of mankind, it is not the human race *en masse* that will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Rather, each individual will account for his or her personal sinfulness. Families, clans, tribes or other homogeneous units do not come in repentance and faith to receive salvation, but men and women as individuals, be they Jew or gentile.

The importance of this fact cannot be overstated. The Gospel is never addressed to "Jews", "Muslims" or "Hindus". Such ideal stereotypes do not exist in fact, only individuals with their idiosyncrasies, inconsistencies and distinctive characteristics. A book on "The Christian approach to the Jew" may well be a fascinating exercise in theoretical missiology, but "the Jew", idealistically conceived, does not exist. This calls to mind an insight expressed by an Israeli comedian who, when asked if he were an Orthodox Jew, replied by saying "No, I'm only 'Jewish.'" ("Ish" in Hebrew means "man". In other words, the Israeli comedian was saying "I'm an individual who is also a Jew.")

J.H. Bavinck, in words that should be indelibly engraved on our memories, puts it well:

Abstract, disembodied and history-less sinners do not exist; only very concrete sinners exist, whose sinful life is determined and characterized by all sorts of cultural and historical factors; by poverty, hunger, superstition, traditions, chronic illnesses, tribal morality, and thousands of other things. I must bring the Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ to the whole man, in his concrete existence, in his everyday environment. ... The content of God's Word itself teaches me that I must seriously

*consider the person to whom I would direct myself. Under no circumstances may I present the Word of God in general abstract timeless formulas addressed to no one. As an ambassador of the living Christ I must direct myself to living people, and I must earnestly consider them as persons, in all their circumstances, and in all their traits of character.*¹⁷

In some Evangelical and Reformed circles it is not at all unusual to be told that, since man is the same as ever he was and the Gospel is unchanged, “all we need to do is preach its timeless truths.” Such a view also finds expression in Barth’s Homiletics, where he denies that man’s real situation is the historical one in which he finds himself; man’s real situation is as he stands in the sight of God. This is not the lesson that ought to be derived from the sensitive particularism demonstrated by our Lord and His apostles. There is nothing to stop us from being faithful both to the biblical text and to life. Preaching without due sensitivity to the context into which we preach, and exclusive concern with matters of content, leads to stifling irrelevance. In one sense, we must begin with the text, for it is the. {110} text which must be allowed to determine our message. In another, we must begin with the hearers, asking ourselves “What message must I preach in this particular situation?” To put it differently, in one sense our preaching is a monologue. In another, it is a dialogue. The response to our message may not be as vocal as it was on the day of Pentecost, but if our preaching has apostolic relevance, it will ultimately result in the pricked heart crying out “Men and brethren, what shall we do?!” It could be argued that all communication is a dialogue, even if the form is monological. This is true of most other forms of witness-bearing: personal conversation and debate are the normal activities of evangelism. The interaction, question and answer, of an evangelistic encounter must elicit from the evangelist appropriate responses to the questions posed and to the context to which he has chosen to address himself. We must learn to “scratch where it itches”.

Sensitivity to, and empathy with, others is of the very essence of evangelism. The ability to “sit where they sit;” to identify, means far more than learning to speak a foreign language or having a theoretical knowledge of a people’s history and social customs. The identification to which we must aim is analogical of Christ’s identification with us: “Let this mind be in you ...” (Phil 2:5). This incarnational identification served Paul, the great missionary apostle, with a standard to be emulated (I Cor 9:16 - 23).

George W. Peters reminds us that the missionary task is a human one:

*God has chosen human instruments to accomplish His task in human hearts within a human society surrounded by a human environment. Humanism and theological liberalism, no doubt, have over emphasized this factor and have made missions almost totally anthropocentric and philanthropic. Evangelical Christianity to a great extent has underestimated this vital fact.*¹⁸

¹⁷ JH Bvinck, An Introduction to Science of Missions

¹⁸ George A Peters, An Introduction to the Science of Missions, Presbyterian and Reformed 1960 pp. 81-83.

The practical implications of these principles in relation to Jewish evangelism have yet to be worked out in detail. They do, however, serve as an important warning both for the promoters of Messianic Jewish congregations and for those who oppose them. We will do well to heed that warning and to rethink our respective practices.

{111} A statement on the Current Debate Concerning the Necessity of a Testimony by the Church to the Jewish People

Issued by Evangeliumsdienst für Israel (Germany).¹

Among Christians and Christian theologians, the question is being vigorously discussed whether Jewish people have their own special and peculiar way to salvation which may have nothing to do with Jesus Christ. The argument is that our Jewish brethren by virtue of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenant, remain the elect of God and hence are members of the father's household. Although Jesus said that He was the way, the truth and the life and that no one could come to the father except through Him (John 14:6), that may be true for the gentiles but not for the Jews. Consequently there are two ways to God: one for the Jews on the basis of their election (without Jesus Christ) and the other for the gentiles through Jesus Christ. The gentiles in this case are those who have been converted through Jesus Christ to the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are permitted to share in the salvation which God has prepared for Israel and through Israel for the nations of the world. The conclusion drawn from this argument is that evangelistic work among Jews is "nonsense" since it is blindly doing something contrary to God's plan of salvation. Also such missionary work contradicts the lasting validity of the Old Testament.

Linked with this is a devaluation of the New Testament and its message of God's salvation through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This seriously affects some of the essential doctrines of the New Testament which are fundamental to the confessions of faith of the Christian churches. This is also the context of the repeated accusation that the roots of all anti-Semitism are to be found already in the New Testament. In other words, Christianity, by having the New Testament as its doctrinal foundation, inevitably tends toward anti-Semitism. Consequently Christianity must be urged to correct the fundamentals of its faith or to revise them drastically.

The need for a revision of Christian doctrines is often supported by reference to the Holocaust having been perpetrated by the Church against the Jews.

Any theology drawn up after the Holocaust must, it is said, respect and acknowledge the Jewish faith. It is, for example, alleged to be inconceivable that Jewish people who went into the Nazi gas chambers with their testimony to God {112} upon their lips should not be accepted by God and should be excluded from the glories of His kingdom.

It is certainly not for us to judge how God will extend His mercy to people who have never ever heard God's offer of salvation in Christ or who are blind to such an offer. But it is for us to confess and to testify to what, through God's goodness, we have experienced as God's way of salvation in Jesus Christ for us and for others. It would be disobedient and a rejection of the mercy of God if

¹ English translation of EDI's "Stellungnahme" (Spring 1987).

we were to question the revelations of the New Testament and were to declare them as invalid for our time. It was, after all, the Jewish disciples of Jesus who before their nation's Sanhedrin and hence before the religious leaders and doctrinal authorities of Israel, testified that even for Jews there was salvation in none other than Jesus, the Messiah, alone(Acts 4.12). We are not permitted to abandon this testimony as long as we regard Jesus Christ, who bears the title of Israel's Messiah, as our Lord. And such He will continue to be. We are not at liberty to deny His sovereignty over all men or to limit it to one section of mankind only.

John the Baptist pointed his Jewish disciples to Jesus saying 'Behold, the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world.' Jesus 'was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 2.8-11).

Alfred Burchartz

Willi Pfrunder

Wolfgang Miller

{113} Discrediting Jewish Evangelism

By Daniel C. Juster

Past President of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC 1979-1986). Now serving as General Secretary of the same Union, Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Significant writings are presently emerging from the Jewish Christian dialogue with a clear response to evangelizing Jewish people. One of the most significant books is *What Christians Should Know about Jews and Judaism* by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein (Word, 1984). Another is *Jesus the Pharisee*, by Harvey Falk (Paulist Press, 1985). These books, besides presenting significant information about Judaism, are geared to dissuade Christians from Jewish evangelism, while giving them a positive appreciation of the adequacy of Judaism as a religion for Jews. Unfortunately, some Evangelicals are buying the argument. Only Carl Henry in his review of Eckstein's book remarked, "Read with critical appreciation, welcome its call for serious conversation; and hope for balanced discussion with constructive counterpoint" (emphases mine).

Those Jewish leaders who are involved in Jewish Christian dialogue are some of the more enlightened leaders in the Jewish community. What is their argument? How shall we respond?

The Push for the Two Covenant Theory.

The greatest desire of Rabbi Eckstein and those who follow him is that Christians would accept Judaism as a legitimate and adequate faith for Jews. This view harkens back to the writings of Franz Rosenzweig. Rosenzweig argued that Christianity was a legitimate religion that provided Gentiles with the opportunity to enter into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus. However, Jews do not need to go through this route, since they are already with the Father through the covenant which God made with Abraham. Most Bible-believing Evangelicals would not find this argument in itself convincing: the example of the Apostles in preaching to the Jewish people and their direct teaching of the Jewish need for the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 2:9-11 "to the Jew first") easily invalidates this view - the Gospel is no separate covenant for Gentiles with a Messiah for Gentiles; it is the universal truth. The fulfillment of all the older covenants (and not their abolition, Matt. 5:17,18) is through the Messiah of God for both Jew and Gentile.

However, a further emotional argument is raised - the Christian persecution of Jews. In the light of anti-Semitism from Chrysostom to Hitler, with Crusades, {114} Inquisitions and pogroms in between, do Christians really have the right to teach Jews their religion of "faith and love"? Should not the full repentance of Christians for their history and prejudice include a recognition of Judaism as a beautiful, adequate and equal religion for Jews?

In response to this emotionally powerful argument, Evangelical Christians (including Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews) can only answer that this would be truly to hand Satan the very

victory he seeks. We cannot, because of the evil within institutional Christian history, deny what is revealed by God through the Scriptures. We cannot compound Christian historical unfaithfulness (with regard to anti-Semitism) with the added unfaithfulness of withholding our Gospel witness to the Jewish people. Though this witness must be ethical, gracious, and non-coercive, no circumstances of history can invalidate the Scriptural command to share the Gospel.

The Push for Messianic Jews to Assimilate.

Jewish leaders decry Jewish evangelism as leading to the destruction of the Jewish nation through assimilation; hence their plea is “do not destroy us through evangelism!” The Messianic Jewish movement has responded by saying that we have no intention of giving up our Jewish identity. This response has brought forth an extraordinary new argument, namely that if Jews believe in Jesus they should assimilate.

The Jewish leader may accept the Evangelical’s right to share the Gospel with all, but he stresses that it is unethical to especially single out the Jewish people. (Of course world missions leaders would say that if we do not speak specifically to various groups, tailoring our message to their uniqueness, we will be ineffective in our communication). Furthermore, we are told that it is only ethical to tell the would-be Jewish convert that with his conversion, the Jewish community will sever its ties with him, no longer accepting him as Jewish. Such a cutting of ties was once required by Christian institutions in more anti-Semitic periods: the convert was literally required to eat pork to prove his conversion, and to cut off all relations with his family and friends in the Jewish community. Today every Jewish believer in Jesus is aware of the cost of rejection that his acceptance of the Gospel will bring, since that cost is drummed into Jewish people throughout their lives.

However, the point of the above argument is to bring Christians to the place where they will reject those Jewish believers who continue to maintain a Jewish life-style. Several points are part of this argument:

1. We are told that we must recognize the right of the Jewish people (either the majority of Jews or the historic and contemporary views of the Rabbinic community) to define themselves. Christian acceptance of Jewish followers of Jesus is a rejection of this Jewish right of self-definition. After all, does not the Christian community reserve the right to define itself?

{115} Yet we must respond that truth is not decided by majority vote, but by scriptural revelation. Christian self-definition must be proven by the Bible, not by majority vote. If Paul and other Apostles stated, “I am a Jew,” (Acts 22:2) and demonstrated through teaching and personal example that the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah was the fulfillment of their Jewish identity, then this apostolic viewpoint must be accepted. (NB Acts 21:17-25, 28:17; Rom. 11:1).

2. Of course, enlightened rabbis are aware of the continued Jewish life-style of the Apostles. Their argument must therefore approach from another angle. It is argued that although Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity developed from the same Jewish roots, they developed in different legitimate directions. Both are good and worthy. It is neither possible to deny this development nor desirable to seek to reverse it.

But is this argument a legitimate one? Could it not be used to invalidate the Reformers of the 16th century who sought to reverse the direction of the Church and return it to biblical roots? This line of argument would invalidate the labors of all who strive to continually reform our faith in the light of biblical revelation. Furthermore, what has or has not developed in history is not the test of legitimacy; legitimacy is only established on the ground of agreement with biblical truth, apostolic teaching and example.

Rabbi Eckstein and others argue that history provides us with an ironclad framework for determining what is or is not possible in the future. Since history shows Judaism and Christianity separating, any attempt at rapprochement is illegitimate. Yet this same argument could be used with devastating results against Zionism: History developed in such a way that the Jewish people did not control their homeland for 1900 years. Would it then be illegitimate to seek to reverse history? No, history does not provide fixed boundaries for what is possible, but human decision decides the future of history.

3. The last point is an appeal from Jewish religious pride to Gentile religious pride. We are told that the continued use of Jewish symbols and practice by Jewish believers in Jesus is an affront to both Jews and Christians. It is an affront to Jews because they see these symbols being used to profess a compatibility between Jewish identity and Christian belief. Furthermore, it is argued that Messianic Jews change the meaning of these symbols in an illegitimate way, making them convey Christian meanings. This is considered an affront. Moreover, the unwillingness to accept Christianity in its present legitimate non-Jewish forms is an affront to Christians. Christianity is legitimate on its own terms without Judaizing it. Hence we are told that we must join together to reject Messianic Jews and their congregations, Hebrew Christians, and Christian missions to the Jews.

Jewish Christians believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of the whole of the Tanach (Old Testament). We believe that the feasts and symbols that are found in these Scriptures genuinely point to the New Covenant truth (even if the Jewish community does not use them in this way). Furthermore, since Rom. 11 teaches that **{116}** Gentile believers are grafted onto an historically Jewish olive tree, how can we hold that those who explicitly reflect these Jewish roots in their faith are illegitimate? The question should be stated “is the New Testament the fulfillment of Biblical Judaism or not?” If it is, our practice makes perfect sense.

Rabbi Eckstein argues that the acceptance of Messianic Jews and Hebrew Christians by the Christian community poisons Jewish-Christian relations and is therefore not worth the effort. We

would respond that it is never safe to build good relations on the suppression of truth. If Jewish followers of Jesus reflect apostolic teaching and practice, we must embrace them; if not, another response is more fitting. The faith and life of Jewish believers in Jesus must be tested by biblical revelation, not by what may have limited value in improving relations between Christians and Jews.

The upshot of Eckstein's argument is that Jews and Christians should join together to see that Jewish followers of Jesus assimilate, no longer call themselves Jewish or live in Jewish ways. Why would the Rabbi want to diminish the numbers of the Jewish nation in this way? Why would he prefer that if Jews became Christians, they would at least assimilate? The following argument answers this question.

The Issue of Deception

The last appeal is perhaps the most common. It is that Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews deceive unwitting Jews into believing that you can accept Jesus and remain a Jew. The use of Jewish symbols, it is argued, deceives the potential convert into believing that he is getting involved in something Jewish when in fact such is not the case.

This, however, is just the point. If Jesus (Yeshua) is the Jewish Messiah, it must by definition be consistent with Jewish identity to accept Him. Underneath all of the Rabbi's arguments looms this larger question: is Jesus the One who He claimed to be? If He is, then this argument and most of the others voiced would fall flat.

The observer of Jewish missions and of the congregational movement of Jewish believers in Jesus is struck by the great changes of the last fifteen years. Messianic Jewish believers in Jesus want to remain loyal to their own identity. They express this in many ways; it is not an evangelistic ploy. However, in this movement, we again see a confirmation of the importance of not requiring peoples to reject their culture (so far as this culture is not inconsistent with the Scriptures) in order to accept the Gospel. This principle, put into practice among Jewish missions and Messianic congregations, has multiplied our effectiveness. This principle is accepted in every major mission field worldwide. Yet some argue that we must reject applying this principle to the Jewish people. Christians are encouraged to reject the most effective evangelistic move of God's Spirit among the Jews since the first century. Most Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews are not being deceptive. We genuinely believe that it is Jewish to believe in Jesus according to apostolic teaching and example. Furthermore, we do not want to diminish the numbers of our {117} people. We live Jewishly. Could it be that the Rabbi's argument is really deceptive, a smokescreen which covers the desire not to face the claims of Jesus and the teaching and example of the Apostles?

There is another issue. It is that we are a challenge to Rabbinic authority. We simply do not accept the right either of the Rabbis, history, or the majority of Jews to define the Jewish identity of

Jewish believers in Jesus out of existence. We accept biblical and apostolic sources above these other authorities. We find ourselves with no option but to challenge the historic Jewish position on Jewishness and Jesus. Biblical teaching leaves us no other choice. Perhaps this is why we are so vehemently attacked by some Jewish leaders. They would rather have us assimilate, since we are seen both as successful and a threat to their authority in the community.

Jewish-Christian dialogue is important; it requires of us an attitude of mutual respect for one another as persons created in God's image. Yet we must reject the paradoxical stance that Christians must reject their Jewish brothers and sisters in Jesus for the sake of good relations with other Jewish people who do not accept Jesus. Furthermore, requiring these followers of Jesus to divest themselves of their Jewish heritage as a prerequisite for acceptance by the body of the Messiah would be to repeat the Galatian heresy albeit with a strange new twist.

The Evangelical response should make it known that dialogue, respect and cooperation must not depend upon our rejection of our Jewish brothers and sisters in Jesus, for that is an unthinkable position. Nor can we require of these brothers and sisters a rejection of their Jewish heritage. The sooner this is announced, the better. Then dialogue will not be based upon illusions, but can go forward in those areas where we have potential for real understanding and cooperation.

In conclusion, we issue a plea to our Christian brothers and sisters: please respect the Jewish roots of your faith. Do not reject your Jewish brothers and sisters in Jesus but support them all the more. The cost of the rejection they must bear in following Jesus is great indeed; they deserve your strong encouragement. The rejection of Jewish followers of Jesus would be a denial of both scriptural truth, the Jewish roots of Christianity and the eschatological hope that Israel will embrace the Gospel.

{118} Lausanne Letter to the Churches

Responses

The following exchange between Ian Kagedan of the Canadian Jewish Congress and John Berthrong of the United Church of Canada, is reprinted by permission from *Current Dialogue* (World Council of Churches) 12/June 1987. The discussion concerns the "Letter to the Churches" from the LCJE Consultation in August 1986, published in *Mishkan* no. 5. The LCJE statement was also published in *Current Dialogue* 11. Rev. Allan R. Brockway, Secretary of the WCC's Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People, has confirmed that Berthrong's response amply represents his understanding of WCC's position vis-à-vis the Lausanne movement and its stand with regard to Jewish evangelism and Jewish-Christian dialogue. *Mishkan* would like its readers to be informed about this discussion and the positions it represents.

Dear John,

In reading the December 1986 issue of *Current Dialogue*, I came upon the reprinted text of the Lausanne letter on Jewish evangelism. I must say, I am glad that the piece appeared at the end of the publication, for had I read it first, I would not have been inclined to read on.

To my mind, the letter marks a major backward step in Jewish-Christian relations. Perhaps I am overstating the case, but I cannot hide my disappointment. The piece seems to me to subvert some of the basic principles on which dialogue between Jews and Christians is established. Paragraph 3, which expresses gratitude that "God's reconciled community" includes both Jewish and non-Jewish believers even in the 1980's (!) is insensitive. Paragraph 4, which denounces anti-Semitism as "contrary to the Gospel" and then goes on to declare that to withhold the Gospel from the Jewish people would be a "gross discrimination," goes beyond insensitivity. The following paragraph's reference to "Jewish believers in Jesus" is sadly misinformed, and the concern "about unbiblical attitudes to minorities in Israeli society" makes me wonder what Bible or whose Bible the authors are reading. The balance of the letter is so thoroughly inconsistent with my notion of the foundations and purpose of dialogue that I wonder whether I have been "tuned in" at all. The approval of various so-called Jewish-Christian movements is profoundly disturbing.

I would very much appreciate your reflections on the Lausanne letter - its origins, its authors and its place within the World Council of Churches program.

With best regards,

Ian J. Kagedan

{119} Dear Ian,

Having finally gotten my copy of *Current Dialogue* 11, I can respond more accurately to your letter of December 4, 1986.

The case is precisely as I thought it would be after having read your initial letter. Let me elaborate. As I suspected, the letter in question is from a group which worked with the Lausanne Consultation. This is a group of conservative Christians, organized to counter the work of the World Council of Churches. It has been in existence for a number of years and has many projects which run parallel to the work of the World Council of Churches. Perhaps I should not say parallel but rather opposed. This is certainly the case in terms of Jewish-Christian dialogue. However, I think it is accurate to say that this kind of thinking is still quite current in many conservative Christian circles, as you probably already know all too well. But let me emphasize again that this is not the position of the World Council of Churches or of the United Church of Canada.

The problem you had arises from the fact that no one in Geneva actually explained at the top of the article who had published it. *Current Dialogue* often publishes articles from other sources to let those working in the field know what is going on - and they, from time to time, republish material which they do not agree with. But they like to keep us all informed of what is happening. I have already written Allan Brockway and have suggested to him that when they publish material like this they indicate the source. I rather suspect that they forgot to do this time because any informed Christian reader would immediately know the source of the material. But it is certainly confusing to those who do not know the various ramifications of internal Christian theological debate.

Let me conclude with a personal note. I find this kind of reasoning, namely that of the Lausanne letter, to be both false and a distorted understanding of the Christian faith from my perspective. It always saddens me to see Christians use this kind of twisted logic in their approach to the Jewish people, and for that matter, to any people in the other faith communities. It is certainly offensive to the other faith communities and is therefore a real block to any genuine and deep interfaith communication. I have always felt that these people do these sorts of things for their own personal need and not for any real desire for communication or cooperation, much less true interfaith dialogue and understanding. I follow the writings of these groups to keep informed of what they are doing. Some of the people involved with these groups are decent human beings as far as I can see. But I think their theology is flawed. In fact, I think that it is precisely these kinds of flaws that lead in the long run to the sorry history of Christian anti-Semitism. Those who are involved may not be anti- {120} Jewish personally, but their kind of theological programs can only promote the derogation of the witness to the Jewish people. However, I must say that I am thankful to my friends in Geneva for alerting us to the fact that there are people in the Christian community who

continue to think this way. It would be naive and foolish for those of us in the Christian churches to forget this sad fact.

I am sorry that this piece offended you, and I can certainly see why. I hope that my explanation sheds some light on the matter. I would, of course, be more than willing to amplify my remarks if necessary.

And on a happier note, best wishes for a wonderful New Year for you and all your colleagues at the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Sincerely yours,

John Berthrong

{121} Do We Need the Fellowship of Messianic Congregations?⁰

By Louis S. Lapidés

Louis Lapidés is a graduate of Talbot Theological Seminary and has worked for many years in various Jewish evangelistic organizations. He is pastor of Beth Ariel Congregation, Westwood CA, USA. and is active in the Fellowship of Messianic Congregations (FMC).

The Formation of the FMC

On February 25, 1986, a national forum of 12 Messianic Jewish leaders from the United States and Canada announced the formation of the Fellowship of Messianic Congregations (FMC). The primary goal of the FMC is to aid in the initiation and establishment of biblically sound Messianic congregations, both nationally and internationally. Like other inter-congregational groups, we seek to promote unity among Messianic congregations and pastors. One might ask, “Why the need for another inter-congregational organization? How is the FMC different from other Messianic associations?” The question might be more aptly stated, “Why do we need inter-congregational organizations at all?”

The Need for Messianic Unity

Over the years it has become clear within the Messianic movement that the need for inter-congregational associations has come out of the desire for unity.

For the past 10 years, some have seen the unifying factor as being “Hebrew Christian”; others have understood it to be Messianic Judaism; still others advocated a more religiously Orthodox or traditional emphasis in its Jewish practices. Some even argued that our unity could no longer be based on anything Jewish as we were once Jewish but are now Christian. The lack of unity in the Messianic movement is due to our different perceptions of what should unite us. Consequently, each group has its own unique view of that unifying element.

I find many expressions within the Messianic community to be edifying (such as Messianic Jewish revival, music, worship, and the expression of Jewish culture).

{122} But I question whether we can form our Messianic unity around them alone. So far, these emphases have tended to stress our distinctives or differences rather than our unity. It is time for

⁰ *Editors note: Mishkan #2 offered a presentation of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations. In a forthcoming issue we intend to present also the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues*

the Messianic movement to find a deeper basis for unity, one not dependent only on our unique experience of Jewish identity and culture.

The Guidelines for Spiritual Oneness

A helpful article by David Hesselgrave on spiritual unity appeared in the Fall 1986 issue of the *Trinity World Forum*¹. Hesselgrave faults Ecumenical unity for being primarily organizational in nature and for jettisoning the truths of the biblical faith. He likewise points out the weaknesses of a Charismatic unity based on spiritual experience wherein participants are encouraged to “leave doctrines at home.” Finally, he scores Evangelical unity which settles for an invisible mystical unity which cannot be evidenced other than in doctrinal language.

Visible Unity. Hesselgrave bases Messianic unity on Messiah’s prayer in John 17. In verse 23 Yeshua repeatedly prayed “May they be brought to complete unity to let *the world know that you sent Me* and have loved them as You have loved Me.” Here we see the Lord praying for a unity that is visible. It is so visible that unbelievers are persuaded by it and come to faith. This is not a mystical unity; it is neither organizational, nor can it be reduced to an experience.

Doctrinal Unity. Ephesians 4:12-16 also discusses this visible unity. Here Paul points out in verse 13 that the proper exercise of spiritual gifts leads the body toward spiritual maturity “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of the Messiah.”

The goals here are spiritual confidence in our understanding of biblical truth (unity of the faith); spiritual comprehension of our Lord Yeshua (unity of the knowledge of the Son of God); spiritual maturity demonstrated by the Body functioning in love, faith and hope (a mature man); spiritual conformity to the character of Yeshua corporately and individually (the fullness of the Messiah). Verse 14 describes the result: “As a result, we will no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine....”

Paul emphasizes that spiritual maturity is found when there is doctrinal stability. It is this stability that demonstrates our visible unity (“the unity of the faith”). *Thus, the Messianic movement experiences visible unity when it is progressing toward doctrinal consistency.* However, within the Messianic movement, there has been confusion about such theological matters as the Torah and its application to the Jewish believer; there occasionally appears to be a willingness to embrace certain aspects of rabbinic Judaism which are inconsistent {123} with New Covenant truth. Others have focused on their Jewishness to such an extent that Jesus has faded into the background. As a result of such doctrinal instability, the credibility of the

¹ Hesselgrave, David, *Trinity World Forum*, “Which Unity? Ecumenical or Charismatic or Evangelical or...?” *School of World Missions and Evangelism/Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Fall 1986.*

Messianic movement as a whole has been called into question. Spiritual disunity in our movement has been the result.

Those who desire Messianic unity have focused on every possible perception of unity but doctrinal unity, the touchstone of “unity” commanded by Scripture! Spiritual unity is not based on the fact that we are Jewish, like to fellowship with other Messianic congregations and pastors, prefer Messianic worship, or practice a certain Jewish liturgy. Rather, it is that visible unit, expressed in congregations involved in spiritual ministry and moving toward spiritual maturity, which will result in spiritual and doctrinal stability. Where there is instability in matters of the faith, spiritual disunity will result. Consequently, God has raised up the FMC to strengthen biblically sound Messianic congregations.

The Purposes of the Fellowship of Messianic Congregations.

1. To encourage and assist in the establishment and growth of Messianic congregations. The planter of congregations must be confident that his definition of a Messianic congregation is biblical. The New Covenant definition of the Body of Messiah is offered by Paul in Ephesians 2:20, “having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Jesus Himself being the corner stone”. It behooves each Messianic fellowship to first qualify as a New Covenant local congregation before it moves on to explore its measure of Jewishness. The Scriptures make it clear that the model for any Messianic assembly is not the rabbinic prototype of a synagogue but the New Covenant pattern of the local congregation. To be truly Messianic, a congregation must include the elements of worship, instruction, fellowship, outreach, accountability and administration of ordinances as defined by the New Covenant apostles and prophets. The FMC desires to communicate to the evangelical world that our foundation is biblical and not rabbinical. Consequently, our Jewishness is to be viewed through the grid of Old and New Covenant revelation, with Yeshua (and not our Jewish identity) being the major message.

On one occasion I had the opportunity to accompany a Jewish studies teacher to a Messianic congregation and when the service was over he enquired, “Why do these people need to believe in Jesus? I can not see what difference their belief in Jesus has made to the Jewishness of the service.” If the Jewish community sees a congregation reflecting Jewish identity but not Messianic principles, can we fairly call our congregations “Messianic”? The FMC desires to be cautious as to what will be validated as a biblical Messianic fellowship. If a Messianic assembly conforms to biblical guidelines, we will gladly embrace that body; but if the biblical elements of a New Covenant congregation are absent, we feel the need to challenge and exhort that congregation to re-discover its true identity as a New Covenant Messianic body.

{124} 2. to develop cooperation among like-minded congregations through their leaders.

Today it is not uncommon to hear of Messianic congregations holding to various positions on the obligatory nature of all or part of Mosaic Law, or to observe certain groups practicing aspects of

rabbinical liturgy which contradict New Testament theology. Who holds these congregations accountable? The member congregations of the FMC have cooperated in making themselves accountable to a doctrinal statement. Our statement of faith commits us to the fundamentals of the faith; it clarifies the believer's relationship to the Torah and expresses our concern with some extremist beliefs and practices found in the Charismatic movement. The FMC offers further accountability vis-à-vis planting new congregations; it extends help to Messianic assemblies searching for a new pastor; it provides counsel and feedback in case of congregational disputes; it affords opportunity for fellowship among Messianic leaders; it also acts as an instrument to channel funds or "people resources" to congregations going through hard times.

3. to represent a biblically and theologically sound Messianic faith to the body of the Messiah and to society at large. As we celebrate our New Testament faith in Jewish cultural forms, a need arises to teach the Body of Messiah the theology and biblical basis for our lifestyle. The FMC desires to be that spokesperson which will communicate on these issues. It would be advantageous for God's people to hear from an association composed of various Messianic congregations, as opposed to hearing from one individual who might be considered the spokesperson for the Messianic movement. On the issue of the Law, New Covenant believers need to hear a carefully reasoned, biblically solid presentation of the Messianic Jew's position vis-à-vis the Torah. Is the Mosaic Law obligatory for today's Jewish believer? If so, which portions of the Law are applicable? Should we have an agreed-upon Messianic authority for interpreting and applying the Law, similar to the Torah Sages within the rabbinic community? These questions can only be dealt with by a responsible corporate body speaking for a broad constituency of Messianic congregations.

4. To carry the message of redemption to the entire world by practicing and promoting the priority of the Gospel to the Jew first and also to the gentile. Most of the pastors leading FMC congregations have served as missionaries among the Jewish people; they are men who are committed to Jewish evangelism. Jewish evangelism can thus be supported through Messianic congregations as well as through Jewish missions. We are living in a day when the liberal wing of the Church (as well as some pockets of evangelicalism) subscribes to the deception that Jews can find salvation apart from Jesus the Messiah. Some endorse an erroneous theory that Torah-keeping Jews will be saved through their law-keeping, and when they enter heaven only then will they learn that they were actually saved through Jesus. These positions are foreign to Scripture: they are to be denounced by evangelicals obedient to the Great Commission and committed to the Gospel priority of "to the Jew first" (Rom 1:16). The FMC opposes in principle all attempts to muddle the message of Yeshua or to dilute outreach to the Jewish community.

{125} Conclusion

We praise our God for what He is doing both in the United States and around the world in raising up Messianic congregations. However the FMC feels that the Messianic movement will not reach its full potential unless theological issues within the Messianic community are clarified and resolved. The FMC has been raised up by God to provide unity to the Messianic movement,

specifically in the area of doctrinal accountability. The banner of the FMC is raised to invite others to find that unity around a biblically sound Messianic congregational movement.

APPENDIX:

CONSTITUTION OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF MESSIANIC CONGREGATIONS

PREAMBLE

In recognition of the gracious work of God in the lives of the increasing numbers of Jewish believers in the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) and ...

In recognition of the need to establish and build up local Congregations designed to minister to these Jewish and like-minded gentile believers and ...

In recognition of the need for an association of these Congregations based on adherence to sound Biblical and theological truths ...

We do hereby establish, on this 25th day of February, 1986, a bond of fellowship, counsel and co-operation, as is set forth in the Constitution and By-Laws which follow, and into which we heartily invite any and all Congregations and individuals who share with us the same faith, doctrine and distinctives.

§ 1 - NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Fellowship of Messianic Congregations, incorporated in the State of California and hereinafter referred to as FMC

§ 2 - PURPOSE

- 1) To encourage and assist the establishment and growth of Messianic Congregations.
- 2) To develop co-operation among like-minded Congregations through their leaders and duly constituted delegates.

- 3) To represent a Biblically and theologically sound Messianic faith to the body of Messiah and to society at large.
- 4) To carry the message of redemption to the entire world by practicing and promoting the priority of the Gospel to the Jew first and also to the gentile.

{126} § 3 - DEFINITION OF A MESSIANIC CONGREGATION

Section 1 - Purposes

A Messianic Congregation is a local assembly planned by the Father, united in Messiah Yeshua, and called by the Holy Spirit to organize for the purposes of worship, instruction, fellowship, outreach, accountability and administration of ordinances.

Section 2 - The Emphases

A Messianic Congregation has the specific emphases of:

- (A) expressing Jewish cultural forms at regular worship services
- (B) observing the feasts and holidays of Israel in a Messiah-centered manner
- (C) identifying with the Jewish people at large
- (D) rekindling the understanding of the inherent Jewish roots of faith in Yeshua, the promised Messiah of Israel
- (E) witnessing to the Jew first and also to the non-Jew

Section 3 - The Foundation

A Messianic Congregation is not under rabbinic authority but is part of the universal Body of Messiah, having been founded upon the apostles and prophets, the Messiah Himself being the Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

§ 4 - FAITH AND DOCTRINE

Section 1 - The Scriptures

We believe that the Scriptures, both the *Tanach* and the Brit *Chadasha*, are fully inspired and God's complete and final revelation to man until the Messiah returns. The 66 books of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation are inerrant in the original writings. They are authoritative in every category of knowledge to which they speak, including faith, practice, science and history (Proverbs 30:5-6; Isaiah 40:7-8; Jeremiah 31:31; Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21).

Section 2 - The Father

We believe in the unity of God as reflected in the Shema. God is the creator of all things, infinite and perfect, eternally existing in three equal persons, nature and the perfections of deity, as well as the characteristics of personality (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 28:19; John 6:27; II Corinthians 13:14; Acts 5:3-4; Hebrews 1:8).

We believe He is Father over all creation, thus its sovereign ruler, Father of Israel whom He has chosen as His unique people, Father of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus), whom He sent into the world to redeem mankind and creation, and Father of all who trust in His gracious provision (Exodus 4:22; Matthew 3:17; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 17:29; Galatians 3:26).

Section 3 - The Messiah

We believe that God the Son **became** flesh in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth, the promised Messiah of Israel, who was conceived by the Spirit of God and born of the Jewish virgin, Miriam (Mary). He is both fully God and fully man, united {127} forever without division or confusion (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Micah 5:2).

We believe that Messiah Yeshua died as a substitutionary sacrifice for man's sin and that all who believe in Him are declared righteous on the basis of His shed blood. The Messiah's substitutionary death was the purchase price for our redemption and was foreshadowed in the *Tanach* in the slaying of the Passover Lamb, the sin and trespass offerings and the sin offerings on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16:15-16; 17:11; Psalm 22:16; Isaiah 53:4-6; 10-12; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 12:10; Mark 10:45; Romans 3:24-26; 5:8-9; II Corinthians 5:14, 21; I Peter 3:18).

We believe that Messiah Yeshua arose from the dead bodily, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Presently He serves as our *Kohen Gadol* (Great High Priest) according to the priesthood of Melchizedek. As such, He is intercessor and advocate before the Father on behalf of all believers (Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 16:10-11; 110:4; Zechariah 6:12-13; Acts 1:9-11; I Corinthians 15:4-8; Hebrews 7:1-25; 8:1; I John 2:1).

Section 4 - The Holy Spirit

We believe the *Ruach HaKodesh* (The Holy Spirit) is a person. He possesses all the distinct attributes of deity and hence He is God. He does not call attention to Himself and is ever present to glorify and testify to Messiah Yeshua (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 139:7; Nehemiah 9:20; John 15:26-27; I Corinthians 2:10-11; 12:11; II Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:30).

We believe that during the period of the Old Covenant, the Spirit of God was active in creating the world and temporarily gifting, empowering and filling individuals for specific services to God (Genesis 1:2; Exodus 31:3; Numbers 27:18; Judges 6:34).

We believe the Spirit of God is active today convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. He regenerates, seals and sets the believer apart to a holy life. At the moment of salvation each believer is baptized (immersed) with the Spirit of God into the body of Messiah and is permanently indwelt by the Spirit of God. Therefore, all believers are complete in Messiah and possess every spiritual blessing. It is the privilege and responsibility of all believers to be constantly filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit, thereby manifesting the Spirit's fruit in their lives (John 14:16; 16:7-15; Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:13, 28-30; Ephesians 1:13; 5:18; Colossians 2:10; II Thessalonians 2:13).

We believe that at salvation the Holy Spirit imparts at least one spiritual gift to every believer for the purpose of edifying and equipping the Body of the Messiah. Believers ought not to emphasize searching for their gifts but rather to give attention to the Scriptural requirements of becoming spiritually mature in order to function in the Body. If this is done, every believer's spiritual gift shall become evident. Individual believers should never seek to obtain spiritual gifts, because they are given according to the sovereign choice of the Spirit of God. (I Corinthians 12:11; 13:13; Ephesians 1:15; 4:11-13; Colossians 1:3-5; I Timothy 3:1-12; Titus 1:5-9; I Thessalonians 1:3,11; II Thessalonians 1:3,4; I Peter 4:10).

{128} We believe that promoting the gift of tongues often gives undue prominence to a gift that had limited use even in New Testament times. It tends to place more emphasis on tongues speaking as an external manifestation of the Spirit rather than on the work of the Spirit within the believer which produces godly character and behavior. Therefore, believers, in their local bodies, should seek the more excellent way of life and be zealous about perfecting and utilizing the more useful and edifying gifts (Romans 8:13; I Corinthians 12:28-31; 13:1-3,13; 14:12,19,23,27-28; Galatians 5:22-23).

We believe that God has promised to heal according to His will. This may occur miraculously, medically or naturally. Supernatural healing may occur in response to prayer and accordance with God's sovereign will. However, healing cannot be claimed unconditionally in this age as a result of atonement, as is salvation (Exodus 4:11; II Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 4:13; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20; James 5:14-15; I John 5:14-15).

Section 5 - Satan and Angels

We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, that he had the highest rank of the created spiritual beings known as angels. He sinned through pride and carried a great company of angels (who are now known as demons) with him in his moral fall (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; I Timothy 3:6; II Peter 2:4).

We believe that Satan is the originator of evil. He and his agents are active in blinding mankind to spiritual truth, inciting anti-Semitism and hostility towards Israel, and attempting to defeat

believers. Believers can and should resist by applying Scriptural truth (Genesis 3:1-19; Luke 10:18 II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:10-19; James 4:7-8; I Peter 5:8-9; Revelation 12:13).

We believe Satan, as god of this world, now rules the non-believing world system. He was judged by the Messiah Yeshua's death, though not executed. Satan will suffer eternal punishment by being cast into the lake of fire after the Messiah's one thousand year Messianic reign (II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 20:10).

We believe a great company of angels remained holy and are before the throne of God praising, worshipping, adoring and glorifying Him. They are sent forth as special agents to bring about God's intended plans and purposes and to minister to all believers (Isaiah 6:1-7; Daniel 10:10-21; Luke 15:10; Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 7:12).

Section 6 - Man

We believe that man was created in the image of God. Adam sinned and consequently experienced not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. The consequences of this sin affected the entire human race. All human beings are born with a sinful nature, and sin in thought, word and deed (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:17; 3:6; Isaiah 53:6; 4:18; Mark 7:20-23; John 2:24-25; Romans 5:12-19; Ephesians 2:1-3).

{129} Section 7 - Salvation

We believe that anyone who by faith trusts Messiah Yeshua as Savior and Redeemer is immediately forgiven of sin and becomes a child of God. This salvation is not the result of any human effort or merit. Salvation is entirely dependent on the undeserved favor of God (Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; John 1:12; Romans 3:28; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 3:5).

We believe that all believers are kept eternally secure by the power of God through the new birth, the indwelling and sealing of the Holy Spirit, and the intercession of Messiah Yeshua (Zechariah 6:12-13; John 10:28-30; 14:16-17; Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 4:30; I John 2:1; I Peter 1:23).

We believe that all believers, though forgiven, still have a sinful capacity in this life. In spite of this, God has made full provision for believers to live in obedience to Him through identification with Messiah Yeshua, reliance upon the Holy Spirit's power, and the knowledge of the Scriptures (John 17:17; Romans 6:1-11; 7:15-21; 8:11-13; I John 1:8-2:2).

Section 8 - The Body of the Messiah

We believe that all believers in Messiah Yeshua are members of the universal Body and bride of the Messiah. The Body of Messiah began at Shavuot (Pentecost) with the baptism of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Messiah Yeshua. It will be completed when the Messiah returns for His bride. The membership of the Body is not based on any earthly organizational affiliation but

is based on faith in Messiah Yeshua. This Body is distinct from Israel and composed of both Jews and gentiles made one by the Messiah's death. These members are under the solemn duty to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of love with a pure heart (Matthew 16:18; Acts 1:5; 2:14-36; I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:11-15, 23-27; Colossians 1:18; 3:14-15).

We believe that water baptism is based on Jewish ritual immersion but under the New Covenant it symbolizes the work of the Messiah. The Lord's supper is based on the Passover seder and is a memorial of the Messiah's death until He returns. They are ceremonies of the New Covenant which the Messiah commanded His Body to observe (Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 11:24-26).

We believe in the local body as the visible manifestation of the Universal Body. It is organized to glorify God through worship, instruction, accountability, discipline, fellowship and outreach. Entrance to the local body is required and based on an act of volition (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 10:19-25).

Section 9 - Israel

We believe Israel is God's special people chosen by Him to be a holy nation and kingdom of priests. The election of Israel is irrevocable, despite her national rejection of Yeshua the Messiah. God will purge Israel of unbelief during the Great Tribulation "the time of Jacob's trouble", ultimately resulting in her national acceptance of Yeshua as her true Messiah (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Jeremiah 30:7; Ezekiel 20:33-42; Daniel 9:27; Zechariah 12:10; 13:8-9; Romans 11:26).

{130} We believe Israel is distinct from the Body of Messiah. However, Jewish believers in Yeshua have a unique two fold identity. First, as the spiritual remnant of physical Israel, and second, as part of the Body of Messiah (Exodus 19:6; Amos 3:2; 9:8; Romans 10:1; 11:2,5,28-29; Ephesians 2:14-16).

We believe the Abrahamic Covenant is an irrevocable, unconditional covenant given to the Jewish people. This covenant provides title of the land of Israel to the Jewish people, promises a descendant (the Messiah) who would come to redeem Israel, and blessing for the entire world through Israel and her Messiah. God will ultimately fulfill every aspect of the covenant in the Messianic kingdom, both physical and spiritual. At that time the Jewish people will know God personally through Messiah Yeshua and will possess the entire land of Israel according to its biblical boundaries (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:17-18; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 11:25-28). We believe that since the Gospel was given preeminently to the Jewish people, it is the believer's duty and privilege to communicate the good news of Messiah Yeshua to them in a bold yet sensitive way. It is also the believer's duty to support and love Israel, whilst opposing anti-Semitism according to the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:3; Numbers 24:9; Jeremiah 31:35-37; Matthew 28:18-20; John 4:22; Acts 13:46; Romans 1:16).

We believe the Law of Moses as a rule of life has been fulfilled in the Messiah and therefore, believers, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, are no longer under its obligation or condemnation. However, both Jewish and non-Jewish believers have the freedom in Messiah to maintain those

aspects of the Law of Moses and Jewish cultural identity which do not violate Scripture. Observances of Jewish customs are to focus on biblical truths and magnify Yeshua. These observances are not nor ever were a means of justification or sanctification, which are by faith alone. Neither are they a source of sinful pride resulting in the reinstatement of the dividing wall between Jew and gentile. Rather, for Jewish believers, these observances are intrinsically biblical expressions of a God-given Jewish identity and a means of fulfilling their responsibility to testify of God's faithfulness to the entire Body of Messiah and to the non-believing world. For gentile believers it is a means of identifying with the Jewish community and expressing the Jewish roots of their faith (Acts 21:24-26; Romans 6:14; 8:2; 10:4; I Corinthians 9:20; II Corinthians 3:11; Galatians 6:2; 3:3,11; Ephesians 2:14).

Section 10 - Last Things

We believe that upon physical death believers enter into the joyous presence of God, whereas non-believers enter into conscious suffering apart from God (Luke 16:19-31; I Corinthians 5:6-8).

We believe in the imminent, personal return of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah for His Body. All members of the Body of the Messiah, living or dead, will at that time be gathered to the Lord forever (I Corinthians 15:51-53; I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:1-11; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:10).

We believe in the personal, bodily, visible and premillennial return of the Lord Yeshua. At that time He will lift the corruption which now rests upon the whole creation, totally restore Israel to her own land, give her the realization of God's **{131}** covenanted promises, and bring the whole world to the knowledge of God (Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:2-5; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Matthew 24:30; Acts 1:11; Romans 8:19-23; 11: 25-27).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men. Believers shall be resurrected to enjoy eternal life with God. Non-believers shall be resurrected to experience judgment and then eternal suffering apart from God (Psalm 49:13-20; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15:52; I Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:4-6, 12-15; 21:1-8).

§ 5 - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1- Congregations

All Messianic Congregations in full agreement with the Constitution and By-Laws, aims and purposes of the FMC are eligible for membership.

Section 2 - Individuals

Individuals who are not directly engaged in Pastoral ministry within the context of a local Messianic Congregation and who are in full agreement with the Constitution and By-Laws, aims and purposes of the FMC are eligible for a non-voting membership.

Section 3 - Application

Congregations desiring membership shall make formal application on the official forms provided by the FMC. Those desiring individual membership will also make application on the approved forms. The FMC, in accordance with its By-Laws, will act on all completed applications at the general meeting following their receipt. Approval for membership will require a two-thirds (2/3) vote and upon approval a certificate of membership shall be executed and forwarded to the newly admitted Congregation or individual.

Section 4 - Dues

Local Congregations belonging to the FMC shall be required to contribute a minimum of one percent (1%) of their gross income annually. Individual members will contribute \$25.00 annually.

Section 5 - Withdrawal and Dismissal

(A) Any member out of sympathy with the constitution, policies or distinctives of the FMC may voluntarily sever connection with this organization by sending a formal resignation through the President.

(B) Any Congregation or individual may be removed from membership, according to the procedure outlined in the By-Laws, for:

- 1) lack of sympathy with the Constitution, policies or distinctives of the FMC
- 2) fraudulent actions or practice of flagrant sin
- 3) teaching unscriptural and harmful doctrine
- 4) non-payment of dues
- 5) continued lack of response to FMC communications

(C) Removal from membership will not occur until the alleged offending member has had free and ample opportunity to respond to the charges.

{132} (D) A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership present at a duly called meeting shall be required to remove a member from the rolls.

(E) No member of the organization and no one who has been a member of it shall be entitled to claim refund or compensation for gifts or contributions to the organization.

Section 6 - Voting

(A) Each member Congregation of the FMC shall select two members to be its representatives at duly called meetings.

(B) Each member Congregation of the FMC is entitled to two votes, one per representative. If only one representative is present, both congregational votes may be exercised by him.

(C) Individuals who qualify for membership in the FMC are encouraged to participate in all general meetings, yet will not be entitled to vote.

(D) All matters concerning the organization will be decided by a simple majority vote. Exceptions to this are motions regarding inclusion or exclusion of members or amendments to the Constitution, in which case a two-thirds (2/3) vote shall be required.

§ 6 - MEETINGS

Section 1- Annual and other Meetings

(A) The Annual Meeting of the FMC shall be held during the week following the third Sunday in February, subject to necessary changes by the Executive Committee. Written notice of the time and place of the Annual Meeting shall be sent to each member at least sixty (60) days in advance of the meeting.

(B) Such other meetings as may at times be deemed necessary may be suggested by any member and ratified by a simple majority vote.

(C) Sub-Committees will meet as often as deemed necessary.

Section 2 - Agenda

All members are invited to submit, in writing, any item for discussion at the Annual Meeting. An agenda shall be prepared by the President and distributed at least thirty (30) days in advance.

Section 3 - Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order shall be the law for parliamentary procedure.

Section 4 - Quorum

A quorum is required before any business can be conducted at the Annual Meeting. Such quorum shall consist of two-thirds (2/3) of the voting membership

Section 5 - Emergency Meetings

The Executive Committee may call emergency meetings without written notice. In this case, members are to be informed by telephone or telegram and are to be given as much advance notice as possible.

{133} § 7 - OFFICERS AND ELECTIONS

Section 1- Officers

(A) The officers of this association shall consist of a President, a Vice President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The officers shall perform those duties appropriate to their offices and in accordance with the By-Laws.

(B) In the event of the President's inability, refusal or disqualification to function, the Vice President (and, if necessary, succeeded by the Secretary and then the Treasurer) shall preside and carry on the President's functions.

Section 2 - Elections and Tenure

(A) Any voting member in good standing is eligible to be elected to an office in the FMC. All officers shall be elected by a simple majority at the annual business meeting.

(B) The President shall be elected for two years and may not immediately succeed himself. He may, however, after a lapse of two years, again be eligible for re-election to the Presidency. The other officers shall be elected for two year terms and may serve for two consecutive terms. following a second consecutive term they shall be eligible for re-election upon a lapse of one term.

(C) An elected officer may be removed for just cause from office by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership of a duly called meeting.

Section 3 - Duties

(A) President

The principal officer of the FMC shall be the President. He shall carry out the duties generally assigned to such an office. He shall be the presiding officer at all regular and special meetings, and

shall be an ex-officio member of each committee. He shall appoint all committees not otherwise designated. He shall sign all official papers of the association.

(B) Vice President

In the absence of the President, or if for any other reason the President is unable to act in his official capacity, the Vice President shall have the same authority and perform the same duties as the President until a successor has been elected. In addition, the Vice President shall perform such other duties as the President shall from time to time prescribe.

(C) Secretary

The Secretary shall be responsible for the keeping of accurate minutes of all meetings and for the sending of such minutes to all members. He shall keep an up-dated list of the names and addresses of all members. He shall keep a record of the terms of office of each officer. He shall be responsible for proper notification of all meetings. He shall supervise all printing and distribution of all forms, circulars and other literature.

(D) Treasurer

The Treasurer shall accept, provide a receipt for, and deposit all funds received. He shall keep an accurate account of the same and shall give a written report of all {134} receipts and expenditures at the Annual Meeting and at other times when requested to do so.

§ 8 - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1- Composition

The Executive Committee of the FMC shall consist of the four elected officers and any additional members as the general assembly may deem necessary.

Section 2 - Meetings

The Executive Committee shall meet at least twice a year with the dates determined by the President. A third meeting shall take place in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting.

Section 3 - Duties

(A) To transact the business and conduct the work of the FMC in keeping with the Constitution, By-Laws and policies of the organization.

(B) To plan and implement the Annual General Meeting.

(C) To give consideration to policies and other vital matters relating to the ministries of the FMC and to make recommendations to the general assembly for implementation.

(D) To take final action on all matters referred to it by the general assembly of members.

(E) To make available to the membership minutes of its proceedings and actions.

(F) To be the official spokesperson for the Fellowship. No other person or organization has this authority.

(G) To have oversight and be responsible for the property of the organization.

(H) To handle, manage and be responsible for monies received and for other forms of property given. The Executive Committee shall not have power to authorize expenditures in excess of three hundred dollars (\$300.00) without the specific approval of the membership at a duly convened meeting.

§ 9 - AMENDMENTS

Proposed amendments to this Constitution may be submitted by any member according to the following procedure:

(1) The proposed amendment must be submitted in writing to the secretary ninety (90) days prior to the next annual meeting.

(2) The proposal shall then be sent by the secretary to each member at least sixty (60) days prior to the annual meeting.

(3) A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the general assembly will be required for adoption of this proposed amendment.

**{135} Jesus the Pharisee:
A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus
Harvey Falk
Paulist Press, New York; 175 pages, \$8.95**

Reviewed by Menahem Benhayim

Israel secretary of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance.

In his classic work, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, the pioneer biblical archaeologist W.F. Albright noted:

Jesus has been turned into a social revolutionary, a pacifist, a prohibitionist, a royalist, a republican, a YMCA secretary, and anti-semite...

Now Rabbi Falk has come forward with an ingenious thesis about Jesus (and Paul) as good Jewish Pharisees of the House of Hillel, fighting the good fight of Hillelite Judaism against the anti-gentile House of Shammai. The Shammaites are believed by some scholars to have dominated rabbinic Judaism during the life of Jesus and His immediate followers until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

The real aim of Jesus and the Apostles was, according to Rabbi Falk, to found a religion for Gentiles based upon the Noahide principles. According to rabbinic tradition, these were transmitted by Moses along with the “Oral Law” and meant for dissemination among the Gentiles. Citing a distinguished 18th century Polish Rabbi, Jacob Emden, Rabbi Falk concludes with Emden that “the Nazarene brought about a double kindness in the world” by strengthening the Torah of Judaism and by spreading “the Seven Commandments of Noah” among the Gentiles (P.21).

Rabbinism and New Testament Messianism

The fact that the Apostle Paul was “a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee” is well-documented in the New Testament. The relationship of Jesus to the Pharisees is somewhat more ambivalent, but the probability of Shammaite dominance in the New Testament times has been noted by more than one writer. The interaction between various Jewish trends (especially ancient Rabbinism) and the primitive Christian movement has been of major interest to a whole school of modern scholarship, Jewish, Christian, and various streams of Hebrew Christianity and Messianic Judaism.

Rabbi Falk reinforces the position of those who reject the claim that there is a basic discontinuity between **{136}** mainstream rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament.

Falk's impressive command of traditional Jewish sources includes scripture, Talmud, Midrashim, standard Jewish commentators and modern scholars, both secular and religious. His strong advocacy of the goodness of Jesus and of the Apostles is not often maintained in Orthodox Jewish circles. His translation of Rabbi Emden's *Letter to the Polish Jewish "Council of the Four Lands"* is a valuable contribution (p.17-23). At one point, addressing the Christian Church, Rabbi Emden, poignantly appeals to his Gentile contemporaries, "They [the original Christian teachers] even said to love one's enemies. How much more so us [Jews]! In the name of Heaven, we are your brothers! One God has created us all..."(p.21).

This is a remarkable appeal, especially in light of the fact that it was not penned by a modern liberal Rabbi, but by a strictly Orthodox Talmudist who battled the followers of Shabtai Zvi, *and* opposed the nascent East European hassidic movement because of his conservative religious views - all this in Catholic Poland, well-known for its strong religious prejudices.

Pharisees and Pharisees

Rabbi Falk finds ample justification for Jesus' sharp attacks on the Pharisees of His day, including the "woes" and excoriations of "the scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites" in chapter 23 of Matthew's Gospel. Nothing Jesus said is without parallel in rabbinic literature, he argues (p.80-82). Falk is convinced that the Shammaites were closely linked to the Zealot party (p.111-128). With Josephus and with some rabbinic sages he cites, Falk shares negative views of their violent, even criminal, character and refers to the Zealots as "terrorists" (p.122, 125). Readers are repeatedly asked to remember that Jesus was a true follower of Beit Hillel, a rabbinic school which Falk claims was largely driven underground by the league of Zealots and Beit Shammai. Jesus therefore denounced a particular brand of Pharisees who had taken control of the movement. Shammaite authority was to be respected (because "they sit in the seat of Moses"... Matt. 23:2-3), but their ways were decried.

As opposed to the Shammaite-Zealot alliance, Rabbi Falk posits an alliance between the followers of Hillel and the Essenes in a desperate effort to fulfill a goal the Shammaites would not contemplate, namely a mission to the Gentiles (p.49-53). Since the Talmud itself does not directly refer to the Essenes, Falk develops ingenious speculations based on talmudic hints. There is, in the rabbi's opinion, a clear link between Beit Hillel, the Essenes, and Jesus and the apostles. The final defeat of the Shammaites and the Zealots follows the failure of the Great Revolt against Rome, after a heavenly voice was heard in Yavne declaring that "the Halacha is according to the House of Hillel."

Jewish and Gentile Hassidim

Rabbi Falk, like his mentor Rabbi Emden, has studied the New {137} Testament from a thoroughly talmudic perspective. This leads him to interpretations of the New Testament which will seem far-fetched to the uninitiated. It must be admitted that the Hebrew Scriptures were often handled by the New Testament writers in a manner which sometimes resembles the methods of some talmudic sages. They were part of the same milieu, but Falk makes too much of this fact.

Rabbis Emden and Falk cast light on the seemingly contradictory teaching of Jesus about the immutability of the Torah (Matt. 5:17-20) and other Torah precepts, such as “an eye for an eye,” oath-taking and divorce. In Christian circles it has often been taught that, by virtue of His divine authority, Jesus abrogated various Mosaic precepts. By introducing the rabbinic principle of “*lifnim mishurat hadin*” (going beyond the demands of the law) (p. 33, 144) - in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, “exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” - Falk finds a resolution of the dilemma. It is in the true “hassidim” of “exceeding righteousness” which is implicit in the observance of the Torah. This kind of hassidism is not available only to Jews who are obliged to keep the entire Torah, but to Gentiles, who could thus become *hassidey umot ha'olam*, (the righteous among the nations), bound only by the Seven Noahide commandments. Rabbis Emden and Falk see the outline of Noahide “hassidism” in Acts 15:19-20, where the decision of the Jerusalem council concerning Gentile Christians is recorded (p.83-86).

Circumcisers, Minim and Hebrew Christians

If Jesus' goal was to found a movement of Jewish “hassidim” who were to spread the knowledge of God among the Gentiles and to create a movement of Gentile “hassidim”, as Rabbis Emden and Falk believe, what then was to be the relationship between the two movements? It is at this point that the argument falters seriously when it is held up to the data of the New Testament.

On the one hand, Rabbi Falk takes a surprisingly negative, but logically consistent, view of the so-called circumcision party, the Judaizers of the New Testament. In his view, it is they who are the *minim* (heretics) against which mainstream Judaism pronounced its maledictions, not the Pauline party of orthodox Christianity. Paul is said to be a leader in the battle against the *minim* (p. 75). The Judaizers sought to impose on Gentiles the yoke of Torah, an effort which was contrary to rabbinic teaching, which insisted that Gentiles were not to be courted for Judaism, only for the observance of Noahidism.

On the other hand, echoing Rabbi Emden, Falk concludes that Paul's teaching in the first epistle to the Corinthians is crucial to the issue of continued Judaism. Paul declares:

Let everyone lead the life which the Lord has assigned him ... Was anyone at the time of his {138} call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone ... uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. (I Cor.7: 17-18)

As far as Rabbi Falk is concerned, Jews must remain good orthodox Jews while Christians remain good orthodox Christians ... and one is tempted to echo, “and never the twain shall meet.”

What of the Jewish Messiah?

But what of Jesus’ claims and of Paul’s proclamation of Jesus as Messiah and Lord? What of the prophecy that Jesus’ disciples would reign with Him over the tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28)? What of Messiah who is the “end” (perhaps “aim”) of the Torah (Rom. 10:24)? Rabbi Falk ignores the challenge of Jesus’ messianic claims, as well as those His disciples made in His name.

Paul was Apostle to the Gentiles, but he never abandoned his program of “to the Jew first” (Romans 1:16b). He moved about the synagogues and meeting places of Diaspora Jewry, proclaiming the uniqueness of the Messiah Jesus as redeemer of Israel and of the Gentiles. No doubt, Rabbi Falk would insist that Paul’s message to the Jews was that they should get on with the spread of Noahidism among their Gentile neighbors. There is, however, not a shred of evidence that the gospel that Paul preached to Jews, different as it may have been in form, was any less centered in Jesus as savior of all men, than was his message to pagans or gentile Godfearers.

Evangelism Out

Rabbi Falk remains orthodox in his opposition to the evangelism of Jews in any form. He writes, “There seems no question that the Hassid from Nazareth (Jesus) would have objected strenuously to Christian missionary activity among Jews” (p. 158). He is convinced that Jesus’ mission was to restore Hillelite Judaism to Israel and to spread Noahidism among the Gentiles. Since that time, Shammaite Judaism was vanquished by the heavenly voice (“the halacha is according to Beit Hillel”), and Christianity (and Islam) have been spreading the precepts of Noah among the gentiles. Mission ended!

What then remains to be done? The concluding response:

The most relevant lessons which we of the twentieth century may derive from this analysis would be connected to the ideals of brotherly love and peace, which are the goals of modern society. (p.158)

An astonishingly benign appraisal of modern society!

A Poignant Reminder

Notwithstanding strong reservations the Christian believer may have about the author's conclusions, Falk's work provides many fascinating insights into the world of rabbinic {139} Judaism and its impact upon New Testament writings. The ordinary reader may find some of the talmudic rationale hard going, but it is well worth the effort.

Rabbi Falk's work provides a poignant reminder of the challenge so often fumbled by Christians confronting Israel with the testimony of the "Hassid from Nazareth". Rabbis Falk and Emden, and many other Jews of less than Orthodox commitment, have been deeply moved by the New Testament. But they have been unable to bridge the gap between their own Jewish involvement and what has seemed to them the inevitable result of church affiliation; namely, a detachment from Jewishness. The Synagogue and the established Jewish community have played their part in reinforcing this mutual exclusiveness.

May we not hear another cry underlying the appeal of Rabbi Emden to the Church of the 17th century with which Rabbi Falk concludes his book? "In the name of Heaven, we are your brothers..." Is it the heart cry of the faithful remnant of Israel, longing for reconciliation between the true hassidim of Israel and of the Gentiles (*hassidei umot ha'olam*), without requiring the spiritual or national extinction of each other as the price of reconciliation?

{140} The Resurrection of Jesus. A Jewish Perspective.

Pinchas Lapidé

Augsburg, Minn., 1983

Reviewed by Maurice G. Bowler

“That which the prophet Daniel reports concerning his revelation is basically valid for all prophets of Israel, ‘And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision (Dan. 10:7)’. If we had been present on Easter Sunday in Jerusalem, we probably would have not fared better (Pinchas Lapidé, Resurrection of Jesus, p. 117)”.

This is a friendly and gracious book on a topic which is as precious to Christians as it is unacceptable to orthodox Jews, and yet the writer is an orthodox Jew who rejects the Christian position! In taking such a stand, Lapidé is certain to attract considerable criticism from his fellow-Jews and great appreciation from his Christian readers for his positive attitude towards the resurrection of Jesus. But because of the very complicated argument of this book, and the equally involved language used, it is necessary to examine Lapidé’s position very carefully. It would be easy to jump to the conclusion that Lapidé holds the orthodox Christian position regarding the resurrection of Christ, but the quotation given above should encourage caution.

Lapidé addresses himself to two issues, that of resurrection in general and of the resurrection of Jesus in particular. He shows that Paul’s challenge to Agrippa in Acts 26:8 was justified when he asked, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”

Regarding the resurrection of Jesus, Lapidé’s position is obscured by his use of the current language of “mystification” which some theologians use to wrap up their thoughts. He quotes various modern theologians who seem to try to avoid belief in the physical, tangible and historical resurrection of Jesus by affirming something which is subjective, visionary or metamorphical (pp 128-9). When Lapidé’s own statements are carefully weighed, it is difficult to isolate among them unequivocal affirmations of belief in the resurrection of Jesus as recorded in the Scripture. The resurrection is seen as an event which took place in the consciousness of believing beholders, not an event like the crucifixion which occurred in space and time.

The writer of the introduction, Carl E. Braaten, brings a quote from another of Lapidé’s books, in which the author says “I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday, not as an invention of the community of {141} disciples, but as a historical event” (p 15). But in this book, especially devoted to “The Resurrection of Jesus”, Lapidé does so much qualifying and defining of terms, that the end result is nowhere as straightforward as the quotation brought in the introduction would seem to indicate.

By concentrating first on what he believes the Resurrection is not, Lapidé in fact rejects any suggestion of miracle (p 151), tangibility (p 118) or facticity (pp 93, 109).

He considers the Resurrection to be a subjective (p 97), ambiguous (p 144), and “faith experience” (p 126 etc). Details such as the empty tomb (p 128) and the angels at the tomb (p 128), which would indicate the event as being subject to verification by a first century observer, are rejected by Lapidé.

There is a great deal that is valuable and relevant in this book. Its friendly and gracious tone is most welcome. But it is not a personal confession of faith in the resurrection of Jesus as described in the New Testament. Will the writer continue to avoid this ultimate position, after having gone so far as this book shows him to have done? Seventy five years ago, another Jew, (Claude Montefiore) wrote:

“I do not think that the objective vision possibility could not be held by a Jew. For if we believe in the immortality of the soul, we shall also believe that the spirit of Jesus survived death, and it may have been the will of God that the disciples should be miraculously accorded this particular vision”. (p 384, *The Synoptic Gospels*, London, Macmillan, 1909).

Montefiore maintained his rejection of Christianity to the end. Will Lapidé do the same, or will he go on to acknowledge the risen Christ as Lord?

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{142} Blood Brothers

A Palestinian's struggle for reconciliation in the Middle East

Elias Chacour with David Hazard; Kingsway Publications Ltd 1985

Reviewed by Haakan Sandvik

Th.M. Worker of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Beit Jala near Bethlehem.

Blood Brothers is a remarkable book; not because of its literary or ideological standard, but because it gives voice to a group of people that is not so often heard among all the loud voices in the Middle East - the Christian Palestinians. Reading *Blood Brothers* you will find yourself looking at a very familiar history, but from a different angle. And whatever opinions one might have concerning the book's historical descriptions and the theological interpretations, one must attempt to understand the experiences of the Arab Christian minority in the Holy Land.

Blood Brothers is the life story of a Melkite priest, Elias Chacour. It starts with his childhood in the 1940's in the Galilee village of Bir'am, continues through his studies and his ministry as a priest in Ibillin, also in the Galilee. Chacour manages to develop broad contacts with all kinds of groups, both in Israel and beyond its borders. Elias Chacour is known as an eager lecturer about the Palestinian cause, and also for his work as director of summer camps for youth.

The Melkite Church (also called the Greek Catholic Church) is today the largest Christian Church in Israel with more than 40,000 members. It is also one of the churches that has the oldest tradition. Melkite Christians express proudness of having grown out of the synagogue. This factor, however, is not mentioned in Chacour's book. Today the Melkite Church has close contacts with the Roman Catholic Church, acknowledging the primacy of the Pope. But the Melkite Church is nevertheless independent, and relations with Rome have lately not been too warm.

Blood Brothers is a very person-centered book, nearly a biography. The book should be read (as the subtitle indicates) as a Palestinian's struggle for reconciliation in the Middle East. The book does not present the history of the Palestinian people, but rather recounts the life and experiences of *one* Palestinian. This is simultaneously the book's strength and weakness.

The experience of Elias Chacour helps us to understand the {143} frustration and bitterness among the Palestinians due to the development in their land during the 1930's and 1940's. These feelings have grown since then and erupted from time to time. But Elias Chacour is unfortunately not representative of the Palestinians, nor even for the Christian Palestinians. Chacour's explanations of Zionism's history are too selective to convince anyone who has read the same history from a Jewish point of view.

The book begins with Elias Chacour as a small boy in Bir'am. The description of life in the village is idyllic - perhaps too idyllic to be convincing. But at the same time we must keep in mind that it is a boy's experience, a description about a lost home. This idyllic view of the home-village is one of the most vivid dreams in the refugee camps today and a definite factor in the Palestinian resistance. At the end of 1948 a rumor is in the air that Jewish survivors from the Holocaust are coming to the village. This gives the villagers no cause for fear, however. The villagers of Bir'am have lived on good terms with those Jews in neighboring villages. Elias' father, motivated by his strong Christian commitment, wants to receive the Jews and make place for his blood brothers. But things do not turn out as expected. The newly arrived Jews are not the same kind of Jews they had known previously. The Bir'am villagers are forced out from their village with a vague promise that they will soon be allowed to return. But when, after many hardships and broken promises, they finally return, they witness a macabre scene; bulldozers are tearing down all their homes.¹

Intermingled with this history is Elias' own religious development, which from the very beginning has a contemplative direction, leading him to commit his life to church ministry. He studies at St Joseph's seminary in Nazareth, and then, because he is not allowed to cross the border and study at the seminary in Jerusalem, he is sent to Paris. In Paris he theologically and ideologically examines his experience of being a Christian Palestinian confronting Zionism. This part of the book, though sympathetic, leaves many question marks in the margin. A short general survey of the rise of Zionism and its political implications can never do justice to this complicated history. Some vital parts that would help us understand this history are not dealt with in the book. Mainly I want to mention the importance of knowing the structure of the Palestinian society at that time, and also contemporary Palestinian reactions to the arrival of the Jews. The situation of the people in Bir'am is not generally applicable to all Palestine. Similarly Chacour does not say many words about the activity from the Arab world. He {144} sees Jewish settlement in Palestine as a strange marriage between Zionists and Christian Restorationists. Without a doubt he gives a sound challenge to Western Christians about their part in what the Palestinians regard as the West's betrayal of their people. Chacour further asks a question commonly asked by the Palestinians: Why do we have to suffer from the Western world's bad conscience because of the Holocaust? As a conclusion of his understanding of the history and his own experiences, Elias Chacour is looking for a middle way between his father's complete pacifism and the fedayeen's violent opposition. This middle way he finds in passive non-resistance, which for Chacour mostly means building up Palestinian self-confidence.

Chacour's theological interpretation naturally emphasizes justice and righteousness with support from the Prophet Isaiah. He does not deny the Jewish right to a homeland. However, Jews do not own Israel - the land is God's. Because of this, the Jews have to take their responsibility to God seriously and rule with justice and righteousness, not with arms and deceit. The Christians are grafted into the Israeli "fig-tree", and that is why Jewish rights to a homeland cannot rule out the Christian Palestinian's rights. Elias Chacour claims that the prophecies about Israel will not be

¹ Editor's note: Bir'am is close to the Lebanese border, the Israeli army considered an Arab village there a security risk. The people of Bir'am and Ikrit, that suffered the same fate, have fought within the Israeli juridical system for their right to return. In 1987, it seemed possible that some kind of return might be allowed.

fulfilled until the Jews change their exclusivist self-understanding and accept co-existence with their Palestinian blood brothers.

The last part of the book amusingly describes Chacour as Abbuna (priest) in the Galilean village of Ibillin, and his work of building self-confidence in the Arab communities in Galilee. He is reunifying the split congregation in Ibillin and takes initiative to build schools and congregation centers in several Arab villages. At the same time he is in contact with Jewish political and religious leaders. These contacts reach their peak at a peace demonstration in Jerusalem on August 13, 1972, with 8000 participants from all the religions in Israel.

Elias Chacour is temporarily studying Judaism at The Hebrew University at his church's request. He developed an especially warm relationship to professor David Flusser. It would have been interesting to hear something about how these studies enriched his theological thinking and how they influenced his views on Judaism. It appears his contacts with university officials were the greatest gain from his studies.

Elias Chacour has taken Jesus' words from the Beatitudes as a motto for his life and his work: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." His is a life and work against all odds, and several times towards the end of the book, desperation breaks through the lines. Chacour has received much criticism of his work from Christians, Jews and Moslems. But despite this criticism, Chacour's openness and refusal to be controlled by bitterness and hatred presents the only hope for reconciliation between blood brothers.