

A NEW TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE JEWISH REJECTION OF JESUS: FOUR THEOLOGIAN ON THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL

JOHN J. JOHNSON*

Is Christian theology inherently anti-Semitic? Are the fundamental teachings of the NT blatantly anti-Jewish? Is the church's historical oppression of Judaism responsible (at least in part) for the Holocaust? More importantly, does the Holocaust force Christians to re-think the matter of Jewish salvation? A growing number of scholars, both Jewish and Christian, are answering "Yes" to these questions, and are seeking alternative understandings of the Christian message which they believe will avoid the anti-Semitic trappings of the past.

The landmark work in this area is Rosemary Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide*, which was published in 1974. This book examined how Judaism has been demeaned and vilified by the NT, the Church fathers, and the states of Christian Europe. Ruether called for a radical new openness on the part of Christians toward Judaism in order to make amends for these sins: "Christians must be able to accept the thesis that it is not necessary for Jews to have the story about Jesus in order to have a foundation for faith and a hope for salvation."¹ The solution to Christian anti-Judaism, Ruether claimed, lies in a "revitalization of Christian absolutism which can accept the independent salvific validity of the Jewish tradition."²

Ruether's book has had a tremendous influence on the contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue. The extent of this influence can be judged from the fact that Gregory Baum, who wrote a powerful apologetic work in 1968 vigorously defending the NT against the charge of anti-Semitism, penned the introduction to 1974's *Faith and Fratricide*. He there admitted that the apology he presented in his earlier work was untenable.³ Baum stated he had come to believe that, in light of the history of Christian anti-Judaism, especially the Holocaust, Christian theologians must "look for a formulation of the Christian faith that does not negate Jewish existence."⁴

Baum is not alone in his abrupt change of position. For example, Krister Stendahl no longer believes that Paul's letter to the Romans teaches that Jews must receive Christ as their Savior in order to experience salvation.⁵

* John J. Johnson resides in Wilmington, DE 19810.

¹ Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Seabury, 1979) 256.

² *Ibid.* 260.

³ *Ibid.* 1–22.

⁴ *Ibid.* 22.

⁵ Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

There is a host of prominent thinkers, many of them Christian, who share Baum and Stendahl's views, and they continue to have an enormous effect on the ongoing Jewish-Christian dialogue.⁶

This article is an attempt to understand, from a decidedly NT perspective, some of the ways in which the Jewish people's rejection of the messiahship of Jesus Christ has been understood. My aim is to challenge the new orthodoxy that now prevails among many mainline Christian theologians regarding the matter of Jewish salvation. This new orthodoxy is largely a result of theological reflection upon the Holocaust. Due to the sheer horror of Jewish suffering, and Christian complicity in that suffering, many now consider any attempt to link Jewish salvation with the Christian Savior theologically untenable, if not dangerously anti-Semitic.

I wish to demonstrate that the traditional claim that Jesus is the Savior of the Jews is not anti-Semitic, and that it is in fact a requirement if an honest interpretation of the NT evidence is to be maintained. Christian theology must be based on revelation, not on human experience, however tragic and far-reaching that experience may be. To assume that Christian theology must change as a result of the Holocaust is to base our theological thought on the tragedy of human evil rather than on the revelation of God. And while the Holocaust is a particularly obscene example of human depravity, it is different only in degree, not in kind, from all the sins of mankind throughout the centuries. C. S. Lewis, responding to the alleged "new urgency" brought about by modern man's recognition of the riddle of evil, cogently remarks, "[W]hat new urgency? . . . it is no more urgent for us than for the great majority of monotheists all down the ages. The classic expositions of the doctrine that the world's miseries are compatible with its creation and guidance by a wholly good Being come from Boethius waiting in prison to be beaten to death and from St. Augustine meditating on the sack of Rome."⁷ And while Lewis was not writing about the Holocaust *per se*, his comments are plainly relevant to our discussion. Terrible examples of evil have plagued mankind throughout the ages, but Christians never radically changed their soteriology as a result. Why should the Holocaust be treated differently? What the Holocaust *should* do, and largely *has* done, is to make Christians realize that their old anti-Semitic prejudices must go, that the vilification of Jews as "Christ-killers," etc., must be repudiated for the sins that they are. But this is far different from altering the central message of the NT: the gospel of salvation through Christ is for all, Gentile and Jew alike.

The first two theologians I address are Clark Williamson and Sidney Hall, both of whom can be considered contemporary representatives of the paradigm shift in Jewish-Christian relations that was inaugurated by Ruether some twenty years ago. They are both proponents of the so-called dual

⁶ Two representative works are John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) and John T. Pawlikowski, *Christ in the Light of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (New York: Paulist, 1982).

⁷ C. S. Lewis, "Evil and God," *God in the Dock* (ed. Walter Hooper; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 22.

covenant theory, which holds that Christ is indeed the Messiah, but only for *Gentiles*, not for *Jews*. They differ somewhat in their reasons for advocating this view, but the Holocaust is the primary motivation in the thought of both men. The next two theologians I treat are Karl Barth and Jakob Jocz. They represent the more conservative, pre-Ruether view that Jesus cannot really be called the Christ if he is not truly Messiah for both Gentile and Jew. These two (especially Jocz) rely more heavily upon the NT for the formulation of their views, but they differ greatly in their understanding of the way in which Jewish salvation through Christ occurs. Barth believes that the Jews will be saved *en masse* as a result of divine election. Jocz, on the other hand, seems to be more aware that the NT treats the matter of Jewish salvation in terms of divine election *and* personal choice. Jocz arrives at his position because he is willing to take seriously the apparent dichotomy between God's electing grace and the individual's free will, which is evidenced in Romans 9–11. I believe that Jocz's view is to be preferred over those of Williamson, Hall, and Barth, because his position has the support of the NT.

In order to assess the positions of these four theologians and to show the superiority of Jocz's view of the matter, I will turn at the end to an examination of each scholar's view in light of what Paul says regarding Jewish salvation in Romans 9–11. Since this passage is the most comprehensive Biblical treatment of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Jews, any Christian understanding of this matter must honestly come to terms with what Paul says in these chapters.⁸ E. P. Sanders has said regarding the salvation of the Jews via Christ, "it is only in Romans, and explicitly in Romans 9–11, that Paul directly addresses the question of the status of the Jews [regarding their relationship to Christ]."⁹

I. THE POST-HOLOCAUST THEOLOGY OF CLARK WILLIAMSON

Clark Williamson has written extensively on the subject of anti-Semitism for many years, but his fullest treatment of the subject is found in *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology*. For Williamson, the Holocaust was the culmination of nearly 2,000 years of Jewish persecution at Christian hands. Williamson does not believe that Christian anti-Judaism was solely responsible for the Holocaust, but that centuries of Christian anti-Semitism created the environment which made the Holocaust far more likely. Because Christian theology played a role in this awful event, it must

⁸ There are, of course, other NT passages that touch on the matter of Jewish salvation, especially in the Gospels. However, I believe that many of these assume a negative attitude toward the Jews only because *particular* Jews in the Gospels are hostile to Christ. See, for example, Urban C. Von Wahlde, "The Johannine Jews: A Critical Survey," *NTS* 28 (1982) 33–60. However, none of these passages has the systematic quality, nor the *balance*, of Romans 9–11. I will therefore assume throughout this paper that this is the definitive Biblical text concerning Jewish salvation.

⁹ E. P. Sanders, "Paul's Attitude Toward the Jewish People," *USQR* 33 (1978) 178. Also helpful is Sanders's treatment of this issue in *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 192–199. Here Sanders points out just how difficult it is to maintain the two-covenant theory based on what Paul wrote in Romans 9–11.

necessarily be radically amended, altered, and reformulated to ensure that it never again has a part in so great a human catastrophe. Williamson's battle cry throughout his book is that no "statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children."¹⁰ For Williamson, any type of Christian theological statement is unacceptable if it in any way suggests that Judaism is inferior to Christianity, or that Jews must convert to the Christian faith. Such statements, he believes, helped pave the way to the Holocaust.

Williamson is concerned not only with eliminating harmful anti-Jewish ideas from current Christian thought, but also with reinterpreting the very Christian canon itself in order to remove the anti-Jewish tradition which has propagated anti-Semitism for centuries: "[t]he anti-Judaism in the [Christian] tradition, including parts of the tradition defined as canonical, must be eliminated and a new interpretation offered that seeks both to be more appropriate to the tradition and more plausible in a post-*Shoah* [Holocaust] situation."¹¹ The traditional Protestant reliance upon the *sola scriptura* principle can no longer be maintained in light of the terrible evil of the Holocaust which was, at least in part, caused by anti-Jewish statements in those Scriptures. Christianity is a *living* religion, Williamson maintains, and an absolute insistence upon the primacy of Scripture does not permit Christianity to properly respond to the exigencies of human existence, especially the Holocaust. Williamson writes that "we have stipulated one set of rules for doing Christian theology after Auschwitz: that we will beware any theological statement made after the *Shoah* that is unchanged from how it was made before [the *Shoah*]."¹²

By rejecting Scripture as the sole criterion for the basis of Christian theology, Williamson must find a new criterion that will enable him to respond to a post-Holocaust world. He finds this in what he terms "authentic" Christianity. The only passages of the NT that may be considered "authentic" are those that reveal "the gracious promise of God's love freely offered to each and all" and teach "the command of God that in turn we love God with all our selves and do justice to, that is, love, the neighbor as ourselves."¹³ Any NT passage that provides a basis for Christian contempt of Judaism or suggests that Judaism is an "inferior" faith which has been superseded by a "superior" Christianity does not meet this standard and hence cannot be considered authentically Christian.

The word "freely" in the above quotation plays so prominent a role in Williamson's discussion of authentic Christianity because of his disdain for the many NT passages that are exclusivist in nature, teaching that salvation is possible only for members of the "new" covenant [Christians], not those belonging to the "old" covenant [Jews]. Not only are such passages

¹⁰ Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire," in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* (ed. Eva Fleischner; New York: KTAV, 1977) 23.

¹¹ Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 18.

¹² *Ibid.* 20.

¹³ *Ibid.* 23.

inauthentically Christian, Williamson maintains, they actually promote the very thing Christians have always accused Jews of: reliance upon works-righteousness for salvation! "The claim that Jews lost the covenant because they were not worthy of it is simply works-righteousness . . . works-righteousness contends that God is not free to covenant with whomever God pleases but only with those who *deserve* to receive it."¹⁴

Obviously, Williamson rejects the traditional Christian doctrine of salvation through Christ alone, for this would imply that only Christians receive salvation, and that God is not free to extend his love to anyone outside of the Christian faith. Such traditional theology makes Jesus "a condition upon the grace of God, apart from which God is not free to be gracious."¹⁵ In fact, Williamson goes so far as to claim that the Christ event cannot really be considered a "new" episode in salvation history as Christians have always claimed. Rather, what God did through Christ is merely a continuation of the salvific action he began with the Jewish people and continues with them to this very day: "Christ re-presents the same grace of God that had earlier been re-presented to the people of Israel and that continues to be re-presented in the synagogue. Hence, we must understand the grace of God in Christ in the light of God's continuous faithful dealing with the Israel of God."¹⁶

Williamson rejects any thought of a "new," "better," or "improved" covenant made possible by Christ. He even views the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, the symbolic representations of the covenant established by Christ, as a mere continuation of God's grace, which had been extended to the Jewish people throughout the pages of the Hebrew Bible. The bread of the eucharist is tied to Jewish tradition and cannot be understood apart from this tradition, because it "re-presents the bread the Hebrew people ate in the exodus from slavery in Egypt," while the rite of Christian baptism recalls "the waters of freedom through which the Israelites passed at the Exodus."¹⁷ It is not that Williamson denies the efficacy of the sacraments for Gentiles: he fully affirms them. But he insists that nothing *new* or *superior* is made available through them: "Neither baptism nor the breaking of bread conveys any different or 'better' kind of grace than is available to the Jews through synagogue and family."¹⁸

It is no surprise that Williamson flatly rejects the idea of conversionary missions to the Jews. The whole notion of evangelizing Jews is "premised upon the theologically absurd notion that Jews are unacquainted with the God of the Bible."¹⁹ Williamson also believes the NT offers no justification for any such mission, and he explains that those passages which speak of missionary activity (e.g. Gal 1:16; Rom 1:4–5; Luke 24:27; Acts 28:28; Matt 28:19–20) do so only in reference to Gentiles. There are no concrete passages

¹⁴ Ibid. 114.

¹⁵ Ibid. 208.

¹⁶ Ibid. 258.

¹⁷ Ibid. 258–259.

¹⁸ Ibid. 259.

¹⁹ Ibid. 250.

which can be used to support missionary activities toward Jews: "The pertinent New Testament literature offers no warrant for such a mission."²⁰ Rather than viewing Judaism as an inferior religion, Christians must realize that Jews are their spiritual equals and that "Christian mission is a *shared* mission, one in which both the church and synagogue are called to be the witness of the God of Israel before the world and each other."²¹ Williamson's solution to the problem of the Jewish rejection of Christ is plain and simple: he denies that they need to accept him in the first place, and rejects any passage of the NT which teaches otherwise.

Williamson is correct when he reminds Christians about their ancestors' shameful treatment of the Jewish people for almost two millennia. He is right to welcome the recent proclamations issued by various Christian denominations that repudiate the "teaching of contempt" about the Jews and recognize the value and integrity of their religious heritage. And he is certainly correct that Christian anti-Semitism played a role in the Holocaust. But do the sins of our Christian past mean that we must abandon the central message of the NT, namely the doctrine that salvation comes through Christ alone? I turn now to another theologian who seems to be more willing than Williamson to grapple with the NT's teaching about the primary role of Christ in the salvation of both Gentiles and Jews.

II. CHRIST IS ONLY THE GENTILE, NOT THE JEWISH, MESSIAH

In *Christian Anti-Semitism and Paul's Theology*, Sidney Hall, despite his many similarities with Williamson, does not believe an approach like Williamson's is sufficient from a Christian perspective, for it ignores the Scriptures that lie at the very heart of the Christian tradition. Although he calls Auschwitz the "normative event for doing Christian theology," Hall, unlike Williamson, tries to account for the NT's insistence that all men, Jews included, must embrace Christ to receive salvation. However, he does this in such a way as to remain faithful to his belief that the Holocaust *demand*s a new approach to Christian theology: "The death of innocent Jewish children must be an event that helps determine the character of particular doctrines of the Christian faith after Auschwitz."²²

Hall devotes the main portion of his book to an exegesis of Romans. He admits that in Romans Paul does indeed demand that all must receive Jesus as the Christ, but he believes traditional interpreters have misconstrued Paul's meaning here. According to Hall, Paul does not demand that Jews embrace Christ as *their* messiah, only that they recognize him as the messiah for the Gentiles. The gospel is an original revelation only for Gentiles: "the good news already belongs to the Jewish people . . . Paul's good news was never intended to be bad news for Jews."²³ Hall, unlike Williamson,

²⁰ Ibid. 251.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sidney G. Hall, *Christian Anti-Semitism and Paul's Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 141–142.

²³ Ibid. 91.

admits that God has done something new in Christ, but Paul, according to Hall, “insists Jews embrace the gospel *of* Christ, not that they embrace *Christ* [italics mine].”²⁴

Those passages in Romans where Paul seems exasperated with Jews who rely on the law for salvation and reject Christ as Savior must be re-interpreted accordingly. “Paul’s frustration is not over the Jewish people’s inability to accept Jesus as their Messiah, but over some Jews who boast in Torah and their relation to God (2:17, 23; 3:27).”²⁵ The “hardening” of the Jews which Paul speaks of in chapter 11 has “nothing to do with their not becoming Christians.”²⁶ Rather, it pertains to the only real criticism Hall believes Paul levels at the Jews in Romans: they are hardened to the idea that God could possibly offer covenant fellowship to anyone outside the law.²⁷ In fact, Hall believes the salvation of “all Israel” in 11:25 will come about when Jews finally cease boasting about their allegedly exclusive relationship with God and admit that he has decided to covenant with Gentiles as well as with Jews.²⁸

Referring to the traditional interpretation of Rom 11:25, which holds that Jews will eventually be saved because they will accept Christ, Hall says a “Christ-centered thesis that in the end God will make Jews into Christians is inadequate and unacceptable. It retains an eschatological rejection and replacement theology of the Jews.”²⁹ Despite his attempt to offer a Scripturally-based reinterpretation of a Christian theology of Judaism, Hall ends in a position akin to Williamson’s. Hall believes the idea of an eventual Jewish conversion to Christianity is in effect a denial of Judaism’s continuing validity: “A theology accepting Jews as Jews now, but with an eschatological vision that accepts Jews only as Christians, is not a credible faith. . . . Genuine pluralistic spirituality is a faith that permits one to maintain the integrity of one’s own faith while respecting others in the integrity of their own faith.”³⁰ Hall believes that his position, which he refers to as the “inclusive promise” of God, allows Christians and Jews to exist in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Christians partake of the promise through Christ, while Jews are included in the promise via faithful Torah observance.

As with Williamson, one can appreciate the fact that Hall is attempting to dismantle the legacy of Christian hatred toward the Jewish people which has marred Jewish-Christian relations for so long. His attempt to seriously wrestle with what Paul teaches about the Jewish law *vis-à-vis* salvation through Christ must also be applauded. But it is doubtful if his interpretation of Paul will prove acceptable to those who find in the NT (especially in Paul!) a rejection of the Jewish law in favor of the Christian gospel. I now

²⁴ Ibid. 92.

²⁵ Ibid. 113.

²⁶ Ibid. 120.

²⁷ Hall believes that the “boasting” of some Jews over their special relationship with God via the law (rather than, say, the question of Jewish salvation) is the *most* serious problem Paul addresses in Romans. See pp. 93–100.

²⁸ Ibid. 123–124.

²⁹ Ibid. 118.

³⁰ Ibid. 123.

turn to a theologian who is, in most respects, far more "traditional" than either Williamson or Hall. This may be due, in part, to the fact that he wrote before the era of the sea-change in Christian thought ushered in by serious reflection on the Holocaust.

III. KARL BARTH'S VISION OF THE CORPORATE SALVATION OF ISRAEL

In stark contrast to the views of both Williamson and Hall is the theology of Israel advocated by Karl Barth. Despite many charges to the contrary, Barth was not anti-Semitic. He insisted on the validity of the Jews' designation as the chosen people, he strongly supported the state of Israel, and he went as far as to say that "[a]ntisemitism is sin against the Holy Ghost."³¹

Barth told Pope John XXIII in a 1966 visit that, for Christians, "there is ultimately only one truly great ecumenical question: our relationship to Judaism."³² For Barth, Christianity was nothing but a "balloon trip [if] separated from the history of Israel."³³ Barth had no wish to denigrate or revile Judaism. He did, however, attempt to understand the Jewish rejection of Jesus from an uncompromisingly *Christian*, and *Biblical*, point of view.

For Barth, the Jews were, are, and will remain the chosen people of God—nothing can alter this divinely-ordained fact. So convinced of this is Barth that he considers the ongoing existence of the Jews, in the face of centuries of unparalleled persecution, to be the only real "visible and tangible" proof of God's existence.³⁴ Barth is fond of quoting a conversation between Frederick the Great and his personal physician, Zimmermann: "Zimmermann, can you name me a single proof of the existence of God?" And Zimmermann replied, "Your majesty, the Jews!"³⁵ Barth accepts this response, despite the fact that the Jews, God's special people, do not accept God's Messiah, Jesus Christ. Israel still "upholds the Synagogue. . . . It acts as if it had still another special determination and future beside and outwith the Church."³⁶

Yet Barth does not simply dismiss Israel's disobedience as an act of unfaithfulness which results in a reciprocal rejection by God, as have many traditional Christian thinkers. Rather, Barth believes the Jews' disobedience is *temporary*, and that it fits within God's salvific plan for humanity, actually serving God's larger purposes: "Israel cannot alter the fact that even in this way [the rejection of Jesus] it discharges exactly the service for which it is elected."³⁷ Struggle as they may against God's purpose for them, their efforts can never revoke their election, nor foil God's intentions for them. The Jews belong in God's "elected community," and Israel "cannot escape its appointed

³¹ Karl Barth, *The Church and the Political Problem of Our Day* (New York: Scribner's, 1939) 52.

³² Quoted in Pinchas Lapide, "Christians and Jews—A New Protestant Beginning," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 12 (1975) 485.

³³ Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (trans. G. T. Thompson; London: SCM, 1949) 75.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. II, pt. 2 (trans. G. W. Bromiley et al.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957) 208.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 209.

service in it."³⁸ Here Barth breaks radically with those more traditional Christian thinkers who see in Israel's refusal to receive Christ a purely *human* refusal, a merely human blindness to the messiahship of Christ. For Barth, the Jews do not receive Jesus because God has *ordained* their rejection of him.

But for what purpose has God ordained this unbelief of the Jews? The reason, according to Barth, is to reflect the judgment of God, to exemplify the sorry state of humanity when it is in rebellion against God.³⁹ Barth interprets the long, sad history of Jewish suffering not so much as punishment for Israel's sins (though it is that, if the OT is to be believed), but as something God has brought upon them not so much because of their *sin*, but because of their *election*. Barth writes that "it costs something to be the chosen people, and the Jews are paying the price."⁴⁰

Israel's disobedience is really a sign of *humanity's* rebellion against God. The Jews have been "chosen" to represent the sinful state of all men: Israel has been elected "to reflect the judgment from which God has rescued man and which He wills to endure Himself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth."⁴¹ Barth writes: "in the Jew we have revealed and shown to us in a mirror who and what we all are, and how bad we all are."⁴² The Jews, then, are a microcosm of the human race, in its sinful rebellion against its Creator and in need of a Savior. Caution is needed here. Barth is not saying that Jews are especially sinful, or that they somehow "personify" evil: "The Jew as a Jew is neither better nor worse than other men . . . [the Jew represents] every man, without exception."⁴³

The Jews do more than simply make the Gentile world aware of its sinfulness. The Jews point all humanity toward the only solution to Gentile *and* Jewish sinfulness: Jesus Christ. But in order to complete their role as a guidepost to the Gentiles, the Jews must finally receive Jesus as Savior. This is necessary "if men are to read and understand the sign and testimony which is given them in the existence of the Jews, and are actually to be convinced that they [Gentiles] too are the enemies of God."⁴⁴ The Jews do not fully convince the rest of the world of its need of God until the Jews themselves acknowledge their own need and enter the church. Then, the Gentile world will know that "on its own it can only plunge into ruin, that it cannot save itself from ruin."⁴⁵

³⁸ *Ibid.* 208.

³⁹ Barth's position is similar to Augustine's, who maintained that Jewish suffering since the fall of Jerusalem at Roman hands was a judgment upon them for their lack of faith in Christ, and that they served as a warning to all about the perils of rejecting the Christian Savior. However, Barth seems far more optimistic than Augustine about the ultimate salvation of the Jews. For a good summation of Augustine's view, see Clark Williamson's *A Guest in the House of Israel* 115–117.

⁴⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, pt. 3 (trans. G. W. Bromiley and R. J. Ehrlich; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960) 220.

⁴¹ Barth, *CD* II.2. 206.

⁴² Barth, *CD* III.3. 221.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 223.

⁴⁵ Barth, *CD* II.2. 207.

In order for all of this to come about, there must obviously be a mass Jewish conversion to Christianity. Unlike Williamson and Hall, this poses no problem for Barth. In fact, it is absolutely essential to God's salvific plan for humanity. Like Paul, Barth does not pretend to know when this conversion will occur. It is an eschatological event for which the church can only patiently wait, confident that God will bring it about.⁴⁶ So confident is Barth of this eventual God-inspired conversion that he attaches absolutely no importance to Christian missionary activity toward the Jews.

Still, there is one great problem. Israel has not yet become faithful to her election. Israel is not yet an "active" participant in the church, although she is still part of it. She is not yet a full member in what Barth calls the "one community" of God, but even in her state of disobedience she remains a powerful witness to the sin of which all humanity is guilty before God. Barth looks forward to a time when the Jews will fulfill their election, when they will cease to be dormant members of the one community of God and accept full, active membership in this community. They will then serve as a "reminder of the settled, the canceled indictment, the forgiven sin, its witness [will] lend critical salt to the message of the accomplished reconciliation of the world with God without calling it into question."⁴⁷ Once this occurs, the "special honor of Israel [will] then consist in continually consoling and exhorting the Church by magnifying to it the judgment which has overtaken man . . . and therefore holding before it the cross of its Lord as its one and only hope, not to assail but to confirm the faith that the Church as such has to confess."⁴⁸

Barth, like Williamson and Hall, repudiates Christian anti-Semitism. Like them, he insists that the Jews remain God's chosen people. But unlike Williamson and Hall, he reminds us that the Jewish rejection of Jesus is God's mysterious work (in accordance with Paul's teaching in Rom 11:25). However, he has little to say about the role of *personal choice* in the matter of Jewish salvation (which is certainly taught in Romans 9–11). I turn now to a theologian who, in my opinion, is to be preferred over Barth, because he builds his theology around the dual theme of divine election/personal choice, which Paul teaches are both essential in the matter of Jewish salvation.

IV. THE INDIVIDUALIST CHRISTOLOGY OF JAKOB JO CZ

Jakob Jocz was a Jew by birth, a Christian by choice. All of his books are concerned with the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, specifically the relationship between Jews and Jesus. Like Barth, he wrote before the advent of the change in theological attitudes caused by reflection on the Holocaust (most of his books were published in the 1950s and 60s). Also like Barth, he is insistent upon the Jews' designation as God's chosen people. To deny this is a virtual historical impossibility for Jocz: there "is an aspect of

⁴⁶ Ibid. 213.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 208.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Jewish history which remarkably corroborates the faithfulness of God. No theologian can seriously write about this people without paying attention to the miracle of its survival."⁴⁹ As with Barth, the Jews for Jocz were and remain God's chosen, and they cannot alter this fact, despite their efforts: "Israel's history is the supreme proof that there is no escape from a God-given task."⁵⁰ The Jews' rejection of Jesus cannot change what God intends for them, and those who have throughout the Christian era advanced the idea that Christians are the "new," "spiritual" Israel, which replaces the "old," "false" Israel, receive no support from Jocz. The very concept of a "new" Israel has no NT basis, Jocz claims: "there can be no plural to Israel. The idea of another Israel is utterly alien to the N.T., as alien as the idea that beside the God of Israel there can be another God."⁵¹

While Jocz rejects the idea that Christians have replaced Jews as God's chosen, he is well aware that there is indeed one great difference between them: Christians know Jesus as Messiah, while Jews do not, to their great loss.⁵² On this point, Jocz is not willing to retreat. In fact, to compromise on this clear distinction between Christian and Jew is to court disaster for Christianity. It is "a matter of fact that a bridge theology spanned between the two faiths always means a compromise for the Church on the basic issue, namely the Lordship of Jesus Christ."⁵³ As much as Christians may wish not to offend Jews, they cannot give ground on this crucial issue: "for the Church to reduce her high christology in order to accommodate the Synagogue would spell dissolution. She stands or falls with the confession that Jesus is Lord."⁵⁴

Such compromise inevitably leads to the "dual covenant" theology espoused by Williamson and Hall, and Jocz does not believe such compromise is an acceptable position for Christians. Surely it is not acceptable if the NT is to be taken seriously. The Christian Scriptures know nothing of two Messiahs, nor of two separate ways to salvation. Jocz writes that the "Gospel is only Good News if the offer of God's grace extends to all men [Jews included]."⁵⁵ If Christ is indeed the messiah, as Christians believe, then he is messiah for all, and this means there can be no ambivalence on the question of a conversionary missions to the Jews. Not only *should* the church engage in such a mission; it *must* do so. Mission to the Jews is the "inevitable result of the claim that Jesus is Lord."⁵⁶

But when presenting the gospel to the Jews, the church must never lose sight of the fact that it also, no less than Israel, is in dire need of that very gospel. In other words, the Christian church and Israel are both, at the same time, what Jocz terms church and mission: "in the Bible Israel is at the same time both Church *and* mission. Israel is Church as God's people of election;

⁴⁹ Jakob Jocz, *A Theology of Election* (New York: Macmillan, 1958) 97.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 108.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 120.

⁵² *Ibid.* 132.

⁵³ Jakob Jocz, *Christians and Jews: Encounter and Mission* (London: SPCK, 1966) 34.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 33.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

but Israel is also mission as part of the rebellious world in need of conversion."⁵⁷ According to Jocz, not only Israel, but also the Christian church, is portrayed this way in Scripture, and he cites as an example Paul's Corinthian correspondence. The Corinthians are the "church" in that they have been saved through grace, yet they are still "mission" because they remain "confused, struggling sinners" who need to be chastised by the apostle.⁵⁸

Jocz's point is that "*only a repenting Church can be a missionary Church.*"⁵⁹ The Christian community can effectively present the gospel to the Jews if it does so with an attitude of humility, fully aware that it is spiritually no better than Israel, and that it is guilty of all the sins of which Israel is guilty.⁶⁰ Some would say that a church that did not do all it could to prevent the Holocaust has no moral credibility, indeed, no moral right, to preach to the Jewish people. But Jocz says just the opposite is true—the nature of the gospel demands that just such a sick, unworthy church must present the message of sin and forgiveness to the Jews: "[I]t is a sick and humiliated Church which has to face the Jewish people and face up to it. . . . In this encounter the Church can never assume an air of superiority, but can only in humble penitence try to hear again what she says to others."⁶¹

By approaching the Jews in such a manner, the church not only improves her chances of conversionary success, she also discovers for herself the true nature of the gospel, namely, that it is entirely a matter of grace. Christians and Jews are equally guilty in the eyes of God, and both find their hope only in Christ. Jocz would say that Christian complicity in the Holocaust, far from disqualifying Christians from presenting the gospel to the Jews, *better* qualifies them for the task, for it makes them realize that they dwell in sinful solidarity with those whom they know so desperately need to hear the gospel. There "is nothing that historic Israel is guilty of, that the Church is not."⁶²

When it comes to the question of Jewish salvation, Jocz radically departs from Barth. Whereas Barth saw corporate Israel saved *en masse* (if not now, then sometime in the future) due to their special status as God's chosen people, Jocz strongly rejects such an idea. He does not accept the premise that membership among God's elect is based on only racial/ethnic heritage. Only individuals, not racial or ethnic groups, can experience salvation, according to Jocz. Jocz says this is one of Paul's central points in Romans, and to claim that an individual is assured salvation as a matter of birthright would "make nonsense of faith" in the Pauline understanding of salvation.⁶³

Jocz insists that salvation can occur for Jews "only by returning, by believing, by submitting to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit of God."⁶⁴ It must be stressed here that Jocz is not advocating Pelagianism; he is fully

⁵⁷ Ibid. 2–3.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 4.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 12.

⁶¹ Ibid. 13.

⁶² Jocz, *Theology of Election* 131.

⁶³ Ibid. 139.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 12.

aware that human salvation is both initiated and completed by God.⁶⁵ Yet he stresses the importance of the individual Jew's personal response to Christ because he believes it is necessary to refute the idea that Jews will somehow "magically" be saved at the eschaton, simply by virtue of their Jewish heritage. This accounts for Jocz's insistence on the need for Christian missions to the Jews (something to which Barth gives no attention). "Israel as a people cannot hear the word of the Cross; it can be heard only personally by the individual Jew."⁶⁶

The concept of personal faith in Christ is so important to Jocz's doctrine of Israel that he rejects outright the Barthian assumption that the unbelief of the Jews is in any way compatible with the divine plan. Unlike Barth, Jocz says that Israel's unbelief is related not to its *election*, but to its *humanity*. He thinks not in terms of collective "Israel's unbelief but human unbelief."⁶⁷ God does not will Jewish unbelief in Christ any more than he wills Gentile unbelief. Nor is Jewish unbelief any different than Gentile unbelief: by not receiving Christ, both Jew and Gentile rebel against God.⁶⁸ Whereas Barth divided the Christian church and the Jewish synagogue into two historically distinct camps, Jocz rejects such a demarcation based on racial distinction, for "the Church is frequently Synagogue and the Synagogue is sometimes Church."⁶⁹ That is, Jews and Gentiles reveal themselves to either be within or without the elect of God by their response to Christ.

Jocz acknowledges that Israel as a collective entity, as the chosen race of God, as a people elected to do his will, *is* a Biblical concept, especially in Romans 9–11. How does Jocz reconcile this fact with his insistence on the importance of the individual's response to Christ? He explains that the key lies in a proper understanding of what the NT, especially Romans, means by election. "St. Paul uses election in a twofold manner: sometimes he speaks of election in personal terms and sometimes in collective. The two are not the same. Israel's election is in respect of revelation; individual election is in respect of salvation."⁷⁰

While Jocz admits that Paul is rather ambiguous regarding these two meanings of election, he insists that Romans 9–11 cannot truly be understood unless this distinction between the two aspects of election is maintained.⁷¹ In Romans, Paul attempts to balance two different, yet related, concepts: his belief in Israel's corporate election as the chosen people of God, and his belief that each person, Jew or Gentile, is elect only if he comes to have personal faith in Christ. Both ideas are necessary, Jocz maintains, in order to make the Christian concept of salvation possible. For if corporate election did not occur, the individual would, in Pelagian fashion, elect himself; only an elect community can make possible individual election, and the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 109.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 191.

⁶⁷ Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961) 321.

⁶⁸ Jocz, *Theology of Election* 7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 134.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 111.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

personal choice it involves. The community, be it historic Israel or the Gentile Christian community, is elect in terms of the *revelation* it receives from God; this revelation in turn makes possible individual Jewish or Gentile salvation.⁷²

It is at this point that Jocz introduces an eschatological component to his theology. While individual salvation occurs in the present, the salvation of "all Israel," which Paul refers to in Romans 11, is an eschatological event; it cannot be understood in the same way as the conversion of individual Jews. The salvation of "all Israel" will occur in the future, although the "remnant," or individual Jewish Christians, such as Paul, are saved in the present.⁷³

By "all Israel," Jocz understands Paul to mean all those Jews and Gentiles who will eventually constitute the one true people of God. For Jocz, all Israel is "the Church of God in her completion, the Church in heaven."⁷⁴ The salvation of individuals is an ongoing process, but the full salvation of all Israel "is an ideal to pray for, to strive after, to try to realize."⁷⁵ In order to bring about this one united Israel, Christians can only continue to proclaim to the Jews (and to remember themselves!) the one thing that will make the true Israel a reality: the cross of Christ. I turn now to a brief analysis of Romans 9–11 as a basis for understanding and evaluating the four positions set forth in this article, with a view toward showing the superiority of Jocz's position.

V. ROMANS 9–11 AS THE BASIS FOR ASSESSING JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

Any theological attempt to explain such matters as the Jewish rejection of Jesus or the nature of Jewish salvation will hardly be credible at least from a NT standpoint, if it cannot claim the support of Paul's teaching in Romans. I hope to show two things. First, that an interpretation of Romans 9–11 that sees Christ as Savior for Gentiles *and* Jews is in no way anti-Semitic. And second, that the interplay between divine sovereignty and personal choice found in Romans indicates that Jocz's theology of Jewish salvation is preferable to those of Williamson, Hall, and Barth.

To put it bluntly, the dual covenant theory maintained by both Williamson and Hall finds no support in these chapters, as just a few examples will make clear. In fact, the theory encounters an immediate, insurmountable problem in the opening verses of chapter nine, namely, Paul's somber, heart-broken attitude regarding his Jewish brethren: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel" (9:2–4). While it is true that Paul does not specifically state that Jewish unbelief in Jesus is the cause of his anguish, Heikki Räisänen rightly remarks that "no other reason makes sense." If it were only a matter

⁷² Ibid. 138.

⁷³ Ibid. 111.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 139.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

of the Jews' failure to understand that God had decided to include Gentiles in his salvific intentions (so Hall), then Paul's deep anguish seems hard to explain.⁷⁶ Why would Paul be willing to abandon his own salvation because of a mere theological misunderstanding on the part of his fellow-Jews? John Piper notes that Paul's willingness to sacrifice himself must mean that his unbelieving brothers are "in a plight as serious as the one he is willing to enter for their sake."⁷⁷ Räisänen bluntly declares that Paul's attitude here "presupposes that his kinsmen are for the moment outside the sphere of salvation."⁷⁸

If Paul maintains this attitude toward Jews who have not received Christ, then clearly Paul does not consider the law to be sufficient for salvation, contrary to both Williamson and Hall. Paul makes this point in 9:30–32, where he contrasts Gentiles, who find righteousness through faith, with Jews who cling to the law and fail to find it. Paul agonizes over non-Christian Jews because he believes the law cannot do for them what the redemptive power of the gospel can. As Charles Talbert declares, "human nature is assumed by Paul to be in bondage to sin, a bondage from which only God can deliver one. Humans are, as a result of their sin, faithless in any relation [including a Torah-observance relation!] with God, a faithlessness from which only God can deliver."⁷⁹

Faced with such evidence, Williamson can only designate as "inauthentically Christian" those passages in Scripture that demand that Jews respond to Christ. Hall, on the other hand, is forced to develop a radical reinterpretation of the Pauline gospel which owes far more to his desire to develop an acceptable post-Holocaust theology than to a fair assessment of Paul's teaching.

If Williamson and Hall's position does not adequately address what Paul teaches concerning Jewish salvation, what of Barth's view that the Jews, *en masse*, will be saved at some moment in the eschatological future?⁸⁰ Barth surely cannot claim Paul's support for his view. There is near-unanimous consent among scholars that Paul did not think salvation was guaranteed for all Jews by virtue of their ethnic origin.⁸¹ Paul makes this quite clear in Rom 9:6–9. In fact, Paul broke from the traditional Jewish understanding of his day, which maintained that all Jews were destined for salvation on the basis of birth.⁸² Barth's position that salvation is something all Jews will arrive at *necessarily*, by divine *fiat*, is at odds with the struggle Paul

⁷⁶ Heikki Räisänen, "Paul, God, and Israel: Romans 9–11 in Recent Research," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism* (ed. Jacob Neusner et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 180.

⁷⁷ John Piper, *The Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) 29.

⁷⁸ Räisänen, "Paul, God, and Israel" 180.

⁷⁹ Charles Talbert, "Paul on the Covenant," *RevExp* 84 (1987) 304.

⁸⁰ While Barth never explicitly states that he believes every person of Jewish descent will be saved, this seems to be his meaning in, for example, *CD* II.2. 238–239.

⁸¹ R. Hvalvik, "A 'Sonderweg' for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11.25–27," *JSNT* 38 (1990) 100.

⁸² Talbert, "Paul on the Covenant" 304.

evinces in Romans 9–11. Paul believes the Jews, God's chosen people, have, for the most part, become enemies of the gospel.

This apparent contradiction in Paul can be best explained by Jocz's position that there are really two types of election described in Romans: the Jewish community is elect in terms of *revelation*, while individual Jews (and Gentiles) are elect in terms of *salvation*. Admittedly, there is a tension between these two themes which Paul never resolves completely,⁸³ but Jocz's theory goes a good part of the way toward relieving it. His belief in the two types of election enables him to fully affirm a passage like Rom 9:4, which calls the Jews the recipients of the covenants, the law, and the promises of God. It also allows him to take seriously the Pauline doctrine of salvation through Christ alone, which shows no partiality toward Jews (e.g. Rom 10:12).

There is a problem with Jocz's understanding of the duality of election, however. It seems to work well only if one's salvation depends *solely* on one's personal response to Christ. But in Romans 9–11, there is clearly more than human free will involved; the thorny issue of predestination throws a great theological wrench into Jocz's understanding of Paul's teaching. John Piper rightly points out that in Romans 9, membership among Israel's elect is based *only* on the electing will of God, not on the actions of the individual.⁸⁴ In fact, Piper makes the case that it is precisely by invoking the doctrine of predestination that Paul can be confident that God's promises have not failed, despite the contrary response of most Jews to the gospel.⁸⁵ In chapter 11, the predestinarian overtones are even stronger. Paul says that God himself is responsible for "hardening" Jews against Christ (11:25). Jocz's position has little room for such divine hardening: Jewish unbelief for him is a matter of sinful, *human* rejection of God.

Karl Barth's position, on the other hand, is much more amenable to the predestinarian currents in Paul's thought. For Barth, God is in control of the Jewish rejection of Jesus, and ultimately it is God's responsibility to resolve the problem of the people who have rejected their own Messiah. At the end of chapter 11, one gets the impression that Paul, too, assigns final responsibility for human salvation to God: "For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" (11:32). Elizabeth Johnson agrees, concluding that the matter of Jewish salvation is "God's problem, and Paul is willing to let God solve it."⁸⁶

Despite the strong predestinarian elements in chapters 9 and 11, it would be wrong to assume that it is the sole basis of Paul's argument. For in chapter 10, faith in contrast to works-righteousness, not divine election, is Paul's criterion for determining salvation.⁸⁷ It has been said that chapter

⁸³ Elizabeth E. Johnson, "Jews and Christians in the New Testament: John, Matthew, and Paul," *Reformed Review* 42 (1988) 119.

⁸⁴ Piper, *Justification of God* 202.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Johnson, "Jews and Christians" 120.

⁸⁷ Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 164–165.

9 looks at the matter of Jewish salvation from *God's* vantage point, while chapter 10 looks at it from *Israel's* point of view.⁸⁸ Even Piper, despite his insistence that Paul's approach to the Jewish problem is thoroughly predestinarian, still believes there is more to Paul's position than predestination alone. He warns against succumbing to "the naive and usually polemical suggestions" that prayer and evangelism are pointless.⁸⁹ Barth's theology of Israel, followed to its logical conclusion, would inevitably fall prey to such dangers. There is no mistaking Paul's message in Romans 9–11, as well as his other writings, as inextricably bound up with preaching and missionary activity.⁹⁰ Paul asks in Rom 10:14, "how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" If Jewish salvation is *entirely* in the hands of God, as Barth claims, Paul's language here would make little sense.

Obviously, Barth's stress only on God's role in Jewish salvation is not sufficient. It makes no allowance for the importance of personal response to the gospel, which Paul insists is necessary for salvation (10:9–13, 11:20, 23). Still, in Romans 9–11, Paul seems to be saying that one's response to Christ is *initiated* by God.⁹¹ Therefore Paul's teaching on predestination should humble us, moving us to recognize that we have no choice but to cast ourselves upon God's mercy.⁹² Nowhere is God's mercy more apparent than in the Savior whom Paul urges everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, to confess.

Even Jocz is compelled to write, regarding the interplay between individual response to the gospel and God's electing grace, "even man's 'Yes' can only be a humble 'Yes,' a sponsored 'Yes,' prompted and encouraged by the Holy Spirit of God."⁹³ And although Jocz may make this admission somewhat grudgingly, his position is preferable to Barth's, since it allows for the priority of God's electing will, while at the same time preserving the importance of personal response. Thus can Paul in chapter 11 speak of Israel's rejection of Christ as both divine hardening (11:25) and a lack of Jewish faith (11:20). If Romans 9–11 is indeed the clearest NT statement regarding the matter of Jewish salvation, then surely Jocz's position is superior to those of Williamson, Hall, and Barth, for Jocz's theology is faithful to the teaching of Christianity's greatest apostle.

Christians should follow Paul's teaching in Romans honestly. They should, along with Williamson and Hall, repudiate the sin of anti-Semitism. They must affirm, with Williamson and Hall (and Paul!), that the Jews are and remain God's special people. Let Christians also recognize, along with Barth, that the "hardening" of the Jews is God's mysterious work; it certainly should not lead Christians to believe that they are in any way "spiritually superior" to Jews. After all, it is because of this hardening that the gospel became available to Gentiles (11:25). Christians are, as Williamson puts it, "guests in the house of Israel." Christians can only stand in puzzlement—

⁸⁸ John Paul Heil, *Romans—Paul's Letter of Hope* (Rome Biblical Institute Press, 1987) 70.

⁸⁹ Piper, *Justification of God* 205.

⁹⁰ C. K. Barrett, *Reading Through Romans* (London: Epworth, 1963) 62–63.

⁹¹ Heil, *Romans* 77.

⁹² Piper, *Justification of God* 205.

⁹³ Jocz, *Theology of Election* 146.

and gratitude—at the inscrutable will of God. But Christians must also insist, along with Jocz, that Jesus Christ is Messiah for all, Gentile and Jew, and that personal response to him is essential for receiving the mercy God intends for his elect. Even the demonic evil of the Holocaust does not alter this.