

MISHIKAN

A THEOLOGICAL FORUM ON JEWISH EVANGELISM

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MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

"TWO COVENANT THEOLOGY"

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Editorial {Inside Cover}

Two ways - two covenants?

In the last decade a new, two-covenant theology has become a dominant force in the Jewish-Christian dialogue and a challenge to those involved in Jewish evangelism. Within the last year - from the autumn of 1988 to the summer of 1989 - three international conferences have dealt with this theology in different ways. We are therefore glad to present this issue of MISHKAN with some important contributions from various parts of the world, which analyze and deal critically with this theology.

In November, 1988 the Sigtuna conference of the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish people (WCC) issued a statement which follows the two-covenant theology in substance and in terminology. The gradual emergence of “two communities of faith” in the early centuries is affirmed as a permanent reality when it is concluded:

We see not one covenant displacing another but two communities of faith, each called into existence by God, each holding its respective gifts from God, and each accountable to God.

As the affirmations from Sigtuna are completely silent with regard to the apostolic witness that Jesus is the one and exclusive Savior for Jews and gentiles, the Sigtuna statement ends up with a one-sided endorsement of the two covenant theology: There is one way for the gentiles which leads to the Father through the Son, and there is another for the Jews who are with the Father since His covenant with them on Mt. Sinai.

The contributions of Bowler, Goldberg and Glaser point to the Jewish background to the two covenant theology (Rosenzweig, Maimonides i.a.). We may not be surprised that this theology has found fertile ground among theologians and Christian leaders who have rejected a ministry of evangelical witness to Jewish people. However, it is a strange fact that the two covenant theology also has gained adherents among evangelical Christians in various parts of the {100} world. The Danish author and theologian Poul Borchsenius, with his book on *Two Ways to God* (1968), is just one example. It is therefore to be noted that the World evangelical Fellowship and the Lausanne movement this year have issued clear statements refuting the two covenant theology and affirming our evangelistic responsibility for Jewish people and the gospel as God’s power of salvation “to the Jew first.”

In April, 1989 the World Evangelical Fellowship sponsored a consultation of the Gospel and the Jewish People at Willowbank, Bermuda, with evangelical theologians and leaders from four continents. The Willowbank declaration responds in particular to the

new theology . . . which holds that God’s covenant with Israel through Abraham establishes all Jews in God’s favour for all times, and so makes faith in Jesus Christ for salvation needless so far as they are concerned.

The Willowbank declaration is presented in this issue of MISHKAN. It clearly demonstrates that the two covenant theology contradicts not only New Testament Christology and ecclesiology – that the church was, is, and will be a fellowship of Jews and gentiles – but also the biblical hope for the Jewish people and the biblical concept of mission. The declaration also shows that the biblical alternative to the two covenant theology is not the classical replacement theology – which lets the gentile church replace the Jewish People – but an integrated understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the election of the Jewish people.

In July, 1989 the Lausanne movement held its 2nd congress of World Evangelization in Manila. When the Lausanne Covenant was adopted in Lausanne in 1974, the question of the Jewish people and of Jewish evangelism was not addressed. In Manila this omission was corrected, and the Manila manifest deals

specifically with the two covenant theology. The manifest borrows its terminology from the Willowbank declaration and states:

It is sometimes held that in virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the Gospel 'to the Jew first . . .' We therefore reject the thesis that Jews have their own {101} covenant which renders faith in Jesus necessary.

In this perspective the contributions on the two covenant theology in this issue of MISHKAN therefore reflect a growing biblical confidence in Jewish evangelism. A well-founded analysis and response to the two covenant theology, however, is not only important for Jewish evangelism, but for a biblical understanding of world mission.

First, we have in the past seen how uncertainty about Jewish evangelism also leads to uncertainty as to the need of other communities of faith to acknowledge Jesus as Saviour and Lord – be they Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus or others. We sometimes speak about the domino-effect in our missiology. Second, the biblical hope for world mission has a double vision: the salvation of the full number of the gentiles and also the salvation of all Israel. Jewish evangelism therefore is a focal point in biblical missiology.

We invite the readers to enjoy and study the various contributions to the current issue of MISHKAN and to enter the debate of the two covenant theology.

Ole Chr. Kvarme

{1} Rosenzweig on Judaism and Christianity

The Two Covenant Theory

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Introduction

Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) belongs to the twilight marking the end of the period in German Jewry's history which began with Moses Mendelssohn in the 18th century and ended in stark tragedy in the 20th. The problems of persecution, assimilation, and the challenge of the surrounding culture which are never far from Jews in exile, take on the shades and colors peculiar to Rosenzweig's period as we examine his life and work.

One special contribution which arises from the experiences, studies and special insights of this outstanding figure of Jewish thought is his "Two Covenant" theory of the relationship between God, Israel and the Church. Rosenzweig first broadly indicates the terms of God's dealings with the world, but then makes a qualification with regard to Israel. The covenant between God and the world is seen by Rosenzweig to operate through the mediation of Jesus of Nazareth. He says, "We are wholly agreed as to what Christ and his church mean to the world: no one can reach the Father save through him."¹ As these words were written after Rosenzweig had considered, and decided against, being baptized himself, this position of Rosenzweig and his fellow-Jews naturally requires clarification. He gives the clarification by saying, "But the situation is quite different for one who does not have to reach the Father because he is already with him. And this is true of the people of Israel (although not of individual Jews)."² {2} Thus, God's covenant with Israel is seen to be of a different nature from that with the rest of the world. Whereas one is a "Way," involving movement into a covenant relationship with the Father, the other is a "Life," which is, itself, a relationship with God and, in Rosenzweig's view, exempts the Jew from any recourse to the mediation of Jesus. The full implications of these two covenants are brought out as Rosenzweig describes, in his other writings, the two communities which the respective covenants produce.

Practical

In both the positive and the negative reactions to Rosenzweig's Two Covenant theory, there have been indications that an ecumenical significance has been attributed to Rosenzweig's scheme. Borchsenius saw in it "the breakthrough to real dialogue,"³ while Schoeps says that Rosenzweig's recognition of the Church's world mission is the key to future Judeo-Christian discussion (and), "without this Jewish admission in the future no further discussion is possible."⁴ On the other hand, Taubes accuses Rosenzweig of arranging "a rapprochement between Christians and Jews somewhat

¹ Quoted by Nahum Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961). p. 341.

² *Ibid.*, p. 341.

³ Paul Borchsenius, *Two Ways to God* (London: Vallentine, Mlitchell, 1968). p. 191.

⁴ Hans J. Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), pp. 141-142.

too neatly,”⁵ while Neher refers to that rapprochement as “*unissant intimement, et d’une manière à la fois agressive et indechirable, le judaïsme au christianisme.*”⁶ But the rapprochement which the critics have feared and which the supporters have eagerly anticipated has not materialized.

One reason could be that the ecumenical movement tends to operate on the institutional level, in the realm of ecclesiastical statesmanship, a sphere which had no attraction and very little significance for Rosenzweig. He was not concerned to strive for any practical liaison between Jewish and Christian organizations.

It was different, however, on the personal level, where Rosenzweig could speak of “communion.” Of his fellowship with Rosenstock he says, “... where Eugen and I met, no antiquated walls separate man and man ... Our communion - which I tried to resist between 1913 and 1917 - is safe. Judaism, Christianity, Creation: what has happened to us with regard to all three is the living faith . . .”⁷

Another reason which would have the effect of inhibiting ecumenical initiative from the Jewish side is the almost unanimous suspicion, which may be noted from Jewish writers, that Rosenzweig’s high estimate of the Church involves a corresponding lowering of the position of the synagogue.

History

Another significant aspect of Rosenzweig’s scheme is the interpretation of history which it involves. Rosenzweig was aware that he was living {3} through cataclysmic events, especially as he saw World War I come to a disastrous conclusion for his native Germany. But living so near the events, he could not be expected to understand just how deep an abyss was opening up in world history. His whole sacral view of history, which stems from his positive interpretation of the Constantinian revolution in the church, caused him to hold on to ideas, which were already anachronistic. He writes, “Christianity has been able to synthesize with the world. What matters is the fruitful tension of such syntheses, which has given Christian Europe her spiritual dominance in the world.”⁸

Here Rosenzweig is still thinking in terms of “Christendom.” In the same context, he could write about “secularization,” and he even seems to anticipate modern ideas about “religionless Christianity” as he looks into the future. But he is still basically oriented to a Constantinian view of history and still sees the Church as dominant, triumphant and mistress in the world. But, despite the fall of the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs, the decline of the British Empire and the decreasing relevance of religious influence in national and international politics, Rosenzweig could not see that “establishment” was not of the essence of the Church, even though it was a phase of many centuries’ duration. But the Church did not begin as an established and privileged Imperial cult, and even in Rosenzweig’s day it had ceased to have this status in Russia and in most of Europe. It had certainly never been thus privileged in North America (whose rising eminence as a world power and effective dominance of world affairs even in his day seems to have escaped Rosenzweig’s notice). It is not surprising, then, that in the intellectual climate of the ‘50s after World War II, when Rosenzweig’s thought began to make its impact, this historical factor in his work should raise problems.

⁵ Jacob Taubes, *Arguments and Doctrines*, ed. A. Cohen (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1970), p. 411.

⁶ Andre Neher, *L’existence juive* (Paris: Editons du Seuil, 1962), p. 228.

⁷ Franz Rosenzweig, *Judaism Despite Christianity*, ed. E. Rosenstock (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 75-76.

⁸ Glatzer, p. 274.

Theological

But, for most interpreters, the general focus of attention on Rosenzweig's Two Covenant theory seems to be on the positive evangelizing role of the Church in the world. It is his "taking of Christianity's claim more seriously"⁹ that encourages Borchsenius, and it is his inclination to "all but concede the force of the Christian argument"¹⁰ which incenses Arthur Cohen. It is the idea that a modern Jew should "pray for the conversion of the whole non-Jewish world to Christianity"¹¹ that causes Emil Fackenheim to reject the Two Covenant theory with such vehemence. But this is not at all Rosenzweig's point of emphasis regarding the Church. Despite anything that his critics or supporters might say, Rosenzweig's scheme is not Church-oriented but Israel-oriented. The Church is brought into the picture in order to relate it to a centrally placed Israel and not vice-versa, as Arthur Cohen suggests when he accuses Rosenzweig of seeing the Jews as "compelled by history to {4} function alongside Christianity, neither true nor false, but historically relativized."¹²

Rosenzweig's emphasis on the role of the Church, which Cohen and others criticize, has to be seen, in fairness to the critics, as a contrast to his treatment of Judaism, which is not handled in the theological and philosophical way he deals with Christianity. As Julius Guttmann points out, The Star "is not a philosophy of Judaism. It does not intend - at least in the important sections of the book - to evaluate Judaism."¹³ Certainly, Rosenzweig goes into great and loving detail about the lore, customs and worship of the Jewish people, but he sees them in a different light from the Church, which he sees as a community of "the spirit."¹⁴ But of the Jewish people he says, "This people has a unique characteristic which, when one tried to dismiss it through the front door of reason, forces an entrance through the back door of feeling."¹⁵

Following this line, Rosenzweig does not pit Jewish theology against Christian theology. That would be out of keeping with his whole approach. His whole aim is to contrast Christianity, seen as a theoretical system, with Jewish life. He presents Christianity as a way, a system, a philosophy that, he admits, is the best kind in the world. Judaism, however, is not of this "kind" at all. A Jew is not won into Israel; he is born into it. He does not confess, "I believe." Instead, he declares, silently if necessary, "I am, and I prove what I am by what I do." Writers such as Cohen seem to prefer to fight their battle on the Christian ground of theology. Rosenzweig, however, is not alone in Jewish thought in choosing to take up his stand on Jewish practice and tradition as being the essence of Judaism. Credit, therefore, can be given to the Church for its "way" without detriment to Judaism's "Life."

Conclusion

As we noticed at the beginning of this study, Rosenzweig stands at the end of a period that began with Moses Mendelssohn facing the challenge of the Enlightenment, but which ended in the bitter smoke of the gas chambers. Rosenzweig's approach has been characterized as unique by Glazer,¹⁶ Borchsenius,¹⁷ Scholem,¹⁸ and others; and, if his passion for Jewish survival is accepted as his

⁹ Borchsenius, p. 191.

¹⁰ Taubes, p. 402.

¹¹ *Commentary Magazine*, August, 1968.

¹² Taubes, p. 402.

¹³ Julius Guttmann, *Philosophy of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), p. 372.

¹⁴ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), p. 299.

¹⁵ Glatzer, p. 335.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

¹⁷ Borchsenius, p. 191.

¹⁸ G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 322.

basic drive, it could be traced to the unique challenge of his day. A previous threat to Jewish existence had been directed by monolithic Church-State synthesis of the Middle Ages against intellectual dissent. A centripetal society, it sought to draw each and every kind of man into its vortex and reserved its venom for Waldenses, Albigenses, Marranos and Jews who refused to assimilate. Like Molech of old it was especially partial to children.

But in Rosenzweig's day, a centrifugal society was forming in Germany, which sought to spin off every foreign and exotic element. Taught by Gobineau, H. S. Chamberlain and Nietzsche and later by Hitler, the new {5} totalitarianism had a morbid fear of children, and saw some magical powers in the blood of gypsies and Jews and other non-Aryans which could permeate and eventually overwhelm the racially pure *Herrenvolk*. No longer was assimilation demanded - it was feared as a cloak for a pernicious infiltration of the native stock.

Rosenzweig could not have known Hitler, but he was familiar with the works of Gobineau,¹⁹ Chamberlain,²⁰ and, of course, Nietzsche.²¹ Knowing the "folk" orientation of this school of thought, he would be able to foresee the kind of tensions that would arise between German society and its Jewish minority, but, of course, he could not have known what depths this "folk" -mania would plumb. For him, and for the community he was seeking to serve, the future had to be worked out in the context of German society, for better or for worse. His rallying cry, "Into Life"²² did not have a transfer to Palestine or North America as a pre-condition. "Life" meant holding onto, and maintaining, the continuity of a Jewish life in Germany which had survived the challenge and tragedies of the centuries.

Seen in this light, the Two Covenant theory can be understood as a *modus vivendi* to enable Jewish life to go on, even in a hostile milieu. From this angle, the exclusion of Jews from the Church's evangelistic mandate was not a prohibition, but a release from an obligation on the part of the Gentile church authorities. Whereas, under a universal mandate, Jews would have to be encouraged to join the fellowship of Gentile Christians and welcomed as brothers and sisters in Christ when they did join, they could now be bypassed with a clear conscience.

Also, Rosenzweig's strong emphasis on the racial element in Judaism, in which he put such stress on "blood," could be the exact opposite of the claim to superiority it might at first seem. It could be seen as a guarantee of Jewish apartness, an undertaking that Jews would hold themselves aloof from the sacred genetic bank which the racists were so jealously guarding.

All this is not to deny the wide sweep and relevance of Rosenzweig's universal concepts, nor does it detract from the philosophical value of the New Thinking and its place in the development of Western thought. But Rosenzweig's experience and the letters which distill his reflections on this experience show clearly that his ideas were not formed in a vacuum, and that they had an unmistakable connection with the hard facts of his situation.

If, then, Rosenzweig did seek to chart a course for German Jewry in the troubled years between the wars, his desire was frustrated. Because of the national insanity which seized the German people, thoughtful or reasonable counsel could hope to prevail. But where reason could not {6} operate, armed might did, and the "thousand year Reich" was swept away and many of the factors that seemed so permanent in German life were swept away with it. But the German Jewish community was already destroyed. The situation to which Rosenzweig addressed himself, therefore, no longer exists. His European diaspora orientation and his Constantinian view of history are now

¹⁹ *Judaism Despite Christianity* p. 107.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²² *The Starr*, p. 424.

anachronistic. The tolerance for which he argued cogently on behalf of Judaism is available now in the West to all religions on the grounds of indifferentism and not of mutual respect, and it is denied in the East on the same grounds.

It is a fact of history that neither Rosenzweig nor anybody else really solved German Jewry's problems, and it yet remains to be seen if Rosenzweig's philosophy will help American Jewry in the problems it faces today. But in the matter of the Two Covenant theory the very formulation of the concept may serve a useful purpose. In the world of science, it is not only successful experiments and confirmed hypotheses which are recorded in the scientific journals. It is of considerable academic importance if a reasonable-sounding hypothesis, carefully investigated by the use of the appropriate experiments and controls, is shown to be invalid. Such a report can save time for succeeding experimenters.

In the field of Jewish-Christian dialogue, Rosenzweig has gone farther than any other, according to his interpreters, in the direction of reconciliation between Church and Synagogue. Because of his remarkable background, his learning and lack of learning, his experience and lack of experience, Rosenzweig was ideally equipped for the experiment he made. People with less learning would have been unable to draw on the many sources which he used from world literature. People with a stricter and more systematic training in Jewish sources would not have attempted what he did. A person who had never hovered on the brink of conversion to Christianity would never be able to show the sympathy and insight towards it which he does. And a person who has not fought back to a position of commitment to an ancestral faith would lack the compassion for the weak and wavering which Rosenzweig showed to the "periphery" Jews who came to the *Lehrhaus* in Frankfurt. But with all his efforts, the situation remains as it was; the problem of Jewish and Christian antipathy remains unresolved. But if a problem is to be solved, it is all gain to know that the problem still waits solution.

When the facts of the respective Jewish and Christian positions are examined, especially when the Christian claims for Christ and the Jewish denials of those claims are considered, it seems that the available options are clear. Both Judaism and Christianity could be wrong. Judaism could be right and Christianity could be wrong. Or, Christianity could be right and Judaism wrong. What is not possible is that Christianity and Judaism, as {7} we know them, could both be right in the absolute sense of the word "right." There is, of course, much common ground on which both Jews and Christians agree. Also, where subjective statements about personal convictions are made, such as "I believe in the Trinity," or "I do not believe in the Trinity," both statements can be accepted as true because both are affirmations about a state of mind on which the speakers are presumably, the best authorities. But if I say, "God is a Trinity," then the antithetical statement, "God is not a Trinity," must be held to be untrue. Both Judaism and Christianity purport to deal with the truth about God, and unless this truth has a genuine objective relevance to God and not merely to the subjective opinions of the believer, it has very little value. Because Jew and Christian reach diametrically opposed positions on the depravity of man and the unity of God and many other issues, we have to accept Arthur Cohen's verdict that, "Christian and Jew are locked in theological enmity."²³ But because God is one, we can look forward hopefully to the time when He will unite into one people those who look to Him. For this reason we can hope that the controversy between Jew and Christian will prove to be a *mahloket leshem shamayim* (a struggle in the name, and for the sake, of Heaven).

²³ A. Cohen, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 209.

{9} Are There Two Ways of Atonement?

Louis Goldberg

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Yehiel Eckstein in his book, *What Christians should know about Jews and Judaism*, states¹:

“Theologically, the issue of Christian missions to Jews revolves around the question whether or not Christians can affirm some form of double covenant theory. In 1967, a study group of the Faith and Order commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) issued a report highlighting the question. In the report, the WCC raised the possibility that the Church and the Jewish people together be viewed as comprising the one people of God and that the Church’s attitude towards the Jews, therefore, be different from her attitude towards others. ‘It should be thought of more in terms as ecumenical engagement in order to heal the breach of missionary witness in which you hope for salvation,’ stressed the WCC... “

“The Holocaust was obviously a key factor prompting many Christian groups to reevaluate their traditional position on Jewish missions. A 1971 resolution of the Synod of the Protestant Church of the Rhineland for example, declared, ‘We confess, being confounded, the co responsibility and guilt of German Christianity for the Holocaust ... and we believe in the continuing election of the Jewish people as the people of God and we recognize that the Church was brought to Jesus Christ into the Covenant of God with his people ... we believe that Jews and Christians in their respective vocations are witnesses to the world and to each other’ ... ‘in light of Auschwitz, any deliberate attempt to convert Jews to Christianity can only be seen as a more subtle form of Hitler’s final solution - a plan to erase the Jews from the face of the earth. “‘... “

“Many from both the Catholic and Protestant traditions have come to appreciate the moral and religious tenets inherent in the Jewish faith. They have soundly rejected the notion that Judaism is inferior to Christianity and that Jews are in need of spiritual completion through {10} Christianity. . . rather Christianity was an extension of that original covenant between God and the Jews to those previously not embraced by it... ““

Yehiel Eckstein is very obviously referring to the two covenant theory as espoused by Franz Rosenzweig in his *The Star of Redemption*, which was already completed in manuscript form by 1919. However, only beginning in the 1950s and certainly by the 1970s has the weight of Rosenzweig’s work been recognized by Jewish leaders in their dialogues with Christian leaders. The former now have a tool by which they can persuasively insist that Judaism and Christianity have equal and valid paths of the truth in revelation.

Such being the case, we can therefore understand why Eckstein can use the two covenant theory as his basic argument to demonstrate that, at best, any mission to convert Jewish people is unnecessary;

¹ Yehiel Eckstein, *What Christians should know about Jews and Judaism* (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), pp. 292-294

Jewish people and Christians should respect each other's expression of faith. At its worst, the missionary effort is nasty business because it gravely harms the identity and existence of Jewish people by decimating their ranks, especially after 6,000,000 have already been removed when they perished in the Holocaust.

In this article, we need to: 1) examine some of the statements by Rosenzweig that bear directly on how Judaism and Christianity relate to the God of the universe and that claim that the former, far from being inferior to the latter, actually has a closer relationship to God; 2) note how Jewish scholars and rabbis have used Rosenzweig's conclusions in the current dialogues with Christian leaders, where they attempt to demonstrate that Christians should learn how dependent they are upon Judaism's contribution to Christianity as a system of faith; 3) realize that if Judaism has such great positive value, then it follows that there is no place for missionary endeavours to reach the Jewish people with the gospel. We shall also see what effect dialogues have had upon some Christian leaders; and, last of all, 4) we shall examine once again the subject of atonement according to the Mosaic covenant. Do Jewish leaders, placing their faith upon this covenant, declaring it adequate for a right relationship with God, really understand the significance the sin offering plays in atonement? Is it possible to have such atonement today, since the temple no longer exists?

I. FRANZ ROSENZWEIG

A. His background

Franz Rosenzweig was born in Cassel, Germany on December 25, 1886. He was the only son of a well to do, assimilated Jewish family. He grew up with a very elementary Jewish education with little religious training from his parents. The one strong, positive Jewish influence in his young life was {11} in the home of his great-uncle, Adam Rosenzweig, who had a knowledgeable interest in German culture and a genuine attachment to his Jewish heritage.

From 1907 until 1912 Rosenzweig studied history, philosophy, art, theology, literature, and the languages of classical antiquities at the Universities of Berlin and Freiburg. The first part of 1913 he spent at the University of Leipzig where he took courses in jurisprudence. Here he befriended Eugene Rosenstock-Huussy and the two of them met regularly to earnestly discuss Judaism and Christianity. These conversations caused Rosenzweig to experience intensive intellectual pressure, either to justify his Jewish identity or convert to Christianity.²

Conversion to Christianity was not altogether a new idea for Rosenzweig. Some years previously he had contemplated being baptized, but had decided against it for he feared that other Jews would disapprove of his decision; he rightly thought his parents would believe he sought baptism because of social considerations rather than genuine religious conviction.

Upon arriving at the point of decision, he still believed he must make his decision on philosophical and theological grounds, and disregard other considerations. As Rosenstock termed it, Rosenzweig's Judaism was a "personal idiosyncrasy, or at best, as a pious-romantic relic" of the posthumous power of a dead great-uncle³. Rosenzweig, however, before being baptized, insisted upon one basic condition: he was to enter the church as a Jew, like the earliest Christian believers, and not as a pagan coming from a previously irreligious or rationalistic position.

Before he would pursue this decision with its novel condition, Rosenzweig decided to attend the Rosh Hashanah services in the synagogue at Cassel. The worship services had little affect on him

² Nahum Glatzer, "Franz Rosenzweig," in *Great Twentieth Century Jewish Philosophers* (Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Books, 1985), pp.160-161

³ *Ibid* p.161

but he did not give up. Ten days later, while in Berlin, he attended a small orthodox synagogue for the Day of Atonement services. Whatever happened to him there revolutionized his life. During the service he underwent an inner transformation. Instead of leaving Judaism, as he fully intended to do, he made a complete about face and became its defender. As Nahum Glatzer has pointed out from Rosenzweig's later writings:⁴

Anyone who has ever celebrated the Day of Atonement knows that it is something more than a mere exaltation (although this may enter into it) or the symbolic recognition of a reality such as the Jewish people (although this may be an element); it is a testimony to the reality of God which cannot be controverted. {12}

Glatzer points out also how meaningful the experience of that Day of Atonement became to Rosenzweig:

*What the day conveyed to him was that, essential as a mediator may be in the Christian experience, the Jew stands in no need of mediation. God is near to man and desires his undivided devotion.*⁵

It would seem reasonable to say that on that Yom Kippur of October 11, 1913, Rosenzweig found that sense of the reality of God and of personal communion with Him, whom he had been seeking, so arduously and until then thought he could find only in the church. In a letter to Rudolph Ehrenberg, a cousin who had converted to Christianity, Rosenzweig said he realized that for the Christian, no one could reach the Father except through Jesus. But for himself, he declared, "After prolonged, and I believe thorough, self-examination, I have reversed my decision. It no longer seems necessary to me, and therefore, being what I am, no longer possible. I will remain a Jew."⁶

Rosenzweig joined the German army at the beginning of 1915, serving until September, 1918. Throughout the course of the World War, he carried on a correspondence with his friend, Rosenstock, as the two of them continued to share thoughts on Christianity and Judaism. In a comprehensive letter to his cousin, Ehrenberg, dated November 18, 1917, he outlined the germ of what was to eventually be the thesis of his book, *The Star of Redemption*. In fact, during the remainder of the time he spent in the army from 1917-1918, he began writing *The Star of Redemption* on postcards! By 1919, he had written the final section.

It is not possible in this essay to provide a comprehensive analysis of Rosenzweig's major work. Significantly, it begins with "from death" and concludes with the words "into life" which therefore provide the motif and main idea of his thinking. "Death" was Rosenzweig's "battle against his own skepticism and his own tendency toward abstraction in its demonic sense." As he wrote *The Star of Redemption*, he "emerged a free man,"⁷ which is what he meant as he faced "into life." For our purposes, we will deal only with some ideas that have to do with the possibility of two ways of atonement.

⁴ Nahum Glatzer, "Introduction," in Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, W. Hallo, Tr., 2nd ed. of 1930 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. XII

⁵ Nahum Glatzer, Franz Rosenzweig," *Op. Cit.*, p.162

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.163

⁷ Nahum Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken, 1961, second rev. ed.), pp. XXIX

B. “Judaism is More Valid Than Christianity”

In Book three, which treats “The Star For the Eternal Truth,” under the topic of spirit (psychology), Rosenzweig discusses how “we find ourselves,” how we relate to the truth within ourselves as people. {13}

1. Configuration of Humanity: The Jew⁸

Rosenzweig discusses the “rebirth of the Jew” and emphasizing that this is not a personal experience but the transformation of all Jewish people, Rosenzweig explains that Abraham’s response to the call of God marks the beginnings of a unique people. Every descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob since then is “born a Jew. He no longer needs to become one in some decisive moment of his individual life.” A Jewish person, precisely because he is a descendant of Abraham, need not be reborn into that peoplehood. Rather, God has already brought that peoplehood into existence, whose existence he now sustains!

The Christian is different from the Jew. At a certain point in the life of every individual from the nations, when he comes to the miracle of rebirth, he or she “is made, not born.” Every non-Jew who accepts Jesus becomes a Christian and is reborn. Not so for the Jewish people. They are already Jewish because they are already, from birth, a part of their people.

We can see therefore why Rosenzweig insists that a Jewish person never needs to become a Christian because in a sense, a Jew is already a part of the Jewish people. Jews are not pagans. The Christian however, needs to be reborn in Christ because his background is pagan, or, as Rosenzweig puts it, “the Christian loses everything natural, everything innate, in his Christianity.” We already begin to have a sense of what Rosenzweig has to say as to whether or not Jewish people need conversion.

2. The Shape of Verification: Eschatology⁹

Rosenzweig continues to argue for an essential difference between Jews and Christians. Near the end of his book, he discusses the authoritative guidelines for everyday life and the end-time expectations of both faith communities.

a. The Uniting of God¹⁰

According to Rosenzweig, the Law has great significance for Jewish people. No Jew should seek to fulfill the Law “for the sake of heavenly reward,” because a tit for tat relationship with the God of the covenant is extremely disdainful. Rather, Rosenzweig insists, every genuine remnant in every generation of the Jewish people fulfill the “endless customs and precepts for the sake of uniting the holy God and his Shekhina.” The pious Jew seeks to love and serve God, thereby gathering up God’s glory and dispensing it all over the world in many sparks. Rosenzweig taught that, when a Jew seeks to piously fulfill the Law, in the “Jewish heart there shines the star of redemption.” So, when a Jew is faithful to the Law, the entire world of people will be greatly affected.

{14} We shall yet discuss whether it is possible for Jews to live out the Law as given by Moses, but one question points to a glaring emptiness: How does Judaism seek to fulfill the Law without a temple? As one Israeli put it to this writer, “We are all unclean,” and when he was asked, “Why?” his reply was quick and to the point, “We do not have a temple by which we can be cleansed!”

b. Christian Eschatology¹¹

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.396-397

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.409

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.410-411

Rosenzweig sees something entirely different for the Christian. One who has accepted Christ does not relate to a dominion here and now, but rather something that is in a “distant, far distant future” for Paul declared that, in the end, Christ will then hand over the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Only then will the Christian be able to enjoy the kingdom-dominion in fellowship with all other Christians. Until then, Rosenzweig implies, something is missing in the here and now of Christian experience, a something which every Jewish person can fully experience in company with the rest of his people.

The Christian may have some kind of individualistic spiritual relationship with God, which Rosenzweig calls mysticism. But, for Rosenzweig, this individual mystical experience falls short of what Jewish people now enjoy in their togetherness as a special people called by God since the days of Abraham. The problem, however, is that nowhere does this Jewish thinker discuss the presence of the universal Church, which is a community of oneness of all believers in Yeshua the Messiah. If he did, he would insist that the universal church is not yet the dominion-kingdom it is to become in the end times. Rosenzweig would insist that the Church is a mystical organism made up of all kinds of people from many ethnic groups and cultures. There is no people as uniform as the Jewish people.

So, for Rosenzweig, Christians will realize their complete fulfillment only in eternity, “wholly beyond time,”¹² in direct contact with God who is all in all. Rosenzweig therefore sees Judaism as a more meaningful experience than Christianity.

3. The Law of Verification: Theology¹³

For Rosenzweig, the Jewish person is the one who gives meaning to Christian beliefs. Without what Judaism has to offer, Christianity might know something but not really “feel it.” The point being made is that, through sanctification of the Jewish person’s flesh and blood by faithfulness to the yoke of the law, Jews can live “constantly in the reality of the heavenly kingdom.”¹⁴ But what about the Christian? Because he despises {15} flesh and blood and seeks a mystical relationship with God, he moves away from the redemption, which only the Jew can offer.

Because the Jew is bound to the Law, he can always appreciate the full meaning of the heavenly kingdom. In other words, because of the covenant God made with Israel, the Jew can “feel” the presence of God, while the Christian cannot, except as he relates to this very covenant. According to Rosenzweig, the Christian is actually in need of Jewish knowledge and experience. The Jew fulfills the Law within the covenant. Without it, the Christian will miss something vital.

The point is that the Jewish person has his feet on the ground; he relates to a covenant which ties his people together. Therefore, the Jew can appreciate the kingdom which is yet to come. But the Christian, so mystically related to Christ, is inclined to miss the meaning of the covenant of Moses, which covenant gives sense to relationships with Christ. On this score, Rosenzweig might be right. If the Christian focuses too much on the spiritual and heavenly, he is likely to miss the continuity which exists between Moses and the prophets on the one hand and the New Covenant on the other.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.411

¹² *Ibid.*, p.412

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.413

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.413

4. The Eternal Hatred For the Jew¹⁵

In order to demonstrate why Jewish people are hated by Christians, Rosenzweig repeats the question Frederick the Great asked his chaplain regarding proof for the truth of Christianity: the cleric answered by saying, “Your majesty, the Jews!” Too often, the Jews are in fact the tension between the two faith groups, because Christians frequently emphasize a complete discontinuity between themselves and Jewish people. Christians often ask, What can the Jews offer Christians in light of their responsibility for the death of Christ?

Rosenzweig therefore insists that the existence of Jews is necessary to stand for the security and validity of everything Christian. He actually agrees with Paul, who said that Jewish people will continue to exist to the very end, that is, until the Son returns the dominion to the Father (Rom. 11:1, 25, 29b; 1 Cor. 15:24). Like it or not, the Christian cannot do without the Jew because the latter, with his living Old Testament, guarantees the existence of the former’s Christian faith.

In one sense, Rosenzweig is right. The moral content of the commandments are a part of the fabric of the New Covenant. Yeshua quoted every one of the ten commandments, while Paul mentioned nine of the ten in his letters. Furthermore, the five great offerings of the sacrificial system (Lev. 1:1-6:7) are subsumed in the one sacrifice of Yeshua, as, for example, the sin offering {16} is given as the reason for which the Messiah came (2 Cor. 5:21), while the burnt offering of dedication is vividly pictured in Romans 12:1. These and many other instances mark the continuity which exists between the Testaments, alongside discontinuity regarding the body of Messiah as an elect people alongside the people of Israel.

No doubt, the church of Rosenzweig’s day focused primarily on the discontinuity between Christianity and Judaism. This is no less true in some quarters today. In many instances, however, today’s followers of Jesus recognize the value of Old Testament studies as well as that of the traditional subjects of investigation.

5. The Meaning of Verification

Rosenzweig therefore sees both Jews and Christians as involved in the same mission. One cannot dispose of the other. There may be enmity between the two, but God gave eternal life to the Jew “by kindling the fire of the Star of his truth in our (Jewish people) hearts.” Christians, however, pursue “the rays of that Star of his truth for all time unto the eternal end.”¹⁶

Rosenzweig further explains that Jewish people have a keen sensitivity for the “true image of the truth,” while Christians live in this world where the truth is not seen directly. They follow the rays of that truth, but the source of light ever remains hidden to them.

Rosenzweig is careful to explain that neither of the two religions has a full grasp of the truth. When Jewish people keep the covenant by living according to the Law, the Star is within their hearts, but they do not behold truth in its entirety. And, while Christians can see the rays, they cannot see their source. We are the created, not the Creator. Even in eternity we shall ever be learning, but the people of both faith systems will be able to see more clearly than they could in this life.

6. Conclusion

Rosenzweig is quite clear concerning the relationship between Jews and Christians. According to him, both have a sense of the truth in the Star of Redemption. Jewish people, however, see truth more

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.415

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.416

clearly while Christians are led by the rays of the Star out to the world. Both have some sense of the measure of the one and same truth.

For our purposes, it is extremely important to recognize that Rosenzweig does not believe it necessary for Jewish people to convert because that would mean a denial of God's purposes in bringing the Jewish people into existence. Gentiles need to be reborn to turn from their pagan ways, which rebirth will {17} lead a gentile to appreciate the covenant that binds Jewish people to God. Through his conversion, he enters into the blessings of that covenant by at least having the rays of the Star of Redemption guide him in his mission.

II. ROSENZWEIG MAGNIFIED

Now it remains to see the impact which Rosenzweig had on future generations of Jewish rabbis and leaders, particularly in their attempt to enter into dialogue with Christians. An overview of representative selected essays follows:

Will Herberg, *Judaism and Christianity: Their Unity and Difference*¹⁷

As early as April 1953, Will Herberg drew heavily on Rosenzweig in his attempt to demonstrate the unity and differences between Judaism and Christianity. In particular, he pointed out that, according to Franz Rosenzweig, the vocation of "both Judaism and Christianity can be defined in common terms: to stand witness to God amidst the idolatries of the world, or in the familiar rabbinic formula, *kiddush ha-shem* - the sanctification of the name. But the Jew fulfills his vocation by 'staying with God,' while the Christian can fulfill this only by 'going out' to conquer the world for God."¹⁸ Does Herberg see anything significant about Christianity requiring Jewish people to convert and so enter into genuine faith? Not at all. He relies too heavily upon Rosenzweig to be able to entertain such a notion. Christianity may have the New Covenant but, in reality, the New Covenant only expands upon the covenant that already exists between God and Israel. Although Christianity may be considered a new religion, Israel's calling has never been annulled.

Steven S. Schwartzschild, *Rosenzweig on Judaism and Christianity*¹⁹

In the spring of 1956, Schwartzschild made good use of Rosenzweig in the growing prominence of dialogue between Jewish and Christian leaders. In particular, discussion was held concerning the need for Christian mission among the Jews. Without a moment's hesitation, Schwartzschild echoed Rosenzweig: "God established an everlasting covenant with Jewry into which all preceding generations entered by natural birth. In that covenant is contained 'the everlasting life,' a relationship to God, the world and one's fellow man which can be appropriated by the individual Jew immersing himself in his own personal and historic sources."²⁰

While explaining the Christian's position and function, Schwartzschild points out that a gentile becomes a Christian but, unlike the Jew who can turn inwardly to appreciate what he already has in his covenant, the {18} Christian goes "out of himself: by transcending the pagan nature of his biological birth," he then seeks to change the pagan world by preaching Jesus Christ.²¹

¹⁷ Will Herberg, "Judaism and Christianity: The Unity and Difference," in *Journal of Bible and Religion*, April 1953, pp.72-75

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.72

¹⁹ Steven S. Swartzschild, "Rosenzweig on Judaism and Christianity," in *Conservative Judaism*, Spring 1956, pp.41-48

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.41

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.42

Although Schwartzschild uses Rosenzweig in order to support the Jewish contention that Jewish evangelism is out of the question, he also finds fault with the German Jewish thinker. For a number of reasons which, for simplicity's sake, we shall not discuss in this essay, Schwartzschild believes Rosenzweig's formulation of the two monotheistic religions in relation to each other is too rationalistic, a "complicated, sophisticated, intellectual rationalization ... of the two monotheistic communions."²² His argument is much too complicated for the average layperson of either communion to grasp without difficulty. One point is plain, however; Christians need not convert Jewish people.

Elliott M. Dorff, *The Covenant: How Jews Understand Themselves and Others*²³

By the early 1970's, the die had been cast and Rosenzweig became the principle champion in the dialogue between Jewish and Christian leaders. Jewish leaders could confidently insist that Judaism is either equal to Christianity or a notch better because of the Covenant God made with Israel.

Dorff explicitly states that each Jewish person must realize that he is part of an elect community specially set aside by God, not only to hear but also bear the message of Sinai. He cites Rosenzweig as his authority when he says that the Jewish people are an eternal people and therefore cannot be mixed with other peoples of the world.²⁴

Christians are also a part of this elect race of people, but they are also unlike them. While the faith of Christians is rooted in the Bible, their mission is to go out to the nations, bringing to them God's word. The mission of Israel, however, is to "exist as an eternal exemplar of God's will."²⁵ The Christian task is to take the very word given to Israel and share it with mankind. Dorff uses Rosenzweig's symbols: Judaism represents the "fire of the sun and Christianity is its rays."²⁶

By so using Rosenzweig, Dorff seeks to instruct Christians that both they and the Jewish people have different missions, but the basis of faith for both communities is found in the one covenant God made with His people, Israel. The Mosaic covenant was shaped differently in the New Covenant, so as to serve as a guide for non-Jews.

{19} Dorff's point is obvious: How can Christians have any mission vis-a-vis the Jewish people?

David Berger, *Jewish-Christian Relations: A Jewish Perspective*²⁷

Berger continues the already well-shaped argument against Christian evangelistic outreach among Jewish people. Rosenzweig has become the flaming sword with which Jewish leaders can parry any defense of Jewish evangelism.

Berger champions the well-defined statement that Christians "missionize everyone except... Jews."²⁸ Building on this possibility, Berger insists therefore that if Christians are going to argue from the passage, no one comes to the Father except through me [Yeshua] (John 14:6), how will they respond to the distinct possibility that Jewish people *are already with* the Father through the Mosaic covenant? How, is it possible to talk in terms of bringing-Jews to God through Jesus? Especially is this true when, according to Berger, the Mosaic covenant has never been taken away from Israel (Rom. 11:28, 29)! He

²² *Ibid.*, p.42

²³ Elliott M. Dorff, "The Covenant: How Jews Understand Themselves and Others," in *Anglican Theological Review*, Vol.64, October 1982, pp.581-501

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.487

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.489

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.489,490

²⁷ David Berger, "Jewish-Christian Relations: A Jewish Perspective," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol.21, Winter, 1983, pp.5-32

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14

further argues that since, “as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.” Jews are still the chosen people. Why, then, is it necessary to evangelize them, or to speak of Jesus as the only way?

Berger is obviously responding to scriptural truth, as we shall see in a moment. But does Paul in this passage of Romans have the Mosaic covenant in mind? It would appear not.

As we have already seen, the moral content of the commandments appears also in the New Covenant, and the five sacrifices of the Levitical system are subsumed in the one sacrifice of Yeshua. But can we say that the entire package of Mosaic covenant is still intact as given by Moses? We shall further discuss this point at the end of the present essay. Suffice it for now to indicate that Paul here speaks of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:7) which guarantees the continuity of Jewish people throughout the history of the human race. In that context Israel is an elect people (Rom. 11:28), serving alongside the church as the body of Messiah.²⁹

“It is when the discussion shifts to the more concrete plane of ‘witness’ and mission that matters become particularly difficult for both Christians and Jews.”³⁰ Berger at least faces the need for an honest assessment of the mission of evangelicals, who recognize the mandate given them by the Messiah Himself. He honestly faces the fact that witness is part and parcel of an evangelical faith.

{20} Many Christians deplore past methods of coercive evangelism. Yet, they believe it to be an obligation to witness to their faith. Berger acknowledges that dialogue will be all the more difficult with those who share such a conviction, but at least he recognizes that Christianity calls for its adherents to evangelize - Jewish people included. When this occurs, Jews will generally respond so as to deflect the witness, but such exchanges need not be bitter or disrespectful.

We cannot here deal with all the material cited by Berger concerning Christian response to missionizing. Enough has been said, however, to show that, unlike the above writers, who deplore any kind of Christian missionizing of Jewish people, he recognizes Jewish evangelism to be an essential activity of the Christian Church. Regarding “Mission and Covenant,” he concludes, the question of “mission is one in which significant progress has been made but which remains sensitive, profoundly difficult, and ultimately unresolved.”³¹

Conclusion

From an examination of some Jewish leaders, it would seem that the plain intent of dialogue is for Christian ministers, scholars and teachers to recognize that the root of evangelical faith in Yeshua is distinctively Jewish. It is not possible to understand the full scope of the Gospels or of the New Covenant letters without first having a grasp of Jewish lifestyle and of much of the Jewish background which lies behind the New Testament writings.

On the other hand, Jewish leaders desire to create a middle ground between Judaism and Christianity and therefore insist without equivocation that Christianity has nothing new to offer. Since Rosenzweig’s thesis, the message is plain: all dialogue between Jewish leaders and all forms of Christianity must realize that there is no need to address the Jewish people with a distinctive message, as if Jesus is the only way by which men may come to the Father (John 14:6); Jewish people already have acceptance in the covenant made at Sinai.

²⁹ As the Bible exegetes emphasize, as for example, Charles Hodge, “As it regards *the election*, or the covenant of God, they are still regarded with peculiar favor, because descended from those patriarchs to whom and to whose seed the promises were made... that the covenant made with Abraham was inconsistent with the final rejection of the Jews, as a people (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951, original edition, 1886), p.376

³⁰ David Berger, *Op. Cit.*, p.15

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.19

Furthermore, in order to accentuate the differences between the two communions, Jewish leaders can conveniently cite past history, particularly the Middle Ages, when Christendom perpetrated many evils against Jewish people. In light of such a past, why should any Jewish person want to turn to any Christian communion?

{21} III. PRESSURE FROM AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE

We will now consider two Christian positions which maintain that Jewish people ought never be considered objects for conversion. One of these comes from the liberal theological camp while the other, surprisingly, comes from an apparently conservative theological position. Such views seriously undermine Jewish evangelism by raising grave doubts as to whether the Jewish people should be included in the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20). We shall withhold further comment on this issue until we have had opportunity to examine the main arguments presented in defense of the two sources.

A. Paul van Buren

Van Buren asserts in *A Christian Theology of the People Israel*³², and in an article, *Discerning the Way to the Incarnation*³³ that in response to gentile Christians telling Jewish believers that the Torah is no longer their authoritative guide, the Jewish people in general would reject Jesus' Messiahship, as well as the church's insistence that the Torah no longer has any binding force. Van Buren insists that Israel "has said no to Jesus Christ out of faithfulness to the Father of Jesus Christ, the God of Israel."³⁴ They must not turn away from their Torah. "The primary significance of Christ for the Jewish people is that their God was in Him, opening their light to the nations, the gentiles. Had that life not been used by the church to scorch Jews with every opportunity, Israel might well have come to thank God for this that He had done."³⁵ The point van Buren is making is that the church is to be a witness to pagan gentiles, concerning none other than the God of Israel, who has revealed Himself to His people through the Torah. Although van Buren does not specifically quote Rosenzweig, his spirit is very clearly present.

In his book on theology van Buren attempts to indicate how Christians should relate to Jewish people. In a sub-section under "The Incoherence of 'Mission to the Jews,'" he asks tersely "to whom or what should the Jew convert? Did not he or she already know the one God, the God of Israel? The most that the Jew could do was to turn back, or turn again, repent, to that God."³⁶ Van Buren considers repugnant any mission that calls upon Jewish people to convert to Jesus. He insists that whenever Jews joined the church, it was only because he or she had already assimilated into a non-Jewish culture. He believes the only Jews who could ever be won to the church are those who had already forgone allegiance to the Jewish people.

Is this claim true? This writer would say that assimilated Jews who believe in Jesus rediscover their ethnic and cultural being. Many a Jewish believer whose former faith had worn thin now affirms his Jewishness most {22} vigorously. Messianic Jewish congregations are practicing a distinctly Jewish lifestyle, even as did the first followers of Messiah in the land of Israel.

Van Buren's claim that Jewish people who accept Yeshua have assimilated is simply not true. In 1977 a nationwide survey of Jewish believers in Yeshua was conducted by the Graduate Theological Union Library, Berkeley, California. Over 900 Jewish believers completed the 71-

³² Paul van Buren, *A Christian Theology of the People Israel, Part II* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983)

³³ Paul van Buren, "Discerning the Way to the Incarnation," in *Anglican Theological Review*, 63, July 1981, pp.291-301

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.298

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.299

³⁶ Paul van Buren, *A Christian Theology of the People Israel, Op. Cit.*, pp.326-327

question, six-page survey. A select sample of 100 respondents was evaluated, the data being compiled and interpreted by Don La Magdeleine as part of his master's thesis for the Graduate Theological Union. La Magdeleine is a Roman Catholic, neither a Jew nor an evangelical.

We cannot begin to include all the information available through this survey, but one point is pertinent to the previous religious affiliations of Jewish believers. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents received religious training in Judaism as children. The average amount of training listed is 6.4 years. The distribution of respondents by self-identification is as follows: 37.6% Reform; 34.0% Conservative; 15.1% Orthodox; 72.8% Simply Jewish.

Moishe Rosen, leader of Jews for Jesus, has stated, "Although certain leaders in the Jewish community have questioned our Jewish training, general education and quality of home life, this survey gives evidence to the fact that in almost all respects, the pre-Christian life of the respondent was very similar to that of other Jews in the same age group."³⁷ These and other surveys demonstrate how mistaken van Buren is to claim that only assimilated Jewish people become believers.

Van Buren completely discounts the fact that there were always Jews who believed in Jesus the Messiah, and that in significant numbers. One can hardly understand such a position in the face of what we know today. As many as 20% of the nation in the 1st century seem to have accepted Jesus as Messiah: 1) On the day of Pentecost (the Jewish Shavuot) 3,000 came to the Lord; (Acts 2:41); 2) Shortly thereafter, some 5,000 Jewish men (not counting women and children) became believers (Acts 4:41); 3) The record then indicates that a "large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). 4) Some 25 years later, when Paul returned from his 3rd journey, he stayed at the home of James, the godly leading elder of the Jerusalem congregation. This leader, highly regarded even among the Pharisees, was able to point out how the numbers of believers had grown. "You see, brother, how many (myriads, or tens of thousands of) Jews have believed" (Acts 21:20); 5) By the time we come to the end of the 1st century, thousands of Jewish people became believers because they were shaken by the insistence {23} of Jewish believers that Yeshua had predicted the destruction of the temple (Luke 19:41-44).

Judaism was traumatized because the temple no longer existed. They could no longer come and worship, offer their sacrifices, and draw near to the Lord. Many who knew that Moses had threatened such a destruction in the Torah were convinced by what the Jewish believers preached: Yeshua the Messiah is the atonement, which fulfilled the very principles Moses had taught.

In the present century, Jewish believers are to be found in thousands, worshipping in some 100 congregations of theirs in North America and about 30 congregations in the state of Israel.

Van Buren has fallen prey to the insistence of Jewish leaders that the Jewish people are unique because of their faithfulness to the Sinaitic covenant. For sure, van Buren finds in Rosenzweig a base for much of his own views concerning the uniqueness of Israel and the dependence of Christianity on Israel's identity.

David Novak in his *A Jewish Response to a New Christian Theology*³⁸, applauds van Buren's position. Quoting extensively from the article which is really a forerunner to his book, Novak says, "Thus for van Buren, Jesus of Nazareth's Jewishness is essential precisely because only through Israel can anyone reach God. There is no 'New Israel.' He writes, 'we are called not to be Jews, but

³⁷ *Jews for Jesus News Bulletin: Jewish Converts in Christ Surveyed*

³⁸ David Novak, "A Jewish Response to a New Christian Theology" (Review essay on P. van Buren) in *Judaism*, 31, Winter 1982, pp. 112-120

to be the historically continuing body of one Jew, Jesus Christ.”³⁹ Novak is careful to point out that van Buren has no “higher God,” a unique Lord Jesus to whom Israel must respond. Jesus remains a Jew, living out the Torah. There is no need for Jews to “convert,” to become Christian. The Jewish person already has in the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai all he or she needs.

Regarding the evangelism of Jewish people, Novak cites van Buren: “Judaism has never lost its primary covenantal status and, therefore, does not lack anything which Christianity can possibly supply. This admission alone, highly courageous for a Christian theologian, makes authentic dialogue between Christians and Jews possible.”⁴⁰ Novak would insist that if all proselytizing activity ceased on the part of both Jews and Christians, conversion would become a rare event. If any did “convert,” it could only be due to lack of a religious background!

Van Buren has become the Christian Rosenzweig, calling now upon Christians to give up all notions of evangelism among the Jewish people. {24} Evangelicals can handily demonstrate that Rosenzweig the Jew and van Buren the Christian hardly begin to reflect a sound biblical theology. But Jewish people will confidently point to van Buren, the Christian theologian, and use this influence in order to insist that all other Christian theologians should follow suit. Those who refuse will be regarded as insensitive people who have little regard for the dignity of the Jew.

B. Robert M. Price

In *An Evangelical Version of the ‘Double Covenant’*⁴¹ a Southern Baptist from the United States provides us with an interesting look at how Christians may relate to the Two Covenant theory. Discussing Messianic Prophecy and Hermeneutics, Price cites Richard Longenecker’s work, “Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period.”⁴²

Price suggests that what Longenecker seems to imply is that “modern readers will not rightly find any prediction of Jesus of Nazareth, since the claim of early (‘apostolic’) Christians to have done so depended upon exegetical methods which are no longer acceptable.”⁴³ Price uses this suggestion to imply that, if evangelicals could only recognize that the Hebrew scriptures do not literally predict the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy by Yeshua, an obstacle would be removed on the way to dialogue between evangelicals and Jewish leaders.

Price has embarked on dangerous ground because the apologetics of the early Jewish believers were meant to explain why Yeshua the Messiah had to suffer and die. Early Jewish thought did not hold that Messiah would die as atonement for sins; rather, he was to deliver the nation of Israel and reestablish her at the head of the nations. Then Messiah would establish universal peace. No matter how many times Yeshua told his disciples that he would be delivered into the hands of the leaders in Jerusalem, be put to death, and be raised from the dead on the third day, his disciples could not accept that pronouncement because such an announcement did not fit the commonly held perception of Messiah’s ministry.

When Jesus’ death and resurrection took place exactly as he had predicted, the apostles and disciples were thoroughly convinced of the truth of his claims. Turning aside from what the traditions said concerning Messiah, they found that the Hebrew Scriptures actually predicted what

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Robert M. Price, “An Evangelical View of the ‘Double’: New Possibilities for Jewish-Fundamentalist Dialogue,” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 20, Winter 1983, pp.33-42

⁴² Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974)

⁴³ Robert M. Price, Op. Cit., citing Longenecker, *Ibid.*, pp.218, 219

Yeshua had declared, as Paul stated in First Corinthians 15:3-4. No wonder the disciples preached the Hebrew Scriptures so confidently. They had a message that was confirmed by God Himself.

Many Jewish people in Israel of that period not only acknowledged the explanations given by the Jewish believers, they actually responded to that {25} proclamation. Not only those with a minimal Jewish training responded to the message of the apostles and disciples. Priests also did so (Acts 6:7), along with people such as Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and others. Did the New Testament Jewish believers misinterpret the Old Testament scriptures? Price is suggesting that we ignore how they used the scriptures in favor of the dubious modern method of the historical-critical school.

This writer certainly believes in dialogue but not in forgoing the plain method by which New Testament writers used the Old Testament in order to teach concerning Yeshua. Dialogue must never exist at the lowest possible common denominator.

IV. WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

There are many areas in which evangelicals and Jewish people can dialogue. The Jewish people can make an important contribution to our knowledge of Jewish history, interpretation and social concerns. They themselves testify that God kept His covenant with Abraham in that the people of Israel exist to this very day, and will continue to do so as long as mankind exists. But Jews need to hear the heartfelt concerns of evangelicals in hermeneutics, biblical interpretation, the application of scripture to daily living, and so on. What do the scriptures say about evangelism?

A. The Written Law (Old Testament)

The only valid question which can be raised from the point of view of the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai is: What did Moses say regarding atonement?

The answer to that question lies in the manner in which atonement is explained by the sin offering (Lev. 4); and the ritual of the great Day of Atonement (Lev. 16; and the Mishnah tractate Yoma).

The sin offering clearly teaches that atonement comes to a repentant heart attitude through the sacrifice itself. Four principles become apparent: 1) Substitution: Atonement can only be affected through a substitute provided by God; 2) Identification: As the Israelite placed his hands upon the head of the sacrifice, his sins were symbolically transferred to the sacrifice; 3) Death: Once the substitute-sacrifice had become sin, it had to die. The offerer himself killed the animal (Lev. 4:4, 24, 29, and 33). The point is twofold: a) It was God Himself who made provision for a substitution atonement. There was no other way by which it would be accomplished; and b) the offerer had to learn that the substitution animal had to die. He therefore killed that animal while the officiating priest caught the {26} blood and applied it as commanded; and 4) Exchange: As the sacrificial animal died, it gave its life to the offerer. He received the substitute's life, now regarded as a new life.⁴⁴

Repentance of mind and heart was necessary to make the principles of atoning sacrifice effective. This is readily apparent by Isaiah's denunciation of Israelites who came to offer their sacrifices in a ritualistic manner (Isa. 1:11-15). In no way does this mean that God does not want sacrifices but a repentant heart. GOD WANTS BOTH! Atonement is based on the formula: repentance combined with the sin offering.

⁴⁴ Louis Goldberg, *Bible Study Commentary: Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), pp.26-33

Simon the just (about 200 B.C., Avot 1.2) stated that the world hangs on three factors: 1) repentance; 2) a temple sacrifice; 3) a pious lifestyle. He had understood what Moses had taught regarding atonement. An experience with God begins with atonement for one's sin, along with the change of heart and of attitude towards the scripture. Jews thus joined the remnant of believers and could then live the new life in a manner pleasing to God.

This subject of atonement on the Day of Atonement is picked up in the tractate Yoma. According to Yoma, when the high priest made atonement for himself, he prayed over the sacrifice, saying: "I have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before Thee, I and my house. O, God, forgive the iniquities and transgressions and sins which I have committed and transgressed and sinned before Thee, I and my house, as it is written in the Law of Thy servant Moses, for on this day shall atonement be made for you."⁴⁵ The point is that atonement can never be made apart from the substitution sacrifice of a required animal.

Similarly, when the high priest prayed over the goat "for the Lord" that was to be sacrificed on behalf of the people, the high priest prayed again, "O God, Thy people, the House of Israel, have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before Thee. O God, forgive, I pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which Thy people, the House of Israel have committed and transgressed and sinned before Thee."⁴⁶ Once again; atonement is only possible through the substitution sacrifice described by Moses. There was no question in the minds of ancient Israel, high priest and priests together, that repentance, as well as sacrifice, was a necessary ingredient for atonement.

B. After the Second Temple

What happened after the loss of the temple in 70 C.E? In the council of Yavneh, Yohanan Ben Zakkai and others prescribed a drastic change. Judaism was restructured, becoming a religion with no substitutionary {27} atonement. Atonement was now to be based upon repentance, prayer and the highest form of living - the act of compassion and lovingkindness.⁴⁷

But who authorized these distinguished rabbis to change the Law of Moses? Jewish leadership might say that rabbinical authority has thus made the Torah livable. In order to do so, it was necessary for them to reinterpret the Torah. This was their God-given task.

It would appear that the Bible insists upon the need for a substitution sacrifice, as acknowledged by many Hasidim today. On the eve of the Day of Atonement they will swing chickens or roosters over their heads in order to effect an atonement. The prophets (or Yeshua for that matter) do not call for a change in substitution atonement, nor substitute it with acts of mercy. Jeremiah called upon the people of Israel to bring their "burnt offerings, and sacrifices, thank offerings to the house of the Lord" (Jer. 17:26). Yeshua likewise recognized this need: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23, 24). Messiah would not set aside what Moses had described as true worship.

C. What Is the situation today?

What may be said today in this connection regarding the necessity for Jewish evangelism and Israel's ongoing relationship with the Lord. What is the key to a proper Christian relationship with

⁴⁵ Yoma 3.8, transl. H. Danby, *The Mishnah*, (Oxford 1933), p. 165

⁴⁶ Yoma 6.2, *Ibid.*, p.169

⁴⁷ Louis Goldberg, "Whatever Happened to the Substitute Atonement of the Torah," in *Issues*, Vol. 5:7(1986)

the Jewish people? Jewish leaders make much of the Sinaitic covenant, which binds God to Israel. They therefore devote themselves to interpreting the Torah for the people.

The Mosaic covenant as a body of legislation consists primarily of the following aspects: 1) moral; 2) sacrificial; 3) jurisprudential; and 4) models of worship and lifestyle. Once the temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., the sacrificial element is no longer available. The rabbis have substituted prayer and other deeds of godliness for the sacrifices but the question may be legitimately raised: Did God ever sanction such a change? This writer would respectfully suggest that the sacrificial system must stand, calling for a substitute to die in the place of any who would come to God. Such is the position maintained by the New Covenant. Jewish believers understood Moses well: They never changed the four basic principles of atonement; they now proclaim Yeshua as their ultimate fulfillment.

{28} One can no longer speak of the covenant of Sinai as a whole. The sacrificial element has been removed. Neither may we substitute models of lifestyle for the biblical demand for atonement. Prayer, clean speech and pious living are all good in themselves, but they were never intended to take the place of substitution atonement. From an Old Testament as well as a New Testament point of view, self-effort can never be the equivalent of atonement.

Are there two ways of atonement? No! Rosenzweig spoke of a way to God through the Sinaitic covenant without the temple and its atoning sacrifices, but such paths lead to no atonement. Just as in the Hebrew Scriptures there was only one way to atonement for sin, so too there are no two ways according to the New Covenant, which centers upon Yeshua and his atoning death as the only way to God. The mandate for evangelism is all the more urgent, because Messiah declared that He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). We respectfully suggest that the mandate to preach the gospel to the Jews must also include our Jewish friends. To omit them from this universal message of salvation is to do our Jewish friends the greatest disservice by practicing that which, from God's point of view, would be the height of discrimination.

{31} Two Covenant Theology

David W. Torrance

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Strong arguments have been raised against a “Two Covenant Theology” and in defense of the Newmarket Statement of 1983 to the effect that “the Mission to the Jewish People is the foundation stone upon which the Christian mission to all the peoples of the world is built.” It has been argued that there are not two ways of salvation, one for Jew and another for gentile, but both are saved by grace alone. This one way of salvation is worked out and established by Jesus Christ. Salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone.

I am in full agreement. I believe, however, it is necessary to explain something of the inner meaning and relatedness of some passages frequently employed in defense of this position. It is my intention to: a) present the position which emerges from the biblical evidence, b) to discuss the Law as a partial revelation of God and c) the place of the Jewish People today within God’s covenant.

Barth’s treatment of Election or Covenant in vol. 2, part 2, pp. 3-506, along with vol. 3, part 1, pp. 42-329 and vol. 4, part 1, pp. 3-78, is, I believe one of the greatest contributions to theology of all time. What I will go on to say here has been deeply influenced by Barth’s work on these themes.

God’s Covenant of Grace

It is often argued that, in the Old and New Testaments, there is only one way of salvation - by grace through faith (Rom. 4). In content and substance, there is only one covenant of grace, although it differs in outward form and administration. In Old Testament times, the inner content of the covenants with Abraham and with David was the Word, who is not separate from the person of God. He is the angel who appeared to Moses and who led the People of Israel through the wilderness into the Promised Land (Ex. 3:2, 14:19, 23:20, 23:23, 32:34, 33:2 and cp. Gen. 22:11,15, 24:7,10, 31:11, 32:1, {32} 48:16). The Law was given within the context of the covenant. With Law as with covenant, the inner content is the Word of God, who is the very Person of God in the form of His Word. As such, the Law is but a partial revelation of God. This is the primary purpose of the Law. It both reveals and convicts of sin, but the full revelation of God is in Jesus Christ.

The Law is intensely personal: The 10 commandments are what God says (*devarim*) and cannot be separated nor detached from the person of God. They cannot be obeyed apart from love to the Lord and faith in Him. This *davar* is the same living Word of God referred to in the prologue to St. John’s Gospel and who became flesh in the man Jesus Christ. Whenever Israel did not love the Lord and did not believe in Him, she could not keep the Law. She took the outward form of the Law, detached it from the person of God, legalized it and added to it many other rules and regulations. In her unbelief, she attempted to use this legalized law as a means of achieving righteousness before God. It was against this legalized and false interpretation of law that Paul spoke so vehemently in Galatians and Romans. But in so doing, like Jesus Himself in the Sermon on the Mount, he seeks to uphold the Law (Matt. 5:17, Rom. 7:12, 16 and I Tim. 1:8). When Israel did not believe the Word of God, the inner content of the Law and of the covenant, was likened to a stone which the builders rejected (Ps. 118:22, Matt. 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17 and cp. Isa. 28:16, Eph. 2:20, I Pet. 2:6). It became a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence. Paul struggled passionately to bring the Jews to faith in Jesus Christ and thus to faith in the Word of God who

had been revealed to Abraham, so that they may be saved by grace. We ought never forget that it was in the context of Judaism that the gospel was born.

The Centrality of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and man. In Him alone God acts toward man and all creation. In Him alone is God revealed and in Him alone can man see and know God. In Him alone does God redeem man and all creation, raising them to glory. This is the thrust of the prologue of St. John's Gospel, of Ephesians 1, of Colossians 1 and of many other New Testament passages, including those in which Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" and "The Father does nothing without the Son nor the Son without the Father."

God does not simply act, as it were, through Jesus Christ, or by means of Jesus Christ. When Christ acts, God Himself is present and acting. Christ, the living and eternal Word of God, is himself God. Jesus Christ is God acting toward man and all creation in love and grace.

{33} Those who advocate a two-covenant theology do not take seriously the absolute centrality of Jesus Christ. It is that fundamental failure which leads to advocate one way of salvation for the Jewish people and another for the gentiles.

In so far as Jesus Christ Himself is God in being and in action, so that God does nothing apart from Him, God's covenant of grace with Israel, with all mankind and with all creation, is Christ's covenant. Jesus Christ is the God who covenants or elects, and at one and the same time is Himself the man, the elect one, the one alone with whom and in whom God covenants, (see Barth, vol. 2, part 2, p. 103). That is to say, He is not one elect among many, but in the deepest, truest sense, the one alone who is elect, with whom God makes covenant. He and He alone perfectly fulfills God's will, offering on our behalf a perfect human obedience. He alone is the one in whom all the promises and the blessings of God are fulfilled, the one who gives life and light to the world. He is not merely the reconciler. He is the reconciliation. He is the elected one and at one and the same time the elector. His power as the elect one to give life and light to all who come to Him in faith flows from His being the God who elects. The will of Jesus Christ is the will of God and the will of God is the will of Jesus Christ.

The mutuality and oneness of God's will and of Christ's is both implied and affirmed in many passages of St. John's Gospel. "All mine are thine and thine are mine" (John 10:17). "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." (John 5:26). The Father glorifies Him, but He too glorifies the Father (John 17:1-5). It is Jesus' meat to do the will of the Father who sent Him (John 4:34), but the Father who abides in Him does his works (John 14:10). The Father is greater than He (John 14:28) but "He hath given all things into His hand" (John 3:35) and "hath given Him power over all flesh" (John 17:2). In the same breath He says, "Believe in God and believe also in me" (John 14:1). "No man cometh unto me except it be given him of the Father" (John 6:45). He must have been "drawn" by the Father (John 6:44). He must have been given to Jesus by the Father (John 6:37; 17:6,9,24). But, again, He, Jesus, is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). For this reason he prays, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory, which thou hast given Me." (John 17:24) - quoted from Barth, vol. 2, part 2, p. 106. The clear implication of these passages is that, at one and the same time, God and thus Christ, elects and yet Christ is also the subject of the election, the elect one.

In so far as Christ alone is the elect one, we share in His election only as we are united to Him by grace through faith and, by the Spirit, are one with {34} Him. Paul's often repeated phrase "in Christ" (occurring over 160 times in his epistles) does not simply mean "together with Christ" or, "in His company." Nor does it mean "through Him" or "by means of Him." As Calvin has said, God has, in Jesus, transacted with us a "wondrous exchange," so that "in Christ" means that God henceforth treats us

as if we were Jesus Christ, his only beloved Son from all eternity. "In Christ" means that, by grace, we share in Christ's person, in His will, His election and in the very life, love and fellowship of God.

From this follows that there is no such thing as being elect apart from Jesus Christ. There is no elect community, Jewish or gentile, apart from the election of Jesus Christ. All alike are elect only when, by union with Christ through the Spirit and by grace, they share in His one election. Christ is the ground and source of all other elections.

Therefore, there are not and cannot be two covenants, one for Jews and the other for gentiles; there is only the one covenant of grace in which all alike share through union in the Spirit with Jesus Christ. There is only one way of salvation - by grace alone.

The Place of the Jews today within the Covenant

The fact that there is only one covenant does not preclude the additional fact that this covenant has an inner and outer form. God has made an inner covenant with the people of Israel in order to work out his wider covenant with all mankind and with creation. That inner covenant with Israel, made on the plain of history, is for all time. It serves for the outworking of God's purposes of love and salvation for mankind and for all creation, and is irrevocable. The Jewish people continue to be God's chosen people, serving for the salvation of the world. But there is a still further covenant within the covenant of God's chosen people: God has made his covenant of grace with the people of Israel, so that Paul can say of "all Israel" that they are the "sons of God" (Rom. 9:4). Even so, only an inner few believe the Word of God and, in the deepest, truest sense, partake of God's covenant of grace and salvation. Among these are people like Elijah, the 7000 who in his day did not worship Baal, Paul and the other Apostles (Rom. 11:1f). There is a covenant within the covenant people of God. There is an election within the elect people. The true Church, the Body of Christ, is the inner elect of Israel who believe, together with the believing gentiles who are added to their number, thereby forming the one commonwealth of Israel. But God's covenant in all its forms is forever a covenant of grace, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation.

{35} A Covenant Based on Atonement

Jesus the man, the elect one, was elected to suffer and to die for the world. Man was made in the image of God. Creation was good but, because of man's sin and rebellion against God, the image of God in man has been marred. Man in his sinful state is at enmity with God and subject to God's judgment. The election of the one man Jesus means that God chose - covenanted - to become man, a particular man, in order to represent us all. In wondrous love, He chose to take on Himself all the consequences of man's sin, his rejection of God and his death. Through Jesus' death, man's sin and death are cancelled, the powers of darkness and of hell are overcome and man, by grace through faith and by the power of the Spirit of God, is restored in Christ to the image of God and enabled by grace to share in the life, fellowship, love and joy of God Himself. God's covenant with Himself in Jesus is the covenant "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). For "in heaven there is more joy over one sinner who repents than over ninety and nine just persons who have no need of repentance." (Luke 15:7). Having a part in Christ's covenant rests on the atonement which He made for our sin.

The earlier and inner covenant with Israel had as its central act of worship the Day of Atonement, when sacrifice was made and prayers offered for the forgiveness of Israel's sin. Those who did not seek God's cleansing and forgiveness by keeping the Day of Atonement, were no longer regarded as belonging to God's people. The Day of Atonement foreshadowed the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. It presupposed it, its efficacy was grounded on it. Christ's sacrifice alone gave the day its content. That day anticipated the day when God would Himself come and, in the man Jesus, make atonement for the sins of his people and for the world.

Those who do not, by grace through faith, share in Christ's atonement, in His death to sin and His resurrection to life have no part in Christ, be they Jew or gentile. They do not share in God's covenant of grace, that is, in the elect man Jesus. A two-covenant theology which by-passes the once-and-for-all atonement provided in Jesus, and which fails to make that atonement the foundation of the covenant for Jew and for gentile, is without biblical foundation.

This position raises many questions. What of devout Jews, who do believe in God, who endeavor to keep the Law and yet do not accept Jesus as Messiah? In so far as they continue to be God's covenant people, should our approach to them be different from that to gentiles? What of the place of Messianic Jews within the Church? These and other questions must be left to further issues of Mishkan.

{36} The Two Ways / Two Covenants Theory

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Origins of the Theory

Some time before World War I the German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig wrote a letter to Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, one of his cousins who had become Christian, and who was to become a philosopher and religious thinker. In this letter Rosenzweig, the Jew, who had himself barely resisted the temptation of crossing over to the Christian side, wrote to his Christian cousin in view of John 14:6 and 1 Corinthians 15:28:

Christianity acknowledges the God of Judaism, though not as God, but as the Father of Jesus Christ. It adheres to the 'Lord,' because it knows that only he is the way to the Father. As Lord he stays with his Church all the day, up to the end of the world. But then he ceases to be Lord, and will also be subject to the Father, and then he will be all in all. What Christ and his Church mean for the world, on this we agree: nobody comes to the Father. It is different, however, if somebody does not have to come to the Father, because he is already with him. Now this is the case with the People of Israel (not of the single Jew). The People of Israel, elected by its Father, looks directly across the world and across history toward that last, farthest point, where this same Father will be the One and Only - all in all. At this point, where Christ ceases to be Lord, Israel ceases to be elect; on that day God loses the Name, with which only Israel calls him; God. Up to that day, however, it is the life of Israel to anticipate this eternal day in confession and action, to stand as a living sign of that day, as a people of {37} priests, to sanctify the Name of God with the Law, with its own holiness.¹

In this letter, the Two Ways/Two Covenants theory was born: There is one way for the gentiles which leads to the Father through the Son. And there is another way for the Jews who are with the Father since the day God made His Covenant with them on Mt. Sinai. Ultimately, the two ways will be brought together; but for the time being both (gentile) Christians and Jews are walking on their separate paths, living in their separate covenants. To be sure, this does not mean that they need be antagonistic to each other; but it certainly means that they have to remain true to their respective ways and covenants and stay separate from each other.

Rosenzweig was not the first Jewish thinker to formulate such thoughts. Back in the Middle Ages, the great philosopher Maimonides accorded Christianity a positive role in bringing monotheism to the nations - on condition that Jews and gentiles stay separate entities. Also Rosenzweig elaborated on his theory in later years.

¹ Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, ed. Edith Rosenzweig, Berlin 1935, 73f. Translation by the author.

But Rosenzweig's important contribution was the *bon mot* concerning the Jews who are already with the Father while the Christians must be shown a way to Him through Jesus Christ. This idea stuck in the minds of many, Christians and Jews, especially in the period of rethinking which followed the Holocaust.

It is important to notice the apologetic of Rosenzweig's idea. Its main thrust serves to refute the traditional Christian claim to absolute truth by referring to passages like John 14:6. It is a way of saying, "Leave us alone with your claims to ultimate truth. Leave us in peace." There is also an element of genuine Jewish *chutzpah* in the refusal to be impressed by those very New Testament words which have so often been used as a weapon against Jewish self-esteem. Rosenzweig implicitly admits that an individual Jew may have to go some way to the Father. But he insists that the Jewish people as such and by virtue of by its election is in covenant with God.

Rosenzweig's insistence that the Jews are already with the Father and that they do not need to come to Him a new way, has become the starting point for much new thinking concerning the relationship between Christians and Jews in our times.

The Impact of the Holocaust

During the years following 1945 the terrible facts of the Holocaust and of the contribution of the Christian "Teaching of Contempt,"² gradually {38} dawned on Christians in Germany and other countries. It can well be understood how desperately such Christians began seeking a new way of relating to Jews and Judaism, a way which would exclude any sort of contempt, hatred or triumphal on the Christian side.

It seemed to be a fascinating idea to understand Christianity and Judaism as two separate entities, emerging from the same root but now neatly separated: one belonging to the world of many nations with the task of leading all nations to the true God through Jesus Christ, the other belonging to the one elect people, with the task of leading the scattered remnants of this people to covenant faithfulness in the ancient way of Israel. If the relationship between Christians and Jews was seen in this light there would be no room for interference with each other any more. Each religion should maintain its own calling and try to attain as friendly relations with the other as possible. The perfect model for such relations seemed to be dialogue - as a means of positive and friendly encounter without denying the right to each partner to be what he is.

From that point of view, mission of any kind was understood as a massive disturbance, a relapse into the former ways of antagonism and competition for all those who hoped and strived for a dialogue relationship. This may explain why the prospect of missionary endeavor was so harshly repelled.³

I feel strongly that we must acknowledge the main object of the Two Ways/Two Covenants theory is to establish a new relationship between Christians and Jews, a relationship without estrangement and antagonism, a new encounter on friendly terms. With such an aim we can only have the deepest sympathy. It certainly would be wonderful to have such a relationship between Christians and Jews, and we should do our best to work toward it.

The Two Ways/Two Covenants theory involves, however, severe difficulties, upon which I will expand later. Before I begin with my criticism I want to give more details about the development of this theory, especially in Germany.

² Cp. the title of the famous book by Jules Isaac.

³ Cp. slogans like "Mission is another form of the Endlösung (final solution) of Auschwitz" or the "Anti-Missionary Law" in Israel.

The Development of the Theory, especially in Germany

Once the first shock following the Holocaust had been overcome and relations between individual Jews and Germans had been reestablished during the 1950's - often on a highly emotional basis - there began a period of tentative reformulations of the relationships between Christians and Jews in general. In 1961 the Working Group Jews and Christians of the {39} German Evangelical Kirchentag⁴ were formed, as a cooperative venture of both Christians and Jews - something quite unheard of until that time. The group gained wide attention. Its first publication⁵ aimed at the abrogation of the traditional replacement theory, which claimed that the Church is the only true heir of Old, Testament Israel; its second publication⁶ stressed the intimate connection between Christianity and Judaism.

Following a very heated debate about mission and dialogue which raged throughout the 1960's, a Study Commission on the Church and Judaism⁷ was established by the authorities of the Evangelical Church in Germany in 1967 with the task of overcoming the antagonism within the church. The outcome, in 1975, was a study document "Christians and Jews."⁸ Although this document was a breakthrough in forming the new relationship between Christians and Jews, it more or less evaded the question of the Two Ways/Two Covenants theory because no agreement seemed possible. In 1980, the Synod of the Regional Church of the Rhineland voted almost unanimously for a statement on the "Renewal of the Relationship between Christians and Jews."⁹ This statement was hailed by adherents of the dialogue position as a "refutation of mission among Jews." The central passage states: "We believe that Christians and Jews are called to be God's witnesses in regard to the world and to each other according to their calling/election; we are therefore convinced that the Church cannot take care of its witness towards the Jewish people in the same way as of its mission towards the Nations."¹⁰ Paul van Buren's *Discerning the Way. A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Encounter*, published in the United States the same year, also consistently assumed the Two Ways theory, which has now attained wide acceptance in progressive European theological circles.

In recent years the debate seems to have lost some impetus, especially among younger theological scholars. There seems to be a growing tendency to think less emotionally and more deeply about these issues.¹¹ Such thinking cannot evade the setbacks of the Two Ways/Two Covenants theory.

Difficulties in the Two Ways/Two Covenants Theory

The Two Ways/Two Covenants theory, as an only too understandable attempt to find a way out of the mess of Christian history regarding the Jews, seems oversimplified. There are two major setbacks

⁴ Arbeitsgruppe Juden und Christen beim Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentag. The "Kirchentag" is a Protestant lay assembly rallying up to 120,000 people for several days every second year.

⁵ *Der ungekündigte Bund* (The Covenant not abrogated), Kreuz Verlag, Stuttgart 1962.

⁶ *Das gespaltene Gottesvolk* (The People of God split apart), Kreuz Verlag, Stuttgart 1966.

⁷ Studienkommission Kirche und Judentum der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland.

⁸ *Christen und Juden. Eine Studie des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, Gutersloh 1975.

⁹ *Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden*. Handreichung der Landessynode der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland, Dusseldorf 1980.

¹⁰ Rhineland statement 2,6. Cp. also 2,4: The Church was "through Jesus Christ received into the Covenant of God with His people".

¹¹ Interestingly enough, the Vatican Document of June 24, 1985 *Recommendations for a proper presentation of Jews and Judaism in the Preaching and Teaching of the Catholic Church* flatly refuses the Two Ways Theory in L7. Referring to Jn 10:16 it is said: "Church and Judaism cannot be presented as two separate ways to Salvation, and the Church has to witness to Christ as Saviour before all people, and this 'in strictest respect for the Freedom of Religion', as it has been taught by the Second Vatican Council (Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*)". (Translation by the author from the German Text according to *Freiburger Rundbrief. Beiträge zur christlich-jüdischen Begegnung*, vol. XXXVII/XXXVIII 1985,86, p.10.)

involved: the systematic question of Christology and the practical question of Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews.

A. Christology

This issue comes out rather clearly in the formulation of the Rhineland declaration, according to which Jesus Christ “as Messiah of Israel” is “the Saviour of the world.” This is meant to say that the real importance of Jesus {40} Christ lies in his being Saviour of the gentiles. However, by using the title, “Messiah of Israel,” in this context, the declaration unwittingly states that His importance cannot be confined to the Nations. If Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, then this has to do first of all with the Jewish people. It is impossible to leave the Jewish People out of the reach of the gospel of Jesus.

This is not only an historical statement but also a statement of principle. Jesus has never dissociated himself from His Jewish people. Therefore no one is entitled to dissociate Him from them. Jews were the first recipients of His message. They will always be addressed by it. There is no reason whatsoever to leave them out. Jesus and his message are not responsible for the things done to Jews by so-called Christians.

B. The Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews

It is more than obvious that there would never have been a Christian Church without the disciples; the apostles of the first generation were thoroughly Jewish. There is no denying this fact.

Adherents of the Two Ways/Two Covenants theory often argue that the facts of New Testament times cannot be taken as models for our times. In the case of Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews, the terrible burden of a long history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism hinders Christians of today from taking the New Testament Jewish followers of Jesus as the model for Jewish evangelism today.

Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews, however, are still to be found today; they are not relics. Their very existence is embarrassing for dialogue minded Christians (and Jews).¹² They do not fit into the picture of two neatly separated bodies of Jews and Christians, especially since they claim to remain Jewish following their conversion, and insist with increasing vigor upon being regarded as Jews in Christ.

The difficulty which Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews of today constitute for dialogue-minded Christians lies in their almost generally held assumption that Christianity has been a gentile affair since it attained the status of the state religion of the Roman Empire. This assumption is so general that most people feel no need to explain why the words “Christians” and “gentiles” are used interchangeably. It is quite clear that, from this point of view, there is no use for Christians who clearly are not gentiles and do not want to become such. Therefore, there is a strong tendency to stress that in former times most Jewish converts to Christianity were gentilized, and to argue that this will eventually be the fate of present-day Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews. Only thus can the theory of neatly separated bodies of Jews and Christians be upheld. This may explain why {41} dialogue-minded Christians (and Jews) are so reluctant to take notice of the recent emergence of Jewish Christian/Messianic Jewish congregations in many parts of the world, congregations in which a Jewish identity within a Christian context is developed all the more clearly.

Even when a theory does not fit reality, its adherents remain generally reluctant to forsake it. In this case such reluctance has a special reason. The Two Ways/Two Covenants theory has been of real help

¹² They are not even mentioned in the documents quoted above. There is only one of the leading dialogue-minded theologians in Germany who deals openly and intensively with the existence of Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews in the past and present: Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Grundzüge einer Theologie im christlich-jüdischen Gespräch* Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog, Band 12, Chr.Kaiser Verlag, München 1987, pp.154-167.

to many Christians (and Jews) who were earnestly seeking a new formula for the relationship between Christians and Jews after the Holocaust. To people looking for a position that eradicates all kinds of hatred, triumphalism, and power play (anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism) from the thoughts, feelings, and actions of Christians over against Jews, the Two Ways/Two Covenants theory has seemingly proved helpful. Most of these people are Christians whose sincerity is beyond any doubt. In their joy over the new formula, which has made possible meetings between Christians and Jews on a new basis of mutual respect and openness, however, adherents of the theory have tended to “throw out the baby with the bathwater.” In order to avoid condescension they have come close to stating that Christianity is inferior to Judaism; in order to avoid the abrogation of the Sinai covenant they have come close to saying that the New Covenant in Christ has a lesser authority. And they accompanied their presentations with a good deal of judgment on all those who are not willing to follow.

I am quite convinced that on second thought the flaws of the theory will come out more and more clearly. If we want to be faithful to the message of the New Testament - and to our present-day experience - we must acknowledge that Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews are an essential part of the Church Universal, small as their numbers may presently be. Moreover, we cannot limit the mission of Jesus Christ to so-called “gentiles.” In learning the lessons of the Holocaust, we should, however, earnestly strive to witness to our faith in Jesus Christ in a way that includes respect for Jewish heritage and openness to the spiritual experiences of Jews.

What is to be done?

Jewish and gentile Christians each have a different task.

Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews must further develop their identity as followers of *Yeshua HaMashiach* within the Jewish people - and thus to disprove the possibility of a Two Ways/Two Covenants theory. In this context it is especially necessary to develop a genuine Messianic Theology. (It must at the same time be a truly orthodox Christian theology.) As such, they must make their voices heard among other Christians and among other Jews. They should not forget the burden of the history of Christians over {42} against the Jews and still resist the temptation of dissociating themselves from the rest of Christianity.

As for the other Christians, especially for those in Germany and similar countries, we should search out the Jewish roots of our faith and make ourselves more and more aware of them. At the same time, we should work hard for the establishment of a general climate of solidarity and friendship between Christians and Jews. We should especially stand by Jewish Christians/Messianic Jews, as well as strive sincerely to develop a new theology that stays clear of the evils of substitution theory, triumphal, and other signs of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. The guideline for our theology should be faith in God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. If we really look to Jesus Christ, who was born a Jew and never ceased to be one, He will help us discover more and more our relation to the Jewish heritage. This will give us something to share with those Jews who have not found faith in Jesus Christ. In sharing our faith, however, we should constantly keep the course of history in mind. It will take a long time before we can go out and preach the gospel without recalling the painful memory of the Holocaust.

The Two Ways/Two Covenants theory, fascinating as it may appear at first glance, does not fit into the realities of New Testament or present times. In finding fault with this theory we should not, however, turn away from the goal of a new relationship between Christians and Jews. It may appear difficult to achieve that goal if there are not two neatly separated entities on their respective ways to ultimate fulfillment. It may appear easier to strive for that goal without the interference of Jewish Christians, but this is reality. By the will of God, Christians and Jews can never be neatly separated.

{44} Critique of The Two Covenant Theory

Mitch Glaser

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Introduction

It is impossible to remain uninvolved or dispassionate when discussing the Two Covenant theory. If this theory could ever be proven true theologically, it makes fools of evangelists to the Jews. If Jesus is not the only way of salvation for Jews as well as gentiles, and if Jews are not required to confess Him in order to be part of the Heavenly Father's family, then the struggles of Messianic Jews and their rejection by the Jewish community turn out to be meaningless. But even more meaningless becomes the death of Jesus at Calvary! Let us examine the Two Covenant theory.

I. STATEMENT OF THE TWO-COVENANT THEORY

The Two Covenant theory states there is a way of salvation for the Jews (through the covenants God made with the Jewish people in the Old Testament) and a way of salvation for the gentiles (through Jesus). The theory does not imply that every Jewish person will be saved, but that the Jewish person doesn't need to believe in Jesus in order to be saved.

Rosemary Reuther, Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, explains the view in her book *Faith and Fratricide*:

Christians must be able to accept the thesis that it is not necessary for Jews to have the story about Jesus in order to have a foundation for faith and a hope for salvation. The story of Jesus parallels, it does not negate, the Exodus. It is another story, born from Abraham's promise, which becomes the paradigm of salvation for Christians.¹

Dr. A. Roy Eckardt of Leigh University² believes that Judaism and the Church are like elder and younger brothers in one equally valid faith, united in a single covenant:

{45} For the Christian as younger brother to behave in any way, which implies that the Jew as elder brother is not, already a member of the household of salvation is the height of presumptuousness. In principle, it is out of the question for the Christian church to try to "convert" the Jewish people to Jesus Christ. Such an attempt can only mean a fatal distortion of the structure of the history of salvation.³

The dual covenant position has landed a foothold within the Christian community and has caused a number of Protestant denominations to alter their historic position in relationship to the Jewish community. In some respects this has been good, as negative stereotypes about the Jewish people have

¹ R. Reuther, *Faith and Fratricide*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974) pp. 256-257.

² Dr. Eckardt has served both in the National Council of Churches' study group on Israel and in the World Council of Churches' Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People.

³ G. Anderson, *The Church and the Jewish People: Some Theological Issues and Missiological Concerns. Missiology: An International Review*, (1967) p. 285.

been corrected and pastors have become more attuned to the sensitivities of the Jewish community. Unfortunately, it has led in a number of cases to the acceptance of the Two Covenant theory.

The 1.7 million-member United Church of Christ, the 10th largest Protestant denomination in the United States, adopted a declaration at their 1987 annual convention calling for the church to recognize the unique role of the Jewish people in the purposes of God. The leaders asked church members “to turn from this path of rejection and persecution to affirm that Judaism has not been superseded by Christianity.” According to the report, although other Christian groups have denounced anti-Semitism, the United Church of Christ is the first to adopt a policy statement affirming the validity of Judaism.

Rabbi James Rudin, Director of Inter-religious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee, commented in an interview in *Moment* magazine on the importance of the United Church of Christ statement:

*This new statement means that the whole question of Christian proselytizing, missionizing, and conversion is undermined, because they don't need to convert people who already have a covenant relationship with God.*⁴

Acceptance of the Two Covenant theory is not limited to those denominations considered theologically liberal. According to Rev. George Sheridan, former East Coast Regional Director for the Southern Baptist department of Interfaith Witness:

The Jewish bond with God was not superseded by the coming of Jesus. The Jews of today, as ever, receive salvation through their having been chosen by God in covenant with Abraham, Moses, and the prophets.... My position is that Jews do not require evangelization. We ought to leave them alone in light of their history.^{5 6}

{46} The new combined PCUSA has been working on producing a similar Two Covenant statement and establishing a new mode of operation for the denomination. In the past, Presbyterians have been very active in Jewish evangelism. The task force, which worked on the document, was assisted in their study by two non-voting Jewish consultants, Dr. David Blumenthal, Emory University (Judaic Studies), and Michael Wyschogrod, Bernard Baruch College, City University of New York (Philosophy). It could hardly be claimed that these Jewish “advisors” are anything near objective, since both have used their positions to combat the evangelization of Jews when and where possible. This task force worked for two years. Their report, entitled *Christian and Jews: A Unique Relationship*, which was widely circulated for advice and comment, was carefully reviewed and revised by the Council on Theology and Culture, and was adopted and recommended to the 1983 General Assembly jointly by this Council and the General Assembly Mission Board. The 195th General Assembly (1983) took the following action:

that the 195th General Assembly (1983) return the paper “Christian and Jews: A Unique Relationship” to the Council on Theology and Culture for further study and that the Council be instructed to broaden the base of those working on this study to include specifically Middle-East Christians and those within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) having responsibilities for working in the Middle

⁴ *Moment Magazine*, November 1987.

⁵ *Dallas Times Herald*, February 27, 1988.

⁶ Rev. Sheridan was recently removed by Rev. Larry Lewis, the President of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, who claimed, “We must believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Lord and Savior. Someone who doesn't hold that position shouldn't be in an evangelistic position for the Home Mission Board.”

*East, and to include contacting resource people who can more effectively reflect contemporary Judaism in its relationship to Christianity.*⁷

This paper included seven theological affirmations that are said to lay a foundation for a new and better relationship under God between Christians and Jews. They are:

1. A reaffirmation that the God who addresses both Christians and Jews is the same - the living and true God;
2. A new understanding by the church that its own identity is intimately related to the continuing identity of the Jewish people;
3. A willingness to ponder with Jews the mystery of God's election of both Jews and Christians to be a light to the nations;
4. An acknowledgement by Christians that Jews are in covenant relationship with God, and a consideration of the implications of this reality for evangelism;
5. A determination by Christians to put an end to "the teaching of contempt" for the Jews;
6. A willingness to acknowledge the continuing significance of the promise of land, and to explore its implications for our theology;
- {47} 7. A readiness to act on the hope, which we share with the Jews in God's promise of the peaceable kingdom.⁸

The misleading language of the fourth statement should be of particular interest to us, as it lays the theological and theoretical basis for the Two Covenant theory and its implementation within the PCUSA. They expanded the 4th statement in the following manner:

We affirm that the reign of God is attested both by the continuing existence of the Jewish people and by the church's proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, when speaking with Jews about matters of faith, we must always acknowledge that Jews are already in a covenantal relationship with God....

We believe that the time has come for Christians to stop and take a new look at the Jewish people and at the relationship, which God wills between Christian and Jew. Such reappraisal cannot avoid the issue of evangelism. Should Christians seek to evangelize Jews? For Jews, this is a very sensitive issue. Proselytism by Christians seeking to persuade, even to convert, them has too often been the experience of Jews. Besides its negative judgment on Jewish faith, Christian evangelism is seen by them as a threat to Jewish survival, because Jews who unite with the church usually sever their bonds with the Jewish people. The issue is problematical for Christians as well. Although we understand ourselves called to be witnesses to Christ in all the earth, we understand our scriptures and our confessional documents to teach that Jews are already in covenant with God, and that God's covenant is not revoked.

For Christians, there is no easy answer to this dilemma. We affirm that Jesus Christ came for all people - "to the Jew first and also the Greek." But if most Jews choose not to follow Him as Messiah and Lord, we are not entitled to

⁷ *Report and Recommendation on a Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christian and Jews*, by the Council on Theology and Culture.

⁸ *Ibid.*

conclude from this that God's covenant with their forebears has now been rescinded. We do not presume to know the whole mind of God on this matter, but this we can surely say: we will witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ among all the "nations" (ethne), by word and by life, in accordance with our Lord's command. But whenever we speak with Jews, we must not forget that they are already in covenant with God.

Dialogue is the appropriate form of faithful conversation between Christians and Jews. Dialogue is not a cover for proselytism. Rather, as trust is established, not only questions and concerns can be shared, but faith and commitments as well. Thus dialogue is compatible with witness, while it is incompatible with a militancy that seeks to impose one's own terms on another. It is out of a mutual willingness to listen {48} and learn that faith deepens, and a new and better relationship between Christians and Jews is enabled to grow.⁹

The paper was once again returned to the committee to be reconsidered at next year's General Assembly. The reason had nothing to do with the theological unacceptability of the Two Covenant theory. Rather, item six above was deemed overly sympathetic to Jewish Israelis. For many years, Presbyterians have conducted missionary efforts among the Arabs and they did not want to alienate their Middle-Eastern brethren. We can expect to see this report back again, somewhat modified, yet in all probability accepted by the General Assembly.

According to the Two Covenant theorist, Judaism without Christ provides a viable means of redemption for the Jewish people. There is no need to tell Jews about Jesus. Denominations and Christian groups are accepting the theory and demonstrating a great willingness to act on their beliefs. We should expect this trend to continue, and these groups to intensify their opposition to Jewish missions.

II. JEWISH ORIGINS OF THE TWO COVENANT THEORY

The Christian community is actually only the "front man" for the Two Covenant theory; we shall see that the originators of this (are in fact) Jewish. This is not surprising since the Two Covenant theory gives an ideal theoretical basis for discouraging the continued efforts of Christians to preach the gospel to Jewish people. It is the intended strategy of many leaders in the Jewish community today to encourage Christians to accept a new basis for Jewish-Christian relations - a basis which allows the Jewish people theologically to survive. If Christians can be persuaded that it is unnecessary to preach the gospel to Jews, it would then reduce the level of perceived threat to the Jewish religion.

⁹ *Ibid.*

A: Conversion to Judaism

In the Talmud, the sages of Israel declare: “Pious men of all the nations have a share in the life to come.”¹⁰ But this way is not necessarily by actual conversion to Judaism. The Jewish religion has had an uneven past in its attempts to make converts from among the gentiles. At one time in history the Jewish community was active in “making proselytes,” as recognized by Jesus in Matthew 23:15; but Byzantine Christianity, having been assured of its legal ascendancy by Constantine, made further proselytizing by Judaism illegal. Nevertheless, some among the Reform movement today have again shown a desire to actively reach out with the intent of converting non-Jews.

{49} Jews have traditionally made it difficult for gentiles fully to enter the fold of Israel. Some would argue that it was an act of compassion so as not to lay the burden of the whole Law upon the gentile who was sincerely seeking God. Judaism’s tendency to exclude rather than include non-Jews within the fold may well have been in self-defense, motivated by a desperation to survive in the Diaspora.

B. The Doctrines of Survival

According to Dr. Fackenheim, the “614th commandment” incumbent upon all Jews is, “Thou shalt ... survive!” And indeed, from century to hostile century, Jewish people have had to master the art of survival. Techniques were developed, and strategies of survival discovered, which enabled us to preserve our race and resist conversion to the majority religion. Some of these strategies are theological in character; the Two Covenant theory must be understood in this light, as a doctrine of survival. From earliest days, Jews have been a minority. We have survived and flourished as a minority culture longer than any other race. Yet certain compromises have had to be made: Rabbinic Judaism has at times validated gentile religions and yet simultaneously not encouraged conversion to them, this as a matter of survival. After all, it was not in the best interest of the Jewish community to criticize the religion of the Christian or Muslim majority. Judaism was not eager to include the gentiles in the Jewish religion nor did the authors of Halakhah want to bring down the wrath of the majority upon the Jews and their religion. The Jewish people had experienced that destructive wrath before; hence they wanted to avoid any and all provocations.

Conveniently, Judaism claimed that there was no need for the gentiles to become Jews if they faithfully followed their own religions. A concept was promulgated known as *Hasidei Ummot Ha-Olam*: “The pious ones of the nations of the world.” This is a rabbinic term denoting righteous gentiles. The concept is first found, albeit in limited form, in the Midrash. The *Yalkut Shimoni*, for instance, explains that the verse “Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness...,” (Ps. 132:9) refers to “the righteous of other nations who are priests to the Holy One in this world, like Antoninus and his type.”¹¹ The notion that the *hasidei ummot ha-olam* also merit a place in the world to come (a true sign of their worthiness) is found in the Tosefta, which teaches that they are as eligible as any member of the House of Israel to a share in the hereafter.¹² Without specifically naming the righteous gentiles, Maimonides also equates “all human beings who ardently seek God ... desire to worship Him, to know Him, and to walk uprightly in His ways...,” with priests and Levites.¹³ Undergirding this strategy for survival was an attempt on the part of Jewish leaders to demonstrate their acceptance of heathen religions. One rabbi said:

¹⁰ A.J. Heschel, “No Man is an Island,” Disputation and Dialogue, p. 357; Tosefta, Sanhedrin 13:2; Baba Bathra 10b.

¹¹ Yalkut Isaiah 42:9.

¹² Tosefta, Sanhedrin 13:2.

¹³ *Yad*, Shemittah 13:13; Encyclopedia Judaica vol. 7, 1383.

{50} “Gentiles outside Palestine were not really idolaters, but only blind followers of their ancestral customs.”¹⁴

This is contrary to the religion of the Old Testament. The prophets did not hesitate to denounce pagan religions even when the idolaters were in the majority. But the rabbis of the dispersion were ready to posit that the worshippers of Greek gods, and even adherents to Christianity and Islam, could possibly be righteous gentiles. The need for Jews to survive among the nations burned far brighter than the calling to shine as lights to the gentiles. Validating the religions of the dominant culture was a means of preserving the Jewish people and their religion.

1. Noachide Laws

According to Rabbinic thought, the covenant with Noah was particularly applicable to the gentiles. The so-called laws of Noah, mirrored in Acts 15, were an acceptable basis for determining the righteousness of a gentile. The seven laws include the institution of courts of justice, prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, incest, murder, robbery, and against eating the limb of a living animal (some would also include a prohibition against castration, the mixing of breeds, and witchcraft).¹⁵ Maimonides wrote:

*All who observe the Seven Commandments - obligatory to the descendants of Noah - are hasidei ummot ha-olam, provided that they are motivated by belief in the divine origin and the authenticity of Moses' prophecy, and not by mere intellectual cogency. In the latter case they are to be considered only as “wise ones of the other nations” (hakhmeihem, according to some versions).*¹⁶

If these laws were obeyed, then gentiles retained the freedom to worship their own gods and be accepted into the good graces of the God of Israel. The words of the prophet Micah have been quoted through the centuries by Jewish leaders to justify this position: “Though all the peoples walk, each in the name of his god, as for us, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.” (Micah 4:5). According to Maimonides, the prophet does not insist that the gentiles who will come up to Jerusalem must convert to Judaism rather, they will be able to maintain their own religious customs and yet still be acceptable to God.

According to Berger and Wyschogrod, conversion to Judaism is discouraged because the Noachide laws already provide a sufficient means for the gentile to be considered righteous and to find a place in the world to come.¹⁷

A medieval writer, Rabbi Menachem Meiri, drew a distinction between idolaters on the one hand, and Christians and Muslims on the other. The latter, he writes, are “people disciplined by religion and in principle, are to {51} be regarded as Jews “as far as economic and social relations were concerned.” This was an extreme view for the time, but it does demonstrate how intent the Jewish leaders were on showing tacit acceptance of the dominant religious and political forces of their day. Maimonides claims that a gentile who observes the Noachide laws should be honored above a Jew who does not study the Torah.¹⁸ This concept of Noachide laws as applicable to gentiles is a doctrine of survival, allowing Jews to treat the gentile majority with a semblance of respect, all the

¹⁴ Hul. 13b; Encyclopedia Judaica vol. 7, 411.

¹⁵ Sanhedrin 56a-b ff.; Encyclopedia Judaica, vol.7, 412.

¹⁶ *Yad*, Teshuvah 3:5; *Yad*, Melakhim 8:11; Encyclopedia Judaica vol.7, 1383.

¹⁷ D. Berger and M. Wyschogrod, *Jews and “Jewish Christianity”* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1978) pp.62-63.

¹⁸ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, p. 412.

while hoping for reciprocal treatment. This method of placating the religious majority became a theological paradigm, which later generations would follow.

2. The Doctrine of *Shittuf*

Essential to the Christian religion and to God's revelation in Jesus Christ is the divinity of the Messiah. Though this is a doctrine that is seemingly repugnant to the Jewish people, a way was found around this doctrine as well. This came to be known as the Rabbinic doctrine of *shittuf* (partnership) answering the question: Are Christians idolaters if they believe that Jesus is God?

Medieval Jewish writers wrestled with the problem. The tosafist, R. Isaac of Dampierre, held that since Christians could not be regarded as strict monotheists, according to the Halakhah they come under the category of Noahchides who are not enjoined against Trinitarian belief.¹⁹

Berger and Wyschogrod explain it as follows:

*The accepted Jewish view is that belief in shittuf does not constitute idolatry for Gentiles but does so for Jews. The reason for this is that the definition of what constitutes idolatry is different for Jews and Gentiles. Belief in shittuf, the belief that God shares his being in equal partnership with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, is not idolatry by the standard demanded of Gentiles. But the very same belief held by a Jew constitutes idolatry by the standard applicable to Jews. It is for this reason that Judaism does not condemn Christian Trinitarianism as idolatry unless those holding the belief are Jews who are bound by the covenant of Sinai.*²⁰

The incredible inconsistency is revealed between the attitude toward Jews who accept the deity of Christ on the one hand, and toward gentiles who are Trinitarian on the other. A double standard has been created which presumes the spiritual superiority (or inferiority) of the Jews. The unfairness of the doctrine was not paramount, nor the fact that sincerity and convictions played no part in such qualifications. It was ruled impossible that a Jew might honestly believe that Jesus was God and was acting in concert with the covenants. Jews who believed in Jesus had to be rejected and {52} were always to be presumed as acting in "bad faith." Yet it should be understood that the Jewish people would be placed in a precarious situation were they to condemn Christians as idolaters. Anyone who knows the history of Judaism and Christianity recognizes that this would have brought annihilation to the Jewish people in Christian Europe. It was hoped that the toleration offered to the gentiles regarding the Trinity would be reciprocated by Christendom in respect to doctrines particular to Judaism.²¹

3. Preparation for the Messiah

Maimonides claimed that Christianity was *preparatio messianica*, God's way of preparing the gentiles for the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom. Maimonides viewed Islam in the same way. He wrote:

All these matters relating to Jesus of Nazareth and the Ishmaelite (Mohammed) who came after him, served to clear the way for King Messiah, to prepare the whole world to worship God in one accord, as it is written, "For then I will turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord

¹⁹ Tosefta to Sanhedrin 63b; Tosefta to Bek. 2b; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol.7, 414. 20

²⁰ Berger and Wyschogrod, pp. 29, 32-33, 61-63.

²¹ *Ibid.*

to serve Him with one consent.” (Zeph. 3:9) Thus the messianic hope, the Torah, and the commandments have become familiar topics.²²

Maimonides was forced to validate Islam. What choice did he have? If, in the spirit of Isaiah, he condemned Mohammed as a false prophet, he would have brought about his own destruction and precipitated a *Jihad*, a Holy War against the Jewish people.

Yehuda Halevi uses a parable to teach the relationship of Judaism to both Christianity and Islam.

The wise providence of God towards Israel may be compared to the planting of a seed of corn. It is placed in the earth, where it seems to be changed into soil, and water, and rottenness, and the seed that has changed the earth and water into its own nature, and then the seed raises itself from one stage to another, transforms the elements, and throws out shoots and leaves ... Thus it is with Christians and Moslems. The Law of Moses has changed them that come into contact with it, even though they seem to have cast the Law aside. These religions are the preparation and the preface to the Messiah we expect, who is the fruit himself of the seed originally sown, and all men, too, will be fruit of God’s seed when they acknowledge Him, and all become one mighty tree.²³

Abraham Joshua Heschel believes that this openness to the validity of Christianity should be reciprocated by Christendom:

{53} Thus, whereas the Christian doctrine has often regarded Judaism as having outlived its usefulness and the Jews as candidates for conversion, the Jewish attitude enables us to acknowledge the presence of a divine plan in the role of Christianity within the history of redemption.²⁴

Acknowledging the validity of other religious systems is a means of possible peaceful coexistence; Judaism views its unique role as having given birth to both Islam and Christianity. The root of conflict with both daughter religions lies in their apparent disrespect for their mother; this is seen in their trying to make converts of Jewish people to Islam or Christianity - often at the point of a sword!

C. Modern Day

Modern Jewish philosophers, basing their arguments on the mutual respect and tolerance familiar to the modern pluralistic Western mind, emphasized the Two Covenant theory. But now Christianity’s unique truth-claims had become a target, as the Jews in the West were learning to survive in a “post-Haskalah” society. Jews were now able to integrate into Western society. The doctrines of survival became increasingly important not only as a means of appeasing the dominant culture and religion, but as a measure preventing Jews from turning to Christianity. The race-specific validity of Judaism for Jews was emphasized in an attempt to decrease Jewish attraction to Christianity.

Martin Buber claims: “God’s doors are open for all. In order to come to God, the Christian need not go through Judaism nor the Jew through Christianity.”²⁵ Buber illustrates his point with a poignant story.

²² Heschel, p.358.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Heschel, p. 357-358.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

I live not far from the city of Worms, to which I am bound by the tradition of my forefathers; and, from time to time, I go there. When I go, I first go to the cathedral. It is a visible harmony of members, a totality in which no part deviates from perfection. I walk about the cathedral with consummate joy, gazing at it. Then I go over to the Jewish cemetery consisting of crooked, cracked shapeless, random stones. I station myself there, gaze upward from the jumble of a cemetery to that glorious harmony, and seem to be looking up from Israel to the Church. Below, there is no jot of form; there are only the stones and the dust lying beneath the stones. The dust is there, no matter how thinly scattered. There lies the corporeality of man, which has turned to this. There it is. There it is for me. There it is for me, not as corporeality within the space of this planet, but as corporeality within my own memory, far into the depths of history, as far back as Sinai.. {54} I have stood there, have been united with the dust, and through it with the Patriarchs. That is a memory of the transaction with God which He has given to all Jews. From this the perfection of the Christian house of God cannot separate me, nothing can separate me from the sacred history of Israel...

The cathedral is as it is. The cemetery is as it is, but nothing has been withdrawn from us.²⁶

Franz Rosenzweig was an advocate of the Two Covenant theory. He was not, as some mistakenly assume, the originator of the idea, but he was perhaps the most articulate spokesman for the view among contemporary Jewish theologians. In his magnum opus, the *Star of Redemption*, which appeared in 1921, Rosenzweig proposed the thesis that both religions, Judaism and Christianity, possess equal validity and are mutually complementary. Neither is the arbiter of the truth, which will only be fully known at the end of days.

Judaism is the Life - the faith that was with the Father at the beginning - while Christianity is the way toward the Father of those who are not yet with Him. Judaism is the first; Christianity the rays. Judaism is the Star of Redemption turned in upon itself; Christianity the Cross with its arms branched outward.²⁷

Many contemporary Jewish authors have accepted the Two Covenant theory as a basis for continuing dialogue with Christians. But some Jewish leaders are willing to speak their mind regarding the Two Covenant theory and their true desire for how they wish to be treated by Christianity. Eliezer Berkowitz pulls no punches when he scathingly writes:

(The issue) is still conceived in the old questionable tradition of religious persecution. It is not a matter of whether Christianity acknowledges

²⁶ F. Talmage, *Disputation and Dialogue*, p. 246.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 245: "The Jews simply refuse to see that their development leads through Jesus in whom alone the Jewish religion could 'consummate itself.' Judaism has not taken this step; on the contrary, it rejects with all possible force the notion that He has already arrived through whom their historic mission is to be fulfilled; Judaism is still waiting for Him and will continue to wait so long as it exists. The development of Judaism has by-passed Him whom the 'heathens' call 'Lord' and by whom 'they reach the Father'."

"Here an abyss opens between Jesus and His church, on the one hand, and every Jew on the other - an abyss that will never be filled up. That 'connection of the innermost heart with God' which the heathen can only reach through Jesus, is something the Jew already possesses, provided that his Judaism is not withheld from him by force; he possesses it by nature, through having been born one of the Chosen People..." N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1953) pp. 25, 27.

*fragmentary truths in Judaism. All we want of Christians is that they keep their hands off us and our children!*²⁸

The Two Covenant theory is an attempt to neutralize the testimony of the Church to the Jews. If both Jew and Christian have valid covenants with God, then the superior course for the minority religion would be if each left the other alone except for occasional readjustments in the uneasy balance of religious pluralism. In other words: no nativity scenes, no prayer in schools, and by all means no evangelism!

{55} III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO COVENANT THEORY IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The Two-Covenant theory, Jewish in origin, was “transferred over” to the Christian community. Liberal theologians would not denounce it as the bastardization of the doctrine of salvation, since they themselves had long since departed from an orthodox soteriology, largely viewing salvation in terms of saving a whole society by social means. This shift in soteriology had already taken place within the World Council of Churches. They were recasting the mission of the Church among the Jewish people from an evangelistic mold into one of dialogue.

According to Methodist missiologist, Gerald Anderson:

Within the National Council of Churches in the USA, there was for many years a Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews. An official of the National Council of Churches describes the demise of that Committee as follows: “The decline in the work of the Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews and its eventual disappearance was of course directly related to the increasing questions in our member communions about the theological and sociological propriety of evangelizing the Jews. As early as the late 1950’s, as a result of the thinking of Reinhold Niebuhr and others, serious questions were being asked...

It became increasingly clear as we moved into the 1960’s that the choice between dialogue and conversion as the focus of Christian encounter with the Jewish community was being resolved in favor of the former. Whereas there has been money available before for evangelism, there was no money available for programs in Jewish-Christian relations divorced from some element of conversion. The result was that the Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews slowly withered away, was never officially terminated, but certainly did not exist in any functioning capacity whatsoever by the end of the decade.”²⁹

Increasingly, the Two-Covenant theory was touted as the only acceptable basis for further dialogue between the Christian community and Judaism, although it was only theological liberals who embraced this conditional relationship. Indeed, the doctrines of universalism had been making headway within the World Council for many years. John Stott, fresh from his experience at the first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in 1974, admonished the leaders of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi in 1975 on the dangers of universalism:

{56} *Universalism, fashionable as it is today, is incompatible with the teaching of Christ and His apostles, and is a deadly enemy of evangelism. The true universalism of the Bible is the call to universal evangelism in obedience to*

²⁸ See Jocz, p. 293.

²⁹ Hunter (1974). See G. Anderson, “The Church and the Jewish People: Some Theological Issues and Missiological Concerns.” *Missiology: An International Review*, p.281.

Christ's universal commission. It is the conviction not that all men will be saved in the end, but that all men must hear the Gospel salvation before the end, as Jesus said (Matt. 24:14), in order that they may have a chance to believe and to be saved (Romans 10:13-15).³⁰

To speak plainly, the Two-Covenant theory is simply universalism disguised as Jewish-Christian relations.

A. The Catholic Church

The Declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965) was the most significant breakthrough in Jewish-Catholic relations in this century. According to a report:

The Catholic church has gone on record as acknowledging that the Jewish people today are the heirs of and continue in God's eternal covenant with them. The Jewish people today, according to this teaching, are the Israel of God. The ancient covenant between God and Israel, in other words, continues today, ever new and ever alive in the ambiguous contemporary life of the Jewish people. Not since the Apostle to the gentiles insisted on this point has the church seen this so clearly. It constitutes a reversal of the tradition at a point so central to the church's understanding of itself and God, as well as of Israel, that it cannot fail to have major consequences for christology.³¹

Later statements in explanation of the *Nostra Aetate* continued to move the Catholic church in the direction of the Two Covenant theory so that paradoxically, even the Jewish Catholic writer, Gregory Baum, is opposed to the preaching of the gospel to the Jews. It is hard to fathom how Baum lives with such an apparent contradiction: Why did Baum become a Catholic, if the Jewish people still have a valid covenant with God that provides individual Jews with salvation?

B. The Protestant Church

Liberal Protestants quickly identified with the Two Covenant theory. One of the first modern theologians to call upon the Church to accept a dual covenant position was Reinhold Niebuhr. At a meeting of the joint faculties of Union Theological Seminary and the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1958, he declared:

{57} Missionary activities among the Jews are wrong, not only because they are futile and have little fruit to boast for their exertions. They are wrong because the two faiths despite differences are sufficiently alike for the few to find God more easily in terms of his own religious heritage than by subjecting himself to the hazards of guilt feelings involved in conversion to a faith which, whatever its excellencies, must appear to him as a symbol of an oppressive minority culture.³²

Niebuhr rejected the idea that Jewish people need Jesus Christ. His sentiments were echoed by Paul Tillich, who wrote:

³⁰ H. Hoekstra, *The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids: Tyndale, 1979) p. 138.

³¹ *Religion & Intellectual Life: The Journal of Associates for Religion and Intellectual Life*, Volume III, No. 4, pp. 41-42.

³² Heschel, p. 356.

Many Christians feel that it is a questionable thing, for instance, to try to convert Jews. They have lived and spoken with their Jewish friends for decades. They have not converted them, but they have created a community of conversation which has changed both sides of the dialogue.³³

C. Among Evangelicals

The Two Covenant theory, which has found a welcome home among liberal Catholics and Protestants engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue, is now attempting to find hospitable lodging in evangelical circles. A well-known evangelical pastor in Northern California, who is otherwise truly supportive of Jewish missions, accepts a form of the Two Covenant theory. This pastor has made numerous trips to Israel throughout the years and has a number of Israeli friends. When asked if he witnessed to them, he responded from a Two Covenant perspective: He claims that because of what these friends went through in the Holocaust, they would never be able to accept Jesus. The pastor then asked the question, "Do you really think God would condemn them without giving them a fair chance?" He stakes his hope for the salvation of these Jewish friends on Romans 11:25-27.

The dual covenant view is growing, especially among those evangelicals who are most concerned and sensitive to the Jewish people. Our attempts to understand one another can result in well-intentioned empathy leading to confusion and compromise. However, Christian empathy is powerless to reach beyond the gate of the grave and comfort those in a Christless eternity. Ironically, Christians who compromise the gospel are persuading themselves not only that they feel they are doing their Jewish friends a favor, but they also think that they are putting God and Christians in a better light as well. Many believe that Christians should exercise a greater degree of sensitivity towards the Jewish people because of the history of Christian mistreatment of the Jewish people. Indeed they should! But the greatest form of sensitivity is to recognize the urgent need for eternal life through Christ.

{58} Withholding the gospel from Israel is not better treatment for Jews! It is rather the most toxic form of anti-Semitism. The same logic would be true if applied to American Blacks because of the inhumane treatment received during the days of slavery. Should we then withhold the gospel from Blacks? This kind of misguided sensitivity can lead to a missionary retreat in any and all lands and among all peoples who have in some way been mistreated by Christianity.

There is a right kind of Christian empathy: Jesus agonized over the destruction of Jerusalem. He did not ignore it. The right kind of Christian empathy does not heave a sigh of relief because certain people can be saved without Jesus - it agonizes because they cannot. The Christian with the right kind of empathy does something about it! But wherein lies the confusion? The critical point of confusion is the nature of God's covenant relationship to the Jewish people. God will remain faithful to his promise to Abraham (Rom. 11:29). But the question remains: Does God's faithfulness to the covenant imply that individual Jewish people can have a relationship with God without personally accepting Christ?

IV. THE METHOD OF CRITIQUE

Most critiques of the Two Covenant theory begin with a presentation of the uniqueness of Christ. Passages such as John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 clearly present Jesus as the only way of salvation for both Jews and gentiles. Yet most proponents of the Two Covenant theory are theological liberals who do not accept the integrity of the New Testament. Passages such as John 14:6 are dismissed by

³³ *Ibid.*

manipulating form and redaction criticism. Rosemary Reuther strikes a blow against the Christology of the New Testament when she writes in *Faith and Fratricide*:

*We have seen that the anti-Judaic myth is neither a superficial nor a secondary element in Christian thought. The foundations of anti-Judaic thought were laid in the New Testament. They were developed in the classical age of Christian theology in a way that laid the basis for attitudes and practices that continually produced terrible results.*³⁴

Her solution is to rewrite the New Testament, making sure that the rewrite will include terms more favorable for the Jewish people. Paul Van Buren has made a similar suggestion, one disputed by Dr. Arthur Glasser of the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission:

*Van Buren wants a Christianity that has lost contact with the historical Jesus. Since he doesn't grapple with the New Testament data, other than to make general charges of its anti-Judaic spirit, it is not {59} possible to have substantive dialogue with him. The truth about Jesus can be found only in that intensely Jewish book - the New Testament - written by Jews within two brief generations of Jesus' death and when its details could be confirmed by Jewish eyewitnesses still living.*³⁵

It would be easiest to argue against the Two Covenant theory from the New Testament. Yet if those we are opposing do not accept our premise (i.e., that the New Testament is authentic), then a polemic based upon the teaching of the New Testament will be considered weak and ineffectual by them. Curiously, whereas some Two Covenant theorists refuse to accept the integrity of the New Testament, they act as if they accept the authenticity of the Old. God's Covenant relationship to the Jewish people in the Old Testament is accepted by the Two Covenant theologians. And on the basis of this covenant, they hold Jewish people are granted theological standing and freed from any obligation to accept the New Covenant.

It goes without saying that the Jewish thinkers who insist on the Two Covenant theory would prefer to ignore the New Testament. Most assuredly, they balk at any question of its authenticity and authority. It is important to critique what is a misunderstanding of the Old Testament covenants on the part of the Two Covenant theologians. It will also be imperative to present a sound explanation for the salvation of Israel in Romans 11. Our critique will rest upon these two points.

A. The Old Testament Covenants

Those who accept a dual covenant position misunderstand God's covenant relationship to the Jewish people. Most evangelicals believe that God will remain faithful to His promise (Rom. 11:29). He will be faithful to His chosen people, yet the question must be asked: Does God's faithfulness to the covenant imply that individual Jewish people can be saved from sin without personally accepting Christ? Was this God's intent in choosing the nation of Israel? The answer is no! The Jewish people were chosen to be servants of the living God; that was their divine vocation. Personal salvation was a matter between each individual Jew and God. The covenant insured nationhood, but faith and faith alone was still the only possible conduit of forgiveness.

³⁴ Reuther, p. 227.

³⁵ *Religion & Intellectual Life: The Journal for Associates for Religion and Intellectual Life*, Volume III, No. 4, p. 68.

1. Etymology and definition of the term

The Hebrew word usually translated “covenant” is *b’rit*. It is used 286 times in the Old Testament. The origin of the term is unsure.³⁶ At least 86 times, when the Bible refers to a covenant being made, the term *b’rit* is used in conjunction with the word *karat* (“to cut”). The phrase would then be best understood as “cutting a covenant” rather than making or establishing a covenant. This is vividly illustrated in Genesis 15, when God has Abram {60} kill a number of animals and, after cutting them in half, tells him to lay them out in a field. God Himself then passed between the animals, signifying the irrevocable nature of the covenant agreement which was sealed in blood. O. Palmer Robertson, writing in his book, *Christ of the Covenants*, combines a number of the possible roots of the term and defines a covenant as a ‘bond in blood sovereignty administered.’³⁷

2. The Nature of the Old Testament Covenants

God’s covenants with Israel were not merely lifeless, legal agreements. The covenants are His means of governing His relationship with mankind in general and with the nation of Israel in particular. Those covenants are rooted in the sovereignty and love of God, but no covenant stands alone. They cannot be accepted or rejected as individual agreements. A person or a people must first accept the God who revealed Himself to all men and sovereignly ministers all covenants. One cannot choose one covenant over another because he finds the terms of one more agreeable than the other. Covenants were never intended to be bargains; God does not allow us to shop for the best deal. *He* decides the terms of all His relationships with mankind. We are mistaken when we emphasize the agreement and trivialize the Person with whom the covenant is made.

It is not the right of theologians to determine how and with whom covenants are established; it is the sovereign right of God alone. The primary misunderstanding of Two-Covenant theologians is the belittling and humanization of God, who is presented as capricious and unfaithful. What kind of God promises a new covenant and then fails to fulfill His commitments?

Covenants were made with a number of different parties. They were made between individuals, such as Jonathan and David (I Sam. 18:3), and between nations (I Sam. 11:1ff). Traditionally, scholars have divided God’s covenants into major categories: unilateral (unconditional) and bilateral (conditional) covenants. One’s response to the covenant agreement brings either blessings or curses. In a unilateral covenant, blessings are secured by the grace of God, and in a bilateral covenant by obedience.

The covenants referred to most frequently in the Old and New Testaments were made with Abraham and Moses. There is mention of a covenant with Noah, David, and perhaps, according to Pentecost and Fruchtenbaum, a Palestinian or Israeli covenant which directly regulates God’s promises regarding the inheritance of the Land. The New Covenant spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah is significantly different from the Mosaic covenant, and seems to be related more directly to the Abrahamic covenant. The few references to an everlasting covenant in the Old Testament appear to point to the Abrahamic covenant, as the Psalmist writes:

³⁶ For a number of years, scholars suggested that *b’rit* came from one of two different Akkadian words: the term *burru* (meaning “to establish a legal situation by testimony with an oath”) or from *birtu* (literally meaning “fetter,” emphasizing the binding quality of all covenants). Some Old Testament scholars, such as Ludwig Kohler, believe that the root of *b’rit* is *brh*, (meaning “eat”). He claims that the animals killed in the inauguration of the covenant became the main course for a ritual meal. Whereas most Old Testament scholars are unsure of the root, it is commonly accepted that the shedding of blood is the essential element in rightly understanding the nature of Old Testament covenants.

³⁷ O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House), p. 4.

{61} Which covenant He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant. (Ps. 105:9-10)³⁸

3. The Abrahamic Covenant and Individual Salvation

The more open proponents of the Two Covenant theory insist that individual Jewish people can be saved through their relationship to the Abrahamic covenant. They view the provisions and blessings of the covenant as adequate for a personal relationship with the God of Abraham. Some who identify as evangelicals would also suggest the same thing; they view these individuals as having somehow accepted Christ without being aware of their decision.

Daniel Juster, a leader in the Messianic Jewish Movement believes that the only way to be saved is through the atoning death of the Messiah. Yet in the past he has stated that there is a possibility that a faithful Jewish person could perhaps be saved through the Abrahamic covenant. The following is a quote from a personal conversation with Juster:

*If Jewish people living under the Old Covenant were saved while looking forward to the Messiah, without personally accepting Christ, then wouldn't it be possible for a Jewish person today, who was faithful to God and expecting the Messiah, to be saved? What if he had never heard about Jesus?*³⁹

Juster clearly states that he had never encountered this hypothetical person. He illustrates his point by saying:

If there were a Jewish person who was sincerely seeking after God and was hit by a car and killed before he ever personally accepted Jesus, would he not be saved? What if the person had an Abraham-like faith?

According to Juster, the gospel was incipient in the Abrahamic covenant. He gleans this from Paul's statement in Galatians 3:8, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.'" Such a Jewish person might die without accepting the historical Christ while he was alive, and yet still be saved. This hypothetical Jewish person's faith in the Messiah to come would, indeed, save him. Yet in interpreting Galatians 3:8 it appears to me that the gospel can only be incipient before the cross. Both Jews and gentiles are now responsible for the revelation of the gospel at Golgotha. If the authority of the New Testament is at all accepted, then there must be a difference in God's {62} expectation on this side of the cross. After all, God did expect the Old Testament saints to believe all that had been previously revealed, or at least they could not be in a position of denying established revelation. No faithful subject of the household of Israel was allowed to discard the book of Leviticus simply because it favored the priests and that person didn't happen to be a priest.

Juster is radically different in his position from a typical Two Covenant theologian, who believes that Jewish people do not need Christ, since the covenant with Abraham was intrinsically adequate. He believes that the entire scenario is unlikely, as Paul graphically describes both Jews and gentiles in Romans 1-3 as sinners by nature. Juster considers this a theoretical issue and does not think he will ever meet a Jewish person who would be saved without knowingly receiving Jesus. This position is a far cry from the Two Covenant theory, yet any view of the Abrahamic Covenant that

³⁸ Is. 24:5, 61:8; Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 16:60, 37:26.

³⁹ Cf. D. Juster, *Jewish Roots. A Foundation of Biblical Theology for Messianic Judaism* (Davar, Maryland 1986), pp. 167-171.

claims it alone is enough for personal salvation is still a misunderstanding of the covenant. This same mistaken view is shared by those who oppose evangelization of the Jews.

Yet is it unfair to ask, “If a Jewish person has an Abraham-like faith and is seeking after God, then would he not logically have the yearning of his faith fulfilled by God who would give the gift of faith in Jesus?” Surely we cannot allow ourselves to hold any view, which makes God to be a bystander. Doesn’t our belief in the sovereignty of God demand that He answer seeking faith with certain disclosure of Himself and those facts essential to salvation.

Furthermore, why limit this ultimate favor of salvation to Jews alone? Would this not be true also of a pagan who follows the trail of general or natural revelation to the Savior? After all, the promise to Abraham also contained provision for the gentiles. If God can offer the gift of salvation to Jews on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant, then should this offer not be extended to the gentiles?

The actual term *b’rit* is not used in the Hebrew Scriptures as a reference to individual or personal salvation. The language of the covenant describes God’s relationship to the nation of Israel. The phrase which Two Covenant theorists use to describe this relationship is, “And I will be their God and they shall be my people.” This covenant promise is found seven times in the Old Testament and three times in the New.⁴⁰ Each of these passages, except Jeremiah 31:31-34, emphasize the nature of the blessings as national, not personal. This terminology describes the blessing of a unique relationship graciously bestowed upon the Jewish people by God, representing His designs for their covenant relationship.

{63} 4. Jeremiah 31:31-34 - The New Covenant

The covenants of the Old Testament were nationalistic in their emphasis and were given to insure God’s ongoing relationship to the Jewish people. They were not intended to provide the individual Jew with personal salvation or forgiveness of sin. This was only previewed in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, but fulfilled through the finished work of Christ and the institution of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant was a promise made by a Jewish prophet for the Jewish people. One, who states that the New Covenant is unnecessary for the Jews, is demeaning the word of God as it came through Jeremiah. If one says that the New Covenant is applicable only to the gentiles, then backhanded anti-Semitism is at work. The announcement of the New Covenant at the Last *Seder* was made to Jesus’ group of Jewish disciples. The Book of Hebrews, which articulates the theology of the New Covenant, was written to Jewish believers in Jesus (Heb. 6,8).

Yet this new covenant is unlike the one made previously with the Jewish people. If the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were deemed adequate, why was a new one promised? Many unique features in the New Covenant point to its role in the personal salvation of individual Jewish people. For example, the law would be internalized, God would be personally known by all men and sin would be forgiven and forgotten. Jeremiah uses similar language as before, yet the covenant relationship he describes takes on a new dimension of intimacy as it emphasizes both personal and national blessings. The New Covenant is God’s grace fully established through the instrumentality of the cross. To keep Jews from the cross is tantamount to sending them into the wilderness to be judged by a plague of serpents, and hiding the brass serpent that God provided for healing. One might as well toss desperately ill people out of the only hospital that could cure them. Yet Jesus came to

⁴⁰ Ex. 6:7, Lev. 26:12, Jer. 7:23, 11:4, 30:22, 32:38, and in the New Testament, 2. Cor. 6:16, Heb. 8:10, Rev. 21:3: Colin Brown, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 368.

heal the sick; and each of us, Jew and gentile, is suffering from the suffocating sickness of sin. Can we afford to be selective in offering the cure?

B. The Mosaic Covenant and Personal Salvation

The blessings and curses of the Mosaic covenant were primarily addressed to Israel as a nation, although it is obvious that nations do not experience either blessings or troubles - people do. But the covenant was not selective, and the covenant results were universally meted out among the children of Israel. Some use the term “corporate solidarity” to describe God’s workings among the Jewish people, as if the nation were one person. In the biblical scenario, even the righteous of Israel would suffer famine and dispersion on account of the sin of his less righteous neighbors.

{64} The terms of the covenant were attached to the land of promise: destruction for disobedience (Deut. 29:9) and prosperity for obedience (Deut. 29:21). The covenant was binding upon Israel for their mission in the world and it was in the world that the rewards and judgments of the covenant were executed. Many passages clearly teach that God’s covenant with Moses was never intended to provide individuals with salvation; it was a national covenant which bound Israel and God to each other under very specific terms. Personal salvation through the Mosaic covenant would not be possible. The covenant contained terms too stiff for any sinful human beings to fulfill.

The salvation paradigm which has Jews going through Moses and gentiles through Jesus is untenable, as it confuses the intent of the great Old Testament covenants. The Mosaic covenant was never intended to provide personal salvation for Jewish people; its purpose was to point toward the New Covenant. Paul says the Law was a schoolmaster to teach us the way of salvation in Christ (Gal. 3:24). It would be the height of irony if we Jews were barred from graduating from the school of our own law! For according to the Apostle, Christ is the very fulfillment of the Torah. (Rom. 10:4)

The foolishness of this misunderstanding of the Mosaic covenant is apparent: If personal salvation were the object of the Mosaic covenant, and the relationship described as “my people ... your God” were intended to guarantee individual salvation through one’s obedience to the laws of the covenant, then no Jew could be saved. Even Judaism teaches that it is impossible to keep the Laws of Moses at all times. It would then become a covenant that excludes Jews from a living relationship with God.

C. The Problem of Romans 11:25-29

1. The Exegetical Problem

What is the meaning of Paul’s words, “and all Israel shall be saved”? Who is the “all Israel,” and how will they be saved? Can the revived natural branches draw nourishment from the Abrahamic Covenant without Jesus, who is the connection and fulfillment of the promises of God?

Before we attempt to understand chapter 11, it is critical to grasp a few essential truths from chapter 10. The Apostle clearly teaches that both Jews and gentiles must accept Jesus to find eternal life. There is no difference between the Jews and the gentiles according to Paul - eternal life through the Messiah is available to all (Rom. 10:12). The provisions of salvation are the same for Jews and gentiles, as are the means of receiving salvation. (Rom. 10:13)

We are instructed to call upon the Lord, believe the gospel in our heart and confess Him with our mouths (Rom. 10:9-10). But our confession goes beyond {65} the Messiahship of Jesus, to confessing His deity. This is the meaning of the Greek word *kurios* in this context. The great expositor on Romans, John Murray, writes:

Verse 13 is again confirmation from the Old Testament - Joel 2:32 (3:5 in LXX). This formula, "call upon the name of the Lord" is a characteristic Old Testament way of expressing the worship that is addressed to God and applies specifically to the worship of supplication...

When Paul applies the same to Christ this is another example of the practice of taking Old Testament passages which refer to God without qualification and applying them to Christ. It was the distinguishing mark of New Testament believers that they called upon the name of the Lord Jesus (cf. Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; I. Cor. 1:2; II Tim. 2:22) and therefore accorded to him the worship that belonged to God alone.⁴¹

God will fulfill the covenant destiny of the faithful remnant through Jesus. We might not be certain whom Paul had in mind or the precise turning of Israel to the Lord, but we are certain that the chapter teaches the necessity of a conscious turning to the Savior by Jewish people and the acceptance of His equality with the Father.

The turning of the Jews will result from the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:17) and the object of their faith will be the person of Jesus. Is there any other way to be saved? For if faith "comes by hearing," how is it possible for Israel to be saved without believing? There is no such thing as an unconscious turning to Christ. This is a convenient myth which undermines the integrity of both God and man. Is God like Laban, who made Jacob work for seven years for Rachel, but gave him Leah instead? Does God command the Church to reach the world and offer His grace to "whosoever will," only to pull an eternal switch beyond the grave? It would be tragic-comic to imagine the face of an Orthodox Jew who crosses over, only to discover that Jesus, not Moses or Abraham, was there to usher him into the "world to come." God is not a liar nor was the Apostle Paul confused. There will be a turning of Jews to Jesus, but if this is to be consistent with all of Scripture, it will be a conscious turning of a faithful remnant to the Savior.

2. Denial: The Rejection of Faith

We have been too lenient in making allowances for unbelief among the Jewish people. True, we must be compassionate and take into consideration the multitude of evils perpetrated by Christendom against the Jews. But we must remember that the opposite of faith is not merely a lack of conviction, but rejection and denial. Can a person deny Christ before men and be confessed by Christ before His father in heaven? Isn't everyone who hears the gospel and chooses not to heed it a denier? And if a person refuses to {66} hear and is willfully ignorant (whatever his reason for not listening), is he any less culpable of denial? To say that one cannot hear when one chooses not to listen is a misrepresentation of the way God created the human soul. We do have a choice and we do have a responsibility for that choice. Isn't it true that a refusal to hear, compounded by a refusal to take responsibility, is even more serious than a sin of omission? Isn't it merely a device used to mask denial?

Jesus clearly said, "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 10:33) The ingathering promised in Romans 11 will be an ingathering of Jews who believe in Jesus and have repented of their denial and sin. The fountain of cleansing grace flows only in response to true repentance and faith. We cannot expect God to change His ways to accommodate any people, even His chosen people.

⁴¹ J. Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans PublishingCo., 1968) p. 57.

V. THE RESPONSE OF THE MISSIONS COMMUNITY: REPUDIATION OF THE TWO COVENANT THEORY

The Two Covenant theory excludes the Jewish people from the mission of the Church. Why should Christians evangelize Jewish people if Jews have their own valid way to God outside of Christ? Perhaps we should develop a two-and-a-half covenant theory for Muslims? After all, they accept both the Old and New Covenants!

The Two Covenant theory must be repudiated by all who take the Great Commission seriously. That which may seem only to threaten Jewish evangelism is the nemesis of world evangelization. The missions community does not fully see the danger, as it is innocently cloaked in the benign respectability of Jewish Christian relations. This “not-so-new” theological threat to the unfinished task has primary implications for the evangelization of the Jews, but it will not stop there! For when the Church lacks the conviction that the gospel is the power of salvation to the Jews (Rom, 1:16), the credibility of the gospel to save gentiles is also on the verge of collapse.

Conclusion

Eckstein freely admits what may be termed the “hidden agenda” of Two Covenant theology. For him it is indeed a modern-day doctrine of survival - and evangelism is the supposed threat. He writes: “There are Christian thinkers who have come to affirm the Two Covenant notion, and as a result, have renounced all proselytizing efforts toward the Jews.”⁴²

He explains further:

Jews will, undoubtedly, bid evangelicals to make the theological attempt to adopt some form of the double covenant theory as many {67} liberal Protestants and Catholics have done, and to acknowledge the continuing validity of the divine covenant with the Jewish people.

Jews, in this light, are not in need of adopting Christianity to achieve fulfillment and salvation. They will ask Christians to refrain from missionary efforts toward Jews “until the full number of Gentiles enter in.” (Romans 11:25) Should this prove to be too theologically difficult, they will request that evangelicals regard dialogue as the proper forum in which to “preach the gospel” to Jews and that they abandon the zealous and even cultic techniques often employed in attempts to convert them. For is it not the Christian’s commission simply to testify through words and deeds to the truth of the Christian message while it is the Lord’s prerogative to act upon the individual through the Holy Spirit and possibly bring about his conversion? If this is so, is it not reasonable for Jews to ask evangelicals to fulfill their missionary commission through dialogue, decently and courteously, by model, teaching, and joint cooperation and without the intention of converting them? Certainly Jews will ask responsible evangelicals to be especially alert to evangelizing efforts that involve any sort of manipulation, deception, or excessively aggressive tactics and to refrain from giving moral and financial support to the many Hebrew Christian para-church groups that target Jews for conversion.⁴³

Will evangelicals continue to be lured into the Two Covenant trap? The current President of the National Association of Religious Broadcasters is on the Board of Eckstein’s foundation, which

⁴² Y. Eckstein, *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism* (Waco, TX, 1984) p. 265.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

was started to help Christians understand the Jews. Is the goal of Eckstein's organization to promote the free exchange of ideas, or to gain influence with evangelical leaders and do whatever is possible to counteract Jewish evangelism?

Can there be life outside of the Savior for Jew and gentile? Can there really exist another way to God that bypasses His person and atoning death? If so, then we do not know the same Jesus! More than ever, we must cry aloud with the Apostle Paul, "For me to live is Christ!" (Phil. 1:21) The cornerstone of concern is and should be the person of Christ. For if Christ is the fulfillment of God's covenants with Israel, then there indeed is only one way to the Father for both Jew and gentile - and for the Moslem, the Taoist, the Animist and the Secularist.

Wyschogrod sees the conflict clearly when he writes:

These are some of the questions that go through my mind when I think of Christology in the context of the current Jewish-Christian dialogue. Frankly, I have the feeling that we are witnessing the encounter of the irresistible force with the immovable object. It is difficult for me to see {68} how progress can be made without compromising doctrines essential to each of the faiths.⁴⁴

If only every evangelical viewed the conflict as clearly as Wyschogrod!

The battlefield is not Jewish evangelism, but the person of Christ. Can there be true conversion without Christ? According to the Two Covenant theorists, yes; but according to the Scriptures, no. We must affirm the statements of our Lord Himself regarding His uniqueness (John 14:6). We must add our "amen" to the confession of Peter who, speaking to a large gathering of Jewish people, said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) All we have to give to our despairing world is a Person - a Person who stands willing to make a new and everlasting covenant with individuals from every culture and nation. The person is Jesus and only through His atoning power can Jews and gentiles be saved.

There is a two-fold path described in the Scriptures. One way leads to everlasting life and the other to an eternity of loneliness and condemnation. Our task is to give men and women a choice, to stand out in the cross-section of these two paths warning of the danger and inviting all to enjoy the blessedness of His mercy and grace. The real question is not whether or not there are two or more ways of salvation or whether or not it is possible for a person to be saved by Christ without knowing that it is Christ who saved him. There is the penultimate question that we must keep on asking ourselves and everyone else: *What think ye of Jesus?*

⁴⁴ *Religion & Intellectual Life: The Journal of Associates for Religion and Intellectual Life*, Volume III, No 4, p. 80.

{71} The Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People

An Introduction.

Tormod Engelsviken

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Our Lord and Savior Jesus spent most of His earthly ministry calling upon His own nation to follow Him, proclaiming and demonstrating the coming of the kingdom of God. His disciples were initially sent out to none but the people of Israel. Only following Jesus' death and resurrection were they sent to the gentiles. Even then they first proclaimed the gospel to their fellow Jews and only reluctantly included gentiles who came to faith in Jesus.

The "Apostle to the gentiles," Paul of Tarsus, the Jew who was commissioned by the Lord to bring the gospel to places where the name of Jesus was not known, consistently maintained the missionary principle of going to the Jews first. This practice was not a matter of mere strategic expediency. It was firmly rooted in a theological understanding of Israel's role in God's overall plan of salvation. The gentile Church was not thought of as replacing the people of Israel as God's elect people. On the contrary, God's people now consisted of Jews and gentiles. Gentiles who believed in Christ were like branches from a wild olive, grafted onto the cultivated tree. The tree was Israel.

Paul's anguish because so many of his fellow Jews rejected the salvation offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah opens Romans 9-11 with the heartfelt cry,

My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of brethren, my kinsmen by race. They are Israelites, and to them belong the {72} sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ (Rom. 9:1-5).

He goes on, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved ... for Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be saved" (Rom. 10:1,4).

The little group of men and women who gathered in Willowbank, Bermuda, on April 26-29, 1989, and which produced the "Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People" stand in the same tradition. They believe in Jesus as the Messiah and the only Savior, and they share a love, gratitude and a respect for the Jewish people and its heritage. They are also partners to Paul's aching concern for Israel's salvation through faith in Jesus. They see no contradiction between a love and respect for the Jewish people and a longing for them to turn to Jesus.

Obviously, the Willowbank Declaration was framed in a very different context from that of the New Testament. They are separated by almost 2000 years of history largely characterized by tragedy and atrocities directed against the Jews. Much of what has been done in the name of Christ

in no way deserves to be called Christian. It is rather an expression of antichristian sentiments and attitudes. To be anti-Semitic is to be antichristian.

They see no contradiction between a love and respect for the Jewish people and a longing for them to turn to Jesus.

The Willowbank Declaration also belongs to the new phase of Jewish Christian relations entered into after World War II. The background for this change is twofold: the climactic expression of anti-Semitism evidenced in the Holocaust, and the establishment of the state of Israel. It has led to the development of a Jewish-Christian dialogue involving the Roman Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches and other Christian bodies.

The Jewish starting point for this dialogue is not theological. The basis was laid when the general secretary of the World Jewish Congress, Gerhart M. Riegner, and the secretary of the World Council of Churches, W. Visser't Hooft, before and during the war cooperated in order to save Jews from Nazi persecution.

{73} The determining desire motivating official Jewish-Christian dialogue has been to focus on those elements of Christian theology and practice which Jews have come to consider most threatening, such as the Jewish role in the course of Jesus' trial. The church's support of Israel's struggle for existence. The church's attitude to Jewish mission. (See the instructive article by Oskar Skarsaune in "Judendom och kristendom under de forsta arhundradena," Oslo 1986, pp. 37-51; Nostra Aetate of the Second Vatican Council, 1965; "The Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue" approved by the WCC Executive Committee in 1982.)

The main issue of debate is the question of Jewish mission. While the first WCC documents assumed the duty of the Church to bear Christian witness to the Jewish people (Amsterdam, 1948), the Bristol document of 1967 (The Church and the Jewish People, the WCC Commission on Faith and Order and the WCC Committee on the Church and the Jewish People states that there is more than one view concerning Christian witness to the Jews.

The more traditional view prefers "to stress that beside service to the Jews it is also legitimate and even necessary to witness in a more explicit way as well, be it through individuals, or special societies, or churches."

The other view chooses to "regard the Church and the Jewish people together as forming the one people of God, separated from one another for the time being, yet with the promise that they will ultimately become one. Those who follow this line of thinking would say that the Church should consider her attitude towards the Jews theologically and in principle as being different from the attitude she has to all other men who do not believe in Christ. It should be thought of more in terms of ecumenical engagement in order to heal the breach than of missionary witness in which she hopes for conversion" (cf. H. Croner (ed.): Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations, 1977, p.81).

The latter view assures that after Christ, the people of God is made up of two parts. The one part is the Church, which acknowledges Christ; the other is Israel, which rejects Him but which in spite of their rejection remain specially loved by God. This is the notion of "two ways of faith" of "two covenants," which both lead to the same end, and - it is important to note - render missionary witness superfluous, even unethical.

The view, which denies that the evangelization of the Jewish people is an obligation for the Church today, has been gaining acceptance in increasingly wider circles worldwide.

{74} The consultation which produced the Willowbank Declaration was convened in an effort to address this situation and speak a word on behalf of evangelical Christians to the Church today on this vital issue.

The necessity and urgency of such a declaration are underscored by the fact that Jewish mission is increasingly rejected by groups who regard themselves as evangelical and who hold to a form of Christian Zionism. They believe that there is salvation in no other name but that of Jesus. They are further convinced that the Great Commission is a commission for Jews to evangelize gentiles, but not vice versa. God himself is responsible for the eventual and certain conversion of the Jewish people. It is therefore both futile and contrary to God's will to engage in Christian mission to the Jews today.

A retreat from the obligation, which binds all Christians to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with Jews and gentiles alike, invalidates the dedicated work of Messianic Jews to win their fellow Jews for Jesus. They are therefore often accused of deception and of disloyalty to their Jewish identity. It is a major concern of the Willowbank Declaration to affirm the existence and the ministry of Messianic Jews; their right to be Jews with all that such a 'being' may involve; and their right and duty to witness to their own people. The Declaration is therefore a statement of support for the Jewish Christian community in the name of the gentile members of the universal Christian Church.

Having considered some aspects of the context in which the participants met, let us take a look at the consultation itself: The consultation was sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship and supported by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, the two major world bodies representing the Evangelical wing of Christendom. The rather small group of participants representing these bodies were drawn from different continents, cultures and denominational traditions. They spent four days in the study of the Bible, listening to papers, discussing and praying together. The topic was approached from five different angles: biblical, theological, historical, psychological and missiological.

The biblical material was covered by Henri Blocher and David Lim (who was not able to be present but whose paper was read), the theological by Bong Ro (who was also not present) and Sunand Sumithra. A survey of historical attitudes towards the evangelization of the Jewish people was given by Robert Godfrey (from the Early Church to the Puritan Movement) and Tormod Engelsviken (from 1700 to modern times). The psychological and sociological barriers to Jewish evangelism were discussed by Murdo MacLeod and Vernon Grounds (who also served as chairman of the {75} consultation), while the missiological questions were dealt with by Arthur Glasser and Ole Chr. Kvarme.

Also present were Tokenboh Adeyemo, Gretchen Gaebelein Hull and Kenneth Kantzer who contributed to the discussions and to the closing Declaration. The distinguished theologian, James I. Packer, wrote the original draft for the Declaration and saw it through to its completion.

The Willowbank Declaration speaks for itself. The form of the Declaration, however, is a bit unusual. It consists 1) of a preamble acknowledging the Church's immense debt to the Jewish people and its resolve to uphold their rights in both Israel and throughout the world; and 2) a pledge to resist every form of anti-Semitism. It further describes the setting which renders such a Declaration necessary.

The Willowbank Declaration (affirms) the existence and the ministry of Messianic Jews; (and) their right to be Jews with all that such a 'being' may involve.

The bulk of the Declaration consists of 27 affirmations and denials divided into five sections. This form was chosen in an attempt to speak clearly and frankly. It is not - I believe - an expression of

insensitivity or arrogance, but an effort to confess Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord of all men, and to draw the necessary scriptural consequences from that position vis-a-vis Jewish evangelism and Christian relationship to the Jewish people.

Leaders of the Jewish community, especially in the United States reacted to the Willowbank Declaration in strongly negative terms. Rabbi A. James Rudin, National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee, has charged that the statement is “shot through with the ancient Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism,” and therefore represents “the worst kind of religious imperialism.” It is a “theological assault upon the integrity of Jews and Judaism throughout the world.” The Declaration was also called a “blueprint for spiritual genocide.” Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, called the statement “retrograde and primitive. A desperate attempt to stop the clock of progress in interreligious relations.”

In spite of these strong reactions - whose justification the reader is invited to judge for himself - the Hebrew Christian community has welcomed the Declaration and given it its support.

{76} Some evangelical leaders have also criticized the Declaration on the grounds that some of its offensiveness to Jews could have been alleviated. Alan Johnston of Wheaton College says that “the one-sided focus on the evangelization of Jews conveys the false impression that evangelicals consider them objects of conversion only.” (Cf. Christianity Today, Sept. 22, 1989, p.48.)

At “Lausanne II in Manila,” the Consultation on World Evangelization arranged by the Lausanne Movement last summer, the basic thrust of the Declaration received strong support in the “Manila Manifesto,” which devoted a paragraph to the question of the two-covenant theology. It may be appropriate to quote the Manifesto in full:

It is sometimes held that in virtue of God’s covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ, to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to the Jew first ... We therefore reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary.

The Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People, and the Manila Manifesto have both served to clarify the evangelical position on Jewish evangelism. Whether this position is in accordance with the Scriptures is a matter left for each individual to judge for himself.

The Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People

“The Gospel is the power of God for salvation, to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” (Romans 10:1)

PREAMBLE

Every Christian must acknowledge an immense debt of gratitude to the Jewish people. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the long-promised Jewish Messiah, who by his life, death and resurrection saves from sin and all its consequences. Those who worship Jesus as their Divine Lord and Savior have thus received God’s most precious gift {77} through the Jewish people. Therefore they have compelling reason to show love to that people in every possible way.

Concerned about humanity everywhere, we are resolved to uphold the right of Jewish people to a just and peaceful existence everywhere, both in the land of Israel and in their communities throughout the world. We repudiate past persecutions of Jews by those identified as Christians, and we pledge ourselves to resist every form of anti-Semitism. As the supreme way of demonstrating love, we seek to encourage the Jewish people, along with all other peoples, to receive God's gift of life through Jesus the Messiah, and accordingly the growing number of Jewish Christians brings us great joy.

In making this Declaration we stand in a long and revered Christian tradition, which in 1980 was highlighted by a landmark statement, "Christian Witness to the Jewish People," issued by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. Now, at this Willowbank Consultation on the Gospel and the Jewish People, sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship and supported by the Lausanne Committee, we reaffirm our commitment to the Jewish people and our desire to share the Gospel with them.

This Declaration is made in response to growing doubts and widespread confusion among Christians about the need for, and the propriety of, endeavors to share faith in Jesus Christ with Jewish people. Several factors unite to produce the uncertain state of mind that the Declaration seeks to resolve.

The holocaust, perpetrated as it was by leaders and citizens of a supposedly "Christian nation," has led to a sense in some quarters that Christian credibility among Jews has been totally destroyed. Accordingly, some have shrunk back from addressing the Jewish people with the Gospel.

Some who see the creation of the state of Israel as a direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy have concluded that the Christian task at this time is to "comfort Israel" by supporting this new political entity, rather than to challenge Jews by direct evangelism.

Some church leaders have retreated from embracing the task of evangelizing Jews as a responsibility of Christian mission. Rather, a new theology is being embraced which holds that God's covenant with Israel through Abraham establishes all Jews in God's favor for all times, and so makes faith in Jesus Christ for salvation needless so far as they are concerned.

{78} On this basis, it is argued that dialogue with Jews in order to understand each other better, and cooperation in the quest for socio-economic shalom, is all that Christian mission requires in relation to the Jewish people. Continued attempts to do what the Church has done from the first, in seeking to win Jews to Jesus as Messiah, are widely opposed and decried by Christian as well as Jewish leaders.

Attempts to bring Jews to faith in Jesus are frequently denounced as proselytizing. This term is often used to imply dishonest and coercive modes of inducement, appeal to unworthy motives, and disregard of the question of truth even though it is truth that is being disseminated.

In recent years, "messianic" Jewish believers in Jesus, who as Christians celebrate and maximize their Jewish identity, have emerged as active evangelists to the Jewish community. Jewish leaders often accused them of deception on the grounds that one cannot be both a Jew and a Christian. While these criticisms may reflect Judaism's current effort to define itself as a distinct religion in opposition to Christianity, they have led to much bewilderment and some misunderstanding and mistrust.

The Declaration responds to this complex situation and seeks to set directions for the future according to the Scriptures.

I. THE DEMAND OF THE GOSPEL

ARTICLE I. 1

WE AFFIRM THAT the redeeming love of God has been fully and finally revealed in Jesus Christ.

WE DENY THAT those without faith in Christ know the full reality of God's love and of the gift that he gives.

ARTICLE I. 2

WE AFFIRM THAT the God-given types, prophecies and visions of salvation and shalom in the Hebrew Scriptures find their present and future fulfillment in and through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who by incarnation became a Jew and was shown to be the Son of God and Messiah by his resurrection.

WE DENY THAT it is right to look for a Messiah who has not yet appeared in world history.

ARTICLE I. 3

WE AFFIRM THAT Jesus Christ is the second person of the one God, who became a man, lived a perfect life, shed his blood on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for human sins, rose bodily from the dead, now reigns as Lord, and {79} will return visibly to this earth, all to fulfill the purpose of bringing sinners to share eternally in his fellowship and glory.

WE DENY THAT those who think of Jesus Christ in lesser terms than these have faith in him in any adequate sense.

ARTICLE I. 4

WE AFFIRM THAT all human beings are sinful by nature and practice, and stand condemned, helpless and hopeless, before God, until the grace of Christ touches their lives and brings them to God's pardon and peace.

WE DENY THAT any Jew or Gentile finds true peace with God through performing works of law.

ARTICLE I. 5

WE AFFIRM THAT God's forgiveness of the penitent rests on the satisfaction rendered to his justice by the substitution sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

WE DENY THAT any person can enjoy God's favor apart from the mediation of Jesus Christ, the sin-bearer.

ARTICLE I. 6

WE AFFIRM THAT those who turn to Jesus Christ find him to be a sufficient Savior and Deliverer from all the evil of sin: from its guilt, shame, power, and perversity; from blind defiance of God, debasement of moral character, and the dehumanizing and destructive self-assertion that sin breeds.

WE DENY THAT the salvation found in Christ may be supplemented in any way.

ARTICLE I. 7

WE AFFIRM THAT faith in Jesus Christ is humanity's only way to come to know the Creator as Father, according to Christ's own Word: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

WE DENY THAT any non-Christian faith, as such, will mediate eternal life with God.

II. THE CHURCH OF JEWS AND GENTILES

ARTICLE II. 8

WE AFFIRM THAT through the mediation of Jesus Christ, God has made a new covenant with Jewish and Gentile believers, pardoning their sins, writing his law on their hearts by his Spirit, so that they obey him, giving the Holy Spirit to indwell them, and bringing each one to know him by faith in a relationship of trustful gratitude for salvation.

{80} WE DENY THAT the blessings of the New Covenant belong to any except believers in Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE II. 9

WE AFFIRM THAT the profession of continuing Jewish identity, for which Hebrew Christians have in the past suffered at the hands of both their fellow-Jews and Gentile church leaders, was consistent with the Christian Scriptures and with the nature of the church as one body in Jesus Christ in which Jews and non-Jews are united.

WE DENY THAT it is necessary for Jewish Christians to repudiate their Jewish heritage.

ARTICLE II. 10

WE AFFIRM THAT Gentile believers, who at present constitute the great bulk of the Christian church, are included in the historically continuous community of believing people on earth which Paul pictures as God's olive tree. (Romans 11:13-24)

WE DENY THAT Christian faith is necessarily non-Jewish, and that Gentiles who believe in Christ may ignore their solidarity with believing Jews, or formulate their new identity in Christ without reference to a Jewishness, or decline to receive the Hebrew Scriptures as part of their own instruction from God, or refuse to see themselves as having their roots in Jewish history.

ARTICLE II. 11

WE AFFIRM THAT Jewish people who come to faith in Messiah have liberty before God to observe or not observe traditional Jewish customs and ceremonies that are consistent with the Christian Scriptures and do not hinder fellowship with the rest of the Body of Christ.

WE DENY THAT any inconsistency or deception is involved by Jewish Christians representing themselves as "Messianic" or "completed" or "fulfilled" Jews.

III. GOD'S PLAN FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE

ARTICLE III. 12

WE AFFIRM THAT Jewish people have an ongoing part in God's plan.

WE DENY THAT indifference to the future of the Jewish people on the part of Christians can ever be justified.

ARTICLE III. 13

WE AFFIRM THAT prior to the coming of Christ it was Israel's unique privilege to enjoy a corporate covenantal relationship with God, following {81} upon the national redemption from slavery, and involving God's gift of the law and of a theocratic culture; God's promise of blessing to faithful obedience; and God's provision of atonement for transgression.

WE AFFIRM THAT within this covenant relationship, God's pardon and acceptance of the penitent which was linked to the offering of prescribed sacrifices rested upon the fore-ordained sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

WE DENY THAT covenantal privilege alone can ever bring salvation to impenitent unbelievers.

ARTICLE III. 14

WE AFFIRM THAT much of Judaism, in its various forms, throughout contemporary Israel and today's Diaspora, is a development out of, rather than as an authentic embodiment of, the faith, love and hope that the Hebrew Scriptures teach.

WE DENY THAT modern Judaism with its explicit negation of the divine person, work, and Messiah-ship of Jesus Christ contains within itself true knowledge of God's salvation.

ARTICLE III. 15

WE AFFIRM THAT the biblical hope for Jewish people centers on their being restored through faith in Christ to their proper place as branches of God's olive tree from which they are at present broken off.

WE DENY THAT the historical status of the Jews as God's people brings salvation to any Jew who does not accept the claims of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE III. 16

WE AFFIRM THAT the Bible promises that large numbers of Jews will turn to Christ through God's sovereign grace.

WE DENY THAT this prospect renders needless the active proclamation of the gospel to Jewish people in this and every age.

ARTICLE III. 17

WE AFFIRM THAT anti-Semitism on the part of professed Christians has always been wicked and shameful and that the church has in the past been much to blame for tolerating and encouraging it and for condoning anti-Jewish actions on the part of individuals and governments.

WE DENY THAT these past failures, for which offending Gentile believers must ask forgiveness from both God and the Jewish community, rob Christians of the right or lessen their responsibility to share the gospel with Jews today and for the future.

{82} ARTICLE III. 18

WE AFFIRM THAT it was the sins of the whole human race that sent Christ to the cross.

WE DENY THAT it is right to single out the Jewish people for putting Jesus to death.

IV. EVANGELISM AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

ARTICLE IV. 19

WE AFFIRM THAT sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with lost humanity is a matter of prime obligation for Christian people, both because the Messiah commands the making of disciples and because love of neighbor requires effort to meet our neighbor's deepest need.

WE DENY THAT any other form of witness and service to others can excuse Christians from laboring to bring them to faith in Christ.

ARTICLE IV. 20

WE AFFIRM THAT the church's obligation to share saving knowledge of Christ with the whole human race includes the evangelizing of Jewish people as a priority: "to the Jew first." (Romans 1:16)

WE DENY THAT dialogue with Jewish people that aims at nothing more than mutual understanding constitutes fulfillment of this obligation.

ARTICLE IV. 21

WE AFFIRM THAT the concern to point Jewish people to faith in Jesus Christ, which the Christian church has historically felt and shown, was right.

WE DENY THAT there is any truth in the widespread notion that evangelizing Jews is needless because they are already in covenant with God through Abraham and Moses and so are already saved despite their rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

ARTICLE IV. 22

WE AFFIRM THAT all endeavors to persuade others to become Christians should express love to them by respecting their dignity and integrity at every point, including parents' responsibility in the case of their children.

WE DENY THAT coercive or deceptive proselytizing, which violates dignity and integrity on both sides, can ever be justified.

ARTICLE IV. 23

WE AFFIRM THAT it is unchristian, unloving, and discriminatory, to propose a moratorium on the evangelizing of any part of the human race, and {83} that failure to preach the Gospel to the Jewish people would be a form of anti-Semitism, depriving this particular community of its right to hear the Gospel.

WE DENY THAT we have sufficient warrant to assume or anticipate the salvation of anyone, who is not a believer in Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE N. 24

WE AFFIRM THAT the existence of separate churchly organizations for evangelizing Jews, as for evangelizing any other particular human group, can be justified pragmatically, as an appropriate means of fulfilling the church's mandate to take the Gospel to the whole human race.

WE DENY THAT the depth of human spiritual need varies from group to group so that Jewish people may be thought to need Christ either more or less than others.

V. JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

ARTICLE V. 25

WE AFFIRM THAT dialogue with other faiths that seeks to transcend stereotypes of them based on ignorance, and to find common ground and to share common concerns, is an expression of Christian love that should be encouraged.

WE DENY THAT dialogue that explains the Christian faith without seeking to persuade the dialogue partners of its truth and claims is a sufficient expression of Christian love.

ARTICLE V. 26

WE AFFIRM THAT for Christians and non-Christian Jews to make common cause in social witness and action, contending together for freedom of speech and religion, the value of the individual, and the moral standards of God's law is right and good.

WE DENY THAT such limited cooperation involves any compromise of the distinctive views of either community or imposes any restraint upon Christians in seeking to share the Gospel with the Jews with whom they cooperate.

ARTICLE V. 27

WE AFFIRM THAT the Jewish quest for a homeland with secure borders and a just peace has our support.

WE DENY THAT any biblical link between the Jewish people and the land of Israel justifies actions that contradict biblical ethics and constitute oppression of people-groups or individuals.

{84} This Declaration was developed and adopted on April 29, 1989 by all those present at the Consultation on the Gospel and the Jewish People after several days of intense consultation, undergirded by prayer. Together, the participants commend this document to the churches with a call to prayerfully consider and act upon these very serious matters as touching the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People.

Dr. Vernon Grounds, (Chairman) U.S.A.; Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, KENYA; Dr. Henri Blocher, FRANCE; Dr. Tormod Engelsviken, NORWAY; Dr. Arthur Glasser, U.S.A.; Dr. Robert Godfrey, U.S.A.; Mrs. Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, U.S.A.; Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, U.S.A.; Rev. Ole Chr. Kvarme, NORWAY; Dr. David Lim, PHILLIPINES; Rev. Murdo MacLeod, ENGLAND; Dr. J. I. Packer, CANADA; Dr. Bong Ro, R.O.C.; Dr. Sunand Sumithra, INDIA; Dr. David Wells, U.S.A.; Tuvya Zaretsky, U.S.A.; SPONSOR: WORLD EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP, SINGAPORE/WHEATON, IL., U.S.A.

{85} From the Manila Manifesto of the 2nd Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism, July, 1989

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

We are called to proclaim Christ in an increasingly pluralistic world. There is a resurgence of old faiths and a rise of new ones. In the 1st century too there were ‘many gods and many lords’ (1. Cor. 8:5). Yet the apostles boldly affirmed the uniqueness, indispensability and centrality of Christ. We must do the same.

Because men and women are made in God’s image and see in the creation traces of its Creator, the religions which have arisen do sometimes contain elements of truth and beauty. They are not, however, alternative gospels. Because human beings are sinful, and because ‘the whole world is under the control of the evil one’ (1. Jn. 5:19), even religious people are in need of Christ’s redemption. We, therefore, have no warrant for saying that salvation can be found outside Christ or apart from an explicit acceptance of his work through faith.

It is sometimes held that in virtue of God’s covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ, to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to “the Jew first...” We therefore reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary.

{86} Resolution of the USA branch of Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism re. the ‘Christian Identity’ movement, April, 1989

Whereas, there is a proliferation of racism and Jew-hatred in our world today, and

Whereas, this evil is perpetrated by individuals and groups that are part of the “Christian Identity”-Movement, and

Whereas, the “Christian Identity”-Movement promulgates the error of the inherent superiority of the white Anglo-Saxon Aryan race and the inferiority of all others, and

Whereas, the “Christian Identity”-Movement defines itself as the true Israelites and views the Jewish people as accursed, and

Whereas, the “Christian Identity”-Movement dishonors the Person of Jesus the Messiah by its erroneous theological justification for racial bigotry, and

Whereas, the “Christian Identity”-Movement is fostering the same attitudes and actions that existed in pre-Hitler Germany that led to the genocide of 6,000,000 Jews

Be it resolved, that the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism of North America calls upon all genuine Christians everywhere to:

1. Be alert to the presence and danger of the “Christian Identity”-Movement, and
2. Affirm God’s everlasting love for the Jewish people, and

3. Take an active stand against this insidious form of anti-Semitism, and
4. Pray that God would bring glory to Himself despite this distortion, that these deceived people would come to a correct understanding of God's Word, and for the protection of the Jewish people, and
5. Share the love of God manifested in Jesus the Messiah with both Jews and Gentiles.

{87} Judaism and the Origins of Christianity

David Flusser

Magnes Press, Jerusalem 1988; XXVIII and 725 pp.(DM 156)

Reviewed by Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, Professor, Head of Department of Comparative Religions, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

“I did not reach India as a kind of new Sinbad,” claims Flusser in “Abraham and the Upanishads,” the last of the 41 pieces which make up this voluminous and truly impressive book. The reader, however, may beg to disagree. Making one’s way through the book, one often feels that the author shows no less an adventurous mind than the famed seaman. Indeed, the search for Christian origins, which Flusser put on a new setting in the last generation, is a very risky one, because of 2000 years of prejudice, hatred and their terrible consequences for the Jews.

Flusser is a scholar, not an apologetic. Each of these studies (about a third of which are new) offers a fresh approach and presents a new solution, to scientific problems. He does not seek to blur the traces of his own vantage point: that of a 20th century Jew carrying in his flesh and mind the wounds of his people’s passion. Like his hero, Erasmus, Flusser believes that sound scholarship removes obstacles between people and that knowledge can only induce reciprocal respect and recognition. In other words, Flusser’s belief is that of a true humanist. This belief, not altogether different from his religious faith, provides the strongest drive to his work.

The book, which features many now classic seminal articles (for instance “The Dead Sea Sect and pre-Pauline Christianity,” “Salvation Present and Future,” or “A New Sensitivity in Judaism and the Christian Message”) also includes studies published since the early 1950’s, and which seem to this reviewer not to have been sufficiently valued by international scholarship. It is hoped that their re-publication in this volume will at last accord Flusser’s research the attention it deserves.

The book is divided into three parts: The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic, and Ancient Judaism and Christianity. To be sure, these distinctions are bound to be somewhat artificial, and the {88} various articles repetitive. But Flusser has here provided the reader with multiple cross-references and additional notes not available elsewhere in those of his works republished in this volume. The three parts well reflect Flusser’s poles of interest in the field: He began his research as the Dead Sea Scrolls were becoming available to scholars, and has since made full use of them. Through the years, his interest in the Jewish literature from the 2nd Commonwealth and the rabbinic period grew.

The wealth and depth of his detailed analyses of many texts and traditions from various backgrounds and in many languages has afforded him a larger scope of reflection on the nature of early Christianity and its complex relationship with Judaism.

To present Flusser’s Ansatz in a nutshell, one could state, with him, that nothing but a precise knowledge of Judaism can permit an understanding of the true nature of early Christianity. Flusser thinks, rightly, that scholars too often pay mere lip service to this indubitable truth. One might add that a careful study of early Christianity will, of necessity, sharpen our appreciation of Judaism, both that of the Rabbis and that of the sects and movements of the late 2nd Commonwealth.

A major heuristic principle of Flusser’s research is that rabbinic texts and traditions edited in the first Christian centuries are often directly pertinent for the knowledge of early Jewish thought and concepts echoed in the New Testament. Both the personality and the message of Jesus can be properly understood only within the framework of the Palestinian Judaism of his time. An immediate implication is that the

relationship between Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity should be described as between sister religions. The more common filial metaphor is misleading because it does not recognize the major transformation which the religion of Israel underwent around the time of Christianity's birth.

Among the many qualities that Flusser brings to his reading of the texts, the first are his intuition and sharp literary sense. His impressive erudition in many fields and cultures comes next. Flusser knows that texts reflect - and often alter - a reality that is existential in its core. But religion is by no means restricted to the faith of the individual and his (or her) relationship to God. Flusser is sensitive to the social and political aspects and implications of religious beliefs. This sensitivity permits him to offer complex analyses of the various ways in which the many trends and sects of Judaism during the 2nd Commonwealth {89} influenced layers of early Christianity.

Essene, apocalyptic, Pharisaic and Hassidic trends should be taken into account. Flusser's description of the subtle interplay between these is altogether convincing, although the Jewish roots of Gnosticism (which Flusser does not deny) should be more pronouncedly insisted upon, as early Christianity cannot be properly understood without the concomitant emergence of Gnosticism. For instance: Flusser distinguishes, convincingly to my mind, between the different roots of Jesus' teaching. While his basic ethical doctrines stem from Pharisaic stock, his social approach cannot be understood without taking Essene influences into account. Another aspect of his thought stems from Jewish Apocalyptic. While Flusser states no aspect of Jesus' teaching "would have caused His hearers to suspect Him of heresy," he does not by any means minimize Jesus' originality. Another good example of such discrimination can be found in the study on "Hillel's self-awareness and Jesus."

While Flusser recognizes the anti-Jewish passages in the New Testament for what they are, he insists - and establishes this claim on the grounds of evidence - that early Christianity shows a pattern of progressive Judaisation, and that the mounting anti-Judaism is directly related to this pattern. Whether Christianity can, or should, reform itself today in order to become a humane religion, as Flusser claims (p. 644), is a question which must remain outside the bounds of this review. What can be said is that the originality and depth of Flusser's studies should make an impact on the Christian study of Christian origins.

{90} Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith

Marvin Wilson

Eerdmans/Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1989; xxi, 374 pp., softback.

Reviewed by Jim R. Sibley, Worker of Baptist Convention in Israel.

Marvin R. Wilson is a prominent evangelical author who is well qualified to write on this important topic. *Our Father Abraham* seems to be, in fact, an expansion of the author's previous article, "Hebrew Thought in the Life of the Church" (in *The Living and Active Word of God*, ed. M. Inch and S. J. Schultz. Winona Lake, Indiana: 1983. pp. 123-135). Beginning with the basic premise that "the roots of Christianity run deep into Hebrew soil" (back cover), this book is intended to be "an exposition of what it means for today's Church to be part of Abraham's spiritual family." (p. xvi) Wilson is professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts; he has long been active in Jewish/ Christian dialogue; and he has been a prominent spokesman on Jewish/ Christian relations. His voice is one which must not be ignored.

Wilson's work is extremely readable and well presented. Its content is informative and relevant, and it is comprehensive in scope. He divides his material, which is written primarily for gentile, evangelical Christians, into five sections.

Part I begins by outlining the Jewish roots of the Church and the "de-Judaisation" which followed. This de-Judaisation is picked up in Part II and traced through the intervening centuries. What began as a Jewish movement, gradually succumbed to de-Judaisation, then to anti Judaism and, finally, to anti-Semitism. Part III affords an incisive analysis of the impoverishment of the Church, which came about as a result of this estrangement. Part IV contains selected studies of specific ways in which the Church is significantly, though unconsciously, influenced by her Hebrew heritage. Finally, Part V points to some practical ways that Christians can recover this heritage and establish productive relationships with today's Jewish community. Wilson wants Christians to reach out with humility and perseverance to Jews "through interfaith dialogue, {91} educational activities and social action" (p. 324). These three headings actually describe a new agenda which the Church is to adopt vis-a-vis Israel.

In spite of the fact that this reviewer finds some of Wilson's views to be disturbing, the author shows his familiarity with each of these areas of discussion and consistently stresses the relevance and, indeed, the absolute necessity of recovering our "Jewishness." To this goal and its relevance we can only give hearty affirmation.

Our Father Abraham was written to be used as a textbook (cf. p. xv-xvi). In this regard, it is gratifying to see the full and well-organized table of contents, a pronunciation key for transliterated Hebrew words, footnotes at the bottom of the pages, and the very helpful study and discussion questions at the end of each chapter. The book is also very well-indexed, with indices of biblical texts, rabbinic literature, other early extra biblical literature, authors, subjects, and indices of Hebrew and Greek words. He also has included a nine page "selective bibliography." While it is necessarily "selective," there are some significant and unfortunate omissions.

These deficiencies fall under two broad headings: 1) books by and about Jews who have recognized and embraced Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer, and 2) books which deal with the relevant history and historical sources. As to the former, there are many fine books from which to make a selection - the books by David Baron, David Cooper, Daniel Fuchs, Jacob Gartenhaus, Mitch and Zahava Glaser, Phillip Goble, Moishe

and Ceil Rosen, and Adolph Saphir, to name but a sampling. Daniel Juster's *Jewish Roots* was included by Wilson, but should be balanced by the very different perspective of Arnold Fruchtenbaum's work, *Hebrew Christianity*. Since Wilson refers to "this olive tree connection with Israel" (p. 15), it is surprising that John Fischer's book, *The Olive Tree Connection*, was not mentioned. Finally, there have been several books by evangelical authors for the purpose of helping gentile Christians to enter into a Jewish mindset. Notable in this regard is Martha Zimmerman's *Celebrate the Feasts*. At the very least, it would certainly seem that Jewish believers would have something of significance to say about the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

Since Wilson's conclusions seem to rely so heavily on historical considerations, his bibliography needs strengthening here as well. As an introduction to the historical sources, he includes Strack's *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, which was written in 1887 and was revised in 1924, but not Bowker's *Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (1969). Neither did he include George W. E. Nickelsburg's *Jewish Literature {92} Between the Bible and the Mishna or Faith and Piety in Early Judaism* (which Nickelsburg co-authored with Michael E. Stone). He has noted only one volume (#2, by Safrai and Stone) of the five currently available in the *Compendia Rerum Iudicarum ad Novum Testamentum*.

Since Pharisaism formed Jesus' teaching (pp. 40, 92); was bound up in Paul's lineage (p. 43), education and teaching (p. 126); gave rise to Rabbinic Judaism (p. 88); and was influential in the early Church (p. 52), it is surprising that there is not a single monograph on the Pharisees to be found in the bibliography. Also, in dealing with the early history of the Christian faith, Wilson would have been well served by Ray Pritz' *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*. These bibliographic deficiencies, unfortunately, are reflected in the warp and woof of the book itself.

In analyzing the content of *Our Father Abraham*, there are several major issues which confront the reader. This reviewer has identified four which merit a response.

Problem 1: Wilson fails to distinguish sufficiently between biblical Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism. This failure leads inevitably to a confusion of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, to a misunderstanding of Jews who profess faith in Jesus, and to a deprecation of Jewish evangelism. The observation of Jakob Jocz still holds true:

*Jews have persuaded Christian writers of two things: first, that there is a direct and unbroken line of development between the Old Testament and later rabbinism; and, second, that Pharisaic Judaism was the religion in which Jesus was reared and which prevailed at the time of the New Testament. Seen in that perspective, Christianity is the wayward daughter of the synagogue and ought to be led back to its source. Granted that understanding, there can be no "common ground." ("Difficulties in Jewish-Christian Dialogue" in *The Messiahship of Jesus*, ed., A. W. Kac; p. 89)*

Rabbinic Judaism is not validated by claims that it predates faith in Jesus. Furthermore, although both the New Testament and the Mishna originated in the pluralistic milieu and theological ferment of Judaism in the Second Temple period (e.g., Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc.), Rabbinic Judaism actually began to crystallize following the destruction of the Temple, and in large measure was a reaction against Jesus and His followers. Therefore, the Jewish roots of Christian faith are to be sought in biblical, not Rabbinic, Judaism. Of course, Christians, nevertheless, are obligated to demonstrate both respect and love to the adherents of Rabbinism.

{93} Although there are no direct citations indicating literary dependence on Marcus Barth at this point, Wilson apparently has been greatly influenced by his book *The People of God*. Here, Barth

argues for a development in Paul's thought which moves from a rather hastily taken position in Galatians 4, through a more mature understanding expressed in Romans 9-11, and culminating in the single people of God, found in Ephesians 2. Neither Barth nor Wilson understand this "People of God" to be composed of only those Jews and gentiles who have trusted in the atoning work of Jesus, but of ethnic Israel into which Christians have been grafted. This position appears to this reviewer to be incompatible with evangelical faith.

Problem 2: Wilson's historical survey is fatally flawed by his inadequate treatment of the *Birkat HaMinim*. If he is to argue successfully that the "Curse of the Heretics" was not specifically formulated for use against the early Jewish believers in Jesus, he must answer the arguments and evidence of books, such as Jakob Jocz' *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*. For example, Wilson says on p. 68, "It is very significant that *notzrim* (Christians) appears only in the two Genizah versions of the *Birkat HaMinim*..." But Jocz cites others and offers a full discussion of the issues involved in the literary history of the text (cf. pp. 51-57). In fact, Wilson's chapter (5) on "Heretics and the Synagogue" is totally unsatisfactory. It is not based on solid evidence or argumentation, and is thus both prejudiced and tendentious. Even if the final separation of Church and synagogue was a lengthy process [e.g., cf. "Jews and Christians in a Roman World," Eric Meyers and L. Michael White, *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (March - April, 1989): pp. 26-33], this does not mean that the rabbinic authorities were not attempting to bring about a division at an earlier time.

Wilson tries to maintain that persecution of Messianic Jews prior to the First Jewish Revolt was limited to "acts of mob violence rather than official persecution" because "there is not one clear case of the Jewish religious leadership having a judicial execution of a Christian solely for religious purposes" (p. 59). Is persecution to be seen only in carefully delimited terms of executions? Could one imagine a white pastor in the southern United States in the mid-1960's claiming that any racial discrimination on his part had been a purely personal matter and not in his capacity as a pastor because, as a pastor, he had not been convicted in a court of law of the first-degree murder of a single Negro for solely racial reasons?! The evidence from the book of Acts, as cited (but just as quickly and cavalierly disregarded) by Wilson, amply refutes his own contention.

{94} Problem 3: Wilson accepts uncritically Pinchas Lapide's denial that Judaism teaches salvation on the basis of good deeds. It is inconceivable that Wilson says (p. 21), "Judaism does not teach that participation in the *olam ha-ba*, 'the coming world,' is achieved by works, but through the gratuitous mercy of God." Evidence to the contrary could be multiplied, but consider the following:

1. Maimonides said, in a letter to Rabbi Hisdai Halevi, "There is no doubt about the matter, that whoever has perfected himself with good attributes of behavior and with sound principles of belief in the Creator, praised be He, is among those destined to have a share in the world to come." [Quoted in *Issues in the Jewish Christian Dialogue*, ed., H. Croner and L. Klenicki. New York: Paulist Press, 1979, p. 98)

2. "Man must redeem himself from sin not by faith alone, but by repentance and good works [emphasis in the original]; then God will redeem him from death and Satan ... Each man is responsible for himself, and through his good deeds he must find atonement for his sins ... Numberless times the Talmud returns to the idea that redemption depends on repentance and good works." [Joseph Klausner (trans. by W.F.F. Stinespring), *The Messianic Idea In Israel*. New York: Macmillan, 1955. pp. 530-531)

3. "Virtually every aspect of 'good works' is mentioned as a means of atonement. e.g., 'Now that there are no sacrifices, a man's table acts as an atonement' (Ber. 58a); 'acts of kindness bring atonement' (R. H. 18a); 'Charity brings atonement (Bava Batra 9a), and 'good works avert the evil decree' (Taan. 16a)." [from *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, ed. Dr. R. J. Zvi Werblowsky and Dr. G. Wigoder. Jerusalem: Masada Press Ltd., 1967, p. 48)

4. “The mitzvot sanctify the Jew’s life and imbue it with transcendent meaning and content ... The mitzvot are the vehicles by which Israel is transformed into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation ... Through them we become cleansed and purified ... All blessings, therefore, begin with the words, ‘Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe who has sanctified us with your mitzvot and commanded us to... (the specific mitzvah is mentioned).’ [Yechezkel Eckstein, *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism*. Waco: Word Books, 1984, p. 59]

These quotes only indicate that Wilson’s representation of Rabbinic Judaism cannot be substantiated. To be sure, God’s mercy is given its place in Rabbinic Judaism, but that mercy must be based on something, and it is *not* “gratuitous.” Wilson fails to address, directly, the basis of God’s mercy in Judaism, but the {95} implication is that it is ethnic in nature. Of course, if it were based either on race (ethnic Judaism), or on works (mitzvot), then His mercy would assuredly be either capricious or cheap; but His holiness would thereby be compromised. If, however, it is based on the guiltless death of an acceptable substitute, God’s mercy atones for sin without compromising His purity. This is beautifully pictured in the Temple liturgy. God’s “Seat of Mercy” was located in the Holy of Holies, and was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement.

This is what we find in Judaism of the New Testament period. John the Baptist said, “And think not to say within yourselves, ‘We have Abraham to our father’ for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Mt. 3:9, cf. also, Lk. 3:8). Jesus repeatedly castigated the religious leadership of His day for failing to see that works of the Law were inadequate as a means of gaining God’s favor. In fact, as Paul points out, not even Abraham was justified by works (Rom. 4:1-2), but by his faith (Rom. 4:3-5). Indeed, Jesus made it abundantly clear to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, that nothing but faith in the crucified Son of God could atone for the sin of man. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” It is really unfortunate that the Person and work of Messiah Jesus receives little, if any, attention in Wilson’s book. In any discussion of Jewish roots, due attention should be given to “the Root and the Offspring of David” (Rev. 22:16). As such, He embodies both the Jewishness we need to recover, and the basis of Jewish/Christian relationship and dialogue.

Problem 4: Wilson is accusatory and critical of Christians who approach Jewish/Christian dialogue with “hidden ... agendas” (p. 325) - by this, the author refers to the evangelization of the Jewish people. Evangelism, however, is not a hidden agenda, and never has been. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of the Messiah; for it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). This verse is commonly regarded as the heart of the New Testament. For an evangelical to depart from this basic understanding of the gospel and our commission to proclaim it to a lost world, is to deny evangelicals’ *raison d’être*.

Wilson states that, “The object of dialogue is not to convert one’s partner from one faith and tradition to another. Conversion is the work of God, not of human beings” (p. 325). This theme is {96} becoming a familiar one in books of this nature. For example, a Lutheran publication says:

In their encounter with Jews, Christians can learn that mission does not mean the conversion of another through one’s own efforts. Christian witness can prove itself to be genuine only through God’s Spirit just as surely as God himself is the Lord of the community that confesses God as the one who gathers the people of God from all peoples. [Judaism: An Introduction for Christians, ed. J. Limburg. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987, p. 211]

Granting that conversion is the work of God does not absolve the believer of his responsibility to proclaim the gospel. Wilson argues that since “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26), and “only God can remove [this final barrier]” (p. 328), Christians should not make it their business to seek the salvation of the Jewish people. This same argument was overthrown by William Carey and others when it was advanced by the hyper-Calvinists of the late 1700’s. They were arguing that God would save the elect without man’s effort; Wilson would substitute “Jew” for “elect.”

One can hardly imagine a more calloused attitude toward the spiritual condition of unbelieving Israel. In light of the recent statements on Jewish evangelism contained in the “Manila Manifesto” (cf. Editorial and p. 85) and in the “Willowbank Declaration” (cf. pp. 71-84), it is fair to ask if the position espoused by Wilson reflects a truly evangelical perspective.

Our Father Abraham may unwittingly be playing a part of a larger strategy: Yechiel Eckstein has made it quite clear that the perceived threat of evangelical witness is to be neutralized by trying to persuade evangelicals to adopt some form of a dual covenant theology (usually based on ethnic Judaism). “Should this prove to be theologically too difficult, [Jews] will request that evangelicals regard dialogue as the proper forum in which to ‘preach the gospel’ to Jews ... without the intention of converting them...” [op. cit., Eckstein, p. 321]. This book contains many good features, and its goal of exposing and reviving the Jewish roots of our faith is both praiseworthy and greatly needed. Nevertheless, the author’s undermining of Jewish evangelism is a discredit to any evangelical book and a dangerous precedent in the subversion of a healthy evangelical faith.

This reviewer can only hope that both Wilson and those who are involved with the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies will recommit themselves to the proclamation of the good news to those whom they profess to love and who are in such desperate need of the atonement their Messiah died to provide.