

# MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE



*Jerusalem*

# MISHKAN

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

**“THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL”**

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# The Church and Israel—Dialogue and Witness

## Editorial

The disciples were once asked, “What do you say about the Son of Man?” Another question raised to disciples and the church through the ages, is: “What do you say about Israel?” The Holocaust caused Western churches to rethink this question and reflect anew on their relation to the people of Israel and its faith. This issue of *Mishkan* examines this process within the church at large as well as on national and denominational levels.

Dialogue between the church and Israel is not an invention of the 20th century. The early church left us a number of dialogue books, such as Justin’s second century *Dialogue with Tryfon*. Although these books give us polished Christian versions, they testify to real encounters between Jews and Christians (in part Jewish Christians). In the mediaeval period there were arranged and forced dialogues. The powerful church ordered a formal dialogue between a rabbi and a Christian scholar, about Bible, Talmud and faith. Within this setting the dialogues hardly touched the hearts.

Christian-Jewish dialogue before 1945 was not a common phenomenon. But two German Jewish thinkers were involved in dialogue before and after the First World War. Franz Rosenzweig, who himself had been on the brink of conversion and baptism, conversed deeply with two Jewish Christians—his cousin Eugen Rosenstock as well as Hans Ehrenberg. These dialogues from 1913 and 1916 were published much later (1969). In 1933 Martin Buber conducted a dialogue with K.L. Schmidt in Stuttgart, which also has been published. These dialogues were real encounters, Rosenzweig’s probably more existential than Buber’s.

The Nazi atrocities against the Jewish people changed the picture. Christians understood that anti-Judaic traditions within the church through the centuries belonged to the background of modern anti-Semitism. A rethinking of the relation between the church and Israel followed. Western churches have tried to put an end to church triumphalism and supersessionist theology (while Eastern churches have not been part of this process).

For many thinkers the Holocaust has been made a hermeneutical key for rethinking theology. Christology and ecclesiology were understood anew, albeit in a less absolutist way. Some make the Holocaust a revelatory event that

reveals to the church not only the sad truth about the past, but also new knowledge about Israel, the church and salvation.

Some years ago a Lutheran-European commission (LEKKJ) discussed their churches' relation to Israel. A German participant proclaimed, "After 1945 we Lutherans can give no valid testimony about Jesus to the Jews!" A Norwegian colleague responded: "Maybe you should say 'We *German* Lutherans can give no valid testimony to the Jews'—members of my Lutheran family smuggled Norwegian Jews to Sweden during the war." In the same forum a member living in Israel phrased his dilemma; "As an ordained pastor I have to preach to everyone that only in Christ there is salvation. But I cannot say that to my Jewish friends!" Was his empathy overruling his Christology?

Christian-Jewish dialogue since 1945 has been an asymmetric relationship. Christians felt they desperately needed this dialogue. They had come to understand the Jewish roots of Christianity, and saw that Christendom must encounter the Jewish people to truly understand the nature of the church. Christians felt a need to confess the sins and faults of the church, both before and during the Hitler era. They wanted finally to encounter Jews as even partners, not as inferior partners of the powerful church, which earlier had seen itself as the successor of the Jews as the people of God.

The Jewish side saw it differently: Judaism does not need a Jewish-Christian dialogue to understand itself. (Neither Jews nor Christians had yet read Jacob Neusner's research of the 80's that demonstrated that basic facets of rabbinic faith were outlined in the encounter with the Byzantine church.) Jewish leaders could nevertheless find a dialogue useful for practical reasons. The post-Holocaust situation could give them a golden opportunity to request of the Christians to cleanse the church of anti-Semitism, support the state of Israel, and denounce proselytism and evangelism of Jews.

To a large extent modern Christian-Jewish dialogue has been a street with one-way traffic. Christians have continued to express their guilt and shame, continuing to walk the second mile with their opponents. But did it come to a real dialogue, as the one Rosenzweig was involved in? Was this a broken record, playing the same tune over and over again? After 40 years the tune may appear boring.

A few pedestrians may have tried to walk against the one-way traffic. Israeli-Vatican dialogue attempted some detours. But perhaps the year 2000 saw the first vehicle traveling in the other direction. After working together for a couple of years, some American Jewish thinkers published "Dabru emet (speak truth). A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity," with eight sub-statements about how Jews and Christians may relate to one another. They note that Christian churches have changed their face of contempt vis-à-vis the Jewish people, and now honor deep values in Jewish tradition. They acknowledge (as did Maimonides and Jehudah Halevi) that through

Christianity millions of gentiles have come into relationship with the God of Israel. Further, Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book—the Hebrew Bible, and they adhere to the same ethics from the Torah, have the same respect for the dignity of every human being, and may together work for peace and justice in the world. Christians respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. Therefore the Jewish side should welcome a renewed relationship between Christians and Jews, where each side learns to respect the other. The faith differences that remain between them will only be settled when God redeems the world according to the promises of Scripture.

Some Jewish scholars did not want to sign the statement. And there may be sentences in “Dabru emet” that evangelicals are not totally happy with. Nevertheless, it remains a voice to which Christians should listen.

Some of our authors note that Messianic Jews remain an odd card on the play board of Christian-Jewish dialogue. Messianic Jews are excluded from most dialogues. This may be a condition from the Jewish side, or it may be a conscious or unconscious decision from the Christian participants in the dialogues. Thus one plays anew a melody of the fourth and fifth centuries, when Jewish Christianity was torn asunder in the growing rift between church and synagogue. Neither side wanted a bridging group that was a living protest against the ultimate division between the church and Israel, a division wanted by the gentile church as well as the synagogue.

Jewish dialogue partners want the Christians to sign a moratorium on “proselytism,” i.e. Jewish evangelism, which they claim is another form of anti-Semitism, aiming for a “final solution to the Jewish question” of another kind than Hitler’s. Some churches have submitted to such pressure from the outside, or to a diluted theology from within. Others have boldly stayed on the old path, proclaiming that the gospel still is for the Jew first.

The 20th century has changed the terrain of Christian-Jewish interaction. What are evangelical and Messianic responses to the situation of today? Facing the challenges and questions of the modern world, Francis Schaeffer once asked, “How should we then live?” (the title of his 1976 book).

How should we then live? Theological reflection is needed, but so is a committed Christian life. The Roman Catholic Church has done more to change Israel’s relation to Christendom than many evangelicals comfortably acknowledge. The second Vatican Council (1965) opened a new way of dialogue with other living faiths. In 1986 John Paul II visited the synagogue in Rome and talked respectfully about “our elder brother.” The pope’s visit to Israel in April 2000 is probably the most important event for Christian-Jewish relations after 1945 (see *Mishkan* 32/2000, 67-81). In this issue David Neuhaus portrays the *kehilla* of Hebrew Catholics in Israel—a community that is not involved in evangelism, but prefers to be “a community of prayer and life in the midst of Israeli society.” A community that looks forward to a renewed relation

between the church and Israel, it is painfully aware of its being part of both entities.

Hebrew Catholics want to be a humble testimony to Israel, but not engage in traditional missionary activity. They belong to a church that now sees “salvific significance of the Jewish religion for its believers.” Messianic Jews and most evangelicals see this issue differently, and are therefore not prepared to abandon evangelism, as they see only one salvific name given under heaven, for Jew as well as gentile. But perhaps we should learn from some of our Hebrew Catholic brethren to listen more deeply to the pain Jewish conversion to Jesus does cause Jewish families and friends. That pain is linked to the tragic joint history of church and synagogue. We need empathy and tears alongside the proclamation. Evangelism does not exclude empathic dialogue.

Most of its history the church bypassed the Jews. This error should not be followed up by another –bypassing Jewish believers in Jesus. As Mitch Glaser phrases it, Messianic Jews remain a bridge between Christendom and the Jewish people. They do belong as an integral part in Christian-Jewish dialogue. May this issue of *Mishkan* be a stubborn reminder to Christians as well as Jews about this reality. He who has ears, let him hear!

*Torleif Elgvin*

# Jewish Evangelism in Post-Holocaust Europe—in light of some mission documents

Kai Kjær-Hansen

It is not difficult to find negative statements on Jewish evangelism—made by Christian theologians:

Jewish evangelism is an anachronism because Christians are not the only people of God.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of its history in the Hitler era, Jewish evangelism has forfeited its credibility and also its right (“exousia”) to missionize.<sup>2</sup>

Since Israel and the Church both belong to the one and same people of God, neither of them can missionize the other.<sup>3</sup>

Jewish evangelism is the “Endlösung der Judenfrage mit anderen Mitteln” — the final solution to the Jewish question by other means.<sup>4</sup>

To redress the balance we might listen to a few statements by the late Axel Torm, former chairman of the Danish Israel Mission. In 1972 he wrote:

*In earlier times the church downgraded Judaism in order to exalt Christ. It was a sin that the church committed. Today people downgrade Christ in order to exalt Judaism. Is that better?*<sup>5</sup>

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This article consistently uses the term “Jewish Christians” in order not to burden the presentation with a terminological problem. “Jewish Christians” is the designation which is mainly used in the theological debate in Europe by those who do not have much contact with Jewish believers in Jesus or Messianic Jews.

<sup>1</sup> Rolf Rendtorff, “The Effect of Holocaust on Christian Mission,” *Sidic* 1981/1, 20-25.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gerhard Aring, *Christliche Judenmission, Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 8-13.

<sup>3</sup> Bertold Klappert, *Christlich-jüdisches Forum*, 3979, no. 51, 71-72.

<sup>4</sup> Heinz Kremers, *Judenmission heute? Von der Judenmission zur brüderlichen Solidarität und zum ökumenischen Dialog* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1979), 31. Cf. the discussion below.

<sup>5</sup> Axel Torm, “Kirke og synagoge,” Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Israel, Kirken og Verden* (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1972), 188.



*Are we today ignoring Christ – in happy recognition of people if they will only say God? If Christ is not everything, then he is nothing. If it is possible to belong to God without him, then he is not necessary...<sup>6</sup>*

*If we downgrade Judaism in order to exalt Christianity – and this has happened – our message will become incredible. If we downgrade Christ – and this is happening today in order to meet the synagogue on equal terms in brotherhood – then we have forfeited our message. Friendship and brotherhood alone create nothing new. Together in Christ, in whom we are chosen, we must come before the face of God ...<sup>7</sup>*

## **The Good Old Days and Our Days**

The old days are almost by definition the good old days, and by the same token the present represents hard times. Sometimes the myth about the good old days and one's own hard times is used to rouse self-pity, or it is used as an explanation of why things are not going so well for us and what we stand for. The times are against us – and so are some churches and what they say about the church's relationship to Jews. But in the good old days things were different!

To see Jewish evangelism in Europe in this light – before and after the Holocaust – is, mildly stated, an oversimplification. A good way to deal with this self-pity is to look at things in a historical perspective.

In the Reformation era – i.e. the 16th century – there was no organized Jewish evangelism. In the wake of Pietism this came into being with the setting-up of Institutum Judaicum in Halle, Germany, in 1728, and with J.H. Callenberg's work there.

In the 19th century a number of societies for mission to the Jews were set up, beginning with The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (1809). Many countries in western and northern Europe followed and established their own Israel Mission societies in the 19th century. There have been changes over the years: some have been abolished; others have changed their names, for example replaced *Mission* with *Ministry*. This *may* indicate a turning away from mission, but not necessarily so. Jewish evangelism is *not* a thing of the past in Europe.

The so-called good old days were not as good as we often imagine. This is also the case with the 19th century, although this was the great century of Jewish evangelism. A cursory examination of old mission magazines provides many examples of writers who complain that there is a lack of interest in the missionary work, who point out that some people think that the Jew should be left in peace, that the work among the Jews is useless anyhow, that the gospel

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-194.

bears no fruit, has little impact, etc. In a report from a conference on Jewish evangelism in Leipzig 1895 it says: "Jewish evangelism has few friends." The report spells out the reason why Jewish evangelism does not have many friends: "The necessity for it is denied, partly for dogmatic reasons and partly for reasons of expediency."<sup>8</sup>

The main part of this article will be a demonstration of the unclear and unsatisfactory attitude to Jewish evangelism which has been expressed through the enormous amount of documents and statements formulated by various churches and Christian organisations after the Holocaust. The themes contained in the various statements *are* relevant. But the formulations are often of a nature that allows a more positive interpretation than intended by those who drew up the documents. The examination of a book by Heinz Kremers shows that an individual may have rather radical views when writing in his own name—although he has been co-author of a document with a much softer formulation.

## The Importance of Mission Documents

Documents and statements are one thing, reality something else. This is worth a few considerations.

Some statements include dissent from a minority; others do not. At a conference in 1977, arranged by The World Council of Churches (WCC), such disagreement was expressed. Here it is stated that some are convinced of the Church's obligation to witness to the Jews, while others believe that the Jews are faithful and obedient to God, even though they do not accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.<sup>9</sup> Most documents are the result of compromise, of giving and taking, of a lot of polishing of the wording.

This is also the case when Evangelicals formulate their documents. At a conference held by The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) in Manila in 1989, a manifesto was issued in which members of The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) requested that the following passage be inserted, a passage which is important for Jewish evangelism:

*It is sometimes held that in virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism, as well as being disloyal to Christ, to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel to "the Jew first ..." We therefore reject the thesis that Jews have their own covenant, which renders faith in Jesus unnecessary.<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> Rich. Bieling, *Nathanael* 1895, 102; cf. Kai Kjær-Hansen, *LCJE Zeist* 1991, Sabro, Denmark, 154-156.

<sup>9</sup> CCJP *Contribution to DFI Guidelines* (adopted by the Jerusalem Conference of CCJP, June 1977), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Manila Manifesto, cf. *Mishkan*, 11/1989, 85.

And yet, sad to say, no one dares to claim that all participants in the Manila meeting were in agreement with this or subsequently implemented the message of this passage.

Most of the documents, drafted after the Holocaust, have retained the concept that Christians have a testimony to be given to Jewish people. The problem is that it is not made clear what is the content of this testimony.

When the formulation of a document has been polished and finally agreed upon, the result is not that people go home and act accordingly. On the contrary, they continue where they left off. Only a minority change their views. Those who advocated mission to Israel continue to do so, although the document in question is more ambiguous about this point than they would have preferred. And those who opposed mission to Jews continue to do so, although they would have preferred the document to express a clearer *no* to mission than is the case. And then of course there are exceptions to this rule.

This is not to say that documents are void of importance. On the contrary, I am convinced that it is important that advocates of mission to Israel assume the often tiresome and hard task of drafting documents—even when all they achieve is to get a minority statement included in documents which express opposition or reluctance to mission. To my mind it is important that, for example, the document “Christian Witness to the Jewish People” from LCWE’s consultation in Pattaya, Thailand, 1980,<sup>11</sup> is included in a German book with almost 200 statements and documents on the Church and Judaism in the period of 1945-1985.<sup>12</sup> Whether one likes it or not, in order to be part of the theological and missiological debate, it is necessary from time to time to draft documents. They may never get any influence to speak of on the scholarly debate, and they may be dismissed as fundamentalist declarations—and therefore uninteresting—but they may be of help to others who want the best for Israel. There is a name for that: Yeshua.

The vague language used about Jewish evangelism in the documents has not had the disastrous impact on Jewish evangelism that might be feared. Not all agencies in Europe have died. A few examples will show this.

## **Jewish Evangelism Does Exist**

Under Hitler some Israel mission societies and their publications were banned in Germany and in the occupied countries, while others were allowed to

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<sup>11</sup> *Christian Witness to the Jewish People, Report of the Consultation on World Evangelization Mini-Consultation on Reaching Jewish People* (Pattaya, 16-27 June 1989), (Wheaton: LCWE 1980).

<sup>12</sup> Rolf Rendtorff & Hans Hermann Henrix (eds.), *Die Kirchen und das Judentum* (Paderborn 1988, 2nd printing 1989: Verlag Bonifatius-Druckerei Paderborn & Chr. Kaiser Verlag München).

function. Some missionary societies did not survive the Holocaust—those in Berlin and Cologne, for example. Neither did they revive after the War, which the Leipziger mission did (the Zentralverein).

A few more examples can be mentioned: The Swiss mission embarked on a development which resulted in mission being replaced by dialogue. Since 1981 the society has called itself "Stiftung für Kirche und Israel" (Society for Church and Israel). In 1970 the Swedish mission changed its name to "Kyrkan och judendomen" (Church and Judaism). Later, as part of "Svenska kyrkans mission" (The Swedish Church's Mission), it abandoned the mission line. However, when a society is closed down or when it changes its views, there will often be a reaction. In Württemberg, southern Germany, "Evangeliumsdienst für Israel" (EDI) was set up in 1972 by people who were formerly active in the Swiss mission. In 1968 "Arbeitsgemeinschaft für das messianische Zeugnis an Israel" (AMZI, Association for the Messianic Witness to Israel) was founded by 10 persons from seven denominations and organizations in Switzerland – since 1985 with a Germany branch.<sup>13</sup> In Sweden a small Israel mission was set up in the late 1980's. In 1978 one was founded in Iceland and in 1992 one in the Faroe Islands in the North Atlantic.

When the declaration from the Rhineland Church was published in 1980, with what was understood as a *no* to mission, reactions were immediate. These include a statement from the Confessional Church in Germany<sup>14</sup> and a number of statements from German professors who objected to the *no* of the declaration.<sup>15</sup> After the Zentralverein in 1991 had given up the term "Judenmission" (Jewish mission or Jewish evangelism) because it was found to be an embarrassment and also open to misconstruction,<sup>16</sup> this *no* was countered by a number of theologians from the University of Göttingen.<sup>17</sup> Matthias Dahl, chairman of "The Nordelbischer Verein für Zeugnis und Dienst unter Juden und Christen e.V." (The Nordelbisher Association for Witness and Ministry among Jews and Christians), did not intend to follow this line and invited, for example, Stan Telchin as main speaker to the 1993 annual meeting of the Nordelbischer association.<sup>18</sup> And after The International Missionary Council's Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews (IMCCAJ) had been silenced when in the 1960's it was made part of The World Council of Churches (WCC), The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) was established in

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. pamphlet from AMZI: *25 Years*, 1993, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Die Kirchen und das Judentum* (cf. note 12), 596-598.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Wolfgang Schrage, "Ja und Nein - Bemerkungen eines Neutestamentlers zur Diskussion von Christen und Juden," *Evangelische Theologie*, 1981/42, 126-151.

<sup>16</sup> "120 Jahre Zentralverein," *Friede über Israel*, 4/1991, 168.

<sup>17</sup> See Arnold H. Baumann, "Aneinander vorbei: Der Göttinger Streit," in *Friede über Israel*, 3/1992, 97-98. For other reactions, see *Friede über Israel*, 1/1992, 32-34.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Fokus Israel*, no. 3, 1993, 2.

1980 with a program which almost might have been copied from IMCCAJ—a matter which will be dealt with below.

Attention should also be drawn to the statement issued by the Norwegian Israel Mission in 1986, entitled *To the Jew first*, which is an affirmation of continued Jewish evangelism without any reservations.<sup>19</sup> The same is true of The Willowbank Declaration (1989) a document to which European theologians also contributed.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, if the focus is exclusively on the churches' *official* mission documents, one is often led to a pessimistic view of the position of Jewish evangelism. But if one looks at the actual situation, it is a different picture. There is, however, no doubt that involvement in evangelism as such—and not just Jewish evangelism—is not as broad as one could wish.

### **Main Lines After 1945**

The question of how the Holocaust has influenced the concept of God among Jews and Christians will not be dealt with here. For some from both sides it has become meaningless to speak about God after the Holocaust. But from a New Testament perspective—and in spite of the Holocaust—it has to be said: The gospel came from Israel and was for Israel. If it is no longer for Israel, then it is no longer for us. It is not those who maintain that Jews need Jesus for salvation who have the problem. It is those who deny it. It ought to be possible for those with a clear Christology and theology to interact with fellow evangelicals who have a clear Christology when it comes to evangelism of non-Jews. As to those who have abandoned the New Testament's Christology it is a different matter. Here the theological confrontation must continue, not only in regard to Jewish evangelism, but in general.

The phase immediately after the Holocaust is characterized by the Church's shame and guilt towards the Jewish people, but also towards the Jewish Christian members of the Church whom it had betrayed. In several documents the Church confesses its guilt. But this confession does not fundamentally affect the fact that the Church has an obligation to evangelize the Jewish people. Prominent spokesmen for mission *before* the Holocaust are also spokesmen for mission *after* the Holocaust. The Israel mission societies continue their activity. When the WCC was founded in Amsterdam, Holland in 1948, the Jews were included in the churches' mission. The WCC warns against unworthy mission and manipulation and recommends that pastors are trained to expound the

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<sup>19</sup> *To the Jew first. Statement About Christian Ministry to the Jewish People.* From the National Board of directors, the Norwegian Mission to Israel (Oslo: 1986); printed in *Mishkan* 4/1986, 53-63. For reactions to this, see *Mishkan* 5/1986, 12-33.

<sup>20</sup> Printed in *Mishkan* 11/1989, 76-84; see also Henri Blocher's article in this issue.

gospel to the Jewish people and to produce literature suited for such work. Anti-Semitism is condemned as a sin against God and men.<sup>21</sup>

Concurrently with the confession of guilt there is a process of reflection on the peculiarity of the Jewish people, its special importance for the Christian faith, the State of Israel as a theological phenomenon, and above all, a reflection on the question of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. The question was asked: What in the churches' preaching and theology could have contributed to the Holocaust? In various contexts instructional material about Judaism was produced in order to fight a false representation of it. Already in 1947 there was a gathering in Seelisberg, Switzerland, of Catholics, Protestants and Jews. The meeting was arranged by IMCCAJ. Jules Isaac had worked out 18 points, and the conference issued a document with ten points intended as guidelines for pastors and teachers in their preaching and teaching. These points are worth mentioning:

1. It is the same God who speaks in the Old Testament and the New Testament.
2. Jesus was born of a Jewish mother, he was of David's lineage, and his love encompasses his own people and the whole world.
3. The first disciples and martyrs were Jews.
4. The commandment to love God and one's neighbour is found in the Old Testament, it is affirmed by Jesus, and it is binding for Jews as well as Christians.
5. Biblical Judaism as well as post-biblical Judaism must not be denigrated in order to extol Christianity.
6. The word Jew should not be used exclusively about the enemies of Jesus. One should avoid calling the whole Jewish people his enemies.
7. The Passion should not be described as if all Jews—or as if the Jews alone—were responsible for the circumstances which led to the death of Jesus.
8. The crowd's shout: "His blood be on us and on our children!" should not be isolated from - and cannot nullify - Jesus' words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Jesus' words have the greater weight.
9. The godless idea that the Jewish people has been rejected, cursed and damned to interminable suffering must not be supported.
10. The fact that the first members of the Church were Jews must not be suppressed.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Göte Hedenquist (ed.), *25 Years of the International Missionary Council's Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1957), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Axel Torm, *Israelsmission og Israels Mission* (Århus: Forlaget OKAY-BOG, 1990), 60-61.

The ten points in the Seelisberg declaration are worth noting and worth further reflection. Anti-Judaism as such is still an urgent issue. In 1994, the Norwegian theologian Øyvind Foss maintained that there are many examples of anti-Judaism in earlier issues of the magazines of the German and Nordic Israel missions.<sup>23</sup> This may be so, but those who advocate mission to the Jews should not be surprised that some people accuse them of anti-Judaism. If a person says that Jews need Jesus for salvation, some will see this as an anti-Judaistic statement. According to Rosemary Ruether's theology, which has had a considerable influence on European theology, "anti-Judaism is the left hand of Christology,"<sup>24</sup> for which reason she claims that the New Testament Christology needs to be reformulated. To those who agree we must boldly assert the New Testament's Christology – and be prepared to be accused of anti-Judaism.

It is noteworthy that in the 1950's there is still in IMCCAJ a clear commitment to Jewish evangelism. The International Missionary Council (IMC) had been founded in Edinburgh in 1910, had held world conferences on Jewish evangelism in Budapest and Warsaw in 1927, in Jerusalem in 1928, and had worked since 1932 under the name The International Missionary Council's Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews. In passing it may be noted that its main task was similar to LCJE's today. The founder of IMCCAJ was John Mott who hoped to place the Jews at the center of the Christian churches' mission commitment.<sup>25</sup>

In connection with the celebration of IMCCAJ's 25-year anniversary, a small booklet was published. This booklet is indeed edifying reading for those who today advocate Jewish evangelism! After an enumeration of various objections to Jewish evangelism, it is said:

*If it were held that the Jews did not need Jesus Christ, or were an exception as regard Christian missions, it has to be conceded that there may also be other people who would not need Christ. This would imply that the Christian mission was deprived of the basis for its claim of the absoluteness and necessity of salvation for the individual man and for mankind. It is true, however, that Christianity, as well as Mohammedanism, has its roots in Judaism but it is only one of these three religions that recognizes Jesus of Nazareth as Christ. Judaism is as much without Christ as Mohammedanism and Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Either all people need Christ or none.*<sup>26</sup>

In 1961 IMCCAJ was incorporated in the WCC and the Committee on the Church and the Jewish People (CCJP) was formed. This was the year when WCC held its third general assembly, in New Delhi, and CCJP was joined with

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<sup>23</sup> Øyvind Foss, *Antijudaisme, kirke og misjon* (Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Rosemary Ruether, "Anti-Semitism Is the Left Hand of Christology," R. Heyer, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), 1-9.

<sup>25</sup> Göte Hedenquist (cf. note 21), 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

the department for world mission and evangelization. In 1971 CCJP became a sub-unit for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies. There is quite a gap between what IMCCAJ stood for—with its commitment to Jewish evangelism—and its replacement, CCJP, with its vague if not negative attitude to Jewish evangelism. In CCJP the orientation is in a different direction, which is shown in the following words from a conference in 1977:

*We want to consider in more depth how Jews and Christians are jointly, yet distinctly, participating in God's mission to his creation toward the "Hallowed be Thy Name." (missio dei/qiddush ha-Shem)*<sup>27</sup>

The period from about 1960 through the 1970's is the period in which dialogue between Jews and Christians becomes the dominant feature while the church's commitment to evangelize Jews is played down. Naturally, this does not mean that there were not occasional dialogues before or after the Holocaust. But now even Christians demand that Jewish evangelism be abolished. The acknowledgement of God's ongoing covenant with Israel is used theologically to speak about one covenant people which has been divided. On Calvary God did not annul his covenant with Israel, but it is now expanded to include gentiles.

The scope of this article does not allow a proper confrontation with the dialogue attitude. I am *not* opposed to the idea that people of different faiths meet and discuss their faiths so that misconceptions can be avoided and people can help each other keep the commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Nor do I deny that through dialogue I can learn something—indeed much—from Jews about my own faith. I am not against cooperation in the field of scholarly research. And I am not blind to the fact that the religions can make a combined effort and together speak up for more peace and justice in the world. But when dialogue replaces mission, when dialogue becomes dialogism with pluralism and an openness towards all people with a living faith as the fundamental principle, and when the pursuit of peace and justice becomes the main issue, then one has alienated oneself from genuine Christian faith, transformed New Testament Christology and nullified the salvific work of Jesus. According to the New Testament this work is to the Jews first! If the Church does not proclaim that the world needs Christ, no one in the world will do it.

The Christian professor M. Stöhr sums up this phase very accurately in the preface to Pinchas Lapide's book, *Ökumene aus Christen und Juden* (1972).<sup>28</sup> He says that (1) ecumenical meetings are incomplete without the participation of

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<sup>27</sup> *Dialogue in Community. Statement and Reports of a Theological Consultation, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 18-27 April 1977*, (Geneva: WCC, 1977), 24.

<sup>28</sup> Pinchas E. Lapide, *Ökumene aus Christen und Juden* (Neukirchen-Vluyn,:Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 6.



Jews and that (2) a Christian witness expresses itself through the practical cooperation of Jews and Christians for more justice and human worth in the struggle against oppression and exploitation. Jewish evangelism is a contradiction of this biblical task.

These words are taken from a statement, issued in 1971 after a joint Jewish-Christian service in Augsburg.

In documents from this phase there is constant mention of Christian witness, but it is never specified what the witness implies. For some the dialogue becomes a new way to proclaim the gospel. It is in this context the 1975 study *Christen und Juden*, published by EKD, Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands, (The German Evangelical Church) must be placed.<sup>29</sup>

A glance at the themes dealt with in the churches' mission documents shows that these are indeed key questions. To mention but a few:

- \* Guilt owing to shared responsibility for the Holocaust
- \* The struggle against anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism
- \* Israel's God – Jesus Christ's Father and our Father
- \* The Jewish roots of the Church
- \* The continued election of Israel and the denouncement of the view that the Church is the new Israel
- \* The State of Israel in a theological perspective.

The so-called renewed reflection on the Israel question, on behalf of the churches and other church bodies, must be welcomed. The conclusions, however, often leave much to be desired, the reason often being a distorted Christology.

We will now focus more specifically on a 1980 document which has received much publicity.

### **The Synodal Resolution of the German Rhineland Church 1980**

Not many documents have attracted so much attention as the one formulated by the Rhineland Church in 1980.<sup>30</sup> Some have seen it as the decisive turning-point in the relations between Judaism and Christianity. The document itself sees the Holocaust as a turning-point—not in God's revelation but in the relationship between Jews and Christians.

Four reasons for this turning-point are cited:

1. Co-responsibility for and guilt because of the Holocaust

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<sup>29</sup> Printed in *Die Kirchen und das Judentum*, (see note 12 above), 558-578. The EKD study of 1975 was later succeeded by another study, *Christen und Juden II, Zur theologischen Neuorientierung im Verhältnis zum Judentum* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> Printed in *Die Kirchen und das Judentum* (see note 12), 593-596. See also Helgo Lindner's article in this issue of *Mishkan*.

2. New biblical insight into Israel's continued importance for salvation history (Rom 9-11)

3. Israel's continued existence, its return to the Promised Land and the creation of the State of Israel are tokens of God's faithfulness to his people

4. Willingness on the part of Jews to dialogue and cooperation with Christians in spite of the Holocaust.

These four points are given a more specific explanation in paragraphs beginning with "Wir bekennen" (We confess), "Wir glauben" (We believe) and "Wir stellen darum fest" (We therefore declare).

Three statements are of particular interest:

§ 4.3 "We confess faith in Jesus Christ, the Jew, who as Israel's Messiah is the saviour of the world and who unites the peoples of the world with the people of God."

(It is positive that Jesus is called "the Jew" and "Israel's Messiah," *but* it is not said explicitly that the Jew Jesus is Messiah to Israel's people *now*.)

§ 4.4 "We believe in the continued election of the Jewish people as God's people and acknowledge that the Church through Jesus Christ has entered the covenant of God with his people."

(Again, *nothing* about what God's acts through Jesus mean for Jewish people *now*.)

§ 4.6 "We believe that Jews and Christians in their calling are always witnesses of God to the world and to one another. We are therefore convinced that the Church cannot witness to the Jewish people in the same way as it does in its mission to the nations of the world."

(This might be construed as an explicit formulation of the view that mission to Israel is *different* from Christian mission to non-Jews. But that was not the way it was understood nor was it meant that way.)

In summary, the themes are highly relevant and there is much to rejoice in. Much of what is said about Israel, about the relationship of the Church to Israel, and about the Church and Jesus is valuable and relevant. And yet behind the formulation there is cause for scepticism towards the overall understanding of the declaration. It is tied up with vagueness about the importance of Jesus *for Israel* and related ambiguity regarding the Church's witness *to Israel*.

We will leave this document and turn to a book written by one of those who had a hand in both the 1975 study of the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (The German Evangelical Church) and in the 1980 declaration of the Rhineland Church in an attempt to uncover what may be hidden behind consequent cautious and vague formulations.

### **Hans Kremers' "Judenmission heute?"**

The subtitle of the book *Judenmission heute?* (Jewish Mission Today – published 1979) reveals in what direction Kremers is taking his readers: Von der

Judenmission zur brüderlichen Solidarität und zum ökumenischen Dialog (From Jewish evangelism to Brotherly Solidarity and to Ecumenical Dialogue).<sup>31</sup> A cursory glance through Kremers' book corroborates the fact that although a document is formulated in rather cautious terms, the persons behind it are often more explicit when they write in their own name.

Kremers arrives at the conclusion that the word "Judenmission" can no longer be used as a term for the Christian witness to the Jewish people. Indeed he goes as far as to say that all agencies involved in mission to the Jews must be abolished, even those which no longer use such names, and be replaced by others whose programme is to help Israel and teach Christians what Judaism is. Instead of agencies for mission to the Jews, the Church should have working groups under the name "Church and Israel" (p. 80).

There is no mistaking what he has in mind, but for those who do not share his view, the really interesting thing is the way he argues. Kremers seems to be distancing himself from Jewish evangelism "today" ("today" in quotation marks will be used below in the meaning "the end of the 1970's") by using arguments about "yesterday's" Jewish evangelism. The problem is not that he criticizes "yesterday's" Jewish evangelism—there are plenty of things to criticize—but that the problem is not dealt with in depth. In passing it may be mentioned that Kremers himself reveals some knowledge of Messianic Jews in Israel.

First Kremers defines the word "Judenmission": It comprises all church activities which aim at "making Jews Christians," which means that they are taken out of their people and made members of a gentile Christian church (p. 10). He quotes, and concurs with, the American theologian Eva Fleischner's words: "The goal is baptism and entrance into the Church, with the consequent disappearance of the Jew as Jew."<sup>32</sup>

It would have been relevant if Kremers had discussed what Jewish Christians and Christian Israel missions "today" have to say regarding whether a Jew who comes to faith in Jesus has to give up his Jewish identity. He might also have mentioned how at least some Jewish Christians of the last century tackled the problem. If he had done that, it would not have been possible for him—at least not without strong modifications—to define the goal of Jewish evangelism the way he does. He might instead have asked some Jews what they think of the question, and he might have come up with examples showing that "today" it is in Jewish non-Messianic circles that the desire for Jesus-believing Jews to disappear as Jews is strongest.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. note 4 above.

<sup>32</sup> Eva Fleischner, *Judaism in German Christian Theology Since 1945* (Metuchen, N.J., USA: ATLA Monograph Series, No. 8, Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1975), 139.

Kremers goes on to enlarge on the situation for Jews who have become Christians (pp. 10-11). From the second century onwards Jews have only been able to become members of a Christian church if they renounced their Jewishness:

1. In order to become Christians, they had to segregate themselves from their people, which is still the one God's covenant people (*Bundesgemeinde*).

2. In order to become Christians, they were no longer allowed to live in a Jewish manner (after the Law).

3. In order to become Christians, they were no longer allowed, like the Jewish Christians before them, to understand Messiah Jesus and the entire Christ event in a Jewish way. That had now become synonymous with heresy. On the contrary, they had to bring a *sacrificium intellectus*, i.e. they had to sacrifice their Jewish intellect, and understand Messiah Jesus and the entire Christ event in a Hellenistic and western way.

Not one word hints that Jewish Christians as well as people involved in Jewish evangelism have exactly these themes on their agenda today—which was also the case in the 1970's. Who says "today" that a Jewish Christian must segregate himself from his people? Not the Jewish Christians! It is true that the Jewish Christians' relationship to the Law is a subject for discussion and disagreement "today," but there is more to it than Kremers implies. Who says "today" that the Christ event must not be seen in a Jewish light? It is not the Jewish Christians and it is not the non-Jewish Israel missions. Kremers elegantly ignores what is actually on the agenda of Jewish evangelism "today." Kremers claims that for 1800 years the Church was convinced that it had a commission from its Lord to evangelize Jews. By this he implies that it is different "today."

He proceeds to speak about Jews and Christians as brethren. Jews should help Christians become better Christians, and Christians should help Jews become better Jews (p. 12). Kremers then examines various documents from the Jewish-Christian dialogue. He objects to this dialogue being used as a new form of Jewish evangelism (p. 26). The Jewish people and the Christian church have both been called by the same God to be his witnesses in the world. He says: "The sustained call of Israel forbids the Church to understand its witness to Israel in the same way as its sending (mission) to all other nations."

According to Kremers, the Church ought to be able to understand when Jews "today" (after the Holocaust) claim that Christian mission to the Jews is an expression of an "Endlösung der Judendfrage mit anderen Mitteln" (a final solution to the Jewish question by other means) (p. 31). Professional contact and personal friendship with Jewish scholars<sup>17</sup>—Rabbi Aschkenasy, Professors Safra, Pines, van Praag and Flusser—have led him to a new realization: Christian mission to the Jews is a mistake (p. 33).

Here things become really interesting, for Kremers goes on to speak about some Jewish Christians in Israel whom he met during a six-month stay in Jerusalem in 1968 (p. 34). First Kremers mentions a conversation between a Jew and a Jewish Christian (p. 34) – which I render slightly paraphrased:

*The Jew to the Jewish Christian:* So, as a Jew you are a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth and believe that he is the Messiah?

*The Jewish Christian:* Yes!

*The Jew:* That is good! But tell me also, have you been baptized?

*The Jewish Christian:* Yes!

*The Jew (disappointed):* That is not good. For you have betrayed your Jewishness with your baptism and you have defected to the gentiles!

Kremers comments that this is a problem he often encountered, and came to understand the Jewish aversion to baptism better.

It would have been appropriate for Kremers to discuss whether this Jew's positive attitude to the Jew who professes Jesus as the Messiah is characteristic of the general Jewish attitude, which the unsuspecting reader is led to assume. If this question had been asked, there would be negative things to say about at least some Jews' continued very negative view of Jesus and not least their dissociation from fellow Jews believing in Jesus as Israel's Messiah. As to the question of baptism, there are also important matters to discuss. It is possible to be baptized without "defecting to the gentiles" – according to some Jewish Christians. In addition there is the very basic question to discuss, namely that baptism is not a gentile Christian invention; it is Jewish, practised by the first Jewish Christians. How can a man who wants to be taken seriously as a theologian tell a story like this and not deal with such a fundamental question? Baptism in Jesus' name did not turn the first Jesus-believing Jews into ex-Jews.

Kremers then describes his contacts with Jewish Christians in Israel in 1968. Most of them were critical of him because of his *no* to Jewish evangelism. When he asks them why they live in Israel, they answer that they are Jews. When he asks them why they still belong to a gentile Christian church, most of them answer that the other Christians in Israel will not allow them to form a pure Jewish Christian church. And if this is attempted, financial pressure is brought to bear on them. Slowly it dawns on Kremers that the Christian mission to the Jews has gone astray when they will not tolerate an independent Jewish Christian church in Israel.

Unfortunately Kremers moves on instead of pursuing relevant questions, although there are plenty of them: the presence of Jewish Christians as a challenge to the Church; gentile Christian churches' fear of a Jewish Christian church; and the Israel missions' fear of the same. Nor does Kremers discuss the relevant question that the Jewish Christians are made losers, whether intentionally or not, when it is argued that the Jew as Jew – without faith in Jesus – and the non-Jew through faith in Jesus are both called to be God's

witnesses in the world (p. 26). From Kremers' point of view there is no reason to become a Jesus-believing Jew. If this had been the case, he might have entered a meaningful discussion of what to expect from gentile Christian churches and missionary societies concerning a Jewish Christian church. But Kremers is not in the least interested in a Jewish Christian church. He is interested in the abolition of the Christian mission to the Jews—and uses Jewish Christians to serve that purpose.

After a chapter on Biblical theology (ch. 5) Kremers returns to the mistake of Christian mission to the Jews (ch. 6). He goes back to the first centuries, speaks about a first-century "Kirche aus Juden und Heiden" (Church of Jews and gentiles), about their differences and their oneness in faith (p. 71), and quotes Markus Barth as saying that nowhere in the New Testament are *gentile* Christians told to missionize Jews. "Mission to Jews is here [in the New Testament] an *internal Jewish matter*" (p. 72). Towards the end of this chapter he recapitulates three conditions which *all* Christian missions to the Jews have imposed upon those Jews who would like to become Christians—from the third century and to this very day:

1. For Jews who want to become Christians it is a condition that they leave their people.
2. For Jews who want to become Christians it is a condition that they no longer live "after the law of their people."
3. For Jews who want to become Christians it is a condition that they no longer understand the Christ event in Jewish terms.

The argumentation comes close to sophistry. One could, by the same token, say the following: The great commission in Matthew 28 was given to Jews, hence it does not apply to non-Jewish believers! And again, with so strong an emphasis on the oneness of Jews and Christians and the insistence that both parties are witnesses about God in the world, it seems strange that a barrier is erected between Jewish Christians and Christians, particularly since the New Testament accentuates their oneness. But then the Jewish Christians do not constitute an integrated part of Kremers' theological overall view. He reflects on unity and differences in the first century between Jesus-believing Jews and non-Jews, but he does not apply it to a similarly serious discussion of the situation "today."

In conclusion Kremers speaks about the ecumenical dialogue between Jews and Christians and about their faith identities. With an example he makes his own position clear. If a Jew comes to him and says, "Baptize me or I will go and hang myself," then Kremers will baptize him.

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*If baptism was the only way I could stop this man from hanging himself, then I would baptize him. For according to Jewish doctrine mortal danger supersedes the commitment to keep the commandments. And here it supersedes what I see as the commandment imposed upon me by God, namely not to baptize any Jew. But if I should succeed in calming down the suicide candidate, then I would entreat him heartily and earnestly not to be baptized, because he*

would thereby give the other Jews the impression that he had betrayed his people – and so give them offence. But above all I would show him that also as an unbaptized Jew he could, thanks to ‘the freedom of the gospel,’ be a complete disciple of Jesus Christ who does not lack anything for his Messianic salvation. And I would ask him to take upon him the cross of Jesus and walk this more difficult way than the one of the Christian baptism into a Christian church (pp. 78-79).

Kremers’ (ab)use of Jewish Christians leads me to question how Jewish Christians figure generally in documents and discussions about the relationship between Jews and Christians.

### **Jewish Christians in the Jewish-Christian dialogue**

The main tendency is clear. Jewish Christians hardly have a place in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. The relatively few exceptions confirm the rule, and when Jewish Christians are mentioned they are seldom integrated in the theological overall view of Christians when they discuss the relationship between Jews and Christians.

This assertion can be substantiated by an examination of the 700-page book with almost 200 statements from the period 1945-1985 about the Church and Judaism which I referred to above. Exceptions are the Pattaya document from LCWE 1980 and a couple of statements from Israel which are also included in the book. In a joint statement in 1963 from the majority of the churches in Israel it is made clear that a Jew who becomes a Christian remains a member of his people.<sup>33</sup> The Baptists in Israel denounced anti-Semitism in 1972 without mentioning the Jewish Christians,<sup>34</sup> and in 1977 the United Christian Council in Israel (UCCI) declared against the so-called anti-mission law.<sup>35</sup>

Jewish Christians or similar designations are used about the *first* Jesus-believing Jews, i.e. about a phenomenon of the past.<sup>36</sup> It is also used in documents which confess guilt because Christians failed them under the Nazi regime; it is often said explicitly that they are authentic members of the Church.<sup>37</sup>

Some documents mention that there are Jewish Christians today and that they may serve to remind the Church of its Jewish roots.<sup>38</sup> An example from Los Angeles from 1982 indicates that Catholics strongly dissociate themselves from members of the Jesus movement and mention as an example the organization Jews for Jesus.<sup>39</sup> A *yes* to the Jewish Christians comes from the Confessional

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<sup>33</sup> In *Die Kirchen und das Judentum* (see note 12), 341.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 483-484.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 392-395.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, e.g. 531, 537-538, 539, 546, 589.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, e.g. 531, 537-538, 539, 546, 589.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, e.g. 292-294, 426, 432 et. al.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, e.g. 292-294, 426, 432 et. al.

Church in Germany; they encourage them not to abandon their solidarity with the people of Israel.<sup>40</sup>

There are positive tendencies in documents and writings which individuals from for example the German Zentralverein and the Norwegian Israel Mission have helped to draw up,<sup>41</sup> but the overall impression is clear: Jewish Christians are not really integrated in the debate about the relationship between Jews and Christians. And one might add that, with a few exceptions, Jewish Christians do not take part in this debate.

In conclusion we note the following: If it is true that Jewish Christians are not on the agenda in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, and if it is true that Jewish Christians do not take part in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, then we can hardly complain about this *if* the truth is that Jewish Christians and those who support them *do not want to* make their contribution in such contexts.

This is one side of the matter. The other is that Jesus-believing Jews have sometimes been ostracized by the Jewish partner in a planned Jewish-Christian dialogue, as mentioned by Mitch Glaser in his article in this issue of *Mishkan*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 597.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. Arnulf H. Baumann & Käte Mahn & Magne Sæbø (eds.), *Luthers Erben und die Juden. Das Verhältnis lutherischer Kirchen Europas zu den Juden* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1984), 98-101, 121-124.



# The Church, the Jewish People and Mission to the Jews in Germany

Helgo Lindner

Everyone who wants to understand the German perspective regarding Christian-Jewish relations will initially be confused by seemingly contradictory impressions. Among these is the fact that most church members do not give much thought to Judaism (if at all) when reading the Bible or worshipping—in spite of our active part in the mass annihilation of the Jewish people in the midst of the past century. In the schools young people usually learn nothing of the Jewish origins of Christianity, but there are periods, too, in which they feel inundated with information about the mistreatment of the Jewish people during the Third Reich. For older people Jewish topics stimulate German guilt, and they do not like to speak about them, e.g. the restitution payments for forced laborers.

But a small percentage of academic people (especially among Christians of all denominations) are vividly interested in Jewish matters. These people participate in Christian-Jewish societies and attend relevant lectures and journey to the Holy Land. But after the German reunification of 1990 a new movement began. It is a subculture of youths who participate in anti-Semitic activities. In eastern Germany the past had been ignored officially; consequently people have had few opportunities to come to terms with what Germany did during the Second World War. But suppressed anti-Jewish feelings are part of our German reality everywhere. In the field of theological thinking we observe that no great shedding of traditional patterns occurred until 1980—before the doctrine of “Enterbung” or substitution. But since then we have experienced an increasing enthusiasm toward Israel, and different “Israel theologies” have begun to dominate the Church synods (not in all subject matters, but those regarding Christian-Jewish relations).

## **Dialogue and Church Declarations before 1975**

Since 1961 the German Evangelical Church Congresses (“Kirchentage”) offered forums for dialogue with Jewish scholars (Berlin, 1961: “The Uncancelled Covenant”). After Hitler, Jewish mission and scholarship related to Jewish-Christian issues began anew. However, from the beginning objections towards Jewish evangelism were very strong within this movement. Jewish participants in the dialogue made this point very clearly and soon Christians were asking themselves, “How can we converse with Jews if we continue to look at them as “mission objects”?”

When we consider German Church declarations on the Church, the Jewish people and mission to the Jews since 1975, we have to remember the declaration of the Roman Catholic Church *Nostra aetate* of 1965. This statement stresses the links by which (1) the people of the New Covenant are joined to and indebted to the stock of Abraham, and (2) abandons both the views of Jewish guilt for Jesus’ crucifixion and God’s rejection of the Jewish people. There were also declarations of Lutheran (Scandinavian) and Reformed (Netherlands) Churches which helped promote new ideas in Germany about Jews and Christian-Jewish relationship.

## **Dialogue and Church Declarations from 1975-2000.**

Confining ourselves to a few important statements, mention should be made of six documents. Three of them are studies done by the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany and compiled by the “Studienkommission Christen und Juden” of the EKD (Protestant Church of Germany): “Studie I” published in 1975, “Studie II” in 1991, and “Studie III” in 2000. These texts reflect post-war development, but there are also other declarations of equal importance: The Resolution of the “Rheinische Kirche” (Rhineland Church) of 1980, a Roman Catholic Bishops’ Declaration of the same year, and – not so widely published – a statement of the leading committees of both the EKV (United Protestant Church) and the VELKD (United Lutheran Church in Germany) of 1996. An evangelical document of 1980 marks the contrast between academic theology and missionary concern.

Marked by the Synod’s Resolution of the Rheinland Church, 1980 was a turning point. This document was followed by a great number of similar resolutions of other “Landeskirchen” or regional churches, and, since 1988, alterations of church constitutions. The turning point of 1980 proved to be detrimental to mission to the same extent that it was a beneficial for a new theological approach to the Israel phenomenon. It was marked by dialogue and dialogue theology, but excluded mission and Jewish evangelism! Let me name one other important change: Up to that year the guilt of mass murder of the Jewish people was considered a national and corporate German phenomenon;

after 1980 it became a theological issue, i.e. a collective *Christian* guilt, which accompanied the Church from its earliest times. "Faith" seemed to be inseparably linked to "fratricide" from New Testament times onward.<sup>42</sup>

The papers of the Rhineland church succeeded in securing church political relevance, at least for the following 20 years. Not only did Church resolutions follow this event, but systematic theology had new subject matter as well. Moreover the Rhineland Resolution marks the breakthrough of an "Israel theology" in Germany.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Protestant Church of Germany**

First we shall take a look at the document of 1975 produced by the Protestant Church of Germany. It is an honest paper in so far as it does say (and nothing beyond) what German theologians could agree on. It deals with the "common roots" of Jews and Christians, but also with the "parting of the ways," and has a third part which describes the situation of "Jews and Christians today." In an appendix it gives good information on several topics, e.g. the "annihilation of European Jewry." In preparing the paper the participants of the 'Studienkommission' did not come to terms on the question of "dialogue" and "mission," and only by intervention of the Council did they finally accept the following formula: Mission and Dialogue should not be taken as terms or notions which are mutually exclusive, but "as two dimensions of one and the same Christian witness." The paper mentions Jewish Christians in its historical section as "a parting of the ways," and in its glossary, where it explains that Jewish Christians' Jewish identity is contested by their (fellow) Jews. Jesus is seen as a teacher who lived within Jewish traditions, but who interpreted the traditions in ways unusual to his Jewish context. Jewish traditions are seen as essential to Christianity: the oneness of God, the Holy Scriptures, the notion of being the People of God, God's justice and love, common elements in the liturgy, and the expectation of God's final acts in history. The paper has no unanimous answer to the question of salvation of the Jewish people. Romans 11:2 ("God has not rejected His people") is understood to say that the Jews "now or in future" will be saved.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. the title of R. Ruether's book, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York, 1974), which in 1978 appeared in German ("Nächstenliebe und Brudermord").

<sup>43</sup> This "Israel theology" not only means tracing the historical origins of Christianity to the Old Testament and the Jewish past of Jesus and the Apostles, but also trying a new definition of Christian faith based upon Israel's ongoing Covenant and its present religious reality.

## The Declaration of the Rheinland Synod, 1980

When we consider the statement of 1980, we have to keep in mind that it was the first Church resolution prepared in cooperation with Jewish dialogue partners. The declaration has a theological core of Christology (part three) and Ecclesiology (part four - regarding the election of Israel). The first item to be agreed upon was the passage about mission (part six), because the Jewish guests thought it imperative that the Christian theologians abandon all manner of missionary attitude. The theologians of the Rheinland Church were prepared to make the following statement: "Jews and Christians both according to their vocation are witnesses of God to the world and to one another; therefore we are convinced that the Church cannot bear witness for the Jews in the same manner as for the world of the nations."

The thesis explain this difference, expressing that Israel is the origin of Christianity, not the target of its mission: "It is up to the Church to form its self-understanding in the light of the ongoing vocation of Israel and not to meet him as a stranger." The term "ecumenical relations" to Israel (Karl Barth) is foundational in this concept. In chapter three on Christology it reads "We profess Jesus Christ, the Jew, who as the Messiah of Israel is the Saviour of the world and who links the nations of the world with the people of God." In chapter four on Ecclesiology it reads: "We believe the ongoing election of Israel as God's people and we recognize that the Church is taken into God's covenant with His people." Perhaps a better translation would be: "taken into participation in God's covenant with His people." For it is precisely "participation" which forms the point of the Rhineland argument and especially the systematic concept of Bertold Klappert—consistent with Karl Barth – is basic for this resolution. The pattern of substitution (the Church takes the place of Israel who rejected its Saviour) is superseded by this pattern of participation, in which Israel and its relation to God remain fundamental for all of Christian Church and theology. Consequently, Jesus prior to being called Son of God or Redeemer is the Messiah of Israel, and it is his "Israel quality" which enables him to be the Redeemer of mankind.

So the theologians of the Rhineland document do not start with Jesus Christ's incarnation and go from there go to the Church; instead they begin with Israel's reality in history and presence, and from there go on to Jesus as its Messiah, and even farther to his messianic message for the nations. This is an impressive systematic concept which cannot fail to impact future developments. But we have to note that whereas Jesus' coming and his messianic work is a strong corroboration<sup>25</sup> of Israel's singular role in history, the Rhineland statement does not mention Jesus' significance for his people or his call for repentance and obedience, cf. John 1:11. Jewish Christians are not mentioned at all. The ongoing covenant with Israel as well as the Jewish background of Jesus and the New Testament are not seen as arguments for

mission, but rather the opposite. We should also note that the establishment of the State of Israel is seen as a theological event, as “a sign of God’s faithfulness” (Resolution 2 (3)).

The way in which German theology deals with Jewish-Christian relations may well be recognized by the question of Jesus’ messianic dignity. Speaking of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel is rather unusual and may be claimed as one of the positive results of the post-war dialogue. But when a well-known Jewish partner (P. Lapidé) objected to the Rhineland statement saying, “a religion may not prescribe to another one whom they have to think to be their Messiah,” the synods ceased to mention this crucial point of New Testament theology in their declarations. Additional uncertainty caused by widespread historical criticism which considered all Christological terms to be created by the early church, contributed to this. But it is not Christology, on the whole, which led to changes in Christian doctrine in the 20th century, but ecclesiology. When Martin Buber in 1933 formed his famous saying: “Aber aufgekündigt ist uns nicht worden” [“We have not been dismissed”], he did not foresee, perhaps, what a long-lasting effect it would have. The German churches after WWII were confronted, sooner or later, with the reality of Israel’s unconditional covenant and had to remodel their self-understanding in light of it.

### **An Evangelical Statement.**

The declaration “Mission among Israel—even today” (MAI) stands out as an evangelical document of the pivotal year 1980 (March), drawn up by the “Confessing Communities.” It should be noted that there is no rethinking of the unconditional covenant or of replacing mission with dialogue, as though guilt concerning anti-Semitism stemmed from religion or ideology. The participants of the conference speak in favor of Israel’s right to live in the land of Israel as well as in the Diaspora – the former not without respect to the rights of the Palestinian people. Mission to the Jewish people is seen as a duty to testify to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah who is promised in their Holy Scriptures. Its target is seen in Israel’s “reinstatement” into the covenant of grace (Jer 31; Heb 10) which was restored and revived at Golgotha and on Pentecost, but Jews who accept Jesus must not abandon their affiliation to the people of Israel. Mission invites them to enter anew in their vocation of “Heilsgeschichte” which calls them to convey God’s blessing to all nations. (Such a concept, of course, was a clear indication of “Enterbungstheorie, or supersessionist theology!”)

As for the Jewish Christians in the land of Israel, MAI pleads for their freedom and civil rights as it calls the Churches to prayer for Israel and donations to Jewish missions – although it was well known at that time that most of the German “Landeskirchen” (regional churches) had already ceased to make collections for Jewish mission or evangelism. The members of the Frankfurt conference did not know the text of the Rhineland statement, but they

knew that something like it was “in the air.” So they rejected any disapproval of Jewish mission. For them, bluntly spoken, Jews were unbelievers, although of a class of their own. By the way, I want to note that the first draft of MAI was composed by Alfred Burchartz, who is a great old man in pioneering Jewish missions in post-war Germany. The document did not effect the development of the years to come in respect to German church declarations. But it can well illustrate a strictly evangelical point of view, comparable to the Pattaya documents of 1980.

### **A Roman Catholic Document.**

The Roman Catholic Bishops’ Declaration – “Erklärung über das Verhältnis der Kirche zum Judentum vom 28. April 1980” (BD) – is a document of repentance, but also a theological treatise of nearly 20 pages. Beginning with Jesus Christ as “our access to Judaism,” it speaks of Israel’s spiritual legacy for the Church, among which it mentions the Scripture, the One God, the doctrine of man as created in God’s image, the Covenant, the Instruction (the Torah), messianic hope, the Jews as a praying and praising people, manifestations of Israel’s fundamental outlook towards God in obedience, fear of God, its ways of passion, its remembrance of God’s deeds in the past as well as its forward eschatological look. The New Testament, especially Romans 9-11, and the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, as well as the experience of Auschwitz give the background of this treatise which is very much indebted to Franz Mußner’s theology on Israel.

In relating the differences from Judaism the declaration puts things more bluntly than protestant documents: “It is the connecting link between the two religions, namely faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, which at the same time reveals their deepest difference.” Justification is obtained no longer by fulfilling the precepts of the Torah, but only by faith in him. But Christians need to do some rethinking regarding *the Jews, the Pharisees, and the Jews as God’s murderers* in order to speak “justly” about Judaism. Opinions on the Law and its fulfilment as a way of payment and heavenly merit have to be abandoned. Instead Jews do practice obedience towards God in order to follow their vocation. The purpose of a life according to the Torah is not to gain heaven by any payment but to sanctify everyday life.

As in the Rhineland statement, the Roman Catholic Document makes no mention of Jewish Christians. Jesus was a Jew “according his human nature,” he is the promised Messiah “for the Christians.” It is for the benefit of the nations that the salvation of the Jews is postponed “for the time being” (Rom. 11:32), but the promise of their salvation is not cancelled. Antisemitism has to be rejected in favor of a dialogue in confidence. There is no explicit statement that Jews need Jesus for their salvation, nor any mention of Jewish mission, or

of the State of Israel. On this point the document is in accordance with the restraint of *Nostra Aetate* from which it quotes a long passage.

### **A Shifting of Fronts**

Compering MAI with the other two statements of the same year it is surprising to note the theological gap between them. It can be described as an expression of the difference and controversy between the supporters of dialogue and those of mission. But it is also a sign of mutual alienation of a new theology on Israel (academic and, even more, in Church committees) and the situation in the parishes (as well as in academic theology) where people felt that the foundation of Christology and justification by faith in Jesus were being questioned. In the same way the Rhineland document represented a greater appreciation of Israel and the Jews, underscored division within the Church, and pointed the way ahead to still more alienation between Church leaders who fought for Israel theology and many laymen (but not only!) who dissented. It was especially the Jewish-Christian dialogue in the “Kirchentag” section, which accelerated this development.

The turning point of 1980 had another interesting aspect in so far as we can observe a shift in theological fronts. Until that time no one would have considered the friends of Israel (who practised repentance and renewal) “modern” theologians. They generally were affiliated with a theology of salvation history or a dialectical thinking in the ways of Karl Barth and Joachim Iwand or with Old Testament scholars like Gerhard von Rad or Walther Zimmerli. But together with the breakthrough of a theology on Israel which became “modern,” the former modernists (and liberal theologians) of Bultmann’s school discovered their affiliation to the traditional Church and its traditions. Whereas theologians who started from the guidelines of revelation and salvation history now became the heralds of innovation, most of the Bultmannian and right-wing Barthian theologians tended to take up a conservative standpoint (regarding Israel and the Jews). They also made alliances with conservative and evangelical groups.<sup>44</sup>

### **EKD Studie II, 1991**

This second study of the Protestant Churches of Germany (EKD II) is based on four tenets of the Rhineland document: the renunciation of anti-Semitism, the

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<sup>44</sup> All the texts mentioned so far are to be found in a documentation edited by Rolf Rendtorff and Hans-Hermann Henrix: “Die Kirchen und das Judentum. Dokumente von 1945 bis 1985”, Paderborn/München 2nd ed. 1989. The subsequent publication under the same title but covering the period of 1986 to 2000 is being edited by Wolfgang Kraus and Hans-Hermann Henrix.

confession of Christian guilt for the Holocaust; the unconditional election of Israel; and the establishment of the State of Israel as a sign of God's faithfulness. In detail the study admits that not all of the New Testament authors are convinced of Israel's irrevocable covenant. For example, Matthew thinks that Israel's relationship to God was fundamentally changed by their rejection of Jesus, and so he approaches the doctrine of disinheritance or substitution. The diversity of biblical witnesses leads the Commission members to ask for a nucleus that can give theological orientation, and they find it in Romans 9-11, which is interpreted from the perspective that God's faithfulness cannot be annulled by human unfaithfulness. They do not repeat the Rhineland statement on mission. Instead they make very careful statements about Christians bearing witness to Jews and *vice versa*, about mutual learning from each other in respect of the convictions of the partner. A change of religion cannot be excluded, but the possibility of conversion should not be an objective of its own. And there is a general mention of Jewish Christians: "Christians of Jewish origin should be looked upon by the Church as a living memento of the Christian roots and of the Church as a community of Jews and gentiles."

We may conclude that EKD II stands somewhere between the Rhineland statement and a missionary point of view. The latter is obvious through the participation of at least two theologians who were in favor of mission: Alfred Burchartz and Arnulf Baumann, who was the vice chairman of the Studienkommission. The question of mission is not answered by reference to Israel's ongoing election, but explained through practical points of view. Considering the whole situation of the Studienkommission, which had a majority of members opposing mission, this was a great success for the supporters of mission, which soon could not be repeated. The whole study, of course, is not balanced, but that is indicative of the situation in Germany. Still, it marks itself as a document of the new theology of Israel by its reception of fundamental statements of the Rhineland statement.

### **An EKV/VELKD Statement, 1996**

We have already noted above that in relation and opposition to a "modern" theology on Israel, a peculiar alliance can be observed, going back to 1980, between conservative theologians and the liberal representatives of exegesis who do not consent to any concept of salvation history. This opposition against a theology on Israel is likely to be the backdrop of preparatory discussions by Israel theologians about a common new liturgy which was to be published in 2000 (my abbreviation: Anti-KLAK).<sup>45</sup> The question is: How can we make use of

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<sup>45</sup> Evangelisches Gottesdienstbuch, Berlin 2000. The title of the commentary is „Das Anliegen des christlich-jüdischen Dialogs und der christliche Gottesdienst. Stellungnahme des Rates der EKV und der Kirchenleitung der VELKD zu dem Votum



the Old Testament in our services—a book that is primarily and incessantly the book of the Jews? Do we need a new interpretation of Jesus and New Testament in alignment with the reality of Israel and its ongoing Covenant? The answer of the theological committee is, “No. Christians have a way of their own to look upon the Old Testament which is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus and consequently is different from Jewish interpretation.” Christian doctrine of God necessarily means the doctrine of Trinity. So the liturgical addition to the Psalms when recited or sung in the service: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning...” etc. is no anti-Jewish correction, but the appropriate expression of a Christian standpoint of those who pray with the words of a Psalm. Likewise it cannot be forbidden to witness to Jews of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. The published text of Anti-KLAK shows (by special votes that are printed) that some members of the committee disagreed; and in fact, it gives expression to a far-reaching controversy in German theology. It nevertheless marks a stop signal for an Israel theology which does not take into account the real situation of Christian life in our country.

### **EKD Studie III, 2000**

This study, which is the last one of the series (the Studienkommission was disbanded by the Council of the EKD “because its task was fulfilled”) contains a regular theological treatise (28 pages!) on the term and notion of Covenant, especially whether it is right or not to state (with the Rhineland statement) that the Church is taken into God’s Covenant with Israel. The conclusion was negative! The Jews have a self-understanding of their own based upon the notion of covenant. But the New Testament use of the term—e.g. in the Eucharistic institutional sayings of Jesus or in Hebrews—cannot be understood in the sense of a continuation of this Israel covenant, rather it marks a new accentuation of the prophesy of Jeremiah 31, which originates in eschatology and Christology, not in issues of ecclesiology. By the formula of the “blood of the Covenant,” which is “shed for many,” the death of Jesus is endowed with an expiatory effect like that of the Sinai Covenant, but open to the nations as well. So the Church is not associated with Israel, but affiliated with the God of Israel. In this new concept Jews are not excluded from the Christian message. Nevertheless EKD II, in an extra chapter—and notably for the first time in the course of the EKD studies—gives a plain vote against Jewish missions, thus indicating an official Church consensus which would be repeated a few weeks later by the Synod of the Wuerttemberg<sup>80</sup>Landeskirche. The main argument is

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der Konferenz landeskirchlicher Arbeitskreise ‚Christen und Juden‘ (KLAK), September 1996.“

drawn from the Jewish self-understanding of their ongoing election, which according to EKD III is identical with Paul's witness in Romans 9-11:

*After a long period of Israel-oblivion Christians have rediscovered the apostolic witness of Israel's ongoing election. It leads us necessarily to the conclusion that Jews are in no way far from salvation... (55).*<sup>46</sup>

A second argument comes from the experience of the Holocaust, which is seen as the utmost consequence of the Christians' contestation of Jewish self-understanding (58). The chapter has an appendix about Jewish Christians which is mainly a description of Jewish-Christian past and presence in Russia, the USA, Canada, Israel and Germany.

## Conclusion

The concept of EKD III stands against that of the Rhineland statement. According to EKD III it is not the participation in Israel's covenant that brings the nations into the realm of salvation, but a new eschatological covenant established in the person of Jesus Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews in particular corroborates such a view. The new covenant is in no way restricted to the gentiles. This raises several questions: Can Jews live and be saved without it? Is Paul's lament over Israel in Romans 9:1-5 a kind of short-sightedness, and is his prayer that his fellow-people be saved (Rom 10:1) based on an error which in the following chapter will be superseded by the discovery that his fellow-Jews will be saved without believing in Jesus? Isn't there a mental leap from the ongoing covenant to the reality of being saved?<sup>47</sup> Can we accept a view which does not lend weight to Jesus' own mission to his people?

On the whole, dialogue came out on top against mission. Mission, on the other hand, which is essential to Christian identity, seems to deepen the rift between Christians and Jews at least in Germany. Seeing this constellation, a number of missionary societies which had made a new beginning after WWII, stopped their activities or changed them during the 1960's into work of information and dialogue. The "Zentralverein für Mission unter Israel" (Central Association for Mission among Israel), which for a long time and in contact with Scandinavian societies supported and bravely defended Jewish mission, changed its name in 1965 to "Evangelisch-lutherischer Zentralverein für Zeugnis und Dienst unter Juden und Christen" (omitting the emotive term

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<sup>46</sup> Christen und Juden III. Eine Studie des Rates der EKD, Gütersloh 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Obviously this identification is essential for the theology of Jürgen Roloff, who was the chairman of the Studienkommission at the time of EKD III. Cf. H.Lindner, Christliche Kirchen - jüdische Identität. Anmerkungen zum Thema Judenmission, Theol. Beiträge 1999, 91-100; id., Ist der christlich-jüdische Dialog am Ende?, ibidem 2000, 196-204.

“mission”). In 1991 the Leipziger Erklärung also abandoned most of its missionary objectives.

The German situation on the whole is characterized by its connection with the German past and the Shoah. When we realized that this was also a subject matter of Church and theology we experienced shock, dismay, repentance and renewal. This situation expressed itself in an adequate manner in an EKD-declaration of 1950 (“Berlin-Weißensee”) and in the work of the “Kirchentag” over a couple of years. Also the text of the Rhineland statement is in many respects an echo of this development. But this document likewise reveals a theological concept with a one-sidedness that provoked opposition. Considering 40 years of Christian reorientation regarding the Jews, we must admit that many a way that began as repentance ended in quarrel and dispute among Christians. “Israel theology,” the perception of “Hebrew thinking” (Buber, Heschel) are good things in my view. But it is surely an ideological prejudice of many an “Israel theologian” when they suppose that the friends of mission should not seek repentance and renewal after 1945. And it is surely an indication of misunderstanding when Jewish partners could not accept that some of their Christian friends were eager to learn from them a new understanding of the New Testament while maintaining a missionary zeal. But this missionary outlook has everything to do with their adherence to Jesus of Nazareth and nothing to do, I think, with a continuation of the Shoah. However, we will succeed in Jewish mission only to the degree that we succeed in understanding our Jewish partners in dialogue.

# The Episcopal Church and Christian–Jewish Relations

Steve Engström

This paper will address the Christian-Jewish relations of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America (PECUSA) from 1976-1997. While a General Convention was held in 2000, its records are not readily accessible, and in any case, there were no resolutions passed at that convention that would affect the contents of this study.

In 1964, the General Convention stated that the PECUSA “reject(s) the charge of deicide against the Jews and condemn(s) anti-Semitism,” and called for “dialogue with appropriate representative bodies of the Jewish faith.”<sup>48</sup> Presiding Bishop John E. Hines established the Presiding Bishop’s Advisory Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations early in the 1970’s, later renamed as the Presiding Bishop’s Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations in 1986.<sup>49</sup> The Committee’s initial purpose was not to develop new programs, but to study and evaluate existing efforts. In time, this committee would consolidate its insights to produce *Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations*, adopted by the General Convention of 1988 in Detroit, which would strongly influence all future Episcopal-Jewish interaction. This document, which relies heavily on existing Protestant and Catholic documents,<sup>50</sup> heartily encourages church members to engage the Jewish community with honesty and joy, but without the intent to proselytize.

Significant interaction with the mainstream American Jewish community evolved as the Committee cultivated relationships between the Presiding Bishop and “the five national Jewish organizations with offices or departments

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<sup>48</sup> *Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations: General Convention 1988* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 19.

<sup>49</sup> *The Blue Book: Reports of the Committees, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church* (New York: General Convention, 1988), 449.

<sup>50</sup> Specifically the World Council of Churches’ “Ecumenical Considerations on Christian-Jewish Dialogue,” the Vatican’s “Nostra Aetate” and “Guidelines on Catholic-Jewish Relations,” and “The American Lutheran Church and the Jewish Community, 1979.”

of religious affairs.”<sup>51</sup> These organizations are: the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Synagogue Council of America, the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’Brith, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Discussions were held between the Presiding Bishop and representatives from these organizations, and representatives were also invited to the General Conventions of 1985 and 1988, where they were introduced to both Houses and hosted by the Presiding Bishop. Further, the Committee submitted its *Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations* to these organizations, and consulted with them over the implications of the Middle East crisis on Christian-Jewish relations.

In 1991, the Committee noted that “during the last twenty-five years, remarkable progress in the relationship between Christians and Jews has occurred,” emphasizing Pope John Paul II’s admission on 6 December 1990 that God’s covenant with the Jewish people was not superseded by Christianity.<sup>52</sup> The Committee identified four factors that contributed to this progress: an open and pluralistic expression of religion in the United States; a social agenda which both Jews and Christians share; the rediscovery of Jesus’ Jewish identity; and the acknowledgement of many churches that Christianity contributed to historic anti-Semitism.<sup>53</sup>

The Presiding Bishop’s Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations was disbanded in 1992 when the Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning appointed the Advisory Committee on Interfaith Relations. This change was thought to be necessary due to “the changing North American context [that] requires a broader scope.”<sup>54</sup> While in 1991 the Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations supported improving relations with other non-Christian religions, it was also concerned that “the special relationship which we believe links Christian faith with Judaism” be affirmed and maintained, and had even requested augmenting the Committee’s financial and personnel resources.<sup>55</sup> Instead, the Christian-Jewish dialogue committee was reformed as a “Relational Committee” within the Committee on Interfaith Relations (together with a Relational Committee dedicated to Episcopal-Muslim relations). The work of Christian-Jewish relations was recommended to occur primarily “at the national level through that body where Christians cooperate to work together – The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA,” where the Episcopal

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<sup>51</sup> *The Blue Book* 1988, 449.

<sup>52</sup> *The Blue Book: Reports of the Committees, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church* (New York: General Convention, 1991), 536.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 536.

<sup>54</sup> *The Blue Book: Reports of the Committees, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church* (New York: General Convention, 1994), 187.

<sup>55</sup> *The Blue Book* 1991, 536.

Church is well represented.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, there are no supplemental reports to the Journals of the General Convention after 1991 that address Christian-Jewish relations at length, the most thorough reports having been submitted in 1988 and 1991.

### **The Impact of the Holocaust**

The impact of the Shoah is as evident on the Episcopal church as it is on most other mainline churches. Note that the existence of Christian anti-Semitism was the impetus for dialogue behind the resolution of 1964. The *Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations* stress that “Jews living in Christian countries have not fared better than those in non-Christian countries,” indeed that “where Jews have been a minority presence among Christians” persecution was most persistent.<sup>57</sup> And because anti-Semitism is such a consistent theme in Christian history, “a profound sense of penitence is the necessary response.”<sup>58</sup>

So with respect to the Jews, the PECUSA identified Christian anti-Semitism as the problem and dialogue the solution, thereby profoundly re-orienting its approach to ministry among the Jewish community. For now the Episcopal Church’s endeavors would focus both on identifying and rooting out anti-Judaic biases, and on building non-threatening relationships with mainstream Jewish communities—rather than on developing missions to Jews. Its leadership recognized that its theology of the Jews was changing, and therefore that philosophies of both evangelism and education would have to change with it.<sup>59</sup> Theological supersessionism<sup>60</sup> was rejected, traditional missionary efforts were consistently called into question, and proselytism eschewed in all its forms. Interfaith dialogue became the accepted form for Christian-Jewish relations, and education was to serve its purposes.

### **Theology**

Theologically, the Episcopal Church joined other mainline denominations in repudiating traditional theological supersessionism: “From the early days of the

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<sup>56</sup> *The Blue Book: Reports of the Committees, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church* (New York: General Convention, 1997), 117.

<sup>57</sup> *Guidelines*, 5,12.

<sup>58</sup> *Guidelines*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> *The Blue Book* 1988, 450, primary task #6 “To advise program groups in the Episcopal Church, especially in the fields of Christian education and evangelism, of the implications in their materials and programs for Christian-Jewish relationships.”

<sup>60</sup> “Supersessionism maintains that because the Jews refused to receive Jesus as Messiah, they were cursed by God, are no longer in covenant with God, and that the church alone is the ‘true Israel’ or the ‘spiritual Israel.’” Statement of the 1987 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA); in Alan Brockway et. al., *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), 111.

Church, many Christian interpreters saw the Church replacing Israel as God's people... This theological perspective has had fateful consequences."<sup>61</sup> Drawing primarily from the letters of Paul,<sup>62</sup> the Bishops of the 1979 General Convention summarized that "God does not withdraw the gifts He has bestowed or revoke the choices He has made."<sup>63</sup> The *Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations* likewise stress that God's covenant with the Jewish people is sacred, and that while Christian theology differs from Judaism in important ways, Judaism is still a valid Biblical religion: "Through dialogue with Jews, many, though yet too few, Christians have come to appreciate the richness and vitality of Jewish faith and life in the Covenant and have been enriched in their own understandings of Jesus and the divine will for all people."<sup>64</sup> The Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations noted the "milestone" reached when Pope John Paul II established officially for Roman Catholics that "God's covenant with the Jewish people is permanent – that it was not superseded by the emergence of Christianity."<sup>65</sup>

So as the theology of the Church affirmed God's unbroken covenant with the Jewish people, the Church began to explore both the Jewish roots of Christian faith and Judaism itself. The PECUSA identified all that is positive in the New Testament concerning Jewish people and faith, and recognized the Church's indebtedness to Jewish religion. Members were encouraged to learn all they could about Jewish contributions to Christian faith, and about Judaism's rich history and contemporary expressions. For example, the General Convention of 1979 urged priests and laity "wherever appropriate, to seek exposure to ancient and contemporary Jewish scholarship so as to better comprehend the Scriptures on which, and the religious environment in which, our Lord Jesus was nourished; and to appreciate more fully the religious worship and experience of our neighbors in the Jewish community."<sup>66</sup> Further, the Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations continued to evaluate the Episcopal Church's educational material and institutions, commending those efforts that improve the study of all Jewish sources.<sup>67</sup> The *Guidelines* themselves, while not a comprehensive presentation, nonetheless describe common Christian misconceptions about Judaism, and they attempt to give proper context to polemical verses in the New Testament in which Jewish groups are represented in a negative light, urging that these texts not be made the basis for understanding Judaism.

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<sup>61</sup> *Guidelines*, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Rom 9:4-5; 11:17-24; 11:28-29; I Cor 15:28 (with Zech 14:9); and Gal 3:7.

<sup>63</sup> Resolution # A044, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 1979* (New York: General Convention, 1980), p. C-48.

<sup>64</sup> *Guidelines*, 7.

<sup>65</sup> *The Blue Book* 1991, 536.

<sup>66</sup> Resolution #A044, 1979.

<sup>67</sup> For example, *The Blue Book* 1991, 534.

## Education

Concomitantly, as the Church extended itself to the Jewish community to learn and appreciate, it looked within itself to confront and remove anti-Judaic biases and anti-Semitic habits. The Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations closely scrutinized Episcopal liturgy to discern whether anti-Jewish sentiments were being expressed,<sup>68</sup> and pressed for the inclusion of *Yom haShoah* and *Kristallnacht* in the Church calendar.<sup>69</sup> The *Guidelines* have several paragraphs on this subject, recalling the tragic history of Christian anti-Semitism, and suggesting ways in which active opposition to anti-Semitism should take shape.

Thus the PECUSA recognizes that Jewish interpretations of Scripture and forms of obedience contribute to Christian faith. For example, “many Christians have come to a more profound appreciation of the Exodus hope of liberation, praying and working for the coming of justice and peace on earth.”<sup>70</sup> And since Jews and Christians share a common faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, based on the Hebrew Scriptures and God’s acts in history, they find many areas of common concern in which they can work together: “Christians and Jewish leaders find themselves working side by side on such issues as racism, the challenge of poverty, sexism, concern for the environment and the preservation of civil liberties.”<sup>71</sup>

## Dialogue and Evangelism

The PECUSA believes its commitment to a posture of dialogue rather than evangelism unfolds naturally from its theology, because if God’s covenant with Jewish people remains unbroken, and if Jewish faith remains a valid expression of faithfulness to God, then the Church’s mission is to understand and become reconciled with the Jewish community, but not to evangelize it.

The primary principle for dialogue is best summarized by the Rev. Dr. William L. Weiler in the introduction to the version of the *Guidelines* published for the church, who quoted Martin Buber: “All real living is meeting.” Based on this principle, “the spirit of dialogue is to be present to each other in full openness and human vulnerability.”<sup>72</sup> Therefore, “dialogue can rightly be

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<sup>68</sup> See especially Resolution # D181, 1991 “*Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That whenever liturgical materials are developed for or adopted for use by the Episcopal Church on the national level, a member of the Presiding Bishop’s Committee on Christian-Jewish relations, or a person recommended by that body, be consulted so that the Church may honor its Jewish heritage and Jewish sisters and brothers in utilizing materials appropriately sensitive. *Journal of the General Convention of ... The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), 799.

<sup>69</sup> *The Blue Book* 1988, 538.

<sup>70</sup> *Guidelines*, 10.

<sup>71</sup> *The Blue Book* 1991, 536.

<sup>72</sup> *Guidelines*, 14.



described as a mutual witness<sup>73</sup> for each participant brings valid and valuable expressions of faith. Dialogue is “mutual understanding” where the integrity of each tradition is respected, where prejudice and ignorance are exposed and repudiated.<sup>74</sup>

The church recognizes that dialogue participants may be tempted to under-emphasize the differences that exist between religious traditions. PECUSA documents justifiably address this concern repeatedly, and explain that true dialogue sensitively recognizes differences. Thus, it is appropriate for Christians to express their belief that *for them* Jesus is the ultimate expression of God’s presence in history: “The goal of dialogue is to communicate truth as participants perceive it within their own traditions.”<sup>75</sup> The *Guidelines* judiciously describe some of the basic differences between Judaism and Christianity. Most notably, the role of Jesus and the definition of salvation are two subjects which distinguish the two faiths: “Knowing the One God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, therefore, Christians worship One God with a trinitarian confession involving creation, incarnation, and Pentecost. In so doing, the Church worships in a language that is strange to Jewish worship and sensitivities, yet full of meaning to Christians.”<sup>76</sup>

However, while the PECUSA enthusiastically recommends open and honest communication with the Jewish community, it firmly rejects proselytism in all its forms as contrary to authentic dialogue, embracing the language of the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: “Proselytism embraces whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in religious matters.”<sup>77</sup> This criticism of proselytism virtually extends to *any* form of Jewish evangelism, based on the premise that only a “fine line” separates evangelism from proselytism, and on the grounds that Jews have fellowship with God through the Mosaic covenant:

*With special respect to Jews, we note that the New Testament in several places affirms God’s continuing Covenant with the Jews through Moses even as he establishes the New Covenant through Jesus Christ. We suggest, therefore, that any evangelistic focus on the Jewish people collectively may be inappropriate...<sup>78</sup>*

With respect to evangelism, the PECUSA documents emphasize the history of anti-Semitism perpetrated by Christians who coerce Jews to conversion. This position was underscored in greater detail in 1991, when the Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations explored the implications of the PECUSA “Decade

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>74</sup> *The Blue Book* 1994, 187.

<sup>75</sup> *Guidelines*, 14.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, from *Ecumenical Review*, 1/1971, 11.

<sup>78</sup> *The Blue Book* 1988, 452.

of Evangelism” on Christian-Jewish relations. The Committee called the Decade of Evangelism a “major concern” because the church would endeavor “to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such ways that persons may be led to him as Savior and follow him as Lord within the fellowship of the Church.”<sup>79</sup> For the Committee, even this carefully stated ambition recalls the anti-Semitic history of Christian proselytism. By contrast, witness should be defined as “sharing one’s faith conviction without the intention of proselytizing.”<sup>80</sup> Rather, “the church must learn to proclaim the Gospel without generating contempt for Judaism or the Jewish people.”<sup>81</sup> The PECUSA commends the Anglican tradition for being “particularly respectful of God’s truth as it exists outside of Christianity, yet without compromising our devotion to Jesus as Lord and Savior,”<sup>82</sup> and for “recognizing that the gospel in a pluralistic society also reminds us to be aware of the significance of God’s self-revelation outside the Church.”<sup>83</sup>

Dialogue as mutual witness, witness without intention, replaces evangelism as the endorsed method of the PECUSA. The motives of those members of the Anglican Communion who do practice Jewish evangelism are questioned. The Rt. Rev. John Burt, chairperson of the Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations in 1988, provocatively suggested that those who support Jewish evangelism may actually wish that “God’s eventual intent may be that Jews as Jews should disappear.”<sup>84</sup> He further disparages the evangelistically inclined as “those with a biblically literalist turn of mind” and “some such people,” in contrast to “probably a majority in our Church” who believe that “God does not break his promises.”<sup>85</sup> It was predictable that when members of the Committee met with representatives of the Anglican mission society CMJ (the Church’s Ministry among Jewish people) in 1991, Burt admitted they “did not reach a full meeting of the minds.”<sup>86</sup> Jews for Jesus is singled out as the only non-Anglican recipient of criticism for unworthy Jewish evangelism in General Convention documentation: “we must raise serious questions about some of the statements and strategies of the ‘Jews for Jesus’ movement.”<sup>87</sup>

Beyond General Convention documentation, the PECUSA’s response to the Southern Baptist Convention underscores the extent to which dialogue replaces

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<sup>79</sup> *The Blue Book* 1991, 535.

<sup>80</sup> *Guidelines*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> *The Blue Book* 1991, 537.

<sup>83</sup> Resolution #A060, *Journal of the General Convention of ... The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), 397.

<sup>84</sup> *The Blue Book*, 535.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 535.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 535.

<sup>87</sup> *The Blue Book* 1988, 452.

all Jewish evangelism. When in 1996 the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution affirming its commitment to Jewish evangelism, PECUSA Bishops in New York, together with Lutherans and Catholics, criticized the Baptists on these grounds:

*The Christian witness toward Jews, however, has been distorted by coercive proselytism, conscious and unconscious, overt and subtle ... An aggressive direct effort to convert the Jewish people would break the bond of trust built up for over thirty years and recreate enmity between our 'elder brothers and sisters' and ourselves at the start of a new millennium.*

The significant point here is that while the Southern Baptists were not embracing aggressive, coercive proselytism, the Bishops in New York now recognized no distinction between evangelism and coercion.

## Israel

Interestingly, there appears to be strong differences of opinion within the PECUSA over the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. Judging by the number and frequency of resolutions passed by the General Convention on this subject, the PECUSA is greatly exercised and far from indifferent. Of those resolutions passed addressing *any* issue related to the Jewish people from 1976-1997, 21 of approximately 26 resolutions comment upon the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Resolutions addressing the conflict occur in every General Convention during this time (which meets triennially), whereas those five resolutions passed on other areas of Christian-Jewish relations occur only in the Conventions of 1979, 1988 and 1991 – just three out of eight conventions.

A brief reading of these resolutions indicates a decidedly pro-Palestinian commitment. While the PECUSA unequivocally supports the existence of Israel within secure borders<sup>88</sup> it endorses little else in Israeli politics. For example, the PECUSA judges that the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and “occupied territories” of the West Bank and East Jerusalem are “illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace,” and thereby requests the United States Government to withhold funds used by Israel for settlement activity, instead making those funds available for Israeli settlers leaving the territories and “equally for Palestinians accepting the principles of compensation for their lands and homes in Israel.”<sup>89</sup> The US government should also condition loan guarantees to Israel “on its abandonment of violence as a tactic of civilian control and on the release of all Palestinian political prisoners and detainees.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Resolution #D089, 1979.

<sup>89</sup> Resolution #D065, General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of ... The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), 310.

<sup>90</sup> Resolution #A103, 1994.

Further, the PECUSA criticizes Israeli restrictions on Palestinian housing and institution-building.<sup>91</sup>

Resolution #A147 of 1991 is typical of PECUSA positions enumerated in these various resolutions. Support for the State of Israel is announced merely as an introduction to detailed criticism that holds the Palestinians largely unaccountable for the particular situation at hand.

*Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church supports the existence of Israel as a sovereign state, the democratic and humanitarian inspired homeland for displaced Jewish people, and calls upon the Government of the United States:*

1. *To assist in the creation of a Palestinian State, and,*
2. *To assist Israel to secure the human rights of indigenous Arabs within Israel through:*
  - a. *ending the violation of civil and human rights and by stopping the brutalities committed against individual, families, and groups which now occur;*
  - b. *restricting the use of military force to measures and practices proportionate to the situation and suited to the control of civilian populations, and, to that end, to assure that military personnel and units, before assignment to duty, be given proper training in riot control and the techniques and practices of control of civilian populations;*
  - c. *causing the State of Israel to discontinue the use of administrative detention and collective punishment;*
  - d. *the permanent reopening of schools, universities, and other educational institutions for the Palestinians in the occupied territories;*
  - e. *causing the State of Israel to be even handed and fair in the recognition and enforcement of the rights and interests of the Palestinians with respect to their personal safety, property rights, water rights, and rights of access to commercial markets; and*
  - f. *encouraging the opening of candid and patient communication between the representatives of the Palestinians and the State of Israel and between the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples; and*
  - g. *reestablishing and safe-guarding the City of Jerusalem as inter-religious municipality in which full respect is accorded the rights and interests of Christians, Jews, and Muslims.*

In fact, the PECUSA calls for Jerusalem to be the shared capital of two states, Israeli and Palestinian.<sup>92</sup>

Positions like these did not convince the Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations that the PECUSA embraces a balanced view. In 1988, they developed an extensive argument calling for a more balanced view. While acknowledging that Arab Christians in the Middle East, many of them Anglican, are distressed by Israeli policies, the Committee stated forthrightly that “there is a need to remember ... that the plight of the Palestinian people is not simply a creation of Israel ... It involves also the forty-year behavior of the surrounding Arab

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<sup>91</sup> Resolution #A107, General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of ... The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), 181.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

states.”<sup>93</sup> The report reminded the church that “none of those states has conceded officially the right of Israel to exist,” except (at that time) for Egypt.<sup>94</sup> The Committee recounted its official criticism of an article written by the Rev. Na’em Ateek, a notable Anglican priest of Jerusalem, published in the December 1986 *Episcopalian*, calling it one-sided, unfair and inaccurate, charging that “Israel is ... portrayed as the sole perpetrator of the condition of the Palestinian people, with no consideration of the part played by the Arab nations in perpetuating the plight of the refugees.”<sup>95</sup> The Committee calls for a more balanced view, urging Episcopalians to speak with Jews as well as Palestinians in Israel, and counsels against “simplistic judgments” such as equating the plight of Palestinians with black South Africans, “since the two situations are fundamentally so different.”<sup>96</sup> Finally, a warning is given against the temptation to allow unhappiness with the State of Israel to become an excuse for anti-Semitism.<sup>97</sup>

## Conclusion

The efforts of the PECUSA to define Christian-Jewish relations are nearly indistinguishable from other participating members of the National Council of Churches. Many of the PECUSA documents quote directly from those published by members of the NCC and the Vatican. Thus, the PECUSA is representative of a much wider community of Christian churches who are thoroughly probing this issue. So while the PECUSA is relatively small in comparison to other denominations, its influence extends farther as it participates in wider ecumenical efforts.

Evangelical Christians and Messianic Jews will certainly object to the way in which the PECUSA connects Jewish evangelism with anti-Semitic proselytism, especially in the offensive, patronizing language of the John Burt. He fails to even mention the existence of missionaries to the Jewish people, many from his own Anglican Communion, with unquestionable compassion, theological integrity and learning.<sup>98</sup> If his analysis is indicative of PECUSA efforts, then it clearly rejected Jewish evangelism without much thought, care and study. And furthermore, the prejudiced political perspective of convention resolutions indicates that the dangers of anti-Semitism are not simply the property of “those with a biblically literalist turn of mind,” but may in fact emerge from the more liberal side of the Christian community masked as anti-Zionism.

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<sup>93</sup> *The Blue Book* 1988, 453.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 454.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion*, (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1991).

From an evangelical standpoint, the weakness in the PECUSA theology is not so much in what it affirms, but in that what it affirms is insufficient for forming such a hostile attitude to evangelism. In this regard, the PECUSA is acting prematurely. Even theologians who contribute to this movement recognize that merely rejecting supersessionism and affirming God's continuing commitment to the Jewish people does not provide an adequate alternative to traditional theological systems. For example, Methodist theologian R. Kendall Soulen confesses that "the rejection of supersessionism is fraught with profound implications for the whole range of Christian theological reflection, and the full extent of these implications is still far from fully clear."<sup>99</sup> Very few Christians or Messianic Jews actively engaged in Jewish evangelism would quarrel with any of the general theological statements made in PECUSA documents; in fact, most would applaud the re-discovery of Romans 9-11 and the new appreciation for the Jewish roots of Christian faith. However, they would take issue with the unnecessary dismissal of Jewish evangelism, as if that were the only logical theological implication. Evangelical theologians, in fact, find impetus for Jewish evangelism in these same affirmations, and have for many years. Again, the PECUSA seems to have been too hasty in its harsh criticism of Jewish evangelism.

However, it would be equally premature for those committed to Jewish evangelism to altogether ignore the PECUSA and its ecumenical partners in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement. Lest our criticism cause us to reject our brothers and sisters out-of-hand, we need to remember that many of the Christians who engage the Jewish community in dialogue do so because they love Jewish people deeply. Indeed, these Episcopalians have developed meaningful relationships within the Jewish community, and we ought to respect the progress they have made in overcoming traditional prejudices on both sides. They are Christians of humility, steeped in Jewish scholarship, and who, often in conflict with their denomination, support the State of Israel in its current conflict. Were it not for their skepticism of evangelism, we would find much in common.

Sadly, there is no indication that the PECUSA and its partners have realized the enormous contribution that Messianic Jews can make to the dialogue process. In fact, aside from its critical comment of Jews for Jesus, there is no indication that the PECUSA is even aware of the Messianic Jewish movement, or that it has formed any opinions about it. Mature Messianic Jewish theologians capable of expressing the richness and diversity of their communities could challenge the shallow critique of Jews for Jesus (who are, in fact, Jews!), and create awareness among Christian leaders of the inherent contradiction of excluding them from the table. The PECUSA, which prides

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<sup>99</sup> R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), x.

itself on its openness, should have no official reason for not allowing the full participation of Messianic Jewish believers in its dialogues. The principles of dialogue expressly encourage diversity: "Since generalizations often produce stereotyping, Jewish-Christian dialogue must try to be as inclusive of the variety of views within the two communities as possible."<sup>100</sup> Such involvement would no doubt create a whole new array of relationships, which are critical for these Christians as they continue to probe God's will for the Church and the Jewish people.

We should not have to choose between the false dichotomy of dialogue and evangelism; rather, our relationships with all non-believing people involve a diverse array of appropriate human responses. Agreed, the Holocaust is more than just a sober challenge to make subtle adjustments. It warns all Christians to look deeply within their traditions, to repent and change. But the presence of Jews who believe in Jesus will remind us all that dialogue on its own, while an historical improvement in Christian-Jewish relations, is still an incomplete response. Indeed, they can remind us that above all else, Jewish evangelism is truly an act of love.

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<sup>100</sup> Guidelines, 6.

# What's Being Said and Done Among the American Presbyterians?

Fred Klett

There has been a long-standing interest in Jewish ministry among the Presbyterians and their theological forefathers. The primary doctrinal standards of all Presbyterian bodies are the Westminster Confession and Larger and Smaller Catechisms. It is significant that the Larger Catechism, in its answer to Question 191, states that praying "Thy Kingdom come" means we pray that "the gospel [be] propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in." So prayer for the restoration of the Jewish people to faith has for centuries been a part of our doctrinal standards and the hope for that restoration has been the position of great Reformed theologians such as John Calvin, John Owen, Charles Hodge, Matthew Henry, and Geerhardus Vos.<sup>101</sup> The first recorded Jewish believer in the United States was Judah Monis, a Jewish Puritan who taught Hebrew at Harvard.

There are a number of Presbyterian bodies in the United States. The largest is the old "main-line" Presbyterian denomination, the PCUSA.<sup>102</sup> The next largest Presbyterian group is the conservative evangelical Presbyterian Church in America or PCA.<sup>103</sup> A third smaller conservative denomination is the

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<sup>101</sup> See Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. XIX, *Epistle to the Romans* (Baker Book House, 1981) p. 434-440 and John Owen's *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Second Edition, Volume 1, published in Edinburgh in 1812, 443-444 and 454-455. Also available online at [www.chaim.org](http://www.chaim.org)

<sup>102</sup> The main line PCUSA covers a broad theological spectrum. Their web site claims "approximately 2.5 million members, 11,200 congregations and 21,000 ordained ministers."

<sup>103</sup> The PCA has one of the largest missions boards in the world, is completely evangelical, and was founded in 1973. Their web site states: "The Presbyterian Church in America is one of the fastest-growing denominations in the United States. Since its founding in 1973 with 240 congregations and just 40,000 members, it has grown to include 1,277 congregations and 260,885 members."



Orthodox Presbyterian Church or OPC.<sup>104</sup> There are several other Presbyterian bodies, but they do not have current direct involvement in Jewish ministry.<sup>105</sup>

The less than objective work of David Max Eichorn, *Evangelizing the American Jew*, states that the Northern Presbyterian's Jewish ministry department from 1914-1938 "was the most vigorous denominational organization seeking to proselytize American Jews." He mentions 17 works associated with Presbyterian and Reformed bodies in North America prior to WWII.<sup>106</sup>

The International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews was formed by several denominations in 1930 and organized under the International Missionary Council. They had a significant conference in Atlantic City in 1931 in which Presbyterian John Stuart Conning was prominent. In 1961 the IMF was absorbed into the WCC, which had backed away from Jewish missions after WWII, and this ended the International CCAJ. In the PCUSA, however, the CCAJ did continue to exist (more on that below). Since those pre-WWII glory days, the Presbyterian church has suffered numerous splits and struggles with liberalism, along with other WCC related churches. Jewish ministry suffered as these internal conflicts unfolded. Many works either died out or became independent.

The PCUSA work in Philadelphia, formerly known as the CCAJ, is currently called Messiah Now. This is the last existing work of that denomination, but it has a vision to rebuild. PCUSA theological student Jonathan Kaplan, in his papers *A Brief History of Presbyterian Ministry Among Jewish People: 1820-2001*, provides concise overview of the PCUSA efforts.<sup>107</sup> The staff consists currently of Rev. Andrew Sparks, a secretary, and a seminary intern. Sparks has a Master's degree from Westminster Theological Seminary and also from Yale. There had been a small struggling Messianic congregation, Beth Messiah, which was one of the oldest Messianic Congregations in the United States, but has been

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<sup>104</sup> Their web site states: "Today, one may find her approximately 260 churches and mission works in 44 states (and one Canadian province) ... the total membership of the OPC at the end of 1999 stood at 25,302."

<sup>105</sup> The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, "Reformed" churches, coming out of the Dutch tradition, such as the Christian Reformed Church, and the United Reformed Church, currently have no Jewish works. However, Rev. Anderson and Rev. Klett preach in these churches and CHAIM has board members associated with these churches.

<sup>106</sup> Eichorn, David Max, *Evangelizing the American Jew* (Middle Village NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1978) 155-161.

<sup>107</sup> Jonathan Kaplan's paper is available online at: [www.theologymatters.com/TMIssues/Kaplan01.PDF](http://www.theologymatters.com/TMIssues/Kaplan01.PDF). See also Ewearitt, Daniel Joseph, *Jewish Christian Missions to the Jews 1830-1935* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1989) 244-261 and Thompson, A. E., *A Century of Jewish Missions* (Chicago, IL: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1902), 222-253.

discontinued. A new congregation is in the works which is mentioned below. Messiah Now has a center-city outreach station, a couple of "Messianic Chavurot" (home fellowship groups), a fledgling campus ministry, bi-monthly street work and is beginning an ESL program for Russian Jews. They can be found online at [www.messiahnow.com](http://www.messiahnow.com).

There are several fairly recent documents adopted by the PCUSA which touch on Jewish ministry, the Jewish people, Messianic Jews, and the Jewishness of Jesus. (I much appreciate the help of Jonathan Kaplan and Andrew Sparks in researching these things.)

*Christians and Jews* is a brochure produced and distributed by the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations of the PCUSA. It is a distillation of the larger paper *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews*.<sup>108</sup> The brochure contains the following summary, which can be found online at <http://pcusa80.pcusa.org/pcusa/wmd/eir/jews.htm>:

1. *The God who addresses both Christians and Jews is the same – the living and true God.*
2. *The church's identity is intimately related to the continuing identity of the Jewish people.*
3. *We are willing to ponder with Jews the mystery of God's election of both Jews and Christians to be a light to the nations.*
4. *As Christians we acknowledge that Jews are in covenant relationship with God, and we consider the implications of this reality for evangelism and witness.*
5. *As Christians we acknowledge in repentance the church's complicity in proliferation of anti-Jewish attitudes and actions, and we determine to put an end to the teaching of contempt for Jews.*
6. *We are willing to investigate the continuing significance of the promise of "land," with its associated obligations, and to explore the implications for Christian theology.*
7. *We act in hope, which we share with Jews, as we both await the final manifestation of God's promise of the peaceable kingdom.*

The pamphlet goes on to state:

*Dialogue is the appropriate form of faithful conversation between Christians and Jews. As trust is established, not only questions and concerns can be shared but faith and commitments as well. Christians have no reason to be reluctant in sharing the good news of their faith with anyone. A militancy that seeks to impose one's own point of view on another, however, is not only inappropriate but counterproductive.*

While not denying the validity of witness to the Jewish people, due in significant part to the efforts of the CCAJ board and then director Rev. Herbert Links, the document, according to Sparks, left open the future direction of

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<sup>108</sup> This and other denominational statements can be found at [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/research/cjl/Documents%20library/Protestant%20Documents.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/research/cjl/Documents%20library/Protestant%20Documents.htm)

Jewish ministry. It was uncertain as to whether evangelism would continue to be valid or ecumenical dialogue would win the day.

On a positive note, *A Theological Understanding ...* made explicit reference to the Jewishness of Jesus and the New Covenant faith:

*Christianity began in the context of Jewish faith and life. Jesus was a Jew, as were his earliest followers. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, referred to himself as a "Hebrew of the Hebrews." The life and liturgy of the Jews provided the language and thought forms through which the revelation in Jesus was first received and expressed. Jewish liturgical forms were decisive for the worship of the early church and are influential still, especially in churches of the Reformed tradition.*

The paper also addressed "Replacement Theology," yet in a way which leaves open, in my opinion, whether or not the Jewish people need Jesus for salvation. It is maintained that both Christians and Jews are elect communities serving as witnesses to the true God. Anti-Semitism is condemned in no uncertain terms. The need for the continued existence of the Jewish people and the land promises to Israel are also mentioned, as well as the need for justice for the Palestinian people and a Palestinian state. The prophetic speculations of Dispensationalists concerning National Israel are explicitly disavowed, while the need for the Jewish people to have "sustainable life, prosperity, peace, and security" are affirmed.

A later resolution adopted by the PCUSA General 203rd Assembly in 1991 is *Turn to the Living God: A Call to Evangelism in Jesus Christ's Way*.<sup>109</sup> This has been produced in booklet form and was distributed to "governing bodies and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (USA) for study and implementation." The document provides a more positive affirmation of witness to people of other faiths, though it could be clearer, in my opinion, as to whether or not people of other faiths are completely lost without faith in Jesus:

*With other Christians we are called to make joyous witness to persons of other faiths in a spirit of respect, openness, and honesty. The Presbyterian Church (USA) affirms with ecumenical partners that:*

*the proclamation of the gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. Christians owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and every people. ("Mission and Evangelism," an ecumenical document of the World Council of Churches, paragraphs 10, 41)...*

*As our Christian affirmation meets the faith of others, we are not called to respond in judgment but in awareness of the limitless, saving presence, power, and grace of God. The spirit that is to inform our witness among people of other faiths ... presupposes our presence with them, sensitivity to their deepest faith commitments and experiences, willingness to be*

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<sup>109</sup> *Turn to the Living God*, pages 18, 19, 23, 27 and 29.

*their servants for Christ's sake, affirmation of what God has done and is doing among them and love for them. ("Message" of San Antonio, World Council of Churches, Section 1.25)*

*For those of other faiths and ideologies, the good news is that in Jesus of Nazareth, God has revealed the fullness of divine love and extends through the church an invitation for all to share in the banquet of God's reign.*

While this booklet is a definite step in the right direction, I assess the language is carefully crafted to please evangelicals yet is indefinite enough to leave open a little wiggle room for liberals and ecumenicists. (We must wait and see how the theological battles within the PCUSA play out.)

*Turn to the Living God* provides for culturally indigenous congregations in calling for: "the establishment of congregations in every human community and culture" and affirms "The church of Jesus Christ is present today in almost every country of the world. It exists in an amazing variety of forms." It calls the church to acknowledge "the authenticity and integrity of varying forms of the Christian movement, as long as the essentials of the faith are affirmed..." and speaks of the church "established in every tribe, tongue, people, and nation..."

The most significant PCUSA-related statements relevant to Jewish ministry are to be found in the July/August 2001 issue of *Theology Matters*, the publication of "Presbyterians for Faith, Family, and Ministry," an evangelical renewal group which defines itself as an organization "working to restore the strength and integrity of the Presbyterian (USA) Church's witness to Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Savior, by helping individual Presbyterians develop a consistent Reformed Christian world view." The issue is devoted completely to Jewish ministry and has much to say regarding Messianic Judaism.<sup>110</sup> H. Stanley Wood, Director of the Center for New Church Development, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur GA, wrote the lead off article: "New Church Development in a Pluralistic World: Messianic Jewish Congregations." Wood writes:

*The Church has forgotten how it looked and functioned as a relevant Gospel witness in a Jewish culture, as faithful Jewish-Christian believers within their Jewish cultural context... In the Presbyterian emphasis of a "church reformed and always being reformed by the word of God" we find abundant biblical support for what I call "Messianic Jewish congregations" or New Church formation with Jewish people.*

Wood goes on to cite one of the models from the forthcoming PCUSA *New Church Development (NCD) Guide*, which can also be found listed as part of the Columbia Seminary's outreach programs:

*The Messianic Jewish Congregation (NCD)<sup>49</sup> is used when a presbytery seeks to be a faithful witness to the roots of the Judeo-Christian tradition in a presbytery where there is a large Jewish population. All the first new church developments of the New Testament, such as those*

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<sup>110</sup> See [www.theologymatters.com](http://www.theologymatters.com) and the Columbia Seminary site [www.ctsnet.edu](http://www.ctsnet.edu)

*in Jerusalem, Corinth, Colossae and Thessalonica grew out of a Messianic ministry within synagogues. Twentieth century Presbyterian Messianic Jewish ministry has grown out of a Presbyterian effort to share the love and claims of Jesus, the Messiah with a religiously and culturally diverse Jewish population in a major urban center. Worship is held beginning on the Jewish Sabbath and with an affirmation of Jewish culture which is quite similar to other ethnic congregations that have a high degree of ethnocentricity such as African American Presbyterian outreach to unchurched African Americans. The focus of a Messianic Jewish Congregation (NCD) is to reach the unaffiliated Jewish population. (For example see Philadelphia Presbytery, The Messianic Jewish Center, Congregation Beth Messiah.)*

It is very significant that this is being said by arguably the foremost authority in new congregational development in the PCUSA, and someone on the faculty of a PCUSA seminary. This is, I believe, the first statement affirming Messianic Congregations by someone in such a position in that denomination. What is also interesting is that the statement mentions worship "beginning on the traditional Jewish Sabbath" rather than Sunday worship, which appears to be a divergence from the official standards Presbyterians hold to, which speak of the day of communal worship being changed to the Lord's Day.<sup>111</sup>

The main article in that issue of Theology Matters, by Sparks, argues forcefully for the establishment of Messianic Jewish congregations:

*The New Testament records that the Jewish segment of the Early Church gathered to form Jewish-oriented worshipping (sic) communities both in Israel and in the diaspora ...*

*Thus, apostolic practice and church history reveal that Jewish ministry took place in the context of planting messianic Jewish congregations...*

*Presbyterian Jewish ministry is presently coming alongside the Presbyterian church's national vision for congregational planting by encouraging support for the planting of messianic congregations across the nation.*

Sparks is a capable and articulate advocate of the Messianic movement within the PCUSA.<sup>112</sup> Just recently the Philadelphia PCUSA Presbytery has

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<sup>111</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXI Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day, VII. "As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week, and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath."

<sup>112</sup> While I respect Rev. Sparks position, and greatly esteem him personally, I must strongly disagree with his assertion. In the diaspora, I believe the New Testament evidence demonstrates, Paul planted mixed New Covenant congregations made up of both Jews and gentiles. He never planted two congregations in a given locale, one for Jewish believers and one for gentile believers. The churches at Rome, Galatia, Corinth, etc. are examples of this practice, contra Sparks.

approved of a new congregation to be planted by Sparks and funded by the denomination. This will need to be ratified by their General Assembly.

Turning to the next largest body, the PCA, this author graduated from Westminster Seminary and was ordained as its first evangelist specifically called to Jewish ministry. In 1989 we founded CHAIM with the vision to help rebuild the Reformed witness to Jewish people in the USA. CHAIM was officially recognized on a National level by the PCA 20th General Assembly in 1992. Rev. Rick Anderson, a Jewish believer ordained in the OPC, also serves with CHAIM and is developing work in New Jersey. Bi-vocational worker Marko Malyj is PCA licensed and coordinates CHAIM's Russian Jewish work. Marko has been the driving force behind getting Rock of Israel (see below) started. CHAIM is involved with street evangelism, Messianic Chavurot, Russian Jewish congregational planting, educating the church, seminary courses, and developing outreach ministries within local churches.

Rock of Israel is a new Russian Jewish PCA congregational plant. Founding pastor Ilya Lizorkin is licensed in the PCA and on the way to ordination. Ilya is an official PCA Mission to North America church planter called by the Philadelphia Presbytery, but is also seconded to Chosen People ministries. The leadership team is comprised of Ilya Lizorkin, Marko Malyj, Rick Anderson, Fred Klett and another PCA man, Jonathan Eide, who served in Ukraine with the PCA Mission to the World. Rock of Israel is developing a distinctly Russian-Jewish congregation within the PCA, one self-consciously meeting on Sunday. There are many Jewish worship elements in the service, but it is not based on an American Messianic congregational model; rather it seeks to incarnate the body of Messiah within the *Russian* Jewish community. For further information see the Rock of Israel web page, [www.rockofisrael.com](http://www.rockofisrael.com).

There are other works with PCA connections. Dr. Arthur Glasser, who was a leading figure in the development of the Jewish ministry program at Fuller Seminary is a PCA minister. He has written many articles in the area of Jewish missions. Chosen People's Toronto director, Joseph Gray, is PCA ordained and is a Jewish believer. In Philadelphia, Ammi is directed by Ron Elkin, a Jewish believer who is a member of a PCA church and is "under care" of the PCA Presbytery. Ammi is recognized by the local presbytery and is primarily oriented toward reaching out to Russian Jewish immigrants. (These works can be found on the web at <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/3961/> and [www.chosenpeople.com](http://www.chosenpeople.com).) In New York, Redeemer PCA has also been very active in helping to establish Hope of Israel, a Russian Jewish congregation pastored by Greg Zhelezney. Their Russian web site is <http://www.hopeofisrael.com>

An official PCA statement, *Evangelism of Jewish People*, was passed by the 20th General Assembly in 1992. The statement, prepared by Arhurt Glasser, Fred Klett, and CHAIM chairman Bruce Howes, was passed by the

Philadelphia and Pacific Presbyteries and then by the whole General Assembly. The Southern Baptist affirmation of Jewish ministry, that caused such a stir, was loosely based on the PCA statement, which went largely unnoticed by the press and the Jewish community. The PCA statement was brought forward in order to go on record with a clear declaration in opposition to "two-covenant" theology. I believe there was only one negative vote, negative because that elder felt the PCA *already* believed what was being stated. Here are some key passages:

*Whereas there has been an organized effort on the part of some who claim to profess the name of Christ to deny that Jewish people need to come to Him to be saved; and*

*Whereas these people have spread a false hope and security that Jewish people can inherit eternal life apart from faith in God's New Covenant promises foretold by the Jewish prophets (Jer. 31:31, Isa. 53);*

*...the 20th General Assembly of the PCA re-affirms that we are "not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16)...*

*Re-affirms that anyone and everyone – Jewish and Gentile – who fails to receive Jesus, Messiah of Israel, as Savior and Lord, as taught in the New covenant, will perish eternally...*

*Re-affirms that "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) and "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil 2:10)...*

*Re-commits itself to prayer for all peoples – Jewish and Gentile, to turn to the God of Israel and His Holy Messiah Jesus in faith, as the Westminster Larger Catechism states, we are to pray that "the gospel [be] propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in" (Westminster Larger Catechism answer to Question 191);*

*Re-commits itself to the preaching of the gospel of Christ to all peoples – Jewish & Gentile, and condemns as the worst form of anti-Semitism withholding the gospel from the Jewish people...*

*We therefore re-affirm, in accord with the scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, that it is our duty, as Messiah's people, to take the gospel to all the peoples of the earth, including the Jewish people. We call the Jewish people, through whom Jesus came, to join us in faith in their own Messiah, obedience to their own King, Jesus the "King of the Universe," and in the proclamation of His gospel to all peoples, for that same Jesus will one day return to judge the world (Acts 1:11).<sup>113</sup>*

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<sup>113</sup> The whole overture can be found on our web site, [www.chaim.org](http://www.chaim.org).

The PCA resolution states in unequivocal terms that only through faith in Messiah Jesus can any person escape eternal condemnation and affirms proclamation of the gospel to all people, "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." The statement explicitly mentions that Jesus is the King of the Jews and the Jewish Messiah. The obligation of prayer for the Jewish people, quoting the Larger Catechism, is also re-affirmed.

In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Jewish ministry was present at the very beginning. Its fourth General Assembly in 1938 received this recommendation from its Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension: "That the General Assembly give its earnest consideration to the establishment of special missionary work among the Jews and that the General Assembly instructs the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension to establish special missionary work among the Jews."

Rev. David Freeman, an OPC ordained Jewish believer, worked among Jewish people in the 1930s and 1940s. His work was primarily in the Philadelphia area. Mrs. Freeman also worked among the Jewish people in Washington D.C. Their work was funded by this fledgling denomination. During WWII Freeman entered the chaplaincy while Mrs. Freeman continued in the work. When the work was resumed by Freeman, it was proposed to the Tenth OPC General Assembly (1943) that there be greater funding and that the Jewish work be overseen by its own separate committee, rather than a sub-committee of the general home missions committee. This was not granted. (David Freeman and William Young recorded their negative votes.) The Freemans were commended for their work. Freeman also served as pastor of a local church, but his principal work remained among the Jewish people. It was recorded in the 1944 assembly minutes that "Special services" and "personal work has been carried on" The work was discontinued in 1946, but churches were encouraged to avail themselves of Freeman's services in conducting Jewish ministries "in their respective localities." Jewish ministry, it seems, would no longer exist as a special work, but would be conducted as part of the regular ministry of the local church. This, in my opinion, resulted in Jewish work suffering increasingly less attention and activity. Years later, in 1976, the OPC 45th General Assembly recommended that the home missions committee "consider how they may participate in mission work among the Jews..." A report from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands on Jewish ministry was distributed to local church sessions.

No specialized ministry was conducted in the OPC after 1946 until a work began at a local church, New Life OPC, in the Philadelphia area in the late 1970s by this author. It was known as the Natural Branches Ministry and then as the Etz Chaim Fellowship. Our present ministry, CHAIM, was started in 1989 and a call was to be issued to me to be ordained as an OPC evangelist to the Jewish people. I was licensed in the OPC, but soon after New Life left the OPC and



joined the PCA and I went with them. OPC involvement began again in 1999 when a Jewish Westminster Seminary graduate from a Conservative Jewish background began to work with CHAIM. He was ordained in the New Jersey OPC Presbytery as the first ordained OPC minister to the Jewish people since David Freeman. Rick Anderson is currently the only ordained OPC evangelist to the Jewish people.

Where are the North American Presbyterians today? There is continuing involvement and a need to rebuild. There is exploration of how to integrate Jewish culture into witness while remaining loyal to our doctrinal standards, which we believe are accurate statements of the Biblical faith. An embryonic web site, [www.frumm.org](http://www.frumm.org), has been established with a few papers relating Reformed theology to Jewish ministry. Clearly, we still have a long way to go. In Europe and Israel, Christian Witness to Israel, with Presbyterian roots and recognized by the Free Church of Scotland, is doing great work. We have a rich heritage. May God give us wisdom and increase our efforts as we bring the Good News of Messiah to the Jewish people in a culturally relevant way.

# “On the Record”: Official Statements of Southern Baptists Regarding the Jewish People

Jim R. Sibley

Southern Baptists have been characterized by philo-Semitism since their beginning in 1845. This may be due to four concepts that have shaped Southern Baptist identity. These basic convictions are religious liberty, the inerrancy of Scripture, a distinction between Israel and the Church, and the biblical mandate to take the gospel to all people.

First, Southern Baptists are a free people. As a strongly independent religious movement that opposes the concept of a state church, Southern Baptists have historically insisted on religious liberty for all, including those with whom we disagree most strongly. Second, Southern Baptists are a people of the Bible. Coupled with an affirmation of biblical inerrancy and divine authority, Southern Baptists generally interpret the Bible in a literal or normal hermeneutic. Third, a literal hermeneutic has led Southern Baptists to see a distinction between Israel and the Church in Scripture. While Replacement Theology still has a great deal of influence within Southern Baptist life (contrary to the author’s wishes!), it is usually a more moderate form that understands the Church to have replaced Israel only *temporarily*. Most Southern Baptists agree with dispensationalists in insisting that there is yet a glorious future for ethnic Israel. Fourth, and finally, Southern Baptists are an evangelistic people. They are driven by the missionary mandate of the Great Commission.

## Historical Survey to 1975

Official statements made by Southern Baptist groups prior to 1950 regarding the Jewish people were greatly influenced by Joseph S.C.F. Frey (1771-1850), “The Father of Modern Jewish Missions,” and by Dr. Jacob Gartenhaus (1896-1984), both of whom were Jewish believers in Yeshua and who were Baptists by conviction and affiliation.

Dr. Bobby Adams, in his doctoral dissertation, says something very significant about Baptists of the 1800s and about Frey’s contribution to the

shaping of Baptist attitudes concerning the Jewish people: "In the organizations that Christians formed to relate to Jews and Judaism, top-level leadership was Baptist. This indicates that Baptists desired the conversion of Jews. Baptists over the nation shared this concern."<sup>114</sup>

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was formed in 1845, and Adams summarizes the effect that Frey's preaching had on official pronouncements made by Southern Baptists in the years that followed:

*In 1867, Baptists resolved to "labor and pray more earnestly for the conversion of Jews." In 1873, Abraham Jaeger, a converted Rabbi, addressed the annual convention session on the subject of the conversion of the Jews. Following his address, the Convention was asked to direct the Board of Domestic Missions to employ Jaeger to work among the Jews. He was not employed. In 1875, Crawford H. Toy offered a resolution to direct the Home Mission Board to seek those who would work among the Jews. In 1882, a similar resolution was adopted. This time, however, the Foreign Mission Board rather than the Home Mission Board was asked to "seek missionaries to Israelites in this and other countries." Six resolutions were adopted between 1894 and 1921 asking that mission work be begun in Palestine.<sup>115</sup>*

Between 1867 and 1921 the SBC adopted ten resolutions that dealt with Jewish evangelism. In response to these early resolutions, the Home Mission Board employed Dr. Jacob Gartenhaus as their first missionary to the Jews. His appointment eventually led to an entire department of Jewish evangelism, directed by Gartenhaus, until his retirement in 1949. These resolutions speak of the earnest desire to share the gospel with the Jewish people, but they also reveal the frustrating search for suitable leaders and missionaries to do the work.

During his tenure at the Home Mission Board, Gartenhaus influenced some local Baptist groups to adopt official statements. For example, in the late 1920s, such statements were adopted by the Baptist Ministerial Alliance of Shreveport, Louisiana; the Baptist Ministerial Alliance of Kansas City; and the Lynchburg [Virginia] Baptist Ministers' Conference.<sup>116</sup> Another such resolution was adopted by the Atlanta Baptist Pastors' Conference in approximately 1946, though the date is not certain. These statements were almost all related to special conferences led by Gartenhaus, and they speak of love and concern for the spiritual welfare of the Jewish people and of the need to intensify Baptist efforts to share the gospel with them.

The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, in Nashville, Tennessee, holds a copy of a resolution that apparently was written just prior to

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<sup>114</sup> Bobby Adams, *Analysis of a Relationship: Jews and Southern Baptists* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation; Ft. Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; December, 1969), 78-79.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>116</sup> Copies of these statements are available from the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee.

World War II. Gartenhaus' name is handwritten on the upper left corner of the first page, so it is assumed that he authored it. Knowledge of the precise date of this resolution and the group that may have adopted it, however, has been lost. This resolution is a strong response to the anti-Semitism that was sweeping Europe and thereby threatening the Jewish population.<sup>117</sup> It states:

*... Be it further resolved, that in the face of such a tragic fate for a whole people, we, as followers of Christ, cannot remain silent. We do hereby voice our protest against these concepts of race which are the opposite of the teachings of Christ, and disavow as Christians any sympathy with them or any connection between them and the truth as we know it in science and in Christian faith.... Therefore we do here and now express our deep sympathy and concern to our Jewish brethren [sic] in every land, in their hour of suffering and assure them of our love. We, representatives of the Christian faith, publicly condemn the oppression to which millions of Jews are being subjected as a blot on the civilization of our time, and do set ourselves against any manifestation of it in our own land.*

In all of these statements, there is the expression of deepest concern for the Jewish people – both for their physical well being, as well as for their spiritual salvation.

### **Official Statements Since 1975**

Since 1975, the Southern Baptist Convention has adopted three resolutions regarding the Jewish people: The first on religious liberty in Israel, the second on anti-Semitism, and the third on the need to evangelize the Jewish people.

In 1978, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted the following resolution:

#### **On Religious Liberty in Israel**

*WHEREAS, We have confidence in the commitment of the state of Israel to religious liberty, and*

*WHEREAS, A law passed by the government of that nation in December of 1977 may inhibit religious freedom,*

*Be it therefore Resolved, that we call upon the State Department, the Congress of the United States and the President of the United States to communicate the concern of this Convention to authorities in that nation, and*

*Be it further Resolved, that we call upon the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Baptist World Alliance to assist in the implementation of this resolution.<sup>118</sup>*

In 1981, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted the following resolution on anti-Semitism:

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<sup>117</sup> An additional, though much more concise, repudiation of anti-Semitism was officially adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1948 (*SBC Annual*, action # 129, p. 57).

<sup>118</sup> *SBC Annual*, action # 186, 67.

*WHEREAS, Christians are profoundly indebted to the ancient Hebrew nation because of its contribution to our faith; and*

*WHEREAS, Baptists and Jews share a common heritage of persecution and suffering for conscience sake; and*

*WHEREAS, Periodic waves of anti-Semitism emerge in our nation; and*

*WHEREAS, Christians believe that God loves all the people of the world;*

*Be it therefore Resolved, that the messengers at the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Los Angeles, June 9-11, 1981, commend our Southern Baptist Convention leaders as they seek sincere friendship and meaningful dialogue with our Jewish neighbors.<sup>119</sup>*

This resolution, although titled, “On Anti-Semitism,” seems actually to have been written to “commend our Southern Baptist Convention leaders as they seek ... meaningful dialogue with our Jewish neighbors.” Under more liberal leadership, some denominational agencies had become much more interested in dialogue than in evangelism with respect to the Jewish people.

Following the return of the denomination to its conservative theological roots, and since many years had passed since Southern Baptists had officially stated their position regarding the need of the Jewish people for the gospel, the time was ripe for an official statement. The author drafted a resolution, but was unable to bring it before the convention for a vote. The Resolutions Committee must recommend all proposed resolutions to the Convention, and the resolution on Jewish evangelism seemed to be stuck in committee. It was first presented in 1993, while the author, who lived in Israel, was in the United States. Since the author had to return to Israel and thus was not able to present it in 1994 and 1995, he asked an influential pastor and personal friend to present the resolution on his behalf. Still there was no progress.

Finally, in 1996, the resolution was presented and adopted by the Convention. It is interesting to note that just slightly more than one year earlier, in March 1995, The Alliance of Baptists (a small, liberal splinter group) adopted “A Baptist Statement on Jewish-Christian Relations.”<sup>120</sup> While this statement rejects Replacement Theology and denounces anti-Semitism, it also espouses Dual Covenant Theology. The statement reviews Baptist involvement in Jewish-Christian dialogue, and says, “Regrettably, in recent years this effort at Jewish-Baptist dialogue has been reduced to a theology of conversion.” It denounces “a theology which has valued conversion over dialogue” and “a theology which does not acknowledge the ...efficacy of the Jewish faith.” These affirmations by the Alliance of Baptists served to point up the need for a clear statement of Southern Baptist conviction.

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<sup>119</sup> *SBC Annual*, action # 166, 51.

<sup>120</sup> This statement is accessible on The Alliance of Baptists’ web site. <[www.allianceofbaptists.org/christian-jewish.htm](http://www.allianceofbaptists.org/christian-jewish.htm)>

The resolution of 1996 is as follows:

### **On Jewish Evangelism**

*WHEREAS, Jesus commanded that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47); and*

*WHEREAS, Our evangelistic efforts have largely neglected the Jewish people, both at home and abroad; and*

*WHEREAS, We are indebted to the Jewish people, through whom we have received the Scriptures and our Savior, the Messiah of Israel, and "they are beloved for the sake of the fathers" (Rom. 11:28b); and*

*WHEREAS, There has been an organized effort on the part of some either to deny that Jewish people need to come to their Messiah, Jesus, to be saved, or to claim, for whatever reason, that Christians have neither right nor obligation to proclaim the gospel to the Jewish people; and*

*WHEREAS, There is evidence of a growing responsiveness among the Jewish people in some areas of our nation and our world; now, therefore,*

*BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 11-13, 1996; reaffirm that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16); and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we recommit ourselves to prayer, especially for the salvation of the Jewish people as well as for the salvation of "every kindred and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9); and*

*BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That we direct our energies and resources toward the proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people.*

### **Concluding Observations**

The reaction of the Jewish community and the secular news media to this last resolution was vociferous and prolonged. Every major national news commentator or television talk show featured the story. Talk radio stations and programs also featured lengthy discussions. The *New York Times* ran a number of stories and a full feature with photographs. The story garnered international attention as well. Attention was given to it in the Israeli press and the BBC aired reports on its international English news programs. Even the *Yearbook* of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* included comment about the resolution and the author's appointment to the Home Mission Board (now, the North American Mission Board).

Of course, the leadership of the major Jewish organizations attempted to distort and to inflame the situation for several reasons. The first objective was to intimidate Southern Baptists to rescind their action and threaten any other Christian denominations that might have similar intentions. The second objective was to insulate their constituents against any effect such Christian witness might have. Most importantly, however, the actions of the Southern Baptist Convention presented national Jewish organizations with a golden opportunity to raise funds to “defend” against “the Mission.” It must be noted, however, that *Toward Tradition*, a Jewish non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote political views, was strongly supportive of the SBC resolution.

The most unexpected response was a press release issued by the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA). MJAA was critical of Southern Baptists because they feared that our efforts would lead to their assimilation and thus to their annihilation (!). Apparently the leadership of MJAA was trying to curry favor with the unsaved Jewish community on the premise that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” It did not work.

One of the first distortions (made by a Jewish leader and picked up by the secular press) was the charge that the SBC had called for “targeting,” or singling out, the Jewish people for exclusive attention. This kind of language, however, is completely absent from the actual resolution. The resolution of 1996 was designed to correct an imbalance, redress a wrong, and refocus the Convention on the place of the Jewish people in the overall missionary mandate of Scripture and in the official actions of the denomination.

Another observation worth comment is that in none of these official statements has there been explicit reference to Jewish believers in Yeshua. This is true, even though in 1996 there were more than a dozen Southern Baptist Messianic congregations, and thousands of Jewish believers who were members of Southern Baptist churches. As a matter of fact, the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship added their endorsement to the resolution of 1996 when it was first proposed. No reference was made specifically to Jewish believers because the resolution was intended to be a statement of Jewish *and* gentile Southern Baptists. The Southern Baptist Convention is composed, as was the New Testament Church, of both Jews and gentiles who believe in Yeshua.

As a result of the publicity generated by the resolution of 1996, the need for Jewish evangelism was clarified for Southern Baptists. Many had never even considered the issue until it was national news. Suddenly, SBC leaders were being asked to comment on national television, and, gratefully, they took uncompromising stands in defense of Jewish believers and the obligation of all disciples of Yeshua to share the gospel <sup>60</sup>with the Jewish people as well as with gentiles. Grassroots Southern Baptists have also been strengthened in their conviction that the gospel is for the Jewish people—a conviction that compels a greater willingness to face the hostility of the secular press.

Through all of the years, Southern Baptists have been willing to go “on the record” in opposition to anti-Semitism, in defense of religious liberty in Israel, and in support of prayer for – and witness to – the Jewish people. May God grant that our actions would match our words.



# The Assemblies of God and the Messianic Movement (1975-2000)

Raymond L. Gannon

The Assemblies of God (USA) has proven to be a faithful and enduring friend to Jewish missions and the Messianic Jewish Movement. But prior to analyzing the documents put out by the Assemblies of God during the last quarter century of the second millennium in support of my statement, it is useful to examine the backdrop for these Pentecostal statements on the Church, the Jewish people and missions to the Jews.

The Pentecostal Revival of the early 20th century was born out of the Holiness and Keswickian movements of the late 19th century. In addition to the expectation of a fresh sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit within the spiritually anemic Church in America, these humble Christians anticipated a full restoration of the Church to its pristine first-century New Testament condition of anointing and spiritual power that the ultimate purpose of the Church may find its redemptive and universal fulfillment just preceding the Second Coming.

By the time the Pentecostal movement came to international attention in 1906 as an outgrowth of the Los Angeles "Azusa Street Revival," Theodor Herzl's work had become widely appreciated as the Zionist movement gathered growing sympathy and support. The very notion of "a restored Zion" sounded a familiar call among Pentecostal restorationists. Plainly to Pentecostals, God was at work on two fronts: (1) restoring the Church to its rightful spiritual and empowered condition for divine service and (2) restoring a dispersed Israel to its rightful habitation in *Eretz Israel* in anticipation of the pending universal reign of Jesus from atop Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.

The Assemblies of God formed as a Fellowship in 1914. By the time of their second General Council in 1916, Jewish voices were heard from the platform calling upon the Assemblies of God constituents to consider the great need for Jewish evangelism. According to the minutes of the 1916 General Council, "Dr. Murcutt and Mark John Levy (two converted Hebrews) brought up a

discussion of Pentecostal evangelism among the Jews."<sup>121</sup> Levy had earlier persuaded the *Weekly Evangel* (forerunner to the *Pentecostal Evangel*), in anticipation of the 1916 St. Louis General Council, to publish the text of a resolution prepared by the Hebrew-Christian Alliance of America. It read in part,

*RESOLVED, That the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America urgently requests "all the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 16:4) to proclaim to the Jews throughout the world that they are left free, if they so desire, to observe the national and social customs of Israel when they accept our Lord-Jesus Messiah, according to the teaching and practice of Christ and the Hebrew Christians in the primitive church.*<sup>122</sup>

What is evident from the earliest moments of the Pentecostal restorationist movement known as the Assemblies of God is that a great openness existed toward Jewish evangelism and likewise toward the notion of continued Jewish cultural expression among Hebrew Christians.

Alongside scores of Jewish missions news columns regularly highlighting Assemblies of God efforts to win Jewish people "to their Messiah" was the declared conviction that the positive Jewish response to the Gospel was another "sign of the times." Surely, it was believed, Jewish evangelism was crucial to God's ultimate purposes in Israel which seemed to be so manifestly unfolding at present through the contemporary Zionist movement.

The Assemblies of God pioneers were reluctant denominational organizers having come out of a revivalist tradition entirely suspect of organized and "dead" religion. Although formed in 1914, the Assemblies of God did not adopt a constitution until 1927. "The salvation of national Israel" was to find a prominent place in the very first "Statement of Faith" incorporated into that initial constitution. Article 14 entitled, "The Millennial Reign of Jesus," read,

*The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, the salvation of national Israel, and the millennial reign of Christ on the earth is the Scriptural promise and the world's hope (2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 19:11-14; Rom. 11:26, 27; Rev. 20:1-7). (Emphasis mine.)*

The Second Coming and the millennial reign of Jesus combined with "the salvation of national Israel" to represent not only the Scriptural promise but the "world's hope"!

A sampling of statements published in the *Pentecostal Evangel* in succeeding decades reveal a fundamentally pro-Zionist, pro-Jewish evangelism, and philo-Semitic Assemblies of God official posture as represented in the official organ of the denomination. In the 1920s and 1930s articles containing the following themes were repeated in the *Pentecostal Evangel*: (1) condemning anti-Semitism, (2) highlighting local Jewish evangelistic ministries, (3) accenting the glorious role of Israel in world redemption, (4) reporting the ongoing developments in

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<sup>121</sup> General Council Minutes, 1916, 4-5.

<sup>122</sup> *Weekly Evangel*, 23 September 1916, 11.

*Eretz-Israel* and the accomplishments of the Zionist movement, (5) insisting on the tremendous debt of Christianity to the Jewish people, (6) proclaiming the utter Jewishness of the early Church and the destiny of the Church to be led by the Jewish people again, (7) offering numerous historical examples of the miserable fate of antisemites, (8) resounding the Jewish return to Zion as Biblical prophecy fulfilled, (9) celebrating the wonderfully disproportionate number of Jewish believers entering full-time Christian ministry, (10) prophesying the times of the gentiles as drawing to a close, (11) rejoicing in the multiplication of missionaries proclaiming the gospel to Jewish people, (12) pointing to Israel as God's "greatest sign" and the greatest miracle of history, (13) journaling the preparedness of hundreds of thousands of Russian Jewish youth to travel on foot to Palestine as well as (14) a series of reports on Jewish massacres in Europe, and (15) strongly advocating Christian acts of kindness to the Jewish people.

On the heels of the early post-World War II revelations as to what the Jewish people had suffered in Europe and elsewhere in the 1930s and 1940s, the General Council, in its 1945 biennial session, adopted the following resolution in opposition to anti-Semitism:

*WHEREAS, We have witnessed in this generation an almost universal increase in anti-Semitism and this has resulted in the greatest series of persecutions perpetrated in modern times, and*

*WHEREAS, Even in the United States of America there has been an alarming increase in anti-Semitism;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the General Council hereby declare its opposition to anti-Semitism and that it disapproves of the ministers of the Assemblies of God identifying themselves with those who are engaged in this propaganda.*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the editor of publications be instructed to prepare an article including Section 1 of this resolution in which our position on anti-Semitism is set forth and that it be published in the Pentecostal Evangel.<sup>123</sup>*

Here are some excerpts from the mandated article which followed in the 20 October 1945 issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*:

*What is our position in this matter? That which is set forth in the Scriptures of truth, which we have taken as our sole guide for faith and conduct. We do not fail to recognize that God has redeemed the children of Israel unto Himself to be His people for ever ...*

*despite all Israel's failures, the Spirit of God tells us they are still "beloved for the father's sake" ... And the promise is given that He who has scattered them will gather them again unto Himself ...*

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<sup>123</sup> General Council Minutes, 1945, 28-29.

*Every child of God who finds joy in the revealed will of our Father, delights in the glorious promises of Israel's restoration...*

*God gives solemn warning to those who hate and persecute Israel...*

*Many Jews have their hearts open to receive the gospel these days...*

*The greatest reason why no Christian should be anti-Semitic is that our Savior was a Jew ... God raised Jesus from the dead, and in giving His world-wide commission of evangelism to His disciples, Jesus first thought of His own people ... On the day of Pentecost three thousand devout Jews yielded their lives to Him, and today there are many devout Jews whose hearts God is meeting ... Thank God, we have many such in our fellowship. May he give us many more...*

*Let us remember the word, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and the promise attached: They shall prosper that love thee." Psalm 122:6. If you pray for the people represented by Jerusalem, you will never be guilty of being anti-Semitic.<sup>124</sup>*

Although the Assemblies of God had always shown great empathy for Jewish evangelism, publications in the 1950s and early 1960s more emphatically endorsed Pentecostal missionary labors to win Jewish people to Jesus and afforded generous space in print for accenting the efforts being made. Great celebration of the founding of the Jewish State of Israel and reports of national development were frequently included in publications. Not only the *Pentecostal Evangel* but other Assemblies of God periodicals like *Missionary Challenge* and the later *World Challenge*, the *Hebrew Witness* and the later *Jewish Witness*, all accentuated the need for impacting the Jewish world with the gospel of Jesus during these decades prior to the Six Day War of 1967.

Pentecostal euphoria immediately followed the recapturing of Jerusalem in 1967 and continued for several years. The events of 1967 were viewed as convincing evidence of the hand of God at work in further setting the stage for the imminent return of Jesus.

Published reports in the 1970s of the new rise of the Messianic Jewish movement, the development of Messianic Synagogues even within the Assemblies of God, and the intensified efforts of newer Jewish missions, were all embraced as "signs of the times." Messianic Synagogues were written up in the *Pentecostal Evangel* for inspiring witness to the movement of God among the Jewish people everywhere. A professionally prepared sight and sound presentation was offered during the 1975 General Council (while in session) in Denver. Enthusiasm was contagious and widespread. At last, it was proclaimed, the Jewish people were responding to the gospel as it was being presented in culturally Jewish and relevant terms.

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<sup>124</sup> Stanley M. Frodsham, "The Editor's Notebook," *Pentecostal Evangel* (20 October 1945), 4-5.

While no General Council resolutions during the last quarter century addressed the issues of the Jewish State or Messianic Jewish ministry per se, the Assemblies of God were not silent on these issues. While numerous books had been published by the Assemblies of God-sanctioned Gospel Publishing House dealing with Israel in prophecy and Jewish missions, the *Pentecostal Evangel* remained the primary official organ and voice of the Assemblies of God. It should, therefore, be viewed as reflecting the official positions of the movement on Jews, Judaism, the Jewish State, and Jewish evangelism. Any questionable text or article would be submitted for the approval or rejection of the "Committee on Doctrinal Purity" prior to publication.

Much of the overt enthusiasm for the re-establishment of Israel so characteristic of the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, seems to unofficially dissipate off the printed page over the final decades of the 20th century. Even prolific and highly esteemed Assemblies of God authors who published texts boldly advocating Pentecostal faith and confidence in the Jewish State nevertheless lowered their rhetoric regarding Israel in articles published in the *Pentecostal Evangel* from the mid-1970s on. This dampening of public display was due to three chief causes: (1) Israel's question-raising war effort in 1973 which starkly contrasted with her grand victory in 1967; (2) the heightened awareness of Arab economic power in the world following the oil boycott of the early 1970s; and (3) the new Assemblies of God focus on mission enterprise in the Islamic world and fear of reprisal against missionaries.

Published statements on Israel were numerous but revolved around archaeological finds, tour experiences, treatment of New Testament distribution efforts, announcements of pending Pentecostal conferences in Jerusalem, and mistreatment or legal threats against missionaries or Messianic Jews in Israel. Apart from newsworthy articles on the Russian and Ethiopian Jewish migrations, gone were the typically euphoric pieces on Israel's national developments. Middle Eastern politics found occasional expression but tended toward political neutrality as the years progressed.

Stepping back from politics, the Assemblies of God still dared take a biblical position on Israel's destiny. The *Pentecostal Evangel* stated, "The Assemblies of God has never (lost) sight of the fact God has chosen to be in covenant relationship with this (Jewish) people."<sup>125</sup> Again, "The everlasting triangle of the God of Israel, the land, and His chosen people was formed in a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, initiated by Almighty God—eternal and unconditional. Such a covenant ultimately must be fulfilled."<sup>126</sup>

In probably the closest likeness to an official Assemblies of God statement on Israel, Jews and Jewish ministry until 1991, Charles Harris, professor at

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<sup>125</sup> "Fellowship Maintains Active Interest in Jewish People," in *Pentecostal Evangel* (12 July 1981), 21.

<sup>126</sup> Sandy O'Connell, "Jerusalem," *Pentecostal Evangel* (10 March 1985), 17.

Central Bible College and a forerunner to the “Committee on Doctrinal Purity,” published “A Priority in Evangelism.” He wrote, “God has some promises which he has made to the Jewish nation which He will yet keep.”<sup>127</sup> Fifteen years later Daniel Gruber wrote, “God has declared that He will not revoke the gifts and calling which He has entrusted to Israel (Romans 11:29).”<sup>128</sup> Later he expressed,

*God has promised blessing to the church and to all the world through the salvation of the Jewish people ... We believe the Jewish people are God's key to unlock the nations of the earth, God's explosive catalyst to set the world ablaze for Him ... God created the Jewish people to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.*<sup>129</sup>

There was never any attempt to remove from Jesus his craving for relationship with the Jewish people or to suggest his beloved Israel did not really need him. Rather,

*...in Israel now, [t]here is a growing appreciation of Jesus – that He is a genuine Israeli, the best and the most famous the nation has produced.*<sup>130</sup>

*[T]he first, the second, and the last concern of Jesus is the salvation of the Jews. Since that is true, Jewish evangelism needs to have a priority in the outreach ministry of Christian workers. The Gospel shows that the priority of Jesus' own ministry was the salvation of the Jews.*<sup>131</sup>

The most significant single expression of the Assemblies of God position regarding the Church's relations with Israel, the Jewish people, and Jewish missions, was the widely distributed 28-page pamphlet written by Daniel Gruber entitled, “My Heart's Desire.” It was published by the General Council of the Assemblies of God through the auspices of the Intercultural Ministries Department in 1991. It was mailed to the Assemblies of God districts, churches, and Bible colleges across America and, as much as anything else, became the officially documented position of the Assemblies of God regarding Jewish missions.

Crucial excerpts from “My Heart's Desire” are:

*...the Bible teaches the uniqueness of the Jewish people in the ongoing plan and purpose of God, and that the Church has not replaced them in that plan and purpose.*<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Charles Harris, “A Priority in Evangelism,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (12 January 1975), 20.

<sup>128</sup> Daniel Gruber, “Do Jews Need to Believe in Jesus?” *Pentecostal Evangel* (17 June 1990), 20.

<sup>129</sup> Daniel Gruber, “Speaking the Truth in Love,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (18 November 1990), 21.

<sup>130</sup> C. M. Ward, “All Israel Shall Be Saved,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (26 December 1982), 10

<sup>131</sup> Charles Harris, “A Priority in Evangelism,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (12 January 1975), 20.

<sup>132</sup> Daniel Gruber, “My Heart's Desire,” (Springfield, MO: Intercultural Ministries Department, 1991), 2.

*The totality of His kingdom will come with the repentance and salvation of Israel. (p. 3)*

*Jesus taught them to expect the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. (p. 5)*

*The New Covenant is God's means of bringing restoration to Israel, and through Israel to the world. (p. 8)*

*In God's plan of salvation for the world, God used the Jews to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. In gratitude, the Gentiles are to bring the gospel to those Jews who do not yet believe. (p. 11)*

*Gentile believers do not take anything from Israel, they are joined to Israel. Having become fellow citizens ... in the commonwealth of Israel. (p. 12)*

*The faithful remnant was not removed from Israel ... The Church is the New Covenant combination of the believing remnant in Israel and the engrafted believing Gentiles. (p. 16)*

*The Church should pray for the salvation of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and, in love, bring the gospel to them. (p. 17)*

The historical capacity of the Assemblies of God for cultural variety and ethnic pluralism is witnessed most graphically in the very sincere embrace of the Messianic Jewish and Messianic synagogue movements. The high level of publicity given to Messianic Jewish ministries including those forming Messianic Synagogues is adequate testimony to the open-heartedness of the Assemblies of God leadership and constituencies toward Jewish evangelism, Messianic discipleship, and Messianic congregational planting. While the Assemblies of God stifled their urge to publish ringing support for Israel as a political entity from the mid-1970s, there was no reluctance to openly celebrate their Pentecostal enthusiasm for the advance of the Kingdom of God within the various American Jewish communities.

Articles in the *Pentecostal Evangel* from the mid-1970s onward accented the necessity of planting Assemblies of God Messianic Synagogues as a direct result of highly successful Jewish evangelism. Extensive reports were published on Temple Beth Emanuel (later Ahavat Zion) in the Los Angeles area, Temple HaTikvah in St. Louis, Congregation Beth Shalom in Brooklyn, Temple Aron Kodesh in Fort Lauderdale, Beth Emanuel Fellowship in Philadelphia, and others, as well as reports on highly successful Messianic evangelistic campaigns in places such as New York, San Francisco and Long Island.

National leaders of the Assemblies of God were quoted as fully endorsing Messianic Jewish-styled evangelism and congregational worship life as the natural outgrowth of very effective Messianic Jewish discipleship. Jewish cultural expressions were celebrated not only as consistent with Jesus' and the early Church's Jewish cultural practices but as entirely consistent with Assemblies of God intercultural ministry guidelines.

Very little is recorded in Assemblies of God documents regarding the Jewish roots of the Church apart from occasional articles on one or another of the biblical Holy Days, e.g., Shavuot, Sukkot, Pesach, etc. Nor is any need strongly expressed for the Assemblies of God to better acquaint themselves with their Jewish roots per se. Yet Assemblies of God Messianic Jewish believers are fully entitled and expected to engage their Jewish heritage in their adoration of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

The Assemblies of God have historically demonstrated great enthusiasm for the salvation of national Israel. From its earliest years the Assemblies of God offered ringing endorsements of political Zionism and the later Jewish State of Israel. Regrettably, these overt expressions of political support have been muffled since the mid-1970s. However, Assemblies of God modern interest in "political correctness" on the world stage of mission enterprise has not carried over to American-based Messianic Jewish ministries. Pentecostal ferment for the rise and proliferation of the Messianic Jewish and Messianic Synagogue movements since the 1970s has never wavered.

The Assemblies of God have always exhibited a strong sense of fraternity with the Jewish people and have always theologically embraced the distinct role a nationally redeemed Israel is to play in God's grand order of things. There is every reason to believe the Assemblies of God will continue to make great strides forward in their support of Kingdom expansion within "All Israel." Their conviction remains firm that the day will surely come when, "All Israel Shall Be Saved."



# Catholic Statements on the Church, the Jewish People, and Mission to the Jews

Peter Hocken

The pontificate of Pope John Paul II has been of huge significance for Jewish-Catholic relations. A reflection on Catholic statements concerning the church, the Jewish people and mission to the Jews for the last quarter of the 20th century is primarily a reflection on the distinctive contribution of the Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla who became Pope John Paul II in October 1978. The pope's personal contribution owes much to personal experience of Jews in the Poland of his childhood and young manhood. The many addresses John Paul II has given to Jewish leaders manifest a sharp consciousness of the immense sufferings of the Jewish people, not only in the Holocaust, but also in previous ages.<sup>133</sup> The issues we will examine have an importance for the pope because of his heart for the Jewish people.

## The Reception of *Nostra Aetate*

Although the decree *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council with its teaching on the Jewish people (para. 4) was promulgated in 1965, 10 years before the beginning of the period we are considering, its teaching has strongly shaped subsequent Catholic teaching on these issues. Almost all the more recent Catholic statements refer to the conciliar teaching. This is not only because of the strong Catholic emphasis on tradition (new Catholic documents always cite previous official statements<sup>134</sup>), but also because of the particular importance attached to the teachings of a Council of the whole Catholic episcopate.

In order to evaluate the significance of particular Catholic statements, whether on the Jewish people or any other subject, it is necessary to bear in

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<sup>133</sup> 70  
"The terrible persecutions suffered by the Jews in different periods of history have finally opened the eyes of many and appalled many people's hearts." (John Paul II to Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Mar. 6, 1982, Fisher & Klenicki, p. 18).

<sup>134</sup> A notable exception to this was *Nostra Aetate*, para. 4 itself, because no previous statements could be quoted in support of its teaching.

mind its weight, in particular who made it and the degree of authority it is given.<sup>135</sup> I will use for most references two collections of Catholic statements relating to the Jewish people: *Catholic Jewish Relations: Documents from the Holy See*<sup>136</sup> and *Spiritual Pilgrimage: Texts on Jews and Judaism 1979-1995* (edited by Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki).<sup>137</sup> Besides *Nostra Aetate*, para. 4, the first of these contains three documents from the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: (1) Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (no. 4) from 1974; (2) Notes on the Correct Way to present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church, dated 1985, and (3) *We Remember*, a Reflection on the Shoah, dated 1998. These three statements have an official character, but they do not carry the same weight as papally-signed documents.<sup>138</sup> They are to be understood in the light of the higher-authority documents, such as *Nostra Aetate* and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>139</sup> (1994). In the same way, papal messages on specific occasions have an importance because they are given by the pope, but they too are to be interpreted in the light of the more official signed documents.

For these reasons, it is wise to print the greater part of paragraph 4 of *Nostra Aetate*<sup>140</sup>:

*As this Sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.*

*Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the Prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ – Abraham's sons according to faith – are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His Inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ Our Peace reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.*

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<sup>135</sup> In Vatican practice with papal documents, for example, an encyclical letter carries greater authority than an apostolic letter, and an apostolic letter more than an apostolic exhortation.

<sup>136</sup> London: Catholic Truth Society, 1999.

<sup>137</sup> New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996.

<sup>138</sup> This is important to bear in mind when considering the document *Dominus Jesus* from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the summer of 2000 concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the uniqueness of the Church.

<sup>139</sup> Hereafter CCC.

<sup>140</sup> This citation omits the penultimate paragraph decrying all forms of anti-Semitism, and the final paragraph about the universality of the salvation won by Christ on the cross.

*The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: 'theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenant and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh.' (Rom 9: 4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's mainstay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.*

*As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognise the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews, in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading. Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues – such is the witness of the Apostle. In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and 'serve him shoulder to shoulder' (Zeph 3: 9).*

*Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this Sacred Synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.*

*True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected by God or accursed, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. ..."*

In the addresses of John Paul II to Jewish leaders during his pastoral visits to many nations, he has reiterated the central themes of *Nostra Aetate*, para. 4: (1) the roots of the Church in the people of the Ancient Covenant; (2) the irrevocability of the covenant with the Jewish people; (3) the repudiation of all teaching that the Jews are rejected by God or are an accursed people, because of not accepting Jesus as the Messiah; (4) the denunciation of all forms of anti-Semitism.

## **The Relationship Between the Church and the Jewish People**

*The Pope says, commenting on the first section of *Nostra Aetate*, para. 4, "Thus it understood that our two religious communities are connected and closely related at the very level of their respective religious identities."<sup>141</sup> Thus, Catholic teaching today sees an intrinsic relationship between the Church and Judaism that belongs to the inner character of each. This point will be important to bear in mind in relation to the question of the "distinct integrities" of each faith. This point was further developed in Rome in 1986 during the first-ever visit of a Pope to a synagogue: The Jewish religion is not "extrinsic" to us, but in a certain way is*

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<sup>141</sup> Response of Pope John Paul II to Representatives of Jewish Organizations, 12 March 1979 (Fisher & Klenicki, 4).

*“intrinsic” to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers.*<sup>142</sup>

The Pope addressed another angle on the bond between Christians and Jews in an address to the Jewish community in Vienna, Austria, 50 years after the Nazi destruction of their synagogue:

*Peace [Shalom] comprises the offer and the possibility of forgiveness and mercy, the outstanding qualities of our God, the God of the Covenant. You experience and celebrate in faith this certainty, when you annually keep the great Day of Reparation, the Yom Kippur, as a feast day. We Christians contemplate this mystery in the heart of Christ who – pierced by our sins and those of the whole world – dies on the cross. That is the highest degree of solidarity and fraternity by the power of grace. Hatred is extinguished and erased, the Covenant of love is renewed. This is the Covenant which the Church lives in faith, in which she experiences her deep and mysterious union in love and faith with the Jewish people. No historical event, however painful it may be, can be so powerful that it could contradict this reality which belongs to God’s plan for our salvation and fraternal reconciliation.*<sup>143</sup>

### **The Irrevocable Covenant with Israel**

In Mainz, speaking to the Jewish community of West Germany, John Paul II rounded out what *Nostra Aetate* had taught in referring to Romans 11:29, speaking of the “Old Covenant” as “never revoked by God.”<sup>144</sup>

The Vatican document of 1985 states:

*The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God’s design. We must in any case rid ourselves of the traditional idea of a people punished, preserved as a living argument for Christian apologetic. It remains a chosen people, ‘the pure olive on which were grafted the branches of the wild olive which are the gentiles’ (John Paul II, 6 March 1982, alluding to Rom 11: 17-24).*<sup>145</sup>

*The irrevocability of the covenant with the Jewish people is reaffirmed in the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, where para. 839 cites key passages from Vatican Two and ends by citing Romans 9: 4-5 and Romans 11:29.*

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<sup>142</sup> Pope John Paul II on the occasion of his visit to the Synagogue of Rome on 13 April 1986 (Fisher and Klenicki, 63). The year before, the Pope had spoken of “a relation which could well be called a real ‘parentage’ and which we have with that religious community alone” (*op. cit.*, 56).

<sup>143</sup> On June 24, 1988; see Fisher & Klenicki, 120.

<sup>144</sup> On November 17, 1980, Fisher & Klenicki, 75.

<sup>145</sup> *Catholic Jewish Relations*, 47, para. 25. “This people perseveres in spite of everything because they are the people of the Covenant, and despite human infidelities, the Lord is faithful to his Covenant.” (Address of John Paul II to Symposium on “The Roots of Anti-Judaism in the Christian Milieu”, 31 October 1997 in *Information Service – P.C.P.C.U.-Vatican City 1997/IV*, 142).

The next paragraph then states:

*And when one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah, whose features remain hidden till the end of time; and the latter waiting is accompanied by the drama of not knowing of or misunderstanding Christ Jesus.<sup>146</sup>*

However, an earlier paragraph of the Catechism treating of the second coming of Jesus provides a different angle on the place of the Jewish people in the future of the Church:

*The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel," for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus ... The "full inclusion" of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of "the full number of the Gentiles," will enable the People of God to achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" in which "God may be all in all."<sup>147</sup>*

There is here a teaching developing that does not see Israel's instrumental-salvific role as limited to giving birth to the Messiah and to the Christian Church. Rather, through the irrevocable covenant, the Jewish people and Judaism are still bearers of divine revelation in a mysterious way that is not easy to formulate. Such a formulation will not be possible, it would seem, until there is greater clarity about what was lost or weakened in the ancient Church through a wrong understanding of the Jewish people and God's covenant with them.

### **Mission and the Jewish People**

This is a subject that the official documents and the papal addresses do not directly address. On the other hand, it is a subject on which Catholics involved in the dialogue with Judaism have often expressed grave reservations and sometimes outright opposition to any deliberate proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus to the Jewish people. How is this situation to be interpreted?

It is clear that the magisterium (teaching office) of the Catholic Church has in the last 40 years consistently taught that (1) Judaism is unique among non-Christian religions (see section above) and (2) dialogue and evangelization are not to be seen as alternatives, but both are necessary in relation to non-Christian religions. The most authoritative expression of this second point is found in John Paul II's encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* of 1990.

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<sup>146</sup> CCC, para. 840.

<sup>147</sup> CCC, para. 674.

*In the light of the economy of salvation, the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission ad gentes [to the nations].<sup>148</sup>*

In fact, this point had already been applied to the Jewish context in the Vatican Guidelines of 1974:

*In virtue of her divine mission, and her very nature, the Church must preach Jesus Christ to the world [Ad Gentes, 2]. Lest the witness of Catholics to Jesus Christ should give offense to Jews, they must take care to live and spread their Christian faith while maintaining the strictest respect for religious liberty in line with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. ... They will likewise strive to understand the difficulties which arise for the Jewish soul – rightly imbued with an extremely high, pure notion of the divine transcendence – when faced with the mystery of the incarnate Word.<sup>149</sup>*

Pope John Paul II cited this whole passage in his address to representatives of Jewish organizations in 1979.<sup>150</sup>

During the pope's visit to the Roman synagogue in 1986, he alluded to this question:

*No one is unaware that the fundamental difference from the very beginning has been the attachment of us Catholics to the person and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, a son of your people ... But this attachment is located in the order of faith, that is to say, in the free assent of the mind and heart guided by the Spirit, and it can never be the object of exterior pressure, in one sense or the other. This is the reason why we wish to deepen dialogue in loyalty and friendship, in respect for one another's intimate convictions ...<sup>151</sup>*

There are two issues here: first, the repudiation of all proselytism, of unworthy forms of evangelism that do not respect the human dignity and socio-cultural heritage of the recipients; secondly, there is the question of sensitivity to what the Jewish people have already received through their election and through divine revelation. The first concerns what forms of religious expansion are morally reprehensible;<sup>152</sup> the second, how presentation of the gospel to the Jews should differ from its presentation to gentile peoples.

The proselytism issue is one to which Catholics with a love for the Jewish people and an interest in Judaism have become increasingly sensitive. These are the Catholics who have learned of the immense suffering of the Jewish people through Catholic oppression over the centuries, and of the degradation of baptism through force and duress in medieval Europe, especially in Spain. The change from contempt to deep respect ruled out all forms of Christian advocacy that were rooted in negative statements about the Jews or about Judaism. The

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<sup>148</sup> Redemptoris Missio, para. 55.

<sup>149</sup> Catholic Jewish Relations, 24 [Guidelines, section I].

<sup>150</sup> Fisher & Klenicki, 5.

<sup>151</sup> Fisher & Klenicki, 64.

<sup>152</sup> The proselytism issue has been most fully addressed in the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue, in its joint report *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness* (1997).

sins of the past were so appalling that great sensitivity is now needed to avoid any hints of repetition. It seems as though our past sin has disqualified us Catholics from direct proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people.

In this growing respect, there is a Catholic recognition of truth in the age-long Jewish complaint that conversion to Christianity meant the death of Judaism. The instinct of most informed Catholics is that Evangelical evangelism of the Jews contains elements of an unacceptable proselytism, particularly perhaps in the widespread negativity towards rabbinic Judaism. However, the public Catholic debate of such questions has generally not considered the question of a renewed Jewish expression of faith in Jesus of Nazareth, and with that the possibility of Jews becoming believers in Jesus without required "gentilization."

The only references to a Jewish believer in Jesus Christ in papal addresses are in the homilies for the beatification (1987) and the canonization (1998) of Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein).<sup>153</sup> The pope here spoke of Edith Stein as one who remained a Jew after her conversion: "Today the Church is honoring a daughter of Israel who remained faithful, as a Jew, to the Jewish people, and, as a Catholic, to our crucified Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>154</sup> While beatification and canonization of their nature represent the setting forth of a model for all Catholics, and the Hebrew Catholics naturally receive St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross as a kind of unofficial patron saint, no official statements have commended her conversion as a model for other Jews. However, at her canonization, the Pope said,

*Through the experience of the cross, Edith Stein was able to open up a way towards a new encounter with the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith and cross were inseparable in her eyes ... She understood that it was very important for her to be a daughter of the chosen people and to belong to Christ not just spiritually but also by blood.*<sup>155</sup>

## **Mission and the Identity of Judaism**

Another important dimension of mission concerns the question of the identity of Judaism. This is expressed in the Vatican Notes of 1985: "we should recall the passage in which the *Guidelines and Suggestions, I*, tried to define the

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<sup>153</sup> Edith Stein was born in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland) in 1891. Brought up in an actively Jewish family, she became an atheist and studied philosophy, becoming an important exponent of phenomenology. Brought to faith in Jesus, Messiah, Saviour and Son of God, she was baptized in 1922 and later entered the Carmelite order in 1934. Sent to the Netherlands for her safety in 1938, she was arrested and died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz in 1942.

<sup>154</sup> On the occasion of her beatification in 1987, in Fisher & Klenicki, 90.

<sup>155</sup> My translation from a French version.

fundamental conditions of dialogue: 'respect for the other as he is,' knowledge of the 'basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism' and again learning 'by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience'."<sup>156</sup>

It was in this understanding that the Pope said at the Roman synagogue in 1986:

*each of our religions, in the full awareness of the many bonds which unite them to each other, and in the first place that "bond" which the Council spoke of, wishes to be recognized and respected in its own identity, beyond any syncretism and any ambiguous appropriation.*<sup>157</sup>

What does this mean for Christians, who accept the irrevocability of the covenant with Israel, but who also believe in the uniqueness of the incarnation of the Son of God and in the saving mystery of his death and resurrection? It poses with particular force the right understanding of the relationship between the biblical covenants.

It is characteristic of Catholic magisterial teaching to hold open such challenging questions, allowing and hopefully encouraging further research, and only to act authoritatively to close out unacceptable solutions that short-change some aspect of the mystery. One "solution" advocated by some theologians is to emphasize the salvific character of the covenant with Israel, establishing a real relationship with the living God, and thereby suggesting that evangelization of the Jewish people is denying the validity of the first covenant. In some, this view finds expression in a theory of each faith having its own covenant by which its adherents are saved.

A major figure in the Vatican, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, responsible for doctrinal orthodoxy in the Catholic Church, clearly does not share such views. In a collection of essays entitled *Many Religions One Covenant*,<sup>158</sup> Ratzinger emphasizes the inherent connectedness of all the biblical covenants, insisting on the inner continuity of salvation history, and the fulfilment of the Torah through the Law of the Gospel. "The Law is read prophetically, in the inner tension of the promise."<sup>159</sup> He sees their connectedness in relation to the heart of the Father: their unity is rooted in the unity of their author. "The Gospel thus brings the Law to its fullness through imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father."<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Para. 4.

<sup>157</sup> Fisher & Klenicki, 64.

<sup>158</sup> San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999 (German original, 1998).

<sup>159</sup> *Op. cit.*, 37. "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old is made explicit in the New." (cited by Ratzinger, 36, and by CCC, para. 129).

<sup>160</sup> *Op. cit.*, 33, citing CCC, para. 1968.



Though Ratzinger does not treat dialogue as recognizing the “integrity” of Judaism, his position on the inter-connectedness of the covenants excludes recognition of Judaism as an integrally valid way of salvation. The rightful insistence on approaching Judaism “in its own identity” means that we listen to them seeking to recognize all that is true and worthy, refusing to judge them on the basis of who we are. In particular, I suggest that it means being alert for elements of divine revelation and wisdom, expressed in the Old Testament and maybe also in the New, that never found a place in Christian life because of our rejection of the Jews yet found a continuing expression in the Jewish community.

# “Kehilla, Church, and the Jewish people”

David Neuhaus

Hebrew-speaking Catholics in Israel come together in the *kehilla* (meaning “community”, established formally within the local Catholic Church in 1955 as “the Association of St. James”)<sup>161</sup>. Membership in the *kehilla* is characterized by the following characteristics:

- 1: Catholic Christians of both Jewish and gentile origin,
- 2: who are Israelis or residents in Israel and live in the Jewish milieu,
- 3: praying and giving expression to their faith in Hebrew,
- 4: with a profound appreciation of the Jewish roots of their faith and practice,
- 5: and seeking to understand the relationship between contemporary Judaism (in all its diversity) and Christian faith today.

The *kehilla* is neither a mission station nor a Jewish-Christian dialogue center but rather a community of believers that comes together in prayer and love like any community of believers anywhere else in the world. The *kehilla* does not have a theological, philosophical or ideological set of principles upon which all members are agreed other than belief in God who sent his son, Jesus, following his teachings and belonging to the Catholic Church. As there is no one system of thought that is at the basis of coming together, there is a great diversity of views on all subjects.

There is, however, something that distinguishes the *kehilla* from other communities, and that is the unique context in which it lives its faith, a context that places the *kehilla* at a crossroad between the Catholic Church and the

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He is a long time member of the Hebrew speaking Catholic community of Jerusalem and the article has been written in close collaboration with a number of other members of the Jerusalem *kehilla* and special thanks are due Yohanan Elihai, Jean-Baptiste Gourion, Hanna Kleinberger and Pierbattista Pizzaballa.

<sup>161</sup> Although we will speak here of “*kehilla*” in the singular, there are four established communities in the four major cities of Israel, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa and Beer Sheba.

Jewish people. Prayer and community life in Hebrew in a Jewish milieu as Catholic Christians as well as work and relations within Jewish Israeli society define the perimeters of life and reflection. Creating, nurturing and sustaining a prayer community within the Jewish milieu as Christian believers from Jewish and gentile origins is a distinguishing mark of the *kehilla*. Some members are Jewish by origin, history, culture and identity. Some of these believers live their faith openly and publicly; others live discreetly and privately. Some, who are not Jewish, have become Israeli citizens or permanent residents, opting for life here, connected to Jewish and Hebrew culture, history and tradition. It is thus clear that the *kehilla* sees itself as intricately connected to the life of the Jewish people in Israel. While no distinction is made between Jew and Gentile in the life of the *kehilla*, particular attention is paid to the Jewish milieu in which the *kehilla* lives, breathes and has its being.<sup>162</sup>

Yet, in addition to being implanted in Jewish Israeli society and maintaining manifold connections to the Jewish people, the *kehilla* is also part of the Universal Catholic Church, united in faith with Catholics throughout the world. This belonging to a traditional church is a conscious choice for many in the *kehilla*, who thus choose to associate themselves with the long history of Christian believers through the ages. Within this history there is much joy and light but also much pain and darkness, especially in relation to attitudes and behavior towards the Jewish people. It is this belonging that places the *kehilla* in a privileged position to work for healing and reconciliation. Within the Israeli context, the *kehilla* is part of the local, indigenous Catholic Church, which is predominantly Arab in culture and language. These axes of belonging are the bases for reflection on the place and role of the *kehilla* in the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people.

### **The Grace and Joy of Present Times**

The *kehilla* is living a period of grace and joy. Since the middle of the 1960s the Roman Catholic Church has clearly and explicitly embraced the links between Christianity and Judaism and encouraged dialogue with Jews and Judaism.<sup>163</sup> In these days, the *kehilla* has seen an increasing openness with regard to issues that touch the Jewish people on the part of the Church in general and Pope John Paul II in particular. Especially significant for the *kehilla* was the warm welcome extended to the Pope on his Jubilee pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The *kehilla*

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<sup>162</sup> The *kehilla* is, of course, not alone in this vocation. It is aware of other communities of believers living a similar vocation, especially Messianic Jews. Members of the *kehilla* do maintain longstanding friendly relations with members of the Messianic assemblies. These friendly relations lead to exchanged visits and shared prayer, conversation and sharing, as well as increasing mutual understanding and respect.

<sup>163</sup> See in this issue, the article of P. Hocken, "Catholic Statements on the Church, the Jewish people and Mission to the Jews."

was overjoyed to witness the Pope stand in silent prayer before the Western Wall and in sorrowful repentance at Yad VaShem.

When the *kehilla* was founded in 1955, few Catholics were engaged in studying the Jewish identity of Jesus, the Jewish background to the New Testament and the primitive Christian communities. Few too were the Hebrew-speaking Catholics inserted into the life of the Jewish people in Israel. The Hebrew-speaking Catholic community and its founders were among the pioneers in this field. Today the *kehilla* notes with pride that the Jewish identity of Jesus, the Jewish roots of Christian faith and Catholic tradition are celebrated throughout the Catholic Church. Interest in Judaism, dialogue with the Jewish people and awareness of Christianity's Jewish roots no longer uniquely characterizes the *kehilla* in the margins of the (universal) Catholic Church, but characterizes the very center of the Church. This was summed up in the most recent document of the Vatican's Biblical Commission, which said:

*Dialogue (with the Jewish people) is possible because Jews and Christians possess a rich common heritage, which unites them. Dialogue is also most desirable in order to eliminate progressively, on both sides, prejudices and misunderstandings, to favor a better knowledge of the common heritage and to strengthen mutual ties.*<sup>164</sup>

The past four decades have seen a significant theological reappraisal of Catholic thinking about non-Christian religions. The Church has moved from a position of seeing herself as unique depository of truth (all other religions being condemned as false), to a position of valuing the truths found in other religious traditions and seeking dialogue with them. The Catholic Church conceives of the possibility of salvation outside the confines of the visible Church, which has no monopoly on the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for the salvation of all humankind. If this attitude of respect characterizes relationship with other religions in general, how much more so is this true for Judaism, which is so intimately related to Christianity (through shared Scriptures and traditions as well as Jesus' own identity and that of his disciples and the first community). Within the *kehilla*, the use of Hebrew as a liturgical language and a language of community life and Christian religious expression naturally underlines the common heritage shared by Church and Jewish people.

Theological reflection within the Church takes place within a particular historical context. The present context of Catholic-Jewish dialogue has been underlined by Pope John Paul II in his focus on the theme of repentance. The Catholic Church is engaged in an ongoing reflection on Catholic participation in historical manifestations of intolerance, contempt and violence. If this is true in relationship with non-Catholics in general, how much more so is this true in

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<sup>164</sup> PONTIFICIA COMMISSIO BIBLICA, *Il popolo ebraico e le sue Sacre Scritture nella Bibbia cristiana* (The Jewish people, and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible), Rome, 2001, 207.

relationship with the Jewish people? Catholics are currently engaged in a multi-dimensional review of the many forms of the “teaching of contempt” for Jews and Judaism within Catholicism which sometimes led to persecution and even genocide. Within the *kehilla*, some have direct links to the *Shoah* and all are sensitive to the issue of anti-Semitism within Jewish society, which creates a particularly awareness of the need for repentance and healing.

It is also significant within the local context that the local Catholic Church, which is primarily Arab in hierarchy and composition, has recognized the particular vocation of the *kehilla*. In the recent Synod of the Catholic Churches in the Holy Land, this recognition was expressed in the following terms:

*There is a group within the Jewish people who have come to know Christ as (...) Savior. They are part of our local Church and they live in their own special conditions. They too have a right to develop their own relationship with Jews and Judaism from the vantage point of their reality and situation, at the same time as remaining connected to the reality of the local Church and being open to it. We must preserve open bridges of communication between our Churches and this community in order to exchange experiences so that we can learn from one another and so that this community can develop according to its own particularity and as part of the community of faithful in our countries.*<sup>165</sup>

Communion and communication between the *kehilla* and the rest of the Church is a fundamental part of the vocation of the *kehilla*. On the local level, some members of the *kehilla* have been and continue to be engaged in teaching within the local Arabic-speaking Church and promoting better relations between Jews and Palestinian Christians and Muslims too.

The *kehilla* realizes that there is still much to be done. The way to reconciliation between Jews and Catholics is a long and arduous one after centuries of estrangement, hostility and persecution. Even now, the *kehilla* must pray intensely for this new and relatively fragile relationship, as the way is fraught with suspicions and pain. Nonetheless, the way has been paved for increasing trust and ever more honest dialogue. Many of the motivating dreams of the founding mothers and fathers of the *kehilla* have been realized. For this the *kehilla* is joyful and thankful.

## **A Discreet Presence**

As much as the *kehilla* might rejoice in the establishment of increasing trust and dialogue between the Church and the Jewish people, so too many *kehilla* members are aware that the *kehilla* itself is called to be a discreet presence. The *kehilla* is privileged to be at a crossroads where Church and Jewish people are meeting in a new relationship of trust and friendship. However, the historical

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<sup>165</sup> ASSEMBLY OF THE CATHOLIC ORDINARIES IN THE HOLY LAND (Diocesan Synod of the Catholic Churches), *The General Pastoral Plan*, 2001, 156.

complexity of relations between Church and Jews calls the *kehilla* to ever-greater sensitivity and love for both sides.

The very fact that there are Jews who have recognized a call to enter relationship with Jesus within the Catholic Church is a very sensitive issue in the relations between the Church and the Jewish people. In recent times, some prominent Jewish figures that have entered the Catholic Church have been at the center of painful controversy. The Catholic Church has sought to celebrate the presence of such Jews in the center of the Church. Thus, for example, Pope John Paul II has repeatedly celebrated the Jewish identity of Edith Stein, the German Jewish philosopher who converted to Catholicism in the 1930s, entered the Carmelite order and died as a Jew in Auschwitz in 1942. Edith Stein has been recognized by the Church as an exemplary figure of belief in the modern world, a philosopher turned mystic and has been formally recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church and made one of the patrons of Europe.<sup>166</sup> Many Jews find this celebration of a figure they consider an apostate problematic in the dialogue between Jews and Catholics. Some Jews have asked: "Is the Church suggesting that the best Jew is a converted Jew?"

There is recognition in the *kehilla* of the pain that Edith Stein represents for the Jewish people and thus many insist on a discreet presence for a community at the core of which are Jews who have entered the Catholic Church. Within the move to firmly establish a new relationship of trust between Catholics and Jews, many in the *kehilla* see their role within the Church rather than in the direct and official dialogue between Catholic and Jewish representatives. This role is one of constantly spreading awareness within the Church of the significance of the relationship with Judaism and the Jewish people. Within the Catholic Church, believers of both Jewish and gentile origin have made a great contribution to the sensitization of the Church to both the Jewish roots of the Church and to contemporary Judaism and the Jewish people. Some of these prominent figures have been members of the *kehilla* or linked to it.<sup>167</sup>

Perhaps it is not yet time for Catholics from among the Jewish people to be prominent in the dialogue between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church. Perhaps rather this is a time for the *kehilla* to engage in a vigilant and constant prayer for the success of this dialogue and the realization of true reconciliation

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<sup>166</sup> See the special edition of the official Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* of 12-13.10.1998, at the time of the canonization of Edith Stein (Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross).

<sup>167</sup> Among those members and friends of the *kehilla* who taught and wrote prolifically about the need for increased awareness of the Jewish roots of Christian faith and Catholic tradition we mention here two prominent figures who have gone to their heavenly reward: Bruno Hussar and Rina Geftman. Both Israeli Jews, Bruno was founder of the peace village Newe Shalom and Rina was a prolific teacher on the Jewish roots of the Church.

between the Church and the Jewish people after so many centuries of pain. This discreet presence clearly includes the weaving of friendship with neighbors in Israel. Members of the *kehilla* feel called to bear witness to the possibility of deep and respectful friendship with the Jewish people within the context of daily life. They bear discreet and yet profound witness to the deep desire for friendship with the Jewish people and the fundamental changes in Church attitudes. These relationships will eventually register a different history of Jews and Christians, relegating to the distant past the centuries of suspicion and mistrust.

### **Living and Bearing Witness to “Good News”**

The *kehilla* is not engaged in any kind of traditional missionary activity whatsoever. Missionary activity in its traditional sense (explicitly preaching or distributing Christian matter) is no longer seen as appropriate in relationship to the Jewish people and the *kehilla* is in harmony with the Universal Church on this score. Summing up the new attitude, Cardinal Kasper, head of the Vatican commission for relations with the Jewish people, stated, in Jerusalem: “Now we are aware of God’s unrevoked covenant with His people and of the permanent and actual salvific significance of the Jewish religion for its believers.”<sup>168</sup> The *kehilla* is profoundly sensitive to the Jewish world in which it lives. The fact that some Jews are drawn to faith in Jesus Christ and among them some do become members of the Catholic Church, is a painful reality for most Jews. Many members of the *kehilla* live this pain as an integral part of their identities and recognize the historical reasons for widespread negative Jewish reactions to the phenomenon. However, reactions are not always negative and sometimes deepen dialogue and relationship.

When it comes to mission (“being sent”) though, the *kehilla* does sense a mission to the Universal Church. It is sent, first and foremost, to remind the Universal Church of its claim to catholicity. The *kehilla* sees itself as part of a movement towards the reconstitution of a community of Catholic believers within the Jewish milieu. Even before the liturgical reforms, which allowed mass to be celebrated in the vernacular languages (spoken languages rather than Latin), the *kehilla* received authorization to celebrate the mass in Hebrew. Thus, Hebrew was restored to its rightful place as one of the venerable languages of Christian tradition and liturgy. This mission to the Church is to awaken the slumbering Jewish roots of Christian faith and Catholic practice and tradition. Moreover, the *kehilla* is called to bear constant witness to the fundamental unity of the Old Testament with the New, that Jesus and the first

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<sup>168</sup> See W. Kasper, “The Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Foundations, Progress, Difficulties and Perspectives,” conference at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 21.11.2001.

Christian community were rooted within the Jewish people and God's fidelity to His people.

Within the Catholic Church today the word "mission" is often replaced by the words: "evangelization" or "witness." Recent Catholic thinking has stressed that each individual must be respected in their particularity. Thus, Catholics today tend to speak more of "witness to the faith" than active missionary activity through argumentation and disputation. By "witness" is meant the attempt to live Christian lives as clearly and radiantly as possible. Words have been so long contradicted by acts in the history of Christian communities that they seem to ring out meaninglessly. Believers have often spoken too much and acted too little. It is acts rather than words that can bear witness to the message of love and respect upon which the lives of believers are based. Particularly within the *kehilla*, the word "mission" conjures up a concept and a strategy that are no longer acceptable within the Israeli and Jewish contexts. "Mission" has too often been understood as "proselytism," in which respect for personal freedom and cultural, historical and social particularity has been overridden in the name of the supposed salvation of souls. The Jewish people are deeply wounded by centuries of offensive missionary activity that sought to bring them "to the light" even in spite of their resistance. Within the Church today, this aggressive and offensive missionary activity, strongly linked to a teaching of contempt for Judaism, has given way to an appreciation of the internal dynamics of the Jewish tradition.

Many in the *kehilla* believe that believers in Jesus should be measured and humble in their faith when face to face with the Jewish people. This humility is the necessary prerequisite for the much needed healing. Only when a relationship of trust is restored can Jews and Christians look confidently at one another once again and re-evaluate the place of Jesus Christ in the history of salvation. This means that the attitude towards others should be governed by a profound respect for their freedom, a sincere humility regarding the history of the Church and a burning desire to live faith simply and clearly, more in acts than in words. When questioned explicitly by Jews (or anyone else) about faith, the words of Peter might best capture the attitude generally adopted in the *kehilla*: "Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts and always have your answer ready for people who ask the reason for the hope that you all have, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet 3:15).

The *kehilla* does seek to make Jesus of Nazareth known as a son of this Land and of the Jewish people. This holds for his disciples and the primitive Church too. Here, the *kehilla* finds itself side by side with Jewish scholars, exegetes and historians, in the renewed interest for Judaism in the late Second Temple period where Jesus and his followers have their place. The New Testament should be restored to its place within the Jewish literature of the period. Jesus of Nazareth is a son of his people and a participant in their history.



## Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

It is clear that the primary vocation of the *kehilla* is to be a community of prayer and life in the midst of Jewish Israeli society. Within this community, prayers for the well being of the people, the country and for peace and justice in the region have a very special place. Living within Israeli society, prayers in the *kehilla* are all the more the prayers of and for this society. Common life with the Jewish people makes the *kehilla* particularly sensitive to the need for healing and reconciliation. Yet, the other dimension of this Land is never far from the prayers of the *kehilla* too. The proclamation of faith in the Prince of Peace places the *kehilla* at the center of the painful reality being lived in this Land—the continued violence and bloodshed. Common faith with the other Christians of the Land makes the *kehilla* particularly sensitive to the need for peace and justice. Instead of widespread discouragement, though, the *kehilla* seeks to live hope at the center of society in Israel.

There has been much progress in the relations between Jews and Christians. Part of this progress is undoubtedly related to the establishment of the State of Israel and the development of a Jewish majority within Israeli society. The context of the State of Israel holds out two dimensions of specific promise and eschatological hope for the *kehilla*:

1. In the midst of Israel, the *kehilla* might restore an important, even essential, element to the catholicity (universality) of the Universal Church. A “church” out of the midst of the Jewish environment, particularly sensitive to the inner life of the Jewish people, recalls the most primitive “church,” the church of the first disciples of Jesus. This earliest *kehilla* (the primitive Church in Jerusalem within the Jewish milieu) was greatly weakened after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD and it eventually disappeared from view, swallowed up into the gentile Church. Today, in the midst of the historical, traditional Church, a Church from the Jewish milieu alongside a Church from the gentile milieu restores a missing dimension to the universality of the Body of Christ, promising renewed vigor to the catholic (universal) community of believers.

2. On the other hand, a local Israeli Catholic community of believers in Jesus, living integrated in Jewish Israeli society, can serve as a bridgehead for profound healing and reconciliation in this beloved land. Within the *kehilla*, the Jew who has met Jesus within his Church remains firmly rooted in Israel. The less the Jewish people feels threatened in its survival, the more the Jewish people can afford to open itself. May there come a day when Jews can freely express their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and remain fully integrated within the Jewish people!

Meanwhile, the *kehilla* seeks to be fully integrated in Israeli society as well as in the Catholic Church. From this unique vantage-point, the *kehilla*, in communion with both the universal Church and with the Jewish people, incessantly prays for a full reconciliation between Jews and Christians and among all believers in this Land and in the world. The *kehilla* is aware that it is called to be a community of hope—hope that Jews and Christians will be fully reconciled, hope that Israelis and Palestinians will find peace and security in this Land. Pope John Paul II expressed this in his meeting with the two chief rabbis of Israel in Jerusalem in 2000:

*We must work together to build a future in which there will be no more anti-Judaism amongst Christians or anti-Christian sentiment among Jews. We have much in common. There is much that we can do together for peace, for justice, for a more human and fraternal world. May the Lord of heaven and earth lead us to a new and fruitful era of mutual respect and cooperation for the benefit of all.*<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Speech of John Paul II at the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, Jerusalem, *The Holy Land welcomes His Holiness Pope John Paul II, 20-26 March 2000*, Jerusalem, 2001.

# Authentic Dialogue Between Messianic and Non-Messianic Jews ... A Miracle Could Happen Here!

Mitch Glaser

Is there a possibility of genuine dialogue between Messianic Jews and the mainstream Jewish community? Perhaps. Would this be a worthy goal? Certainly, but only if the dialogue is respectful and genuine. At this point, the likelihood of there being fruitful interchange between Messianic and non-Messianic Jews is doubtful. It would take a miracle of Hanukkah proportions!

There are a few historic examples of debate and dialogue between Messianic Jews and the “mainline” Jewish community. The majority of these debates, however, took place during the Middle Ages. Nachmanides and other Jewish leaders debated both Jewish and gentile representatives of the Catholic Church. These debates were often compulsory for the Jewish citizens of the particular realm. Dialogue and debate between Jews and Protestants were historically rare.

The first series of contemporary dialogues between Evangelicals and Jews emerged in the 1970s and was spearheaded by Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, director of Inter-religious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Dr. Marvin Wilson of Gordon College often provided the leadership for the Evangelicals. Together with Rabbi James Rudin, who succeeded Tannenbaum as director, national conferences of evangelicals and Jews were convened in 1975, 1980, and 1984. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School played a major role in helping to stage at least two of the dialogues. Dr. Kenneth Kantzer and Dr. Walter Kaiser played an instrumental role in promoting them within the American Evangelical community.

These dialogues focused on the commonality of the two groups while areas of difference were downplayed and de-emphasized. A number of significant Christian theologians participated in these events, including Dr. Vernon Grounds of Denver Seminary and Dr. Arthur Glasser of the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission.

Three volumes recording the papers<sup>88</sup> presented at the dialogues were produced. *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation* and *Evangelicals and Jews in*

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*Conversation on Scripture, Theology, and History*, edited by Tanenbaum, is the compilation of the conference held in 1978. *Evangelicals and Jews in an Age of Pluralism* also edited by Tanenbaum, compiled the papers from the 1980 conference at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Rudin, along with Dr. Marvin Wilson of Gordon College, organized the third conference and *A Time to Speak: The Evangelical-Jewish Encounter* was produced in 1987.

Another important dialogue occurred when Kaiser debated Rabbi Pinchas Lapide on the evangelical Christian talk show *The John Ankerberg Show*. It was in this debate that Lapide, a respected German-Jewish scholar, suggested the resurrection of Jesus might have been an actual historic event. However, he added, this does not mean that Jesus was the Messiah. Resurrection, according to Lapide, is a tenet of the Jewish faith that cannot be denied. But, not all of those resurrected were the Messiah. Therefore, the resurrection proves nothing more than a Jewish doctrine and age-old belief articulated by Maimonides in his Thirteen Articles of Faith.

These dialogues were significant but there was little or no participation of Messianic Jews in these dialogues. In personal conversation with some of the Evangelical leaders who were involved in these dialogues, it was clearly understood that one of the ground rules for the dialogues was that Jewish believers in Jesus were not to be invited as participants. This became a standard operating procedure in most of the “bridge building” dialogues and debates of the last two decades.

## **Messianic Jewish Dialogue with the Jewish Community**

There has been dialogue and debate in the last two decades between the Messianic and non-Messianic Jewish community. However most of the debates were not with representatives of the mainline Jewish community. Rather, these various and infrequent debates usually teamed members of fringe Jewish groups like Jews for Judaism against Messianic leaders such as Dr. Michael Brown.

### **Traditional debate/dialogue format**

In the later 1970s and early 1980s, Canadian Rabbi Emmanuel Shochet actively debated Messianic Jewish leaders in various public forums. He was an effective debater and was responsible for a number of Messianic Jews turning away from Jesus such as the current leader of Jews for Judaism, Julius Ciss.

Dr. Louis Goldberg, retired professor of Jewish Studies at Moody Bible Institute, debated Dr. Yechiel Eckstein in the 1980s at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Eckstein, president of the Holy Land Fellowship of Christians and Jews, is an Orthodox Rabbi but does not represent the mainstream of the American Jewish religious leadership.

Yet both Shochet and Eckstein would be considered more likely as “core members” of the established and mainstream Jewish community than those involved would with Jews for Judaism.

### **Television and radio**

In 2000, Larry King of CNN created a forum with a debate on the relationship of Jewish people to the gospel. Along with members of the mainline Jewish and Evangelical community, he included David Brickner, the leader of Jews for Jesus, the president of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, and Shlomey Boteach, an Orthodox Rabbi.

Some years earlier another televised dialogue on *The Sally Jesse Raphael Show*, created an encounter between a Rabbi, a Lutheran minister and two members of Jews for Jesus, Susan Perlman and Tuvya Zaretsky. Again, this debate was created by the secular media and did not have credence within the religious Jewish community. There also have been numerous radio encounters between various Messianic Jewish leaders and members of the Jewish community. In 1998, the author debated Rabbi Yakov Spivak on WABC in New York City. However, Spivak, though well known as a Rabbi in the New York area, is not a mainline leader of the Jewish community.

These spurious types of debates and dialogues will continue. The members of groups like Jews for Judaism and other self appointed anti-missionaries will continue to participate in debate and dialogue as these opportunities enable them to gain the high profile needed to make their mission viable. The Messianic Jewish leaders and spokespersons will also continue to engage in these debates if for no other reason than to share the gospel with the individual anti-missionary and to provide a larger forum to the listening public.

### **A more mainstream Jewish forum**

A debate between Michael Brown and Shlomey Boteach, who is really a very unorthodox Orthodox Rabbi based in New York City, is scheduled for the spring of 2002. This event as currently planned is unusual, as it will take place at the 92nd street YMHA, a mainline Jewish institution, although local Messianic Jews in New York City and Chosen People Ministries have created the event.

The fact that this event is being held at a recognized, mainstream Jewish institution makes it unique. Whether or not the debate will actually take place is another matter!

### **Include the Jewish Believers – or No Debate**

It is the view of the author that any dialogue or debate between Evangelicals and the Jewish community is profoundly lacking in academic and spiritual

integrity when Messianic Jews are excluded. Issues such as the present condition of the state of Israel, the Holocaust and the *Christian* persecution of the Jewish people throughout history would take on entirely new dimensions if Messianic Jews were invited to participate in the dialogue.

These emotionally charged subjects, as well as others, would have to be addressed differently as Messianic Jews also have suffered through the same experiences and yet still became followers of Jesus the Messiah. This concept is disturbing to the mainstream Jewish community and changes the course of the debate. And therefore, Messianic Jewish participation would change the climate of dialogue with Evangelicals. Instead of challenging *Christians* to repent of their historic evils and accept responsibility for improving relations between Christians and Jews, the dialogue would emphasize issues related to Jewish identity and the distinctions of religious practice between Jewish people – including Messianic Jews.

The dialogue would also underline the Jewishness of the gospel and the fact that a person does not lose his or her cultural and ethnic identity by becoming a believer in Jesus. The issue would focus more on Jesus and personal faith than on communities of faith. Matters of heart would rise to preeminence in the discussion rather than issues involving relationships between Evangelicals and the Jewish community. These are important, but do not touch the very heart of our mutual religious pilgrimage, and do not allow the discussion of clear differences.

Messianic Jews have been excluded from the dialogue because it is the hope of the mainstream Jewish community that Evangelicals will discourage evangelism among its constituents. Knowing the prejudices of the mainstream Jewish community towards Messianic Jews, I contend that it is inappropriate for Evangelicals to accept the exclusion of Messianic Jews as a condition to dialogue.

What an encouragement it would be if our fellow Evangelicals stood with the Messianic Jewish community and declared that genuine dialogue with the Jewish community is impossible without the participation of Messianic Jews. For the denial of Messianic Jewish participation is tantamount to a declaration by the mainline Jewish community that one cannot possibly be an Evangelical Christian and remain a Jew.

Most Messianic Jews find it to be an affront to our faith that Evangelical leaders would accept terms of a dialogue or debate which bars Messianic Jews from participation. I recognize that I speak for myself, as there are some Messianic Jewish brethren who prefer the opposite and do not want to be institutionally identified with Evangelicals. However they would still want to participate in dialogue, but as Messianic Jews and not as Jewish Evangelicals.

I am happy to report that there are several contemporary illustrations of Evangelical leaders who refused to debate or dialogue without the participation

of Messianic Jews. In 1996, shortly after the historic Southern Baptist Convention resolution on Jewish evangelism was approved, Dr. Phil Roberts of the North American Mission Board was invited to appear at the 15th National Workshop on Jewish-Christian Relations. However, Dave Zauber, a Messianic Jew and Southern Baptist, was only able to be an observer and not a participant.

When Phil Roberts was invited to again engage in a dialogue by Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League, Roberts stated that this would only be possible if a Messianic Jew was included in the dialogue. This condition was rejected by the ADL who wanted Southern Baptists to repudiate all attempts at Jewish evangelism and state that Jewish people who believe in Jesus could no longer consider themselves Jewish. The SBC rejected these conditions and the dialogue never took place.

Soon thereafter another opportunity was presented to the Southern Baptists, but again, the dialogue never took place. The discussion was a result of the historic conference on Jewish evangelism, entitled, "To the Jew First in the New Millennium," held in New York City on 26 September 1999. The keynote speaker of the conference and co-convenor was former president of the Southern Baptist Convention Dr. Paige Patterson. The conference and the Southern Baptist involvement with Jewish evangelism caused a media fury as did the long list of other well-known Evangelical leaders, such as Dr. Walter Kaiser and Dr. Darrell Bock, who participated in the conference.

In a series of letters between Patterson and Gedale B. Horowitz, president of the Jewish Community Relations Council, the issue of a dialogue emerged. However, Patterson threw down the Messianic Jewish gauntlet and insisted that a Messianic Jew be part of any dialogue that would ensue. This proposal was refused and the dialogue never took place.

The details of the interchange are worth reviewing and reflect many of the issues and tensions underlying the relationships between Messianic and non-Messianic Jews. In his November 8th letter to Patterson, Horowitz, who sent a copy of the letter to the newspapers while at the same time sending it to Patterson, writes,

*Our quarrel with the Southern Baptists is not over its right to proselytize. Rather, the Jewish community is deeply offended that the SBC has formally embraced a strategy that attempts to deceive Jews into believing that one can be both a Jew and a Christian.*

Horowitz goes on to write,

*All the movements within Judaism have jointly averred that conversion to Christianity removes one from participation in Jewish communal life and that Christian belief in, and worship of, Jesus is incompatible with any authentic Jewish practice. This position has been fully articulated in the enclosed document, Meeting the Challenge: Hebrew Christians and the Jewish Community, which received the endorsement of the presidents of the Rabbinical seminaries of the four major Jewish denominations (i.e., Conservative, Orthodox, Reform and Reconstructionist).*

Horowitz quotes from this document, which reflects the mainstream Jewish position on having no formal relationship with Messianic Jews as a recognized community of faith.

*Though Hebrew Christianity claims to be a form of Judaism, it is not. ... It deceptively uses the sacred symbols of Jewish observance as a cover to convert Jews to Christianity, a belief system antithetical to Judaism.*

*Hebrew Christians are in radical conflict with the communal interests and the destiny of the Jewish people. They have crossed an unbreachable chasm by accepting another religion. Despite this separation, they continue to attempt to convert their former co-religionists.*

Horowitz adds a telling further comment in his letter to Patterson,

*The entire Jewish community is of one accord on the above set of principles. Those who adopt another religion discard any true connection with their Jewish faith and heritage, thus making any claims of Jewish identification devoid of meaning, disingenuous and, ultimately false.*

This statement is at the crux of the unwillingness of the Jewish community to engage in dialogue with Messianic Jews. No matter to what extent Messianic Jews identify as Jews, the mainstream Jewish community as represented by the distinguished and well-respected Horowitz, do not consider Messianic Jews to be a part of the Jewish community. In fact, he has gone beyond calling us outsiders and casts us in the role of unethical predators, seeking to bring harm to our own people.

Patterson responded to Horowitz's assertion in a letter that was also sent to the presidents of the four Jewish Theological Seminaries in the United States:

*As kindly as I know how to say this, let me say again that your attempts to repress the religious liberties of "Messianic Jews" are hardly becoming for a people who due to centuries of victimization at the hand of suppressive religious authorities should always be at the hand of the line of champions of unfettered freedom of religion.*

*For example, your statement [in the letter from Horowitz of 11/8/99] about Messianic Judaism being a "constitutionally protected behavior," makes me wonder what you would do if it were not thus protected? Would you act repressively?*

Attempts began between Horowitz and Patterson to find a workable format for ongoing dialogue. The proposal broke down when Patterson insisted on having a Messianic Jew as part of the dialogue.

Patterson wrote again on 10 November:

*Thus I propose a conference with eight Jewish leaders, the six of you and two others of your choice. Southern Baptists will bring eight leaders to the table in an attempt of Jews and Baptists to enhance understanding and encourage absolute integrity of religious expression as we relate each to the other. A neutral place of meeting will be arranged by Gedale Horowitz and me. The meeting would begin at 9:00 AM and conclude at 5:00 PM, with a friendship luncheon at noon. A general agenda would also be agreed upon by the two of us.*



*The two provisos would be first that our Jewish friends would have to understand that Baptists cannot abandon the proclamation of our faith, and second, that two of our eight representatives would be, in the interest of maximizing understanding, "Messianic Jews." I will hopefully and prayerfully await your reply.*

Horowitz responded to Patterson on 3 December:

*The Jewish community desires friendly relations with the Southern Baptists. The one-on-one format I had proposed, at a time and place of your choosing, will allow us to address the most imposing impediment to this relationship.*

He identified that "our concern regarding the Southern Baptist Convention embrace of organizations that utilize conversion efforts that are clearly deceptive."

I am confident that most Messianic Jews would applaud the stand made by Patterson and other Evangelical leaders. It must be understood by all that Messiah's family includes both Jews and gentiles and that it would be unconscionable to allow an outsider, even a distant cousin, to speak about another family member behind their back.

### **The Future of Dialogue**

The future of any meaningful dialogue between Messianic Jews and the Jewish community would have to include certain elements for the efforts to be fruitful.

The dialogue needs to engage leaders of the mainline Jewish community, including well-known Jewish scholars, along with their Messianic Jewish counterparts. Most Messianic Jews are weary of debating members of Jews for Judaism and other groups who have little credibility within the mainline Jewish community. And until the Jewish community stops treating Messianic Jews as a fringe group the ensuing dialogue will not benefit either community.

There have been some recent changes in this area as two significant books by mainline Jewish scholars have begun to recognize that Messianic Jews are and should be treated as part of the Jewish community. Both Carol Harris-Shapiro and Daniel Cohn-Sherbock have exercised courage as well as superb research in publishing material to this effect.

Harris-Shapiro's book, *Messianic Judaism, A Rabbi's Journey Through Religious Change in America*, published by Beacon Press is sympathetic to the Messianic Jewish movement. She presents a balanced view of the movement, though she limits her research to a few representative congregations.

Cohn-Sherbock addressed the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations annual meeting in 2001. This was a daring effort on his part and on the part of the UMJC to explore new ways of relating in a manner that would enrich both the Messianic and non-Messianic Jewish community. His book, *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, published by the Messianic Jewish publishing house Lederer Books, includes articles from various Messianic leaders and is itself a dialogue.

However, the dialogue is limited to Messianic Jews speaking to other Messianic Jews, though Cohn-Sherbock writes an intriguing and thoughtful introduction.

The next book of this nature should include members of both the Messianic and non-Messianic Jewish community. This would be a great step forward in building good relations between both groups. Perhaps the efforts of Cohn-Sherbock and Harris-Shapiro will facilitate this possibility. Their works are bright harbingers of a new day of improved relationships between the Messianic and non-Messianic Jewish community

Certainly as Messianic Jews, we understand that we are a minority movement. However, our willingness to accept rejection by the mainline Jewish community does not mean that we should cease to point out that the Jewish community would continue to be impoverished by our exclusion. Frankly there is much that Messianic Jews need to learn from the mainstream Jewish community and much that the Jewish community can learn from us.

Acrimony, disrespect and name calling on the part of the mainstream Jewish community are unbecoming behavior in our pluralistic society. It is time for the mainstream Jewish community to act kindly and graciously to those within the Jewish community with whom they disagree. This request calls for neither acceptance nor agreement, but rather mutual respect and humane treatment. Surely, our Rabbis and sages would agree.

It almost goes without saying that future dialogues between the mainstream Jewish community and Evangelicals should, and must include Messianic Jews. As I have stated, unless this happens, the dialogue will be less than sincere.

If our brother and sister Evangelicals leave us out of the debate, then they are simply engaged in a family discussion while ignoring their older brother or sister. Too often gentile Evangelical scholars teach that Judaism—at least in its first century format—is the father of Christianity. This is not quite true. Actually, the first believers in Jesus were all Jewish and their faith and lifestyle a reflection of their heritage and the dynamism of their newfound faith in Yeshua. A dialogue without the older brother is somewhat disrespectful.

The dialogue, though sincerely accepted by Evangelicals, becomes the opportunity for the mainline Jewish community to use Evangelicals to affirm our exclusion as Jews. There can be no honest dialogue without the inclusion of Messianic Jews. This is a stand that we hope Evangelicals will take in support of their Messianic Jewish brethren.

### **A Call to True Dialogue**

At this point, our dialogue as Messianic Jews with the mainstream Jewish community is sporadic, all too often harsh, lacking in common decency and punctuated by extreme defensiveness. We talk at one another, rather than to one another. As Messianic Jews we are only too happy sometimes to take the position as the *Jewish outsider*, which only feeds into the lack of respect the

Jewish community has for us. We must assert ourselves as a community of Jews who act and behave like Jews, shouldering our share of Jewish burdens with the rest of the Jewish community.

If we relate to the mainstream Jewish community as outsiders then we will be rightfully treated as outsiders. This demands a change of heart and attitude on the part of many Messianic Jews. Our rejection by the mainstream Jewish community because of our faith in Yeshua and efforts to see our fellow Jews believe in Him should not deter or determine the way we live as Jews.

One of the problems we have is that the only arena we seem to engage the mainstream Jewish community is in the area of evangelism. The Jewish community needs to see that we are Jews who have more to talk about than our faith in Yeshua, though He is of supreme importance to us. We have more to say about what it means to be Jewish. We are also Evangelicals by definition of faith and lifestyle, though again, there are some Jewish brothers and sisters who would prefer not to identify with institutional Christianity. We are a bridge between both worlds.

The Messianic Jews have much to give to both the mainstream Jewish community and to Evangelicals and therefore need to be included in the dialogue between the two groups—a dialogue that will hopefully continue.

Yet Messianic Jews need to have a relationship with the mainstream Jewish community on its own, not simply as a part of the Evangelical church. We now have almost 100,000 Messianic Jews in the world and hundreds of Messianic congregations. We have developed an approach to faith and life that reflects honorably on our relationship to Jesus and upon our heritage as Jews. Our Jewishness does not separate us from our Evangelical brethren, but rather our uniqueness enriches the entire church, as our faith in Yeshua will challenge the Jewish community as well.

It is time to break down the old prejudices and the walls that divide us. We might not agree, but we must be able to discuss those topics for which both communities of faith are willing to stake their lives. One such example is the future of our children as Jews and the future of Israel to which Messianic Jews share a common loyalty with the mainstream Jewish community. Yes, we will always want to take whatever occasion to bring our brethren the gospel. We do this not because we want to make Jews into non-Jews, but because as an early Messianic Jew told his brother, “we have found the Messiah!”

We also hope to relieve Jewish poverty wherever possible, to combat anti-Semitism when it is found and to take our role as Jews in caring for the welfare and well being of our people. The future can be bright for healthy and fruitful relationships and meaningful dialogue<sup>96</sup> between Messianic and non-Messianic Jews, but only if we are willing to explore our common concerns and deal with our differences honestly and respectfully.

Then, we will be what my grandmother called, a mensch.

## **A Postscript**

A week after the fall of the Twin Towers, a group of the Chosen People staff attended a memorial service for the victims of 11 September at a Synagogue on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The Klezmatics, a popular Klezmer group sang, as did a Jewish student group from New York University. Yartzeit candles lined the walls and the program was designed to give Jewish people an opportunity to mourn with other Jews over the tragic events surrounding the destruction of the Twin Towers.

I was glad that we attended that event. I needed to cry with my people. My next-door neighbor, a Reform Rabbi, attended as well. It was a small crowd and he could not miss the fact that my wife and I were there! This next-door neighbor has not spoken to me in the ten years we have lived next to one another. Yet, there we were - mourning with our fellow Jews - including him and his wife. I can only imagine the discussions the Rabbi and his wife had later that evening.

We did not attend to make a point to the Rabbi. I did not even know he was planning to attend. I had been mourning all week with fellow Evangelicals, but also needed to mourn with fellow Jews. Though the Rabbi treated me as an outsider for a decade, I have and never will accept that position. Neither should any other Messianic Jew. We need to assert our identity as Jews and wait patiently for our family according to the flesh to take note of our presence. Then, the dialogue might just begin!

# The Willowbank Declaration and Its Present-day Relevance — Some Reflections after 12 Years

Henri Blocher

The 1989 Willowbank Consultation on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People was convened, under the auspices of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, to meet the needs and to fulfil the wishes of our brothers and sisters who call themselves Messianic Jews. They had been undergoing adverse pressures<sup>170</sup> and they felt the moment had come for representative theologians to reaffirm the basic truth of their message, to vindicate the manner of their witness, and to uphold them in Christian solidarity.

The group of those attending – 12 scholars from seven countries, with two or three “assistants” added, whose names were not publicized – achieved a truly collective work. Papers on various topics related to the main theme were read and discussed before we set on the task of drafting the Declaration. The chief architect and redactor was that master of English style and artist of theological argument, Dr. James I. Packer.<sup>171</sup>

The Declaration did not go unnoticed, at least in the United States. I was sent excerpts from the press showing the burning emotion that it aroused among the Jewish leadership, often verging on furore. They could hardly tolerate the contrast with the concessive style of many “ecumenical” documents – although the Willowbank statement avoided all needless offence in the choice of words and in contextual allusions. Such a negative reaction was not unexpected.

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<sup>170</sup> As a sample statement of their experience, one may quote Mitch Glaser, “Forum: Indeed My Heritage Is Beautiful To Me,” *Mishpochah Message*, Jews for Jesus (Summer 1989), 3: “It can be distressing to realize we will never be accepted as Jews because we believe in Jesus. Frankly, our people regard us with a level of contempt usually reserved for Adolf Hitler and the Nazis.”

<sup>171</sup> One can find the Declaration in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 13/4 (October 1989) 161-164 and in *Mishkan*, 11/1989, 71-84.

Twelve years later, the situation does not appear to be radically different.<sup>172</sup> The major changes in Eastern Europe, including emigration from Russia into Israel—the main events in the period, apart from the rise of new technologies and economic growth—have not altered the structure of Christian-Jewish relationships. I suggest therefore that we concentrate, reflexively, on issues of a permanent import. I selected four of them, the first two questions of which are dealt with explicitly in the Willowbank Declaration. These are discussions of the Covenants and the so-called supersession or displacement scheme and debate regarding Israelite identity and faith in Jesus. The other two topics lie below the surface of the document: the question of “theology after Auschwitz” (the emphasis will fall on theologizing and theodicy) and that of biblical interpretation, its aim and criteria.

### Branches But Broken

The theology of Israel that has come to prominence in WCC circles,<sup>173</sup> the turning-point being the Bristol *Faith and Order* conference in 1967 which involves a loud condemnation of the *verus Israel* perspective, with its implication of supersession, displacement and replacement of Israel by the Church as the People of God, and of abrogation of the Mosaic covenant as “old” in the sense of obsolete. The now *religiously correct* view reverses traditional tenets, whether cast in the patristic-catholic mould, or in that of Reformed *federal* theology, or in more modern *heilsgeschichtliche* terms. One only hears of the gifts and calling of God being irrevocable and of the Jews as beloved of God (Rom 11:28b-29); this entails (except where one rules out Christianity altogether) that the two Covenants validly exist side by side, that Jews have access to God and to his approval in and through *theirs* and no attempt should be made to have them change allegiances.<sup>174</sup> This agrees with the general climate, with the ever-growing hostility towards “proselytism.” It also converges with the thought of some major Jewish thinkers such as the

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<sup>172</sup> One of the last issues of *Time Magazine*, 157/7 (Feb.19, 2001) includes an article by a non-religious Jew, Michael Kinsley, who chides his fellow-Jews for over-reacting to evangelism: “Don’t Want to Convert Just Say No,” 43.

<sup>173</sup> I dealt with the dossier *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988) in my “L’cuménisme et les juifs,” *Fac-Réflexion*, n. 13 (July 1989), 25-31.

<sup>174</sup> The Statement adopted by the WCC Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People at Sigtuna (4 November 1988) reads: “We see not one covenant displacing another, but two communities of faith, each called in existence by God, each holding to its respective gifts from God, and each accountable to God,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13/4 (October 1989) 154 n. 8; Ole Chr. M. Kvarme comments (p. 158): “has the One Lord, Jesus Christ, now been replaced by two communities of faith,” a tragic new “replacement?”

magnanimous Franz Rosenzweig who stood in 1913 on the threshold of Christian profession but, as he attended a Yom Kippur celebration, opted for Judaism. In his major work, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, he makes room for both faiths, Judaism representing "life" (*vita*) and Christianity the "way" (*via*), the former the fire and the latter its radiation.<sup>175</sup>

The ecumenical success of the covenant coexistence scheme shows no sign of abating. A recent article by Alain Blancy, who was a leading ecumenist, strikes very hard at Christian tradition, at the claim to uniqueness and universality.<sup>176</sup> Quite lucidly, he selects Christology as the main target of his critique. He writes, "Christians did everything to tear off Jesus from his Judaism and to divest him from his Jewish messiahship by making him divine"; hence, "the one who was made Saviour and Lord of the others became the pitiless judge of his own."<sup>177</sup> At the other end of the theological spectrum, the evangelical specialist of the Judaic-Christian dialogue Marvin R. Wilson, who still understands Romans 11 (it seems) along traditional lines, uses language that reflects the new scheme. He vehemently blames the second century church for its "arrogant takeover" as it appropriated the name "Israel" and "arrogated to itself the very position of the olive tree."<sup>178</sup> As he refers to that image in Romans 11, he refrains from challenging the Rabbis' assurance and merely comments: "Paul uses this symbol of the living and growing olive tree to show that the destinies of faithful Jews and Gentiles are inextricably bound together"<sup>179</sup> ("faithful Jews" being a clever ambiguity).<sup>180</sup> One also realises that the two

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<sup>175</sup> On Rosenzweig, I am indebted mainly to Paul Ricœur, "La 'figure' dans l'Etoile de la Rédemption de Franz Rosenzweig," in *Lectures 3. Aux frontières de la philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 1992) 63-81, first published in *Esprit* (1988), and to Emmanuel Levinas, "Franz Rosenzweig: une pensée juive moderne," in *Hors sujet* (Livre de poche biblio essais 4246; Paris: Fata morgana, 1987), 69-89, first published in *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* (1965). Among other writers, one can cite Hans Joachim Schoeps, e.g. in the article partially reprinted in Arthur W. Kac, ed., *The Messiahship of Jesus: What Jews and Jewish Christians Say* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 60f.

<sup>176</sup> "La Théologie chrétienne d'après la shoah," *Foi et Vie* 99/1 (Feb. 2000) 63-80. A. Blancy used to be the Rector of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, and the co-chairman of the Groupe des Dombes.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. Blancy can write, p. 75, that "God made himself Jewish, as a people and as a person": apparently, he can accept some divinisation, provided it is attributed to the whole Jewish people.

<sup>178</sup> *Our Father Abraham. Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids/Dayton, Ohio: Eerdmans/Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1989, 1992repr) 16, 83, chapters VI and VII.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. Cf. p. 267.

<sup>180</sup> Even Cardinal Ratzinger, in his "New Vision of the Relationship Between the Church and the Jews," published by *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 Dec., 2000, and translated in *Origins* 30/35 (15 Feb. 2001), though he maintains that the Church is the legitimate continuation of Israel (p. 565, the Woman of Rev 12 is Israel, and the New Israel, and

covenants scheme, with the proscription of proselytism, comes to paradoxical agreement with extreme dispensationalist Zionism.

The Willowbank Declaration carefully avoids speaking of supersession and using the name Israel for the Christian Church. It does not state that the First Covenant should be considered null and void. However, it expressly repudiates the "new theology" that affirms that "the covenant with Israel through Abraham establishes all Jews in God's favour for all times," so that faith in Jesus Christ becomes "needless" for salvation (Preamble). Several articles rule out any radical difference between Jew and gentile in their plight regarding salvation; IV,21 denies that "there is any truth in the widespread notion that evangelising Jews is needless because they are already in covenant with God through Abraham and Moses and so are already saved despite their rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour." III,15 deserves a full quotation :

*WE AFFIRM THAT the biblical hope for Jewish people centres on their being restored through faith in Christ to their proper place as branches of God's olive tree from which they are at present broken off. / WE DENY THAT the historical status of the Jews as God's people brings salvation to any Jew who does not accept the claims of Jesus Christ.*

Article II,10 also refers to Romans 11 and stresses both the continuity of the olive tree and the inclusion, within it, of gentile believers, which is tantamount to a rejection of the charge that the Church was "arrogant" when it considered itself the olive tree.

Since the other views have not receded, the Willowbank articles are relevant. More important still, I suggest they are true, being in conformity with Holy Scripture. Displacement language finds little warrant. The *logion* that goes farthest in this direction is Matthew 21:43, the kingdom of God taken from the leaders of Israel (the tenants) and given to a "nation" that will "make" its fruit. The meaning then is, apparently, *another* nation. That nation, however, may be "other" through renewal and through the gift of new institutions. This *logion* may well find its echo in Acts 1:6 in which the disciples' question contemplates the restitution of the kingdom (the kingdom of God, according to v. 3) to Israel. (The structure may be compared with that of Matt 23:38f, with a time of desolation followed by the glad welcome, at last, of the Coming One.) The massive witness of the New Testament, meanwhile, as well as the plain sense of Romans 11, is that the Church is the end-time remnant upon which the Spirit is poured out according to prophecy, the seed of Abraham who inherit the promises, the true circumcision, the colony of Isaiah's Jerusalem, the people that can bear the Covenant titles of Exodus 19 and 1 Peter 2:9. This remnant is made up of believing Jews and their adopted brothers and sisters from the nations. Israel neither displaced nor replaced, but enlarged!

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Mary) suggests, though rather vaguely, there are two "paths" that will ultimately converge (p. 566).



But what about those who are commonly called "Jews?" This special use of the name occurs in Scripture. First Corinthians 10:32 is a case in point; "Jews" in the fourth gospel may also be mentioned, in a subtle antithesis with "Israelite" (1:47) that gives the mistaken impression of "anti-Semitism."<sup>181</sup> As the Willowbank Declaration reminds its readers, they are broken off from the tree. This is the truth the "new theology" wishes *not* to see. Consequently it misses a key feature of Paul's treatment, i.e. the paradoxical character of the status of Jews that refuse to believe in Jesus the Lord. They are *both* "enemies" and "beloved" (Rom 11:28). The permanence of the gifts and calling of God – words that develop the clause "according to election" – implies a distinctive status, but there is nowhere any suggestion that it would be enough to avert the "wrath to come." If the Church, through centuries, incurred the guilt of forgetting that Jews are "beloved," this is no justification for a symmetrical lapse of memory. Non-Christian (non-Messianic) Jews are indeed branches, but broken off from the olive tree, that is the "Israel of God."

What does the distinctive status, "because of the fathers," *positively* entail? Negatively, it does not provide another way of salvation, apart from faith in Jesus Christ, but it involves the advantages that go with being a "Jew outwardly" (Rom 2:28). The apostle stresses the trust of God's oracles (Rom 3:2), the legal titles, institutions and connections "according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3-5), but it appears that these advantages, far from amounting to a safe-conduct and to an automatic guarantee of *shalom*, bring about a heavier judgment on disobedience (Rom 2:12; cf. Amos 3:2).

Are we to say that the First Covenant itself is still in force for Jews? The answer may not be so simple. Scripture stresses the qualification "old," and comments that Jeremiah's prophecy implied that the "ageing" Mosaic Covenant was then "soon to disappear" (Heb 8:13; cf. 2 Cor 3:14). Galatians 3:19,23ff gives the Law the role of a temporary arrangement. The new era is so new that the previous order is brought to an end (with *athetèsis*, annulment, in Heb 7:18, and *telos*, often). At the same time, this is no mere nullification, for what is new is the goal (*telos*) and *fulfilment* of the old, the substance that was foreshadowed (Col 2:17), the realisation of the Abrahamic promise (Gal 3, etc.). From this perspective, the New Covenant *is* the Old Covenant renewed, reformed (Heb 9:10), fulfilled – just as the maintenance of the Levitical priesthood, as promised in Jeremiah 33:18, is ensured, in spite of the changes affirmed in Hebrews 7:11-18, through the fulfilling priesthood of Christ (Heb 9-10 shows that Christ's sacrifice fulfilled all *Levitical* types). This "continuation" of the Old Covenant

<sup>181</sup> This insight (which I had first received in an article by J. Ramsey Michaels) is put forward in the vigorous treatment offered by Peter Stravinskias, "Anti-Semitism and the Christian Bible: Interpretation and Misinterpretation," *Origins* 30/33 (1 Feb., 2001) 536. He can write: "Far from being anti-Semitic John's Gospel is arguably the most Jewish of the four."

pertains to believing (Christian) Jews and gentiles. It is possible to add that the Old Covenant does not cease to apply in the case of unbelieving Jews inasmuch as the *sanctions* fall on covenant-breakers (again, Rom 2:12), just as the sanctions of the creation covenant still apply. All men die *in Adam*. From that angle, the divine calling is shown to be irrevocable in the judgment of the "enemies" as disobedient.

The "Jews' distinctive status" may involve two other elements, definitely positive, but these are controversial among Evangelicals. The Willowbank Declaration avoids making any commitment here. In the tradition of Pietism, one may hope for a *very large movement of conversion* to Jesus among Jews, probably towards the end of the present Church-age, somehow symmetrical of the majority rejection (Rom 11:15) at the beginning of that age. Willowbank article III,16 only affirms that "the Bible promises that large numbers of Jews will turn to Christ through God's sovereign grace." Paul's logic in Romans 11, with its suggestions of symmetry and chronological sequence (v. 25, partial and temporary hardening *until* the fullness of Gentiles have entered, presumably during the "times of the nations," Luke 21:24), and some hints elsewhere, do warrant, in my estimate, this enthralling prospect. The second element relates to *the land*. Does Scripture promise that Jews will go back from their dispersion and again inhabit their ancestors' territory, with or without a valid legal claim to its possession, by virtue of the Abrahamic covenant? Willowbank article V,27 only supports "the Jewish quest for a homeland with secure borders and a just peace" and affirms ethical norms. Biblically, a very strong case can be made for the view that the New Testament interprets the covenant promise of land either in spiritual or in universal terms (Rom 4:13; Heb 11:10,16). Paul Williamson has recently shown that this interpretation is congruent with the *Old Testament* data.<sup>182</sup> Most prophecies of return refer to the Babylonian exile and their application to events 24-25 centuries later seems too artificial and arbitrary for acceptance. However, I would not rule out possible indications in the last chapters of Zechariah. And, especially, Luke 21:24 does seem to imply that Jerusalem will remain under gentile control as long as the "times of the nations" will last and *then* come back under Jewish authority. In a conversation with Edmund P. Clowney (the former president of Westminster Theological Seminary), I was comforted by his agreement on this point. Was not this implication made *history* in 1967? If this is so, the times of the nations are drawing to a close and the great spiritual revival among Israelites is near at hand.

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<sup>182</sup>"Abraham, Israel and the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly* 72/2 (2000), 99-118.

## The Mystery of Jewishness

"A Jew for Jesus is no more a Jew than a Catholic who denies Christ is a Christian," says Rabbi Stephen Fuchs.<sup>183</sup> The Willowbank Declaration firmly replies that Jewish identity and membership in the Church are consistent with each other (II,9), that "Jewish people who come to faith in Messiah have liberty before God to observe or not observe traditional Jewish customs and ceremonies," and, therefore, it denies that "any inconsistency or deception is involved by Jewish Christians representing themselves as *Messianic* or *completed* or *fulfilled* Jews" (II,11). "Conversion" does not ring the same in Christian and in Jewish ears. Moishe Rosen explains: " ... since proselytes to Judaism are required to forsake their families in order to become part of a new people, Jews might infer that one who converts to Christianity must also abandon and renounce the Jewish people"<sup>184</sup>; on the contrary, conversion to Jesus is nothing else than biblical repentance.

The stance of the Willowbank Declaration must be maintained on grounds both existential and practical – the experience of many, since New Testament times<sup>185</sup> – and theological, in accordance with the olive tree symbol. Yet one can sympathize to a degree with the rabbi's anger and resentment and the issue draws our attention to the *oddity*, indeed the *uniqueness*, of Jewish identity.

For all peoples, the relationship between essential culture and religion is less easy to solve than it may be for modern Christian eyes (precisely, religion was first freed from national and cultural shackles through Christian influence and, then, by post-Christian secularization). In the Jewish case, however, it borders on mystery. The word Jew means both a member of an ethnic group (though of a unique kind), of a people and kin (*'am*),<sup>186</sup> and an adherent of a specific religion, Judaism. Jacob Neusner expresses well what makes the situation unique :

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<sup>183</sup> Quoted in the *Mishpochah Message* earlier mentioned, 8.

<sup>184</sup> "Christian Conversion and Jewish Culture," a paper presented at the Consultation on Conversion, Hong Kong, January 1988, 11.

<sup>185</sup> Marvin R. Wilson, *op. cit.*, 29, offers a good summary of the evidence: "Paul adhered personally to such Jewish practices ... remained a faithful Jew ... Likewise, Paul seems to have no objection in his writings to Jewish Christians continuing to keep various ceremonies of the Law, since this was a way of demonstrating their solidarity with their kinsmen in the Jewish community at large. It is likely that Paul allowed his Jewish hearers and the recipients of his letters to decide for themselves" (as to circumcision, etc.).

<sup>186</sup> I sense some ambiguity in the use of the English word "people" at Willowbank, since it may mean the whole group as an organic entity or an indefinite number of individual members.

*It was a family, but not a family like other families, related by nature. It was a nation, but not a nation like France or America or the State of Israel. It was a "holy people," the like of which no one ever knew.*<sup>187</sup>

Millions of Jews in the ethnic sense have no share in the Judaic *faith*, and Neusner, who pictures Judaism as parallel to a church, seems to exclude them,<sup>188</sup> and yet ... Jewish identity does possess a family and genealogical dimension,<sup>189</sup> while it is not *racial*. The interference of Jewish proselytism drawing many converts from the gentiles precludes a racial definition, especially if Arthur Koestler's thesis is right, that a large percentage of modern Jews are descended from the Khazars whose kingdom collectively embraced Judaism c. 740 AD<sup>190</sup> George Steiner, who received no "formal" religious education in his early years and does not know Hebrew (quite ashamed), does not refer basically to "faith." "My parents," he says, "gave me time and history as my religious identity. I am a Jew even in my deepest ties, but through history, through the suffering and destiny of my people. It would be inconceivable for me not to be a Jew."<sup>191</sup> He can state: "I know of no Jew who converted to Christianity."<sup>192</sup> Jewishness as a concrete phenomenon in modern society is thus the product of a long history in which rabbinic religion played an important part, without eclipsing the other components; of course, conflict – too often bloody – with so-called Christianity also played a part.

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<sup>187</sup> "Being Israel: Religion and Ethnicity in Judaism," in *The Religion Factor. An Introduction to How Religion Matters*, ed. by William Scott Green & Jacob Neusner (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 34. On p. 32, Neusner uses "Judaist" for a practitioner of the Judaic religion.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 36: "'Israel' is a supernatural category, for Israel consists of all those who are born in Israel, except for those who deny the principles of the faith." In support, Neusner quotes from *Sanhedrin* 10.1, excluding from Israel those "Epicureans" who deny the resurrection and the heavenly origin of the Torah; the converse is the full equality of the proselyte, whose daughter may marry a priest according to *Genesis Rabbah* 70.5 (p. 38).

<sup>189</sup> Jakob Jocz, "Difficulties in Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in *The Messiahship of Jesus*, *op. cit.*, p.90, chides Rosenzweig for giving "a purely ethnic interpretation. He makes blood relationship the guarantee of Israel's election. To be born a Jew means, for him, to be already a son of God." This is not new, "for the medieval poet Judah Halevi in his *Kuzari* had already interpreted Jewish election in purely racial terms."

<sup>190</sup> In *The Thirteenth Tribe* (London, 1976) as quoted and followed by Jonathan Jack, "L'Etat moderne d'Israël – fruit de la prophétie biblique" (M. Div. dissertation, presented to the Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée, Aix-en-Provence, 1982), 56ff. Thus 10.5 million Ashkenazim would be, in that view, to a large extent Khazars "genetically."

<sup>191</sup> *Entretiens*, with and ed. by Ramin Jahanbegloo (10/18, Paris: Ed. du Félin, 2000), 61. He insists, p. 62, on Israel's unique permanence through 3,000 years and adds: "Judaism is a clan from which one cannot resign. A mixed marriage is one step towards abolishing the mystery of survival."

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

The thorny question of the continuity between Moses, Isaiah, and the Rabbis (bound, of course, with that of the covenants) plays a great role. Many can speak as if continuity was assumed. Ratzinger himself can say of Judaism today that "it is not another religion to us, but is the foundation of our own faith," and applies the metaphor of daughter and mother to Christianity and that religion.<sup>193</sup> Yet Judaism, which shaped the Jewishness of medieval and modern Jews, is *not* the same religion as Abraham's, Moses', David's, as seen through Christian eyes (Willowbank art. III,14). Rather, as Alan Segal has well perceived, Judaism and Christianity are rival siblings, like Jacob and Esau, born of the same mother at the same time, each with some kind of universalistic intent.<sup>194</sup>

Jewish identity is thus tied *both* to the "distinctive status" of election, covenant, and revelation, *and* to subsequent chains of events, with their lasting effects or traces. From the standpoint of evangelical theology, the history is unique because election is unique. Analytically, it is complex because it is founded on the prior gift of God, which cannot be cancelled, *and* shaped by the settled misapprehension of that gift – hence the claim of messianic Jews to *true* Jewishness, albeit outside Judaism.<sup>195</sup> The Mosaic covenant was in fact part of a package that pointed toward a higher reality. In that sense it was only external or "fleshly" (in the sense of Heb 7:16 and 9:10,13). To continue and sustain that covenant without understanding its typological character brings about a strange mix of external elements and biblical spirituality.

Deeper, I propose that the mystery of Israel's election is that of a representative humankind. It is significant that, in a way, what can be said of God's relationship with Israel also applies to his relationship with all – except the order, "to the Jew first" (and "last," when the "fullness" will receive mercy). Judgement and grace, being shut up in disobedience and granted mercy by God, election and reprobation, being the family "of whom is Christ, as to human nature (*to kata sarka*), he who is God over all, forever blessed." Of every man, one should say that he is "fulfilled" when he is "converted" to Jesus. Jewishness is the mirror of humanity, and it probably had to be so, in God's

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<sup>193</sup> *Op. cit.*, 566 and then 565.

<sup>194</sup> *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World*, as summarised (and followed) by Harvey G. Cox, *Many Mansions. A Christian's Encounter with Other Faiths* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 105.

<sup>195</sup> Mitch Glaser, *op. cit.*, p.6, is quite outspoken. After quoting from Heb. 13:12f, he writes: "Jesus was not, as contemporary Jewish historian Joseph Klausner said, a reformer. The Jesus who said not to pour new wine into old wineskins lest they burst was not a reformer trying to improve Judaism from within"; "stepping outside of the Jewish religion is not the same as ceasing to be a Jew. If you believe it is, you have accepted the rabbis' definition of what it means to be a Jew. Jesus never did!"; we witness from the outside and appeal to people to come outside, to take up their cross and follow Y'shua."

wisdom, if the Son of God was to become truly man, born into a particular family and nation. Maybe Kafka has a presentiment of that mystery of Jewishness when he says : "He who smites a Jew knocks down humanity on the ground."<sup>196</sup>

### After Auschwitz

The Willowbank Declaration briefly alludes to the *Shoa* in its preamble (cf. art. III,17), essentially to deny that it renders evangelization impossible. (I use *Shoa* since I know that many Jews object to the word "holocaust," still frequently found in English. Holocaust is right etymologically, of course, but it suggests an offering made *to God!* The Nazis sacrificed to the devil.) A wider issue, however, cannot be by-passed, that of "theology after Auschwitz." Fear could inhibit us from casting a glance into the abysses of wickedness, on this most horrifying of topics. "Almost everything any Christian has said on this subject," warns H. Cox, "sounds sour and wrong."<sup>197</sup> Yet the dominant discourse about it shows such stereotyped traits, such a taboo-rigidity, such dangers of manipulative exploitation, that there is a duty of reflection. It is a symptom of our time that amidst the sea of post-modern relativism, the *Shoa* plays the role of the Absolute, the only Absolute left, a negative Absolute.

The responsibility of Christians in the tragedy is a very complex issue. Any attempt at exculpation will be frowned upon as spiritually suspect, as the sign of a hardened conscience and self-righteous strategy; but the automatic acceptance of guilt (for the sins of other generations only!) may lack authenticity, and, simply, rightness. The first problem relates to the principle of collective indictment (in general) and its application to different generations as a heritage of guilt. The second one, even more difficult to solve, regards the extent and definition of Christianity: who or what should *count* as "Christian"? In my own circle of Christianity, I have known Corrie ten Boom. During World War II, my family were refugees in a village not so far from the Chambon-sur-Lignon, and my own mother put her life at risk as she repeatedly brought food to Jews hidden in the Aven d'Ornac and guided some of them to Marseilles. This is *my* memory of "Christian" attitudes. Then there is the question of the "ideological" relationship between either traditional or New Testament Christian doctrine (not always the same), the "Teaching of contempt" through many centuries, and the madly murderous program of the Nazis.<sup>198</sup> If

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<sup>196</sup> Quoted in Steiner, *op. cit.*, 66. Cf. Jean Brun, *Vérité et christianisme* (Troyes: Librairie Bleue, 1995) 104: "In Israel we should all find our own images; men relentlessly harass them because they fear they will recognise in them their own faces."

<sup>197</sup> *Op. cit.*, 109.

<sup>198</sup> Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, 565, writes: "Even if the most recent, loathsome experience of the Shoah was perpetrated in the name of an anti-Christian ideology that tried to strike the Christian faith at its Abrahamic roots in the people of Israel, it cannot be denied that a

consequences were drawn illegitimately through misunderstanding and abuse, is the doctrine still responsible for them? Tradition itself, though unfavorably one-sided, is of a mixed character.<sup>199</sup> Another consideration is the old ethical dilemma between "realistic compromise" and prophetic-heroic stances: as information came to church authorities, they had to take a course of action; this dilemma may not be ignored.

Jewish thinkers disagree among themselves regarding the uniqueness of the *Shoa*, as compared with other genocidal crimes. George Steiner confesses: "I do not share my friend Elie Wiesel's position ... for whom the death of a Jew is unlike other acts of violence, including Pol Pot's who used to bury millions of people alive or those which lead to generalised massacres. The Shoah, for me, is still located on the gamut of horrors and inhumanity..."<sup>200</sup> The *Shoa* was exceptional in its scale, but not unique among genocides. And do numbers really change the category? When a single child is raped and tortured and killed – an ordinary crime in the daily news – is the extreme, unthinkable, atrocious not already reached, beyond all comparison? The continuity of the *Shoa* with a tradition of hardships can also be paralleled, e.g. in Armenian history. The administrative and technical perfection of barbarity was probably unprecedented, but it tells more about German genius than it does of the evilness of what was done. Nothing appears to approach, however, the *Shoa's* ideological justification nor the motives behind it, especially if one discerns the furious attack on *divine election*, of which the "broken branches" still bear the marks.<sup>201</sup> The uniqueness of the *Shoa* is derived from the mystery of Jewishness, and, if that mystery is the mystery of representative humanity, the Nazis' methodical de-humanization of their victims was all the more significant.

Theologically, two developments of the *Shoa* theme would lead us astray. The first one answers to the older idea that the misfortunes of the Jews evidence the curse under which they lie because of the cross, and constitute the punishment of their fathers' sin. There seems to be little warrant in Scripture for

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certain insufficient resistance to this atrocity on the part of Christians can be explained by an inherited anti-Judaism present in the heart of not a few Christians."

<sup>199</sup> Stravinskias, *op. cit.*, 531, recalls St. Bernard's words, as reported by a Jewish witness, when he preached the Crusade: "March toward Zion, defend the tomb of Christ. But touch not ye the Jews; speak to them with mildness: For they are the flesh and bones of the Messiah; and if you molest them, you will run the risk of touching the very apple of the Lord's eye!" The charge of deicide was *not* "generally taught" for 1800 years, and the Holocaust did not take place when the church wielded all political power (pp. 534f.). Let us also remember the philo-Judaic spirit of Pietism.

<sup>200</sup> *Op. cit.*, 66.

<sup>201</sup> A. Blancy, *op. cit.*, 64, observes that the Nazis could not tolerate another elect people than theirs. G. Steiner, *op. cit.*, 67, expresses it in his own way: "The Shoah is the ultimate vengeance against those who created God," that is, imposed the yoke of absolute ethics upon humankind.

this construction: Jews who do not believe in Jesus stand under the condemnation and curse of the Law, just as all other men do, but their sufferings in history, the *Shoa* not excluded, have no more (and no less) retributive meaning than that of other peoples. The New Testament passages that establish a correlation between the sin of rejecting Jesus and a bloody national disaster have the war of A.D. 66-73 and the ruin of the Second Temple in view (see Matt 22:7, Luke 19:44 and 23:27-31, and 1 Thes 2:14-16) . These events carry major theological weight in Scripture, as the final stage of the closing of the older economy (a closing that took 40 years), and the words were then fulfilled. If they also typically foreshadow other events, these are not found in the *Shoa* but at the end of the *world*, as Matthew 24:3 suggests and as the representative role of Israel entails.

The second attempt at a theological interpretation related to Auschwitz is no more satisfactory. Taking their cue from the comment made by a witness at the sight of a boy hanged and tortured by the S.S. – Where is God now? He is there, the one tortured – Jürgen Moltmann and many others claim that no other theology can avail but a theology of *The Crucified God*. The meaning is *not* that Jesus was the pre-existent son of God who came, and became a man, to suffer in our stead the punishment human sin deserved, and thus cancelled the cause of human suffering. Rather suffering is posited of deity as such, which can no longer be considered as independent from the world; the concepts are reversed, God is characterized by weakness, impotence, vulnerability, which are considered to be the true marks of love. Such a God alone escapes the charge that theodicy cannot silence (How can an Almighty God... But he is not Almighty, he is love). Such a God draws to himself the moderns who no longer believe in the “magical” interference of a Super-Power but feel comforted by the sympathy of a Personal Presence that pervades the universe. This theology explicitly converges with strands of Jewish mysticism, speculations about the humiliated *Šekînâ* (often tied to Isa 63:9 read in the form “in all their distress the distress was *for him*, and the angel of his face saved them”<sup>202</sup>), and especially Isaac Luria’s doctrine of *çimçum*, the divine contraction or withdrawal required if creatures were to *be*. Alain Blancy calls for a radical form of this post-Auschwitz and *çimçum* theology: “This withdrawal of God could only be accepted if it continued with the even more secret idea of a disarticulation of God himself, exploded in sparks scattered throughout his creation and who waits for his creatures to re-compose him.”<sup>203</sup> This theological orientation does

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<sup>202</sup> This implies reading the negation *lô’* as the preposition *lô*, to him (Qerê), and the next word *çâr*, distress or enemy. With the ancient versions (LXX, Old Latin) and the *Biblia hebraica*, both of Kittel and of Stuttgart, together with the *Bible de Jérusalem* and the *New English Bible*, I deem preferable to keep the negation and to read *çir*, messenger: In all their distress it was not a messenger or an angel, his face (he himself) saved them.

<sup>203</sup> *Op. cit.*, 77.



not find the slightest support in Scripture, which never renounces the proclamation of God's – and Christ's – power (also exercised in punishment). It confuses the precise and concrete humiliation of the Son, for atonement and as a legal transaction, with a reversal of *concepts*. In the *çimçum* scheme, it shows its secret fallacy: the rivalry between God and man, for God must be less than man may be more – whereas in truth "in him we move, we live, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). In Blancy's version (in the spirit of *Kabala*) man gains the upper hand.<sup>204</sup> Yet all along this discourse draws its seductive power, with the glitter of paradox, from the opposite connotations of deity: if God was not first thought of as powerful, there would be nothing interesting, apparently intelligent and comforting in the affirmation of his weakness.<sup>205</sup>

Inasmuch as the *Shoa* is unique, I will interpret it as a terrible sign of Israel's election, jointly with Israel's unique survival, and therefore of the God who elected Israel. He is the living God, whose ways are past finding out and who will infallibly accomplish his purposes in history. George Steiner quotes the verse "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31), and adds: "I begin to understand that it is more terrible still to fall into the hands of a dead God."<sup>206</sup> Can he perceive it? The sign of *Shoa* and survival testifies to the living God.

### Beyond the Verse

The fourth issue, with which I shall deal briefly, is not made explicit anywhere in the Willowbank Declaration. Nevertheless, it lies just under the surface everywhere. The Declaration's whole biblical tenor presupposes a determinate use of the texts, the search for their one objective meaning through philological-historical means. Rabbinic Judaism follows another course and Jewish thinkers today argue for another approach. Levinas' title *Beyond the Verse* (1982) is significant: Marc-Alain Ouaknin, the rabbi-philosopher, connects it with

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<sup>204</sup> The doctrine of *çimçum* is, of course, much more subtle than our brief reference can suggest. Charles Mopsik's interpretation, in "La Pensée d'Emmanuel Lévinas et la cabale," *Cahier de l'Herne: Emmanuel Lévinas*, ed. by Catherine Chalier & Miguel Abensour (Livre de poche biblio essais 4173; Paris: l'Herne, 1991), 432, is worth quoting: "Man's status, in Iurianic doctrine, is not that of a separate creature. One could almost say that he is more the cause of his creation than its effect. Man is the means by which the Infinite fulfils his own constitution as God. The Infinite is made God by the act of man."

<sup>205</sup> Karl Rahner, *Le Courage du théologien*. Dialogues publiés par Paul Imhof et Hubert Biallowons, transl. by Jean-Pierre Bagot (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 127f., criticises sharply Moltmann for a theology of the death of God which shows a "gnostic" tendency and can bring no true comfort. The German original is entitled *Karl Rahner im Gespräch* (Munich: Kösel, 1983).

<sup>206</sup> *Op. cit.*, 64. He goes on: "This is one of the definitions I give of Judaism."

traditional comments on the form of the letter *lâmèd*, which teaches that learning is going beyond what is written.<sup>207</sup>

As Ouaknin brilliantly expounds it,<sup>208</sup> the way in which Jews handle the sacred text contrasts with that of the Willowbank Declaration (in the wake of the Protestant Reformation), while at the same time converging with the so-called "postmodern" reading. The Talmud, first, imposes its massive presence: "One must insist on this point: Judaism this 'biblical' religion—does not hold one book only as its canon. For besides the *Tanakh* ... another book: the Talmud"<sup>209</sup>; and even "the Book is to be sought for in the Talmud rather than in the Bible."<sup>210</sup> Each verse or each phrase may be interpreted in dozens of ways, and the only criterion is fecundity, not rightness as if there were one meaning only.<sup>211</sup> That the Ark was ready to travel (Exod 25:15) teaches us that "a given sense is at once non-sense."<sup>212</sup> The various interpretations are produced through all kinds of procedures, including the breaking of words into component parts, permutations, search for numerical values, speculations on the forms of letters...<sup>213</sup> Contradiction is delicious: Levinas is happy to interpret *lé'môr* in two ways: "to say" and "not to say" (changing it to *lô' émôr*).<sup>214</sup> Of one of the most prestigious teachers, it may be said: "Rabbi [Judah the Prince, 125-217] encounters the Book, paradoxically, in its form and not in the sense."<sup>215</sup> "Actually, what is understood is not the text, but it is the reader. He understands *himself*."<sup>216</sup> A passage of the *Midraš Tanhuma*, as given by Rashi, illustrates both the method and the theological import of the process. Since Deuteronomy 4:14 can be read "for your making you," Rabbi Yohanan concluded that, through obedience to the Torah, "man makes and creates

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<sup>207</sup> *Le Livre brûlé. Philosophie du Talmud* (coll. Points Sa52; Paris: Seuil/Lieu commun, 1993<sup>REV</sup>) 106, 225 and 214. The name *lâmèd* is from the root meaning "to teach" and "to learn" and the letter is the only one in the alphabet which is drawn with a part *above* the line of writing.

<sup>208</sup> The title of his work (n. 38), "The Burnt Book," is a reference to Rabbi Nahman of Braslav (1772-1811) and what he did in 1808.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 and 38, quoting Levinas (*Au-delà du verset*): Levinas' Master had said he could give 120 interpretations of the same phrase. Cf. Levinas' emphasis on numberless meanings in "Les Cordes et le bois. Sur la lecture juive de la Bible," first published in *Axes* (May-June 1972), in *Hors sujet, op. cit.*, 177f.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* (Ouaknin), 221.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-126.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38 and n.62 on p.47. I remember hearing a rabbi explaining that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill," *lô' tirçah*, could also be interpreted "No, thou shalt kill," *lô'* (but) *tirçah*.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, cf. 122.

himself."<sup>217</sup> Levinas praises the subjectivity of such an interpretation, since truth is revealed in a unique way to each person,<sup>218</sup> and he also points to the main safeguard against wanton subjectivism: "obligatory resort to the oral Law, especially under the form in which it was fixed by the Talmud."<sup>219</sup>

The boundaries of tradition may protect individuals from unlimited vagaries but it is clear that the traditional community itself can no longer receive correction and re-direction from the sacred text—the text is deprived of its authority as Jesus showed in Matthew 15:3,6. The procedures brought into play (the right term!) reveal that the Bible has become an *object* for unceasing feats of human ingenuity, a pretext for human creativity, and does not function as the *Word*. Rabbi Ishmael and his school tried to resist that tendency and to maintain *one* meaning, at least for *halaka*, with the perceptive argument that "Torah speaks in the language of man," but Rabbi Akiva's opposite trend won the day.<sup>220</sup> "Fecundity" is a deceptive claim, for the meaning is not, according to that type of hermeneutics, *of* the Text; oneness of meaning being the cutting edge of the *sword of the Spirit*, multiplicity of meanings results in the radical blunting of the Word. Ouaknin openly states that the aim is to silence the discourse (of the Bible), to "erase [its] mastery."<sup>221</sup>

What is left of *truth*? Despite all memories associated with this famous and infamous name, Ouaknin can quote and approve Nietzsche's confession of unfaith: "...there are all kinds of truths and, therefore, there is no truth."<sup>222</sup> If paradox dislocates truth, muffles the Word, burns the Book, how is due honor rendered to him who gave the Book, spoke the Word and is, himself, Truth? Ouaknin agrees with H. Atlan: "The only discourse on God that escapes idolatry is an atheistic discourse. Or, in every discourse, the only God that is not an idol is a God that is not a God."<sup>223</sup> This brings to mind a disturbing feature one meets in the writings of major Jewish thinkers, a divine exile or a reversal of

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 142 (with n. 47 on p. 153). The text reads normally, also in the massoretic pointing, *la'assôtkêm 'ôtâm*, for your making (of) them, i.e. the Lord's commandments, but R. Yohanan wishes to read *la'assôtkêm 'attêm* (which would be totally irregular for the idea of making oneself).

<sup>218</sup> Annette Aronowicz, "Les Commentaires talmudiques de Lévinas," in *Cahier de l'Herne Lévinas*, *op. cit.*, 414.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>220</sup> K.P. Bland, "Interpretation, History of / Early Rabbinic," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume*, ed. by Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976) 447b, and Ouaknin, *op. cit.*, pp.116ff.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16, speaking also of "deconstruction<sub>112</sub>" He reaches the following paradox: "The Book is Book when it is no longer Book" (p.226).

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.137. Cf. n.7 on p.223: "Since it is impossible for truth to find a place or locus it must go out of place, out of all places, and be destroyed as an utterance in language, which is the first (originary) locus of its truth."

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

roles. Martin Buber, in his 1917 letter to Franz Werfel, could thus define his teaching: "What counts is not whether God has chosen me but that I choose God. For it is really not God's affair to choose or reject."<sup>224</sup> Jacob Neusner reports on a significant tradition:

*"God himself, studying and living by Torah, is believed to subject himself to the same rules of logical inquiry [as rabbis]. When an earthly court overruled the testimony, delivered through miracles, of the heavenly one, God rejoiced, crying out, "My sons have conquered me!" – so the sages believed.*<sup>225</sup>

We already encountered a similar reversal among post-Auschwitz reflections: "Poetry after the *Shoa* also takes up this theme," Alain Blancy writes with reference to Paul Celan, "as it proposes to God to start, at last, praying to man that man may have pity on him."<sup>226</sup> For Levinas himself, God is "transcendent to the point of absence," he "is extracted from the objectivity of presence and from being. He is no longer object or interlocutor in a dialogue. His withdrawal or his transcendence is turned into my responsibility: the ultimate non-erotic."<sup>227</sup>

The deep rift between such Jewish thought and Christian theology as expressed in the Willowbank Declaration may be traced back to monotheistic zeal in Judaism, the intention of glorifying transcendence, and, even more, to ethical passion, a "philosophical" translation of love for the Torah. The question is, has not the Torah, together with the correlative human responsibility (free-will), eclipsed the giver of the Torah – and just as sadly, has not this handling of the Book forgotten the Redeemer, and drained the Living One of his life?

It is time to remember that there is nothing more terrible than to fall into the hands of a *dead* God.

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<sup>224</sup> As quoted by Harvey Cox, *op. cit.*, 114. 113

<sup>225</sup> in b. Baba Metzia 5b.

<sup>226</sup> *Op. cit.*, 77.

<sup>227</sup> "Un Dieu transcendant jusqu'à l'absence," a 21 May 1976 lecture, in *Dieu, la mort et le temps*, ed. by Jacques Rolland (Livre de poche biblio essais 4205; Paris: Grasset, 1993), 258.

# Paul van Buren – A Single-Covenant Theologian

Krista Rosenlund Larsen Bellows

Since the mid-1970s the American Episcopalian theologian Paul van Buren has combined a single-covenant theology with an outspoken pro-Israel point of view. Originally a student of Barth and later a well-known spokesman for the secular theology of the 1960s, his turn to Jewish-Christian relationships in the mid-1970s made him and his thinking influential in several contexts. This article describes the roots and basic structures of van Buren's understanding of Israel and the church, as well as the relationship between them, as they were developed in van Buren's three volumes of systematic theology written the 1980s.<sup>228</sup> I introduce a number of problems in van Buren's theological construct, e.g., his Christology and the implications of his thinking for a theology of religions.<sup>229</sup>

The theological journey of Paul van Buren (1924-1998) had some turning points during his career. There are, however, basic elements of continuity. He studied under Professor Karl Barth from 1951 to 1954 and did his doctoral work on the Christology of Calvin. It was later published as *Christ in our Place: The Substitutionary Character of Calvin's Doctrine of Reconciliation*. While serving as an Associate Professor at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas, he became a controversial person as a result of his 1963 book, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*.

The book was influenced by Bonhoeffer and Wittgenstein and gave a new perception of Christian theology based on the reality of secularization with the

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<sup>228</sup> The volumes were: *Discerning the Way: A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality* (New York: The Seabury Press) (van Buren 80), *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality. Part II: A Christian Theology of the People Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row) (van Buren 83) and *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality. Part III: Christ in Context* San Francisco: Harper & Row (van Buren 88). In the 1990s van Buren modified his strict single-covenant view and moved towards a double-covenant understanding of Israel and the church.

<sup>229</sup> This article is based on my Ph.D. dissertation: Paul van Buren's Christology and Theology of Israel. University of Copenhagen, October 2000.

aid of radical criticism of theological language. The book was widely read and van Buren's name became related to the so-called *death-of-God* theology.

From 1964 and until the mid-1970s he worked in the field of analytic philosophy of religion at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He gradually became critical of this field, finding it unable to solve the problems of the 1970s. The administrative task of department chair at Temple then became a theological turning point as van Buren was made aware of the Jewish people and Judaism through tasks related to new appointments at the department.

*The Burden of Freedom: Americans and the God of Israel*, written in 1976, reflects this new interest in systematic theology based on his discovery of the Jewish reality. It served as a prelude to his three-volume systematic theology published in 1980, 1983 and 1988. His initial plan for a fourth volume on the issue of Theology of Religions was dropped some time in the 1980s.

His engagement in ecumenical work included membership in the WCC's Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People, and in the Anglican-Jewish Consultation as well as the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue at the Kennedy Institute in Washington, D.C. Further, van Buren was involved with the Shalom Hartman Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies in Jerusalem. In 1985 he became director of the Center for Contemporary Theology at the Hartman Institute. He died in June 1998.

### Theological Profile

Van Buren's interest in Israel and the Jewish-Christian dialogue led him back to systematic theology. Thus, there is a shift in theological issues in van Buren's theological career around 1975 but at the same time, there is a continued basic philosophical assumption in his theology: the analytic philosophy of language, inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Van Buren's theology of the Jewish-Christian reality can be seen as his attempt to protect theology's transcendental character against the theological pitfalls of modernism—the pitfalls that he now seeks to avoid. He seeks to do so by reinterpreting in historical-functional terms key concepts of Jewish and Christian theology: God, covenant. Therefore, to van Buren the worldliness and historical contemporary character of the people and state of Israel was a gift and help to his theological intentions. He finds Christology unable to carry out this task, whereas Israel—the people and state—is historical and of this world. The covenant terminology becomes van Buren's key to understanding the relationship between God and the Creation. His thinking bears some resemblance to process theology<sup>230</sup>.

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<sup>230</sup> Process theology, in its many forms, is inspired by the pantheistic philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and sees God as possibly personal but not absolute.

Van Buren's profile within the Jewish-Christian field is that of a single-covenant theologian. He rejects the theologies of the Jewish people conditioned by Christology and he favors a Judaism-inspired and Israel-conditioned Christology.

### **Van Buren's Understanding of God**

Van Buren's dealings with the concept of God form one continuing focus during his theological career. His assumptions can be found in the following quote: "If we are to speak of ourselves as being responsible for history, then we shall have to find a way to speak of God that corresponds" (van Buren 80:99).

The basic structure in van Buren's concept of God is God's limited freedom and power and the responsibility of humans for history and redemption. Van Buren understands the Holocaust to have revealed this. In the Holocaust God was present and suffered with the victims, but he did not intervene to prevent the murders.

### **Van Buren's Reinterpretation of Trinitarian Theology**

Jesus' unique connection with the Father is that historically he was the one who provided entry for gentiles into God's Way towards redemption. However, to van Buren, Israel—and not Christ—must remain the necessary contemporary center of the church's focus.

Van Buren assumes continuity within the covenantal terms for Jesus' Trinitarian relationship with God. Christ related to Israel's God in the same ways as do other Jews—within covenantal terms: based on the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants.

Van Buren's problem then is this: On the one hand he cannot claim anything else except continuity of the Christ event with the covenant in order to remain "covenantal." On the other hand he needs to address the interests of the specific notion of the Trinity as something new and beyond covenantal continuity. His

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Rather, he—or it—is changing. Process theology does not uphold a distinction between the Creator and creation, but the world is seen as the body of God.

Van Buren sees process theology's preoccupation with the relational element of the God-creation relationship as something related to his own thinking. To van Buren God is in one sense immanent in his creation. While van Buren himself would not speak of pantheism he admits that there is something partly true about the process theological concern with the relational element in the relationship between Creator and creation (interview, 12 August 1997).

Van Buren's alternative to process theology regarding the relationality between God and creation is to be found within the conceptual context of covenant. In the people, land, and state of Israel van Buren has found an epistemological key for speaking about God within the premises of historical creation. The covenant forms part of this key.

attempt to do both creates some problems. If Christ was nothing special, why then should the gentile church confess him as such? Why not regard Israel instead of Christ as part of the Trinitarian relationship? The uniqueness of Christ that makes the designation Son of God legitimate to van Buren does not stem from any unique connection with the God of Israel, but from the novelty of God's action towards the gentiles. But considering the fact that present Israel forms the present embodiment of sonship, of the same sort as Christ's sonship, the question remains valid: why not include Israel rather than Jesus in his understanding of the Triune God? (e.g., van Buren 88:75).

I find that these difficulties in van Buren's attempt to reinterpret the Trinitarian dogma stem from his understanding of Israel. The exchange of Christ with Israel also affects the conditions for a reinterpretation of the Trinity.

Paul van Buren's understanding of the Trinity thus raises the question of whether he – unintentionally – implies a historical-functional reinterpretation of the Trinity as consisting of the God of Israel, the Israel of God, and their covenant. Regarding his presentation of the Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son of God, one may ask: If Jesus is part of the Trinity as the son of God in the same sense as Israel is the sons and daughters of God (cf. van Buren 80:80) but only with a special assignment, is one then not led to the logical implication that Israel in effect replaces Christ in van Buren's functional concept of the Trinity? After all, to van Buren contemporary Israel, as “the historical embodied reality of divine sonship,” is where the church meets the God of Israel. This feature in his thinking points towards the conclusion that in his theology of Israel and Christology, an inversion is made of Christ and Israel, compared to the structures within traditional Christology. Van Buren's historical-functional doctrine of the Trinity seems to be based on and to depend on what perhaps might be called his “God-Israel-covenant triunity.”

The underlying structure of van Buren's thinking in which “God” is identified with history, or in which van Buren works from a functional “God-Israel-covenant triunity,” held together with the notion that to van Buren Israel is all there is to be seen of God, indicates that Israel is the key to interpretation of history.

## **Christology**

Van Buren works from the premise that Jesus Christ was not and cannot be the Jewish Messiah because he did not bring redemption. Thus, his theology of Israel is based on Judaism's premises. Van Buren's Christology describes Jesus as the gentile church's historical personal point of contact to Israel's covenant with God.

The existence of the covenant and the church's attachment to the covenant as a codicil depends on the people Israel's continued existence. The church relates



to Israel's God only through this covenant. Historically this relationship was established through the Jew Jesus.

Van Buren does not say clearly whether Jesus to him in any sense presently or only historically constitutes this link. However, van Buren's Christology is functional and he puts the main emphasis on Israel as the contemporary link. Thus, only as a Jew and belonging to Israel could Jesus cause this development, and to the extent he is seen as a present link, this is described in functional terms. His function is carried out by Israel.

Focusing on Israel as a present or contemporary existence means that van Buren evades the problems of historicity involved in dealing with a living Christ. A living Christ is less necessary to van Buren because the historical figure of Christ was sufficient as the church's link to the covenant and, furthermore, the ever-contemporary Israel forms the bearer of the revelation of God. It is possible to verify Israel historically – to van Buren this is not so with Jesus – even though Israel can only be called holy in an ambiguous way.

Van Buren assumes that stressing the Jewishness of Jesus inevitably will result in abandoning the classical notion of the Incarnation. But this assumption may stem from other fundamental hermeneutical-philosophical assumptions than explicit Jewish assumptions. The notion of Christ as the incarnate Son of God has been rejected by Judaism as an impossible Gentile notion, utterly foreign to Jewish faith. Van Buren sees it as a gentile misunderstanding. This view must be questioned. The premises for the Jewish rejection were not foreign to the church that formulated the concept of Incarnation. The church Fathers were influenced by the same premises that caused the Jewish rejection, and the Incarnation was not self-evident to them. Tertullian saw the very philosophical impossibility of the Incarnation as an indirect indication of its truth: because the Incarnation is unthinkable it must have happened.<sup>231</sup> Van Buren's way of dealing with the attempted translation or transmutation of the Patristic metaphysics is not transparent. I see this lack of transparency as a reflection of his struggle with ontology.

## Covenant

The main purpose for van Buren's use of the covenant notion seems to be to understand and define the God-creation relationship in a way that secures human independence and autonomy while allowing for a theistic position. During his theological career, the element of human autonomy, involving an immanent ontology, seems to have been the continuous *sine qua non* for van

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Oskar Skarsaune, *Inkarnationen: Myte eller faktum. Om inkarnationstankens baggrund og udvikling* (Århus: Menighedsfakultetet, 1986), 9-11.

Buren. In contrast, the theistic element was set aside at some point, to be returned to later. "Israel" and with it "covenant" became van Buren's key notions to bring out the this-worldly and historicity/historical basis of his God-concept, enabling him to theologially legitimate working at a primarily human or secular level.

### **Christ and Torah**

Perhaps more than any other Christological designation, "Messiah" integrates Christology inseparably with the Jewish context. A fundamental criticism of van Buren is that his rejection of this notion as an appropriate designation for Jesus in a most crucial way undermines his intention to base Christology in a Jewish context and instead separates his theology from that context.

The issue is sharpened by the fact that van Buren makes his point from the argument that the term Messiah was rejected by the Jews out of faithfulness to the Torah. This inevitably brings the focus to the historical-theological issue of how Torah and Christ relate, i.e., how the theologies of Torah and Christ developed in both mutual and contradictory interdependence to the resulting level of incompatibility.

The promise-fulfillment scheme, to which the Messiah term belongs, is rejected and replaced with the promise-confirmation scheme, according to which redemption is fully a future event. And in the model of promise-confirmation the figure of the Messiah does not fit, according to van Buren. What, then, is left of Messiah in van Buren's theology? Along with his change of view towards rejection of the validity of the term, he seems to leave out the personal element of the future Messianic hope and to focus on the central element within his thinking: human or creation's responsibility for bringing about redemption. Inspiration from the philosophy of David Hartman can be found here.

It is an internal contradiction in van Buren's theology that Sinai is not the founding event and thus not constitutive for the gentile-Christian community. He here works from a distinction between Israel and the church that follows from his view that the gentile church is outside God's and Israel's Sinaitic covenant. His rejection of the notion "new covenant in Christ" leads him to the difficult notion of the church as a *codicil* to the Sinai covenant, in turn followed by Sinai and Torah seen as important though not central to the church.

Van Buren's starting point in Israel and not in Christology or Ecclesiology leads to questioning the nature and existence of the gentile church. Others in the ecumenical and Catholic dialogue context have seen this problem. To John T. Pawlikowski it is evident that "unless Christianity is able to articulate some unique features in the revelation of Christ, then it should fold up as a major

world religion.”<sup>232</sup> Pawlikowski captures his criticism of van Buren’s Christian gospel as follows:

*If the only difference between the Messianic vision of Christianity and Judaism respectively is that the Gentiles now understand the plan of human salvation, then why bother with a separate faith community? Why not simply reincorporate the Church into the Synagogue, at least on the level of theological theory? (ibid., 17f).*

The most likely reason why van Buren does not take this step is the Torah-obedience as an inherent feature of the Sinai covenant that single-covenant theologians readily leave with the Jews only. And if on the other hand there were a genuine difference between Israel and the church (e.g., the difference that the Torah is exclusively meant for Israel), what according to van Buren would legitimize this in the life and person of Christ?

Taking the step of theologically reincorporating the church into the Synagogue would conflict with his intention of staying inside the linguistic context of the Christian community. Therefore the historical fact that Torah was not implemented in the church becomes the only reason for not implementing the Torah in the church—a reason that runs contrary to the logic of van Buren’s thinking. Fairly pragmatic criteria are at work here in his thinking.

The core issue is the Christ-Torah relationship: Is salvation brought about by Christ through his atoning death for Jews and gentiles, or is redemption eventually to be brought about through human efforts to live according to the Torah?

There are further unresolved tensions in van Buren’s understanding of the gentiles inside and outside of the church that follow from his point of departure in Judaism. In this issue he does not reach an overall consistent position.

### **Theology of Israel**

His Theology of Israel becomes the starting point as well as the primary issue of his work. As a result, Christian mission to the Jewish people is considered to be a mistake.

Van Buren moved the ontological basis for the reality and existence of the church to Israel—for philosophical, historical and theological reasons. Thus van Buren did not wish to maintain a transcendently based Christology. Instead he applied to “Israel” the ontological basis for the reality and existence of the church. He found what he coins as Israel’s narrative interpretation of reality appealing to his own history-based ontology.

Israel replaces Christ, so to speak, in van Buren’s structure. Van Buren defines Jesus as the church’s personal link to Israel’s covenant with God. But Israel and

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<sup>232</sup> *Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue*. From the series “Studies in Judaism and Christianity.” (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 3.

God are indivisible and inseparable (van Buren 88:265). God cannot be spoken of without Israel and Israel not spoken of without God.

By Israel he means the covenantal people in the broadest sense—the past, present and future people. In van Buren's thinking Israel's role replaces the traditional role of Christ. Israel and God are inseparable and indivisible, in terms of ontology and perception (van Buren 88:255). Therefore to van Buren it is impossible to speak adequately of God without also speaking of Israel. The continued existence of living Israel is the precondition for the continued existence of the church and for the church's access to Israel's God.

In his theology van Buren has removed the element of absolutism from within Christology and replaced it within Theology of Israel. In so doing he has only removed but not solved the problem of absolutism that for him is a basic problem within Christianity.

Van Buren's interpretation of the covenant is the most important conceptual context for his understanding of God. The God of Israel is the covenantal God who relates to Israel in the covenantal context. The central feature in van Buren's unfolding of God's relationship with his people Israel, and through Israel with the church, lies in the development towards a growing human responsibility, which was revealed in Israel through the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel. There remains an unresolved issue in van Buren's thinking regarding who has the final covenantal responsibility: God or the human partner? Van Buren shifts between stressing God's final responsibility and man's inescapable responsibility and the risk involved.

A question for van Buren's theology is whether Israel's covenant is in fact more important to him than Israel itself. The covenant is used to unfold his understanding of the relationship between Creator and creation. And in spite of—and in a certain sense as a consequence of—his historical understanding of Israel, Israel in his thinking in the end becomes an abstraction and idealized entity. This makes his conception very vulnerable towards criticism from those who assume the cause of the Palestinians as well as from those who have a more critical attitude than van Buren towards the Jewish state and who are unwilling to accept the axiom of van Buren that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism.

I understand van Buren's notion of a development within the covenant towards a growing human responsibility for creation as an attempt to reconcile Biblical God-terminology with his understanding of how autonomous man understands and relates to God. The notion of a development towards growing human independence reflects the tensions and problems in his attempt to reach a meaningful understanding of God. In his theological argumentation for such a development van Buren shifts between ontological and epistemological arguments, and he does not seem to reach a conclusion.

The covenant between Israel and God is the key element in van Buren's understanding of Israel, and as a result in his Christology as well as

Ecclesiology. The inspirations from Jewish theology and perspectives can be found here in van Buren's theology, leading ultimately to the view that Christology must be developed from a new understanding and appreciation of the Covenant and Torah.

The continued existence of living Israel is the precondition for the existence of the church and for the church's access to the God of Israel. With Israel as the church's ontological ground, Israel replaces Christ as the historical, immanent mediator of God and the revelation of God.

Van Buren's alternative to process theology regarding the relationality between God and creation is to be found within the conceptual context of covenant. In the people, land, and state of Israel van Buren has found an epistemological key for speaking about God within the premises of historical creation. The covenant forms part of this key. With the concept of the covenant van Buren has found a terminology that for him works as a useful expression for a relationality between God and human beings within which human autonomy is reserved.

### **Theology of Religions**

As for his theology of religions van Buren suggested a theology of religious pluralism. In order to deal with the tensions between his revelatory exclusivist focus on Israel on the one hand and his choice of covenantal pluralism on the other, van Buren seems to operate at two different levels. Seen from the perspective of theology of religions, his systematic theological interpretation of Israel and Christology—as worked out from within the Christian linguistic community and including exclusivist statements—represents “a confession of what has happened to and in the Christian community.” He hereby characterizes in functional categories what are his own struggles to form a metaphysically rooted concept of God.

This indicates van Buren's basic outlook. By the way he develops the epistemological perspective of his Trinitarian concept towards a pluralistic theology of religions van Buren violates the very transcendent anchoring of the Trinity that he has been struggling to maintain.

The tension in van Buren's work between the Israel-monism of his theology of Israel and the pluralism of his theology of religions perhaps reflects two early main influences on his thinking: the revelational centrism of Karl Barth and the analytical philosophy and pluralism of Ludwig Wittgenstein and William James.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Israel is van Buren's attempt to maintain some element of transcendence in Christian theology. However, he is not willing to give up its basically immanent

and functional character. The Christology of his 1963 book was his first attempt in this regard. But Israel now seems to be a better way because of Israel's contemporary nature—he thereby avoids the problems of historicity that to him are involved in Christology.

Van Buren has assigned himself the task of reinterpreting the church's central theological terminology from a Jewish-inspired point of view, in which his functional-covenantal premises preclude the notion of God incarnate in Christ and the atoning death of Christ.

He has put himself in the position of not abandoning central Christian concepts because he wishes to work within the Christian linguistic community and its conversation; abandoning these concepts would be to leave the language of the Christian community. This way of reasoning reflects his linguistic heritage.

He therefore ends up with a number of reinterpreted concepts in which the original intention has been lost, as well as in a basically Jewish position within which it is difficult to give coherent theological reasons for the existence of the gentile church. The coherent implementation of his view would be for gentile Christians to convert to Judaism.<sup>233</sup>

Van Buren regards Rabbinic or Torah Judaism as the authoritative Judaism. Thereby, he has chosen one main Jewish tradition, and he more or less ignores another mainline of thought within Judaism—the Messianic line. He tends to overlook the genuine Jewish roots of Christian faith in Jesus and the understanding of him as the Jewish Messiah based on Old Testament interpretation.

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<sup>233</sup> His shift from a single-covenant position in the 1980s towards a double-covenant position in his last book, *According to the Scriptures: The Origins of the Gospel and of the Church's Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans) probably reflects an awareness of the inconsistencies in his earlier position.

# LEKKJ — European Lutheran Commission on Church and Judaism

Flemming Markussen

LEKKJ is an abbreviation of the German name “Lutherische Europäische Kommission Kirche und Judentum” and was founded in March 1976 at a meeting in Christiansfeld, Denmark to be a forum for inspiration and cooperation between Lutheran organizations and churches in West Germany and Scandinavia involved in Jewish mission.<sup>234</sup>

The Scandinavian Israel missions already had a long tradition of cooperation. During the Second World War the Swedish Israel Mission (Sweden being neutral in the war) took over the leadership of the Norwegian work in Eastern Europe. When the Danish Jewish Christian missionary Scheradsky had to flee to Sweden together with the rest of the Jewish community in Denmark he joined the Swedish Israel Mission and worked for them till after the war.

In 1952 the Scandinavian missions reorganized themselves in a Nordic committee made up of two representatives from each country. From 1968 a representative from VELKD (United Lutheran Church in Germany) participated in this forum as well. This gave rise to the idea of a broader European forum for cooperation and mutual inspiration; LEKKJ was organized with Dr. Axel Torm—the grand old man of the Danish Israel Mission—as its first chairperson.<sup>235</sup> All his life Torm had been engaged in mission to the Jews and worked hard for the Church to maintain its obligation to bring the gospel to the Jewish people. He was chairman of the Danish Israel Mission from 1949-1975 and before him his father, Dr. Frederik Torm, Professor of the New Testament at the University of Copenhagen, chaired the mission.

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<sup>234</sup> The formation of LEKKJ and the first years of the organization is described by Axel Torm in his book *Israelsmission og Israels mission*, (Århus:OKAY-BOG. 1990), 96ff; and in Arnulf H. Baumann, Käte Mahn and Magne Saebø, *Luthers Erben und die Juden*, (Hannover, 1984), 60ff.

<sup>235</sup> Baumann, Mahn and Saebø, 58ff.

## Purpose and Results of LEKKJ

First and foremost LEKKJ was founded as a platform for mutual exchange of experience and ideas. A secondary goal focused on actual cooperation, especially with regard to study projects related to Judaism and Christianity and Church and Synagogue.<sup>236</sup>

It is difficult to measure the results of LEKKJ's primary goal, but with regard to study projects two major works are worth mentioning. In 1984 the book *Luthers Erben und die Juden* was published and in 1990 members of LEKKJ produced a rather extensive statement with an equally extensive name: "A declaration on the meeting of Lutheran Christians and Jews—made at the yearly meeting of the Lutheran European Commission of Church and Judaism (LEKKJ), Drieberger, Niederland, 8 May 1990.

### Luthers Erben

The book *Luthers Erben und die Juden* describes country by country the Lutheran churches in Europe and their relationship to the Jews from the time of the Reformation until today. A more systematic chapter, "Problems and positions in relation to the Jews," describes issues such as Understanding of Scripture, The State of Israel, Jewish evangelism, and The designation *Hebrew Christians*. The use of the designation *Judenchristen* (in German) *Hebrew Christians* (in English) or *Messianic Jews* is embraced. Reticence for such terms had been expressed previously in a Lutheran World Federation context, for example in the declaration of LWF consultation from Løgumkloster in 1964.<sup>237</sup>

The authors explain how the position of dialogue as well as the traditional view of mission can be found in a Lutheran context. The latter view rejects triumphalism and a mission approach using non-spiritual means. The former rejects a dialogue which excludes beforehand giving testimony to one's faith. In conclusion the authors state:

*Mission is God's injunction and is therefore not left to man's decision. God's mission is done through human beings giving testimony to the salvation which he has granted. For Christians salvation cannot be separated from the person of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is and remains 'the power of God unto salvation for anyone that believes, to the Jew first and also the Greek.'*<sup>238</sup>

The book concludes by expressing great expectations for the Messianic Jewish movement. It holds that as the movement looks back and beyond the

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 60f.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 118f.



Greek culture's influence on Western churches it can be of help for the third world churches in their search for a genuine expression of Christian faith.<sup>239</sup>

### **The LEKKJ Declaration**

*Luthers Erben* is a result of several years' consultation in LEKKJ. However, the three editors, Baumann, Mahn og Saebø, have the final responsibility for the book and not all members of LEKKJ agreed with its conclusion.

In 1990 the LEKKJ statement was published. It was a very thorough document agreed to by participants from as many as 14 nationalities. The declaration is made up of four chapters: I. basic legends; II. The Shoah and its consequences; III. The form of the meeting; and IV. Conclusion. Each chapter has four or five paragraphs or theses.<sup>240</sup>

The document states as a basis that the Christian Church began within the Jewish people; it rejects that the Church has replaced the Jews as God's chosen people; the return of the people to the Land of Israel is seen as a sign of God's covenantal faithfulness; and finally it is said that Jewish believers especially have a contribution to make to the dialogue between Jews and Christians.

The chapter on the Holocaust and its consequences emphasizes the Church's need to repent; it maintains that anti-Judaism is still found within the church and that Christian triumphalism needs to be rejected. At the same time it is maintained that according to the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the way to salvation. Proselytism of Jews is rejected,<sup>241</sup> dialogue is emphasized and it is said that Christians are obligated to witness and that the meeting of the two sides includes the possibility of one side being convinced by the other.

### **After the LEKKJ declaration**

Since the LEKKJ declaration was agreed upon the commission has studied the issue of "The land of Israel" as a theological concept for Jews as well as for Christians. At meetings held since the turn of the century the commission has been involved in detecting anti-Judaistic expressions in the liturgies of the Lutheran churches in order to recommend changes.

Lately, more German churches have rejected organized Jewish mission. In 2000 EKD published "Christians and Jews III - Steps towards a renewal of the relationship to Judaism, EKD Memorandum 144, 2000" in which it is stated directly that mission to Jewish people is no longer one of the tasks of the

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>240</sup> The declaration can be found in full and in German at <http://www.jcrelations.net/stellungn/lekkj.htm>

<sup>241</sup> Proselytism is defined as the use of bribery to move Jews to change their faith.

Church. It has been replaced by dialogue.<sup>242</sup> The same opinion has influenced many of those represented in LEKKJ. After the meeting of LEKKJ in Finland in 1999 a declaration was issued in which mission was rejected. The declaration mentions that God's covenant with the people of Israel is eternal and that Judaism stands in a special relationship to its God, the God Christians, too, confess as their God. "For this reason we will not conduct our conversation with the Jews with the purpose of converting Jews to the Christian faith."<sup>243</sup>

The declaration got a majority vote among other reasons because of the absence of several representatives from the Scandinavian churches and was later met with heavy protests. The former chairman of LEKKJ, pastor Vilhelm Værgé responded: "... it is not only a bad theology, which totally refuses mission to Jews under any conditions; it is also false theology."<sup>244</sup>

LEKKJ has a tradition of preparing its declarations very carefully and always tries to reach a consensus. This was not the case with the declaration of 1999. Since the declaration is in contradiction with previous LEKKJ declarations it could just be an unfortunate anomaly. However, LEKKJ will have to live with the tension between German and Scandinavian churches, a tension partly due to the different histories during the Holocaust. With shame German churches have to confess that the church only seldom managed to extend neighborly compassion towards persecuted Jews. In Scandinavia the church defended the Jews and many of the pastors, especially those involved in Jewish missions, risked their lives to save Jews. German Lutherans are more sensitive to arguments that mission is an extension of the annihilation of the Jewish people. In Scandinavia people will uphold that one cannot mourn the Holocaust enough, but preventing Jews from coming to faith in Jesus would only make things worse.<sup>245</sup> Jews who come to faith in the Jew Jesus of Nazareth do not become less Jewish; rather the opposite can be true.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> From the declaration of EKD Christen und Juden III: 3.1.1 <http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/2114.html>

<sup>243</sup> Erklarung der Lutherischen-Europaischen Kommission Kirche und Judentum zum christlich-judischen Dialog Jarvenpaa/Finnland 1999. From the archives of the Danish Israel Mission, dated 17.06.99. Nr. 36. p. 142.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>244</sup> From the archives of the Danish Israel Mission, dated 03.09.99. Nr. 46. p. 182.

<sup>245</sup> P.H. Jørgensen: *Hvilke følger har Auschwitz for jøder og kristne?*, (Christiansfeld, 1982), 28.

<sup>246</sup> Bishop Ole Chr. M. Kvarme: *Kirkens jødiske røtter* (Oslo, 1985) 51ff; Axel Torm, 223; Kai Kjær-Hansen (ed.), *Jewish Identity & Faith in Jesus*, Jerusalem: Caspari Center, 1996), 17.

## Book Review

*Le Judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du colloque de Jérusalem 6-10 juillet 1998* (Lectio Divina - hors serie), Simon C. Mimouni, F. Stanley Jones (eds.). Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 2001, 464 pp.

Oskar Skarsaune

There has been a surge of interest in Jewish Christianity in the scholarly community recently. Conferences are held and books are published—the latter often as fruits of the former. Such is the case with the book under review here, a book with a rather ambitious title: *Jewish Christianity in all its dimensions*. The title is a nice way of saying that the different contributions in the book—23 in all—cover a wide field, are very diverse in character, and that some of them have a rather peripheral connection with the theme of the book. Even so, the book contains a lot of interesting material on early Jewish Christianity. I shall review the contributions that struck me as most interesting and/or relevant.

The theme of James and his role as a leader and figure of identification for Jewish Christianity is a must for all such books. Here this theme is treated by Étienne Nodet: "James, the Brother of Jesus, was never a Christian." This statement is true or misleading, depending on how you define "Christian," and may therefore say more about your definition of the term than it does about James. Nodet bases his case on a supposedly Roman definition of the term, and goes on to develop some rather speculative theses on the Acts story about Stephen's martyrdom as originally envisaging James' martyrdom, and of James being the Teacher of Righteousness of the Qumran scrolls (following Eisenmann). Much of this is based on a rather uncritical acceptance of Hegesippus' story about James' martyrdom as historically accurate. There is also a striking lack of interaction with the many recent studies on James (only Bernheim and Eisenmann are mentioned).

Simon C. Mimouni, well-established authority on Jewish Christianity by his book *Le Judéo-christianisme ancien: Essais historiques* (Patrimoines), Paris: Éditions du Cerf 1998, contributes a chapter on Paul: "Paul de Tarse. Éléments pour une réévaluation historique et doctrinale." This is a fine piece, in which Mimouni briefly comments on recent attempts at Jewish *Heimholung* of Paul, and also offers a perspective of his own on this presently hot project. To me, Mimouni's sketch seems balanced and sound, avoiding some of the recent extremes.

William Peterson, "Constructing the Matrix of Judaic Christianity from Texts," claims that a lot of textual material stemming directly from Jewish Christians and documenting their particular views, has been consistently ignored and overlooked by scholars. When Peterson goes into business, it turns out his own concept of Jewish Christianity is rather simple and surprisingly

monolithic, as is his concept of the opposition: Pauline Christianity. Many details in his concrete comments on texts are less evident than Peterson seems to think, and evidence in the patristic heresiologies is used rather uncritically. There is an unmistakable taste of good old Baur and the Tübingen school in this paper. But I fully endorse his complaints about undue neglect of the subject in recent scholarship.

Among the sources that Eusebius excerpts in his treatment of early Jewish Christians, Hegesippus (ca. 180 C.E.) is of prime importance. In this book Hegesippus is treated in an interesting essay by F. Stanley Jones (known for his book on *An Ancient Jewish-Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27-71* (Text and Translations' Christian Apocrypha Series), Atlanta: 1995): "Hegesippus as a Source for the History of Jewish Christianity." Stanley Jones argues that Hegesippus was not a Jewish Christian himself (despite Eusebius' claim that he was), because (1) a Jewish Christian in the second half of the second century would not be concerned with "orthodoxy"; (2) would not mistake Hebrew *rekabim* for a personal name; (3) would not speak about his own Jewish people as "them," nor as "the circumcision." The last argument is very weak; according to it, Paul would not be a Jewish Christian either, since he does the same as Hegesippus. According to Eusebius (H.E. IV.22.8), Hegesippus quoted freely from Aramaic and Hebrew texts, and was fluent in oral Jewish traditions—and precisely because of this Eusebius concluded that he was of Jewish descent. Concerning the first argument: Why should a Jewish Christian be ruled out *a priori* from any interest in the orthodoxy of "mainline" Christianity? All of this, however, is only a side-line in Jones' essay. He offers some very interesting proposals concerning the sources of Hegesippus' information on the leadership of the earliest Jerusalem community, proposals that would tally very well with the theory put forward in Richard Bauckham's *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1990).

Another classic among the possible sources for Jewish Christianity is the Pseudoclementine romance (in two versions: the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies*). There is no scholarly agreement on the complicated issue of source criticism in these documents; in this book Bernard Pouderon addresses the question anew: "Aux origines du Roman clémentin. Prototype païen, refonte judéo-hellenistique, remaniement chrétien". The thesis of this paper is indicated in its long title: the author proposes the hypothesis that a pagan novel of the first century CE. has first been redacted by a Jewish editor (turn of first/second century CE.), and then redacted a second time, and thoroughly so, by Ebionite editors at the beginning of the third century CE. It is this third editorial stage that makes the romance a source of Jewish Christian theology. Like all similar attempts at literary criticism of these documents, this one is quite hypothetical.

Solid ground for conclusions about the historical reality of Ebionitism is hardly to be found this way.

A much greater consensus is now emerging concerning a specific part of the Pseudoclementine Recognitions, viz. Rec. I.27-71. It has long been recognized that we here have a separate source included more or less intact into the Recognitions, and that this piece has its own profile, differing from its literary surroundings. It has recently been treated in two interesting monographs: Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (SBL Dissertation Series 112), Atlanta (Georgia): Scholars Press 1989; and F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish-Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27-71* (Text and Translations' Christian Apocrypha Series), Atlanta: 1995. In the present book this document is treated by Claudio Gianotto: "Alcune riflessioni a proposito di *Recognitiones* I,27-71: la storia della salvezza." Gianotto's findings are summarized the following way: Behind the document is

*a Jewish-Christian community, faithful to the practice of the Law, whose core is identified in the ten commandments of Sinai, and at the same time committed to the heathen mission, but unwilling to impose [on] them neither circumcision nor the practices of the mosaic Law. ... in its interpretation of the role of Jesus, the document is aware of representing an alternative pattern of christianity, opposed to that of Paul ... mainly on the basis of soteriology: Jesus saves through his teaching (and not chiefly through his death and resurrection) and his prophetic mission, consisting in the total and final abolition of blood sacrifices and in the restoration (not abrogation) of the Law in its original purity.*

There is much to commend in this essay, but I would add that in the question of soteriology, Jesus does not only *teach* concerning the abolition of sacrifices, he also replaces them by a new ritual: baptism, which now confers the same as the sacrifices were thought to do—forgiveness of sins. And this effect of baptism implies a sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death, not unlike Paul's and that of other New Testament writers.

Bargil Pixner has fascinated many with his interesting interpretation of the archaeological soundings in the Tomb of David and elsewhere on present day Mount Zion. In several articles he has defended the view that the oldest part of the Tomb of David building is really the remains of a post-70 Jewish Christian synagogue-church, and that the early Christians had their community center right here, in a close neighbor relationship to the Essene quarter located in the same area. There has been significant scholarly opposition to many of the links in Pixner's argumentative chain; it is to be regretted that he does not interact more directly and explicitly with his critics in this new statement of his views: "Nazoreans on Mount Zion (Jerusalem)."<sup>130</sup>

Burton L. Visotzky has made several contributions recently to the difficult question of how to use Rabbinic sources as windows on early Christianity; in

this case Jewish Christianity. (See his collected studies in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* [Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 80], Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1995.) Here he contributes a new piece: "Jewish-Christianity in Rabbinic Documents: an Examination of *Leviticus Rabbah*." Although Visotzky clearly says (and I think rightly so) that there is not much to be found in Rabbinic sources that clearly point to Jewish Christians as different from gentile Christians, it is still fascinating to follow Visotzky's ingenious digging-out of anti-Christian polemic in this Rabbinic writing.

Finally, I would like to call special attention to Gershon Nerel's paper on "Primitive Jewish Christians in the Modern thought of Messianic Jews." With the passion and drive of an engaged insider, Nerel spells out the existential significance of early Jewish Christianity for present-day Messianic Jews. He thus highlights the fact that the scholarly quest for early Jewish Christianity is not only an academic exercise, but for Messianic Jews also a quest for authenticity and roots.

All in all, this volume makes some significant contributions to the ongoing scholarly quest for a much neglected but highly significant theme.

## **Books Received**

**Volf, Miroslav and Bass, Dorothy C.**

*Practicing Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002; Edinburgh UK: Alban books. vi + 265 pp. \$ 18.00.

**Bulgakov, Sergius**

*The Bride of the Lamb*. Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002. xviii + 531 pp. \$ 40.00

**Boccaccini, Gabriele**

*Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002. Wvii + 230 pages. \$ 24.00.

**Nanos, Mark D.**

*The Irony of Galatians*. Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 2002. xiii + 376 pp. \$ 26.00