

## AN APOLOGETIC RESPONSE ON HOW TO SHARE THE GOSPEL OF MESSIAH JESUS IN LIGHT OF THE HOLOCAUST

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International Society of Christian Apologetics  
Fort Worth, Texas – 24 April 2010

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.... Some talked of God, of his mysterious ways, of the sins of the Jewish people, and of their future deliverance. But I had ceased to pray. How I sympathized with Job! I did not deny God's existence, but I doubted His absolute goodness.<sup>1</sup>

How even after sixty-five years does one answer the questions of the Holocaust? How does one seek to explain the death of six million whose only "crime" was being Jewish? How does one fathom the actions that could result in the death of almost 1.5 million Jewish children?<sup>2</sup>

However, these questions are not the most "impossible" to answer. The most impossible ones of all are simply – How does one show the love of Jesus after two millennia of 'Christian' accusations of deicide? How does one illustrate the compassion of Christianity amid the ashes of innocent Jewish children? How does one share the Gospel of Messiah Jesus after the Holocaust?

Therefore, this paper will embark on a journey to examine the Church's anti-Semitic past. An expedition that will end with the illustration that true Christianity is diametrically opposed to this irrational hatred. This paper also will attempt to take each of the impossible questions and provide an apologetic answer that defends the Gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), 32, 42.

<sup>2</sup> "Children during the Holocaust," *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (1 April 2010). Internet: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005142>. Accessed: 12 April 2010.

## The “Black Eye” of Church History

The year 1965 is not one of the most widely known years in the turbulent decade of the 1960s. 1963 is known for the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. 1964 was the coronation date for the Beatles in America and the overdue passage of the Civil Rights Act. The years 1968 and 1969 were the tumultuous years in which everything happened from the “Summer of Love” to the Manson Murders.

So just what is so significant about the year 1965? In December 1965, Pope Paul VI brought to a conclusion the three-year exercise known as Vatican Council II which revolutionized the worship practices of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup> However, the most fateful decision exercised was to announce officially (October 1965), after more than 1,700 years of accusations and malicious attacks to the contrary, that the Jewish people were not **solely** responsible for the murder of God (i.e., deicide).<sup>4</sup> This statement by Paul VI did little to ease the pain of almost two millennium declarations of hatred towards the Jewish people. For from the Patristic Fathers to the founders of the Protestant Reformation, believers in a state of spiritual amnesia forgot that the foundation of the church was Jewish in nature and scope.

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<sup>3</sup> Gary Macy, “Vatican II: 40 Years Later – The Second Vatican Council: A Timeline,” *National Catholic Reporter* (4 October 2002). Internet: [http://www.natcath.com/NCR\\_Online/archives/100402/100402d.htm](http://www.natcath.com/NCR_Online/archives/100402/100402d.htm). Accessed on 19 January 2010. See also, “The Jews and Vatican II,” *American Magazine* (November 30, 1963). Internet: [http://www.americanmagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=10241](http://www.americanmagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10241). Accessed on 13 January 2010.

<sup>4</sup> “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965.” Internet: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html). Accessed on 13 January 2010; Pier Francesco Fumagalli, “The Roots of Anti-Judaism in the Christian Environment: *Nostra Aetate*: A Milestone.” Internet: [http://www.vatican.va/jubilee\\_2000/magazine/documents/ju\\_mag\\_01111997\\_p-31\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01111997_p-31_en.html). Accessed on 13 January 2010; Gerhart M. Riegner, “Twenty Years after *Nostra Aetate*,” *Christian Jewish Relations* vol. 18, no. 4 (1985): 17-31. The specific wording of *Nostra Aetate* regarding the issue of deicide is both enlightening and disconcerting:

True, the Jewish authorities and those that followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; (13) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged **against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews today**. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. (writer’s emphasis noted)

## Survey of the Patristic Fathers

It is impossible to give anything but a cursory survey of Christianity's anti-Semitic history. For while the previous sentence is inflammatory, it should be acknowledged that regardless of its hyperbolic wording the Christian Church has either by apathy or intention created an environment in which the Holocaust could occur. This ambivalent atmosphere began with one of the earliest Church fathers in a post-apostolic world – Justin Martyr (c. 100-165).

Questions abound to the validity of an actual debate occurring between a Jewish traveler Trypho and Justin Martyr. The one constant that is agreed upon, however, is the fact that Justin's "dialogue" laid the foundation for the hatred and concept of replacement theology which was to come.<sup>5</sup> This replacement theology, albeit first found in the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century Epistle of Barnabas,<sup>6</sup> finds its voice in the allegorical theology of Origen (c. 182-251).<sup>7</sup>

The Council of Nicaea (325), known primarily for Arius vs. Athanasius, also set the official stage for the division of Christianity from its Jewishness. The council determined it was needed to separate the calendar date for remembering the Resurrection of Jesus from the sacrificial redemption story of Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, and Feast of First Fruits.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho," *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish-Christian Encounter*, F. E. Talmadge, ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 92-99; Rausch, 20-22; John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 228.

<sup>6</sup> Amy Karen Downey, *Paul's Relationship to the Jewish People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oradea, Romania; Emanuel University Press, 2009), 111; Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 189-91; Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 126-27, 139; and Robert R. Hann, "Supersessionism, Engraftment, and Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Reflections on the Presbyterian Statement on Jewish-Christian Relations," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 27:2 (Spring 1990): 331-32; and Rausch, 20.

<sup>7</sup> James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 167; Williamson, 115; and Jocelyn Hellig, *The Holocaust and Antisemitism: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 208-09.

<sup>8</sup> Olivier J. Melnick, *They Have Conspired Against You: Responding to the New Anti-Semitism* (Huntington Beach, CA: Purple Remnant, 2007), 23-25; Rausch, 20.

Augustine (c. 354-430) built from the replacement of Justin Martyr/Barnabas' and the separatist Nicaean Council an allegorical comparison of the Church and the Jewish people to Abel and Cain.<sup>9</sup> This allegory of the Jews as Cain manifested into the "Wandering Jew" who were destined to remain on earth to serve as emblems of what happens to those who reject Jesus. Augustine encouraged not pity or sympathy but rather a cautionary tale of the dangers of rejecting Jesus.<sup>10</sup> Augustine advocated perhaps what could be described as a "fate worse than death" in Book XII:

For whoever destroys them in this way shall suffer sevenfold vengeance, that is, shall bring upon himself the sevenfold penalty under which the Jews lie for the crucifixion of Christ. So to the end of the seven days of time, the continued preservation of the Jews will be a proof to believing Christians of the subjection merited by those who, in the pride of their kingdom, put the Lord to death.<sup>11</sup>

However, it is with John Chrysostom that we find the ignominious realization of Patristic anti-Semitism. The Bishop of Antioch (344-407) in a series of eight homilies filled his congregants with a rage against the Jewish people with words such as "[A]lthough such beasts are unfit for work, they are fit for killing. And this is what happened to the Jews: while they were making themselves unfit for work, they grew fit for slaughter."<sup>12</sup> This frenzy of hatred found its final fulfillment in the ovens of Dachau, Mauthausen, and Treblinka.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Williamson, 115-17; Hellig, 207-09.

<sup>10</sup> Joel Carmichael, *The Satanizing of the Jews: Origin and Development of Mystical Anti-Semitism* (New York: Fromm, 1992), 36. Carmichael explains this wandering punishment as – "That was why they survived—to be eternal witnesses precisely to their own guilt, as well to the truth of the prophecies embedded in their own Scriptures, now properly understood only by the Church, and to be witnesses too to the very Triumph of the Church."

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, "Reply to Faustus, the Manichean," *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish-Christian Encounter*, F. E. Talmadge, ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 28-32 (quotation from page 31).

<sup>12</sup> "Medieval Sourcebook: Saint John Chrysostom: Eight Homilies Against the Jews." Internet: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/chrysostom-jews6.html>. Accessed on 4 April 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 50-52; Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews: The Reason for Antisemitism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 94-95; Carmichael, 45-46; Hellig, 209-11; and Rausch, 23-25.

## Overview from the Time of the Crusades to the Shoah

The writings, sermons, and advocacy of the Patristic Fathers paved the way for the next 1,500 years of Christian history. The inglorious Crusades, which were ultimately neither holy nor triumphant, began when Pope Urban II called Europe to arms in 1095.<sup>14</sup> However, more persecution was done to the Jewish people than actual victories achieved in the battles against the Muslims. Jewish citizens of France and Germany were forced to either convert or die.<sup>15</sup> These faulty evangelism tactics only resulted in false converts (i.e., marranos) or Jewish martyrs who died for their faith which resulted in eternal separation from the God of their Fathers. The Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson recalls this futile eternal martyrdom when it was written:

Twenty-two people were slain there and the majority were forcibly converted because of our many sins and great guilt. The forced converts remained there until the day of indignation passed, and afterwards they returned to the Lord with all their heart; may God accept their penitence and forgive the sins of His people.... It is now fitting to recount the praises of those who were forcibly converted. They risked their lives even in matters pertaining to food and drink. They slaughtered the animals they ate in accordance with Jewish ritual, extracted the forbidden fat, and inspected the meat in accordance with Rabbinic law. They did not drink prohibited wine and rarely attended church, and whenever they did go, it was under great coercion and fear, and they went with aggrieved spirits.<sup>16</sup>

The Crusades of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries opened the door for more horrors to follow for the Jewish people. The Inquisition which was focused on uncovering the false converts of the Crusader period brought about growing suspicions about the Jewish people. These “Urban

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**Personal Note:** Numerous personal conversations with both survivors and children of Holocaust survivors have provided this presenter with numerous accounts of anecdotal moments in which Jewish individuals were told that they were being killed because they had killed Jesus.

<sup>14</sup> Carroll, 238-39; Prager and Telushkin, 96; and Hellig, 211.

<sup>15</sup> David Berger, “Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages,” *American Historical Review* vol. 91, no. 3 (June 1986): 577; Carroll, 246-48, 260-63; Hellig, 211-14; Prager and Telushkin, 96-97; Melnick, 30-31; and Carmichael, 57-63.

<sup>16</sup> “The Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson,” *The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades*, trans. and ed. Shlomo Eidelberg (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1996), 67, 68.

Legends” of Blood Libel and Host Desecration today are seen as the naïve beliefs of illiterate Middle Age citizens; however, to the Jewish people they often meant torture and death.<sup>17</sup>

Following the Crusades and Inquisition of the Dark Ages, Martin Luther was seen at the beginning of the Reformation period as a voice of reason and hope for the Jewish people.<sup>18</sup> In “Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew” (1523), Luther writes, “And if I had been a Jew and had seen such idiots and blockheads ruling and teaching the Christian religion, I would rather have been a sow than a Christian.”<sup>19</sup> However by the end of Luther’s life, this rational man became an irrational tyrant who not only sought the end of the Jewish people<sup>20</sup> but also provided a template from which Hitler’s Third Reich could operate. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen provides a point-counterpoint parallel between what he saw as the steps to the Final Solution and Luther’s final diatribe (1543), “Concerning the Jews and Their Lies.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Prager and Telushkin, 97-103; Carroll, 268-77. Prager and Telushkin bring out the fact that the accusation of Host Desecration led to the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council (1215) which ordered the wearing of a yellow badge of all Jews so that they could be identified and perhaps even targeted. These accusations and suspicions fed and were in turn fed more hatred against the Jewish people with the production of “Passion Plays”. Gordon R. Mork, “Christ’s Passion on Stage—The Traditional Melodrama of Deicide,” *Journal of Religion and Film* vol. 8, special issue no. 1 (February 2004); Internet: <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/2004Symposium/Mork.htm>. Accessed on 13 January 2010. See also, *Oberammergau 1960 and 1970: A Study in Religious Anti-Semitism* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1970), 3. An anonymous letter (“The Narrative of the Old Persecutions, or Mainz Anonymous,” *The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades*, trans. and ed. Shlomo Eidelberg [Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1996], 102) from the Jewish people of France provides a glimpse of this barbarity in the name of Christ with this warning:

When the errant ones and burghers heard this, they cried out. They all assembled, anyone of capable of drawing and bearing a sword, big and small, and declared: “Behold, the time has come to avenge him who was nailed to the wood, whom their forefathers slew. Now, let no remnant or vestige of them be allowed to escape, not even a babe or suckling in the cradle.

<sup>18</sup> Hans J. Hillerbrand, “Martin Luther and the Jews” in *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroads, 1990), 129-133.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Luther, “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew,” *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish-Christian Encounter*, F. E. Talmadge, ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 33.

<sup>20</sup> Carmichael, 79-86; Prager and Telushkin, 106-09; Melnick, 32-34; Hellig, 214-16; and Rausch, 27-29.

<sup>21</sup> John Stendahl, “Speaking the Unspeakable,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 32:1 (February 2005): 12-13; Goldhagen, 136; and Hillerbrand, 127-28. See primarily and especially, Martin Luther, “Concerning the Jews and

### Goldhagen's Parallel

1. Verbal Attacks
2. Physical Attacks
3. Measures to separate Jews from non-Jews
4. Forced immigration
5. "Forced resettlement"
6. Establishing Ghettos
7. Starvation, debilitation, and disease
8. Slave labor
9. Genocide – mass shootings, gas chambers, starvation
10. "Death Marches"

### "Concerning the Jews and Their Lies"

1. Set fire to their synagogues
2. Homes to be destroyed
3. Removal of all prayer books and religious works
4. Rabbis be forbidden to teach or instruct
5. No promise of safe travel
6. Money and livelihood be taken away from them
7. Hard labor
8. Forced immigration
9. "If this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden—the Jews."<sup>22</sup>

However, and unfortunately, Christian anti-Semitism did not end with Luther's death.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries also reflected a period of irrational hatred. A hatred often expressed in the veil of Christendom and in the name of the Jewish Jesus. From the forged *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*<sup>23</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century pogrom period<sup>24</sup> to the ranting of the 1930s American priest Father Charles Coughlin,<sup>25</sup> the hundred years prior to the Shoah (Holocaust) reflected no better on the Christian church than the 1,600 years prior. Therefore, the history of the Church in light of the current spiritual condition of world Jewry provides the need to answer a series of increasingly impossible questions. Failure to do so perhaps invalidates the testimony of Christians who claim to follow Jesus but ignore the reality of their past or the spiritual plight of the physical descendants of this Jewish Messiah.

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Their Lies," *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish-Christian Encounter*, F. E. Talmadge, ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 34-36.

<sup>22</sup> Goldhagen, 136; Luther, 34-36.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: Antisemitism, Conspiracy, and the Protocols of Zion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-10.

<sup>24</sup> Melnick, 34-36

<sup>25</sup> Rausch, 99-100; Carroll, 437-38.

## Attempting to Answer the Impossible Questions

### Question 1: How does one show the love of Jesus after two millennia of ‘Christian’ accusations of deicide?

Deicide, the false accusation that the Jewish people in perpetuity are responsible for the death of God (i.e., the crucifixion of Jesus),<sup>26</sup> is an onerous word that has hung around the necks of true Christians for nearly two thousand years. Deicide is a term that has been used to rationalize some of the most irrational moments in modern history. Therefore, deicide is a concept that must be countermanded if there is any hope of creating an apologetic response for Jesus even in full view of the gates of Auschwitz.

One response has been the attempt to explain away the hateful words of John Chrysostom by arguing that the words were nothing more than an in-house response to Gentile Christians behaving as Judaizers.<sup>27</sup> Another attempt is to deflect responsibility away from the Jewish people by noting, albeit correctly, that all of humanity’s sin necessitated the need for Jesus’ sacrifice. However, each of these rationales do little to resolve the inequity of casting blame for Jesus’ crucifixion upon not simply the Jewish people but all Jews for all time. Alternative opinions only hide the basic issue of Christian anti-Semitism and present a barrier to the Gospel for the Jewish people.

Therefore, Christians of all denominational stripes from the laity to the pulpit must acknowledge the sin of this false accusation. Paul Jones eloquently explains this need for

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<sup>26</sup> David A. Rausch, *A Legacy of Hatred: Why Christians Must Not Forget the Holocaust* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 205-06; Thomas F. Stransky, “The Church and Other Religions,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (October 1985): 157; F. E. Talmadge, ed., “Introductory Material,” *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish-Christian Encounter* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 89; Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 35-36. Despite Williamson’s liberal theological mindset, he correctly notes that the majority of Jewish people were at the time of Jesus living outside of Judea proper. In other words, most Jewish people were residents of the Diaspora.

<sup>27</sup> Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4<sup>th</sup> Century* in *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage Series*, gen. ed. Peter Brown (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 160-64.

restitution when he wrote – “In a post-Holocaust world, anti-Semitism in Christianity can no longer be explained away as an accident of history, a misfortune of theology, or a regrettable result of sociological factors.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, believers in Jesus as a component of the holistic Church body need “to own their theological and historical complicity.”<sup>29</sup> Failure to acknowledge this guilt and respond appropriately creates an entity which “does not deserve to call itself a church” and “perhaps should cease to exist because it has ceased to be effective in its mission” as it has abandoned the Jewishness of its beginning and the heritage of its Messiah.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, what is the only answer to the question? It is not to surrender to the passive-aggressive theological option of dual covenantalism. For while dual covenantalism is tempting as it replaces the accusation of deicide and “Wandering Jew” damnation with tolerance and universalism<sup>31</sup>, it also takes away from the soteriological understanding the exclusivist nature of Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, dual covenantalism

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<sup>28</sup> Paul H. Jones, “From Intra-Jewish Polemics to Persecution: The Christian Formation of the Jew as Religious Other,” *Encounter* 67.2 (2006): 167.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. For a concurring thought see also, David F. Ford, “A Messiah for the Third Millennium,” *Modern Theology* 16:1 (January 2000): 77-78.

<sup>30</sup> Amy Karen Downey, “The Theological Significance of Literature Created During or Resulting from a Period of Suffering, 1933-1945,” MAComm. thesis (Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996), 102.

<sup>31</sup> Jolene Chu and James N. Pellechia, “Good News after Auschwitz: Binding the Brokenhearted” in “*Good News after Auschwitz? Christian Faith within a Post-Holocaust World*,” ed. Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Atlanta, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 77; David P. Gushee, “The Good News after Auschwitz: A Biblical Reflection” “*Good News after Auschwitz? Christian Faith within a Post-Holocaust World*,” ed. Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Atlanta, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 165-69; James R. Lyons, “Do the Jews Need Jesus?,” *Christian Jewish Relations* vol. 17, no. 2 (1984): 43-47; Hans Hermann Henrix, “Judaism—Outside the Church, So No Salvation?,” *Christian Jewish Relations* vol. 17, no. 3 (1984): 7-11; Richard A. Cohen, “The Holocaust Is a Christian Issue: Christology Revisited”. Internet: <http://www.ghansel.free.fr/holocauste.html>. Accessed on 21 April 2010; and Ford, 88.

<sup>32</sup> Craig Blasing, “The Future of Israel as a Theological Question,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44/3 (September 2001): 104; Downey, *Paul’s Relationship to the Jewish People*, 104.

leads to a path filled “with a morass of apathy regarding the souls of the Jewish people.”<sup>33</sup>

Therefore it should be understood to take the path of least resistance known as dual covenantalism might lead to a lesser amount of guilt for the Holocaust, it does nothing to eliminate the need for Jewish evangelism so that an eternal Holocaust might be avoided. Evangelicals who believe in the exclusivity of the Gospel must acknowledge the dark Christian past of anti-Semitism and hatred of the Jewish people while still finding means and opportunities to share the Gospel of the Jewish Jesus. To do anything else not only fails to answer the question but also creates a vacuum in which the love of Jesus will never be seen.

Question 2: How does one illustrate the compassion of Christianity amid the ashes of innocent Jewish children?

In many ways, the answer to the first question could slide into this position as well. However, a deeper understanding of the question is required so that a definitive answer can be given to this impossible question. We are all struck by the tragedy that befalls children. We are all moved by the loss of innocence when death enters into the equation of someone so young that they had barely begun to live. We possibly all wonder what might have been the end of the story for Anne Frank if she had not died in Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Would she have discovered “that people are really good at heart”<sup>34</sup>? Would she have known faith and belief and hope? Would she have discovered the compassion of Christianity? Hence, the reason why this question deserves its own separate and unique answer.

Does the Christian mission have a place at the table alongside the ashes of innocent Jewish children? Can believers offer the gift of eternal life through Messiah Jesus when so many individuals who professed to be Christian either by active involvement or apathetic resignation

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<sup>33</sup> Downey, *Paul's Relationship to the Jewish People*, 107.

<sup>34</sup> Anne Frank, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, trans. B. M. Mooyart (New York: Pocket Books, 1952), 237.

participated in the death of children? Gregory Baum believed that Christianity lost its privilege to share the Gospel with the Jewish people as it would be nothing more than “a spiritual way of blotting them out of existence and thus only reinforces the effects of the Holocaust.”<sup>35</sup> And, on the surface, you can empathize with this position when one considers the story of Ephraim Shtenkler who was maligned by a Polish Catholic woman that would pray regularly before a shrine to Virgin Mary even while yelling, “Damned Jew! When will you get out of here?”<sup>36</sup>

This Polish woman instead of negating the necessity of Jewish-focused evangelism as many assert<sup>37</sup> only serves to emphasize the need to reinforce evangelistic efforts towards the Jewish people. Failure to do so does not ease the pain or loss experienced by those who lost children or were children themselves during the Shoah. If Christianity wants to truly honor the children who suffered endlessly as Mengele twins or who starved in the Warsaw ghetto, we must provide answers to those who come after or the spiritual search of the victims (and survivors) is all for naught.

Christianity, regardless of claims to the contrary,<sup>38</sup> does offer the only truth worth discovering. This is the same truth that the children who wrote poems, penned journal entries, or sketched drawings of hopelessness were longing to uncover. Moshe Flinker, who along with his parents died at Auschwitz in 1944, unknowingly expresses this longing for real truth when he wrote these words in two separate journal entries:

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<sup>35</sup> Gregory Baum, “Rethinking the Church’s Mission after Auschwitz” in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1977), 113. Some former Christians have gone as far as to convert to Judaism because “it is the only system of values which possesses moral credibility after the Holocaust.” Robert S. Frey (with Nancy Thompson-Frey), “The Holocaust, Christianity and Personal Response, *Christian Jewish Relations* vol. 17, no. 4 (1984): 33.

<sup>36</sup> Laurel Holliday, “Ephraim Shtenkler” in *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>37</sup> Baum, 116-17, 119, 123; Frey, 33, 38-39.

<sup>38</sup> Harry James Cargas, “Christian Preaching after the Holocaust” in *Removing Anti-Judaism from the Pulpit*, eds. Howard Clark Kee and Irvin J. Borowsky (New York: Continuum, 1996), 48-49.

(28 December 1942) I silently pray for the salvation which does not seem to want to come, and I hope that it will speedily arrive, that God will have mercy on His people, who are in so terrible a plight.... (Undated) Thus I am imprisoned on all sides, and time is ceaselessly running out, and I can do nothing. O Lord, save me, fortify me, and encourage me. Prepare me for Thy will, which is my only desire. Thy will is mine, my Lord. Hear my prayer!<sup>39</sup>

### Question 3: How does one share the Gospel of Messiah Jesus after the Holocaust?

Attempts have been made since the Russians opened the gates of Auschwitz on 27 January 1945<sup>40</sup> to make this final question irrelevant. As has been illustrated through this paper, Jewish leaders,<sup>41</sup> Catholic scholars and mainline Protestant theologians have propagated the position that either Christianity has lost its right to evangelize Jewish people after the Holocaust or that universalism has been the path to God all along. Evangelicals and conservative Christians are not immune either to the tendency of dual covenantalism, even if it is given by proxy.<sup>42</sup> However, this is the most important question to answer of this entire paper.

The first part of the answer to the question is to do away with attempts at Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue. Dialogue, which on the surface could be seen as an apologetic answer to the dilemma of responding to Christian anti-Semitism, does nothing but pave the way towards ecumenicalism and universalism. Robert Healey writing for the *Journal of Ecumenical*

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<sup>39</sup> Laurel Holliday, "Moshe Flinker, 263, 270.

<sup>40</sup> Simone Gigliotti and Berel Lang, *The Holocaust: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), xviii.

<sup>41</sup> Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Crucified Jew: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 240-41.

<sup>42</sup> John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World* (Lake Mary, FL: FrontLine, 2006), 129, 174-75. Gary Bauer, James Dobson, Pat Robertson, Pat Boone, Rich Buhler, Richard Land, Jack Hayford, William Bennett, and the deceased Jerry Falwell and Bill Bright are a few evangelical Christian faces and leaders who are on the endorsement pages of the International Fellowship of Christian and Jews. ("International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Internet: [http://www.ifcj.org/site/PageNavigator/eng/about/endorsements/christian\\_leaders](http://www.ifcj.org/site/PageNavigator/eng/about/endorsements/christian_leaders). Accessed on 22 April 2010.) Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein leads this organization with the goal of bringing Diaspora Jews back to Israel. However, Eckstein will not allow for the sharing of the Gospel with these immigrants. Therefore by endorsing Eckstein and encouraging Christians to support this effort, are we not by proxy presenting a message of dual covenantalism even if we "preach" a different message. See John W. Kennedy, "The Ultimate Kibitzer," *Christianity Today* (February 2009). Internet: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/february/27.32.html>. Accessed on 22 April 2010.

*Studies* provides proof of this argument not only through the title of the article, “From Conversion to Dialogue: Protestant American Mission to the Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” but also in his historical survey of 20<sup>th</sup> century world evangelization aims towards the Jewish people. The 1910 World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh) believed that evangelism to be the answer to the sin of anti-Semitism; however, by the 1931 Atlantic City Conference the tenor of the conference changed to one that encouraged friendship.<sup>43</sup> Healey also goes on to list theologians (including Krister Stendahl and Reinhold Niebuhr) and denominations (specifically the United Methodist Church) who by 1972 was calling for mutual respect and affirmation of two covenants which lead to the same eternal destiny.<sup>44</sup> In 1995, the Alliance of Baptist formally renounced any attempts of Jewish evangelism and even went so far as “accepting both religions as being of equal stature.”<sup>45</sup> Jacó b Jocz provides the best response to apologetic arguments for dialogue when he stated, “We must, however, remember that if it [the church] has no Gospel for the Jews, it has no Gospel for the world.”<sup>46</sup> Coincidentally, Jocz was himself a Jewish believer in Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

The second part to answering the impossible question is to realize the depth of theological confusion the Holocaust has created within the Jewish community itself. A confusion which can only be resolved through a faith relationship with the Jewish and Gentile Messiah – Jesus. Reform Rabbi Daniel Cohn-Sherbok, who coincidentally argues for the

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<sup>43</sup> Robert M. Healey, “From Conversion to Dialogue: Protestant American Mission to the Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 18:3 (Summer 1981): 383.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>45</sup> A. James Rudin, “ ‘Prisoners of Hope’ ”: Jews, Christians, and the Defining Issues of Dialogue,” *Review and Expositor* 103 (Winter 2006): 55-56.

<sup>46</sup> Jacó b Jocz, *Christians and Jews: Encounter and Mission* (London: SPCK, 1966), 48.

<sup>47</sup> Barry R. Leventhal, “Holocaust Apologetics: Toward a Case for the Existence of God,” *Christian Apologetics Journal* vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 2.

acceptance of Messianic Jews within the overall Jewish community,<sup>48</sup> reviews eight specific arguments within Judaism for the appearance of the Holocaust. The arguments range from that the Holocaust happened as a punishment by God upon European Jewry for abandoning the Torah (Bernard Maza) to Ignaz Maybaum's position that Holocaust victims are the true suffering servant of Isaiah 53 to believing that God is dead and/or never existed in the first place advocated by Richard Rubinstein.<sup>49</sup> What Cohn-Sherbok finds as a consistent refrain within his analysis is that all the scholars fail to answer the implicit questions of "Why" and "Where Was God?"<sup>50</sup> And even as the rabbi attempts to provide his own solution to the horrors of the Holocaust, he only can find a measure of hope in the promise of eternal life or immortality.<sup>51</sup> This desperate hope that the afterlife will result in an answer to the Holocaust is the small crevice in which Christians must breach in order to begin a Gospel presentation in spite of and because of the Shoah. We as believers in Jesus have a hope for eternity that Rabbinic Judaism is sketchy at best to provide, especially within the non-Orthodox communities.<sup>52</sup> No consistent belief on life after death provides little hope to those who struggle to even belief in God. We have the promise of peace and eternity and heaven. Why do we not tell our story more often to those who are so spiritually and emotionally desperate to hear it?

Jewish believer Barry Leventhal posits a two-pronged apologetic approach to those like Richard Rubinstein who deny the existence of God in light of Auschwitz. He argues that to

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<sup>48</sup> Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London: Cassell, 2000), 211-13.

<sup>49</sup> Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Holocaust Theology* (London: Lamp Press, 1989). The scholars included in Cohn-Sherbok's analysis are Bernard Maza, Ignaz Maybaum, Emil Fackenheim, Eliezer Berkovitz, Arthur A. Cohen, Richard Rubenstein, Elie Wiesel, and Marc Ellis.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>52</sup> "Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife." Internet: <http://www.religionfacts.com/judaism/beliefs/afterlife.htm>. Accessed on 22 April 2010.

prove the existence of God and consequently Messiah Jesus we need to approach Jewish people with a question of consequences – (1) the illegitimacy of law and (2) the absence of morality in a world without God.<sup>53</sup> While there is much to applaud in Leventhal’s approach, especially from an apologetic standpoint, Leventhal fails to begin at the beginning as it relates to a Christian apologetic to Jewish people in light of the Holocaust. A perhaps more simplistic but intrinsically core solution to the impossible questions is four-fold in nature:

1. We cannot change the past but we must acknowledge the sins of the past
2. We must not allow our guilt of the past to cloud the present need of Jewish souls to hear the message of Messiah Jesus
3. We must fight against the twin heresies of replacement theology and dual covenantalism in the Modern Church
4. We must be prepared to respond to modern anti-Semitism and the next Hitler on the horizon<sup>54</sup>

If and when Christians begin with these four steps (especially an understanding and admission of guilt-ridden Christian past), we can then begin a “dialogue” of the Gospel that never compromises the truth of Jesus’ Messiahship.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who though being liberal in many of his theological positions, recognized this truth even during the beginning days of the Third Reich. The Bethel Confession draft of August 1933 included this Bonhoeffer position – “A mission to the Jews which for cultural or political considerations refuses to baptize any more Jews at all is refusing to be obedient to the Lord.”<sup>55</sup> Our command as believers is to share the Gospel with each and every person we encounter and we are ordered to begin first with the Jewish people (Romans 1:16). If we fail, we will be guilty of an even greater and future Holocaust atrocity than what Bonhoeffer

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<sup>53</sup> Leventhal, 6-11.

<sup>54</sup> These four steps are taken from a Tzedakah Ministries’ presentation – “The Holocaust and the Church ... Answering the Unanswerable”.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen R. Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Legacy: Post-Holocaust Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 75.

mentioned with these words – “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

A few years ago during a Yom HaShoah observance at Adat Shalom Messianic Congregation in Dallas, this presenter had the privilege of comforting a dear friend and Holocaust survivor, Jack Bass. Jack was born as Joachim in Italy to a watchmaker father and a night club singing mother. After Mussolini’s struggles with the Allies and his failure to deport the Italian Jews to Hitler’s death camps in Poland, Hitler undertook the task himself. Jack’s father was soon sent to Poland from which he would never return. His mother seeing the proverbial handwriting on the wall took Jack, his younger sister, and his grandmother on a surreal journey over the Italian Alps by night. Jack’s family eventually reached the British lines and was placed on a ship which brought them to Fort Oswego in upstate New York. Jack eventually found himself living in Dallas as an older man beset by memories and regrets.

That Yom HaShoah night in 2007 found Jack overwhelmed and shaken by the memories of years running for his life. I took his hands to hold them. I placed my other arm around him to let him know he was not alone in his grief. After the service was over, he thanked me for being there and I expressed my regret that I could not have been there to save his father. He encouraged me not to worry with one statement – “But you are here now.”

The question that therefore must be asked today as this presentation concludes is the following: “Are we here now?” Have we developed an apologetic response on how to share the gospel of Messiah Jesus in light of the Holocaust? If so, when? If not now, why?