Wonder and Worries:
An Appreciation and Critique of John Howard Yoder’s The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited

Carl Roemer
Society of the Holy Trinity

Introduction

In this essay, I cannot comment on the issue with which John Howard Yoder is so deeply concerned: the relationship between contemporary Judaism and Christianity and his burning desire to bring about a rapprochement between these two biblical faiths. It is far outside my expertise and knowledge, and, correspondingly, I will also not comment on Part II of the collection of Yoder’s essays on the correspondence that he finds between the free church vision and Jewish tradition. I share with Peter Ochs, who provides commentary on each chapter of Yoder’s work, an admiration of Yoder’s working so assiduously to change the parameters of Christian–Jewish relationships and to open new paths toward dialogue based on an in-depth re-evaluation of the origins of both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. But I must confine myself to his historical and biblical interpretations and evaluations, which are within the sphere of my training.

Yoder has presented a magisterial justification for his thesis that first century Judaism and Christianity were one. His second thesis asserts that the only authentic way of living out monotheism is by expressing the pattern of existence in the world outside the Holy Land that Jeremiah summoned the exiles to realize: “seek the peace of the city where I have called you to be carried away in exile and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its peace you will find your...”

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1 John Howard Yoder, The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2008) 105-143. (Hereafter, I will refer to this collection of Yoder’s essays as simply “Yoder” when referencing this book.) I would like to observe, however, that there is a difference between a church and a sect. The latter purports to be the only legitimate representative and authentic expression of a religious tradition and excludes all other expressions as something other than the true faith. A sect conceives itself as including only true believers who must constantly assure the sect that they are such. Pharisaism during the Second Temple period established haburoth, conventicles in which its members could practice their interpretation of Torah and the oral law which they espoused in complete assurance that they always dealt with those things that were faithful to the oral and written Torah (Within their haburoth they exercised some “care in trade, and...they preferred to trade only with people who kept” the dual Torah. But they were not a sect like the Essenes. See E. P. Sanders, Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992) 440–443. Of course, they never excluded other Jews from being members of the people of God regardless of their attitude toward the (dual) Torah. After 70 C.E., when Pharisaism developed into Rabbinic Judaism, they were exclusionary of all other forms of Jewish teaching and ostracized the teachings of Christianity, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and those who espoused them. (Essenism saw itself as the true sect, the true Israel and the “sons of light,” and all others, including both Jews and Gentiles, as “sons of darkness” who would not be saved.) The Church ostracized Judaism but also conceived of itself as a mixtum compositum—a field sown with both wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30) which mixture would only be divided in the eschaton. Thus, a church, in contradistinction to a sect, understands itself as composed of both believers and non-believers (in the hope that the latter will ultimately be converted). The Torah prohibits the mixture of diverse kinds of seed (Deuteronomy 22:9-11), however, and the Mishnah does not consider wheat and tares as diverse kinds (mKilaim 1.1). Rabbinic Judaism held a comparable view regarding the whole Jewish people.

2 Yoder, 38–40.
peace” (29:7). For him, the Jews have to this day fulfilled that command, and Christians did in the time before Constantine made Christianity the state religion.

The first thesis cannot be gainsaid; Jesus and Paul are to be totally located within Judaism. But first century Judaism was indeed complex. It was characterized by a great diversity of groups, opinions, ways of life, visions of Jewish existence, understandings of Torah, and biblical interpretations. However, in the process of seeking to prove the second part of his thesis and many of its corollaries, he leaves out much of the witness of history and the other parts of the biblical message that stand in contradiction to it.

He asserts that Judaism was evangelizing Gentiles, but that idea is questionable and seriously debated. For example, Matthew 23:15 is frequently quoted as indicating a mission of, at least, the Pharisees to the Gentiles. The Pharisees initiated a revolution within Judaism by adopting several innovations: they practiced some of the priestly laws of purity, thereby stressing the equality of every Jew and denying that the priests constituted a special and privileged class; the family table became an altar, and the prayers offered there were as the temple sacrifice; they established a “fence” about the Torah which protected the written law from being trespassed, and they expanded and updated its application; and they created a new category of law, the oral law, which was considered equal to and as “Mosaic” as the written law.

It is obvious from these innovations that the Pharisees and their successors were directing their attention exclusively toward Israel, its life, and its way of being in the world, so that when Matthew says the Pharisees “travel land and sea to win one proselyte” (Matthew 25:15), it has to be concluded that they are seeking to bring under the Pharisaic umbrella the Jews of the diaspora which, of course, could include Gentiles who had attached themselves to the synagogue. It was not a missionary movement to the wider, Gentile world.

Noachic Covenant

This exclusivity of the Pharisaic revolution and the object of their mission becomes all the more clear with the development that Yoder himself identifies and acknowledges: the idea of the “Noachic covenant.” This idea provides a way for Gentiles to relate to the God of Israel and the covenant he made with all humanity (the bow in the sky). On the basis of this covenant and by observing the laws given to Noah (Genesis 9:3-7), the father of all post-diluvian humanity, even the Gentiles can be included under the aegis of the God of Israel. Yoder questions the antiq-

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3See Yoder, 32-35.
4See Michael F. Bird, Crossing Over Land and Sea: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2010). Bird finds there wasn’t any Jewish missionary activity—at least no formally organized and authorized proselytizing activity. Jews were welcoming to curious non-Jews and urged them to give up immorality and idol worship, inviting them to worship in the synagogue as “God-fearers,” but the initiative in almost all cases had to come from the outside. John P. Dickson is somewhat less sweeping than Bird in his judgment and concludes that it was a possible that some forms of Judaism expressed various kinds of missionary commitment (Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 49). We can conclude that formal missionary activity on the part of the Jews in the second Temple period was virtually non-existent.
5See Yoder, 32 and the long endnote 8, 98-100.
uity of the notion, but it points to the exclusivity of the Judaism that was developed by the Pharisees and their successors.6

Paul, though he did not understand himself to be outside of Israel, was hardly “marginally more open” to the Gentiles, nor did he take just “some strands of Halakah” more loosely.7 For Paul, the Torah no longer played any salvific role in how the Gentiles were included in God’s people. By faith in Christ they are grafted onto the vine of Israel by no action of their own (Romans 11:17). This stance, according to Paul, did not nullify the Torah (Romans 3:19-31). It strengthened its relevance, although it now functioned in a new way: it revealed sin and judged the perpetrator of sin, and so it could not bring the Gentiles into the Kingdom of God by its observance. The Gentiles, just like Israel, could not become God’s people by observance. They too, just like Israel, had to be elected, and if not elected, then the impossible would have to happen: God would have to change his nature.8 They became the people of the God of Israel by grace, by his freely choosing them when they accepted the gospel which proclaimed that the punishment for sin had been borne by Christ on the cross. Paul reasoned quite clearly and consequentially that, just as Israel was elected by grace and not by any accomplishment on its part, so too the Gentiles could be included in God’s people not by their accomplishments (i.e., being circumcised and following the works of Torah), but through God’s election—by grace, as it were. Now they too, through Christ, were joined to God’s people and became a part of the “commonwealth of Israel” (Ephesians 2:11-13).

In this Paul understood that the messianic age had dawned in Jesus, the promised messiah, and that in him the whole history and life of Israel had found their culmination and fulfillment.9 This is the whole witness of the writers of the New Testament, but this is, as Yoder affirms, all a Jewish way of thinking. He justifiably asserts that Paul is the “great Judaizer of the Gentiles.”10

Christianity and Pharisaism

Yoder is overall correct in his preface when he situates emerging Christianity firmly within Judaism, and his criticism of “Christendom” as it developed post-Constantine is well taken. It was under that development that Jews were mistreated, by which, as he says, Jesus himself was “thereby defamed.”11 For Jewish “converts,” continuing to follow Torah did not come into ques-

6 Yoder, 38, n. 10. Could the agreement made at the so–called “Apostolic Council” (Acts 15:29) that to avoid eating meat with the blood of the animal, point to a truly ancient witness to the idea of the Noachic covenant?

7 Yoder, 32.

8 “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the LORD loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

9 “Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

10 Yoder, 49–50, 93–102. It is so that neither Jesus nor Paul rejected Judaism, but there was no such thing as a “normative Judaism,” as Yoder himself recognizes when he describes the plethora of various Judaisms (48).

11 Yoder, 34.
tion (and Peter and James are witnesses to that). Jewish Christians would more easily see themselves at home in (Torah) observant Judaism. Could it be, then, that Ephesians 2:14-18 did not have in mind Gentile Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, but was referring to Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who have been created in Christ “one new man from the two, so making peace”?  

However, there were inherent contradictions between Christianity and Pharisaism and its later development in Rabbinic Judaism. The Pharisees and nascent Christianity could exist side by side within first century Judaism, Judaism being the kaleidoscopic community that it was. But it was after the war, and especially after the demise of the Bar Kochba revolt, when all the various competing groups had vanished, leaving only Christianity and the rabbinic successors of the Pharisees standing, that the inherent contradictions between them became obvious.  

Although both were rooted in and part of the preceding Jewish commonwealth, Christians were motivated to disassociate themselves from what would have appeared to the Romans as a revolutionary sect, while the Rabbis worked mightily to restore Judaism by finding a way for the Jewish people to move forward without land and temple. The Christians looked outward to the Gentile world: the issue of Torah observance had been solved by Paul’s theology of the election of the Gentiles by grace, and so the mission that lay before them was unhinged from Torah. Meanwhile, the Rabbis looked inward to preserve the integrity of the Jewish people: without land and temple, the one reality binding the Jewish people together was Torah observance, which the Pharisees had already been developing and updating for centuries. Both forgot that Christianity was rooted in Judaism and that it and Rabbinic Judaism were sisters. The parting of the ways had begun not merely on the basis of their different orientations, inward and outward, but because there was seemingly an inherent contradiction between them: the Torah was understood as the binding element for Jews spread throughout the world, and Jesus was understood as the messiah who had ushered in the messianic age including the Gentiles amongst God’s elect. The parting of the ways was perhaps “not inevitable,” as Yoder insists, but, at least, it was to be expected.  

The First 50 Years of Christianity

In his analysis of Acts 21, Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem, Gerd Ludemann shows that, whereas the charge in v. 21 that Paul teaches Jews to abandon the law is nowhere to be found in any of his correspondence, he did expect Jewish Christians to forgo their observance of the dietary laws in their association with Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:11-14). And, for example, in 1

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12Yoder, 34.
13That inherent contradiction was already recognized early on when some Jewish elements, like Paul, persecuted the Christian community. There could be little tolerance for those who spoke against the temple as an institution and relativized Torah, as indicated in the story of Stephen (Acts 6-7); Agrippa I’s execution of James (Acts 12:2); and Ananus the high priest’s 62 C.E. accusations against and stoning of James the brother of Jesus and some others of breaking the law (Josephus, Antiquities, 20.9.1). Paul’s behavior and teaching was also judged worthy of the forty lashes less one, on more than one occasion (2 Corinthians 11:24). Of course, as Yoder observes, all of these incidents indicate that nascent Christianity was and was perceived as part of the Jewish world (33).
14Yoder, 43ff.
Corinthians 7:19 and Galatians 6:15, he characterizes the law as inconsequential in the light of the new creation in Christ. It could not fail to come about, then, that as a result Jews would be alienated from the law and cease its practice.\textsuperscript{16} Ludemann goes on to remark that the charge was both “justified and unjustified.” He quotes Harnack approvingly: “Paul suffered in Jerusalem for something which was not at all his own doing, namely, the total separation that was occurring between Christianity and Judaism. But hostile eyes always look more sharply at such historical situations. They were right: Paul’s effect...was the destruction of Jewish customs and bringing the [observance of the] Law of Moses to an end.”\textsuperscript{17} So the Christians in Jerusalem stood completely within Judaism and tolerated no nullification of the law, remaining in Jerusalem until the time of the Jewish war and confirming their continuing solidarity with the Jewish people. Paul does not reject Judaism, however, but he fulfills its mandate to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6) and brings God’s universal election to the Gentiles by means of the Gospel.

So Yoder’s corrective to the “inherited position,” which understands Jesus and Paul as rejecting Judaism, is certainly apt.\textsuperscript{18} However, that he avers that the “inherited position” rejected Christian forms on first century Judaism, such as creed and something analogous to episcopal authority, is not apposite.\textsuperscript{19} No, they did not disagree on whether Gentiles could be accepted into their respective memberships, but how different that process must have looked to the outsider. On the one hand, to join Judaism would mean joining an ethnic group with its traditions, history, and rather strict rules of life and faith, but also with its attractive moral life and, by way of its scripture, a comprehensive Weltanschauung. On the other hand, to join Christianity would mean the opportunity to share in that same history and moral life by means of an ekklesia where one did not have to learn the mores and ways of a national group. This is not to deny the attractiveness of Judaism to the Gentile world. Acts bears witness to the presence of God-fearers all over the empire. Josephus’s \textit{Against Apion} witnesses to the anxieties of Gentiles over the number of them who have associated themselves with the synagogues. Those God-fearers were not con-
fined to the lower classes, either, as the story of the conversion of the royal house of Adiabene and in particular Helene, its queen, abundantly illustrate.\textsuperscript{20} Yoder correctly says Paul’s way of looking at the Gentile mission as God’s election is a thoroughly Jewish way of thinking, and neither he nor his congregations rejected the Jews or Judaism.\textsuperscript{21} His position cannot be gainsaid: one could be a Jew and a Christian at least for the first 50 years of Christianity’s existence.\textsuperscript{22}

**The Jewish Rejection of Christianity**

However, it is too facile to say that Jews did not reject Christianity.\textsuperscript{23} This is certainly true in the sense of the absence of a wholesale rejection in the first century, but the Gospels do represent the Pharisees and Jesus in conflict. Even if this conflict is a retrojection of the experience of the Church, it witnesses all the more to the conflict post-70 C.E. The contentious character of John’s Gospel is allusive of post-70 C.E. conflicts. Acts, too, reports on sporadic rejections and persecutions, which means the Jews involved sensed something was afoot that was incompatible with Torah-practicing Judaism or, at least, with Judaism as they understood it. Already early on in the life of Jesus there are a plethora of accusations against him: the priests, for instance, accuse him of perverting the nation (Luke 23:2). Paul receiving the “forty lashes less one” (2 Corinthians 11:24) points in this same direction. Paul’s statement witnesses to the fact that he was understood as a fellow Jew being punished as one of them, as Yoder affirms. But it is also true that his lashings indicate that they found something incompatible with their understanding of what was an authentic Judaism—and this in a time when “Judaism” was a wide umbrella embracing many different forms.

The “Eighteen Benedictions” also support this inherent contradiction between Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. The recension found in the Cairo Geniza, shorter than that of the Baby-

\textsuperscript{20}Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.2.1. The depth of her Jewish faith and piety was demonstrated by having her tomb built in Jerusalem and her burial there. That was not the full extent of her piety. The Talmud reports, “Over the doorway of the Temple was a carving of a golden menorah donated by Queen Helena, a convert to Judaism. The morning service could not begin before sunrise. The Temple was surrounded by high walls, and it was not possible to see the rising sun, so a priest had to be sent outside to see if it was time for the service to begin. After Queen Helena donated the Menorah, it was no longer necessary to send a priest outside the Temple. As the sun rose in the east it shone against the menorah and the reflected light was cast into the [courtyard].” (Yoma 37b; Tosefta Yoma 82). Nor was that the totality of her piety. During the famine mentioned in Acts 20:28 she sent her servants to Alexandria with enough money to purchase a huge quantity of corn and to Cyprus for a cargo of figs, and so she prevented the deaths of many who otherwise would have died of starvation (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.2.5). I think Yoder might say that Christianity should have been such a blessing to the Jews.

\textsuperscript{21}Yoder, 51.

\textsuperscript{22}Yoder 51-53. This was not just a first century state of affairs. While on tour in Israel, our guide, a Sabra, an altogether faithful Jew, introduced us to a Jewish community which was Christian and yet followed a Jewish way of life. Our guide was thoroughly accepting of their existence and of their being a part of the Jewish nation.

\textsuperscript{23} Yoder, 51.
lonian, comes closest to the wording of the text from 70-100 C.E.24 The twelfth benediction petitions that the “Nazarenes and heretics perish quickly.”25 This execration is corroborated by the Gospel of John, which refers to the expulsion from the synagogue of those who follow Jesus (John 9:22, 12:42). It is not a matter of John inventing the account, although Yoder rejects the explanation that John has retrojected the historical situation of his own time, at the end of the first and early second century, back into the story of Jesus, as if accepting this explanation would imply total skepticism toward the historical value of the Gospel.26

Having said this, it does not imply, as Yoder fears, that Christians and Jews were not part of one community for two generations or more. There is no evidence in the synoptic tradition that Jesus or his followers were excluded from any synagogue.27 However, that inclusive relationship was dependent on a Jewish community that circumscribed all kinds of Judaisms represented by Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees, various messianic groups, prophets, sicarii, zealots, and Robinhood–like bandits.28 As Yoder himself recognizes, a break between the two traditions took at least a half century, though he understands the ultimate break not as inevitable but as the product of “historical development.”29 The war ended all that diversity, and what emerged were two more-or-less incompatible Judaisms.

**Election and Torah**

As Yoder rightly observes, the incompatibility was not in that Christians called Jesus "Son of God,”30 nor in the earlier period “the Anointed One” or “Messiah,” nor even that conflict existed in the pre-70 C.E. Jewish community. The insistence that God could elect the Gentiles

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24Emil Schürer quotes the version of the Eighteen from a copy of the Palestinian version found in the Cairo Geniza which originated during the last three decades of first century. The 12th benediction reads, “And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be quickly uprooted, in our days. And may the Nazarenes and the heretics perish quickly; and may they be erased from the Book of Life; and may they not be inscribed with the righteous” (The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, vol. 2, ed. Geza Verses et. al. [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979], 459-461). David Instone-Brewer’s investigations conclude that the Cairo Geniza originated before 70 C.E. (“The 18 Benedictions and the Minim before 70 C.E.” [Cambridge: Tyndale House, 2003]).

25Schürer, 461.

26Yoder, 53.

27One may point to the story of Jesus at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), where he was apparently expelled, but the expulsion was not from the synagogue but “from the city” (4:29). Luke’s story continues with Jesus going to Capernaum and teaching in the synagogue there (Luke 4:31).

28See, e.g., Carl E. Roemer, What Was the World of Jesus? (Bloomington: True Directions, 2014), 339–442. But Yoder is imminently aware of that reality: “It is ethnic…geographic…ethical…gathered around community practices of prayer, Scripture study and preaching, yet less concerned about the proprieties of ritual or dogma” (58). What is then peculiar about Yoder is that he doesn’t see how the changed circumstances of post-70 C.E. altered the relationships between nascent Christianity and developing Rabbinic Judaism.

29Yoder, 54.

30This divine sonship was perhaps understood in terms of the adoptionism of Psalm 2:7. We find this Christology of the early Jewish Christian church quoted by Paul in Romans 1:3-4, according to which Jesus is legitimated by his Davidic descent and is exalted as “Son of God” by his resurrection (which he quotes in order to establish his orthodoxy with his readers). But, for Paul, the “Son of God” is the pre-existent Christ whom God sent into the world for its redemption (Romans 8:3 and Galatians 4:4) (Günter Bornkamm, Paul, [New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971], 249).
apart from Torah,\textsuperscript{31} what had been merely a source of conflict pre-70 C.E., ultimately brought about the division in the post-70 C.E. Rabbinic environment when the broadness and pluralism of Judaism no longer obtained. In this environment, the rabbis were in the process of creating the means whereby world Jewry could continue on as a people and where Torah and the ancient oral tradition was the absolute norm for being included in this now new and normative Judaism. The many streams of early Judaism had become one exclusive current.\textsuperscript{32}

But Yoder is incorrect in this: the break, which slowly emerged after 70 C.E., was inevitable, because the way Torah was understood by the two communities was not compatible.\textsuperscript{33} Yoder correctly assesses the subsequent history, observing that the complete split, mutual denunciations, and Christians denying the right for Judaism to exist took a long time to develop and became final in the Constantinian reform.\textsuperscript{34} However, Yoder’s insistence that Christianity and Judaism are sisters, his passion for dialogue, and the imperative to seek ways to help Christians and Jews to see how they both are branches of the same tree are well taken.\textsuperscript{35} Their roots lie in that wide first century canopy, which, though narrowed by Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, still has room for both these forms of Judaism.

**Judaism and Pacifism**

In his essay, “Jesus the Jewish Pacifist,”\textsuperscript{36} in his effort to establish the thesis that Judaism had become pacifistic, he avers that Judaism had rejected the idea of kingship and that “[w]ith Jeremiah God abandoned kingship as a vehicle of his people’s identity.” This assertion needs to be modified with some nuances.

First, the book of Jeremiah refers fourteen times to the figure of David. Although Jeremiah pronounces doom on the present kings who “sit on the throne of David” in 22:1-7, he prophesies that the throne of David will be restored if Judah’s king will be true to the covenant. The promise is repeated in 23:5-6, where YHWH declares that the Davidic kingship will be restored and the “righteous branch” will reign with justice and righteousness.\textsuperscript{37} Jeremiah 33:14-26 promises a perpetually perduring, restored Davidic throne, and it, and it witnesses to the continu-

\textsuperscript{31}Romans 3:21. The whole ministry of Jesus shows that the direction of his gospel and his understanding of the Kingdom of God was outward, directed to the Gentile world: he sat at table with outcasts and sinners; his parables made the “other” examples of God’s kingdom; he questions the exercise of fasting, the rules of purity, the oral law, the sacrosanct nature of the Sabbath; he was lax toward divorce; and he included Gentiles in his healing ministry, forgiving their sins. When Jesus said he had come to “fulfill the law” (Matthew 5:17), Indeed, Matthew constantly makes this point by indicating how Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets.) he was referring to Torah, the Pentateuch, which pointed to the ultimate goal of Torah, the inclusion of the nations. (Indeed, Matthew constantly makes this point by indicating how Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets.) Of course, this did not mean that he thought of himself as other than a Jew or as opposed to “Judaism.” For him the Jews were the “light of world,” a “city set on a hill” (Matthew 5:14), just as Judaism was experienced by many throughout the Graeco-Roman world.

\textsuperscript{32}Yoder, 60.

\textsuperscript{33}Yoder, 62.

\textsuperscript{34}Although the Ebionites, Jewish Christians, did live on and survived for centuries.

\textsuperscript{35}Pope Pius XI said the same thing in 1938 when he declared, right in the face of the Nazi myth of race and blood and its virulent anti-semitism that, “spiritually we are all Semites.”

\textsuperscript{36}Yoder, 69-89.

\textsuperscript{37}The metaphor of the branch began with Isaiah (4:2, 11:1) and was developed further by Jeremiah (23:5, 33:15), and Zechariah 3:8, 6:12). See also Jeremiah 30:9.
ing hope for the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:5-16), at least among those who continued in the school and tradition of Jeremiah.\(^\text{38}\) Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, in a time shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, promulgates YHWH’s promises that in the restoration “my servant David...shall be prince among them” (34:23-24).

Second, it is so that there was opposition to the establishment of kingship in Israel by those particularly loyal to the tribal federation with its quality of egalitarianism and revering God as Israel’s true king (1 Samuel 8:4-22, 10:19, 12:12-19). That tradition persisted throughout Israel’s history. Against that tradition, however, must be set the Davidic covenant and the long accession and court history, which is by far the most extensive among all of the material devoted to any other king of Judah or Israel in the Bible (1 Samuel 16–1 Kings 2:12). Implied is that David is not only a man of YHWH’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), but the model for every other king who would sit on the throne of Israel ruling God’s people (most of whom, it would seem did not live up to this ideal). The extent of this history also indicates how important he was, the devotion with which his memory was held, and the ideal of his rule. He is the icon of God among the people.\(^\text{39}\)

The Maccabean literature portrays the second century B.C.E. Hasmonean brothers, Judah, Jonathan, and Simon, as messianic figures who liberated Israel from Seleucid rule.\(^\text{40}\) The Psalms of Solomon, a Pharisaic document of the first century B.C.E., devotes the long Psalm 17 to the messiah, longing and praying for the coming of the “son of David,” the “Lord Messiah,” the ideal king and righteous shepherd who will restore the nation.\(^\text{41}\) The Dead Sea Scrolls describe their hope in the coming of the two “messiahs of Aaron and Israel” who will reign in the coming messianic kingdom. Josephus narrates the stories of the messianic figures that arose in the first century C.E. In the second century Bar Kochba initiated another revolt and Rabbi Akiba (of the third generation of rabbis) called him the star that goes forth from Jacob (Number 24:17) — that is, the king messiah.\(^\text{42}\)

So, from the tenth century B.C.E. through the second century C.E. of Israel’s history (at least some elements of the nation), prophets, biblical narrative, and post-biblical stories nurtured the image of the messiah and longed for his appearance to restore the kingdom and bring peace and justice to it and to the world. The memory of the Davidic covenant flourished as much as the ideals of the egalitarianism of the tribal confederacy. (Even then, it is remarkable that, though the Pharisaic revolution promoted egalitarianism, they still cultivated the messianic hope!) Jesus

\(^{38}\) The LXX, coming from perhaps the fifth century, lacks Jeremiah 33:14-26. However, a later addition (perhaps during the time of Jeremiah?) to Amos 9:11 foresees the restoration of the Davidic throne, but if it is a later addition, it only witnesses to the perduring hope of a Davidic restoration. Although the Deuteronomistic History is a judgment on the Davidic house, it is difficult to understand, on the basis of the Jeremian material itself, how Yoder then refers to “God’s negative judgment on the Davidic Project” as if it were an ongoing judgment (Yoder, 183).

\(^{39}\) The Chronicler increases the valorization of David by having him plan for the construction of the Temple down to the smallest detail and accumulating all the necessary construction materials.

\(^{40}\) It is remarkable in the stories of these three brothers that they never claim to be messiahs, nor does the literature about them. But it is clear from their actions that they are acting as a new David, the first royal messiah. See Roe-


\(^{42}\) Cassius Dio, Roman History, lxix 12,1-2 along with the discoveries in the Judean desert at Murabba’at, Nahal Hever and Nahal Ze’elim tell the story of Bar Kosiba (or Kochba=star). See Schürer, History I, 542-552.
himself is understood as the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. The messiah was also linked with servanthood. It would seem that to vitiate Davidic messianism would eliminate the whole New Testament identification of Jesus as the fulfillment of all the hopes and promises connected with the Davidic covenant.

Yoder is correct when he characterizes the king (the royal messiah) as being under the law, since “justice was knowable...by the oral Torah, by prophets, later by Scripture” so that the king is relativized “both in doctrine and in sociology” and is “the servant of divine righteousness, not its origin.” Israel’s covenant indeed was, as Yoder says, an alternative to the ancient Near Eastern model of monarchy, but it is also true the Torah revels in Israel’s defeat of the Canaanite kings. Of course, this is a reflection of the theology of “holy war” which achieved its greatest expression during the period of the judges and which was also a time when covenant theology was most vigorously in play. The concept of holy war rests on the nature of Israel’s God: he is the one who assures their continuance in history. Israel’s survival depended on the ability to wage war against the onslaughts of other peoples. Israel’s defense was understood not as a projection of its own will but depended on the decision and purposes of Israel’s God to save and deliver them:

As savior and deliverer he is conceived of as a warrior who brings about the victory of his people. Consequently, Exodus 15:3 states that “YHWH is a man of war.” Therefore, it is not Israel that declares war but their God. Any incursion by a foreign people into the land of Israel, which was conceived of as God’s own land and where he dwelt, was considered an affront to God himself and a breach of the covenant that God made with Israel to give this land to Israel as the people’s inheritance. The defense against an enemy invading this holy territory was therefore a holy war, bringing God’s wrath upon those who would violate his will and purpose and thus violate his very nature as the savior and defender of his people. However, God himself could call a foreign invader into his land to wreak his vengeance on his people who had themselves violated the covenant he made with

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46Yoder, 73. Deuteronomy 17:14-20 outlines the duty of the king and places him squarely under the law so that Israel’s monarchy is a form of a constitutional monarchy.
47Yoder, 71. See Deuteronomy 1:4, 2:24, 3:1-6, 29:7, Psalm 135:8-14. It is YHWH who has led the battle and brought them the victory.
48Norman Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979). Gottwald shows that the reality of early Israel’s existence in Canaan was precarious. They were the real underdog, living in the hill country without the technology of the chariot and subject to constant raids by the Canaanites. These “holy wars” were not aggressive but defensive, and the fact that Israel ultimately prevailed was understood as a gift of the Lord and due to his leadership. It was he who had gone out with the tribes to bring about the victory they experienced, and it was not won by their sword or their arm (Psalm 44:3).
them. No military commander could lead the people into holy war by his or her own volition.49

It is questionable, then, to describe Judaism as “pacifistic.” During the Persian period, the priests had developed what I call a “dependent hieratic state” which was characterized by accommodation and dealing with the political reality of living subject to a Gentile empire. They were probably the source of opposition to the Maccabean revolution. However, their “pacifism” was of a practical sort: they took into consideration the possibility of success against their powerful overlords, the Persians and then the Seleucids. These overlords at the same time protected the priests’ own hegemony.

The same motivation describes the priests of the first century C.E. With their worldly knowledge, they could well assess the power of Rome and the possibilities of winning a war. Although revolutionary groups abounded in these circumstances, there was a strain of passive resistance that was woven into the fabric of Judaism. One need only recall the citizens who met Pontius Pilate at his residence in Caesarea to plead for the removal of his military shields from Jerusalem, and when he threatened them with violence, they bared their necks ready to die for the sanctity of the city. Pilate had to relent, and passive resistance won the day!50 The Qumran community led a peaceful and “spiritual” existence, but we know from the War Scroll that they were ready to join in the eschatological war that would bring in the Kingdom of God. Consequently, when the revolution blossomed, they joined in, and the Romans obligingly destroyed them and their community at Qumran for that participation.51

This is not to say that Judaism did not constitute an alternative reality to the ways of the world. Its ethos, daily life, morality, and ideas of a government of justice and peace were rooted in a transcendent reality. But can Yoder say that they had a modern ideology of pacifism? I think not. If it did exist, it was of a practical kind that was related to circumstances. I would estimate that half the population supported the revolt of 66 C.E. People such as Josephus, who knew the depth and breadth of Roman military prowess, could see quite clearly where a revolution would lead.52 But he accepted the appointment of military governor of the Galilee and led a formidable effort to protect it and its citizens. His defense of Jotapata was extraordinary, and though he was ambivalent about the success of Jewish victory, he fought valiantly.

Was Jesus a “pacifist”? Again I would question projecting a modern idea and ideology to describe his thinking. His words were indeed pacifistic:

[49] Roemer, World of Jesus, 14. Other nations had a similar ideology, such that Israel’s wars were often seen as a contest between Israel’s God and the foreign god. When Israel was defeated, there was the temptation to believe that YHWH had been defeated, but the prophets always interpreted the defeat as God’s judgment because of some fault that lay in Israel. A defeat, then, was a time of probing the national life in order to discover the cause of God’s judgment.
[51] Josephus, War, 2.8.10 describes the vicious torture and destruction of the community.
[52] Just as Jesus did. See Mark 13:2.
“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.” (Matthew 5:38-42)

His whole ministry of the Kingdom had to do with restoring wholeness, bringing life to the dead, and calling people into the Kingdom which was characterized by peace, forgiveness, service, becoming as a helpless child, and losing one’s life (giving up the securities of this world) for his sake and for the sake of the kingdom. But even then, he knew that to act and live in this way would bring division:

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes will be those of his own household.” (Matthew 10:34-36)

Of course, he meant that the lack of peace would come about between those who accepted his ways and those who would not. His disciples had to be ready to face persecution. But he uses martial language here and does the same in the parable of the king who gave a wedding banquet” (Matthew 22:1-13) without any censure of this king who, after his invitation is rejected, “sent his troops and destroyed those murderers.” Nor is there censure of the king in the parable of the king who goes out to wage war (Luke 14:31-32). Why would Jesus use these martial examples of what it meant to be his follower if he were a “pacifist” who spurned all violence?

The most we can say of Jesus is that he spurned violence in the circumstances in which his beloved people found themselves. It was an ad hoc response. He knew exactly where it would lead (Mark 13:2, 14-19) and that there was no chance of success with fomenting rebellion against the Romans. He was taking up the familiar Jewish way of non-resistance in the face of absolute Roman power and its threat of irresistible violence. He was a total realist, but was he a “pacifist” in the modern sense?

How then explain the “pacifism” of the later Christians? They lived in the aftermath of the destruction of 70 C.E. The horrific violence and loss of life in both the first and second revolt, coupled with the words of Jesus that called for passive resistance, embedded as it was in Jewish ethos, would have blazoned itself on the consciences of these early Christians and led them to eschew supporting the Roman war machine. After all, they were living in a sort of anti-

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53The case is even more compelling if one argues they originated in the post-resurrection community.
54I estimate that a million Jews lost their lives in the face of the Roman war machine from 66-70 C.E. That loss must have made a deep impression on both Jews and their Christians brothers. The reaction to the loss of the Holy City and the Temple has left its traces all over the New Testament. See Roemer, *World of Jesus*, 374-384.
empire community that eschewed the way of power and domination.\(^{55}\) That it was again an ad hoc response is indicated by the later decision of Christians to join the army.

The primitive community in Jerusalem perhaps set the tone for this later passive resistance and “pacifism.” It decided not to get caught up in further violence and left the city in the midst of the war to flee to Pella in the Transjordan.\(^{56}\) It could also be that part of the Jerusalem community’s motivation was the conviction that God had abandoned his temple. Also rejecting the violence, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai left the city around the same time and received permission from Rome to found a house of study at Yabneh. There is in him a profound turn to a pacific stance—a turn, it would seem, mediated by the horrors of the war. It was reported that he declared, “we have an atonement as effective as [the temple services]…It is acts of loving kindness, as it is said, ‘For I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’”\(^{57}\) He was saying that the people needed an inner change of heart. His experience meant that the war’s inhumanity heightened the necessity to act compassionately and decently toward others.\(^{58}\) That this too was an ad hoc response and not yet even a Pharasaic ideology becomes clear in that, just two generations later, Rabbi Akiba was supporting yet another revolution. Apparently, “pacifism” was confined to developing Rabbinic Judaism.

**Synagogue, Temple, and Worship**

The destroyed temple was not replaced with the synagogue or “house of prayer.”\(^{59}\) If anything, the Pharisees and their successors thought of the family table as a kind of temple and the prayers of thanksgiving offered there as a sacrifice. There were fundamental differences between the temple and the synagogue. The synagogue was an ancient institution of learning developed by the people even before there were Pharisees or Rabbis (Psalm 74:8 may allude to its existence already in the First Temple Period). The temple was a divine institution whose pattern was in heaven (Exodus 25:9, Hebrews 8:5) and, in which it was thought, God himself dwelt. It was also maintained by a distinct priesthood.

The temple was hardly forgotten. Consider the amount of material in the Bible, the Mishnah, and the Talmuds dedicated to the description of the temple (or the tabernacle in the wilder-

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\(^{58}\) Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity*, 94. This is the gist of Neusner’s interpretation of Zakkai.

\(^{59}\) Yoder, 78. His deprecation of sacraments, confession and absolution, Christian liturgy as “ritual set apart from ordinary life” which slipped “back into a ‘religious’ (sic) understanding of what [Christian] meetings were about,” and accusing Christian worship of being more organized around “image and ceremony” than around Scripture (therefore “gnosticizing” true religion) seems an unnecessarily harsh portrayal of Christian liturgy (and hardly open to an ecumenical conversation). In reality, Christian liturgy maintained its Jewish connection by the development of a lectionary, a phenomenon with roots in the synagogue whose own lectionary probably goes back to the first century.
ness), its sacrifices, appurtenances, the annual feasts, and the priesthood. This was so because the temple was never understood solely as a physical structure, but from its very inception, it had an intimate connection with the heavenly realms and with Torah. As a rabbi told me, the extent of the description indicates how precious is the object that is so prolifically described. Even when it no longer physically existed, it still existed in heaven and was still present in Torah.

The hope for its restoration persisted. The Bar Kochba Revolt was directed toward its reconstruction. Again in 362 C.E., the emperor Julian the Apostate, as part of his plan to weaken the ties between the state and Christianity, proposed the Jewish resettlement of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple, although it never came to fruition because of his death. A final attempt was made in 614 when the Persians gained control of the Holy Land but reneged on the plan for the sake of not wanting to offend the Christian majority there.

No one could miss the continuation of that hope when viewing the model of Herodian Jerusalem at the Israel Museum in present day Jerusalem. There the temple mount is painstakingly replicated according to the latest research on how it looked in those days. To underscore the point, I visited a little museum in Jerusalem when I was there in 1994. There all the utensils used in the temple had been meticulously reproduced. They were not manufactured for antiquarian interest, either; the proprietors told me they were made in the hope for restoration of the temple!

The Passover Haggadah annually recalls the temple as one of the great blessings and wonders wrought for Israel by God, which was built “to enable us to atone for our sins.” The temple is explicitly commemorated at the ceremony called Koreh, when, it is said, it is done “in commemoration of the Temple according to the custom of Hillel.” After the meal of thanksgiving, God is petitioned to “build up Jerusalem, the city of holiness, speedily in our days.” That includes, of course and primarily, the building of the temple. Today Jews flock to pray to the Western Wall, part of the remains of Herod’s temple, getting as close as is possible to the “Holy Place” that once stood on the temple mount. So, for hundreds of years the Jews have prayed for the temple’s restoration, so important is it in the faith and psyche of Israel.

Paul’s Theology

Yoder’s exposition of Paul’s theology in his chapter “Paul the Judaizer” is a tour de force. However, that Paul’s opponents were the kind of Christian Jews that Yoder characterizes as coming from a pagan worldview and making a superstitions use of Jewish tradition is not apropos. Gerd Ludemann’s analysis has shown that Paul’s opponents appear to be the same but vary the basis from situation to situation from which they attack Paul. For example, in the

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60Exodus 25-31:11, 35:30-40; Leviticus 1-9, 21-24; Numbers 28-29. Moed, the second division of the Mishnah, is dedicated to the discussion of the annual feasts. The fifth division, Kodashim, is mostly dedicated to the discussion of sacrifices. So, approximately 30% of the Mishnah is related to the temple. This material was all preserved in the Talmuds up to the 10th century. The material indicates that the rabbis had fervent hopes and beliefs that the temple could be reconstructed, so they took great pains to retain and clarify all the information that would be necessary for its rebuilding and restoring its liturgy according to the divine pattern. It also made plain that when and if a restoration took place, the temple services would be conducted according to Rabbinic standards.


62The qodesh qodeshim, as it is referred to throughout the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Apocrypha.

63Yoder, 93-101.
Corinthian correspondence, the opponents are Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who had come together with certain elements in the Corinthians congregation as a party related to “Cephas” who dispute his apostleship. In Galatians, Paul’s opponents are again Jewish Christians who are continuing the Jerusalem dispute (Acts 15) and who were not able to execute their demand at the Jerusalem conference that Titus be circumcised. The same is true of the opponents in Philippi: they too are Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who are demanding circumcision. Romans 3:8 also points to Jewish Christians who accuse Paul, in his denial of the law as a way to salvation, of saying that one ought “to do evil that good may come.”

Ludemann’s study ranges far beyond the Pauline correspondence and investigates anti-Paulinism in the Jerusalem church, in the diaspora, among the Elkasaites, in the Epistle of James, in Hegesippus, in the Pseudo-Clementines, and in Irenaeus’s Against Heresies. He finds that “in the period after 70 C.E. anti-Paulinism was originally limited to Jewish-Christian communities,” all of which had a common root and which derived their opposition from the anti-Paulinism of the Jerusalem church. They propagated what the Jerusalem mother church had propagated. Therefore, it was not a matter of Judaism being mixed with a superstitions pagan worldview, but of Jewish Christians convinced that Gentiles, too, had to become Torah observant in order to be included among the people of God. Paul rightly saw that such a view contradicted the deepest roots of Judaism, which maintained that the people of God only became so by God’s grace and not by “works of the law.” Paul is not polemicizing against “Judaism,” but against Christian Jews who demand obedience to some Jewish ordinances in order to be considered part of the people of God.

Furthermore, Paul did not invent a gracious God whose graciousness is not dependent on works of the law. That too was part and parcel of Judaism. The Thanksgiving Hymns of the Dead Sea Scrolls give ample evidence for Judaism’s conviction that the individual is utterly reliant and dependent on a gracious and merciful God. It is God’s loving kindness that forms the basis of the faithful believer’s relationship to him, and not the accomplishment of one’s own works:

“For thou knowest the inclination of Thy servant,
that I have not relied [upon the works of my hands]
To raise up [my heart],
nor have I sought refuge

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64Gerd Ludemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 75-96. He finds them to be “Jewish-Christian Missionaries who use Cephas’s example against Paul and make apostolic claims for themselves (they let the congregation support them!) and thereby challenge Paul’s apostolic status” (80).


67The phrase “works of the law,” used by Paul in Romans 3:20, Galatians 2:16 (3x), 3:2, 5, 10, is also uniquely found in the Qumran document 4QMMT, *Miqsat Ma’ase ha-Torah* or “Some Works of the Law.” It reads: “We have also written to you concerning some of the observances [works] of the Law...Consequently, you will rejoice at the end of time when you discover that some of our sayings are true. And it will be reckoned for you as righteousness when you perform what is right and good before Him” (Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* [New York: Penguin Books, 1962], 228). Paul takes up this phrase probably because his opponents were using it. At any rate, his usage indicates that he is grounded in the Judaism(s) of his time and that he is in conversation with it. However, this phrase is embedded in a covenantal and eschatological framework, and in the process of retaining that association, Paul declares that not these works, but rather God’s covenantal grace makes one righteous and able to stand before the eschatological judgment. God’s covenant comes before any “works of the law.”
in my own strength. I have no fleshly refuge, [and Thy servant has] no righteous deeds to deliver him from the [Pit of no] forgiveness. But I lean on the [abundance of Thy mercies] And hope [for the greatness] of Thy grace, that Thou wilt bring [salvation] to flower and the branch to growth, providing refuge in (Thy) strength."  

Contra Yoder (95-96), Paul was a pioneer of the mission to the Gentiles. Of course, Jewish politeiai throughout the world had existed for centuries and had welcomed seeking Gentiles into their communities, but no “mission” existed. This is not to say, as Acts make clear, that Paul did not use the diaspora Jewish communities as a springboard to evangelizing the communities in which they existed, and no doubt both Jews and proselytes in the diaspora synagogues accepted Paul’s proclamation of the Gospel.

The Role of the Roman Empire in the Jewish-Christian Schism

The tragedy of the split between Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity lies not in the Christians’ acceptance of their rejection by the synagogues, which was inevitable, but the ensuing mutual vilification and denial of the other’s legitimacy. Jews could have seen Christians as the way God was fulfilling his call to be a “light to the nations” and accomplishing that by and through Jesus, a son of Israel, “the light who reveals God to the Gentiles and [is] the glory of his people Israel” (Luke 2:32). And Christians could have rejoiced in Israel as the great root and foundation in whom they had been engrafted by God’s grace (Romans 11:17-24) and so were included in God’s people. It could have been a great mutual admiration society. They could have gotten on as two devoted sisters, children of the one Father God who had given each a different task: the one to preserve his ancient people, the other to bring the nations into his arms.

Yoder is saying about the same when he rejects the assumption that Judaism and Christianity are two autonomous entities. Such assumptions, he says, “cramp our thought in ways we are seldom aware of.” To make his point, he understands Jesus, and Paul too, as fully within the parameters of Second Temple Judaism, but that in the second century, “some Gentile minorities

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69 See n. 1 above.
70 See n. 3 above.
71 See 2-3 above.
72 Yoder, 150.
started to take the Church away from the Jews.”73 So the Church started to “fall” already, then, by detaching itself from its original Jewish matrix.74

Was there a similar “fall” by Rabbinic Judaism from the rather broad and fulsome nature of Jewish life before 70 C.E., when it included a vast array of different interpretations of what it meant to be Jewish? It would seem that both the Church and Rabbinic Judaism contracted that matrix and, in the process, divided and could no longer see themselves as offspring of one mother who kept all kinds of Jewish children under her capacious wings.

Yoder minimizes the extent of the participation in Simon bar Kochba’s rebellion in order to establish the pacifism of Judaism after the disastrous revolt of 66-70 C.E. He insists that most Jews were not involved with the second century revolt.75 That outlook once seemed plausible because of the poverty of sources, but perhaps he was unaware of the discoveries in the Judean desert in 1960-61 relative to the revolt.76 These documents present quite a different picture. Coins minted bear Simon’s name with the title “Prince.” Others have the image of the temple with a star above it, and still others the name of “Eleazar the Priest,” who possibly was a joint leader of the revolt. The star reflects that Simon was regarded as the Messiah (Numbers 27:17). It was for this reason that Christians could not participate in the revolt and were, according to Justin and Eusebius, persecuted as a result.

The rebellion occupied Jerusalem, as attested by Simon’s coins with the inscription “For the Freedom of Jerusalem” which extols the liberation of the city. Other coins bear only the name of the city, indicating they were minted there. There was at least the intention to rebuild the temple if not the actual beginnings of the reconstruction.77 The revolutionary movement eventually occupied the whole land. Kochba’s rebellion included a disciplined and highly organized governance over various districts which, in turn, were subdivided into administrative units. The district commanders leased out land and collected rents, a tenth of which went into the state treasury. Other elements joined the revolt so that “the whole world was in turmoil.”78

To put down the revolt, Rome required large numbers of troops and the best generals to command them. It took long and costly battles to eradicate the rebels. Siege engines were required to root out the tribes holding out in mountainous areas. During the three and half year war,

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73Yoder, 151. Yoder avers that Hellenism thought of itself as the “whole world.” True enough. But the church did not, since it included also the oriental churches of the east (the Coptic, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Syraic, Malankara Syri-an, and Armenian Apostolic churches).
74Yoder, 152. He sees “the fall” as Christianity losing its sense of a global mission. This assertion is difficult to align with historical fact, as the church expanded throughout the empire and beyond. Under Pauline influence, the Torah was no longer understood as “grace and privilege,” as the Church experienced itself as estranged from developing Rabbinic Judaism. And it is hardly so that for over three hundred years Christians did not learn to live as a diaspora (1 Peter 1:1 and 2:11). Christian people of every time and place have struggled with acculturation, no matter what form the Church adopted. It is doubtful that even the peace churches have escaped such a struggle. Justin Martyr, in endeavoring to make Christianity credible to pagan culture, can also be compared to the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria who tried that same path.
75Yoder, 152.
76Murabba’at in 1961, Nahal Hever and Nahal Ze’elim in 1960-61. These finds include literary and archaeological material, contracts, and correspondence between bar Kochba himself and district governors and chiefs. All of this literary and archaeological material increased our knowledge of the revolt exponentially.
many rabbis died a martyr’s death. Ten of them, including Rabbi Akiba, are honored in the Talmuds and Midrashim. Several hundred thousand Jews fell in battle. The Romans too suffered heavy losses.

Rome’s political response to the rebellion was the prohibition of circumcision. Jewish tradition also maintains that it was additionally forbidden to celebrate the Sabbath and study the Torah. For the Jews, the ban on circumcision meant there could be no rest, and another rebellion erupted under Hadrian’s successor, Antonius Pius (138-161). Rather than face another costly military enterprise and the alternatives of either destroying a people or toleration of religious rites, he relented and lifted the ban. All of this does not bespeak the Jews as pacifistic.

However, the loss of political existence abetted Rabbinic Judaism. Their unity now was centered in the Torah. In the process of turning inward to preserve the identity of Israel, begun by Yohanan ben Zakkai, this centering strengthened the boundaries with the Gentiles all the more. Schuerer notes:

Jews and Gentiles now joined forces to ensure that the gulf between them remained deep. Proselytism slowed down, and pagans ceased to flock to the God of the Jews, partly because the Roman state, without revoking the toleration of Jewish religion guaranteed since the time of Caesar, none the less erected barriers to its propagation.

Yoder is exactly right when he says that the whole situation moved the Jews toward accepting life in the diaspora as the setting for their identity, toward backing away from including Gentiles in the commonwealth of Israel and becoming more of an ethnic enclave leaving missionary activity to Christians.

**Eschatology and the Two Kingdoms**

In his essay “Earthly Jerusalem and Heavenly Jerusalem: a Mislocated Dualism,” Yoder emphasizes a fundamental aspect of Judaism (and consequently, of Christianity): they are not aligned with any political systems but stand over against them, exercising a critical judgment with respect to them. There is no system that can be identified with the divine as if we, as part of any nation, can claim that God is exclusively “on our side.” The biblical point of view is that the kingdom of God is an eschatological reality: “that which is not yet ‘earthly’ is not ‘ethereal’ but ‘to come.’”

However, I would suggest a more nuanced exposition of this Judaic stance toward the state. It is not statehood as such that is the object of criticism and judgment, as Yoder seems to

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81 Yoder, 153.
82 Yoder, 160-166.
83 Perhaps that is a relative assessment. Surely to erase slavery and Naziism had something of the divine in it!
84 Yoder, 164.
imply. As a Lutheran I am committed to the biblical understanding that the state is of God and of his institution (Romans 13:1-7). It is, as we say, the “left hand of God.” Of course that does not mean it is beyond judgment and criticism, for it must function as “God’s minister for good” (Romans 13:4). God’s kingdom of the right hand is his people, among whom the “heavenly Jerusalem” is “incarnate” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Its members do not exercise political authority over one another but are servants and slaves to one another (Mark 10:42-44), following their master who gives “his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

In this essay, Yoder reiterates his antipathy toward the Davidic state. For certain, it did not live up to its founder’s ideal. But the ideal represented in the capacious document containing the accession and court history of David is a kind of constitution or pattern of how a king should rule and live as the representative of God among his people. And so it stands over and against and judges the dynasty as it developed. Its divine origin derives from the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:5-17), and David himself become the embodiment of a king who is after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14): he was a loyal friend (1 Samuel 18:1-5, Psalm 25:10); he constantly showed deference to God and his will (1 Samuel 24:1-7, 26:9-11); he was a man of humility (1 Samuel 24:8-22); he faces difficulties with fortitude, patience, and composure (1 Samuel 27 and 30); he is a modest man (1 Samuel 18:20-23); he is a man who patiently awaits the Lord’s will and who does not take justice into his own hands (2 Samuel 4:1-12, 8:15); he is a man of wisdom (1 Samuel 25); he is pious and shows himself to be constantly in intimate communion with the Lord, seeking his will and not his own (1 Samuel 23:1-5, 30:7-10, 2 Samuel 2:1-4, 5:17-25, 6:12-23); he is a gracious leader (1 Samuel 22:1-2); he ascends the throne through great tribulation (1 Samuel 19:1); he is a suffering messiah who deigns to suffer humiliation to save his people from the plague of war (2 Samuel 15:1-19:18); and he is a servant of the Lord (1 Samuel 19:4, 23:1-11). Psalms 72 and 89 further embody the character of this sovereign representative of God. He is the icon for the restoration of Israel when a David-like sovereign will reign (Ezekiel 34:23). One is tempted to say that the oneness of God almost demands that his people be shepherded by one lord.

Yoder, characterizing the “failure” of the Maccabees as due the fact that they were wrong does not do justice to history. The first generation Maccabees are certainly to be distinguished from their successors who often fell into the way of pagan Hellenistic kings. The original brothers, Judah, Jonathan, and Simon, were not in the enviable position to eschew “being in charge,” as the ultimate survival of Judaism was at stake in the Holy Land. Nor were these brothers pursuing some kind of adventurism and self-aggrandizement. Liberty was at stake. The freedom of their people, that ancient value celebrated in the Passover, burned in their Jewish hearts.

They are described in the Maccabean literature as the embodiment of that ancient ideal of both the judges and David. Judah begins his liberation movement like David. His initial guerrilla force grows in strength, and his successes multiply. He is harassed by elements from among his own nation and is not accepted by all. Their dedication to their people is evidenced by saving whole Jewish communities that were threatened with annihilation by their Gentile neighbors in

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85 “Authentic reverence before divine sovereignty must accordingly mean a critical judgment upon nationhood/statehood” (Yoder, 163).
86Yoder, 162.
various cities. They strove for the independence of the nation as David did from the Philistine
overlord. They never thought in terms of royal prerogatives, but they accepted the role of priestly
leaders of the nation, continuing the tradition established since the time of the restoration after
the exile.

Their concerns were not limited to political categories; they were also concerned with the
religious integrity of the nation. That concern certainly involved politics, but that was in loyalty
to the covenant which included God, land and people, Torah and Temple, and the freedom from
pagan influence. They ultimately gave their lives for the welfare of the nation. From the Mac-
cabean literature it is clear that they understood themselves as chosen instruments of God in the
image of the ancient judges and the royal messianic figure of David to bring about the independ-
ence of the nation which they understood as divinely willed according to the biblical revelation
promising restoration.

Yoder rightly perceives that the phenomenon of the Babylonian Exile produced some
“culturally unique traits” which defined Judaism as it gradually formed after the war, namely
synagogue, Torah, and rabbinate. But I wish he had been more sensitive to the disparate roots
of these three “traits.” The synagogue’s beginnings might have gone back to the first temple pe-
riod (Psalm 74:8) and was therefore a natural and familiar institution which took on special force
in the exile. Torah was under the aegis of the priests who taught it and explicated its meaning (Je-
remiah 18:18). The Torah (the Pentateuch) was a priestly production brought together in the ex-
ile. It was Ezra, a priest, who brought it to the returned exiles in Jerusalem, imposed it on the
people by decree of the Persian government (Ezra 7:25-26), and in obedience to that decree read
it before the populace requiring their subscription (Nehemiah 8).

It was during the Second Temple Period that lay elements, who developed into the Phar-
isees and even later into the rabbis, took it upon themselves to study Torah and to order their
lives after its precepts. Later they also added (some of) the priestly laws to their practices, proba-
ably to fulfill the command of God that Israel be a “kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). So the
foundation of the Judaism that developed after the war was built on the work of priests who
formed the original leadership of the exile community.

It is so, as Yoder insists, that those who take on the structures of this world which has
“gone awry” challenge these powers by playing their game and thus sell out “morally and practi-
cally at the very point where they claim to be taking responsibility.” These “powers” he describes
as structures “whose role should be to serve human flourishing and God’s glory, but which in
their rebelliousness become our oppressors.” So he identifies the “historical world” with the
“principalities and powers” of Colossians 2:15 and as “creaturely structures.” Paul’s reference to

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88 Yoder, 171.
89 Yoder’s stance vis-a-vis the “Constantinian churches” as he calls them makes his interpretation of history under-
standable. The values of the “free churches,” with their local authority, rejection of the historic western liturgy, and
anti-sacramentalism, form for him the interpretive matrix of Israelite society and its sacral institutions. This is not to
 gainsay his assertion about the power of not “being in control” and the paradox of the power of weakness and suffer-
 ing (Yoder, 174). It is, however, one response to the realities of this world. In the Judaism(s) of the first century there
was a spectrum of responses: passive resistance, a quietism which waited for God to act, an activism which saw God
acting on his promises to “visit and redeem his people” (Isaiah 50:2, Jeremiah 15:19-21). The men of Qumran are an
interesting riff on these alternatives: they waited until the revolution progressed and then, deciding that the time of
God’s intervention had come, joined the fray.
“principalities and powers,” however, is not identified with human structures. In every instance where Paul references these entities, the context makes clear that he is referring to spiritual phenomena “in the heavenly places.”

**Yoder’s Understanding of Prophetic Reasoning**

In the final essay of the collection, “See How They Go with Their Faces to the Sun,” Yoder makes his case for the diaspora existence of the Jews as the rejection of statehood and kingship as the new norm and the “new phase of the Mosaic project.” In a note, he rejects even the witness of Second Isaiah as bringing into question this thesis. Second Isaiah, living in the exiled community in Babylon, delivered his sermons just as Cyrus was conquering the near east in 550 B.C.E. He celebrates the new thing that God is doing on behalf of his people: to bring them back to the land that he had given them and restore them as a nation, fulfilling, as it were, the promise of Jeremiah:

The days are coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ but ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ For I will bring them back to their own land which I gave to their fathers.” (Jeremiah 16:14-15).

The prophet proclaims that “now the Lord YHWH has sent me, endowed with his spirit” (Isaiah 48:16), so he understood himself as the one who provides the word of interpretation that accompanies the new thing that the LORD is accomplishing: establishing a new creation and a new exodus-conquest. This background is difficult to integrate into the idea that Jewish existence in the diaspora is the new thing that God is establishing.

Second Isaiah’s message in chapter 40 is almost a panegyric glorying in the prospect of Israel’s return to the land since “she had received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.” The LORD will prepare the way: valleys shall be lifted up, mountains made low, rough ground made level. YHWH comes with celestial splendor to gather his people like a shepherd and tenderly carry them in his bosom. The nations are as nothing before him, so his people need not fear them; “they shall run and not be weary…walk and not faint.” He draws on royal Davidic imagery as he proclaims that God has chosen the Persian emperor Cyrus as his messiah who will bring about the liberation of his people from exile, allowing them to return home (44:28, 45:1) and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

The prophet Zechariah had a similar message: YHWH is angry with the nations, for, while he was a “little angry” with his people, the nations made the disaster worse. So he has returned to Jerusalem “with compassion; my house shall be built in it” (1:15-16); “Jerusalem will
be inhabited…because of the multitude of people [and]…I will be a wall of fire around it…and I will be the glory within it” (2:4-5).

The message here is a counterpoint to the disaster proclaimed by the prophets. It seems that, through these prophets, YHWH is rejoicing that his people have truly repented. They have spiritually returned home to their gracious God already. The return to the land to rebuild Jerusalem and temple is a kind of culmination of Israel’s history: they have eschewed all the idolatries of the past and have really finally become his people in heart. Now they can come back to their heritage and live as his faithful remnant (Zechariah 7:1-8:23). There is simply no evidence that “God finally gave up” on the Davidic ideal. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, it simply is not so that kingship and statehood find no advocacy. The scholar must read between the lines of these documents to see that Zerubbabel is present as a hope for just that possibility, but he inexplicably disappears, probably due to the Persian government who perceived him as a threat of revolution and to its hegemony in the province of Yehud.

In addition, it was the exiled community in Babylon that sent the returnees—not, as it were, anointing their diaspora status as God’s new way and rejecting the unity of God, land, and people. They left and chose to emigrate back to the Holy Land! In other words, it was the community itself which understood that the land was the true home of Israel. On the other hand, the Jewish inhabitants of Babylon had found a comfortable existence there, as the Murashu archives from Nippur illustrate. Babylon was the most affluent of all the Persian provinces. Jews there held land or military fiefs; they were employed as governmental agents and managed some of the canals which were central to the local irrigation economy; there is also an indication that one Jewish family was involved with banking. In other words, Jews were engaged in the administrative structures of the Persian province of Babylonia as the books of Daniel, Esther, and Tobit all illustrate. These would not be people likely to give up easily such contented and rather lucrative lives to emigrate to their former homeland to start life over under unknown and precarious circumstances. Yet they did! The literature of Ezra and Nehemiah indicates there were thousands who made the arduous journey from the east, including priests, Levites, prophets like Haggai and Zechariah, and the Davidide Zerubbabel (Ezra 2, 5, 8; Nehemiah 7, 12).

It is improbable that the priestly writers of the Pentateuch would think that life in exile or diaspora would become a new norm. After all, they were the leaders of the community, probably along with the Davidides, even in exile. It is more realistic to think that, after the Persian conquest and Cyrus’s edict, they might have already envisioned a dependent hieratic state, which in fact was founded after the return. Zerubbabel was at first appointed governor, and it looked as if there would be a sort of Davidic monarchy, except that he would not have a royal title and had to rule as a loyal bureaucrat of the state.

However, as much as Yoder misreads the biblical witness, his basic thesis cannot be disputed: exilic existence did generate new creative possibilities for the Jewish people. It was there,

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94 Yoder, 188.
95 yinonblog.blogspot.com
96 Zerubbabel could have been appointed by either Cyrus or Darius—the chronology is difficult to sort out. At any rate, it was a Persian emperor who appointed him, lending dignity to the survivors of the Davidic dynasty. His fate is unknown, but his removal, it is conjectured, might have been due to a movement to enconce him as king and thus pose a threat to the integrity of the Persian Empire. See Peter R. Ackroyd, Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 146-148.
after all, where the Torah was compiled, the canon began to take form, and worship continued without the temple as the collection of psalms make clear\(^97\) (although as I suggested above, local gatherings and meeting places probably had already been in existence for centuries). But it is those same psalms which would have nourished the hope of return and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. Of course it was not an “irredentism,”\(^98\) for the land remained a divine gift to be reclaimed through the gracious act of the messiah Cyrus. It would have been in exile, as Yoder points out, that the Joseph story undergirded Jeremiah’s exhortation to seek the welfare of the city where God sends them into exile (Jeremiah 29:7). It was there where the stories of exiles such as Daniel further developed. Yoder is correct to a certain extent when he questions the “palestinocentric reading” of Israel’s story.\(^99\) After all, there were large Jewish communities spread across the ancient world. Yet, it is to this “center” that all of these communities looked, like satellites around a common sun and to which every Jew hoped to visit at least once in his life time. The galut (diaspora) certainly prepared the way for the whole nation to live life outside the Holy Land once statehood had been wrenched from them. The persevering existence of a people without land and temple indeed was “something qualitatively new in the history of religions.”\(^100\)

The Babel story is, as Yoder explains, a story that mimes “the effort of a human community to absolutize itself” and humanity’s rebellious nature against dependence on God, asserting itself by the endeavor to reach heaven on its own.\(^101\) However, does the story also mean that the confusion of tongues was a liberation from a “blind alley” and not a “petulant or punitive” divine act? The context of the story within the pre-history of Genesis 1-11 says otherwise. These chapters chronicle the devolution and degeneration of mankind, leading to the salvation history beginning with chapter 12 and the call of Abraham. It is the final act of rebellion recorded by the Yahwist. Making “a name for themselves” (Genesis 11:4) is an attempt to arrogate to themselves what belongs only to the Creator. In the context of the ancient Near East, it is akin to the Babylonian ziggurat, the mythical navel of the earth, an umbilical cord that connected heaven and earth and which enabled the devotee to ascend and meet the gods at the devotee’s own initiative.\(^102\) What the LORD saw in “coming down” is parallel to his walking in the garden to seek out Adam and Eve who had disobeyed his command and ate of the forbidden fruit which led to their expulsion from the garden (Genesis 3:8).

However, there is a contrast in the tower story from the other stories of the pre-history. The primordial couple was cast from Eden, but God’s judgment was tempered with preventing complete disaster: he cared for them; Cain was given a protective mark; one family was saved in the great deluge. But at Babel there is only pure judgment. God does not provide a way out but both scatters them and confuses their language. Genesis 1-11 is the story of man’s revolt against God. There is no positive assessment of God’s judgment in any of these stories. There is no “dis-

\(^{97}\)Yoder, 186.
\(^{98}\)Yoder, 188.
\(^{99}\)Yoder, 186.
\(^{100}\)Yoder, 186.
\(^{101}\)Yoder, 189.
persion as grace.” The way out comes only by the salvation history which follows. But God always takes the initiative and does not abandon his creature of revolt. The context of Genesis 11:1-9, imbedded as it is in this prehistory of Genesis 1-11, makes it plain that the dispersion of peoples is pure judgment. Only in the following stories of Abraham does God promise a blessing on the nations, and that by Abraham’s obedience.

These stories, as well as the Pentateuch as a whole, must be read in light of the exile. The priestly authors and compilers were directing this massive collation of Israel’s literary patrimony to the exiles. In this particular story, they were meant to see that they, along with the prehistory peoples, were in a massive revolt against God. They had to learn repentance and obedience and give up on their propensity to order their faith in their own way. They needed to have the law written in their hearts: “[T]his is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

In this essay, Yoder repeats his thesis that exile is the real mission of the people and not “a mere detour along the triumphal path of the house of David.” Jeremiah indeed rails against the prophets because they preach that all will be well and “[n]o calamity shall come upon you,” that is, there will be no exile (Jeremiah 23:16-17). However, when Jeremiah does predict exile, it is not a permanent status but, “thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place” (Jeremiah 29:10).

It is difficult to see how Yoder insists on this (Jeremianic) thesis in the face of Jeremiah 23:14-26, where the prophet emphatically insists on the exact opposite: his covenant with David can no more be broken than if God would abrogate his covenant with the unvarying passage of day and night!

Yoder continues with his corollary thesis of the pacifism of Judaism, which also then became a Christian attitude. This pacifism, however, grew out of bitter experience and not out of some theological conviction. The Pharisaic precursors of the rabbis were all too willing to be involved politically, especially when their interests and legal interpretations were threatened. For example, they incited a group of hot heads to tear down Herod the Great’s golden eagle which had been erected over the “great gate” of the temple, a revolutionary action. They had previously allied themselves politically with Queen Alexandra (76-67 B.C.E.), who obligingly ordered her reign along the lines of Pharisaic prescriptions. They also inveigled themselves into the sanhedrins which convened periodically under the leadership of the high priest.

Of course, they did learn from the failures of the Hasmoneans, the revolutionary groups of the first century, and bar Kochba. The failure of the first century revolt was interpreted early

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103Yoder, 189.
104 “[B]y your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:18; NRSV).
105Yoder, 190.
106 See also Jeremiah 25:11-12.
107Yoder, 190-192.
110And see above for the Rabbinic support for the bar Kochba revolt.
The writer of the book known as 2 Esdras in the late first century asserts that Israel suffered because of her sin. The so-called pacifism of Yoder did not come without pains and costs for the Jews. Learning not to “take charge” of history was indeed a hard won perspective. Early Christianity could hardly do otherwise, being a minority group persecuted sporadically by the Roman government, but can this be characterized as “pacifism”? Is this word not a modern notion and an ideology? Is it accurate to retroject that concept back onto the Jews and Christians of the first centuries of our era? Is it no more accurate to say that, in face of an overwhelming militaristic (and even sadistic) political system, it would be foolhardy, especially within the memory of such monumentally failed revolutions, to take any other stance? It would seem the Christian “pacifism” was theological, that is, bound up with the example of Jesus who passively resisted and embraced his death as “giving his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). And passive resistance was part of Jewish existence, too.

Having said this Yoder, is spot-on when he characterizes the exilic community as full participants in the pagan society within which they are enmeshed. He surmises that the synagogue arose some time during the captivity, although in reality it is difficult to ascertain exactly when. The exile is certainly a very suggestive environment to suppose its contextual origin, but to assume that priests had no part in its liturgy is doubtful. The priests in fact would have constituted the leadership in the exilic community, which then was continued among the returnees. Ezra was a priest who, by imperial decree, imposed the Torah on the newly constituted Jerusalem community. We know from epigraphical evidence that the synagogue in the first century C.E. had an “archisynagogos,” or the “primate of the synagogue,” a name that was employed all over the Graeco-Roman world from the first through the fourth centuries. He presided over the assembly and maintained order. He chose those who was to read from the Torah. He also was probably the chief administrator of the building. He was usually elected for a year. Although this is evidence from a time much later than the exile, it can be inferred that the synagogue at that time was not some kind of unorganized, free-wheeling, directionless institution.

\[111\] Yoder, 191.
\[112\] 2 Esdras 1-2.
\[113\] See above on my concern with using the word “pacifism” for the attitudes of early Judaism and Christianity. It seems the real motivation for this “pacifism” was simply the reality that the opposite viewpoint was futile.
\[114\] See Epistulae X, 96 of Pliny the Younger which details an account of how Pliny conducted trials of suspected Christians who appeared before him as a result of anonymous accusations and asked for the emperor's guidance on how they should be treated.
\[115\] Yoder recognizes that Christians joined the army and were not restrained by any ideology of “pacifism.” They were simply average citizens who could take advantage of easy work and generous rewards (Yoder, 200, n. 46).
\[116\] See above.
\[117\] Yoder, 192.
\[118\] Yoder, 192. See, for example, mBerakoth 5:4, where even in the post-war synagogue the priest says the benediction.
\[120\] When Yoder describes the synagogue that could have developed during exilic times, it is difficult to understand whether he is speaking about exilic times or the post-war institution. He refers to “rabbis” and the “minyan” as post-war developments (Yoder, 192-193). The difficulty I have with Yoder is his lack of careful exegesis and his anachronisms (as I have observed throughout this paper).
In his “Further Testing” section, Yoder rightly stresses the history of the Jews in the Babylonian diaspora and its vitality. It continued far beyond the existence of the Jewish state in the Holy Land, and it would certainly be a worthwhile project to develop its history alongside the “official history” we have in the Bible and in the extra-biblical literature. However, Yoder cannot escape the importance that the land, temple, and city have in every layer of this literature, including the Mishnah and Talmuds. His thesis of a “Jeremianic” Jewish existence, living in the diaspora, seeking the “peace” (i.e., the “salvation”) of the world is a thoroughly inviting vision for God’s people as citizens of the world fulfilling their vocation as his people. The Jews have lived up to that vocation by the incredible contributions they have made throughout history and in the world today. But he disparages political existence as somehow a denial of the contributions of a diaspora existence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed Yoder’s interpretation of scripture and his historical analyses. I have found that, in many cases, they need to be questioned and corrected. There is little or no evidence for a Jewish evangelism in the Graeco-Roman world. The “pacifism” that he attributes to Judaism and early Christianity needs to be more highly nuanced. From my analysis, it appears that their non-violent attitude was probably more ad hoc than a matter of an ideology: they realistically assessed the futility of resistance to Roman military prowess. Christianity had the apostolic command not to resist the governing authority because it was instituted by God (Romans 13:2), but both had a core conviction that relativized all earthly powers which prohibited making of them any kind of absolute authority. Judaism and Christianity remain basically revolutionary at heart without implying the use of violence.

Judaism also did not reject kingship and the temple. A lively hope for a Davidic king, who would establish a just and righteous kingdom protecting God’s people from a hostile world which would finally recognize Israel’s God, persisted throughout Israel’s history. This hope is witnessed by the prophecies of Jeremiah, the Maccabean literature, the Pharisaic collection known as the Psalms of Solomon, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the messianic movements that bubbled up in the first century C.E., and the bar Kochba revolt of the second century. Nor was the synagogue a replacement for the temple. Its roots go back long before the destruction of the Second Temple so they were two institutions that existed side by side for centuries. The synagogue did not have the divine authorization that the temple had, nor consequently its transcendent quality. The scriptures as well as the Pharisaic/Rabbinic literature attest to the temple’s continuing importance in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people.

Jesus himself ran into difficulty with his understanding of his mission and the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. He was criticized for his slack attitudes toward the Sabbath laws. The Jerusalem authorities accused him of “perverting the nation” (Luke 23:2). Jewish Christians—
ty and Pharasaic Judaism were not incompatible, especially before the war when “Judaism” was a capacious canopy that could include a wide variety of Judaisms. But even though the Jewish Christians were Torah observant, they still ran into difficulties with the authorities. James, the son of Zebedee, was executed by Agrippa I, who was more or less allied with the Pharisees (Acts 12:2). Agrippa arrested Peter (Acts 12:3). James, the brother of Jesus, was executed by the high priest Ananius.\textsuperscript{123} The Jewish Christians who refused to participate in bar Kochba’s revolt were persecuted. So the relationship between Judaism and Christianity was complex and needs to be more highly nuanced than Yoder has described it. The relationship becomes even more problematic when Paul, “the apostle to the Gentiles,” enters the picture. Although he is opposed—not by “Judaism” but Jewish Christians—the compatibility between him and Judaism becomes highly strained. As the relationship develops the Rabbinic successors of the Pharisees, beginning with Yohanan ben Zakkai’s turn inward to preserve the faith of Israel among the Jewish people, Christianity turns outward toward the evangelizing of the Gentile world.

However, all of this is not to gainsay Yoder’s grand program: to re-establish the fundamental bond between contemporary Judaism and Christianity. To carry Yoder’s project forward, however, it must be grounded in a more careful exegesis of scripture and historical investigation. It is also appears peculiar to me that Yoder seems to drive a wedge between his free-churches and the so-called “Constantinian churches.” We all, perhaps the “Constantinian churches” especially, must be involved in this project. This task is utterly important, especially in light of the Shoah and the miserable history of Christianity’s treatment of the Jews through the centuries. These sisters have common roots in the Judaism of the first century. Both serve the same God and read the same scriptures. Both praise the same God in the words of the psalms. We can only thank Yoder for revisiting the Jewish-Christian schism and endeavoring to heal the breach so we recognize one another as children of the same Father. But we must proceed without a tendentious approach to the sources. Christian scholars have been doing this with a complete reassessment of Jesus’ relationship to his Jewish environment. He is being understood more and more as a Jew and his mission directed toward his nation. There has been also a wholesale reassessment of the Pharisees, who are no longer stereotyped as legalists and as Jewish Pelagians.

This is the way forward. The two sisters, while they recognize that Jesus not only separates us but binds us together, begin to mutually affirm their two divine vocations: the one to bring the reign of God to the Gentiles and the other to fulfill the Jeremianic command to “seek the welfare” of the world. And both have fulfilled and are fulfilling their vocations. All that is left is to celebrate their sororal bond.