

# **The Covenant of Grace Fulfilled in Christ as the Foundation of the Indissoluble Solidarity of the Church with Israel: Barth's Position on the Jews During the Hitler Era \***

By Eberhard Busch

How might Karl Barth's engagement with the question of the relationship of the church to Judaism during the Nazi era help us today as we seek to revise that relationship? It is obvious that we cannot simply repeat his statements today. But the reference to Barth would be unproductive if it consisted solely in the assertion that the opponent of anti-semitism at that time was in fact in league with his adversaries. Protestants all too willingly take on an air of self-importance, imagining the distant past to be the proverbial night in which all cats are gray. It would also be insufficient to find in this theologian some good initial ideas, to the extent that they agree with one's own views, in order then, when one differs from his thinking, to identify all the logical flaws that one believes to have successfully overcome. In neither case would we learn anything, but only confirm our own position. If our encounter with a teacher of the church is to be fruitful, we must enter into a conversation in which we are not only the questioners, but also those who are questioned. True, such a teacher, whom we may critically question, is only an authority *subject to* the Word of God. But a proper teacher of the church *is* an authority under the Word of God, and his or her question to us, therefore, is whether we, as we move ahead, are following the Word of God as attested in the Bible or only our own authority. Certainly, there can also be useless encounters. Could the light that Barth believed to have seen have been simply a delusive flicker, or too weak even then to have been instructive, let alone today? According to today's predominant interpretation, this is what must be asserted about Barth's doctrine as well as his conduct in those dark times. It is this problem which I wish to explore.

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## 1. The Contemporary Historical Context

To begin with, in this interpretation a massive weakness is perceived in Barth's *practical* conduct, a weakness that is also supposed to be reflected in his theological teachings. Klaus Scholder interprets the situation as follows<sup>1</sup>: In 1933, with his strong emphasis upon the first commandment and the exclusive and binding force of God's Word, Barth made a decision that, though somehow well-intentioned, should have been expressed less intolerantly. Its weakness was that, in focusing upon the preservation of pure doctrine in the pulpits of the church, it saw no challenge in the Nazi state itself. Thus it had the disadvantage of inevitably glossing-over the significance of the so-called Jewish question. Because he succeeded during the German church struggle to graft this decision onto the developing Confessing Church, he is above all to blame for the fact that this church chronically overlooked the crisis of the Jews. This picture has been painted in innumerable variations, enriched by two further aspects. On the one hand, some claim that even after transferring to Switzerland (one researcher ascribes the move to his desire for a higher salary<sup>2</sup>), he was still uninterested in taking a stand for the Jews. He was working quietly in his study on his Dogmatics as if there were no Hitler.<sup>3</sup> On the other hands, some suggest that he was hindered by the Christocentrism of his decision from seeing the Jews as living beings; he regarded them, in part, as God's chosen people, but also partly as rejected by him.<sup>4</sup> That Barth alone, and not Gogarten, Hirsch or Althaus, finally articulated a confession of repentance towards the Jews,<sup>5</sup> has been interpreted as his admission of his own particular failure in this regard.

In examining the sources for this interpretation, however, one encounters a web of distortions of the truth. Let me give only a few examples. In April 1933 the Civil Service Act was enacted, which contained not only a section on the protection of Aryan culture, although that is what we usually read about it. It was especially effective at the time for the elimination of critics of the state. Barth asked Minister Rust whether he could continue to teach in Bonn, even if he were to exercise the same loyalty to Hitler's regime that the German Nationals had practiced toward the Weimar Republic (that is, none whatsoever).<sup>6</sup> Our artful interpretation

turns this into his approval of the Nazi state, so that he might continue to indulge undisturbed in his theology.<sup>7</sup> If Barth, in his widely distributed sermon of December 1933 (which he even sent to Hitler), interpreted the Jewishness of Jesus as an essential article of faith, and emphasized that he regarded both Jews and us Gentiles as children of the living God,<sup>8</sup> then the interpreters conclude that Barth would have remained silent on the Jewish question, had the text not compelled him to do otherwise.<sup>9</sup> Scholder supports his thesis of Barth's silence on the discrimination against the Jews in 1933<sup>10</sup> by citing a letter, without revealing that it reads as follows: "The solution to the Jewish question which is currently being sought in Germany is an impossibility — humanly, politically and with regard to Christian faith . . . The Evangelical Church must make itself heard with a resounding 'no'" and "enter the fray in earnest support of the members of the synagogue." The problem, however, was that such a church "...as things are simply does not exist."<sup>11</sup> And Krumwiede seeks to document Barth's lack of interest in the Jews with a letter dated September 1, 1933, while leaving out its content;<sup>12</sup> in it we read: "The Jewish question is certainly, seen theologically, *the* exponent of the entire event of our time.... Here, especially, I could not participate, even in the smallest fashion, in National Socialism. Here, if anywhere, one must draw the line which, if crossed, can only be considered a betrayal of the Gospel...."<sup>13</sup> What kind of church history scholarship is this in which Germans, in dealing with someone who was a victim of the Nazi regime, now claim in retrospect that he was in truth a child of that same evil spirit!

It is true that during the months of his direct involvement in the German church struggle he fought for the principle of the exclusive binding character of God's Word. One must understand why, at that time, it was not his criticism of the German Christians — who were completely unacceptable to him — which was central for Barth, but rather his criticism of the inner-church opposition against the German Christians. Most of the recent researchers dismiss this criticism as exaggerated and unkind, although at that time the meaning of the criticism was clearly understood in the church and among theologians, but also by Thomas Mann or the SPD-in-exile, and even in some synagogues.<sup>14</sup> I repeat Barth's statement: "Such a church as things are simply does not exist," not even among those in the church who opposed the German Christians; that is, a church which, as an expression of its very essence, would

speak out in support of the Jews. The church that did exist was distorted in its very essence because it did not support the Jews as the most obvious thing it had to do. How so? Barth wrote about this opposition in April 1933: "The assumption that one could be in agreement with the preamble of the 'German Christians' (in their affirmation of the Nazi state), and then later, have a pure church in opposition to them, ... will prove to be one of the most deceptive illusions of an era replete with such illusions. Let us leave out the preamble, completely and sincerely, and then we will speak further about that which follows."<sup>15</sup> Unlike the blend of Christendom and Nazi doctrine adopted by the German Christians, a type of two-sector doctrine was predominant in the churchly opposition to the German Christians. *Politically* one was a brown-shirt or a German nationalist, and therefore supportive of the state's treatment of the Jews as long as it proceeded "lawfully." *Ecclesiastically*, one wanted to preserve the confessional stance as inviolable, and therefore not separate oneself from the baptized Jews, even though one viewed them as a foreign race. In Barth's view, it was completely pointless to leave the church on account of the latter, as Bonhoeffer recommended, in order to build a free church on the foundation of such a two-sector doctrine.<sup>16</sup> As long as this doctrine was not discarded, this free church would be founded on a cardinal error and would not be able to speak for the non-churched Jews either, because it abandoned them to the measures of the state. That this view of Barth should indicate *lack of interest* in the Jews, as researchers constantly repeat, is also part of their flawed logic. The insistence on the first commandment and on Matthew 6:24 ("You cannot serve God and mammon")<sup>17</sup> attacked this two-sector doctrine head on, and thus the source of the political miscarriage of justice. It clearly contended that the church's positions toward the Nazi state, its ideology and racism must be defined according to the Word of God alone and not according to state ideology. That this was the concern was well understood at that time. For in October 1933 in Berlin, on his first encounter with the newly organized church opposition in the 'Emergency Pastoral Alliance' [Pfarrernotbund], Barth articulated precisely the crux of his thesis: "What does the church have to say about what is happening in the concentration camps? Or about the treatment of the Jews?" The church must not remain silent on these questions. For "the one whose duty it is to proclaim the Word of God *must* address such events with what the Word of God declares."<sup>18</sup> That exposes, in *one* sentence, the practical meaning of his dispute with the two-sector doctrine.

And this was also known at the time: it was not the refusal of an unrestricted oath to Hitler—in which Barth's concern was certainly to take seriously the exclusive and binding Word of God —, it was those Berlin statements about the treatment of the Jews that led politically to his dismissal and to the Confessing Church's movement away from him, and thus to his expulsion from Germany.<sup>19</sup>

I will refer to only two scenes from his life in Switzerland between 1935-1945. After Kristallnacht of 1938, he gave a lecture to the Swiss Evangelical Relief Organization which, from that time on and with his assistance, gave support to the racially persecuted; its motto was John 4:22, "Salvation is from the Jews." He stated on that occasion: Because, in the German "plague of anti-Semitism," in the destruction of Jewish synagogues and Torah scrolls, in the intentional "physical extermination" of the Jews, there is a deep struggle against the God of the Jews, and because the God of the Jews is also the God of Christians, the church is therefore also under a "fundamental attack." Therefore, the church must now state, "even if no one else does," that "fundamentally" military resistance to this Germany "is necessary."<sup>20</sup> In the subsequent years Barth continued with this emphasis to such an extent that the German Foreign Ministry, together with the Swiss government, tried everything to silence him.<sup>21</sup> Rabbi Geis explained in retrospect: "Who, other than Karl Barth, could have demonstrated more clearly the struggle and courageous resistance that develops from grace."<sup>22</sup> The second scene: in July 1944, after the attempted assassination of Hitler, and after Rabbi Taubes had informed him about the extermination of the Hungarian Jews, Barth urged his government to act.<sup>23</sup> In a lecture, he asked, his voice quavering, about God's presence with his suffering servant, in this new Golgotha, in order to cling then to the promise of Jeremiah 31: As certain as the fixed order of the heavens will not pass away, "so will the offspring of Israel never cease to be a nation before me forever." He therefore claimed it was a "proof of God" that such a nation that murdered Jews as Pharaoh and his army had done *must* "necessarily" meet a horrific end.<sup>24</sup> Such a harsh statement as this **hurts the German feelings till today**. The unambiguous clarity of Barth's position at the time has convinced *me* that the difficult passage from volume II/2 of his Dogmatics on Israel and the church (written approximately 1940) must be interpreted in a different manner than has generally been the case. It should be

read in such a way that, in agreement with his criticism of the two-sector doctrine, the theological basis for his practical positions is set forth in the section. In fact, we must examine it all the more carefully because there is also *the* interpretation that asserts that Barth fought against *political* anti-Semitism, but did so as a *theological* anti-Semite.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. The One Elected Community in God's One Covenant of Grace

Barth wrote following the drafting of that section: "Though everything is very difficult and deep, I think I have nevertheless seen a certain light."<sup>26</sup> His text *itself* is certainly "very difficult." That is also a function of the subject matter. Even when the very enigmatic relationship between Israel and the church becomes somewhat clearer to us, even when we have left all sorts of anti-Judaism behind us and have traveled a long road as Paul did in Romans 9-11, we will ultimately stand before the mystery of God's election and confess: "How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" The difficulty also lies in **the fact that Barth attempted** to say something new in this area, **while** he was naturally influenced by **dubious/** tenacious old thought patterns and traditions, that **moreover** have frequently been **transformed/** re-worked in modernity, and which in some have influenced his attempt and clouded it as well. One must observe, however, *how* he dealt with them. One difficulty lies in Barth's manner of thought. The meaning of his complicated, winding, often all too abrupt statements only becomes evident when one grasps the precise intellectual structures in which his views develop. They force us to understand the author, against some of his own statements, better than he understood himself, as Schleiermacher said. *This* text, however, remains opaque, if one only draws a few quotations from it, whether in the interest of pro- or anti-Jewish sounding statements, or for the sake of showing the contradiction between the two, wanting to improve them by omitting the one side.

But what is the "certain light" which Barth believed to have seen here? It is demonstrated in three basic principles, the neglect of which renders his text incomprehensible. The *first* principle: We can only arrive at a new theological reflection on the relationship of Israel and

the church if we recognize the exclusive obligatory character of the *Word of God* as attested by the Holy Scriptures. At that time, this was asserted against the German Christians and against the two-sector doctrine of moderates in the church, as well as against more longstanding traditions. This principle was the break with the concept widely disseminated among Lutherans that viewed this relationship within the larger schema of the abstract legal orders of Creation, into which every human is born, if not coerced. Even if these theologians wished to soften the harshness of the alleged creation-based difference between Jews and Christians, by referring to the love of one's neighbor, or of one's enemy, or to baptismal waters, **this** difference remained **effective as a law of God: the difference** between *Germans* and Jews, between one's own *race* and those of a *foreign race*.<sup>27</sup> Barth's principle is an unequivocal rejection of the approach of this concept. It is also a break with Schleiermacher's liberal concept, according to which Judaism's relationship to Christianity is no different from that of any pagan religion.<sup>28</sup> Under the condition, then, that the Old Testament is to be removed from the Christian Bible,<sup>29</sup> this concept allows a wide latitude: evangelism of the Jews as a form of mission to the heathen, the thesis of an historical succession of the dead Jewish religion by the living Christian one, even a religious dialogue as one might have, for example, with Buddhism, and a tolerance according to which one must treat those of different faiths at least as humans. However against these concepts one must say that they have not been formulated in terms of an acknowledgment exclusive obligatory character of the Word of God as attested to throughout the *entire* Bible. Barth believed that he had learned from Paul that here as well "scriptural proof is everything, so to speak."<sup>30</sup> And *therefore*, he wrote in 1967, he did not occupy himself much with the voices of modern Judaism (though in fact he did much more than he let on), because the witness of *scripture* gave him "so much to think about and to take in."<sup>31</sup>

In short, the criterion, that which the church needs to reflect on regarding itself as well as its relation to Judaism, can only be heard from the biblical witness. The result of his „scriptural proof,, is the recognition of the indissoluble solidarity of the church with Israel as it is expressed in the indissoluble connectedness of the New Testament with the never-to-be surren-

dered Old Testament, a testament which Christians cannot understand without the New, but without which they cannot understand the New either. A few quotations<sup>32</sup>: The church can only be church "in its unity with Israel." It "stands or falls with its fellowship and solidarity" with Israel. It is he, who stands at the center of its faith, who binds the church to Israel. For "he who believes in Jesus cannot not accept the Jews. He must accept them as the ancestors and relatives of Jesus; otherwise, he cannot accept Jesus the Jew. Otherwise, he rejects Jesus himself along with the Jews." Barth employs the anti-Jewish reproach of the rejection of Christ as a criticism of the church. The church *dare* not say: "The Jews crucified Jesus Christ. Therefore, this people has ceased to be the holy people of God. The Christian people has now taken its place. The church is the historical replacement for Israel. With the existence of the church, Israel as such has become a chapter in history. It can only be said of this disobedient people that God has abandoned it."<sup>33</sup> For Barth, all Christian anti-Judaism is essentially rooted in this doctrine of the replacement of Israel by the Church, a theology that he thoroughly disputed. Of course, the so-called anti-Judaism of the New Testament **seems to** oppose the result of this scriptural proof with innumerable unwieldy statements. Barth grappled intensively with whether this placed his position in question. He was reproached for having adopted **by this** the anti-Judaism of the New Testament, instead of removing the entire theme for substantive critical reasons.<sup>34</sup> This reproach overlooks the fact that, in light of the German-Christian thinning out of the Bible in pursuit of a scripture free of Judaism, the contrary procedure would have given credence to the insinuation that the second testament legitimizes anti-Judaism. It also overlooks the fact that such substantive criticism is defenseless against the possibility that the removed parts can continually be reclaimed and used to counter its Jewish-friendly outcome. And this reproach overlooks the fact that even if such a purification of the New Testament occurs, a raft of sections even more harshly critical of Israel can be found in the *first* testament. Christian anti-Judaism had focused especially on these texts, because in them God announces the end, the extermination and the destruction of his obstinate people. Barth maintains that there is a continuity between the passages critical of Israel in *both* testaments and believes that *only together* can they be explained as the non-revocation of Israel's covenant.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, that process of critical elimination would always be aimed at those sections of the first testament as well. For Barth, this is a liberal



process that projects images of another god onto the biblical witness. This process was mostly used against Jews in the modern period. Barth sees no point in standing it on its head for the sake of change. For him there is only *one* way, and that is to read all the difficult texts in the total context of God's actions towards his people in judgment and grace<sup>36</sup>, as witnessed in the biblical account. In attempting to do so, the bold thesis took shape in his mind, that these unruly sections are actually imperative moments for establishing the principle of the irrevocable covenant with Israel, and of the essential connectedness of the church with Israel.

The *second* principle: There is only an indissoluble connectedness between the church and Israel when it is based on the *center* of the Christian faith, which is that Jesus is the *Christ* – but then there is truly this connection. If it is only an historical connection, then it is only external and always dissoluble. But how, then, can Christ connect the Christians with the Jews, where here is precisely the point which divides them? Barth looks more closely at the matter: Christ becomes divisive for Christians only as a result of the *interpretation* that he were the founder of a new covenant or of a new religion. *Then* the birth of Jesus within the Jewish people is merely incidental, unless one understands it as the dark contrast from which he emerges in brilliant light (E. Hirsch). And *then* Israel is of no consequence for the church (R. Bultmann).<sup>37</sup> If, moreover, the confession of Christ *as such* is defined as anti-Jewish, then this requires that the entire sweep of church history from the New Testament onwards should be accused of being anti-Jewish. **Then it** leads to the zeal with which Christocentric theologians of our day are purported to be anti-Jewish even when they are the ones who emphasize the solidarity with Israel. At the same time the disreputable theologians of the last two hundred years are protected, who based their rejection of the Jews on their alien religion or race, but not on their refusal to believe in Christ. The unavoidable consequence is that, for the sake of peace, the church's confession of Christ is hollowed out, and the answer to the question, "Are you he who is to come?" (Matthew 11:3), is postponed into the future. At the end of it all, Christians no longer know why they are *Christians* nor why as Gentiles they are accounted part of the covenant people without having to become Jews. Barth arrives at

the statement of the essential connectedness of the church with Israel through a *new understanding* of the elemental Christian confession, which excludes its being used for anti-Jewish purposes. He does not ask how the Jews relate to Jesus but how Christ relates to them. He sees them defined not by their No to Christ, but by Christ's Yes to them. He seeks to lead "us to see each other as Christ sees us: as Jews struggling with the true God and as Gentiles at peace with false gods, but he sees us both united as 'children of the living God.'"<sup>38</sup> Seen *in this way*, two things become clear *simultaneously*: that the Christ was necessarily a Jew, *and* that in him the door in Israel was opened for the Gentiles, - *at the same time*, that through Christ the election of Israel was made definitive and in this process "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22) to the Gentiles. For Barth replacing Israel with the church only **is rejected** when both are recognized *together*, that both have their common foundation in Christ. *This* can only be acknowledged when the confession of Christ is taken seriously anew, and not by weakening it.

Thus Barth takes up Calvin's insight which he always highly valued:<sup>39</sup> The biblical discussion of the old and new covenant does not mean *two* covenants but rather one covenant of grace in two 'dispensations'. Barth sharpens this insight in that he understands God's action in Christ as the fulfillment of this covenant through reconciliation. New in his interpretation is that for Barth Israel belongs within the *fulfillment* of the covenant. **Therefore** one must understand that these two 'dispensations' are *initially* **the** two different but then inseparably related *aspects* of the fulfillment of the one covenant of grace in Christ. The explanation of this fundamental understanding is the primary content of the Church Dogmatics, volume II/2<sup>40</sup>: The fulfillment of the covenant, God's gracious election as it is completed and revealed through Jesus Christ, is a double-faceted event. On the one hand, in him God in free grace chooses to be in fellowship with a human people, to humble himself to the place of sinners, and on the other hand he chooses these sinful people to be lifted up to fellowship with him. In him God exercises, on the one hand, judgment, that is, he says a strict No to the unworthiness of his **elected** partner, he repudiates the reason that fellowship with him is hindered. On the other hand, God simultaneously exercises mercy towards his partner, that is, his

powerful "nevertheless" towards his partner's incapacity. In that God chooses in Christ to be in fellowship with sinners, the *judicial* condemnation, the offence of the sinner confronts him alone and no one else.<sup>41</sup> He takes this upon himself in the Crucified One, and in this<sup>42</sup> he is the "Messiah of Israel" and the "hidden Lord of the church." And with precisely that step, he elects for those with **whom** he links himself in his healing mercy their salvation and life in fellowship with God. Because he demonstrates this in the Resurrected One of Easter, he is the "Lord of the church" and the "revealed Messiah" of Israel. This double-faceted event is the reconciliation. Through it the election of Israel is made so definitive that it cannot be abrogated by any breach of covenant on the part of Israel; the church must therefore bear witness, "in defiance of all Gentile arrogance, to the eternal election of *Israel*."<sup>43</sup> *And* because thereby the covenant is fulfilled through God's grace with sinners, the Gentile, **who are far more** sinners, who previously stood outside God's just and gracious action, are no longer excluded from his covenant either. **This means - and it is fundamental to notice that: that for both, Jews and Christians, both sides of God's reconciliation in Christ, His judgment and grace, are valid equally and without any difference. But the difference is that Israel is elected first.** Because Israel *remains* elect in Christ, the only possibility for these Gentiles is their calling to be joined to the covenant. Therefore, anyone who would reject the Jews would also reject Christ. Therefore, Gentile Christians can only be certain of God's grace that elects them in the recognition of God's unbroken covenant with Israel, which is known precisely through the reconciliation of Christ. Therefore, *as* the Messiah of Israel Christ is also the Savior of the world.

And the *third* principle follows: God's election of himself for communion with sinners and of sinners for communion with him is documented in the existence of a *community*. It exists in two 'dispensations,' though not simply in temporal succession, as Calvin maintained; rather, they exist in a differentiated togetherness. Joined together by the arch of the one covenant which stretches over both of them, they are, regardless of their difference, the one "community of God,"<sup>44</sup> says Barth, the one "body"<sup>45</sup> of Jesus Christ, who fulfills the covenant of grace through reconciliation. The overarching covenant of grace which binds them together

into one community is, however, "no neutral vantage point of observation."<sup>46</sup> In the church, therefore, one may not leave one's place under this arch; rather, one's thinking must begin and extend from this place. Otherwise, the church would no longer know why it is called into the covenant of Israel, nor why, from a Christian foundation, the covenant with Israel is not terminated, and why the church is inseparable from the Jews in *one* community. The search for Barth's "doctrine of Israel" leads to a dead end. For him, the only concern is the recognition of the "election of the *community*." And it exists, as he defines it, "according to God's eternal resolution as the people of *Israel* (in all its vast history, both past and future — ante- and post-Christum natum!) and likewise, as the *church* of Jews and Gentiles (from its revelation at Pentecost to its fulfillment through the return of Christ)."<sup>47</sup> That indicates that Israel is the primary form of God's community, because it retains its chosen status even after the birth of Christ. Therefore, one may not call "the Jewish nation the 'rejected' and the church the 'chosen community'."<sup>48</sup> This also indicates that this one community of God has two irrevocable forms, so that the church cannot exist by repressing Israel. It further indicates that *one* difference between the two forms is that Israel is a "people," of which one usually becomes a member through birth, whereas one becomes a member of the church by being called.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, this indicates that the Church may well be revealed at Pentecost, but it does not originate then; it already „preexists,, in a hidden form in the Israel of the Old Testament.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, as long as Judaism is rooted in this Israel, it cannot seriously be a foreign body to the church, nor the church to Judaism. And that also means that it is essential to the church, as the second form of the one community now engrafted into God's people, to have Jews not only around it but also in it, represented by the first apostles, particularly by Paul, who were simultaneously Jew and Christian, who did not leave Judaism because of their faith in Christ, but remained Jews, loyal and obedient members of the enduring elect people of Israel.

This one community is a part of what it means to believe in Christ, but it is perceptible as well. For according to Barth, its election as the one community is recognizable in its function as *witness* to the fulfilled covenant of grace. It is attested to not only by the church, as classi-

cal dogmatics would have it. It is testified to first of all by Israel — and then with Israel by the church as well. Both testify to it by their very "existence," says Barth.<sup>51</sup> That is has often not been understood. He means: the meaning of their witness is not to be distilled from an abstract phenomenology of Judaism and Christianity, nor from an abstract prescription of what they ought to be. What is meant is, that both give their witness through their positions, which they receive and truly possess through the fulfillment of the covenant by Christ's reconciliation: as the first-chosen Israel and as the church called to this covenant from among the Gentiles. Their witness takes on a double form, corresponding to the double-faceted election of grace: as the first-chosen, Israel attests that God chooses to be a God in communion with sinners; as those who were called later, Gentile Christians attest that God chooses sinners to be in communion with him. Each therefore attests to a specific aspect, both of which are to be respected in their uniqueness, and each of which also fit together under the arch of the covenant.<sup>52</sup> Both attest to God's gracious election and covenant in an irrevocably different manner, but in such a way that their testimonies need and complement each other. They also attest to *one another* that which the other threatens to forget. Therefore, the church cannot be a witness to the covenant of grace alone, but only together with Israel. By witnessing *together* they show forth the *unity* of the community. Mission to the Jews is thus excluded, since both together are *witnesses* of the electing God. They do this together over-against the lost masses that do not belong to the community, and which Barth illustrates in the *Church Dogmatics* II/2 by referring to the nationalistic Führer-state.<sup>53</sup> They are this witness in distinctive ways. If the first-chosen are the people [Volk] to which one belongs by birth, and if the church is constituted through calling to the one community, then it is of the church's essence that it carry out mission among the Gentiles who are to be called to be added to the one community.<sup>54</sup> Barth agrees in this respect with F. Rosenzweig, and concurs with his statement, that in the church's mission to Gentiles, its first and fundamental task is to convert the heathen in the Christian.<sup>55</sup> "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22) means concretely: salvation comes from the Jews to the Gentiles so that they, through that mission, can come into the one community.<sup>56</sup> And the Jews who believe in Christ, with Paul as their prototype, are the special link from the Jews to the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles to the Jews.

### 3. The Difference Between Jews and Christians in the One Community of God

The fact is, however, that the Jewish and Christian testimony is so different that one might doubt whether two such distinctive witnesses could really be one community. Are they not so different that either we have two different religious communities to deal with or the *one* community only emerges in that the Christian testimony suppresses the Jewish or the Jewish testimony is absorbed by the Christian? Barth thinks in the reverse direction: It is essential to the unity of the *one* community that both of its forms render the same testimony in *different ways*. What links them irrevocably to each other is precisely the reason for the irrevocable *difference* between their testimonies. Without such a difference the church would not necessarily need the testimony of Israel. It expresses something unique that the Gentile church cannot testify to, and which would render the church deficient if it were not expressed by Israel. But, because the difference is rooted in that which binds both into one community, Israel's testimony expresses something that can not put into question the gospel of Christ and that can not alienate the Gentile church from the gospel.<sup>57</sup> The difference of their testimonies displays the double-faceted character of the fulfillment of the covenant of grace in Christ. The result is that the distinctiveness of both sides is not neutralized, and that in their differentness they *correlate to each other*. Recognizing this is, however, difficult because, according to Barth, the necessary differentness of Israel and the church is overlain by the "not-necessary" fact, that Israel, for the most part, does not recognize the fulfillment through Christ of the covenant of grace first made with it. Thus Israel "abstracts" itself<sup>58</sup> from this fulfillment, and therefore also from its membership in the one community. But, according to Barth, Christ does not abstract himself from Israel. He is "above all, theirs," since he has chosen to "make his abode in the flesh and blood of Judah and Israel." "Because the irrevocable promise which was made to them remains in effect, their chosenness and their membership in the one fellowship is confirmed and proven. It is confirmed . . . with regard to their service, which they cannot escape," as "with regard to God's mercy toward them," which they "cannot make unreal."<sup>59</sup> This gives the church the hope that at the destination of

God's way this not-necessary divide between the two forms of the one community will be set aside. Then, as Barth's luminous statement puts it, "The *difference* within the community [will confirm] its *unity*."<sup>60</sup> The church may hope for this because it is already reality in *Christ*, even if not in the life together of the one *community*. But it cannot hope that that this difference will be set aside. For the church lives for ever "on nothing else but the faithfulness of God toward Israel."<sup>61</sup> But as long as the Jews do not realize that they are inseparably linked by the same faithfulness of God with those who are called and added with them in *one* community together, then the church "must take the lead, confessing the unity of the fellowship of God," but with the desire "that Israel's particular service to the one fellowship does not cease, but is continued in faithfulness."<sup>62</sup>

For Barth, it is the indispensable function of Jewish Christians in the church, as represented by the original apostles, to open the eyes of Gentile Christians to see that the particularity of Israel's witness is established in obedience to its being chosen first, before the calling of the Gentiles, and not in its rejection of the messiahship of Jesus. Therefore, despite its refusal of Christ, the rest of Israel also gives this witness. And therefore, the Jewish Christians' belief in Christ does not preclude them from giving the witness of the first-chosen people of Israel to the Gentiles. To what do the two forms of the one community testify? Barth says: Israel is witness to divine judgment, to the promise as heard, and to the passing of humanity; the church is witness to God's mercy, to the promise as believed, and to the humanity that is coming.<sup>63</sup> These concepts caused much offence in that many thought that here, once again, Israel were regarded as cursed, a curse which, in Israel's present suffering were fitting and from which it could only be saved if it were to cast off its Judaism and come into the church. That this is clearly a misinterpretation is made plain by the fact that those Jewish Christians also give the witness of Israel. It is very important to understand that Barth is seeking to articulate anew the distinctive Scriptural character of the two witnesses, especially as expounded in Romans 9 to 11. The exposition of this text takes up three-fourths of his section on the relationship of the church and Israel. And yet, it is in this text itself that one can find anti-Jewish sounding thoughts that run counter to the preceding thesis in Romans 9

of the unbroken covenant and the interconnectedness of Israel and the church. With regard to this thesis, these anti-Jewish **sounding** thoughts present three difficult problems for Barth.<sup>64</sup>

a) What does it mean in Romans 9 that God *has mercy* and *hardens hearts*, that he prepares some, that is, those called from among the Gentiles, to become "objects of mercy" and others, the elect Israel, to become "objects of wrath"? For Barth, the meaning of this mercy and hardening of hearts is only disclosed when one notices that Paul (vv. 10f.) understands it first as a law of God's action *within* his people Israel. But then these two forms of God's action are not directed against Israel. Both forms of his action belong within the structure of his action in the Israel covenant. His action should not be understood as his reaction to good or bad human conduct. God's preparation of objects of wrath does not indicate an exclusion of people from his covenant. Rather it signifies God's obliviousness towards all the natural and moral presuppositions of these people, in which he takes their concern out of their hands and into his own. In his hardening of hearts and in his mercy, therefore, he is not pursuing two different intentions, but only that of his mercy; and thus the "objects of wrath" are taken by God into the intention "of his merciful will and action." If, on the basis of the Christ-event, Paul sees a repetition of this structure of God's action within Israel's covenant now in the relationship between called Gentiles and Jews outside the church, that would really be nothing foreign to Israel. God acts there according to the same law that always governed his conduct toward Israel. And therefore, these Gentiles should not interpret that as an anti-Jewish act, as if God had now abandoned Israel. Paul formulated it boldly, however: for as Gentiles, they are not Israel, not elect and therefore not even considered by God as possible objects of wrath. It is only on account of the overabundant mercy that God had always shown to Israel, that Gentiles come to be called. Thus according to Barth, Paul's seemingly anti-Jewish thought may be distilled in this double statement: If God's mercy, as it is now revealed, is so richly bestowed on the Gentiles, who are subject to his rejection in totally other ways, how much more is it bestowed upon those to whom it was originally promised. And: if everything rests on God's mercy for the rich Jews, according to the prophecy fulfilled in them, how much more so for the poor Gentiles.<sup>65</sup>



Barth's meaning is the same when he says: Israel (outside of and in the church) is witness to God's judgment, and the Gentile church witness to God's mercy; in this difference, both are witnesses of and within the same covenant of grace. Israel is the witness to divine judgment, but not because of a particular sinfulness. As witness to judgment, it is obedient to its place as the first elect. It testifies in this way to the first aspect of God's gracious election, his election of himself in free grace for community with sinners. It testifies to the judgment over the guilt that Israel does not bear, because God through Christ takes it upon himself. Leo Baeck understood Barth well when he approvingly took up Barth's reference to John the Baptist's finger in Grünewald's painting, pointing toward the Crucified One, and said with Barth: the movement of this hand is the characteristic of Jewish existence.<sup>66</sup> Israel is witness to God's judgment in the strict sense that it testifies that belonging to God rests exclusively on his free grace, excluding any worthiness or entitlement to it. It is a testimony to what Gentiles and Gentile Christians do not know or always seem to forget, a testimony against *natural theology* with its assumption of humanity's natural openness toward God,<sup>67</sup> a testimony to *complete* dependence upon God's free election. If Gentile Christianity is witness to the mercy of God, then it is because it was elected last. In its position as last in God's plan, it attests to the second aspect of God's gracious election: because of God's decision to be in fellowship with sinners, even those originally excluded from his election can in fact enter into fellowship with God out of pure mercy. In order that the church does not misunderstand that in a spirit of triumphalism, it must hear Israel's testimony: God's covenanting action excludes all human claims to suitability for membership in this covenant, but does not exclude his mercy, so that even the non-elect are called to his covenant. As Israel testifies to "knowing the human *basis* for God's suffering" which is hidden from the Gentiles, and which excludes all entitlement to membership in the covenant, so the host of those later elected testifies to the "divine *meaning*" of God's judgment in the cross of Christ.<sup>68</sup> that he excludes all human claims to worthiness for the sake of his mercy. As the church is dependent on this witness of Israel, so it must comfort the Jews with its own witness that they must not forget in their repugnant witness to the Gentiles against natural theology, namely, that mercy which is valid for everyone. **Therefore the witness of the Church is as good, as it is am comfort for Israel.**

b) What does it mean in Romans 10<sup>69</sup> that Israel is a disobedient nation which strives for righteousness but does not attain it, contrary to the Gentiles, who did not strive for it? The key to understanding this passage is, for Barth, to see that Paul's talk "of Israel's transgression is directed to the *church*," so that it might be placed in solidarity with Israel and recognize God's mercy alone as the basis of its own calling. In this way alone does the church understand what Paul states here — not "against Israel," but "*for* the electing *God* and, indirectly, for *the* elected and in its election...unfaithful Israel as well."<sup>70</sup> But wherein does Paul see the "transgression"? He speaks of it in connection with Isaiah 65. It is certainly not a novelty in Israel, confirmed only in the rejection of Christ. It is not a matter of Israel listening to God's Torah or not striving sufficiently to follow it. As the people of the covenant, it must do that. The transgression consists of being inattentive, in this legitimate conduct, to *the* law within its own law: that is, neglecting that to which it was initially commanded, to do the work of *faith*, relying on the mercy which can be expected of God alone, which is documented by its non-recognition of God's mercy in Christ. Thus Israel is disobedient to God's gracious election, which is still the source of its life, and not to some alien demand. Therefore this disobedience is not necessarily connected to being a Jew. This is demonstrated in that a Jew who recognizes God's mercy in Christ confirms his being as Jew, and does not relinquish it. And since this disobedience does not refer to the law, but to its underlying divine mercy, it cannot invalidate the mercy shown to the one who is disobedient. Therefore, this mercy toward Israel is inviolable, not only in spite of its rejection of the fulfillment of the covenant through reconciliation in Christ. Therefore its rejection is even an active "confirmation of its election" and its glorification of God's faithfulness.<sup>71</sup> Therefore the church also does not know what transgression means here if it does not first know, with Israel, of God's mercy; and therefore it cannot be certain of this mercy without being in solidarity with Israel.

In the systematic reflection, Barth expresses **Pual's** idea as follows: Israel is the witness of the Word of God heard, and the church of the Word of God believed. Here, he reinforces the

statement that Israel's transgression does not lie in its hearing the instruction of God. They prove themselves as those first elected by doing that. They are in accordance with the Word of God that precedes the witness of the one community, in that they are careful *hearers* of the Word. For that reason the Bible is, in both its parts, "a product of the Jewish spirit."<sup>72</sup> Therefore the church's talk simply becomes "loose speculation" if it does not follow Israel in its service of hearing, which precedes faith. Whether the church stands or falls is based on whether "the Israelites' ('Jewish!') attention to sentence, word and letter" takes place in and is accepted by her.<sup>73</sup> But "the promise must be *heard* in order to be *believed*."<sup>74</sup> After reading a book by the Berlin Rabbi Cohn, Barth wrote to him in 1934 that for both the church and the synagogue the basic issue was a new listening to God's Word, but then asked him why Cohn appeared to call the Jews "more decisively to themselves than to his God." He then added, "Is that already the question of a Christian theologian?", who as such asks about the necessary and "total confidence" of faith in the complete mercy of God.<sup>75</sup> The fact that such faith *follows* upon hearing emerges especially in those who are later called from among the Gentiles, who come to God's community out of God's vast mercy. In their dependence, confirmed in faith, upon the vast mercy of God proven in Christ, they are witnesses that the hearing that precedes and the believing which follows belong together. And, again, the Jews in the church are witnesses to the Gentiles in it that the division of hearing and believing does not necessarily inhere in Judaism.

c) What does it mean in Romans 11 that Paul shows the non-repudiation of Israel *as a whole* from God's covenant by pointing to the remaining "*remnant*" of Israel? This remnant is the part of the Jews which is in the church together with those Gentiles who are called. With their faith in Christ and their subsequent membership in the church they do not lose their membership in Judaism. They stand in continuity with the believers of the first testament. According to Barth, it would be anti-Judaism if the Gentile Christians were to regard this as irrelevant. They would thereby be ashamed of the Jewish origin of the church. The fact that Jews who believe in Christ do not reject their membership in Israel testifies that reconciliation in Christ is not a repudiation of Israel, not a "new revelation" over against its gracious election

but its fulfillment. That means, however, that this remnant stands "for the totality of Israel." It is "the clear proof" that "God's election is not simply transferred to the Gentiles from Israel, departing from Israel as its original object." The remnant confirms the "election of Israel."<sup>76</sup> If, however, Jews remain part of Israel even as Christians, then the fact that the Gentile Christians belong together with them means that they *therefore* also belong to non-churched Israel. And if God's election has not simply transferred from Israel to the Gentiles, then the Gentile Christians can only be connected to this Israel but cannot themselves become Israel and thereby replace it. For that reason, Barth understands the Parable of the Olive Tree as follows: the (temporary) pruning of its natural branches and the grafting of wild shoots onto it does not imply that the Gentile church supplants Israel. It stands in the place that belongs to Israel. The Gospel of God's mercy is not taken away from Israel at this place; rather Israel gives it away so that the originally non-elected Gentiles could come into that place where they do not by nature belong. There, the Gentiles are so dependent upon on God's mercy "that they themselves would have been discarded by God, had he truly discarded Israel."<sup>77</sup> Rather than pursuing mission to the Jews, Christianity should stand in alliance with the Jews and witness to the Gospel among the heathen!<sup>78</sup> That non-churched Israel does not acknowledge the fulfillment of its gracious election in Christ and thus also its inseparable connection to the church, as the church must confess its connection to Israel, certainly "disturbs" the unity of God's community.<sup>79</sup> The resolution of this disturbance lies in God's future, which Paul envisages in his statement that "all Israel will be saved." Barth reads this verse together with the following one, that God has imprisoned *all* in disobedience so that he may be merciful *to all*.<sup>80</sup> If he states at that point that in God's future Israel will "enter into" the church,<sup>81</sup> it does not mean that Israel's precedence over the newly believing Gentile Christians will be set aside, or that Israel will be dissolved in the church; Christian anti-Judaism will never be justifiable. What is meant is that in the salvation of the whole of Israel, it, like that remnant and united with it, will confess the mercy of the God of Israel in Jesus Christ as the basis for the connectedness of Jews and Gentile Christians.

In view of this interpretation, Barth's doctrinal thesis means that Israel is witness to the humanity that is passing away, and the church to the humanity that is coming. The question is,

though: Why this reduction in God's elect people to the small remnant, as Paul sees it in the isolation of Elijah and even in the pruning of the natural branches of the olive tree? Barth answers: In this reduction, Israel is witness to the humanity that is passing away. We should hear M. Buber's words<sup>82</sup> of 1933 regarding a Jewish cemetery, which Barth probably had in mind: "As I stood there, all the death washed over me, all the ashes, all the silent misery. I lay on the ground, fallen like these stones. But I was not revoked." And Barth states, referring to the Jewish cemetery in Prague, that it contains "objectively more true Gospel" than all the unbelieving (and much Christian) "gojim-wisdom."<sup>83</sup> *Israel* does not pass away, it remains elected. But it testifies to humanity that is perishing: in the midst of a Gentile world that has established itself in the godless idiocy of "unending time"<sup>84</sup> and that therefore want to push Israel, which disturbs them, out of the way. And a Gentile Christianity that does not hear Israel's witness falls back into sheer paganism. It is not because of a divine punishment that Israel testifies to the God who **in his gracious election** lets the disobedient person "pass away, so that he can receive a real future." Therefore, allowing humanity to pass away is a *blessing* from God, and Israel's testimony to it is "praise to the mercy of God."<sup>85</sup> But if Israel does not realize that it is already "the people of the risen Jesus Christ," then it *thus* "brings sorrow on itself."<sup>86</sup> For then it gives its witness, which will certainly continue, to this passing away "in abstraction" from the hopeful "new, gracious beginning" which has dawned in the resurrection of Christ and to whom its own testimony points. Yet this is precisely what the Gentile church testifies to. It testifies to the coming humanity that in it "nobodies" who have no existence in God's original election will also be wondrously elected and called. This shows forth the power of Christ's resurrection and its disclosure of "real future" for humanity that is passing away. If by this power the church testifies to coming humanity, than it is not moving away from Israel; for it will "want to live by nothing else than God's grace directed toward Israel." So it declares itself for "the *unity* of humanity which is passing away and which is coming, according to the will of divine mercy," and thereby for the unity of the community of God.<sup>87</sup> And so it awaits God's future, in which all Israel will declare itself **to this unity**. Did not the Jew Franz Werfel also spoke of this expectation: "How much longer will this Hell reign here on Earth / with blind hate in the South, West, East and North? / Until the Jews become Christians / and until the Christians

have become Jews."<sup>88</sup> That recalls the promise of Revelation 21: „And God will dwell in them, and they will be his people.,, Barth understood, more precisely than Werfel, the plurality — in the multitude united with God — in which the Jewish people and those who come from the Gentiles are the one community of God, *unmixed*, and yet *inseparable*.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich*, Bd. I, Frankfurt u.a. 1977, 546-559.

<sup>2</sup> W. Gerlach, *Theologische Höhenluft über der Wupper*, in *DASBI* 3.11.1985, 1985, p. 16. The slander that twists Barth's expulsion from Germany into a retreat for dishonorable reasons has its parallels in the Nazi propaganda of that time.

<sup>3</sup> W. Gerlach, *Als die Zeugen schwiegen: Bekennende Kirche und die Juden*, Berlin, 1987, p. 408.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Marquardt, *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie: Israel im Denken Karl Barths*, München, 1967, S. 266ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes: Karl und die Juden, 1933-1945*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1996, pp. 523-537.

<sup>6</sup> According to H. Prolingheuer, *Der Fall Karl Barth: Chronographie einer Vertreibung, 1934-1935*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2. Ed., 1984, p. 233.

<sup>7</sup> For one of many examples, see E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen*, S. 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Die Kirche Jesus Christi (TEX 5)*, München, 1933. A copy of Barth's letter to Hitler is in K. Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich*, vol. 2, Berlin, 1985, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> For references, see E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen*, pp., 165f.

<sup>10</sup> Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich*, vol. I, p. 558, note 101.

<sup>11</sup> Barth's letter to Fr. Schmidt, Jan. 1, 1934, (Barth-Archives, Basel).

<sup>12</sup> H.-W. Krumwiede, *Göttinger Theologie im Hitler-Staat*, in, *JGNKG* 85, 1987, p. 160.

<sup>13</sup> Barth's letter to Fr. Dalmann, Sept. 1, 1933, (Barth-Archives, Basel).

<sup>14</sup> References in E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen*, Pp. 87-95; 179f.

<sup>15</sup> Barth's letter to G. Merz, cited in W. Koch, "Barths erste Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Dritten Reich," in *Richte unsere Füße auf den Weg des Friedens (FS H. Gollwitzer)*, München, 1979, p. 501.

<sup>16</sup> See D. Bonhoeffer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, München, 1965, pp. 165-130; further, K. Barth, *Lutherfeier 1933 (TEH 4)*, München, 1933, pp. 4f.

<sup>17</sup> See K. Barth, *Reformation als Entscheidung (THE 3)*, München, 1933, pp. 12ff; K. Barth, *Gottes Wille und unsere Wünsche (TEH 7)*, München, 1934, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> E. Busch, ed., *Reformationstag 1933; Dokumente der Begegnung Karl Barths mit dem Pfarrernotbund in Berlin*, Zürich, 1998, pp. 69f, 106.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 20-26.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme, 1938-1945*, Zürich-Zollikon, 1945, pp. 69-107.

<sup>21</sup> See E. Busch, "Der Theologe Karl Barth und die Politik des Schweizer Bundesrats; eine Darstellung anhand von unveröffentlichten Akten der Schweizer Behörden, in *Evangelische Theologie*, 59, (1999), pp. 172-186.

<sup>22</sup> R. R. Geis, *Leiden an der Unerlöstheit der Welt: Briefe, Reden, Aufsätze*, D. Goldschmidt and I. Überschar

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eds., München, 1984, p. 240.

<sup>23</sup> For more, see the citation in E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen*, pp. 515-517.

<sup>24</sup> K. Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme*, pp. 307-333.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. K. A. Sonderegger, *Karl Barth's Dogmatic Interpretation of Israel*, Providence, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> See E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen*, p. 441.

<sup>27</sup> In much greater detail, *ibid.*, pp. 97-124.

<sup>28</sup> F. Schleiermacher, *Der christlicher Glaube nach deen Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche*, Berlin, 1835, vol. I, pp. 77-80.

<sup>29</sup> F. Schleiermacher, *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums*, Leipzig, 1910, par. 115.

<sup>30</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatic*, II/2, p. 284.

<sup>31</sup> K. Barth, *Briefe 1961-1968*, Zürich, 1975, pp. 420f. **Es ist wichtig, daß Barth gerade hier genau verstanden wird: Es geht ihm nicht darum, daß das Hören auf die Schrift das Hören auf jüdische Zeugnisse in Geschichte und Gegenwart ersetzt - so wenig, wie das nötige Achten auf die biblische Rede von der Kiche das Beachten von Äußerungen der Kirche in Geschichte und Gegenwart überflüssig macht. Aber - und das ist Barths Ernstmachen mit dem „sola scriptura“ in diesem Zusammenhang - noch viel weniger kann solches Hören auf jüdische und kirchliche Stimmen das Hören auf die Schrift und ihr Reden von jüdischem Volk und christlicher Kirche ersetzen. Vielmehr geht es im Achten auf die Schrift um das Wahrnehmen des erhellenden und maßgeblichen Lichts, in dem jüdische wie kirchliche Äußerungen zu sehen, zu verstehen, zu diskutieren und zu beurteilen sind. Die Voraussetzung, die Barth dabei macht, ist allerdings die, daß sowohl die Kirche mit der neutestamentlichen Gemeinde wie das Judentum mit dem biblischen Israel in einer solchen Kontinuität steht, daß ihre Beleuchtung mit jenem Licht ihnen angemessen ist und ihnen dadurch keine Fremdbestimmung widerfährt.**

<sup>32</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 223 and 318.

<sup>33</sup> Op. cit., pp. 319f.

<sup>34</sup> L. Steiger, "Die Theologie vor der 'Judenfrage' – Karl Barth als Beispiel," in R. Rendtorff and E. Stegemann, eds., *Auschwitz – Krise der christlichen Theologie*, Munich, 1980, pp. 82-98.

<sup>35</sup> See as early as *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, pp. 566-568.

<sup>36</sup> See op. cit., p. 567: Rather, God exercises "grace in judgment" and "in judgment grace." According to Barth, one has not understood God's grace when one separates it from God's judgment, nor God's judgment when one understands it as expulsion from the covenant rather than as an event within the covenant. **Der Antijudaismus versteht also nach Barth nicht, daß das mit Gottes Gnade verbundene Gericht Gottes auf dem Boden des Bundes stattfindet und nicht von ihm ausschließt. Die Kritik an einem neutestamentlichen (vielmehr biblischen) „Antijudaismus“ denkt nach Barth im Grunde genau so, bestreitet aber im Grunde, daß gerade der gnädige Bundesgott auch der strenge Richter seiner Gemeinde ist.**

<sup>37</sup> R. Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen*, Ges. Aufs. Bd. 1, Tübingen 1958, p. 333.

<sup>38</sup> K. Barth, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi*, THE 5, Munich, 1933, p. 17.

<sup>39</sup> J. Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis* II, 9-11, and especially: II,10.2. See also Barth, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion (1924-1925)*, vol. 2, Zürich, 1990, pp. 381-398. **Hier wird verständlich, warum Barth in seinem Gespräch mit dem jüdischen Theologen H.J. Schoeps Anfang 1933 dessen These (in seinem**

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**Buch: Jüdischer Glaube in dieser Zeit. Prolegomena zu einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums, Berlin 1932) hingegen nicht hilfreich erschien. Schoeps hatte den gerade an Barth geschulten Begriff der Christus-Offenbarung einfach auf die Sinai-Offenbarung übertragen wollen. So wäre ja nicht zu begründen, worauf es Barth ankommt: daß die Kirche mit der Synagoge „in einer Gemeinschaft (lebt), wie sie zwischen keinen zwei anderen ‘Religionen’ möglich ist.“ Aber gerade darum: „Was könnte sie sich Besseres wünschen, als daß ihr ihr von der Synagoge Ererbtes immer wieder in seiner ganzen Eigentümlichkeit vor Augen geführt werde.“ Cf. E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen des einen Bundes*, op. cit., p. 174-179, especially p. 179.**

<sup>40</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, pp. 101-214.

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 177-190; e.g. p. 177: "God wills to lose, so that man might win."

<sup>42</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>44</sup> See the title of the paragraph in which Barth treats Israel and the church, "The election of the community."

<sup>45</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 220, 286.

<sup>46</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 218..

<sup>48</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 219f.

<sup>49</sup> Terminologically Barth reserves the concept "people" [*Volk*] for Israel, while he uses "assembly" (=ecclesia) as synonym for church; the two together are called by him ""community." This agrees with the definitions in F. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erklösung* (1921), Frankfurt, 1993, p. 381.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, pp. 234f.

<sup>51</sup> See on this E. Busch, *Unter dem Bogen*, pp. 457f.

<sup>52</sup> Barth says "resound together" [zusammenklingt], *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 288.

<sup>53</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, pp. 341-344.

<sup>54</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 312.

<sup>55</sup> F. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921), Frankfurt, 1993, pp. 309ff, especially p. 317 and 379. **K. H. Miskotte, in: Karl Barth/ K.H. Miskotte, Briefwechsel 1924 - 1968, ed. by H. Stoevesandt, Zürich 1991, p. 79, writes that he since 1928 referred Barth to this „great book“, which brings to light „signs of the unity of God’s one community (in Israel and in the church)“. Barth p. 104 asked Miskotte to help him to read this book, which seemed him difficult to understand.**

<sup>56</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 289.

<sup>57</sup> "The Jew keeps the question of Christ open," is the much quoted statement of D. Bonhoeffer, often taken out of context (*Ethik*, Munich, 1985, p. 31). Barth agrees with it to the extent that it means that "Christ" is not the property of the church in such a way that it can assert Christ without and against "the" Jew. When it does that, the church renders itself incapable of perceiving the "sign" of the goodness and of the seriousness of God that "the Jew" is for Christianity (Bonhoeffer). For Barth, the statement would be unacceptable in the interpretation often ascribed to it that the Jewish testimony can help Christianity to deal with the question, "Are you the one who is to come?," as unanswered, in order then to regard the question as quite irrelevant and to seek common ground with the Jews at all kinds of other points, e.g. in the hope for an decisive event yet to come in which the



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question could be revealed to be totally nonessential.

<sup>58</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 289.

<sup>59</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>60</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>61</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

<sup>62</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>63</sup> **See the division of the three chapters in *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, pp. 226-336, which lay out the difference in the togetherness of "Israel and the Church;"** in the ET, pp. 195-305.

<sup>64</sup> One should note that the three step argument which follows is not derived solely from Romans 9-11. In the dogmatic consideration of the relationship of the two biblical testaments in general, Barth (in *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, pp. 77-133) proceeds in a structurally analogous three-step pattern, which seeks to develop this thesis (in a disputational dialogue with contemporary Jewish theologians, see p. 87) as follows: Both testaments are saying the *same thing*, but in *different ways*. The Old Testament speaks (1) of the covenant of God, (2) of the revelation of the concealed God, and (3) of the eschatological coming of God. The New Testament says the same thing and thus connects the church "indivisibly" (p. 111) with the people of the Old Testament; "it can only have to do with their incorporation into the one covenant" (p. 115). It does this because the New Testament testifies, moving beyond the Old Testament, to (1) the fulfillment of the covenant in the incarnation of God, (2) the perfecting of the hiddenness of God in the Passion of Christ, which is revealed at Easter as the good news, and (3) the One who has come as the One who is to come. Further, we note that Barth in *Kirchliche Dogmatik* II/2 on the one hand presents God's gracious election in Christ in a three-step pattern again: (1) God determining himself to be the covenant partner, (2) God confirming himself as covenant witness, (3) God electing humanity to be his covenant partner; on the other hand, he presents his doctrine of election in a corresponding three-step pattern: (1) as just mentioned, God as the one who graciously elects, (2) the elect community (Israel/the Church) as his covenant witness, (3) humanity outside this community as the addressee of the gospel of God's gracious election. This leads to the conclusion that the three-step pattern to be discussed here (it relates to the 'elect community' just mentioned unter #2) is to be understood in such a way that what it at stake is the testifying of (1) God's covenant action, (2) God's covenant revelation, and (3) the addressees of God's action and speaking.

<sup>65</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 254, 256.

<sup>66</sup> Leo Baeck, "Die Existenz des Juden: Lehrhausvortrag am 30.5.1935," in *Leo Baeck Institute Bulletin* 81 (1988), p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Barth can say briefly that the Jews testify to Gentiles that they are not elect, that one must be Jewish or belong to them, in order to be elect (III/3, p. 255). This is, in his view, the thing about the Jews that bothers the Gentiles (cf. *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, p. 567). Cf. F. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921), Frankfurt, 1993, with a similar thought: This people "must...remain always alien to and an offence to world history."

<sup>68</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 227, 229.

<sup>69</sup> More precisely, the text under discussion is Romans 9:30-10:21.

<sup>70</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 267.

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<sup>71</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 281, 285.

<sup>72</sup> Thus *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I/2, p. 566, see also III/3, p. 240: The Jew are the "librarians of the church" (Augustine), not the antiquarians, **but rather "the constantly self-renewing realization and exposition of that human" who according to those books is the counterpart in God's covenant.**

<sup>73</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 257. If it did not listen to the Jewish witness, the church would "have nothing more to say to the world."

<sup>74</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>75</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 261. On January 28, 1934, Cohn had sent Barth his book, *Aufruf zum Judentum*, and commented in the accompanying letter that Barth's writings were being read in the circles of the synagogue with lively attentiveness. The letter together with Barth's response of February 2, 1934, is found in the Barth Archives in Basel. What is at stake here becomes clear when we listen at the same time to F. Rosenzweig's formulation in *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921), Frankfurt, 1993, p. 379f: Christian faith is faith in..., contrasted to it the faith of the Jew were "not the content of a testimony, but the product of a begetting. The one who is begotten as a Jew testifies to his faith in that he continues the procreation of the eternal people." In the context above, Barth is apparently debating this view.

<sup>76</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 298, 301fr.

<sup>77</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>78</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 312.

<sup>79</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>80</sup> Romans 11:32, the concluding statement of the entire tractate of chapters 9 to 11 before Paul utters the adoring song of praise in view of God's mysterious ways, is also for Barth the key statement for the understanding of the whole. He understands this statement (*op. cit.*, pp. 330f) together with Jesus' word about the first, the last, and the last ones who will be first, in such a way that it describes the law of grace of God's activity in his covenant: the last will be first because God accepts those who are lost and because the Gentiles are those who are most lost. And the first will be the last, without loss of the "Jewish rights of the firstborn!", because the acceptance of the lost Gentiles reveals that the (enduring!) benefit of *their* election is based solely upon the fact that God accepts the lost.

<sup>81</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 309-313.

<sup>82</sup> M. Buber, "Kirche, Staat, Volk, Judentum;; Zwiegespräch im Jüdischen Lehrhaus in Stuttgart am 14.1.1933," (mit K. L. Schmidt), in *ThBl* 12 (1833), p. 257-274. One should note that Barth, in the analogous third step in the cited section in *C.D.* I/2 was doubtlessly thinking of M. Buber's *Der Kommende: Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte des messianischen Glaubens*, vol. I, Berlin, 1932.

<sup>83</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 260.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, III/2, p. 679. Barth explained (pp. 715ff) that the Old Testament testifies to the limitation of created life. And this is intensified in the New Testament (pp. 728ff), in that here, in the "word of the cross," death itself (the death which was suffered in our place and which allows our "old man" to pass away) stands in the center as the accursed death. The Easter hope that is implied here becomes visible only against the background of this intensification.

<sup>85</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/2, p. 286.

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<sup>86</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>87</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

<sup>88</sup> "Delphisches Orakel," in F. Werfel, *Das lyrische Werk*, ed. A. D. Klarmann, Frankfurt, 1967, p. 527.

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