Is The Church “Israel” Today?

By Prof. Barry Fike

In the Jan/Feb 1990 Issue of “The Reformer” the editor Buff Scott, Jr. had a short article entitled “Who or Where Is God’s Israel Today?” Basically the premise of the article was that today the “church” is God’s Israel and that “God recognizes only one nation today, the nation of believers or one body of people...the natural (physical) children of Abraham (unbelieving Jews) are not Abraham’s offspring or God’s chosen people....”.

In the 1990’s we saw rise to a movement variously known as “Kingdom Now,” “Dominion Theology,” of “Replacement Theology”. Today, some of the biggest names in the religious business are either directly, or at least peripherally, involved. This movement, and the theology it advocates, constitutes what I believe to be one of the greatest threats to the Church and to the people of God of any movement in our generation. It greatly distorts the nature and the work of the Kingdom of God and, in so doing, distorts the very nature of God himself. It engenders bigotry and hatred for other races and peoples and expounds doctrines and philosophies reminiscent of those of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany.

At the heart of its message are five fundamental misconceptions: (1) the Jews rejected Jesus; (2) the Jews crucified Jesus; (3) the Jews were, therefore, cut off by God; (4) replaced by the Church; (5) and the Church of today is the true Israel. All of this is based upon poor biblical exegesis, coupled with almost no knowledge of Church history. The result is a religious system that is anti-Semitic and militant. The destiny of the Church, according to this movement, is to rule, to reign—to establish God’s laws on earth and bring all people into subjection to those laws. Of course, God’s laws mean whatever their definition of God’s laws is, and, herein, a
woeful ignorance of the biblical text is manifested. Many of those who advocate “Kingdom
Now” theology are honest, sincere, well-meaning, although misguided, individuals. Their desire
is simply “to go with the flow.”¹

This basic theology has been a popular one, in various degrees, for about 2000 years. At
one time I believed such material to be true before beginning an honest inquiry into the
scriptures from a Jewish perspective. Since that time my views have been drastically changed
and thus this paper. While a discussion like this could easily fill up many volumes with historical
data and linguistic research, let me give a brief view of what my research indicates is the truth
in this matter.

**Christian Beginnings**

To begin with, one must look at the initial beginning of what we call “Christianity” today
to understand the basis of what will be said later. One of the greatest losses to the Christian
Church has resulted from its centuries-long failure to appropriate the rich tapestry of the Bible’s
Jewish heritage: the history, language, culture, religious practices and feasts, along with the
wealth of scholarly exegetical work done by Jewish sages and Rabbis, which still go virtually
unstudied in today’s seminary and Bible college curricula.² Most people involved in Christianity
today are completely unaware of their historical Jewish roots. They have completely forgotten
that the church was born in the midst of Jewish culture, city and religion. It is clear from the
Christian Scriptures that the Baptist movement, that John was the leader of, and the Jesus
movement did not leave Judaism! The earliest Christian experience was connected to the

The Messiah was Jewish, taught as a Jewish Rabbi, lived in a Jewish culture and only rarely talked with Gentiles since his mission was to go to “the chosen house of Israel” (The Jews)! For years it has been mistakenly taught that the Jews killed Christ and thus a series of unfortunate tragedies have overtaken the Jewish people. But the truth of the Biblical record states that only a small Jewish segment wanted him dead. Most of them were closely associated with the temple aristocracy consisting of the Sadducees and certain sects of the Pharisees. In fact, for their plan to be successful Jesus had to be taken under the cover of night for fear of the people (Matt. 26:5; Mk. 14:2; Lk. 22:2). The trial of Jesus was taken before a Roman court, and, condemned there, he was crucified by Roman soldiers. On the Day of Pentecost 3000 Jews accepted Jesus as their personal Messiah, but in no way is it ever indicated that they left Judaism. As long as the Jewish apostles were alive, the Church’s roots weren’t lost. Fights concerning Jesus still occurred among Jews. Jealous (or zealous) Jewish leaders still hounded Jewish believers who wished to preach to the Gentiles. Yet, despite such differences, there was no debate concerning whether or not God’s promises to the Jewish people were reliable. Early Jewish believers in Jesus (*known to them as ‘Yeshua’) understood that God’s covenant with Israel was eternal. In fact, history records that Jewish Christians continued in the Synagogue until A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed. It was only when the gospel began to be spread out to the Gentile nations, and the church left its Jewish roots, that it began to slowly drift away from the spiritual foundations which had given it its birth and into various religious ideas of a Greek mindset. After the apostles died, the next generation of leaders was mostly Gentile, especially in the great centers of Christian growth,

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4 Eiklor, 54.
which included Antioch and Rome. The Church had begun with Judaism as an all-Jewish sect, but by the early part of the second century its adherents—especially in the diaspora—were predominantly non-Jews.  

**Was God Through With the Jews?**

One of the “errors” of this Greek mindset was the erroneous idea that God was through with the Jews. Call it “Replacement Theology”, “Kingdom Now”, or “Reconstructionism”. It all means the same thing: “GOD IS FINISHED WITH THE JEWS!” Such teaching is not only highly offensive to the Jewish people, it is also unscriptural. The bottom line that Christians are the ‘new Jews’ and the Church is the ‘new Israel” disregards the fact that the Christian church was conceived in a Jewish womb and born in a Jewish cradle. Because of this loss of memory many today fall victim to the archaic roots of historical amnesia which have for centuries affected the collective Christian memory. As Pinchas Lapide says in his book, “Hebrew in the Church”, “…from the days of Paul, as the new faith added non-Jewish elements to its Jewish heritage, the seed of conflict was sown. The divisive strains were painful, and despite many conciliatory voices on either side, the introduction of gentile elements in the early Church easily gave occasion to anti-Jewish incidents...The position of the early Church was not easy. Struggling with its own Jewish Christians and Judaizers on the one hand, and against the anti-Jewish extremists such as the heresies of Marcion on the other, it faced the task of proving to the pagan world of later antiquity that it, and it alone, was the “true Israel,” and that Judaism was merely an illegitimate pretender to the title of a kingdom it had founded and which still carried

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its name...Christian rulers since the fourth century have denied to Judaism any participation in
the contemporary scene. Theologians deprived it of any eschatological future—the Messiah
had already come—and by laying claim to the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures the Church
Fathers robbed the synagogue of even its own past.”

The evolution of Christian anti-Semitism reflects the spread of the new faith among pagan circles and a progressive withdrawal from the ancient faith. The growing hostility was also red by the rivalry for proselytes. Since traditional Judaism continues to attract pagan elements, the newly Christianized groups were highly susceptible to its influence. The young church, therefore, which declared itself to be the true Israel, or “Israel according to the spirit,” heir to the divine promises, found it essential to discredit the “Israel according to the flesh,” to prove that God had cast away His people and transferred His love to the Christians. From the outset, therefore, Christian anti-Semitism was an original manifestation: it differed from the traditional tensions between Israel and the nations and did not merely reflect them.

How did the early church discredit Israel? Immediately the promulgators of this doctrine had a problem proving this. Jesus himself said, when begged by a Canaanite woman to heal her daughter of demon possession, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). His disciples in the “limited commission” charged them in a similar manner by saying, “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5, 6). By these statements, and countless others, Jesus proved himself to be the Messiah promised to ISRAEL.

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Is that was so then fleshly Israel was Israel. It is at this point that we see how inevitable the 
defamation of the actual history of the Jews was, for if the Gentiles were the true Israel, then 
the Jews had all the time been sailing under false colors. That they (the church) were the true 
Israel they proved by innumerable passages from the prophets, in which God speaks of his 
rejection of His own people and His acceptance of the Gentiles. Little by little the Church was 
read back into the whole of Old Testament history, and Christian history was shown to be older 
than Jewish history in that it dates from the creation, and not from Sinai, or even Abraham. 
Continual references to Christ were found in the Old Testament, and it was ‘the Christ of God’ 
who ‘appeared to Abraham, gave divine instructions to Isaac, and held converse with Moses 
and the later prophets.’

Although a few Jewish Christians apparently still attended synagogue in Jerome’s day 
(A.D. 400), the parting of the way seems to have been largely finalized by around the middle of 
the second century due to a large number of factors. By the time of Justin Martyr (A.D. 160) a 
new attitude prevailed in the Church, evidenced by its appropriating the title “Israel” for itself! 
Until this time the church had defined itself more in terms of continuity with the Jewish people; 
that is, it was an extension of Israel. There was a growing awareness, however, that the 
Synagogue was firm in its stance that Jesus was not the Messiah of Israel, and that on this point 
the Synagogue was not going to change its mind. The realization of this impasse gradually drew 
the church to define itself in terms of discontinuity with—indeed, as the replacement of— 
Israel! To this point not only had Jewish Christians considered themselves part of the national 
body of Israel, but so too had Gentile believers. They saw themselves as grafted into Israel, as 

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part of a believing remnant within Israel, not those who had usurped the place of Israel, not as a separate people independent of Israel. Therefore, as long as the Church had a reasonable balance of Jews and Gentiles in the same body, there was no tendency to take over the term Israel. But by Justin’s time that balance has been lost. In fact, in his letters to Autolycus, Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch from 168 to 181 (or 188), after relating the story of creation, and of the flood, and after pointing out pagan ignorance of these events, adds “and therefore it is proved that all others have been in error, and that we Christians alone have possessed the truth.”

The church began to feel the necessity to prove the reality of the Messianic claims of Jesus from Old Testament prophecy and by any exegesis however far-fetched argued for His claims. Cyprian had a collection of over seven hundred texts that are collected, dealing with every possible subject of controversy.

Once it was felt that the Messianic question was settled there was an inevitable deduction made by the Christian writers. We have replaced Israel as God’s people. Thus, the Jews were regarded as heretics, or apostates. ‘For it is clear that they have deserted the law, who have not believed in Him whom the Law proclaims to be alone sufficient for salvation. They should be considered apostates, for denial of Christ is essentially a violation of the law.’

All the writers who wrote catalogues of heresies included under that heading many Jewish sects. While in pre-Christian Judaism they only include divagations from Orthodox Judaism, for contemporary times they include all Jews.

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10 Wilson, 84.
11 Parkes, 98.
In discussing this concept with a Christian brother of mine recently, I was told, “Paul did teach the abrogation of the Torah. ‘For he himself is our peace, who had made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the divine wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law and its commandments and regulations’ (Eph. 2:14, 15). The question that has to be asked is, “Can the term ‘law’ be a direct reference to the whole of Torah, which can mean either the Pentateuch or the whole of the Hebrew scriptures, or something much more limited? Could it be that Paul is referring to something completely different than the Mosaic Law? If the reference is to the entirety of Hebrew Scriptures, what scrolls did Paul ask Timothy to bring to him while in prison? What was Timothy to study to show himself approved unto God? Historical references show that the first songbook of the redeemed, including Gentiles, was the book of Psalms as alluded to in Eph. 5:19. Thus, I find it hard to believe that Paul is referring to the whole of the Old Testament. The Greek word ‘nomos’ (law) is never used for the whole of the Old Testament.13

Could he then be talking about the first five books of the Old Testament commonly known as the Pentateuch? If so, what do we do with all of the references to Adam, sacrifice, Abraham, the Ten Commandments and the history of mankind up to the Israelites settlement in Canaan? Should those not be found anywhere in the New Testament since the ‘law’ was done away with?

If Paul is talking about neither of these options what is he referring to? First of all, one must begin with the ‘mesotoikon’ translated ‘middle wall’ in v. 14. Paul says that Christ has broken down this partition, this dividing piece. What is this? In the context, the middle wall of

13 Parkes, 102.
partition seems to be the wall of partition which consists in the fence between God and man. By his incarnation and death Christ did away with the law of the commandments and removed the enmity between God and man. To refer to the passage to the removal of the antithesis between Greek and Jew, with reminiscence of the temple barriers, the walls of the Law as a protection against Gentiles, or the barricades of the ghetto is hardly convincing or even possible in light of vs. 16, 17.\textsuperscript{14} That the hostility between Greeks and Jews can be done away by abolishing the Law as a way of salvation is by no means obvious. There can be no doubt, however, that the passage is dealing with a new relationship of the Gentiles to God.\textsuperscript{15}

Why is it not obvious that the Mosaic Law is in Paul’s discussion in Ephesians? Because Paul is not discussing that. He (Jesus) obviously wears the clothing prescribed by the law...The prophetic witness applies to Him precisely as One who is set under the Law...The very goal of the messianic work of Jesus was to fulfill the law...His own coming is fulfillment of the Law, and the crucifixion is understood as the uniting of perfect obedience to God’s will as this is stated in scripture with love brethren in the act of self-sacrifice. The Synoptists, of course, do not say directly that they see here the fulfillment of the law by Jesus, but this is in line with their depiction (Matt. 3:15).\textsuperscript{16} Why can it be said with a surety that Jesus kept the law? Because the motive for keeping this law was simply that of obedience. The law was designed to bind the people and the individual to Yahweh. The Law sought to regulate the relation of the covenant people and the individual to the covenant God and to the member of the people belonging to

\textsuperscript{15} TDNT, 625.
\textsuperscript{16} TDNT, 625.
this God, to regulate it on the basis of the election of this people by this God, and by the avoidance of things which might destroy or disrupt the relation.\textsuperscript{17}

All law is the will of Yahweh. It rests on the fact that in history God had given Himself to be the God of this people, and would see this people live as His possession. Thus, law was not a damming force, as God gave it, but a binding, cementing force like a marriage between the groom and his bride. What many of God’s people did with it by making it a step ladder of salvation by keeping it became as legalistic as many people today make the grace of God by following their three or five step programs of understanding and salvation. There is thus a direct and positive relation between the Law on the one side and Jesus as the Christ on the other. True obedience to the law is rendered in discipleship. The rich young ruler will achieve perfect observance of the Law when he surrenders himself and follows Jesus (Mk. 10:17ff). The questioner of Mark 12:34 is not far from the kingdom of God when he recognizes the Law’s radical requirement of love, though he is not yet in the kingdom, since he still expects the fulfillment of the commandment by his own achievement.\textsuperscript{18}

Who can live up to this? All who will follow God’s will! It is interesting to note that the primitive community of God took its attitude to the Law from Jesus himself. Did the Law save anyone? No! It never had! Salvation was always a result of the grace of God! Then why continue to follow the Law? The main reason is concern for the possibility of the Jewish mission. The preaching of Jesus as the Christ of scripture could not be believed by Jews if his followers left the law of God. Paul was asked to take a Nazarite vow upon returning to Jerusalem for just this purpose. “So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the

\textsuperscript{17} TDNT, 1062.
\textsuperscript{18} TDNT, 1038.
brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow” (Acts 18:18-19 NKJV). Nevertheless, that Paul cut his hair at Cenchrea shows that he had earlier taken a Nazirite vow for a particular period of time that had now ended. Such a vow had to be fulfilled at Jerusalem...19 Why did he comply? It wasn’t for salvation, for such was already his. He did so for the sake of becoming a Jew for the Jews as he had become a Gentile for the Gentiles. Hereby, the community, and its head, would have been condemned from the very outset in Jewish eyes had not this happened. That Paul could agree with this view is shown beyond any question in 1 Cor. 9:20f: “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.” (NIV)

In returning to Ephesians 4, let’s note that it says that Christ broke down this partition, this division between the Gentile and the Jews annulling in his flesh the enmity, explained as the Law of the commandments in decrees, that one man might be made out of the two. Why was there enemyness between Jew and Gentile? As has already been explained, what else could there be between those chosen of God and the other? The Rabbinic understanding of the Torah may be summed up in two inwardly related principles: (1) God has revealed himself once and for all and exclusively in the Torah. (2) Man has his relationship with God only in his relationship with the Torah. Thus, as an Israelite their relationship to God was sustained with the law given to them. This law was exclusively for the Jewish people. They had to remain separate for that was law! (Ex. 34:12). This created a natural enemyness between Jew and Gentile. What else could be expected? It was this wall that Christ tore down—not Jewish law.

In Col. 2:14, Paul says, “having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us…” When Paul says “us”, inclusive of both Gentiles and him, a Jew, could he be referring to a Law that holds ALL accountable without any specific reference being made to Torah? If there was no law but Torah then what of the nations to whom this law was not given. “Where there is no Law, neither is there violation” (Rom. 4:15b). But we know that there will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jews first and also of the Greek” (Rom. 2:9). Paul answers this seemingly difficult injunction in Romans 2:14,15 when he says, “For when Gentiles who do not have the law do instinctively the things of the Law, these not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts…” Thus, God’s law is universally understood by all men whether given in written form or not. Paul alludes to this law in Romans when he states, “For when nations not having Law do by nature the things of the Law, they not having Law are a law to themselves” (Rom. 1:14).

The nature of the Law is summed up in the statement that this Law is the good will of God. Hence, not to be subject to the Law is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7).

This is further pointed out by the word ireenee (peace) at the end of v. 15. Peace is the end result of abolishing this wall that divided these individuals. Ireenee means peace with God and within humanity. It thus denotes order, the healing of all relationships. Through the law, and for the sake of it, the Jews had to separate themselves from the Gentiles and regard them as enemies, and the Gentiles repaid them with enmity on their side. Thus, the law of Christ now gave both assurance of their salvation. For the Jewish people, God’s covenant is still in

20 TDNT, vol. 4, 1063.
effect as he never has condemned the everlasting covenant that he made with Abraham. However, by his blood, the wild olive branch has been grafted into the natural olive tree. “If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root” (Romans 11:17). But the olive tree has never been totally chopped down or, according to nature, it could not grow back. For an olive tree to continue living at least one branch must be kept on it. Yes, the Herodians and Sadducees were branches that were chopped off. But many others were not! Such seems to point out that the two became one by adoption of Christ but not negating the Old Testament law for Israel which was to be an eternal statue with the Hebrew nation. Paul admonished the Gentiles “…not to be arrogant toward the branches...remember...the ROOT SUPPORTS YOU!” (Rom. 11:18).

**Changing the Concept of Law**

In order to justify this reading of history, Christians were compelled to challenge the Jewish conception of the Law. The Old Testament, as the embodiment of a complete conception of community, and of the place of religion in common life, which is to the modern scholar the fascination of the law and the prophets, had no meaning for the writers of the early Church.²¹

Even today this misunderstanding of the “Law” is found in the common misconceptions that many within the Lord’s church hold of it. All too often it is looked at as a rule book that damned rather than saved those who followed it. Grace has become a solely New Testament practice and damnation was part and parcel of the Mosaic Law given by God to his people.

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Such is sadly mistaken. Jewish law is the divinely given way through which each individual tries, in his own unique manner, to achieve closeness to the divine source...The compelling feature of the moral law lies in the face that it expresses the divine will. Man satisfies his existential need for value by responding to this expression of the divine will because Jewish law is the divinely ordained way through which each individual is enabled, in his own unique manner, to achieve closeness to the divine source...Judaism is thoroughly legal from beginning to end. If, to the linguistic philosopher, reality is ultimately language, and reality is important and meaningful to the extent that it can be expressed in language, to the Jew, reality is ultimately law. The moral ethic is important to the degree that it can be expressed in terms of law. However, Gentiles entirely missed the moral and corporate significance of the Mosaic legislation. Unconscious that they themselves were creating a ritual and a rule almost as complicated as the priestly code, they saw in the observances of Judaism something comic and contemptible...Justin puts into the mouth of Trypho the following summary of his religion: “first be circumcised, and then observe what ordinances have been enacted for the Sabbath and the feasts, and the new moons of God, and in a word do all the things which have been written in the Law, and then, perhaps, you may obtain mercy from God. To have such ignorance of Judaism, these Gentiles had no difficulty in considering the Law to be an unimportant portion of the scriptures. Such was looked upon as a temporary addition to a book otherwise universal and eternal. Why was it added, it was asked? Because of the wickedness of the Jews.

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23 Parkes, 100-101.
It is indeed unfortunate that the warning that Paul gave to Gentile believers, in Romans 11:17-24, has gone virtually unheeded. When studied very poor methods of hermeneutics and exegesis were used to determine the original meaning in the day and mind of the one who originally wrote it. The Church has become so overwhelmingly Gentile that it began to reason that there was no more need for the support of the room (Israel)! What presumption! At first, the Gentiles were but a rejected wild olive branch allowed by God’s mercy to be grafted into the believing family of Abraham. But in the second, third, and fourth centuries a new spirit of arrogance and super-sessionism has risen. Paul never anticipated that things would develop this far. He insisted that God did not reject his people, for “God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:20; cf. v. 1). Yet, Gentiles claimed to have replaced Israel. As the “new Israel”, the gentile church spiritually expropriated what had belonged to Israel.24

At first, the church was a remnant within Israel, participating in new-covenant life inside a renewed “Israel of God.” Of this Jewish haburah (religious brotherhood), Gentiles had no part. For when the Church began, Gentiles were described as those “who do not know God” (2 Thess. 4:5). But now, those formerly outside the covenant had displaced those physical sons of Abraham who had given them spiritual birth. This displacement resulted in many institutions and concepts of Israel being de-Judaized or Hellenized by the Gentile church. In his Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, Justin Martyr emphasized that what was of old and had belonged to Israel was now the property of Christians. The Jewish scriptures were a central part of this transference. They are “not yours, but ours,” Justin stated emphatically to Trypho.25

Anti-Jewish Rhetoric

24 Wilson, 84, 85.
25 Wilson, 89.
It is true that portions of the New Testament and other early Christian literature contain rather striking anti-Jewish rhetoric. But it is crucial, however, to make an important distinction about these polemical outbursts against Jews and Judaism. In the New Testament, the adversaries Judaeos polemic was “an intro-family device used to win Jews to the Christian faith, in the second century it become anti-Semitic and was used to win Gentiles. In the first case, it was directed mainly by Jews against Jews, and in the second century mainly by Gentiles against Jews.”

It is one thing to read inflammatory language such as is used in Matthew 23:15, 16, 17, 33, 37; John 8:44; 1 Thess. 2:15 and Rev. 2:9 in the context of the first-century intramural Jewish debate. It is another thing, however, to take this stinging rhetoric, as the Church has done tragically over the centuries, and use it to promote the condemnation of Jews and the negation of all that Jewish.

But what about Paul and his leaving Judaism to be a Christian? Again, such a view is simply a result of poor study of Judaism and the foundational thoughts that Paul clearly points out in his letters. Never does he say that he has left his spiritual roots. To have done so would have made him little more than a pagan and on the same level with those he taught. Though some of his thoughts were obviously reformed, his Jewish background lent itself to an understanding of God that is obvious in his teachings. Paul never taught the abrogation of the Torah (meaning either the first five books of the O.T. or the entire O.T.; context determines which usage is to be applied. In this cause the whole of Jewish law). Paul did struggle with the status of Judaism in what he considered the Messianic era. This intellectual and emotional struggle is evident in Romans 9-11.

26 Wilson, 91, 92.
27 Wilson, 92.
What is argued was not that Israel ceased to be the covenant people, but that it is not necessary to be of Israel “in the flesh,” that is, either descended from a fleshly Jew or proselytized into Judaism and thereby part of “corporate Israel,” in order to be “Israel”. The pagan-turned-Christian was Israel, Paul argued. Thus, the person of faith was Israel, and the person who did not believe in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus was not Israel, even if he was Jewish. But this new definition did not signify the abrogation of the election of Israel, it merely argued that the election continued through those who became the children of Abraham through the promise. Paul was the first to advance a theory, used later by the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, Justin, and other early Christian polemists in a way that Paul not probably did not intend. Paul’s statement, or theory, in question is found in Romans 9:8. The later “interpreters would say that the “elder” son of Genesis 25:23 is Israel in the flesh, “the natural children” (Rom. 9:8), and the “younger” whom he will serve, or to whom he will become subordinate, is the Israel constituting the Christian community. The distinction between Paul and his successors might be subtle, but Paul saw the unbroken continuation of the election and not its abrogation. He did not see the Christian experience as the establishment of a “new” covenant in the sense of a different one with another people. For him the church was the “saved remnant,” as Judah was the saved remnant when northern Israel was destroyed.28

Look at the first verse of chapter 11 carefully. “I saw then, has God cast away His people? GOD FORBID for I am also an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin.” The apostle is simply saying, “How could anyone claim that god has thrown the

28 Sigal, 79.
Jews away when I myself am Jewish?” Verse two is emphatic: “God hath not cast away His people which he foreknew…” Verse twenty-six gives fits to those who argue that the Church will be saved...for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” But this would be absurd, for those who follow Jesus have already been saved as Christians have always affirmed. God is speaking of two lasting entities in this important passage: the Church and national Israel. In v. 28 Paul writes, “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes.” Paul recognized here that some Jewish leaders were fighting the early believers (most of whom were Jewish), and he acknowledged that this opposition made them their enemies. But many times we only read half of the verse. Paul continues, “As touching the election, they are beloved for the father’s sakes.” For the sake of His promises to the fathers of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—God’s binding commitment to them will not be broken. That is nailed down by Paul in verse twenty-nine when he declares that the gifts and the calling of God to the Jews are irrevocable.29

In brother Scott’s afore mentioned article, it is commented that the natural (physical) children of Abraham (unbelieving Jews) are not Abraham’s offspring of God’s chosen people. Then Romans 9:6-8 is quoted to say that it is not the natural children who are God’s children today, but it is the children of promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. That’s exactly what Paul means. A Jew is not one that is born into a Jewish family. Judaism is a living faith in a living God! In his book, “What is a Jew?” Rabbi Morris N. Kertzer states that, “Judaism has always been a living faith—constantly growing and changing as does everything that lives.”30 But when asked, “Do Jews believe that Judaism is the only True Religion?” Rabbi Kertzer answers,

29 Eiklor, 61.
“...we neither judge nor condemn the honest, devout worshipper of any faith. The Talmud tells us: ‘The righteous of all nations are worthy of immortality...a Gentile who follows the Torah is as good as our High priest.” This idea of salvation limited to one group never had any place in the Jewish faith and has no place in it today. In Judaism right conduct is the path to God. This path lies open to Jews and non-Jews.  

It might be good for us to once again look at our Lord’s admonition to “Judge not lest ye be judged.” As of yet I have to meet the man or woman who really has the divine knowledge to call the heaven or hell judgment on any individual. Each man will stand before God and give a reckoning of his service to his master on earth. Let’s be sure, as we continue to interpret the meaning of scriptures that we look at the original language, author, intent of writing and who it was written to. Let’s go back and accept the Jewishness of Christianity and accept the fact that our rooms are where our Lords were: In Judaism!

**Summing up**

I thought it might be revealing for you to hear some of the same sentiment that I have expressed coming from the “other side of the track”. This lengthy quote is from Seymour Siegel in the book, “Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation.”

The story of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is a painful one to contemplate. The elder and younger brother have sown hatred instead of love. The solution of the tension seems to me to lie on the theological plane—at least in the beginning. Christianity must reinterpret itself so that it’s important role in the economy of salvation not bring with it the claim that the Jews and their faith have been superseded. This kind of work is

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going on in ALL AREA OF CHRISTIANITY. For several decades, the Jewish community has been pondering over the views of Franz Rosenweig.

“Our recognition of Christianity rests, in fact, upon it’s recognition of us. It is the Torah, ultimately, which is spread abroad by Bible societies to the most distant lands. No one comes to the Father—except through him (that is, through Jesus). No one comes, but the situation is different when one need no longer come to the Father because he is already with Him. This is the case of the nation of Israel.”

What Rosensweig is saying is that there may very well be a new covenant and an “old one”. But the new one does not abrogate the old one. It is the additional covenant for the Gentiles to become part of the people of God. It is, as Michael Wyschogrod has said, the “Judaism of the Gentiles.”

It we are indeed younger and older brothers, it is the duty of the Christian to share in the protection of the Jewish people from their enemies. Precarious is Jewish existence—who can be at ease in Zion?—for God is beckoning us to be restless until his fulfillment comes.

On the other hand, we as Jews should feel a responsibility for Christianity, which is under attack by the idols of the world. We have a stake in the continuation of Christianity and its vigor. The ways of providence are beyond our ken. It was decided that in large areas of the globe, it would be the Christian church which would preserve and teach the truths of creation, revelation, and redemption. We cannot, as Jews, allow the church to be replaced by those forces which seek to destroy it—and with it the human spirit.

Jewish self-understanding still rests on the doctrine of chosenness and covenant. It affirms that the Jewish people is not an ordinary people like all others peoples, but one called
into being by God to serve his purposes in the world. This is a summons and a sending—an obligation to witness to justice and truth amidst the cruelties and hypocrisies of the world. This task we share with men of good will, especially our Christian brothers who read the same Scriptures and who look to the same God.\textsuperscript{32}