

MISHIKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

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MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

"SALVATION IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY"

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Editorial

{INSIDE FRONT COVER}

Paul's passionate prayer was to see the salvation of his own Jewish people. Though the majority of Israel in his day followed rabbinic consensus in reflecting Yeshua's messiahship, Paul expressed a firm belief that Israel's national salvation in Messiah was part of the divine *eschaton*.

It comes as no surprise to discover that this hope has been radically reinterpreted by some involved in contemporary Christian-Jewish dialogue. Questions are raised: surely Paul did not envision a mass national acceptance of Yeshua as a precondition for Jewish national redemption? Isn't it more acceptable to assume that the object of Israel's eschatological faith will be found in its Mosaic heritage, not in faith in Yeshua? Doesn't the epistle to the Romans state that Israel's national regeneration is an eschatological mystery, accomplished without either the evangelistic efforts of men or the necessity of believing in the gospel of Yeshua?

Serious questions deserve serious answers. MISHKAN still sees itself (in the words of our new subtitle) as "a forum on the gospel and the Jewish people." In this issue the eschatological hope of Israel is considered from different angles. Oskar Skarsaune examines and compares the soteriological hopes of Judaism and Christianity, and Rabbi Chaim Pearl responds to his conclusions. Reidar Hvalvik investigates the state of the debate concerning radical reappraisals of Pauline eschatology vis-à-vis Israel, as well as the practical ramifications of that debate for Jewish evangelism. On the basis of Romans 11 John Wilch asks whether, according to Paul, Israel is rejected by God.

Arthur Glasser presents a penetrating article on why some evangelicals object to Jewish evangelism, drawing upon his rich experience as professor at Fuller Seminary's School of World Missions. Paul Peterson, a doctoral candidate at that same school, {88} presents a plea for such non-evangelistic endeavors as the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. Walter Riggans, a former associate editor of MISHKAN and a present MISHKAN advisor sheds new light on Jewish refutations of the Gospel. He challenges us to respect the authors, and to avoid flippancy and pugnaciousness in attempting to answer their charges.

Historical perspectives are brought by William Bjoraker who presents an international overview of Jewish missions from the French Revolution to 1940.

MISHKAN's editors would like to introduce our new Editorial Board.

They include Dr. Michael Brown, Rev. Paul den Butter, Dr. Tormod Engelsen, Dr. John Fischer and Mr. Walter Riggans. We look forward to their challenging and critical contributions in the hope that MISHKAN will better serve our international readership. A warm word of thanks is also due to those who have served as editorial advisors in the past and who have shared their commitment to Jewish evangelism in this practical way.

We pray that the present issue will challenge, strengthen and encourage all who labor together, awaiting the Deliverer whose coming will remove transgression from Jacob.

Avner Boskey

{1} Salvation in Judaism and Christianity

Oskar Skarsaune

Dr. Oskar Skarsaune is professor in Patristic Studies and Early Church History at the Free Faculty of Theology In Oslo, Norway. This article is a slightly revised version of a paper read at the annual meeting of the European Lutheran Commission, The Church and the Jewish People, May 1989.

Jacob Neusner has more than once employed the elegant formula that nascent Christianity and Pharisaic Judaism represent different people speaking about different things to different people. Whereas Christianity was concerned with the salvation of individuals, Pharisaic Judaism was occupied with the sanctification of a nation-Israel. What was important to one group, was unimportant to the other.

Neusner is careful to emphasize that he is speaking about one particular kind of Judaism, not Judaism at large. However, a search in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* for the entry "Salvation," leads to the surprising discovery that there is none such. But no one would dispute that the concept of salvation is central to Christianity. Apparently this is not the case with regard to Judaism. A Christian reader would tend to overlook, however, the relevant entry in the encyclopedia-the entry "Redemption." Many would regard this as highly significant: In Judaism, the concept of salvation has another profile, another content, than that found in Christianity. The difference of terminology, "redemption" versus "salvation," could be seen as an initial indication of this difference.

My purpose in this paper is to question the general validity of the position outlined above. In so doing, I shall compare entities often considered to be utterly incomparable. As representative of "the Jewish" concept I shall take an ancient synagogal prayer and a modern Jewish scholarly summary of the concept of salvation. As a representative of Christianity, I shall take Paul, adding some references from Luke and other New Testament writers.

I am fully aware of the methodological objections one might raise against this procedure. The reason why I find the comparison interesting will, I hope, emerge in what follows. The Jewish author of the article on "Salvation," to which I am going to refer, obviously thinks there exists within Jewish tradition a degree of continuity which makes it meaningful to talk of "the Jewish" concept of salvation. I see no reason to dispute that. If this "Jewish" {2} concept is to be discerned in New Testament writers, I see no reason to avoid the most straightforward conclusion: The New Testament concept of salvation is, by and large, Jewish.

If so, there is hardly any way to avoid the conclusion that the debate within New Testament times about the claim made by Jesus and his disciples, namely that He was the only means of salvation, was a real debate. It was hardly a case of different people talking about different things to different people.

Let this suffice as an introduction. We must now take a look at some crucial texts.

New Testament Salvation Is Jewish

Our main catchword, salvation, occurs in a very significant context in Romans 11:26.

“...all Israel will be saved; as it is written, ‘The deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob. And this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins’” (vs. 26f).

One is struck by the entirely Jewish terminology and imagery of this passage. It contains the two root words for salvation and redemption: *yeshuah* and *geula*. The scripture Paul here quotes was certainly not chosen at random. Isaiah is an important opening passage in one of the main prayers of deliverance in the synagogue service known by its opening phrase, Uvaletzion:

A Redeemer [goel] will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord...

The close relation between Paul and Jewish terminology raises an important question: Do Paul (or the New Testament) and classic Judaism mean the same by the term “salvation”?

As I mentioned earlier, this is often denied, sometimes on the assumption that Jews consider salvation to be something concerned with this world, with new social and political structures, whereas in Christianity salvation is something other-worldly, related to heaven.

This is hardly correct. In *A Dictionary of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue*,¹ there is an excellent summary of the classic Jewish view of salvation by S. Daniel Breslauer.² According to Breslauer, there are two aspects to the Jewish concept of salvation. The first is the redemption of Israel as a people and a nation. Here *geulah* (redemption) is the main concept, and this redemption is regarded as future, not present.

*Messianic expectations of a renewed national life, of a restored judicial and royal system, and of a revitalized religious cult are part of this {3} type of deliverance. ... Only God knows when and why the messianic redemption will be granted.*³

The second aspect of salvation is that of the individual. Here *yeshuah* (salvation) is the main concept: “While redemption is a future, undisclosed hope, salvation is a gift made immediately accessible in the present. Through Jewish teachings and instructions - through Torah - a Jew becomes a *ben olam habah* (son of the world to come, i.e., member of those worthy of salvation). While Torah is the means to salvation, the measure of a person’s worth is not the quantity but the quality of Torah living.⁴ “Life in an unredeemed world ... does not preclude *individual salvation*. The Jew finds personal self-fulfillment possible even in a world which is not yet touched by God’s final act of political redemption.”⁵

Breslauer points to the subtle connections between national redemption and individual salvation: (1) The individual who in his lifetime does not experience the national redemption, will be part of it through receiving the new life of the coming world. By being a *ben olam habah*, the individual is a prospective participant in the full redemption of Israel. (2) Vice

¹ Ed. by L. Klenicki and G. Wigoder, New York 1984.

² Pages 179-182.

³ *Op. cit.*, 179f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 180f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.

versa: By being personally transformed in experiencing personal salvation through a life according to Torah, the individual *prepares* the event of national redemption.

Let me illustrate the first point by quoting some lines from the *uvalezion* prayer:

Be it acceptable in thy presence, O Lord our God and God of our Fathers, that we may observe thy commandments in this world, so that we be deemed worthy to live and witness and inherit the benefit and the blessings of the years of the days of the Messiah, and of the life in the world to come.

I need hardly point out that there is a striking structural correspondence between this Jewish concept and the concept of salvation as we find it in the New Testament. Here also salvation or redemption is future as well as present. I believe it would be true to say that when salvation is spoken of as a present fact, it is mainly with regard to an individual. See for example the healings of Jesus: “Your faith has saved you” (Matt. 9:22 et a 1.); or his word to Zacchaeus: “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19,10). Vice versa, when salvation is spoken of as future, it is mainly the redemption of the people of God as a whole, or the redemption of the world or the creation at large which is at stake. Romans 8:18-25 is a typical example of this.

In the New Testament there is also an organic connection between present and future salvation, and between individual salvation and redemption at {4} large. The power to give new life, which God through His Spirit will show forth eschatologically in the resurrection, is already in action in the healings of Jesus, first and foremost in his raising the dead. The power that in the eschaton will renew the whole world, breaks through in one point in the present, and this results in healing, in raising of the dead-in short: in the restoration of human life. These breakthroughs are therefore *signs* of the future redemption of the whole people, the whole world, and the whole of creation.

So also, through being saved in the present, the individual becomes a *ben olam habah*. This is implied in Jesus’ words about Zacchaeus. In Paul, present justification implies future salvation (Rom. 5:9). In the New Testament generally, the eschatological aspect of salvation seems to be prominent when salvation is spoken of in an absolute way, with no particular reference to a specific human need from which one is saved (such as illness, paralysis, demon possession etc.). One can observe this transition-from salvation related to a specific need in the present to salvation in an eschatological, absolute sense-in the classic story in Acts 3f. about the healing of the crippled man. The man was “saved,” that is: cured of his illness, through the power of the name of Jesus.

“If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been saved, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... this man is standing before you well (hygiees)” (Acts 4:9f.).

But Peter clearly transcends this meaning of the word salvation in his next statement (semantically perhaps indicated in the transition from verb to noun): “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Peter is obviously saying more than that there is power to heal in the name of Jesus, for it would hardly be true to say that the name of Jesus was the only name efficient to heal. As I take it, Peter is saying that the name of Jesus is the only name-that is, Jesus is the only person-that grants eschatological salvation, and the healing of the crippled man is a sign that such is the case. It is through Jesus-and through him alone-that we become *benei olam habah* .

Temple Cult and Atonement

But if the structure of the New Testament concept of salvation/redemption is Jewish-to the extent that we have seen it is-how does it happen that it has this unmistakable *christological exclusiveness* which is present in the passage just quoted, and in a large number of other important texts?

I believe there is a complex answer to that question, but I should like to call {5} attention only to one point. It has been observed by many Old Testament scholars that, in the time during and after the Babylonian exile, the theology of the temple cult was increasingly oriented towards *atonement* -with the Priestly Code of the Pentateuch as a significant example. Even sacrifices originally not conceived of as atoning sacrifices, were now understood as such. "Atonement is the aim of most cultic procedures."⁶ Klaus Koch even claims that the Priestly Code was less concerned with the avoidance of sin than with the abolishment of guilt following sin.

Through being saved in the present, the individual becomes a 'ben olam habah.'

It should be noted that the temple cult was the only context in which a formal declaration was given to the effect that sins were forgiven and that an atoning sacrifice was "reckoned" (Gen. 15:6) to the person in question.⁷ In Ezekiel, the priestly prophet, we may have an echo of this priestly "reckoning" in 18:5ff: "If a man is righteous ... *zadiqhu*." Gerhard von Rad has pointed to interesting links between this priestly declaration and Paul's terminology in Romans on the declaring of the believer as righteous.⁸ (This also raises some interesting questions concerning Jesus declaring sins forgiven in an entirely non-cultic, non-priestly setting.) Be that as it may, the point to which I want to call attention, is the significance and the consequences of the fact that the temple cult and the sacrifices and the priestly service came to an end within Judaism. Only two factions within Judaism were prepared to cope with that fact: The Pharisees led by Johanan ben Zakkai, and the Jesus party. But they did so on different grounds.

Once, as Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai was coming forth from Jerusalem, Rabbi Joshua followed after him and beheld the Temple in ruins. "Woe unto us!" Rabbi Joshua cried, "that this place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste!" "My son," Rabban Johanan said to him, "be not grieved; we have another atonement as effective as this. And what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it is said, For I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6).⁹

It is well known that the Rabbis developed the idea that the Old Testament sacrifices had to be accompanied by *repentance (teshuvah)* in order to be effective. When sacrifices ceased, repentance took their place as the main means of atonement for sins.¹⁰ In rabbinic

⁶ Klaus Koch, "Die Eigenart der priesterschriftlichen Sinai gesetzgebung", *ZThK* 55 (1958),36-51.

⁷ Gerhard von Rad has reconstructed this priestly "reckoning" of sacrifices as valid, i. e. from Lev 17:4 and 7:18b, in an interesting study on Gen. 15:6 "Die Anrechnung des Glaubens zur Gerechtigkeit," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 76 (1951), 129-132 (repr. in *idem, Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Theol. Bucher. 8), Munchen 1965, 130-135.

⁸ Cf. also his important article, "'Gerechtigkeit' und 'Leben' in der Kultsprache der Psalmen," *Festschrift Pr Alfred Bertolet, 1950*, 418-437 (repr. in *Ges. Stud.*, 225-247).

⁹ *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* 4, transl. Judah Goldin, Schocken Paperback 1974, 34.

¹⁰ See, f. ex., the excellent treatment of this idea in S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology Major Concepts of the Talmud*, Schocken Books New York, 1911 (or later), 293-343.

theology, sacrificial, cultic atonement may or may not accompany repentance, but the only necessary and indispensable means is repentance. From this point of view, any claim that a cultic event or sacrifice is indispensable for atonement becomes problematic.

{6} If we say quite bluntly that normative Judaism has replaced something cultic (sacrifices) with something non-cultic (repentance), we might perhaps say as bluntly that in the New Testament something cultic (sacrifices) is replaced or superseded by something that is also cultic: the atoning death of Jesus (Rom. 3:25; Hebrews *passim*; the eucharist). Let me add in passing, that I believe it would be a rewarding task to investigate if Old Testament sayings about the exclusiveness of cultic atonement could be studied as a relevant Old Testament background to New Testament sayings about the exclusiveness of atonement-or forgiveness of sins-in Jesus.

Be that as it may, I think one can state as a matter of fact the two following points: (1) In the New Testament concept of salvation, *the forgiveness of sins* takes on a prominence hardly equaled in mainstream Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism. (2) In the sayings about salvation to be found exclusively in Jesus, the reference to His cross and resurrection is always present, at least by implication (Acts 4:10-12; John 8:24-30; 10:14-18; 14:4 in the context of 14:1ff.; etc.).

The first point is amply illustrated in our passage in Romans 11. In his Old Testament quotation, Paul has made a significant addition. To the saying of Isaiah that the *goel* will come to (or from) Zion to abolish ungodliness from Jacob, he has added from Isaiah 27:9: "to take away their sins." This same emphasis can be seen in an astonishing number of passages scattered throughout the New Testament.

You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt: 1:21)

And you, child, ... will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give the knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins (Luke 1:76f.-in the context, the concept of salvation is entirely Jewish).

Thus it is written, that the Messiah should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

The God of our fathers raised Jesus... God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).

To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:43).

Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses (Acts 13:38f).

{7} The point I am trying to make here, is this: The New Testament sayings about salvation in Jesus and in Him only, are not mere *assertions* that must be believed at face value without any reason. They follow from two basic presuppositions: The cross and resurrection of Jesus-and the (corresponding) New Testament idea of salvation.

NT Asserts Salvific Uniqueness of Jesus

One sometimes hears New Testament sayings about the absoluteness of salvation in Christ turned into subjective statements: "Jesus is the way-indeed the only way *for me* (not necessarily for others)." Once we have become accustomed to this way of thinking,

it seems an incredible arrogance to say that, since Jesus is the only way for me, he must be the way for all men. True, if that was a statement based on a generalization of what I found to be true for myself-I could justly be accused of intolerable arrogance. But, as it happens, the claims to exclusiveness are not mine at all. They come in the mouth of Jesus Himself, or are uttered by His chosen apostles. In the same way that I believe salvation is to be found in Jesus because that is what Jesus Himself and his apostles tell me, I also believe that salvation is to be found nowhere else. Not because I find any other options inconceivable, but quite simply because that is what Jesus and His apostles say. If I felt free to choose, I would certainly choose to believe that Jesus is a way for me -and a very good one-but that there must also exist other ways. That is a convenient point of view which makes interreligious dialogue much easier than any position involving Christological exclusiveness. But I cannot see that the New Testament gives me that option.

When sacrifices ceased, repentance took their place as the main means of atonement for sins.

In fact, as a gentile Christian I observe that the most outspokenly exclusive passages are part of an inner-Jewish controversy. It is certainly implied in these passages that Jesus is the way for all men, but what they explicitly say is that he is the way for all Jews. This holds good for Acts 4:12 as well as John 14:6. The New Testament is more explicit in saying that salvation in Jesus is for all of Israel, than in saying that it is for all men.

This brings me to the last point, which leads us back to Romans 11, and concerns the two terms “eschatology” and “mystery.” I have said already that, in the New Testament, the twin concepts of salvation and redemption have the same double time reference as in Judaism: present and future-now and in the eschaton. I have also said that the statements describing Jesus as {8} the only means of salvation are perhaps more, not less, absolute and unconditional in reference to eschatological salvation. The eschaton by itself does not make any qualification whatsoever to the notion of christological exclusiveness.

But what about the ether word in Romans 11-the “mystery?” Does Paul use this word as a kind of stop sign? “Stop asking questions concerning the final salvation of Israel, let alone offering answers; because this is a mystery into which you are not admitted. Keep your hands off, and leave it to God!”

It is certainly implied in these passages that Jesus is the way for all men, but what they explicitly say is that he is the way for all Jews.

Exegetically I cannot find support for such an interpretation. First, the mystery is something which Paul wants his readers to understand: “I want you to understand this mystery, brethren.” Paul is speaking in biblical Jewish, not modern terms, and in the Bible mysteries are revealed, not kept secret. Secondly, the mystery does not concern a “special way” for Israel apart from Jesus. It concerns the relation between Israel and the gentiles in God’s history of salvation. Very likely, Paul is correcting a then common way of thinking: Salvation in Jesus must first be accepted by all Israel. Then comes the gentiles’ turn. For the present we must concentrate on the mission to Israel. When Israel is saved, God will reach out to the gentiles. He reaches them through Israel. The mystery, says Paul, is that this scheme is too simple. Hardening of heart has come upon the majority of Israel, so God turns to the gentiles already now, before the salvation of all Israel occurs. Also, God is reaching out to Israel through what is happening among the gentiles. This is the way all Israel shall be saved.

Paul has to explain this to his gentile readers, it is not something they make up. He advises them to approach this mystery with awe and humility. In fact, he allows his readers to look into his own heart, admitting that this mystery of Israel’s partial hardening is so painful that he

would wish he himself were accursed and cut off from Christ, if only it could help his kinsmen (Rom. 9:3). “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” (10:1).

Only an exegesis which runs contrary to the context may posit that Paul in Romans 11 is indicating a mystery which has to do with salvation apart from Jesus. Paul, rather, speaks of salvation through Jesus, and of ultimate salvation for “all Israel.” This is what a gentile Christian like myself is told by a Jewish believer and an apostle. It fills me with awe, but also with {9} joy, because the final word is salvation. As a reader of the New Testament I know something about the eschaton, I do have a mystery revealed to me: All Israel shall be saved through Jesus. I take “all Israel” to mean the nation, the people as a body, not a particular sum total of individuals. But I believe those exegetes are right who maintain that the contrast between what is said about the gentiles and what is said about Israel is intentional. From among the gentiles God calls out the number of the elect ones, their fullness. But he saves “all Israel.”

{10} Salvation in Judaism and Christianity: A Response

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Pearl

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Pearl is the Rabbi Emeritus of the Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of New York. He is the author of several popular works on Judaica and is residing in Jerusalem.

It might be useful if I comment on just two aspects of the foregoing essay. First, I believe the author is basically correct in recognizing that in the Jewish sources there is a distinction between salvation and redemption; in Hebrew *yeshuah* and *geulah*. He is also correct, I believe in bracketing the first term with the individual and the second concept with the future of the nation of Israel. There are of course many texts in which the terms overlap. That is to say, *yeshuah* sometimes refers to the nation while *geulah* can intend individual redemption. But essentially the above distinction is valid and few scholars would argue the point that Jewish theology emphasizes that salvation is for the individual and redemption for the nation as a whole.

This leads us directly to the meaning of “salvation” in Jewish theology. It is a difficult concept to explain because it enters into several other areas of thought. The reason why the author could not find a separate entry in the Encyclopedia Judaica is because it is treated under ten different headings - as he must have seen when he consulted the index. It is impossible to summarize the various views in the space of this brief response. But suffice it to say that in Judaism the entire notion of salvation is bound up with the ideal of a person who is free from sin.

Let me make the point straight away. In Judaism the concept of sin is not bound up with the lack of faith. Rather it is an offence against the Law commanded by God, or against the tradition as handed down by the sages. While essentially it is a moral offence for which the perpetrator is held responsible in the sight of God, it can also include an offence against the ritual law-especially for the Orthodox Jew-since that too could bring the offender into a state of alienation from God, the Lawgiver. It is also an offence against one’s fellow man, when the sin involves an act of injustice or harm against another. But in addition, sin is an offence against the sinner himself since, because of his sin, he fails to reach his highest human potential. However, there is a clear remedy through an act of repentance which leads to atonement. In this regard, Judaism rejects all notions of original sin as well as salvation through belief, baptism or any other sacrament. It is true that man has a tendency to sin. But this is different from an original destiny to {11} sin. For all practical purposes, man is essentially free. And if, in his freedom, he sins, then the gift of salvation, or cleanness from sin, is offered him through his act of sincere repentance.

In real terms, such a state of salvation, or purity from sin, is realized by one who lives a life of Torah, who fulfills the teachings of his faith in his righteous conduct towards his fellow man and whose daily life is a perfect example of piety and faith in God. Such a person lives a life of quiet peace, inwardly and outwardly. In spite of all the problems which life may throw his way the righteous man lives a life of tranquility. The Hebrew Bible, and rabbinic literature is filled with hundreds of texts which describe the life of such a person. Such a one has *Yeshuah* - *salvation*. It is not a concept which belongs to his life after death or in the World to Come. It is a description of life in this world. Salvation is thus a worldly concept. This presents us with the first parting of the ways noted in this response. Christianity is more

concerned with salvation after death. This is because the ancient Greeks, at the time of early Christianity, were afraid of death. So the Church proclaimed its doctrines of resurrection and salvation after death.

The second difference developed by Oskar Skarsaune is even more relevant to our understanding of the wide difference between Judaism and Christianity. In classical Christianity there can be salvation only through belief in Jesus. In Judaism such a notion is completely rejected. God is God, and man is man. Jesus was a man and to describe and worship him as Divine is blasphemous. In Judaism the greatest prophet and man of God was Moses. Yet he is never worshiped. Venerated as a great teacher-yes. But he is still “the man Moses.” If belief is not the road to salvation in Judaism, then what is? The answer is repentance and good deeds. In other words it is deed and not creed which points the way to salvation.

To summarize, in Jewish theology, whether we examine the Hebrew Bible or rabbinic literature, the concept of salvation is a state of tranquility in this life rather than in life after death. This is not to deny the belief in life after death. But Judaism prefers to leave such a mystery in the hands of God and instructs man to concentrate on his proper religious and spiritual duty in the here and now.

Secondly, such a state of salvation can never be achieved merely through belief in Jesus, or in anyone else. Some of the most outrageous criminals in history, including mass murderers, professed a belief in Jesus. To hold that they enjoy salvation in the sight of God would be a notion more outrageous than anything else one can imagine, and is contrary to the Jewish concepts of God and His justice. In absolute and total contrast to such an idea, Judaism holds fast to the teaching that it is only a life of true practical righteousness which can gain man the gift of salvation.

{12} A “Separate Way” for Israel? A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11:25-27

Reidar Hvalvik

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This is a revised version of his article “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel? A critical examination of a current interpretation of Rom 11.25-27,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990) 87-107.

In a 1962 article concerning Judaism and Christianity, Krister Stendahl commented upon Paul’s treatment of the relation between the Jews and the gentile Christians in Romans 9-11, saying:

[Paul] goes so far as to consider the mission of the gentiles and the success of that mission in the name of the Messiah Jesus only as a detour which ultimately must lead to the point where the Jews accept this same Jesus as their Messiah.¹

Later, when his article was republished in his book *Meanings*, Stendahl confesses in a footnote: “I think I was wrong in this interpretation of Romans 11:26. The expression ‘And so the whole of Israel will be saved; *sothesetai*, does not indicate any acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.”²

Stendahl does not directly say what led him to change his mind. His comments in *Meanings*, however, hint at two possible reasons. Firstly, Stendahl refers to his book *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*³ where he implicitly offers an exegetical explanation of his new view. In his famous essay on Paul in this book he draws attention to the fact that Paul wrote the whole section of Romans 10:17-11:36 without using the name of Jesus Christ. This is not a coincidence, according to Stendahl, for Paul does not say that Israel will accept Jesus as the Messiah. “He says only that the time will come when ‘all Israel will be saved’ (11:26).”⁴

Secondly, Stendahl admits that his article is “clearly dated.” This is said in connection with a reference to the “significant milestones in the history of Jewish-Christian dialogue” in the last decades.⁵ Stendahl here points to a factor which probably changed the minds of many Christian theologians as to questions concerning Jews and Judaism. Most often this is to be seen as a positive development. Sometimes, however, one wonders if this dialogue has forced certain exegetical results, such as the one dealt with in this article.

{13} Stendahl’s new interpretation is connected with Romans 11:26. This text has also engaged the interest of many other exegetes, of whom Franz Mussner may be the most important representative. On the basis of Romans 11:26f. Mussner states: “By his parousia Christ saves

¹ The original article was published in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 28 (1963), pp. 1-9. I quote from the reprint in Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide*, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 213.

² *Ibid.*, p.215.

³ *Ibid.*, p.215, n.1.

⁴ K. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 4.

⁵ Stendahl, *Meanings*, p.205.

all Israel without a preceding ‘conversion’ of the Jews to the gospel. God saves Israel on a ‘separate way’ (Sonderweg)...”

We can summarize the views of Stendahl and Mussner in three points: The Jews will be saved 1) without acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah (Stendahl), 2) without conversion to the gospel (Mussner) and 3) through the parousia of Christ (Mussner). The two first points may be seen together because they both refer to the absence of certain conditions, while the third mentions the presence of a special circumstance with regard to the salvation of Israel.

It should be clear that Stendahl and Mussner do not hold identical views. Nevertheless, they have two things in common: 1) They both tie their views to Romans 11:26f. and 2) They both hold that the Jews have a special way of salvation, a *Sonderweg*.⁶

This article is a critical examination of the exegetical arguments which are given for the “Sonderweg”-position on the basis of Romans 11:25-27. It will also serve as a small contribution to the understanding of two salient points in this crucial text: the function of the Old Testament quotation in 11:26f. and the character and content of the “mystery” in 11:25.⁷

Romans 11:25-27 in a Broader Context

Romans 11:25-27(32) seems to be a “summary of key ideas developed in chapters 9 through 11.”⁸ It would, therefore, be surprising if these verses contradict what Paul says elsewhere in Romans 9-11. Besides, in recent interpretation, chapters 9-11 are more and more regarded as the “climax” and “real center of gravity” of the letter as a whole,⁹ “an integral part of the working out of the theme of the epistle.”¹⁰ Consequently, these chapters have to be interpreted in the light of the broader context. Against this background one may ask: Is it at all possible to imagine Paul maintaining a *Sonderweg* for Israel *within the framework of Romans*? The answer is No! Ernst Kasemann has rightly stressed that “the doctrine of justification dominates Romans 9-11 no less than the rest of the epistle.”¹¹ The heart of this Pauline doctrine is that *all* who have faith will be justified. When Paul stresses the “all” he does so precisely to show that *Jews and gentiles equally* are justified through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21f., 30). In the broader context of Romans it is, therefore, unlikely that 11:25-27 should express a special way of salvation for the Jews. Let me further substantiate this by some observations concerning Paul’s concept of salvation and faith.

⁶ Franz Mussner, *Traktat über die Juden*, München, 1979, p. 60.

⁷ It is not my intention to give a survey of all the different interpretations of Rom. 11:25ff. The best survey so far is Francois Refoules, “... et ainsi tout Israël sera sauvé” Romains 11, 25-32, *Lection Divina* 117, Paris: 1984.

⁸ Mary Ann Getty, “Paul and the Salvation of Israel: A perspective on Romans 9-11,” *CBQ* 50, 1988, pp. 456-469; quotation from p. 457 (with regard to Rom 11:25-32).

⁹ K. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, pp. 4, 28. Until recently, however, many commentators considered Romans 9-11 to be a kind of supplement or afterthought.

¹⁰ C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans, Vol. II, ICC*, Edinburgh, 1979, p. 445.

¹¹ Ernst Kasemann, “Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans,” *Perspectives on Paul*, Philadelphia, 1971, pp. 60-78; quotation from p. 75.

{14} Salvation without Faith in Christ?

Stendahl argues that the term *sothesetai* “does not indicate any acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.” Such a claim is best tested against the use of the term *sozein* (save) and *soteria* (salvation) elsewhere in Romans.¹²

A natural point of departure is found in Romans 1:16, the first occurrence of the word “salvation” in Romans: The gospel is “the power of God for *salvation to every one who has faith...*” In this verse one finds three important aspects of the Pauline teaching: (1) Salvation is closely connected to *the gospel* (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; Eph. 1:13). Therefore, the gospel has to be preached “that men may be saved” (1 Thess. 2:16). The preaching of the gospel is also presupposed when the word *sozein* is used as a missionary term, in connection with Paul’s apostolic ministry (1 Cor. 7:16; 9:22; 10:33; Rom. 11:14). (2) Salvation is given to those who have *faith*. This is also emphasized in Romans 10:9f. where the conditions for salvation are clearly stated: “If you *confess* with your lips that Jesus is Lord and *believe* in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be *saved*.” This text is especially remarkable because it is found in a passage which deals with universal salvation, and which stresses that “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek” (10:12). This corresponds with the third aspect of Rom 1:16. (3) The gospel is addressed to *few and gentile equally*, but to the Jew first. Paul nowhere indicates that the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah, was addressed to gentiles only. He explicitly speaks of the “gospel to the circumcised” (Gal 2:7) and in his own ministry he tries “to win Jews” (1 Cor. 9:20; cf. Rom. 11:14).

Stendahl and Mussner both hold that the Jews have a special way of salvation.

Against this background it is really hard to imagine that Paul in Romans 11:26 should speak about salvation apart from faith in Christ. In fact his use of the word *sothesetai* indicates that Paul is thinking of a salvation of whole Israel *sola gratia* (by grace alone) and *sola fide* (by faith alone)-in accordance with the use of this word elsewhere in Romans.¹³ That the concept of faith is not absent in Romans 11, is also seen from v.23. In fact, this verse contains Paul’s only statement concerning the way of salvation for the Jewish people in this context: The non-believing Jews will “be grafted in” if *they do not persist in their unbelief*. Faith in Christ is the only way to salvation, also for the Jews. There is no distinction in that matter (cf. 10:12).

This is further corroborated by the fact that Paul sees the remnant of Christ- {15} believing Jews as a sure sign that God has not rejected His people (cf. 11:1ff.). In other words, the remnant guarantees the salvation of “all Israel.” This has an important consequence, as Dan G. Johnson has pointed out: “Since the salvation received by the remnant was not divorced from Jesus Christ, neither will be the salvation of all Israel.”¹⁴

In this connection we have to mention Franz Mussner’s point that Paul does not speak about conversion as far as Israel’s salvation is concerned. This is also emphasized by Bernhard Mayer who says that the text does not deal with “the conversion of Israel, but the salvation of Israel by God.”¹⁵ This calls for some comments.

¹² The occurrences in Romans are as follows: “Salvation” (*soteria*): 1:16; 10:1, 10; 11:11;13:11; “Save” (*sozein*): 5:9f; 8:24; 9:27;10:9,13;11:14, 26.

¹³ Hans Hubner, *Gottes Ich und Israel. Zum Schriftgebrauch des Paulus in Romer 9-11*, FRLANT 136; Gottingen,1984, p.117.

¹⁴ Dan G. Johnson, “The Structure and Meaning of Romans 11,” CBQ 46, 1984, pp. 91-103; quotation from p.102

¹⁵ Bernhard Mayer, *Unter Gottes Heilsratschluss. Pradestinationsaussagen bei Paulus*, FzB 15; Wurzburg,1974, p. 290.

When conversion is set up against salvation in this way, one gets the impression that conversion is understood as a kind of human work.¹⁶ But such an idea of conversion is obviously quite foreign to Paul's thought. The concept of conversion plays no central part in Pauline theology at all. When the term does occur, it is connected with the turning from idols to the true God (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). It is, therefore, no surprise that Paul does not mention "conversion" in connection with Israel's salvation."¹⁷

As to the absence of the name Jesus Christ, this factor should not be given much weight. Firstly, it is an argument *e silentio*. Secondly, as E. P. Sanders pointed out, "It is incredible that he (Paul) thought of 'God apart from Christ,' just as it is that he thought of 'Christ apart from God'."¹⁸ Paul does not play God off against Christ (and *vice versa*) when it comes to the salvation of mankind. And even if he does not directly say that God's promises to Israel concern Christ, "that presupposition underlies the discussion in Romans 9-11, as well."¹⁹

Salvation at Christ's Parousia?

Where Stendahl speaks about salvation for Israel apart from Christ, Mussner does not. To him it is Christ who brings salvation, though in a special way: at his parousia. The majority of scholars do not follow Mussner in what he says about a "separate way" (*Sonderweg*) for Israel,²⁰ but many agree that it is Christ at His parousia who will save Israel. That point of view depends closely on the interpretation of the Old Testament quotation in Romans 11:26f. We shall have a closer look at that quotation:

As an entry point we may use Hans Hubner's discussion. He starts his examination of the quotation with some presuppositions-based on a broad consensus among the exegetes:

1. "The Deliverer will come from Zion" refers to the second coming of Christ. The Deliverer thus means Christ, not God.

{16} 2. "Jacob" means Israel as a people, not the church including both Jews and gentiles.²¹

As to the meaning of "Jacob," Hubner correctly takes the meaning "the Jewish people" for granted. In recent years this has been the dominant interpretation. But concerning his first point, the case is not that evident.²² The main problem is that it contains two statements which should actually be set apart. It is one thing to maintain that "the Deliverer" refers to Christ, quite another to argue that it has reference to the parousia. As to the first point, there are good reasons to understand *ho rhyomenos* (the Deliverer) as referring to Christ. In a Christian

¹⁶ Cf. especially Franz Mussner, "'Ganz Israel wird gerettet werden' (Rom 11,26)," *Kairos* 18, (1976), pp. 241-255; esp. p.251 where the salvation of Israel is said to happen "without works of the Law, but also without a preceding 'conversion' of the Jews of the gospel."

¹⁷ It is, however, interesting to note that Isa. 59:20 (the text which is quoted in Rom. 11:26) is connected with conversion in a Talmudic text: "R. Jonathan said: Great is repentance, because it brings about redemption, as it is said: 'And a redeemer will come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob,' i.e., why will a redeemer come to Zion? Because of those that turn from transgression in Jacob" (b. Yoma 86b).

¹⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, Philadelphia, 1983, p.194.

¹⁹ Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, Minneapolis, 1977, p.155.

²⁰ See, however, Martin Rese, "Die Rettung der Juden nach Romer 11," in A. Vanhoye (ed.), *L'Aptre Paul. Personnalite, Style et Conception du Ministere*, BEThL LXXIII; Leuven,1986, pp. 422-430; esp. p. 430.

²¹ H. Hubner, *Gottes Ich und Israel*, pp. 114f.

²² A certain hesitation on this point is found by some commentators. Cf. the formulation by C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans, II*, p. 578: "By the promised coming of the deliverer he probably understood the parousia of Christ" (my italics). Cf. also Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Romer. 2. Teilband: Rom 6-11*, EKK VI/ 2; Zurich, 1980, p. 256: "By the coming of the Deliverer Paul *probably* means the parousia of Christ as savior" (my italics).

reading of Isaiah 59:20 “the Deliverer” would almost inevitably be understood christologically.²³ Besides, the change from third to first person in the quotation (cf. the pronoun *emou*) and the words *ek Sion* (“from Zion”) point in the same direction. But a christological interpretation does not automatically imply a reference to the second coming of Christ. This seems, however, often to be taken for granted by many commentators. Other arguments in defense of such an assumption are given they are few and not very strong. Let us have a look at the most common arguments.

For Paul, the Deliverer has already come from Zion. This means that God’s truthfulness toward his promises are seen in Christ’s first coming.

1) A usual argument in favor of an eschatological interpretation is that the verb “deliver” (*rhyomai*) elsewhere (1 Thess. 1:10) is used about the second coming of Christ.²⁴ The use of the verb “deliver” is, however, no clear proof. It is used by Paul in different contexts, both referring to God (cf. 2 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:31; Col. 1:13) and to Christ describing a deliverance both past and future. Little importance should be attached to the occurrence of the term in 1 Thess. 1:10 since that text probably is part of a traditional, pre-Pauline formula²⁵ and cannot, therefore, serve as evidence for Paul’s use of the word “deliverer.” This is also the case in Romans 11:26 where the word is part of a quotation, not the free choice of Paul.

2) Another argument in favor of an eschatological interpretation is the more or less clear eschatological ring of the quotation and the context (cf. v. 25). This is, however, seldom spelled out. Ulrich Wilckens seems to be an exception. He stresses the future tense of the verb (*hexei*, “will come”) and calls it a “futurum propheticum.”²⁶ It is, of course, a prophetic future within the framework of Isaiah, but does Paul understand it as future? Probably not. As in the case of Isaiah 11:10 quoted in Romans 15:12, the future tense in 11:26 should be regarded “as realized prophecy.”²⁷ For Paul, the Deliverer has {17} already come from Zion (cf. 9:33). This is clearly seen if one compares Romans 11:28 with 15:8. In 11:26-28 the salvation of “all Israel” is linked with the promises to the fathers (cf. also 9:5), and in 15:8 Paul tells how these promises have been confirmed when “Christ became a servant to the circumcised.” This means that God’s truthfulness toward his promises are seen in Christ’s first coming.²⁸ There is, however, something which still awaits fulfillment. The salutary consequences of Christ’s first coming have not yet been experienced by Israel. They will become a reality once the people turn to Him in faith.²⁹

3) The third and probably most important argument in favor of an eschatological interpretation may be introduced by a quotation from Ernst Kasemann’s commentary:

²³ The messianic interpretation of Isa. 59:19f by the rabbis (cf. b. Sanh 98a) seems to substantiate this. We have to admit, however, that there is no clear evidence for such an interpretation in the first century. (B. Sanh 98a is ascribed to a rabbi who lived about 250 A. D.)

²⁴ Peter Stuhlmacher, “Zur Interpretation von Romer 11, 25-32” *Probleme biblischer theologie. Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, hg. von H. W. Wolff, Munchen, 1971, pp.555-570; esp. p.561, n. 31; W. Sanday/A.C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Edinburgh, 1902, p.337.

²⁵ See, e.g., Ernest Best, *A Commentary on The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, BNTC London, 1977, pp. 85-87.

²⁶ U. Wilckens, *Romer*, 2, p. 257, n.1155.

²⁷ Dieter Zeller, *Der Brief an die Romer*, RNT, Regensburg, 1985, p. 199; cf. also Zeller, *Juden und Heiden in der Mission des Paulus. Studien zum Romerbrieft*, 2. ed, Stuttgart, 1972, p. 261. Even if Isa.11:10 has the future tense, Paul undoubtedly means that the prophetic words have been fulfilled.

²⁸ Heikki Raisanen, “Romer 9-11: Analyse eines geistigen Ringens,” in W. Haase/ H. Temporini (Hgs.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen Welt*; Teil II: Principat; Band 25:4, Berlin/ New York, 1987, pp. 2891-2938; esp. p. 2920. Cf. also D. Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*, p. 261.

²⁹ D. Zeller, *Romer*, p. 199.

*Obviously the reference is neither to the historical Jesus, ... nor to the christological event as a whole , ... nor indeed to the parousia in Jerusalem, ... but to the return of the exalted Christ from the heavenly Jerusalem of Gal 4:26.*³⁰

Why is this so obvious? The answer seems to be found in a detail in the wording of the quotation, to which Kasemann refers in the preceding sentence. In the beginning of the quotation Paul writes *ek Sion* (“from Zion”) instead of *heneken Sion* (“for the sake of Zion”) found in the Septuagint. This is Paul’s only important variation from the Septuagint in this quotation and it, therefore, attracts attention. The variation may be due to unconscious influence from Psalms 14:7 (LXX: 13:7), but most commentators seem to read more significance into it. Kasemann, for instance, thinks that Paul deliberately has changed the text to suit a messianic interpretation.³¹

If Paul has deliberately changed the text, it is obviously correct to emphasize the alteration. But it is far from certain that this is the case. Berndt Schaller has recently pointed out that deviations from the usual Septuagint text in all probability are not due to Paul. They are pre-Pauline.³² Schaller does not find any reason for Paul to change the text, and thinks that the Septuagintal reading would better fit Paul’s way of thinking.³³ He explains the origin of the reading *ek Sion* in Romans 11:26 as a misreading of a manuscript which had the text *eis Sion* (corresponding to the Hebrew *le tsion*). From a paleographic point of view, such a change is easily explained: When the two uncials IC are read as a K, EIC becomes EK.³⁴ Even if Schaller’s theory is not supported by the existence of a Greek manuscript with the reading *eis Sion*, his theory is very attractive.

From another approach, Dietrich-Alex Koch has come to a similar conclusion: The reading *ek Sion* is pre-Pauline, due to a christological use of Isaiah 59:20.³⁵ Paul retained this alteration even if it has no function in Romans {18} 11:25.³⁶ Therefore one should not over-stress the wording *ek Sion*, since it is hardly Paul’s own alteration.

Nevertheless, the words must have meant something to Paul. Two possibilities offer themselves:³⁷ 1) “From Zion” may refer to the Davidic sonship of Jesus, or, more generally, His origin from among the Jewish people (cf. Rom. 9:5). 2) It may refer to Jerusalem as the place of the resurrection. To understand it in the light of Galatians 4:26 (“The Jerusalem which is from above”) seems unwarranted. It is better to take a look at Romans 9:33, the only other place where the word Zion occurs in the Pauline letters. There Zion undoubtedly refers to the earthly Jerusalem.

To sum up, the wording “from Zion” (*ek Sion*) in the quotation does not seem to substantiate the notion that Paul is speaking of the parousia of Christ. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that nothing in the context refers to Christ’s parousia.³⁸ Our

³⁰ Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, Grand Rapids, 1980, p. 314.

³¹ *Ibid.*; cf. also P. Stuhlmacher, “Zur Interpretation,” p. 561, n. 30.

³² Berndt Schaller, “Hexei ek sion ho rhyomenos. Zur Textgestalt von Jes 59:20f in Rom 11:26f,” *De Septuaginta. Studies in Honour of John William Wevers on his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. by A. Pietersma/ C. Cox; Toronto, 1984, pp. 201-206; esp. p. 206.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 203

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204

³⁵ Dietrich- Alex Koch, “Beobachtungen zum christologischen Schriftgebrauch in den vorpaulinischen Gemeinden,” *ZNW* 71 (1980), pp. 174-191; esp. p.189.

³⁶ D.-A. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, BHT 69, Tübingen, 1986, p. 177.

³⁷ Cf. D.-A Koch, *ZNW* 71 (1980), p.189.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.187. N. A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, p. 153 also stresses the fact that no other passage in Paul’s letters suggests that Israel shall be saved at Christ’s parousia.

discussion of the quotations has, however, given rise to an important question: What is, then, the function of the quotation from Isaiah 59:20f/27:9?

The Function of the Quotation in Romans 11:26f.

According to some commentators, the function of the quotation is to give information about the *how* and *when* of Israel's salvation. Martin Rese compares the quotation in 11:26b-27 with the quotation in 11:8-10 and says that the latter explains the hardening of Israel.³⁹ For various reasons, this is hardly correct. Firstly, such an understanding depends on a questionable interpretation of the words *kai houtos* ("and so"), to which we shall return below. Secondly, the function of the quotations in 11:8-10 is not to explain the hardening. The quotations do nothing more than to underline *what Paul already has said*. The quotations underline the fact *that* the majority of Israel has been hardened, but do not say anything about *how* this happened. Without doubt, the quotation in Rom. 11:26f has a similar function. It does not explain how all Israel shall be saved. Paul's concern in Romans 11 is certainly to show that God has not rejected His people (cf. 11:1). Accordingly, his only point in the proof-text is *that* God eventually will save all Israel.⁴⁰

This point can be demonstrated from the quotation itself. Much stress is often laid on Paul's alleged alteration in the wording of the first line. Less attention is drawn to the fact that we face a mixed quotation—a combination of texts not found elsewhere. This probably means that *the combination of Isaiah 59:20 and 27:9 is Paul's own work* and part of the Pauline reinterpretation of Isaiah 59:20f.⁴¹ By adding another word about God taking away the sins of Israel, Paul shows how he interprets the salvation of the Jews: It means salvation from sin and ungodliness. If this is sound reasoning, it means that the important words in the quotation are not to be found in the first line {19} (concerning "the Deliverer"), but in the second and in the last, when Paul says "all Israel shall be saved." This is supported by the words "he will banish *ungodliness* from Jacob;" and "I take away their *sins*."

These words are significant, particularly because they form a link to Romans 4, the great chapter about justification by faith. In 4:5 Paul is speaking of the God "who justifies the *ungodly*." It is the same God who speaks in the quotation from Scripture. In 4:7 Paul quotes from Psalms 31:1 concerning those "whose *sins* are covered." It is they who are justified by faith, without works. These connecting lines clearly indicate that when Paul speaks of the salvation of Israel in 11:25-27, he refers to the justification by faith of the ungodly.⁴² Israel's salvation is thus nothing else but salvation *sola fide* and *sola gratia*. It is, therefore, quite correct to say, as does Ernst Kasemann concerning the salvation of Israel: "Only the time, not the salvation, is different."⁴³

³⁹ M. Rese, "Die Rettung der Juden," p. 429; cf. also F. Mussner, *Traktat*, p. 58.

⁴⁰ So also H. Hubner, *Gottes Ich und Israel*, p. 118. Cf. H. W. Schmidt, *Der Brief des Paulus and die Romer*, ThHKNT VI, Berlin, 1966, p.199.

⁴¹ Cf. D.-A. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge*, p.177.

⁴² This is further supported by the context of the quotation from Isa. 59 and 27; cf. H. Hubner, *Gottes Ich und Israel*, p. 119f.

⁴³ E. Kasemann, *Romans*, p.314.

The ‘Mystery’ in Romans 11:25

We have so far examined the most important arguments in favor of the “Sonderweg”-position. However, another question has to be dealt with: Does not the term “mystery” in 11:25 indicate that there is something “special” concerning Israel’s salvation? Before we can answer this question, we have to grasp the content and character of the mystery.

The first question to be answered is this: What is the *content* of the mystery? Since the answer to a certain extent depends on our understanding of the phrase *kai houtos* (RSV, NIV: “and so”) which introduces v.26, we should have a closer look at this phrase. The meaning of these words has for a long time been subject of much debate, and different solutions have been offered.⁴⁴

Concerning the salvation of Israel: “Only the time, not the salvation, is different.”

(1) *kai houtos* has often been taken to have a temporal sense (“and then”).⁴⁵ A purely temporal meaning of the adverb *houtos* (like *tote*) is, however, not found in Greek.⁴⁶

(2) *houtos* is taken in the modal sense (“in this way”), referring to what follows: “And in this manner all Israel will be saved, as it is written (*kathos gegraptai*): ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion...’”⁴⁷ But it is rightly objected against this interpretation that Paul never uses *houtos* correlatively to *kathos gegraptai*.⁴⁸

(3) *houtos* is referring to what precedes, and has another modal sense: “and so, in that manner all Israel will be saved.” This is a very widespread {20} interpretation.⁴⁹ It is clearly possible from a semantic point of view. It is, however, not easy to see what, taken in this sense, the term should mean. The hardening of a part of Israel is certainly not a way of salvation for the Jews! It is rather something that goes before the salvation of Israel. This leads us to the last possibility.

(4) *houtos* is referring to what precedes, and has a “logical” sense; i.e. it refers to the factual and temporal *presuppositions* of what follows.⁵⁰ In this sense *houtos* is used by Paul in 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 11:28; 14:25. This meaning also gives good sense in Rom. 11:25b-26a. What Paul says is that the salvation of ‘all Israel’ first can take place, and certainly will take place, when the ingathering of the gentiles has come to an end.⁵¹ According to God’s plan, the salvation of the gentiles is a presupposition and a condition for the salvation of “all Israel.”

⁴⁴ On this, see also F. Refoule, “...et ainsi tout Israel sera sauve,” pp. 32-35.

⁴⁵ So, e.g., E. Kasemann, *Romans*, p. 313 and C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, BNT London, 1962, pp. 221, 223.

⁴⁶ It is not found with such a meaning in W. Bauer/ W. F. Arndt/ F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago, 1957.

⁴⁷ So, e.g., P. Stuhlmacher, “Zur Interpretation,” p. 560.

⁴⁸ Cf. Joachim Jeremias, “Einige vorwiegend sprachliche Beobachtungen zu Rom 11,25-26,” in L. de Lorenzi (Hg.), *Die Israelfrage nach Rom 9-11* (Monographische Reihe von ‘Benedictina’, Biblisch -ökumenische Abteilung 3; Rome: Abtei von St. Paul vor den Mauern, 1977), pp. 193-205; esp. p. 198; B. Mayer, *Unter Gottes Heilsratschluss*, p. 284. See also F. Mussner, *Kairos* 18 (1976), p. 243.

⁴⁹ Cf., e.g., J. Jeremias, “Einige ...Beobachtungen,” pp. 198f; U. Wilckens, *Romer*, 2, p. 255; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Romerbrieff*, HTKNT VI; Freiburg, 1977, pp. 339f.

⁵⁰ So Otfried Hofius, “Das Evangelium und Israel. Erwagungen zu Romer 9-11,” *ZThk* 83 (1986), pp. 297-324; esp. p. 315; H. W. Schmidt, *Romer*, p. 199 and Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Romer*, KEK 4, Göttingen, 1978⁵, p. 355, n.7.

⁵¹ O. Hofius, *ZThk* 83 (1986), p. 315. Cf. also Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul - One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle’s Self-Understanding*, WUNT 2:43, Tübingen, 1991, p.174.

What then is the content of the “mystery”? In accordance with the interpretation of *houtos* above, we can establish that the mystery does not include the quotation in 11:26b-27.⁵² It is restricted to 11:25b-26a. Consequently, the mystery may be seen in three stages: 1) A part of Israel is hardened for a limited time. 2) The salvation of the gentiles will precede the salvation of Israel. 3) All Israel shall be saved.

Many commentators think it necessary to define the mystery more precisely. The most important proposals are that the nucleus of the mystery is.⁵³

(1) the temporal limitation of Israel’s hardening⁵⁴

(2) the manner of Israel’s salvation⁵⁵

(3) the salvation of all Israel⁵⁶

The arguments for such limitations of the mystery vary greatly, but one argument demands comment. The argument is as follows: Not all elements in 11:25b-26a are new. Consequently, they do not belong to the mystery proper. Typical of this way of reasoning is Dan G. Johnson’s comments: “It is unlikely that the mystery is the claim that all Israel will be saved, for as we have seen, Paul has already made his position on that quite clear.” He goes on:

*Kasemann’s view that the heart of the mystery is that the Gentiles’ redemption precedes Israel’s fares no better. ... In fact, the chronological ordering of events has already been indicated.*⁵⁷

In this argument, one assumes that the mystery in 11:25b-26a must represent something new compared to what Paul has said earlier in Romans. Working along these lines, Dieter Sanger comes to the radical conclusion that Romans 11:25f. is “no mystery in the genuine sense.”⁵⁸

This raises the question as to the *character* of the mystery. What does Paul mean by using the term? *Mysterion* is clearly an apocalyptic term.⁵⁹ It {21} designates something which-at the outset-is hidden for men, but which God can reveal to certain persons-often through visions or dreams (cf. Dan. 2:22, 28-30). The use of the term alone, says David Aune, indicates that Paul is referring to a “prophetic oracle.”⁶⁰ Some scholars have suggested that Paul in Romans 11 is quoting an earlier prophetic word,⁶¹ but the majority seems to hold that the oracle has originated with Paul himself. The prophetic oracle revealing the mystery is often assumed to be

⁵² Contra O. Hofius, ZThK 83 (1986), p. 311.

⁵³ F. Refoule lists seven different understandings of the mystery (“...et ainsi tout Israel sera sauve,” pp. 25-30). His classification seems, however, to be unnecessarily detailed.

⁵⁴ So, e.g., J. Jeremias, “Einige ...Beobachtungen,” p. 201; D. Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*, pp. 250f., H. Raisanen, “Romer 9-11,” p. 2916, n. 143 and p. 2919; John Ziesler, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, TPI London, 1989, p. 283.

⁵⁵ So e.g. N. A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, p.152; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul. An Outline of His Theology*, Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 359.

⁵⁶ So e.g. F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, rev. ed.; Leicester, 1985, p. 208 and Jacob Jervell in his (Norwegian) commentary on Romans, *Gud og hans fiender*, Oslo, 1973, p. 211.

⁵⁷ D. G. Johnson, *CBQ* 46 (1984), p.101.

⁵⁸ Dieter Sanger, “Rettung der Heiden und Erwählung Israels. Einige vorläufige Erwägungen zu Romer 11, 25-27,” *Kerygma und Dogma* 32 (1986), pp. 99-119; quotation from p. 115.

⁵⁹ Cf. O. Michel, *Romer*, p. 354.

⁶⁰ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World*, Grand Rapids, 1983, p. 252.

⁶¹ This is most clearly expressed by Markus Barth, *The People of God*, JSNTS 5, Sheffield, 1983, p. 83, n. 6: “The use of the term [mysterion] may be a signal, saying that the three affirmations made in Rom. 11:25b-26a (...) were found by Paul in a (now lost) prophetic-apocalyptic book, or that they stem from a New Testament prophet.” Cf. also p. 33.

identical with what Paul says in Rom. 11:25b-26a.⁶² But such a view is questionable. Even if Paul's statement in 11:25f is dependent on a prophetic revelation, it does not follow that the content of the revelation is restricted to these verses. Consequently, it is no surprise that Paul's words in 11:25b-26a are anticipated earlier in chapter. 9-11. As Karl Olav Sandnes says:

*.... the mystery in Rom 11:25-26a represents a continuation and conclusion of the parable of the olive tree (Rom 11:17-24); or, rather, vice versa: ... the parable is influenced by the mystery.*⁶³

This means that Romans 9-11 as a whole has something to do with the mystery.⁶⁴

Against this view it may be objected that Paul's use of the phrase, "I do not wish you to be ignorant" (11:25a), clearly indicates that he is going to say something new and unknown.⁶⁵ This is hardly correct. The phrase, *ou thelo hymas agnoein* ("I do not wish you to be ignorant"), is a fixed formula, a so-called "disclosure formula,"⁶⁶ found in many Greek papyrus letters. This formula is usually found in the transition from the opening epistolary thanksgiving to the body of the letter (cf. Rom. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:8). It may also be found within the body of the letter (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:13). In the latter case its primary function is to introduce a new topic. The use of the formula does not, however, imply that the information given is totally new and unknown to the readers. This is clearly the case in 1 Corinthians 10:1 and 12:1. In both cases the topic treated was well-known to the Corinthians. The reason why Paul uses the formula in such cases is that it "marks the introduction of an important subject which must not be overlooked."⁶⁷ This is undoubtedly the function of the formula in Romans 11:25. To ensure that his readers have grasped the consequences of what he has already written, Paul engages their attention by using this formula.

Does the line of reasoning above imply that 11:25f. does not represent anything new compared to the preceding? Not exactly. It is probably appropriate to say that in these verses Paul "draws the conclusion of the preceding arguments,"⁶⁸ a conclusion where things are more clearly spelled out. Nevertheless, 11:25f. contains one detail which is new. And that is the precise limitation of Israel's hardening: "until (*achri hou*) the full number of the gentiles comes in."

{22} Against this background, it may be useful once more to raise the question: What is the content of the mystery Paul refers to in 11:25? The answer is twofold-or probably threefold:

(1) Seen in relation to the preceding, it seems appropriate to call the time limit (*achri hou*) the real core of the mystery. (2) If the prophetic oracle is not identical with the mystery may also include elements found both in the broader context (chs. 9-11) and in vv.25-26a.

⁶² So, e.g., D. E. Aune, *Prophecy*, p. 252: "The oracle itself consists of three lines..."

⁶³ K. O. Sandnes, *Paul*, p. 174. In this connection it is also relevant to point to the *gar* at the beginning of v. 25 which connects w. 25ff to the preceding section.

⁶⁴ D. Sanger, *Ku D 32* (1986), p.115.

⁶⁵ So, e.g., H. W. Schmidt, *Romer*, p.198.

⁶⁶ Cf. Terence Y. Mullins, "Disclosure - A Literary Form in The New Testament," *NovT* 7 (1964-65), pp. 44-50. Cf. also Jack T. Sanders, "The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus," *JBL* 81 (1962), pp. 348-362 and John L. White, "Introductory formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letter," *JBL* 90 (1971), pp. 91-97.

⁶⁷ Archibald Robertson/ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, 2. ed.; ICC, Edinburgh, 1914, p. 259; cf. also C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 573.

⁶⁸ N. A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, p.152.

Then another aspect of the mystery is easily seen: The salvation of the gentiles will take place prior to, and will be a condition for, the salvation of “all Israel.”⁶⁹

These two points correspond to the first two suggestions with regard to the nucleus of the mystery mentioned above. What then about the third suggestion? Is the salvation of “all Israel” part of the mystery? This is often denied, because it is far from sensational that Paul, as a Jew, maintains that all Israel will be saved.⁷⁰ This is correct, but such a statement is, nevertheless, in need of further qualification. It is true that the rabbis took the salvation of all Israel more or less for granted. But did Paul? I do not think so—if we take his sorrow and anguish (Rom. 9:1-3) and his prayer for the salvation of his kinsmen (Rom. 10:1) seriously. In the situation in which Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, the salvation of “all Israel” was no matter of course. The majority of the Jews had rejected the gospel, and hence nothing in Paul’s own time encouraged a hope of salvation for “all Israel.” This holds true for Paul—and even more for his gentile readers. Because so many Jews had rejected the gospel, gentile believers “were tempted to think that there was no future for Israel. She had rejected the gospel and it had now passed to the gentiles; Israel was finished, rejected, cast off. God had chosen them instead.”⁷¹

The salvation of the Gentiles will take place prior to and will be a condition for the salvation of “all Israel.”

Against such a view Paul had to admonish the gentiles not to think wrongly about these things (cf. 11:13ff.). It is with such gentile readers in mind that he reveals the mystery concerning Israel’s ultimate salvation (11:25a). In the total context of Paul’s writing there can, therefore, be no doubt that the salvation of “all Israel” was unexpected. Consequently, this aspect should be included in the mystery proper.

As to the meaning of “all Israel,” there is today almost general agreement that “Israel” here refers to the Jewish people, and “all” “must be taken in the proper meaning of the word: ‘Israel as a whole, Israel as a nation’, and not as necessarily including every individual Israelite.”⁷² Such an understanding is supported by the use of the phrase “all Israel” both in the {23} Septuagint (cf. 1 Kgs. 12:1; 2 Chr. 12:1; Dan. 9:11) and in the *Mishna* (*Sanhedrin* 10:1ff.).⁷³ This means that Paul is referring to Israel as a people—including both “the remnant” (11:5) and “the others” (11:7). It has often been noted that there is a difference between the phrase “the full number of the gentiles.” and “all Israel.” E. P. Sanders suggests that there could be “an intended contrast” between the two phrases.⁷⁴ I think there is. While the “fullness of the gentiles” (*pleroma ton ethnon*) means the full number of the elect among the nations,⁷⁵ “all Israel” refers to the people as a whole. This difference is not without significance. Here we find what we could call ‘the prerogative of the Jews’⁷⁶ (cf.

⁶⁹ What this means in Paul’s thought, is probably expressed in 11:11ff, where he says that Israel will be made jealous of account of the gentile mission. Cf. Sanday/Headlam, *Romans* p. 335: “And so” means “by the whole Gentile world coming into the kingdom and thus rousing the Jews to jealousy, cf. ver. 11f.

⁷⁰ So, e. g., D. Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*, p. 257; B. Mayer, *Unter Gottes Heilsratschluss*, pp. 288f.

⁷¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids, 1988, p. 419.

⁷² So Sanday/Headlam, *Romans*, p. 335. Leonhard Goppelt is probably right in his comment on what the salvation of “all Israel” implies: “When all Israel is saved, there may yet be indifferent, unbelieving Jews, but there will then be no longer a synagogue nor any Jews who reject Jesus on the basis of their Law” (*Jesus, Paul and Judaism*, New York 1964, p.161).

⁷³ To the meaning of “all Israel,” cf. further O. Hofius, *ZThK* 83 (1986), pp. 316f.

⁷⁴ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish people*, p. 196.

⁷⁵ Cf. E. Kasemann, *Romans*, p. 313; O. Michel, *Romer*, p. 355.

⁷⁶ Cf. My article “To the Jew first and also to the Greek. The meaning of Romans 1:16b.” *Mishkan* 10 (1989) 1-9.

1:16): Israel is-as a people-elected by God. As such, there is a promise of salvation for the people as a *whole*.⁷⁷

No Separate Way of Salvation for Israel

We may now repeat our earlier question: Is there nothing “special” concerning Israel’s salvation? There is, in the sense noted above: Israel shall be saved as a people. This does not, however, imply that the whole people will be saved at once, at a particular moment in history, e.g. at Christ’s parousia or before the establishment of a millennium. The last possibility is in fact a variation of the first and is often suggested by authors holding to a premillennial view. As a representative of this group we may quote the American dispensationalist J. Dwight Pentecost. In his discussion of Israel’s role in the millennium, he writes:

*“The nation Israel is to experience a conversion, which will prepare them to meet the Messiah and to be in His millennial kingdom. Paul establishes the fact that this conversion is effected at the second advent, for he writes: ‘And so all Israel shall be saved...’ (Rom. 11:26-27).”*⁷⁸

The problems connected with this view are manifold. First, it is based on an erroneous interpretation of Romans 11:26-27, as shown above. Second, it presupposes a millennial kingdom which is totally absent from Paul’s teaching. Admittedly, there are some who defend such a teaching on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:22ff, but on very slender grounds.⁷⁹ In my view, this is best labeled speculation without biblical basis. Any doctrine-including the question of Israel’s salvation-should, however, be established on clear biblical teaching. Our treatment of Romans, and Romans 11 in particular, has shown that there is no basis for a theory that maintains *a special way of salvation* for the Jews.

As should be evident from the above, this does not exclude Israel’s unique role in salvation history. God has treated this people in a special way-and will do so in the future. But the single point which is revealed in the New Testament concerning Israel’s future is that God will remove the hardening and that “all Israel” will be saved. It is, therefore, correct to stress God’s {24} own work in relation to the salvation of Israel. But that does *not* mean that God will depart from the only way of salvation: through faith in Jesus the Messiah (cf. Acts 4:12). Often God’s own work is stressed in a way that excludes faith. This seems to be the consequence of Mussner’s view when he says: “The hardening, which is ordered by God, can only be canceled by God, not by a performance of faith by Israel.”⁸⁰ Without doubt, God is the one who will remove Israel’s hardening. But that does not make faith superfluous. It makes faith possible. A great change will take place in the future when the God-given hardening is removed. All Israel will come to faith (cf. 11:23, 26) in Christ.

Israel’s salvation does not take place apart from the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

Mussner’s expression “performance of faith” (German: “*Glaubensleistung*”) is also surprising. In Paul’s theology, faith in Christ is no human achievement but a gift (cf. Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8), given in connection with the preaching of the gospel (cf. Romans 10:17). This must not be forgotten in connection with Israel’s salvation. When Paul in Romans 11:13 speaks about salvation of Jews, “save” obviously is “a missionary term.”⁸¹ Even if God is the logical

⁷⁷ Cf. Nikolaus Walter, “Zur Interpretation von Romer 9-11,” *ZThK* 81 (1984), pp. 172-195; esp. p.181.

⁷⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come. A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, Grand Rapids, 1964, pp. 505f.

⁷⁹ This is clearly demonstrated by H. Ridderbos, *Paul*, pp. 556-559.

⁸⁰ Franz Mussner, *Die Kraft der Wurzel*, Freiburg, 1987, p. 53. 81 E. Kasemann, *Romans*, p.306.

⁸¹ E. Kasemann, *Romans*, p. 306.

subject in 11:26a, the missionary aspect cannot be excluded. God's salvation is offered to mankind-Jews and Greeks equally-through the preaching of the gospel. When Paul emphasizes that "God has the power (*dynatos gar estin ho theos*) to graft them in again" (11:23b), this power is related to the gospel.⁸² According to Romans 1:16, it is the gospel which is "the power of God (*dynamis gar theou estin*) for salvation!" Nothing more and nothing else. Furthermore, the fact that Israel's salvation is so closely connected "with the gentile mission shows that the salvation of Israel does not take place apart from Christ."⁸³ More precisely: Israel's salvation does not take place apart from the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Therefore, the gospel has to be proclaimed to the Jews.

⁸² D. Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*, p. 245.

⁸³ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p.194; cf. also D. Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*, p.257.

{30} Did God Reject the Jews? Romans 11:15

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English versions generally render Romans 11:15 in about this way: “For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”¹ The obvious grammatical implication here is that of an objective genitive, i.e., that God has rejected them, namely, Israel (v. 7). This is usually stated explicitly by paraphrases and commentators?²

However, in the same context (vv. 1-2), Paul proclaims most solemnly and unmistakably: “Did God reject his people? By no means! ... God did not reject his people, whom He foreknew ...”³ Well, did God reject Israel (v. 15), or did He not (vv. 1-2)? A simple reading of 11:1-15 in the versions mentioned in notes 1 and 2 leaves readers in confusion: Paul must have contradicted himself.

But Paul used different terminology: *apothomai* in vv. 1-2 and *apobole* in v. 15. It appears that the translations “reject” and “rejection” may fabricate a false contradiction. Some commentators attempt to gloss over the manufactured conflict with the explanation that God’s rejection of Israel in v. 15 was only temporary.⁴ Others try to solve the problems by claiming that God rejected Israel only partially, that is, they distinguish between Paul’s uses of “Israel” and “God’s people” in the context as referring to the majority of Jews who rejected the gospel and the minority who accepted it,⁵ as if *apobole* and *proslēpsis* in the same sentence would pertain severally to the hardened majority

¹ So the NIV; similarly: AV, RSV, Phillips, TEV, NASB, NEB, NKJV.

² So LB; AAT (Beck): GWN (1989); John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans. tr. J. Owen, repr.: Calvin’s Commentaries. Vol. X I X, Grand Rapids, 1979, p. 424; E.H. Gifford, The Epistle of St. Paul to Romans, Minneapolis, 1977, p. 195; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 5th ed., International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 325; Georg Stockhardt, Commentar uber den Brief Pauli an die Romer, St. Louis, 1907, pp. 517f.; Frederic Louis Godet, Commentary on Romans, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 403; H.C.G. Moule, The Epistle to the Romans, London, p. 299; Paul E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible: The New Testament, Vol. II, St. Louis, 1924, p. 60; R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, tr. C. C. Rasmussen, Philadelphia, 1949, p. 397; Matthew Black, Romans, New Century Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids, 1973, p. 144; J. C. O’Neill, Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Harmondsworth, 1975, pp. 148f.; John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, Vol. II, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, 1979, p. 81; C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Vol. II, International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh, 1979, p. 562; Roy A. Harrisville, Romans, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament, Minneapolis, 1980, p.180; Concordia Self-Study Bible, Robert G. Hoerber, ed., St. Louis, 1986, n. on 11:15.

³ So NIV; similarly, the other versions in n. 1 and 2.

⁴ Nygren, pp. 397,404; Paul Althaus, *Der Brief an die Romer*, 9th ed., *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*, Vol. 6, Gottingen, 1959, p.108; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Grand Rapids, 1963, p. 220; *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, n. on 11:15.

⁵ So Stockhardt, pp. 517f.; Kretzmann, p. 60; Lenski, p. 704; Martin H. Fanzmann, *Romans, Concordia Commentary*, St. Louis, 1968, pp. 201, 206; O’Neill, p.178; Hartmut Gunther, “Der Romerbrief des Paulus: Einweisung in die Biblische Theologie,” *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, 4:1977, pp. 78-80; J. W. MacGorman, *Romans, 1 Corinthians, Layman’s Bible Book Commentary*, Vol. 20, Nashville, 1980, p. 80.

and the saved minority. But the context clearly indicates that the actual Israel of history as a whole is being spoken of throughout; the positive statements in vv. 1, 2 and 15 all point unmistakably to much more than just the elect remnant of Israel.⁶

In his discourse on the “Jewish question” in chs. 9-11, Paul does indeed distinguish between Christian and non-Christian Jews. But he does this principally in ch. 9, where he must first apply the fact established earlier (3:9-31), that both Jews and Gentiles can be saved only by God’s grace through faith in Christ. Therefore, whoever believes in the Messiah sent by God to Israel in fulfillment of His promise is a true spiritual Jew and descendent of {31} Abraham (9:6-8), is really chosen by God (9:24), and is a member of the sacred remnant of Israel (9:27). This emphasis is alluded to just twice more (10:16; 11:5), as Paul turns to stress other aspects of the whole problem in ch.10 and 1:1-15.

It can therefore only make sense in 11:15 that Israel as a whole is meant; in particular, the large majority that has not embraced the gospel of the Christ. This majority is referred to as God’s people (vv. 1-2), Israel (vv. 2,7) and Paul’s “flesh” (i.e., his own ethnically-related people; v.14). Most often, it is so obvious that Paul is speaking of non-Christian Jews in this context that he simply refers to them as “they,” “them” or “their,” as the case may be: It is “they” who “killed the prophets” (v. 3), who stumbled and transgressed (vv. 11-12), whom Paul seeks to move to jealousy (v. 14), etc. They are once contrasted with the chosen remnant of Christian Jews (v. 7; cf. v. 5) as the rest of Israel that is hardened in unbelief against Christ.

At the beginning of this discourse, Paul expressed his intense concern for his brethren and kinsmen “according to the flesh” (9:1-3; cf.10:1). He suffered anguish over this tragic state of affairs for two reasons: First, his fellow Israelites (cf. 11:1) were spiritually lost; and secondly, the apparent contradiction (that the people of Israel failed to accept the Messiah of Israel) threatened to undermine the entire validity of the Christian gospel. Could Jesus be the divinely-promised Messiah of the Jews (and, therefore, the Savior of the gentiles) if His own people did not accept Him?

At the end of this discourse, Paul solemnly proclaims that his understanding and solution of this “Jewish question” is a “mystery” (evidently revealed to him by God; 11:25), a solution that finally moves him to burst into one of the most beautiful and oft-cited doxologies to God (11:33-36). This, at least, involves the fact that neither has God (finally) rejected Israel “according to the flesh” (11:1-2; cf.14), nor have they (finally) fallen (v.11; cf. 23-24), for “irrevocable are the gifts and the calling of God” (v.29; cf. 9:4-5).

Now, back to Paul’s terminology for “reject”: *apostato* (11:1,2) does indeed mean “reject,” “thrust away,” “cast off” in Greek. It appears, however, that Paul is referring to 1 Samuel 12:22 and Psalms. 94:14, where the corresponding word in Hebrew is best rendered “abandon.”⁷ This may allow for a different nuance in meaning. It is not so much that Israel, once acceptable to God, might now be rejected by Him. It is rather that Israel, long in a covenant relationship with God (9:4-5), could now be abandoned by Him. Of course, the basic idea could also be conveyed by rendering “reject.”

In contrast, *apobole* in 11:15 is all but a clear case. It occurs only once elsewhere in the New Testament, where it means “loss” (of life; Acts 27:22). Interestingly, in the same context an etymologically related word, *ekbole*, is employed for {32} “jettison” (what is thrown overboard, ejected; 27:18). The frequently occurring cognate verb, *ekballo*, generally

⁶ Ably argued by Sanday and Headlam, p. 335; Cranfield, pp. 576f.; Werner Monselewski, “Zum 10, Sonntag nach Trinitatis, 2 August 1970.” *Friede Ober Israel* 3/ 1970, p. 88.

⁷ *Natash* in Ps. 94:14, parallel to a *zav*, “forsake,” “abandon”: cf. Brown-Driver-Briggs and Koehler-Baumgartner, *ad passim*.

means “throw out,” “expel” (e.g., Mt. 21:12; Gal. 4:30). The related verb, *apoballo* (the cognate verb for *apobole*), is twice used in the sense of, “cast off,” “reject” (Mk. 10:50; 1 Tim. 4:4). But the only other time it appears in the New Testament, it most probably means “lose” (confidence; Heb. 10:35).

Although *apobole* could conceivably denote “rejection” in Romans. 11:15,⁸ it is somewhat more probable that it should mean “loss.” This is bolstered by a consideration of the kind of genitive most likely involved with *auton* (“their”). As indicated above, most versions and commentators take it to be an objective genitive, i.e., someone rejected them (the Jews); the “someone” is understood as God. An exception is the Berkeley Bible (which paraphrases somewhat for the sake of clarity: “For if the rejection on their part means the world’s reconciliation ...”), as well as the commentators, Don J. Kenyon and Eugene H. Haly.⁹

God has not finally rejected His people Israel; God still has salvation in store for many of them; what was once their “loss” they shall yet “receive.”

For God to be the subject for an action on Israel, however, we must perhaps go as far back in the text as v.2 or at least to v. 8, which is loosely quoted by Paul from Isaiah. 29:10; 6:9-10 and Deuteronomy. 29:4. On the other hand, in the more immediate context preceding v.15, it is Israel who is consistently the subject: They stumble and seemingly fall (but not really, v.11). More significantly, the same construction as in v.15 is employed four times in vv. 11-12: “their transgression” (twice), “their failure”¹⁰ and “their fullness.”¹¹ In each case, we have a subjective genitive with the Jewish people being the subject: they transgressed, failed and become full.

“Failure” offers a potentially close parallel in sense to *apobole* in v. 15: Following the sequence of “not obtain” (v. 7) and “failure” (v.12), the rendering of “loss” for *apobole* (v.15), with Israel as the subject (those who suffer the loss), makes the best sense in the immediate context. Furthermore, this understanding resolves any tension with the categorical statements denying God’s rejection of Israel in vv. 1 and 2. Indeed, it was none other than Martin Luther who rendered as “loss” (*Verlust*) in his German Bible of 1545.¹²

⁸ So Bauer - Arndt - Gingrich - Danker (BAGD).

⁹ *The Modern Language Bible: The New Berkeley Version*, rev. ed., Grand Rapids, 1969; Don J. Kenyon, *The Glory of Grace: An Interpretation of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, Vol. 2, Harrisburg, 1979, pp. 122f; Eugene H. Haly, *Romans, New Testament Message: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Vol 9. Wilmington, 1979, pp. 91, 94.

¹⁰ *Hettema* is best rendered “defeat,” as I Cor. 6:7 (so BAGD; cf. the cognate verb, *hettaomai*, in 2 Pet. 2:19). Thus, it could be rendered “loss,” but since this is ambiguous and “defeat” lacks a proper contextual reference in its usual sense, “failure” (so NASB) appears to be best (cf. “not obtain” in v. 7).

¹¹ *Pleroma* likely means here “full number”; cf., e.g., Martin Luther, *Romans Lecture of 1515-1516*, Ellwein Munchen, 1928, p. 389; Stockhardt, p. 516; BAGD.

¹² Martin Luther, *Biblia: Das ist die gantze Heilige Schrift Deudsch auff’s New zugericht*, Wittenberg, 1545, Hans Volz, ed., 3 vols., Munchen, 1974; it is also rendered “Verlust” in an edition of Luther’s *Romans Lectures, Der Brief an die Romer*, Chr. G. Eberle, ed., Stuttgart, 1978. p. 278. “Verlust” was revised by editors much later to “Verwerfung” (rejection), as in the current edition of the *Lutherbibel*. That Luther rendered “Verwerfung” in his *Romans Lectures of 1515-1516* (Ellwein ed., p. 389), carries very little weight, since this was both before the likely date of his decisive and full understanding of the gospel (his “tower experience”; cf. Lowell C. Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel*, Fallbrook, 1980, pp. 34-35, 62-65, 93-96, 100) and his translation of the Bible. It is therefore unfortunate that the American Edition of Luther’s Works (St. Louis: Concordia), which omitted some of his later works, included the *Romans lectures* (vol. 25, 1972), which are really pre-Reformational in the understanding of the gospel. This also holds true, of course, for Luther’s *Psalms Lectures of 1513-1515* (vols. 10-11, 1974, 1976; cf. John R. Wilch, “Luther as Interpreter: Christ in the Old Testament,” *Consensus*, IX=3 ([July, 1983], pp. 3-9). The Walch German edition (St. Louis concordia, 1880-1910) wisely omitted these early lectures.

The contrasting expression in v.15 *proslēmpsis* (“acceptance”),¹³ is commonly construed as God accepting Israel. The noun can just as easily, however, denote “reception,” that is, receiving what had been sought (v.7). It can thus build {33} a proper contrast to “loss.” Indeed, it is this reversal of the situation that is one of Paul’s themes in his following “parable” of the olive tree (vv. 17-24; particularly the eventuality of the broken-off branches being grafted back in again, vv. 23-24).¹⁴

It is therefore to be concluded: First, the subject of *apobole* and *proslēmpsis* in Rom. 11:15 is Israel, i.e., the historical Jewish people as a whole, as elsewhere in 11:1-15, the vast majority of Jews who have not accepted the Christian gospel.

Secondly, *apobole* means here “loss,” that is, the “failure” (v.12) of the majority of Jews to obtain what they sought (v. 7), namely, righteousness and salvation with God (vv. 11, 14), for they transgressed against God (vv.11-12; cf. the Scriptural quotations in vv. 3-4, 8-10).

Thirdly, *proslēmpsis* in v.15 refers to the Jewish people’s eventual “receiving” of what they had sought, which Paul immediately characterizes as life from the dead. (Paul himself expects to be the instrument of saving only “some” Jews by arousing them to envy through his ministry to gentiles [vv. 13-14], thus keeping alive a “remnant” of Christian believers in Israel [v. 5].) Later, after digressing to warn Gentile Christians against becoming proud and despising non-Christian Jews (vv. 17-22), he portrays this “receiving” as being grafted back “into their own olive tree” (vv. 23-24).

Thus, God has not finally rejected His people Israel according to the flesh (vv. 1-2); they have not finally fallen (v. 11); God still has righteousness and salvation in store for many of them; what was once their “loss,” they shall yet “receive” (v.15).

It is therefore our duty as gentile Christians to witness our faith and salvation to Jewish people lovingly, faithfully, and sacrificially, so that there may at least continue to be a saved remnant among them and that, according to God’s mercy, many of them may be “grafted back in” to His one people.”¹⁵

¹³ *Proslēmpsis* appears without the pronoun *auton*, which does not need to be repeated; so Lenski, (p.704). While Sanday and Headlam define *apobole* from *proslēmpsis* (p.325), Cranfield does the opposite (p.562).

¹⁴ *Proslēmpsis* occurs in Ecclesiasticus 10:21 together with *ekbole* in a sense potentially close to Rom. 11:15: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of acceptance: obduracy and pride are the beginning of rejection” (so Black, p. 144). However, this verse is a gloss that was added later, probably as a theological comment (so John G. Snaith: *Ecclesiasticus. The Cambridge Bible Commentary*, Cambridge, 1974. p. 57). Therefore, its evidence is too late and too weak: neither God as the subject of the nouns, nor the use of *ekbole* could have had any influence on Rom. 11:15.

¹⁵ This sense is noted by Luther in his marginal comment on 11:15 in his 1545 Bible: “...sollen die todten Juden von der Heiden Exempel zum Leben gereizt werden...” (“...the dead Jews should be aroused to life by the example of the gentiles...”), vol. 3, p. 2288.

{36} Evangelical Objections to Jewish Evangelism

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Evangelicals are not in the habit of insisting that the Church should exclude the Jewish people in her world-wide evangelistic mission. If they were, the preparation of this paper would be a straightforward task. It would only have been a matter of selecting several representative statements and evaluating them in the light of scripture.

And yet, there are Evangelicals who use scripture in order to justify their contention that Jewish evangelism is not a priority for the Church in our day. In this paper we shall first establish the biblical basis for Jewish evangelism. We will then probe possible reasons for the growing resistance to this ministry advanced by some Evangelicals. Because of the use made of Scripture to support their arguments, we shall make brief mention of the hermeneutical principles involved. The major part of this paper will be devoted to identifying several anti-Jewish mission themes in current evangelical use, tracing their rootage and weighing their validity. We will conclude by listing other related themes worthy of discussion.

What of Jesus, Paul and the New Testament?

In his important study, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*,¹ Joachim Jeremias makes important observations about the earthly ministry of our Lord; 1) that He pronounced judgment on the intense missionary activity of the Jewish people in His day (Mt. 23:15); 2) that He deliberately instructed His disciples during His lifetime not to evangelize non-Jews (Mt. 10:5ff.); 3) that He limited His own ministry to Israel; and 4) that His ushering of the messianic age would manifest an enlargement of God's salvation "to the Jew first" so as to include the nations. The climax would be a Messianic banquet to which believing Jews and Christ's "other sheep" from the gentile world would be invited. As Johannes Munck vividly stated:² "The reason why Jesus came to Israel was precisely because his mission concerned the whole world."

Few would disagree with the thesis that Paul knew himself as "an apostle to the gentiles" (Acts 26:17; Rom. 11:13). When he was in Jerusalem, the {37} leadership of the church perceived that he "had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised" and directed that he "should go to the gentiles" (Gal. 2:7, 9). As a result, when he concluded his letter to the Romans it was natural for him to bear witness to the grace of God that led him "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the gentiles" (15:16). On this basis it would be quite natural to conclude that such a person would only devote minimal effort to evangelizing Jews.

And yet, Acts records that everywhere Paul went, he gave priority to Jewish evangelism. The invariable pattern of his missionary journeys to the cities of the eastern Mediterranean was to

¹ Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, London, 1958. Also Mt. 8:11; 24:14; Lu.13:28, 29; Ps. 107:1-3; Mal. 1:11; etc.

² Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, Richmond, 1959, p. 266.

go first to the synagogues and only later reach out to the gentiles (e.g. 13:14-43, then 44-49). Acts ends with Paul in Rome surrounded by Jewish leaders and “trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets” (28:23). He saw both Jews and gentiles alike in their guilt before God (Rom. 3:9, 19) and described the gospel as “the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (1:16). No one seriously challenges the thesis that Paul regarded the gospel as intended for Jews as well as gentiles. Throughout the apostolic age we hear no apostle stating that the gospel should not be preached to the Jews. Indeed, their norms for the missionary task of the people of God are derived from three basic postulates: 1) The universality of the gospel. Salvation is God’s gift to all peoples: all are guilty, from the pious Pharisee to the prostitute and publican. Hence no one should be excluded from its promise of forgiveness and divine acceptance. 2) The essence of the Church. Whereas the synagogue is based on a blood relationship, the Church is based on a spiritual principle that transcends racial and social boundaries. Even Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel, had to be born again if he were to see, much less enter, the Kingdom of God (John. 3:1-21). The Church is inconceivable without the successive inclusion of Jews, generation by generation, reborn through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. 3) The Christians’ obligation to accept the authority of Jesus Christ. Their loyalty can only be demonstrated by obedience to His command that disciples are to be made of all peoples, including those most dear to His heart—the Jewish people.³ Evangelicals have long accepted these three postulates and, over the years, have sought to evangelize the Jewish people.

Evangelical Resistance to Jewish Evangelism-Why?

In recent decades, many Evangelicals have been drawing back from the commitment to Jewish evangelism. Various reasons are given for this, but a case can be made for the largely indirect impact of two significant books. I doubt whether many evangelical leaders have read them. But their fall-out has created a widespread climate of doubt in the Christian movement today.

{38} I refer to Rosemary Ruether’s *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (1974) and to Samuel Sandmel’s *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament* (1978). Written by representatives of the Christian and Jewish communities, these books have significantly accomplished three goals: 1) They have given Christians a painful sense of unease over Church history; 2) They have pressed evangelicals to revise their confidence in the wholesome impact of New Testament scripture references on the Jewish people; and 3) They have provided denominational leaders with reasons to turn away from the evangelization of the Jewish people.

The media (TV and press) have also been involved in reminding Christians of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry, and by pointing out that church leaders in those days tolerated, even furthered, the oppression of the Jews. It is probable that Christians today know far more about the Holocaust than they did 20 years ago. The media have also stirred up the Jewish community. As a result, Evangelicals engaged in Jewish evangelism are becoming increasingly conscious of a new militancy among Jewish leaders toward those who would seek to evangelize their people. They constantly warn that friendly relations between the two communities are being jeopardized by proselyting activity. The result is predictable. Increasingly one finds Evangelicals who question the propriety of focusing evangelism “on any one people.” In their eyes it disrupts social harmony.

³ For a representative development of these and related themes consult Jakob Jocz, “The Theological Validity of Jewish Missions;” *International Review of Missions*, Vol. 94, April 1947, pp. 357-369.

In the face of these growing pressures, many Evangelicals have been looking for either a dilution of the traditional imperative to share the gospel with the Jews, or for a new biblical perspective that does away with this obligation altogether.⁴ They are currently being told that there are conflicting opinions in the New Testament on the Christian response to non-Christian Jews. They are even hearing that Paul changed his mind about Jewish evangelism and that this involved him in a deliberate and significant shift in his own ministry, away from his earlier confrontational approach. This idea will be dealt with later.

The Scripture: A Nose of Wax to Be Twisted?

Evangelicals are committed to accepting the full inspiration and consequent authority of the Bible. It is the Word of God - written! But it must be carefully handled (2 Cor. 4:1-2). It is not a “nose of wax” to be twisted on impulse to suit one’s fancy, as Luther warned us. Hence, before we seek to evaluate the biblical studies that have thrown up phrases antithetical to Jewish missions, we do well to make a few brief comments of the “new hermeneutic” they reflect. Four tendencies have been detected:

1) The tendency to superimpose an inadequately established theological construct on Scripture. For instance, if one believes that God is through with {39} the Jewish people, then Scripture can be made to support this view.

2) The tendency to allegorize Jesus’ parables in ways that negate their intended meaning. If one reduces the parables to mere literary vehicles to carry one’s particular fancy, there is no limit to the strange freight they can be made to haul.

3) The tendency to ignore the plain teaching of Scripture because of the desire to compensate for the anti-Semitism of the past, particularly the Holocaust, and the Church’s more recent lack of enthusiastic support of the State of Israel. We should “speak tenderly” to the Jewish people, not trouble them (Isa.40:1, 2).

4) The tendency to handle Scripture in a subjective fashion by extracting texts from their context, ignoring key passages bearing on the subject in question, or by reading into texts perspectives on Jewish righteousness and Jewish salvation that can only generate false hope.

We will now proceed with three key themes that need clarification and correction. Each one will be introduced by an affirmation that is unwarranted, but quite popular in our day.

1. “Make disciples of all the gentiles.” (Mt. 28:19)

A great deal of scholarly attention has recently been given to the alleged “gentile bias” of the Gospel of Matthew and from this to the conclusion that the Great Commission does not give the Church warrant for including the Jewish people in her missionary obedience.⁵ Whereas it is granted that individuals of Jewish heritage may from time to time come to faith in Jesus, the

⁴ The widespread popularity of the so-called “Two Covenant Theory” is a case in point, with its facile and unwarranted thesis that whereas the Sinaitic Covenant is for the Jewish people the “New” Covenant instituted by Jesus is for gentiles. This means two allegedly valid ways of salvation, applicable to two separate peoples in the economy of God. Since this theory has been discussed in MISHKAN (No. 11/1989), I have decided not to discuss it in this paper. The article by Robert M. Price, “An Evangelical Version of the ‘Double Covenant’: New Possibilities for Jewish-Fundamentalist Dialogue” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Winter 1983, pp. 33-42, poses a challenge that should be met.

⁵ Douglas R.A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, “Make Disciples of All the Gentiles,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 37, 1975, pp. 359-367.

overall direction of salvation-history is away from Israel and on to the gentile world. Not unnaturally, the definitive text is found in the climax of our Lord's parable of the wicked husbandmen (21:33-43): "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it."

This thesis-that Israel has been replaced by the Church-becomes the basis for determining that Matthew could hardly have included Israel in the phrase "all nations" (*panta ta ethne*) in the Great Commission. Admittedly, of Christ's eight uses of *ethnos/ethne*, six refer clearly to gentiles (4:15; 10:5, 18; 12:18, 21; 21:43). The other two might possibly include Israel, but this is not decisive (e.g., "You will be hated by all nations for my name's sake" 24:9; also 24:7).

Consider the way in which Matthew describes the final judgment ("Before the Son of man will be gathered all the nations"-25:32). It is widely agreed that in this passage "*panta ta ethne*" are to be judged on the basis of their {40} treatment of Israel (Gen. 12:3; Joel 3:1-3; Eze. 39). Furthermore, when our Lord stated that the Twelve "will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (19:28), he naturally implied that the Jewish people would be treated differently and separately at the end of the age. The nations in this judgment scene (25:31-46) have had no conscious or direct contact with Jesus. They are surprised at what he said: "Lord, when did we see thee..." (25:37)? Furthermore, Matthew gives intimations that Israel's rejection of the gospel was foreordained (13:11-15); that it was total (22:4-7); and that, as a result, God had rejected the nation: "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate" (23:38). How natural then for the resurrected Christ to commission his disciples: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all gentiles."

It is rather tragic that some of the verses cited above appear to have been used in early patristic literature to separate the Jewish people from the evangelistic concern of the Church. In his comments on 15:37 Origen stated: "The apostles did that which had been commanded them in Judea and Jerusalem; but since a prophet has no honor in his own country, when the Jews did not receive the word, they went away to the *ethne*."⁶ In similar vein Chrysostom commented on the words of Jesus: "Go not into the road of the *ethne*." He then makes Jesus say: "Go, make disciples of *panta ta ethne* and declare that the Father also wills this. This scandalized the Jews very much and even the disciples."⁷

Well, what do we say to this? Admittedly, the patristic quotes are not irresistible, but what do we do with this seemingly plausible handling of a considerable spread of texts in Matthew? Do they confirm the underlying presupposition that, because of the crucifixion of Jesus, some other nation has displaced Israel in the ongoing redemptive purpose of God? This is what the Catholic Church has long taught. As a result, no biblical passage is more central to the Catholic view than the Matthean account (16:16-18) of Peter being named the rock on which a new nation-the Church-was to be formed. From henceforth Jews would no longer have any special relationship in the expanding Kingdom of God. Israel had brought upon herself the enduring curse of God when, at Jesus' trial, "all the people" cried out: "His blood be on us and on our children" (27:25). Only since Vatican II has the Catholic Church begun to question her understanding of herself as the "True Israel of God."

Frankly, I believe that unless we have a clear view of the overall purpose which Matthew had in mind in writing his gospel, we will always have a nagging suspicion that evangelizing the Jewish people is not a priority task. How should we read Matthew? He has two objectives: 1) To show that Jesus is the long-expected fulfillment of Israel's expectations and 2) Jesus' mission was to "save his people from their sins" (1:1,21). John the Baptist informs us that

⁶ Hare and Harrington, p. 367. Origen's Commentary on Mt. 13:57 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 10, p. 426.

⁷ Ibid. p. 368. John Chrysostom's Homily on John. 17:1-5, *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 41, pp. 368, 369.

Israel does not automatically share salvation and the Kingdom of God {41} on the basis of genealogy. The Jesus John presents will not save all Israelites, nor will he abandon all Israelites. He will sift them. He only blesses those whose lives are in accord with the will of God (7:21). In effect, the Sermon on the Mount was a call to break with the distortions of truth represented by the religious establishment. Significantly, Jesus did not identify Israel with rabbinic Judaism. Rather, He called for the reconstitution of Israel under the headship of the Messiah and this Kingdom charter. His first Great Commission, though worldwide by implication, particularly applied to Israel (10:1-23; note vv. 18, 23 particularly).

When our Lord gives his second Great Commission, his phrase “all peoples” must include Israel.

As to his own ministry, Jesus experienced both rejection and acceptance; He saved Israel by dividing Israel. His parables confirmed his sifting of Israel; they clarified truth to those who receive His authority. To the unbelieving, the parables remained obscure stories devoid of spiritual significance. Although Jesus mounted no polemic against Israel as a people, He was in almost constant controversy with those who elevated human tradition above Scripture. In the end, He designated Peter (16:17-19) as the leader of the emerging Jewish Messianic community by using Old Testament terminology; it was the remnant with whom God would be well pleased.

This is the key to understanding Matthew. Jesus steps outside the establishment and selects Peter, one whose knowledge of truth came from the Father (16:17), whose leadership came not from “Moses’ seat” (23:2), and whose authority was likewise from God (16:18,19).

In the darkest chapter in all Scripture (Matt. 23), apart from the crucifixion, Jesus denounced the tyranny of the religious leaders of His day. He lamented their failure and called His people to follow Him and the new shepherds He had appointed. The only alternative was for them to remain bound to the tyranny of the old shepherds who were “blind to the mysteries of the kingdom:” Jerusalem and the temple—the centers of their power—will be destroyed, but not the whole people of Israel (24:31, 34). The community of the Messiah will prevail, despite the efforts of “the powers of Hades” to overcome it (16:18). It is most significant that Matthew alone of the evangelists records Jesus’ response to Peter’s query on behalf of the Twelve regarding their future:

Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man shall sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28).

{42} Those who participated in Jesus’ ministry to Israel shall enter His glorious reign over the whole Messianic people of God, including the gentiles. This particular pericope ends with the prediction: “Many that are first (the religious establishment), will be last, and the last (the twelve, along with the believing-remnant) first” (19:30).

This brings us finally back to Jesus’ parable of the wicked householders in which the Kingdom is to be given to a nation (*ethnos*) producing the fruits of it (21:43). The word *ethnos* by itself in the New Testament never refers to a group of peoples, (i.e., to all gentiles), but only to a single, particular, ethnic, national group. What then did Jesus mean? Mark says, “He will give the vineyard to others” (12:9). The tenants are replaced, but not Israel, the vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7). Note the verse which is often overlooked and which invariably follows this parable in the Synoptics: “When the chief priests and the

Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking about them” (21:45; Mark 12:12; Luke 20:19). His controversy was not with the nation as such.⁸

Many other things could be drawn from this gospel in support of our thesis that Jesus saved his people from their sins through a sifting process that ended with the Kingdom being taken from the religious leaders of that day and given to a community over whom they will never again have control. The parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14) only reinforces this sequence of thought, and ends with an intimation that gentiles too shall be invited. Hence, when our Lord gives his second Great Commission (28:18-20), his phrase “*panta ta ethne*” (all peoples) must include Israel. Significantly, in Luke-Acts and the writings of John and Josephus, *ethnos is* often used to refer to the Jewish people.

2. “What right do Gentiles have to evangelize Jews?”

Anyone who has read widely in the field of Jewish-Christian relations today will have encountered allusions to one of our Lord’s parables. They will also agree that parables are never given careful exegesis. Nevertheless, they are often used to provide the punch-line or clincher to discussion on the evangelization of the Jewish people. I refer, of course, to the parable of the waiting father (The Prodigal Son-Luke 15:11-32). At a time when “tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus,” the Pharisees and scribes were murmuring: “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (vv. 1, 2).

In response Jesus gave two parables: the Lost Sheep (vv. 3-7) and the Lost Coin (vv. 8-10) and spoke of “joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (vv. 7, 10). He then added this parable to reinforce the import of the other two parables by identifying this heavenly joy with God Himself:

{43} He is the waiting father who yearns for and delights in the repentance of His people. Indeed, no serious commentary fails to give this explanation. But, lo and behold, in the literature referred to above, we find that what Jesus intended by this parable was to portray “the relationship between Jews and repentant gentiles.” This statement along with much alleged supporting material is found in a book written by Marcus Barth (p. 30) shortly after the 1967 Six Day War. It was a time of “renewed political tension in the Near East and of continuing passivity and misunderstanding among Christians in their position toward Israel” (p. 5). His intention in writing was to establish by this parable the thesis that the Christian (the repentant gentile) has a senior brother (the Jew) whom he has wronged and with whom he must seek reconciliation and identity. The following are some of Barth’s statements:

The priority and hard labor of Israel is as little disputed as the shameful life of the goi with the swine. Their history is different: the one has many things to be proud of; the other has absolutely nothing. The first is in a position to judge the other; the other has coming to him whatever humiliation and punishment may be in store. But the two are not

⁸ What is “the nation” to whom the Kingdom of God is given (Mt. 21:43)? D.A. Carson states: “The leaders failed so badly in handling God’s ‘vineyard’ and rejecting God’s Son that God gave the responsibility to another people who would produce the Kingdom’s fruit (cf. 7:16-20). Strictly speaking, then, vs 43 does not speak of transferring the locus of the people of God from Jews to gentiles ... the locus now extends far beyond the authority of the Jewish rulers (cf. Acts 13:46, 185-6; I Peter 2:9); instead, it speaks of the ending of the role the Jewish religious leaders played in mediating God’s authority” (p. 454). *Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Matthew*, Vol. 8, Grand Rapids: 1984. In this connection F.V. Filson also asks: “What is the nation which yields the fruit of repentance (3:8) and obedient faith? A renewed Israel under loyal leadership? Another nation? A new people combining the loyal of Israel with faithful people from east and west (8:11)? Probably the last (28:19)” (p. 229, 230). *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, New York, 1960.

*left to themselves. God is the father of both, and thus they are and remain brothers. It is not the junior brother's right or mission to reproach his senior. The father has reserved it to himself to call his older son to take part in the joy of his house together with the junior. This puts more than a damper or caveat upon traditional methods used by Christians to convert the Jews. Those who behaved like pigs and were saved from the swine can hardly go beyond confessing their guilt and showing fruits of repentance. It is certainly not theirs to prescribe to the Jews from an assumed position of superiority and security.*⁹

It is on this basis that Barth speaks of Jews and gentiles as “one in Christ,” since both have the same Father. No issues such as “true worship, absolute truth, or superior religion” should engage their thought. There is but “one house of salvation,” God’s (p. 31). “Christians cannot help but beg the Jews to join the ecumenical movement, not for the sake of a super-church, but for the search of true knowledge, genuine service, and unity in love and reverence for the one God” (p. 32). “Christians should acknowledge that every Jew who with a burning heart yearns for the Messiah to come unconsciously but implicitly believes in Jesus” (p. 36). And Barth approves of his father’s hearty “Yes” to the group of Jewish scholars who asked him: “Do you think a faithful Jew may please God as much as a faithful Christian?” (p. 122).

Marcus Barth establishes his view on the basis of a very complex, two-volume study of Ephesians. When he responds to the question: “Who is Jesus?” he is most unambiguous in his reply.

{44} *He is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, the Savior of the world, the King of the Jews and as such King of Kings; he is the image or the Word of God; he is the bringer and ruler of the new aion.*¹⁰

Barth is convinced that “the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, and the doctrine of the church are at stake when the Church’s relationship to Israel is considered” (p.100). He is deeply persuaded of God’s faithfulness in electing Israel to be his people and in reaching out to gentiles too. Barth further stresses that salvation is “by grace alone” (p. 101). It’s strange that Barth tends to overlook Christ’s redemptive death and the call to repentance and faith. In contrast he stresses such themes as: “Every gentile is by nature an anti-Semite” (p. 102).

Nobody among the gentiles likes the picture of mankind which is presented by the Jews: elect and yet murmuring, redeemed and yet rebellious, gifted and yet squandering; privileged by unsurpassed grace and yet relying upon righteousness by their own works (p. 103).

The Jewish people are like a mirror in which gentiles see themselves—the sins they do not like to admit, their guilt in the past, and their helplessness in the present. But, Barth argues, there is only one criterion to show whether Christians are honest with God, and that is their solidarity with the Jews (p. 104). If Christians deny their brotherhood with Israel—their solidarity with all Jews—they are excluding themselves from the household of God (p. 104).

What conclusions does Barth draw from this sequence of thought? 1) He does not find in Ephesians “any decision or exhortation” to engage in “mission to the Jews” (p.109). 2) The New Testament neither records nor encourages gentile Christians to seek to evangelize Jews (p. 30). 3) It is the responsibility of God alone to deal with the Jewish people.

Barth’s thought provides such professedly evangelical groups with an apparently valid reason for violating a basic biblical principle. No Christian should ever give up the obligation to

⁹ Marcus Barth, *Israel and the Church*, Richmond, 1969, p. 30.

¹⁰ Op. cit., p.16.

“make disciples of all nations.” Not even in order to further Jewish-Christian relations in Israel, and “to renounce both practically and in principle any pretension to engage in missionary proselytism (that is, efforts to make Jews members of the Church).”¹¹ This goal is without biblical sanction.

Barth’s handling of Scripture also provides support for still another group of Evangelicals, who have found eschatological significance in the establishment of the State of Israel (1948) and who are preoccupied with speculating about the End. Such Christians have been preoccupied with efforts to build a time scheme on isolated texts: “the veil” that lies over the minds of Jews when they read Moses (2 Cor. 3:15), “the nation” that shall be ‘brought {45} forth in a moment’ (Isa. 66:8), and “the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem” that shall repent when “every eye shall see” the Lord (Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7). They regard as futile all efforts to evangelize Jews today and contend that only God can win this people back to himself. They further like to point out that, in the parable of the waiting father, the repentant gentile made no effort to remonstrate with his older Jewish brother.

What do we say to this? No studied response is needed. The total witness of Scripture is markedly different. The Apostle Paul would remind us of his instruction to Timothy in matters of this sort (2 Tim. 2:23-26)!

3. “Even the Apostle Paul altered his view on mission to the Jews.”

The argument goes something like this: Matthew and John differ in the severity with which they portray Jesus’ dealing with the Jewish people and their religious leaders. From this it is argued (rather unconvincingly) that because they did not agree on what might be termed “authentic Judaism;” we must infer that they viewed Jewish evangelism differently. Serious issues are raised by this view which must be faced:

It is recognized that Paul’s early witness to the Jewish people was within the context of the synagogue. He was not regarded as an “outsider” but as one who deviated and therefore was deserving of synagogue discipline (2 Cor. 11:24). His “insider” status meant that his fellow Jews were in a position to hinder his “speaking to the gentiles that they may be saved” (1 Thess. 2:16). However, by the time he was poised to undertake a relief effort on behalf of Messianic Jews in Jerusalem, his status had so changed that he sought help that he might be “delivered from the unbelievers (Jews) in Judea” (Rom. 15:31). Paul contends in Romans that God is totally impartial in His dealings with Jews and gentiles, and totally faithful to Israel (1:16, 2:11, 3:9, 22). He reiterates the Jewish priority (11:29) while affirming that “God has consigned all to disobedience that He may have mercy on all” (11:32). This causes Paul to raise the question: If God deals with everyone impartially and is faithful to Israel, why have so few Jews responded to the gospel? Paul can only say that Israel’s unbelief has opened up the gentile mission, and that when unbelieving Jews see the gentile response, they too will respond out of jealousy (11:11-16, 25-27).

You sense the conclusion of this argument. Since Paul is convinced that God’s sovereign plan is being carried out, he “magnifies” his ministry to gentiles because he is convinced this is his unique contribution to Israel’s salvation (11:13-14). In effect he is saying that the Christian response to Jewish unbelief is not more ardent proselytizing of Jews but more concentration on mission to the gentile world. Apparently, Paul does not believe that one makes the Jewish people “jealous” by preaching to them! This sequence of argument led {46} Paul to shift from

¹¹ Cited by Johannes Verkuyl and drawn from the Declaration of Principles (issued June 24, 1970) of Nes Ammim. *Contemporary Missiology*, Grand Rapids, 1978, p.141.

his earlier pattern of confrontational Jewish evangelism. He will now preach “in the regions beyond;” among the gentiles of the western Mediterranean basin. After all, his reason for writing to the Christians in Rome was to solicit their support and participation in his mission to Spain (15:24).¹²

What do we say to this? In the first place, we must call to mind what has already been said of the Great Commission (Matt. 10:5-23). Although it was directed primarily to the twelve and to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (vs. 6), its details looked beyond this immediate task and intimated an enlarged future mission that would embrace the gentile world (v. 18). It is on this basis that George Eldon Ladd correctly concludes:

*The mission of Jesus’ disciples to Israel will last until the coming of the Son of Man. In spite of her blindness, God has not given up Israel. The new people of God are to have a concern for Israel until the end comes.*¹³

This may be helpful but what of the sequence of Romans 11? I once heard Bishop Krister Stendahl use this passage to demonstrate that, so far as the Apostle Paul was concerned, evangelistic efforts directed toward the Jewish people were distinctly forbidden. His extraction of these verses from the related themes of chapters 1 through 10 was total and without apology. His failure to distinguish between Paul’s concern for individual Jews and his portrayal of God’s purpose for Israel as a collective people was absolutely unwarranted.

We rejoice in the glorious hope of Israel’s ultimate restoration as a nation. But this does not mean we are free to shirk the responsibility to present the gospel of salvation to them now.

We have no right to interpret any part in isolation from the rest. In Romans 11 Paul is telling us that God will bring “all Israel” to faith. The focus is on Israel, the privileged nation with whom God has made an eternal covenant (11:29). Are we to argue that if God is going to bring this nation to conscious faith at the Eschaton, He does not require of us a witness to the Jewish people throughout the Church age? The emphasis of Paul in chapter 9 is primarily on Israelites as individuals (9:4, 15) and on the believing remnant within the larger whole (9:27). Chapter 10 begins with his heart-felt concern and prayer that Jewish people come to faith in Christ (10:1-4). Paul then stresses the importance of an individual’s personal confession of Christ (10:5-10) and the fact that whether people are Jews or gentiles, “Everyone who calls upon {47} the name of the Lord will be saved” (10:11-13). On this basis he develops the thesis that no one (Jew or gentile) will call upon the Lord without knowing of Him. People must be sent to preach the word of God (10:14-17).

It is only at this point that Paul begins to speak of Israel, the nation-”a disobedient and contrary people” (10:18-21). He carries this new theme into chapter 11, bringing it to its eschatological climax, when “all Israel will be saved” (11:26). In effect, he tells us our present task is twofold:

1) Christians, whether Jews or gentiles, are to witness to the Jewish people, who need to know the Savior. This was certainly Paul’s concern. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for he knew that it was “the power of God unto salvation... to the Jew first” (1:16).

¹² For a comprehensive presentation of this sequence of thought consult E. Elizabeth Johnson, “Jews and Christians in the New Testament: John, Matthew and Paul,” *Reformed Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1988-1990, pp. 113-128.

¹³ In his magnum *opus*: *A Theology of the New Testament*, George Eldon Ladd devotes about one page to the mission of the Church (in 630 pages!). Two of his “asides” seem contradictory: “The mission of Jesus’ disciples to Israel will last until the coming of the Son of Man” (p. 200) and “Paul says nothing about Gentile Christians evangelizing Jews” (p. 562).

Of course, we rejoice in the glorious hope of Israel's ultimate restoration as a nation. But this does not mean we are free to shirk the responsibility to present the gospel of salvation to them now. In this connection Donald Grey Barnhouse has correctly stated:

The Gentile believer who has carefully studied this portion of Paul's epistle to the Romans will not find witnessing to the Jews a dreary obligation, but a privilege. The unbelief which we experience in witnessing to individual Jews will be but a testimony to the mercy of God toward us, and will call forth our gratitude toward Him."¹⁴

2) Christians are to press on with the vast task of evangelizing the gentile nations and thereby "provoke Israel to jealousy" (11:11, 14). Prior to Christ, no gentile could be saved without becoming an integral part of Israel. We think of Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1:16), and of Persians who "became Jews" because of the impressive evidence of God's protection of the Jewish people in the days of Haman (Esth 8:16, 17). But when Jesus came and many Jews chose not to receive Him, the greater purpose of God began to unfold. Through the gospel, an enlarged people of God would emerge, consisting of both Jews and gentiles whose transformed lives and aggressive obedience to Him would provoke unbelieving Jews to jealousy. The Jews would then see the folly of their ways and turn to the Lord. Of course, the tragedy today is that very little in gentile Christianity is of the quality and vigor to provoke Israel to jealousy. Even so, God's purpose still stands. There is the potential in Christians for doing the sort of "good works," energized by the indwelling Holy Spirit that can cause outsiders to "give glory to their Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

We conclude by stating: 1) No case has been made for claiming that the apostle Paul turned from the task of taking the gospel "to the Jew first" and became preoccupied with evangelizing gentiles. 2) It is preposterous to contend that the Church is under no obligation to evangelize the Jewish people.

¹⁴ This encouragement is found in Volume N of Dr. Barnhouse's extensive commentary on Romans, *God's Covenants - Romans 9:11-11:36*, p.161. Grand Rapids, 1959.

{50} Response to Jewish Refutations of the Gospel

Walter Riggans

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We need to be able and willing to present the gospel to people of every culture in whatever ways are appropriate, without compromising its truth or uniqueness. There is something uniquely important about being able to give a reasonable defence of our faith in the face of *Jewish* criticisms and challenges. Only Judaism bases its refutation of the gospel on claims of historical and theological priority. It claims this priority in all the major areas of our faith: Tanakh as sacred scripture; a living tradition of interpreting that scripture; belief in the Messiah, his character and work; and even faith in God Himself, His character, attributes and mission.

Here is a typical remark from a Jewish scholar who sees Christianity as an arrogant late-comer to the whole exercise:

Throughout the history of religious controversies between Christians and Jews in the Middle Ages Christianity was on the defensive. The Christians considered themselves called upon to prove the claims they made on behalf of Jesus by endeavoring to show that the vague prophetic promises were all fulfilled in Christ. The Jews had no counter claims to make; they simply refused to be impressed. As the historical custodians of the Bible text as well as of its manifold interpretations, the Jews looked rather amazed and at times even amused at the confidence with which the erstwhile heathen interpreted at their own pleasure the mistaken Scriptures quoted from the Vulgate.¹

Believers cannot ignore these claims, even if they may think that they can safely ignore the criticisms from other faiths. The New Testament itself tells us that in some sense the Jewish people have legitimate claims on God:

Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the Torah, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah ... (Rom.9:4 f.)

As far as the Gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but {51} as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. (Rom.11:28f.)

The question which we have to face is not whether there is any priority, but rather what sort of priority it is. This is the other side of the conviction which we all hold so dearly, namely that if Jesus has nothing to offer the Jewish people, then He has nothing to offer anyone. The gospel does belong to Israel, and it does relate especially to God's people chosen in Abraham. It is the power of salvation for the Jew first. Therefore we must take Jewish Refutations seriously, and we must be serious in our attempts to give proper and persuasive responses.

In my opinion there are ten areas which we need to consider before we begin to do detailed work.

¹ Harry Austyn Wolfson, in Joseph Jacobs, *Jesus As Others Saw Him*, 2nd.ed., 1925, p. vii.

Refutation Literature Stems from Pain as Well as Theology

Much of it is presented in a sharp and angry way, using aggressive and often offensive language. We can hardly throw stones when we remember the volume of abusive and manipulative literature which has been produced against the beliefs and practices of Jewish people. For centuries the only way that Jewish communities could respond to the oppressions and persecutions of Christendom was either by ridiculing the Christian faith, or by arguing away its attraction to Jewish people by claiming that all its valuable content was in any case derived from Judaism. Although the Jewish communities of the West are now able to hold their heads up proudly vis-à-vis their faith, the sense of righteous indignation lives on.

If we fail to appreciate this fact, we may very well end up winning an argument while losing the respect, of the Jewish person with whom we share.

Our Gospel Witness Must Be Full of Grace as Well as Truth

There is a commonplace caricature of evangelists as insensitive people, never listening to what the other person is actually saying, always thinking of their next pat answer, unwilling to allow the other person to present their case, etc. What should sadden and shame us is the extent to which this caricature is accurate. Further, it seems Jewish evangelism gets a higher proportion of such.

All of our lives should be lived out in obedience to two of the Bible's commandments, as we seek to respond to refutations:

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. (Exod.20:39) Love your neighbor as yourself. (Lev.19:18; Matt.22:39)

{52} It is tragic that one so often finds that people involved in Jewish evangelism, especially at the local church level, are either extremely aggressive in their desire to show the emptiness of Judaism, becoming often dogmatic, and occasionally anti-semitic; or on the other hand, insecure and defensive, frightened of discussions about Hebrew syntax and the laws of the Talmud, or paralysed by the horrors of anti-semitism. We need to recover the middle path defined by: a confidence in the truth of the gospel, that the Tanakh does point to Jesus as the Messiah, and that our faith does hold together well under attack, as well as an attractive modesty and humility in our attitude to Jewish people. Jesus' attraction lay as much in His graciousness as His possession of the truth. It still does!

Refutationists Challenge the Gospel's Validity to Gentiles

The claim is constantly made that they are not attacking Christianity per se, nor are they trying to dissuade gentiles from being Christians. Moses Mocatta, who translated the work of the father of all the Refutationists, Isaac Troki, wrote in his preface to Troki's book:

As we Israelites do not seek to impose our faith on others, a practice altogether repugnant to Judaism, it is necessary to premise that the following work is intended exclusively for distribution among our Hebrew community.

While this is true enough to the extent that many such works were only written in Hebrew, so that they were read only by Jews (and Jewish Believers!), nonetheless their intention was to show the irrationality and unviability of the Christian faith, not just its unsuitability for Jewish people. The disclaimer to this is a popular feature of modern works. Sigal says:

It is not, however, the aim of this book to direct criticism at Christians who do not seek to convert Jewish people. This book has been written neither with malice nor with intent to insult either Christians or Christianity.²

It does seem a little naive, does it not, to posit that there is only one God, with one will, and yet that there are two truths about Him, one for Jews and the other for non-Jews. Can we find any basis for this in the revelation of the Tanakh? If these Refutationists proceed to denigrate the character of Jesus, to belittle the integrity of the New Testament witness especially in terms of its understanding of the Tanakh, and to attack the fundamental tenets of our faith, so that Jewish people consider the gospel a web of distortions, errors, and deceptions, how can they seriously expect non-Jews to ignore all this and base their lives on those very foundations?

{53} In MISHKAN 1/1984 (pp.34f) a Jewish believer notes:

In some of the literature there is a clear insinuation that an intelligent and sensitive Jewish person given the same faith data confronting an intelligent and sensitive Gentile, cannot or may not come to the same conclusions about faith. Thus we face a persistent refutationist belief that spiritual and theological truth can be at one and the same time totally false and unacceptable when considered by any few, but true and acceptable for a Gentile.

“Only Ignorant Jews Are Deceived Into Accepting Jesus”

The assumption behind this claim is that the New Testament faith is not Jewish at all, and is therefore to be discounted by any Jewish person who is aware of the truth of the covenant relationship between God and Israel.

No doubt the various levels of deception involved in the Jews for Jesus movement have succeeded in confusing many Jews who are not sufficiently educated in their religious tradition or are not prepared for a more rigorous discussion of its theology.³

Shmuel Golding, a particularly aggressive Refutationist who lives in Jerusalem, writes on this topic with characteristic barb:

...it is not difficult to visualize the kind of people they win over by their message. Paul declares in the New Testament, “we are fools for Christ” (1 Cor.4:10), “I speak as a fool” (2 Cor.11:23), “not many wise men are called” (1 Cor. 1:26). It seems that things today have not changed since the time of Paul.⁴

Hand in hand with this challenge to the Jewish credentials of the gospel goes a most insidious, at times libelous, attack on the integrity of Jewish believers and all Christians who seek to share their faith with Jewish people, an attack which assumes that we are well aware of the fact that only deception and manipulation will convince Jewish people of the truth of something which they consider untrue. We are all perhaps quite used to this sort of thing:

² Gerald Sigal, *The Jew and the Christian Missionary*, 1981, pp. xviii. See also, rabbi Douglas Charing, *What You and Every Missionary to the Jews Should Know*, 1971, p.2; David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, *Jews and “Jewish Christianity,”* 1978, p.13.

³ Rabbi Daniel Polish, in Martin A.Cohen and Helga Croner (eds.), *Christian Mission-Jewish Mission*, 1982, p.163. See also Sigal, *op.cit.*, p.xv; Dov Aharoni Fisch, *Jews for Nothing*, 1984, pp.12f.; Samuel Levine, *You Take Jesus, I’ll Take God*, 1980, p.7.

⁴ Shmuel Golding, *A Counsellor’s Guide*, 1985, p.16.

*Cute tracts and fellowship with music and friendly faces put many unsuspecting Jewish people at ease, and they become very receptive. The door is open to begin a cordial indoctrination of Christian fundamentalism. Many Jewish people fall victim to this missionary trap.*⁵

On the one hand it is important that we do not rise emotionally to this kind of cheap and sloppy reporting. We must bring a sense of dignity, honesty, {54} and maturity to the proceedings, even if our opponents don't. On the other hand, it is also important for us to respond to such accusations calmly, strongly, and publicly. The credibility of the gospel is at stake here, not just our integrity. Do we have the means to make such responses in our various situations?

“Jews Convert Only for Worldly Gain”

This accusation is closely linked in many minds to the previous one, If Christianity is an impossible choice for a mature, religious Jew, then such a Jewish person who does “convert” must do so for an ulterior motive. This may be to escape real or imagined anti-semitism of some sort, or perhaps to advance himself in a “Christian” society or sub-culture. Jewish evangelists are therefore seen as unscrupulous exploiters of the disadvantaged Jew, and genuinely committed Jewish believers are nonetheless seen as self-serving traitors or marginalized inadequates who fell through the Jewish community's welfare net. David Daube has said it in cool, sober fashion:

*The majority of Jews hold that no educated Jew can become a Christian from conviction; the simple truth of Judaism seems to them so clearly superior to the irrational dogma of Christianity that no one in possession of the former could ever come genuinely to believe in the latter.*⁶

From time to time some open-minded Jewish leaders concede that there are a few authentic Jewish believers. One example of such a concession would be that of Rabbi Harry Joshua Stern: “In all fairness it must be stated that some Jews came to Christianity [sic.] out of conviction, especially in days when Christianity possessed no power.”⁷

This may be a grudging and meager compliment, but it is one place to start in response to some attacks on our integrity.

Refutationists Consider Their Work Vital to Jewish Survival

Jewish people everywhere are deeply troubled over any perceived threat to the Jewish community. They are convinced that Jewish believers will simply become assimilated into gentile ways and mores, end up marrying gentile Christians within one to three generations, and be lost to the Jewish people, thus aggravating an already serious situation of decline in Jewish commitment and numbers. Bruce Lieske has discerned this well:

⁵ The Jewish Press, Feb.28th.,1986.

⁶ In his preface to Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, 3rd.ed.,1979, p.1. See also pp.201f.,224f.,391 n.129.

⁷ *Entrusted with Spiritual Leadership*, 1961, p.62.

*The resistance of Jews to the Gospel once it is presented - stems from at least three reasons: sinful human nature, theological conviction, and the fear of assimilation, with consequent loss of identity with the people of Israel .*⁸

{55} Some, perhaps most, responsibility for this Jewish fear must be laid at the Church's feet, since assimilation to gentile ways of thinking, behaving and worshiping has been the cost demanded of Jewish believers through the ages. To this extent, it is a rational fear. But some blame is also to be borne by the Jews, since their leaders have expelled Jewish believers from the Jewish community, and refused to let them live Jewish lives. To this extent, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy to say that Jewish believers will soon be alienated from the Jewish community. However, questions of blame aside, a desperate desire to prevent this theological and social assimilation plays a dominant part in the motivation of Refutationists. We need to appreciate this if we are to respond in effective ways.

This leads us naturally to consider the passionate denial by Refutationists that Jewish Believers can in any way be described as "fulfilled Jews." According to Britain's Rabbi Shmuel Arkush:

*The greatest cause of anguish is the myth that one can become a better, fulfilled Jew by accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah ... to convert to Christianity is an act of treachery. ... Jewish-Christianity is an impossibility.*⁹

This is certainly the accepted wisdom of the various Jewish establishments, and similar sentiments abound in all the literature. If we focus all our attention and conversation on doctrine and biblical interpretation, then we will fail to meet people in their need, and fail to motivate them to a new openness to the gospel. We must always make sure we address this issue of Jewish identity, and that we address it within the context of Jewish community, because the traditional Jewish view that the community discerns and directs the identity of the individual is still very much alive.

The New Testament is Jewish

Jewish Refutationists ignore this fact, in some cases quite deliberately. They insist on criticizing New Testament texts and concepts as though they were part of modern, western, non-Jewish literature. It is obvious that Jewish critics are employing different canons of judgment when they analyze Paul's letters as opposed to their analysis of Targum or Midrash. Already in 1919 Lukyn Williams was insisting that the New Testament treatment of the Tanakh must be judged by Jewish people in accordance with the midrashic hermeneutical principles and standards of its day.¹⁰

This means that whenever a Jewish person informs you that the New Testament is simply not Jewish, then your duty is to find out exactly what he means by that. What criteria is he using to reach that conclusion? It will be important to ascertain just how versed he is in the language and thought of {56} Jewish religious literature of the period. We must stress the Jewishness of the New Testament, not only in terms of *what* it teaches, but also in terms of *how* it teaches.

⁸ *Witnessing to Jewish People*, rev.ed.,1984, p.23.

⁹ *Operation Judaism*, Fact Pack, 1986, p.3.

¹⁰ A. Lukyn Williams, *A Manual of Christian Evidences for Jewish People*, vol.2, 1919, pp.181f.

Combat Quotes of Liberal Christian Scholars

All is fair in love and war. Any “liberal” Christian scholar who seriously questions the virgin birth or the physical resurrection of Jesus is used to show that at last Christians are beginning to realize that traditionally held beliefs are not really viable.¹¹

Of special value to Refutationists is Christian material which seems to reject that God intended Jesus to be Israel’s Messiah. Not simply a repentance from the arrogance and ignorance of the triumphalistic supersessionism of past ages, but a denial of any dimension of fulfillment in Jesus and the New Testament faith of God’s purposes for Israel and the world. Here are two examples from a Refutationist manual: “Jews and Christians both have vocations from God. We are God’s people, and not two different people.”¹² “Our analysis assumes that these missionary activities are wrong.”¹³

Dan Cohn-Sherbok perceptively notes how some contemporary work within the Christian debate sound remarkably like what we are used to hearing within the Jewish-Christian dialogue, but from the Jewish participants! Here are some of the questions he finds on the modern Christian agenda:

“Were the early Christians mistaken in ascribing deity to Jesus? Has the Church been guilty of idolatry ever since? What actually is the New Testament evidence? Is it reliable?”¹⁴

Although it was always necessary for Jewish evangelists to be well grounded in Christian apologetics, it is more important now than ever.

In What Sense Did Jesus Establish Messianic Shalom?

This is one of the two most common criticisms about Jesus being the Jewish Messiah. They hold Jesus was rejected because he was a man of violence, not true peace (e.g. Matt.10:34f.; Luke 19:27). The consummate proof that Jesus could not be the Messiah, according to the Refutationists, is that there has been no peace in the world since he came. In fact there hasn’t even been peace within the Church! The matter was neatly summed up from the Jewish point of view by Martin Buber:

*The Jew is to the Christian the incomprehensibly obdurate man who will not see what has happened; and the Christian is to the Jew the reckless man who, in an unredeemed world, affirms that its redemption is accomplished.*¹⁵

{57} What has been our response? To speak of Jesus actually promising peace (e.g. John 14:27; 16:33); to interpret passages like Matt.10:34f. as referring only to the inevitable enmity from other people which will result in conflicts even within families; to point to analogous situations in which secularized Jews become *ba’alei teshuvah* and end up in terribly fractured family situations; asking rhetorically whether this means that the Torah is also false; stressing that peace cannot come to the world, even if the Messiah is present, unless and until the world repents and turns to God; and insisting that Jesus’ main interest is in establishing inner peace in the heart of every person who acknowledges him as Lord.

¹¹ See for instance, Levine, *op.cit.*, pp.15f.

¹² Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, quoted by rabbi Benjamin J. Segal, *The Missionary At The Door-Our Uniqueness*, 1972, p.42.

¹³ Reinhold Niebuhr, quoted by Segal, *ibid.*

¹⁴ See his article, “Between Christian and Jew,” in *Christian-Jewish Relations*, no.71, 1980, p.6.

¹⁵ *Mamre, Essays in Religion* (Trans. Greta Hort), 1946, p.31. See also Eugene B. Borowitz, *Contemporary Christologies: A Jewish Response*, 1980, p.4.

These approaches can all be taken, but Jewish tradition demands, and if we are honest, not without some justification, that the Shalom of the Messiah be seen in the public arena, in the spheres of politics, economics and social life. Lions are to lie down beside lambs, and what is more, they are to be seen as lying down together! We have a lot of homework to do incoming to terms with this fundamental criticism, and this brings us to our final major issue.

The Reality and Significance of the Second Coming

This is possibly the most commonly used response to the challenge of a Shalom-less world after the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. While stressing the crucial importance of the coming of Jesus into the world, we go on to say that the full and final ordering of the universe, the establishment of world peace and justice, will occur when Jesus returns.

Down the generations this has been ridiculed by Jewish Refutationists as merely an escape clause for Christians whenever they paint themselves into a corner. Here are some contemporary words of sarcasm from Jerusalem:

*The only way the Church can explain it all is that Jesus is going to “finish the job” at his second coming ... They will tell you that you have to take it “on faith.” “Faith” is wishful thinking, not FACT! Only FACTS can save mankind and redeem the world.*¹⁶

It can certainly sound like merely a way to get out of awkward questions, to have this handy doctrine about a Second Coming of the Messiah. There is not nearly enough debate on this in our conferences and publications. Is it true to say that this doctrine is firmly rooted in the Tanakh? Or do we simply say that it can be seen to fit some of the passages in the Tanakh? It is possible to find evangelical scholars who are unsure about this. Francis Glasson, wrote that whether or not it is correct Church doctrine, “It is certainly absent from the Old Testament, the most important source for the teaching of Jesus.”¹⁷ John Fischer, a leading writer in the Messianic Jewish movement today, agrees that there is no teaching about two comings of the Messiah in the Tanakh, {58} today, agrees that there is no teaching about two comings of the Messiah in the Tanakh, though of course something has to be done, as he says, with the complex passages there about a Messiah who will have a glorious, powerful reign, and yet who is also characterized by terrible suffering and death.¹⁸

Without pausing here to enter the debate about the traditions within Judaism which reconcile the problematic Messianic prophecies by referring to the coming of two Messiahs, we have a first priority to put our own house in order. It is true that there seem to be some Jewish liturgical and midrashic texts which echo this concept of two comings, but again my plea is for us to do our exegetical homework on this matter. Arthur Kac, one of the more able theological writers within the Messianic Jewish movement let himself down rather badly at this point in his generally excellent work on the Messiahship of Jesus. He simply defends the doctrine by stating once that:

*A careful analysis of the Messianic portions of the Old Testament will show that we do not have two different Messianic personalities, but rather two aspects of the Messianic mission of one and the same Person.*¹⁹

Sadly, repetition of a belief neither proves nor establishes it. Quite a lot of work is needed here.

¹⁶ Mordecai Alfandari, *Is Jesus Coming Again?* (a tract from the early 1980's).

¹⁷ T. Francis Glasson, *The Second Advent*, 1945, p.13.

¹⁸ *The Olive Tree Connection*, 1983, p.174.

¹⁹ Arthur W. Kac, *The Messiahship of Jesus*, 1980, p. 271

I have outlined my ten major areas for our disciplined and cooperative study. There is material to be found in various sources which can help us - material which comes out of the mature reflection of others who have wrestled with these very issues. Much of it is from earlier ages than ours, and it crops up in several languages, but if we could appoint a team of people to work on this, then we would all reap the benefit. Specific work on specific issues, like the virgin birth in Isa.7:14, or the intelligibility of the concept of the tri-unity of God, or the moral bankruptcy of the Church after the Holocaust, could then be done with greater confidence, and with greater effectiveness.

To respond well to Refutationists takes a good measure of confidence ... confidence in the text of the Bible, in the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and in one's own relationship with God through Jesus, the Son of God, our Messiah and Lord. To respond well requires patience and love for the other person. It requires the ability to be a good listener as well as a good speaker, to be a good counsellor as well as a good teacher.

{60} The Beginning of Modern Jewish Missions in the English-Speaking World

William Bjoraker

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It can be demonstrated that the last two centuries have witnessed the greatest growth and success of Jewish missions since the 1st century A.D. This article will give an overview of Jewish missions in the 19th and 20th centuries, up to the eve of World War II. The social, political, and theological movements that produced favorable - or unfavorable conditions - for the renewal of Jewish missions during this period will be examined, as well as related missionary structures and methods.

The Holocaust affected Jewish missions more than any single event since the resurrection of Jesus. It is, therefore, a fitting point around which to structure this study. Four historic periods of Jewish missions can be delineated over the last two centuries. These periods are: 1) from the French Revolution to World War I, 2) the period between the two world wars, 3) from World War II to the Six-Day War and 4) from the Six-Day War to the present. This article will cover the first two periods, leading up to the Holocaust.

From the French Revolution to World War I

At the turn of the 18th century, a number of historical factors converged, creating renewed interest in the state of the Jews. The French Revolution, with its violent overthrow of long-established political and social institutions, brought many European Christians to think that the end of the world was near. There was consequently a revival of interest in prophecy and eschatology. Students of apocalyptic literature believed they were seeing the fulfilment of Daniel chapter 7 and Revelation chapter 13. The “little horn” of Daniel was thought to be Napoleon, and the “beast” of Revelation was identified as the pope. Interest in prophecy led directly to an interest in the Jews.

The Revolution directly affected the social and legal status of the Jews themselves. In 1789, the French National Assembly established the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,” which led to the emancipation of the Jews. In some areas of Europe the abolishment of ghettos {61} was decreed and Jews were allowed to live where they wished. This afforded a greater mobility for Jews, resulting in more social contact between Jews and gentiles; this, in turn, stimulated new awareness of, and interest in, the Jews on the part of gentiles. The Enlightenment of the 18th century and the Emancipation secularized the Jews and allowed them to think in terms of a European political nationalist movement. The first stirrings of the Zionist movement began.

We shall turn now to Great Britain. The decade of the 1790’s in itself constituted an experience in apocalypticism for many of the British. The French Revolution spurred in Britain a new passion for prophetic studies. Such a preoccupation invariably caused much thinking about the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to the Land.

The Apostolic Arrangement, that some should go to ‘the Circumcision’ and others to ‘the Uncircumcision,’ was found to be the best even in the 19th century.

The Puritans of the 17th century were ardent philosemites and supported a millenarianism that focused on the Jews. Oliver Cromwell was petitioned to allow the Jews, who had been banished some 350 years earlier, to return to England. The assumption was that the Jews must be converted and restored to Palestine in order for Christ to return. But they must first be restored to England, because they could not return to Palestine before they were scattered to every country in the world.¹ The Jews were allowed to re-enter England, but very few converted to Christ.

In Great Britain, the emancipation of the Jews took place in 1830, after much national debate. Several philosemitic societies were formed at that time (which were not involved in mission) and Jewish missionary societies were also formed.

This situation had both positive and negative aspects in terms of the development of successful missions to the Jews. It stimulated awareness of the Jewish people's need to come to faith in Jesus Christ, an awareness which was to produce much effort throughout the 19th century. But the late Jewish historian, Barbara Tuchman, reflects Jewish feelings when she wrote of Lord Shaftesbury (who, in the mid-19th century, led the "London Society for the Promoting Christianity among the Jews"),

*To him, as to all the Israel-for-prophecy's sake school, the Jews were simply the instrument through which biblical prophecy could be fulfilled. They were not a people, but a mass error that must be brought {62} to a belief in Christ in order that the whole chain reaction leading to the Second Coming and the redemption of mankind might be set in motion.*²

The turn of the 19th century constitutes a turning point for Protestant Christian Missions. William Carey published his *Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* in 1792. The Enquiry signaled a theological breakthrough in rediscovering the validity of the Great Commission. The explosion of interdenominational missionary societies triggered a large-scale missionary enterprise which would provide four-fifths of the Protestant missionaries from the days of Carey until the present time.³ This thrust spilled over into Jewish missions, so that the English-speaking world began to dominate Jewish missions.⁴

The Development of Jewish Missions

In 1801, Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey, the "Father of Modern Jewish Missions;" appeared on the scene in Britain. The newly-formed London Missionary Society (1795), had found its first Jewish missionary. Joseph Samuel Levi was born into a religious Jewish family in Germany in 1771. He had been a Hebrew teacher of children, a cantor in the synagogue, and a shochet (ritual slaughterer). During a stagecoach trip, he was led to accept Christ. He was later baptized by a Lutheran minister and, according to accepted practice, was given the names Christian and Frederick, and was required to drop the family name of Levi.⁵

In 1801, Frey was called by the Danish Missionary Society to assist a missionary in Africa. On his way to Africa he was delayed in London, where the London Missionary Society asked him to stay on and preach to the Jews. He agreed and preached in London for some years with a

¹ Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: How the British came to Palestine*, London 1956, pp. 121-123.

² *Ibid.*, p.178.

³ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed., Penguin Books, 1986, p. 222.

⁴ A. E. Thompson, *A Century of Jewish Missions*, New York, London, p.112.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.113.

measure of success. There he founded a school for Jewish children. The LMS expressed concern over the relatively meager results, to which Frey replied that the reason lay in the fact that the Society was not doing enough relief work, not helping new converts who were ostracized by the Jewish community. Though he requested more funds for this purpose, LMS declined to help. Consequently, Frey organized in 1808 another group, calling it *The London Society for the Purpose of Visiting and Relieving the Sick and Distressed, and Instructing the Ignorant, Especially Those Who are of the Jewish Nation*.

According to W.T. Gidney, who wrote the history of the “London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews” on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of its founding, “a very short experience sufficed to demonstrate that a wrong beginning had been made. The union of gentile and Jewish work proved to be impracticable, and well-nigh impossible. History had repeated itself. The Apostolic arrangement, that some should go to ‘the Circumcision,’ {63} and others to ‘the Uncircumcision’ was found to be the best even in the 19th century.”⁶

Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey chose to establish a society specifically geared toward reaching the Jews. In 1809 he broke with the London Missionary Society and founded the *London Society for the Promotion of Christianity Amongst the Jews*. The society was best known as the *London Jews Society*. It is still active today as the *Church’s Ministry Among the Jews* (CMJ) and is the oldest missionary society to the Jewish people. The society became very popular and the Duke of Kent became its patron, laying the cornerstone for its chapel and school building in 1813. The LSPCJ was originally an interdenominational society, but as controversy arose because of the issue of baptism, it was reconstituted as exclusively Anglican in 1815.

About this time, when the society needed a considerable financial boost, Lewis Way, came upon the scene. Way had received a bequest of 300,000 pounds and was looking for a way to use the money for Christian service. While visiting Devonshire, he was told of a grove of oaks under which two Huguenot ladies were accustomed to pray for Israel. Upon the ladies’ death, they had willed that the trees remain standing until the Jews would be restored to the Land of Israel.⁷ This so impressed Way that he began to study the prophecies regarding the restoration and to inquire of agencies engaged in this matter. He discovered the LSPCJ and paid off their debts. He soon influenced the society, (which up to this point had worked only in London) to consider missions in other nations. He went on a mission of inquiry to the continent and to Russia. On his own estate of Stanstead, he established a training college for Jewish Christian converts, with the intention of sending them as missionaries to the Jews of Europe, Russia and the Middle East. The seminary operated from 1821-1832. Among the most notable trainees were Joseph Wolff and Alexander McCaul.⁸ But his efforts were not very successful and eventually ground to a halt. The society, on the other hand, sent missionaries and established mission stations in many countries with significant Jewish populations.

Following the lead of the LSPCJ, many mission societies to the Jews were established throughout the 19th century, primarily in Britain and America. The societies directed their primary efforts at evangelizing Jews, and this appears to account for their relative success.

In 1839, the Church of Scotland sent a team, which included Robert Murray McCheyne and Andrew Bonar, on a mission of inquiry regarding the Jews in other countries with a view

⁶ William Thomas Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*, London, Operative Jewish Converts’ Institution, 1908, p. 34.

⁷ Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930*, Chicago and London, 1970, pp. 9-10.

⁸ Gidney, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

toward mission. The inquiry resulted in the formation of a Jewish mission society which sent missionaries to work among the Jews.⁹ By the middle of the century, the “non-conformists” (as they were called by the Anglicans) formed the *British Society for the Propagation {64} of the Gospel among the Jews* (1842). This organization prospered under the leadership of Ridley Haim Herschell, a Hebrew Christian. Today it operates in Britain, Israel, France, India, Australia, and New Zealand under the name of *Christian Witness to Israel (CWI)*. Another group, the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, (established in 1876 in London and led by John Wilkinson) became the largest Jewish mission at that time. It operated stations in Liverpool and Birmingham and sent out missionaries to the Jews of Russia, North Africa, and Capetown. It distributed large numbers of Hebrew and Yiddish New Testaments. According to Thompson, from the years 1887 to 1901, the total number of Scriptures distributed was 1,127,786.¹⁰

Frey had immigrated to America in 1816. He received a charter from the State of New York in 1820 to establish a Jewish mission under the name *American Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews*, which followed much the same pattern as it did in Britain. In 1845, the *Baptist Society for the Evangelization of the Jews* was formed. Frey edited their paper. Their most outstanding worker was G.R. Lederer, who together with John Neander, led a Hebrew Christian Seder in New York at which Samuel I.J. Schereschewsky accepted the Lord.¹¹ Schereschewsky was an exemplary man of God, became a missionary to China, and ultimately Anglican Bishop of China.

Many other Jewish missions were formed and a large percentage of their leaders were Jewish Christians; mission leaders discovered that Hebrew Christians made the best Jewish missionaries. Many of the missions served mainline denominations, while many others were inter- or non-denominational. The Presbyterians established a particularly thriving work. William E. Blackstone, who was not Jewish, founded the Chicago Hebrew Mission in 1887. The organization was very successful in evangelism and publications, as well as in encouraging the founding of many new missions. A mission formed in 1894 (which became the largest in the early part of the 20th century), was the “American Board of Missions to the Jews” founded in Brooklyn by a former rabbi, Leopold Cohn. Cohn had several Protestant clergy on his advisory board. That ministry exists today as Chosen People Ministries.

A Missiological Assessment

In many ways, the “Great Century” of modern missions was also the great century of Jewish missions. Results were much more extensive than is generally known. A.E. Thompson, in assessing the 19th century, reports a total of 204,540 professed baptisms of Jewish people.¹² Glover reckons there were 224,000.¹³ It is difficult to ascertain how many of these baptisms were based on belief and how many were merely steps toward assimilation. Jewish Christians would often remain secret believers for fear of ostracism and persecution, so {65} that many true conversions may not have been included in the above figures. In 1894 about 600 Jewish Christian ministers of the gospel filled European

⁹ A.E. Thompson, *A Century of Jewish Mission*, New York, London, 1902, pp. 100-103.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.109.

¹¹ Daniel Fuchs, “Trends in Jewish Evangelism in North American: A Profile of Jewish Missions,” *MISHKAN* no.10,1/1989, p.62.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 264.

¹³ Robert Glover, *The Progress of Worldwide Missions*, 4th ed., New York, London 1939, p. 333.

Protestant pulpits.¹⁴ About 125 American pulpits were filled by Hebrew Christians.¹⁵ Despite claims by rabbis and critics to the effect that most of the converts were from the least educated, lower classes of Jewish society, the *Missionary Review of the World* stated that during the period 1873-1906 1,874 Jews were converted in Berlin alone. Many of these came from the higher, educated classes, including artists and intellectuals.¹⁶ Louis Meyer's book "Eminent Hebrew Christians of the Nineteenth Century" also demonstrates this fact.

At the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, it was announced that America had 45 missions to the Jews which employed 147 missionaries. In Great Britain there were 28 societies, employing 662 missionaries. The rest of the world had 26 missions with 105 workers.¹⁷

Judaism was viewed as a false and obsolete religion. The cultural and ethnic dimensions were to be renounced when a Jew came to Christ.

An important factor which accounts for this growth is described in Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission syllabus: "Renewal and expansion are contagious in contexts where information is easily distributed."¹⁸ The New Testament had been translated into the languages spoken by the people, especially Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian, and then widely distributed. The advent of radio broadcasts was also influential.

Little progress was achieved in the area of contextualization, as was true of all missionary enterprise during the 19th century. The cultural and religious aspects of Judaism were seldom distinguished; Judaism was viewed as a false and obsolete religion. The cultural and ethnic dimensions were also to be renounced when a Jew came to Christ. Jewish Christians were described as "former-Jews" or as "Christians of Jewish origin." For example, when Joseph Frey entered seminary, he was informed that he could not take the examination for the Danish Missionary Society "on account of his having been a Jew."¹⁹ Some progress was achieved as more Hebrew Christians came into public notice. The Hebrew Christian Alliance was formed in England in 1866, and established in America in 1915, providing a framework for discussion of these issues. The Anglican Prayer Book was translated into Hebrew (though whether such a step represents contextualization or colonialism is debatable). For the most part, breakthroughs were not achieved until later.

The Zionist movement must also be assessed as to its impact on Jewish missions.

{66} In 1902 Thomas M. Chalmers, then superintendent of the Messiah Mission to the Jews in Chicago, wrote "A Call to Prayer for Israel." This appeal, signed by about 30 of the most prominent leaders working in the field of Jewish missions in North America, gives an accurate picture of their assessment of Zionism at that time.²⁰ -they were ambivalent. On the one hand, they considered Zionism to be a movement which could lead to the Jewish peoples' restoration to the Land of Israel, which most of them believed was purposed by God. They thought that such a development was likely to awaken the Church to labour on Israel's behalf. On the other hand, they understood Zionism to be a secular, humanist and for the

¹⁴ Louis Meyer, *Eminent Hebrew Christians of the Nineteenth Century*, edited by David A. Rausch, New York, Toronto, 1983, xiv.

¹⁵ A.E. Thompson, *A Century of Jewish Missions*, New York, London, 1902, p. 265.

¹⁶ R.B. Rohold, "Are Missions to the Jews a Failure?" *Missionary Review of the World*, 37, no. 12, 1914.

¹⁷ Ron Gitleman, "Jewish Evangelism Before and After the Holocaust." Pasadena: *World Christian Summer Reader*, Vol. 8, No. 6, 1989, p. 77.

¹⁸ Fuller School of World Mission, Syllabus MH 520, 1990, p.15

¹⁹ David A. Rausch, *Zionism Within Early American Fundamentalism 1878-1918*, New York 1979, p. 23.

²⁰ Thompson, Appendix A. pp. 269-276.

most part atheistic, movement. They feared lest Israel would be less attentive to the gospel because they would have found a substitute, an alternate “redemption.” The early Zionist pioneers certainly saw little need for any other salvation than the national rebirth for which they were labouring. Jews who immigrated to America were another story; they were searching for a new way of life, one not to be found in Zionism.

The church’s attitude to eschatological studies, and the nature of the theological views which result, always affect Jewish missions. Millenarianism became a growing movement in Britain and America, and played a large role in the development of the Fundamentalist movement. From 1878 to 1918, six large conferences dealing with prophecy took place in the United States?²¹

Premillennial eschatology asserted that the Jewish people would be restored to the Land of Israel, and there, turn to Messiah. Such a view naturally assures an ongoing concern for the Jews. Its appreciation for Jewish heritage and its support for the state of Israel brings Jews and Christians closer. It reminds the Church of her Jewish roots and prevents anti-Semitism. Relationships can then lead to witness and evangelism.

On the other hand, such a view can also hinder evangelism, as David Rausch says:

*The early Fundamentalist believed that the Jewish people would return and strengthen the Jewish nation in the land of Palestine in unbelief. In other words, the large majority of Jewish people would not accept Jesus as the Messiah until he returned. Thus, seeing the Messiah in person would change the majority of the Jewish community’s mind, not evangelism ...the average Proto-Fundamentalist would stop “evangelizing” a Jewish individual when told politely to do so.*²²

Many Jewish missions which were founded in the 19th century quickly withered away. Thompson insists that such was the experience of 50 per cent of the organizations. He says that when they encountered the apathy of the {67} Christian community and the antipathy of the Jewish community, they became discouraged, tried to work in another city and repeated the experience of failure. Speaking of the denominational missions in America Thompson said, “...they have been all-too-easily discouraged. Not one of them has succeeded in establishing a work worthy of the church whose name it bears.”²³ Perhaps that this was partly due, to a theological confusion which weakened the sense of a mandate to evangelize Jews. When discouragement sets in, such thinking can easily provide a rationalization for giving up.

In contrast, one is impressed in reading Meyer’s book on eminent Hebrew Christians of the 19th century. Their driving theme and concern was evangelism. Rausch states in his introduction to the book, “They are consumed with the belief that they must ‘save’ their people from damnation. On the other hand, they constantly coax the Christian community to change their attitudes and their apathy.”²⁴

We must also ask whether or not the denominations and mission societies of the 19th century developed effective mission strategies in order to reach the masses of Jewish immigrants who then flooded into the United States. More than two million Jews came to America during the years 1881-1920, most were refugees from the pogroms of Russia and East Europe.²⁵ The assimilation rate was high, with many leaving Judaism for the mind sciences, humanism and assorted spiritualities. Most of them were potentially receptive to the gospel. Who knows what

²¹ Rausch, op. cit., pp. 79-83.

²² Rausch, op. cit., pp. 214-215.

²³ Thompson, op.cit., pp. 251-252.

²⁴ Meyer, op.cit., xvi-xvii.

²⁵ Gade, Richard E., *A Historical Survey of Anti-Semitism*, Grand Rapids, 1981, p. 84.

a well-planned strategy with a more contextualized evangelism could have done at this time? This question has implications for today in relation to the thousands of Soviet Jews leaving the Soviet Union and the many thousands of Israeli Hebrew-speaking Jewish emigrants. The Zionist dream has failed the latter group. Their assimilation rate is high; the New Age movement is sweeping them up. Next to nothing is being done to reach them. How shall they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?

From World War I until World War II

Jewish missions remained the same until the outbreak of “The Great War” of 1914-1918. According to the statistics presented at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, Jewish missions continued to grow. A writer in “Missionary Review of the World,” 1913, stated triumphantly: “Never has there been a time in their history, when the Jews have been more honestly endeavoring to find truth and learn about Jesus Christ than at the present.”²⁶ Here again, great events of history would oppose Jewish missions, this time leading not to expansion, but to retreat.

World War I dealt a blow to Jewish missions. This was due to a combination of factors: British and German Jews, who had to fight each other in opposing {68} “Christian” armies and who had experienced new waves of anti-Semitism, were understandably alienated from what they considered to be Christianity. The structures and work of the Jewish missions themselves were disrupted by the war. The missionary movement succumbed to introspection and pessimism. The optimistic, secularized eschatology of the 19th century had been shattered. British General Allenby’s capture of Jerusalem in 1917 seemed to confirm premillennial eschatology, but doubts arose: perhaps we have no gospel for the Jews? Perhaps, the Church concluded, it ought first to get its own house in order.

In spite of some commendable efforts at the three conferences of the International Missionary Council, historical conditions were such that the centre of world Jewish missions shifted from Great Britain to the United States.

Jewish Missions Between the Wars

The Presbyterian Church in USA had the strongest denominational mission to the Jewish people during this period.²⁷ From 1914, mission strategy was expressed in the use of “settlement houses,” operating in 10 major American cities. Conventional mission stations were also located in Jewish areas, using traditional methods including literature distribution, house-to-house visitation, Bible colportage, Bible women/mothers’ meetings and sewing classes, education, medical dispensary, nursing staff, and preaching in mission halls or on the streets.

In 1920, the Presbyterian Jewish work was re-named the “Department of Jewish Evangelization.” In 1923, the director, John Stuart Conning, decided to employ the parish approach, involving the local churches in outreach to Jews in their areas as part of the local church’s ministry. His reasoning was that Jewish people resent being singled out as a special object of Christian mission and that most American Jews were no longer living in ghettos, but were part of normal residential areas. Conrad Hoffman Jr. followed Conning as head of the department and advocated a similar approach. Evidently, some success was achieved. Conning

²⁶ Rohold, *op.cit.*

²⁷ Eichorn, David May, *Evangelising the American Jew*, New York 1978, p.156.

estimated that, in 1930, 20,000 Jewish Christians were connected with the various churches in the United States.²⁸ It is not clear what percentage of these converts actually came to faith through the “parish approach.” Were this “modality” approach ever proven more successful than the “sodality,” or mission structure approach, it would contradict the experience of Frey in 1809. What with the remarkable success of the Messianic Jewish movement during the 1970’s and the 1980’s using a contextualized gospel message, Conning’s and Hoffmann’s “parish approach” probably was not very effective.

Evidently, J.S. Conning later realized the inadequacy of the parish approach, {69} and the undesirability of Jewish Christians assimilating into the larger, gentile church. In an attempt to arrest this trend, Conning and the Jewish missions arm of the Presbyterian Church USA, helped to establish the first Hebrew Christian Church in Chicago in 1934, led by David Bronstein Sr.²⁹ By the time of World War II, there were 16 such congregations in Jewish centers in the United States.

Jewish missions were renewed after World War I, when, during a meeting of the International Missionary Council in Oxford, England, in 1923, it was decided to encourage conferences on the subject of missions to Jews. A few years later, preparations got underway, and the IMC convened two international conferences in 1927—one in Warsaw and one in Budapest, with John R. Mott presiding. A third was held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1931. These were the first international meetings held on the subject of Jewish missions. More than 100 delegates from various missions attended. W.R. Hogg reports that “each delegate pointed to the fact that the church as a whole possessed an unawakened interest in Jewish evangelization at the very time when counter forces were leading many Jews to surrender their religion.³⁰ The conferences stated that Jewish missions suffered from “isolation,” and were regarded as “something peculiar and apart,” that the work “had not struck the mind and imagination of the Church as a whole.” As for the United States, the work “lacked sadly in permanence,” there was little evidence of any serious purpose to win the Jews” so that efforts expended were “timid and fitful”³¹

In 1928 Morris Zeidmann called for the setting up of a “self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Hebrew Christian Church.”

As a result of these conferences, a resolution was taken at the general Jerusalem Conference of the IMC in 1928, which resulted in the establishment of the “International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jew” (ICCAJ). Conrad Hoffman Jr. was named general secretary. The first act of the ICCAJ was to convene the Atlantic City Conference in 1931. This conference stated that “not to offer the Gospel to the Jew would be discrimination against the Jews.”³² Contextualization and strategy were again discussed. Morris Zeidmann, a Hebrew Christian minister of the Scott Institute of Toronto, Canada, challenged Hoffmann’s parish approach and called for the setting up of a “self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating Hebrew Christian Church.”³³ He

²⁸ Rosen, Moishe, “Trends in Jewish Evangelism in North America; A Profile of Jewish Mission,” *MISHKAN*, 10, 1989, p. 72.

²⁹ Fuchs, “Trends in Jewish Evangelism in North America: A Profile of Jewish Mission,” *MISHKAN*, 1989, p. 63.

³⁰ Hogg, W.R., *Ecumenical Foundation*, New York, 1952, p. 239.

³¹ As quoted in Eisen 1948; *The Christian Approach to the Jew. Being a Report of Conferences on the Subject Held in Budapest and Warsaw in April, 1927* (London, 1927.)

³² Eisen, *Christian Missions to the Jews of North America and Great Britain*, New York, 1948, p. 44. Reprinted from *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. no.1.

³³ Eisen, *ibid.*, p.44.

insisted that Jews who became Christians were often snubbed by gentile Christians and that they did not really identify with the Church as it then was.

{70} In preparation for the Atlantic City conference, and at the request of the committee, Charles H. Fahs conducted an extensive survey of the Jewish missionary enterprise in North America in 1930. The data from the survey is recorded by Eisen.³⁴ Questionnaires were sent to 67 mission stations; 54 replies were received. Thirty-four reported that Jewish Christians participated in local churches, while five centers held that their members did not. The reasons given were to the effect that they felt unwanted or that the services did not meet their spiritual needs. Of course, there may have been others involved in local churches who felt likewise, but did not express it. Of the 38 denominational agencies involved in home mission work without considering the Jews, 18 replied. The most common reasons given for not having work among Jews were: 1) other needs have prior claim, 2) lack of previous success forced closure, 3) the “goodwill” approach to the Jews was preferred to evangelism, 4) they were seeking to eliminate anti-Semitism on the part of Christians before they would do any direct evangelism.

As Nazism came into ascendancy in the mid 1930’s in Germany, the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy was in full swing in the United States. Fundamentalists were too involved in eschatological debates and, for the most part, were not able to effectively combat anti-Semitism or engage in Jewish evangelism. The liberal publication, “Christian Century,” rejected evidence that the Nazis were killing European Jews and charged the American Jews, who were trying to rouse America to action, with “hyphenated citizenship” and “pro-Zionism” (new anti-Semitic code words).³⁵

Following “Kristallnacht” in 1938, an ominous darkness began to settle upon European civilization which would shake Jewish missions to their very core, and from which they have not fully recovered to this day.

Missiological Assessment of the Second Period

The period between the Wars was a time of setback and of success. The wave of Jewish missions never crested as it did during the preceding century. According to statistics published in 1938, there were nine American Jewish missions, with 49 mission centers in 23 cities. Half of these were denominational; the others were non-denominational.³⁶ The two largest missions in North America were the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ) and the Hebrew Evangelization Society of Los Angeles. An estimated 1.5 million dollars were contributed by American and Canadian Christians annually to Jewish missions.³⁷ The Norwegian Israel Mission had noted success in Rumania in the 1930’s, before the Nazi invasion (Richard Wurmbrand was associated with this work).³⁸ The British society, CMJ, continued to work in several countries.

Rausch states that, “Renewal and expansion are often accompanied by new {71} spiritual dynamics or re-contextualized forms of spirituality.”³⁹ Relative to this thesis, the period saw some hopeful development, but no real breakthroughs. In 1915, the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America was established. The Alliance had been formed in Britain in 1866.

³⁴ Eisen, *ibid.*, pp. 45-50.

³⁵ Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

³⁶ Eisen, *op.cit.*, p.33.

³⁷ Eisen, *op.cit.*, p.54.

³⁸ M. Solheim, “Jewish Missions in Rumania,” *MISHKAN I/ 1991*, pp. 31-45; *idem*, *Im Schatten von Hakenkreuz, Hammer und Sichel. Judenmissionar in Rumanien 1937-1948*, Erlangen 1986.

³⁹ Fuller School of World Mission, Syllabus MH 520, 1990 p.15.

At their First General Conference, three concerns arose which indicated progress in the area of a contextualized Jewish evangelism and the growth of an indigenous Jewish Christian church:⁴⁰ First, concern was expressed over the “gentilization” of the Jewish people who were being converted to Christ, and thus being lost to the Jewish nation. Second, there was an evident urgency to evangelize the Jewish people. And third, the Jewish Christians who gathered for the conference believed that the major burden for evangelism of their people fell squarely on their shoulders. They understood their duty to the evangelical churches of America to provide an authoritative, reliable channel in order to serve the cause of Jewish evangelism.

But the degree to which they could indigenize and contextualize their faith in Jewish cultural forms was at that time restricted. This was before the days of “Church Growth” thinking and the “homogeneous unit” principle in missiology, as well as before the general revival of ethnicity and the search for roots. The Hebrew Christians who formed the Alliance were warned against their endeavor by many Christians. They were accused of being Judaizers. Not only much of the Protestant evangelical church opposed the development of Messianic Judaism, but the H.C.A.A. itself opposed it. At the H.C.A.A. General Conference of 1917, a paper was presented by Mark John Levy proposing that the Alliance adopt a resolution which was passed by the Protestant Episcopal Church during its General Convention in 1916. It read:

Our Jewish Brethren are free to observe the rites and ceremonies of Israel when they accept Christ (as the Messiah), according to the clear teaching of the New Testament and the practice of Christ and the Apostles.”⁴¹

The resolution was rejected, described as a heresy and denounced. The following issue of the “Hebrew Christian Alliance Quarterly” (July/October issue 1917) contained a section subtitled “Messianic Judaism.” The editorials denounced Messianic Judaism as a syncretistic compromise with Judaism. They noted opposition to the “misguided tendency” of Messianic Judaism, declaring, “We will have none of it.” The few who proposed a more pronounced affirmation of Jewish identity in worship were accused of being Ebionites.

Even before World War I was over, Messianic Judaism was stillborn. The emergence of a modern Messianic Jewish movement, with congregations of Jewish Christians using culturally Jewish forms of worship and lifestyles to a fuller degree, had to wait another six decades. Renewal and expansion happen when the historical and contextual conditions are right; those {72} conditions, and the theological breakthroughs necessary, were for a later moment of history.

Conclusion

This paper has raised some questions which require further research. How, and to what degree, do historic events create certain theological views or backlashes vis-à-vis the Jewish people? Can such trends be predicted? What is their effect on Jewish missions and Jewish receptivity to the gospel? How will the present revival of Amillennialism and Postmillennialism (represented in the “Kingdom Now,” “Dominion” and “Reconstructionist” theologies) affect Jewish missions? Will they lead to anti-Semitism, as Hal Lindsey contends in a recent book, *The Road to Holocaust?* As the year 2000 approaches, all kinds of eschatological speculations will be

⁴⁰ Rausch, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-32.

⁴¹ Rausch, *ibid.*, p. 35.

evident, both from within Christianity, and among the pagan, spiritualist and New Age movements. With the tremendous pace of change and the impending ecological crises, what will be the Church's missiological strategy vis-à-vis the Jewish people? The period between the Six-Day War to the present, about 25 years, has witnessed the fastest and most promising growth of Jewish missions than ever before. Four major auspicious historical conditions converged to make this possible: 1) the Israeli victory in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and the new Jewish identity which it fostered; 2) the blossoming of the "Baby-Boomer" generation into the late 1960's youth counterculture, and the "Jesus Revolution" fruit of the Holy Spirit among these youth in the early 1970's.⁴² As a result, many new Jewish outreaches were born; 3) the general social movement toward affirming ethnicity and "roots;" and 4) the wider dissemination of "Church Growth" thinking in missions, with its affirmation of contextualization and the "homogeneous unit" principle in church planting. The Messianic Jewish movement is strong and growing.

A recent step forward, countering the trend to marginalize Jewish missions, is the development of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE), begun at the 1980 conference of the Lausanne movement in Thailand. The LCJE is in many ways a resurrection of the "International Committee for the Christian Approach to the Jews" (ICCAJ), sponsored by the International Missionary Council (IMC), about 50 years ago. Jewish Missions have taken their place in the mainstream of modern evangelical missions.

The present is a great day for Jewish missions, although there are also trends working against Jewish evangelism. The Holocaust shook Jewish missions to the core. One legacy of the Holocaust is the spread of a sense of guilt among gentile Christians, which in turn can produce an overcompensating philosemitism such as been expressed by certain groups whose sole purpose revolves around comforting Israel, supporting her politically and shrinking {73} from the offence of the cross. They refuse to preach Messiah, and Him crucified, "to the Jew first."

No evangelism is possible without criticism, resistance and persecution. The Jewish community will continue to oppose the gospel, perhaps even more fiercely than before. The rewards, however, are great. Jewish evangelism is close to God's heart, and He has promised it ultimate success.

⁴² Some 20-40 percent of those who came to Christ were Jewish. Fuchs, *op.cit.*, p. 65. Between 1969 and 1973, approximately 14,000 Jewish people of all ages turned to Christ, and most were young. Rosen, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

{75} Responses on Early Judeo-Christianity

MISHKAN II/1990 was a topical issue on archeology and history of the early Judeo-Christians. MISHKAN editors are pleased to bring two responses to articles in this issue regarding that topic.. The second response is an excerpt of a letter by Hebrew University Archeology Professor Dan Barag to Joan Taylor, author of the main article of this issue, printed with Barag's kind permission.

I have been invited by the Editorial Board to respond to the December, 1990 issue of MISHKAN, devoted to the early history of Jewish Christianity. I was not familiar with the journal, and am happy to learn of it.

The issue shows that the whole field is in flux. It begins with Joan E. Taylor's article, based on her (soon to be published?) Edinburgh dissertation, which denies there are archaeological remains of Jewish Christianity in Palestine. Near the end (p.17), she summarizes: "There is simply nothing-no literary nor archaeological data-that indicates that Jewish-Christians were present in Roman Palestine past the middle of the second century." Taylor's article is followed, however, by Bargil Pixner's essay positing an archaeological remnant of such Jewish-Christians (a Jewish-Christian synagogue on Mt. Zion), and by Ray A. Pritz's essay investigating the worth and interrelationships of various literary witnesses to them.

Since Taylor's article is only a brief taste of her forthcoming volume, we would be ill-advised to take up the issue here. We may, however, note that given the fact that her article deals only with archaeological evidence, her inclusion of a denial of the existence of literary data raises our eyebrows and expectation. One hopes that it reflects detailed discussion and argument (similar to those this article devotes to some of the archaeological evidence), and not merely a lack of regard for a sister discipline, similar to that apparently evident later in this issue, where Randy Cook potshoots the generalization that historians commonly never "tip their hats" to archaeology, while "archaeologists are generally well-versed in the pertinent literary source materials" (p. 76, n.1). Certainly, all disciplines have their provincials. Indeed, historians at times wonder whether archaeologists always take textual evidence seriously, or even read it carefully. Cook's opening feat (p. 71), attempts to refute a Jerusalem museum's statement that "Three hundred years later the sites associated with his [Jesus'] life and death became sacred to a new faith which developed out of Judaism-Christianity." Cook points out that "it is hardly true that this 'new faith' appeared after three hundred years of void" (as if the museum {76} referred to the appearance of Christianity, not to the veneration of its sites). This hardly inspires confidence.

Be that as it may, a student of Jewish history might especially point to one body of literary evidence for ancient Jewish-Christians in Palestine which Taylor doesn't mention in her article (except for an orthographical point in n. 19), and one which is difficult to imagine its neutralization. I refer to rabbinic (talmudic and midrashic) literature-to which Ole Chr. Kvarme, in a book review, does indeed refer, optimistically, as a source for early Jewish Christianity (p. 69 and n. 15).

There is significant rabbinic evidence for Palestinian Jewish-Christianity, in the second-fourth centuries.

For generations, both Jewish and Christian scholars have been attempting to decide whether all the numerous references to *minim* in rabbinic literature apply to Jewish Christians, or if not, which do and which don't. There have been maximalizers (such as R. Travers Herford, who in 1903 supplied a large corpus of relevant texts in his oft-reprinted *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* and argues that most applied to Jewish-

Christians) and minimalizers, and all sorts of positions in between. But it is difficult to imagine any view which denies that there is significant rabbinic evidence for Palestinian Jewish-Christianity, in the sense Taylor specifies, in the second-fourth centuries. For a fairly recent survey, see Burton L. Visotzky, "Prolegomena to the Study of Jewish-Christianities [sic] in Rabbinic Literature," *AJS (Association for Jewish Studies) Review XIV* (1989), pp.47-70.

In the quest for the truth about ancient Jewish-Christianity, one hopes that all disciplines will be able to work together and that, while each remains faithful to its methods and to the data it supplies, its practitioners will remember that they must testify, one way or another, to the same history as that studied by the others.

Sincerely yours: Daniel R. Schwartz Associate Professor Dept. of Jewish History,
Hebrew University, Jerusalem

{77} Dear Dr. Taylor,

Thanks ever so much for your letter of 23 March and the enclosed offprint of your article published in *Mishkan* 11 (1990).

I read your article with considerable interest learning a lot about issues and problems with which I am only remotely acquainted. It certainly is a very informative and useful contribution! In what follows I shall refer to some matters, not necessarily in any particular order:

Page 8 and paragraph 2, I think that a sweeping all-out condemnation of biblical archaeology is unjustified and unnecessary for your argument. Yadin's work on the Solomonic gates of Gezer, Megiddo and Hazor, the comparison between the finds of Lachish and the biblical and Assyrian accounts on the campaigns of Senacherib to Judea and a multitude of other serious and responsible works do not deserve such a harsh judgment.

Page 18. The dating of the Capernaum synagogue and all the early-type synagogues in Galilee (with facade to the south) is the subject of considerable controversies. I belong to those who maintain the early third century A.D. date for its construction and assume that it underwent repairs in later times. Page 19. The Christian community and memory of sites in Jerusalem. While Judea was not laid waste in A.D. 68-73/4 (but rather in 133-135), Jerusalem was in ruins as is shown by the excavations, inter alia. Only very few tombs show evidence of use between 70 and 133 and such tombs are not in the immediate proximity of the city. There is no evidence for either Jewish or Christian inhabitants in Jerusalem in that period. Furthermore, they probably did not settle there in the early days of Aelia Capitolina, although a few probably did sometime during the second half of the second century. Thus I doubt whether there were any real memories concerning the Gethsemane cave or Golgotha. This certainly remains rather nebulous.

Please do not take my remarks as a critical judgment of your work which is very good. With congratulations and kind regards.

Yours sincerely;

Dan P. Barag, Ph.D., F.S.A. Professor of Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

{78} To Witness or Not to Witness: Christian Zionism

Paul C. R. Peterson

Paul C. R. Peterson is presently doing his doctoral studies at the Fuller Theological Seminary, California. This is one chapter in his dissertation in the Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Theological Seminary: *The Church's Ministry of Reconciliation In the Holy Land*.

Christian Zionism could be defined as the belief by many Christians that the Bible teaches God will fulfill His promises to the Jewish people to restore them to the Holy Land, and establish a Jewish state that will never be destroyed. Christian Zionists also believe that as Christians, they should take an active part in this restoration. The current and most effective expression of a politicized form of Christian Zionism is the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ).

There are fellow Christians, largely Jewish believers in Jesus, who are as concerned for the state of Israel as is the Christian Embassy, but who take exception to the ICEJ's activities because these do not include bearing vocal witness to Israeli Jews of the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One of these critics is Baruch Maoz, an associate editor of MISHKAN, and pastor of a local Israeli congregation.

Maoz describes his criticism of the Christian Embassy as a dispute "among friends who disagree. While respecting each other's opinion and acknowledging their respective personal integrity, both sides hold to views which are not compatible."¹

Maoz finds incompatible that the ICEJ has kept it a well-guarded secret that it shares the evangelical conviction, "that Jesus is Israel's promised Messiah, and that faith in Him is necessary for salvation," and that "this inevitably means the gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached to all men-Israel included."²

A further emphasis of his article is the challenge that the Christian Embassy "need not to hedge its conviction (that Jesus is necessary to salvation) by public ambivalence."³

In no way can I claim to be a spokesperson for the Embassy though I was present in Jerusalem when it was launched. I am not a member of their organization and am not fully acquainted with all the details of its history.

{79} But I know the Embassy's heart and feel that we should appreciate its unwillingness to be identified with evangelistic or missionary organizations in Israel or America. I have heard of and admired the Embassy's good work on behalf of Israel, for both Jews and Arabs. I reject the charges leveled, namely, that "lack of such a declaration (endorsing the evangelization of the Jews) does little to gain respect and consequently, little to commend the sincerity of its religious commitment."⁴

The Christian Embassy has been received by the Jewish community and the government of Israel, a brochure on *A Salute to Israel-Conference*, held in the Steven S. Wise Temple in Bel Air, California, (15 April 1991) featured Jan Willam van der Hoeven, Spokesman of ICEJ. The brochure of the meeting, sponsored by *Exodus Ltd.*, a Christian group dedicated to the cause of Zion, describes the gathering as "a special evening of

¹ Baruch Maoz, "The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem," *Mishkan 12* (1/1990), pp. 1-5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

solidarity between the Jewish and Christian Communities celebrating with Israel on her 43rd Anniversary.” Not only was this meeting held in a synagogue, but the Consul General of Israel, the Executive Director of the Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation, and the Lahit Israeli Choir participated in the program. I suggest that the following considerations may be at the root of the Christian Embassy’s acceptance by the Israeli government and the Jewish community:

Faith in God

Faith in God gives to Jews and Christians a commonality in the face of an unbelieving world. In Hebrews 11, the writer lists God’s *Hall of Faith*. Not one New Testament believer is included.

Christians must beware lest they give the impression that they are arrogant in their relationship to the Jews. It was Paul who warned, “If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.’ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either” (Rom. 11:17-21).

Christians dare not forget that Jesus said, “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). They should realize that the Christian witness awakens painful memories to the Jewish people. Although I have never met a Jew who has not respected me for my evangelical convictions, Christian conduct over the centuries stands in the way of persuading Jews to receive Jesus as their Messiah, Savior and Lord.

{80} William LaSor, for many years a professor at Fuller Seminary, shares the following attitude toward the Christians’ Jewish heritage, describing his own sense of theological indebtedness to Jews:

The first Christians were Jews who believed that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. In fact, the name “Messiah,” or its Greek equivalent “Christ,” became the second part of Jesus’ name in the early church. Now those of us who are gentiles would really be totally ignorant of what this means, if we did not have the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament, in our Christian Bible. As a matter of fact, a great many gentile Christians know practically nothing about the Messiah of the Old Testament, for the word “Messiah” does not occur in the Old Testament, and the idea of the Messiah developed many of its characteristics in the period between the close of the Old Testament and the birth of Jesus. We must work backwards from these ideas and trace the roots from which they sprang in our Old Testament. But when we do this, we generally take notions which have developed in the Christian church and paste them into the Old Testament. We have made little or no effort to understand either the Old Testament itself or the Jewish concept of the Messiah. As a result, when we say simply that Jesus is the Messiah, the Jew is either puzzled or offended, for the Messiah we present bears little resemblance to the Messiah of the Jew.⁵

⁵ William Sanford LaSor, “Conversion of Jews:” Paper prepared for Fuller Theological Seminary, August 30, 1976.

God is Opening the Heart of Israelis to Jesus

Ferdinand Zweig, a Jewish sociologist who spent several years in Israel, makes the following interesting observation:

The figure of Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth, looms large on the Israeli horizon, although not much is said about him openly and most Jews cautiously refrain from mentioning his name in public. Still he is very much in the mind of Israeli Jews, more now than ever, and the awareness of his shadow in Israel is constantly growing.

In the Galilee, the most beautiful and inspiring part of Israel, he is the dominating figure. Every site of antiquity and every beauty spot in Galilee bears his footprints. He is still “walking by the sea of Galilee” (Matthew 4:18), “on the Sabbath day he enters into the synagogue of Capernaum: (Kfar Nahum) (Mark 1:21), in Tabgha close to Capernaum he performs the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Luke 9:17). On the Mount of Beatitudes which overlooks the waters of the Lake, he utters his immortal Sermon on the Mount. Of course, Nazareth is the center of his life, and Jerusalem the scene of his last ministry. Much of the charm and magnetism of the Holy Land is due, not only to echoes of the Bible, but also to the echoes of Jesus’ life. {81} Being confronted with Jesus in this way is a new experience to the Jew. In the Diaspora Jesus looked alien to the Jew, an outsider, an interloper. But in Israel he is seen as the Jew from Nazareth, a native of this country, a Sabra, with claims to the land as strong as any. He cannot be brushed aside as a foreign influence.⁶

It is of little consequence whether we agree with Zweig’s views of Jesus, but we should acknowledge the openness and the freedom with which he and many Israelis are now able to study and speak about Jesus.

This amazing trend is also borne out by the 1988 Dahaf survey. The Dahaf Research Institute was commissioned by a group of Israeli Messianic Jews to ascertain public sentiment regarding Israeli Jews who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. One of the remarkable revelations of this survey was that 78% of Israeli society believe that:

A person born to a Jewish mother, who is faithful to the State of Israel, pays his taxes to the State, serves in the army, celebrates the Jewish holidays, keeps the commandments of Israel’s tradition, feels that he is a Jew, and believes that Yeshua is the Messiah, but was not baptized into Christianity has the right to receive an immigrant’s visa as a Jew under the Law of return.⁷

There can be no question: winds of change are blowing a new sense of religious freedom within Israeli Jewry today.

Our Mandate - To Convert Or To Witness?

Nowhere in the scriptures are we instructed to convert anyone. This is the exclusive work only of the Holy Spirit (John 16: 7-11). LaSor speaks from an authentic, evangelical perspective when he writes of the conversion of Jews: *The Bible nowhere speaks of converting Jews. However, the Bible does make clear, repeatedly and in many ways, that Jews, gentiles-all men and women without exception-need to be converted. In the biblical view, gentiles are pagans, and are called upon to “turn” from false gods to serve the true and living God. The descendants of Abraham, on the other hand, are considered within*

⁶ Ferdinand Zweig, a reprinted article from his book: *Israel: The Sword and the Harp*, New York, 1969.

⁷ Dahaf Research Institute, Tel Aviv Square.

the covenant, and are urged to “turn back” to God. There is a perversity in human nature that turns men from God. They must be called upon to return to Him, and this must be done continually. It is the responsibility of every rabbi, priest, and minister, in fact of any of God’s servants.

It is necessary for Jews and for gentiles to turn to God in repentance in order to be saved. No one, Jew, gentile, or Christian, is in the kingdom of God by virtue of his birth; it is only by the new birth that we can enter God’s realm.

{82} *This must be our central message. Some of my Jewish colleagues expressed the feeling that our Christian emphasis on the need of conversion implies that the Jew (or Judaism) is incomplete, that he needs something which we have-and this makes dialogue impossible. I would rather say that the Jew has the same needs that all men have, including me. We need to turn to God repeatedly, continually, throwing ourselves on His grace, and seeking His Spirit to enable us to do His will.⁸*

The Witness of Love to Israel

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum of Tustin, California, has also written an article that is critical of the Christian Embassy, because their good works of charity to both Jews and Arabs are not accompanied with evangelistic witness:

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people...” (Isa. 40: 1). This is the Christian Embassy’s sine qua non . However, the passage must not be removed from its context, which specifies the means by which “my people” are to be comforted: according to verse 9, comforting is achieved by proclaiming the good news to Zion and to Jerusalem. A message of comfort to Israel that does not include a declaration that “her iniquity is pardoned” (Isa. 40: 2) by means of faith in Messiah’s work, is no comfort at all. Blessing or comforting Israel without the proclamation of the gospel is neither a blessing nor a comfort.⁹

It is interesting to note that our Lord made no reference to verbal witnessing when He commended the righteous for their good deeds to His Jewish brethren (Matt. 25: 31-40).

Of course this one parable ought not be held normative for the Christian mandate to witness. But a living witness can sometimes be more effective than a verbal one. This in no way discredits verbal witness, neither should anyone discredit a witness which consists of good deeds motivated by the indwelling Messiah. Is this not what Jesus was referring to when He proclaimed the disciples to be “the light of the world” (Matt. 5: 14).

Witness by Supporting the State of Israel

Tuvya Zaretsky, the Associate Executive Director of Jews for Jesus, of San Francisco, adds further criticism of the Christian Embassy. Zaretsky is of the opinion that the Christian Embassy has erred in supporting a government that is “leading the nation to right-of-center.”¹⁰ We would ask what center? Is it trading “land for peace?”

⁸ LaSor, op. cit., pp. 4, 5.

⁹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “The International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. A Response,” *Mishkan 12* (1/1990) pp. 30-33.

¹⁰ Tuvya Zaretsky, “The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem-Christians for Whom or What,” *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36.

Is it not a part of our Christian witness to discover God's purposes for the nation of Israel from His Word and encourage His chosen people in their destiny? Is not a part of the ministry of reconciliation to help both Israeli {83} Jews and Palestinian Arabs come to terms with God's purposes for the land and to work together for a united Israel? To deny God's clear promise of Israel's stewardship of all the land she is called to govern and to support the unrealistic position of "land for peace" might be opposing God Himself. What nation dares deny Israel her capital city? Surely we who believe the Bible, understand that God loves Jerusalem and has forever bound the soul of Israel to that city?

Should not the Christian Embassy be commended for its love and support for Israel, arising from what its members share with God and the Messiah? Can one be a true and faithful witness to Jews and Arabs living in the Holy Land without speaking of His particular love for Israel?

There Is Only One Messiah

Rabbi Phillip Sigal, a profound Jewish scholar, was engaged in a multi-volume study of *The Emergence of Contemporary Judaism*. He completed only the first two volumes before his untimely death in 1985. In Volume One, *The Foundations of Judaism*, he states that one aspect of the theology that made Judaism and Christianity at first compatible was the first-century messianic expectation. As Sigal explains:

(Judaism and Christianity) went back to the Old Testament doctrine of "the day of the Lord." One belief was that at that time there would be a restoration of a dynasty of the Davidic kingly line who would rule a re-united Israel and Judah. The redeemed kingdom was to enjoy unlimited prosperity and universal peace in both the natural order and in human society. A suffering and dying messiah is glimpsed in various prophetic passages although there is much controversy over their meaning. And there are passages that are exegeted to refer to two messiahs.¹¹

In speaking of the ministry of John the Baptist, Sigal notes:

...when John specifically speaks of Jesus he does not speak of him in conventional messianic terms. He points him out as "the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." This is possibly messianic in the sense of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, or it is a new and revolutionary idea. John may be preaching that Jesus is not yet the messiah, but rather an Isaac-like lamb who will die for the sins of the world, as Isaac died for the sins of Israel. In all of these ideas John is pursuing Judaic thought, but he is transforming it into a series of beliefs which become the basis of a new aspect of Judaism. A dying and atoning messiah was known from the Book of Isaiah. But that was not the conventional messianic belief which was rather a nationalistic political faith in a David redivivus.¹²

{84} Both Jews and Christians must hear that there is only one Messiah—the dying and atoning Messiah revealed in Isaiah 53, the same reigning Messiah of Isaiah 9:6, 7 who restores the kingdom to Israel and establishes His worldwide kingdom of peace, justice and righteousness.

That is why I am a Christian Zionist.

¹¹ Phillip Sigal, *The Emergence of Contemporary Judaism*, Pittsburgh, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 383.

¹² Ibid., p. 387.