

Christianity and Anti-Semitism:
An Evaluation of Rosemary Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide*

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Introduction

In 1974, Rosemary Ruether, a well-respected Catholic theologian, voiced a bold and candid thesis. In *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Rise of Anti-Semitism*, she claims that Christian theology is inherently anti-Semitic and, therefore, anti-Semitism is fundamentally embedded within Christianity. Additionally, she contends Christianity is an indirect but essential cause of the Holocaust and, at the conclusion of the book, she asserts that Christian theology should be drastically altered.¹ Unsurprisingly, these contentions sparked significant controversy. Sarah Pinnock, Professor of Religion at Trinity University, notes that the book “gained such prominence among Christian scholars that within five years after its publication, a symposium and edited book were organized in response.”² Moreover, the responses to the book survey all major opinions on the question of Christianity’s connection to anti-Semitism; while some scholars appreciatively embrace the book, others either partially³ or even wholly reject it.

Although *Faith and Fratricide* is neither the first nor the most recent work to argue that Christian theology possesses anti-Semitic elements, it is the work that largely sparked the debate regarding the relationship between Christianity and anti-Semitism. As already noted, it spawned a remarkable amount of controversy and literature on the subject.³ Therefore, examining and evaluating *Faith and Fratricide* enables the connection between anti-Semitism and Christianity

¹ Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*. New York: Seabury, 1974. P. 222-225.

² Pinnock, Sarah. K. "Atrocity and Ambiguity: Recent Developments in Christian Holocaust Responses." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 75.3, 2007. P. 499-523.

³ The introduction to the book written by Catholic theologian Gregory Baum notes that *Jesus et Israel* written by the Jewish French historian Jules Isaac in 1948 was instrumental in developing the argument that elements of Christianity are anti-Semitic. Baum explains that Isaac’s thorough detailing of the extent to which the Gospels castigate Jews and Judaism had not previously been done. However, likely due in large part to the fact that the book was written very shortly after the Holocaust and that Isaac was both a Jew and a Holocaust survivor, *Jesus et Israel* did not generate anywhere near the same amount of broad interest as *Faith and Fratricide*.

to be thoroughly explored. An inspection of the book, the responses it garnered and the specific New Testament teachings that influenced Ruether facilitates the dissection of this vexing and contemporaneous question.

The essay will begin by summarizing *Faith and Fratricide*. Then, responses to Ruether's book will be explored beginning with negative evaluations and concluding with positive assessments. Next, the paper will survey scholarship on the actual New Testament teachings that Ruether views as the basis for Christian anti-Semitism. Finally, the paper will conclude by utilizing the previous two subtopics to evaluate Ruether's thesis.

At the outset, it is necessary to discuss the term 'anti-Semitism.' Ostensibly, for the purposes of this paper, the term is problematical. After all, the founders and early followers of Christianity were Jewish and, therefore, Semites. Accordingly, it might seem more appropriate to use one of several other terms that refer to behavior and postures that are anti-Jewish.⁴ However, 'anti-Semitism' is the primary term that Ruether uses to refer to anti-Jewish behavior.⁵ Therefore, for reasons of clarity and consistency the paper will use 'anti-Semitism' as its primary term for referring to anti-Jewish behavior even though doing so does appear a bit malapropos.⁶

⁴ The term 'Judeophobia' is one of the more popular alternatives to 'anti-Semitism.' Some argue that it is the proper term to refer to anti-Jewish behavior because they contend that such behavior is prompted by a psychological disorder. See Schafer, Peter. *Judeophobia*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁵ On occasion, Ruether use the term anti-Judaic. However, it appears that she uses 'anti-Judaic' and 'anti-Semitism' synonymously.

⁶ It seems that the literal meaning of the term 'anti-Semitism' is commonly ignored and that the term is solely used to refer to anti-Jewish behavior. A. Roy Eckardt, one of the first scholars to explore the connection between Christianity and anti-Semitism, defines anti-Semitism as "the hatred and denigration of the Jewish people." See Eckardt, A. Roy. *Elder and Younger Brothers*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, P. 3.

Chapter I: Summary of *Faith and Fratricide*

Ruether begins by arguing that “virulent anti-Semitism” is a Christian construct and not a pagan one as some contend.⁷ She acknowledges that during the Hellenistic period anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviors existed. She asserts, however, that this animosity resulted from the peculiarities of Jewish law and practice. According to her, the animosity was “cultural, rather than strictly racial.”⁸ It is her argument that the pagan world never persecuted the Jewish people simply for being Jewish. She contends it was the “distinctively religious hostility of Christianity to Judaism” that led to the establishment of virulent anti-Semitic beliefs and behaviors.⁹ Focusing upon Christianity’s origins, Ruether maintains that fanatical Jew-hatred developed due to Christianity’s fervent attempt to distinguish itself from Judaism as the sole legitimate expression of religion.¹⁰

For the remainder of the book, Ruether investigates Christianity’s connection to anti-Semitism. She provides a detailed discussion of their intertwined development that culminates with her articulating the thesis that Christian anti-Semitism stems from Christology -- the fundamental tenet of Christianity that explains the nature and function of Jesus.¹¹ She argues that by viewing Jesus as the source of salvation, the notion that the Jewish people are inferior to Christians and are undeserving of dignity became interwoven into Christian thought. According to her, Christology established the notion that God spurned Judaism and that Christianity replaced Judaism as the true religion of God. She explains that supersessionism, which is the

⁷ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 30

⁸ *Ibid.*, 24

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-31

¹¹ This position is not wholly unique. Jakob Jocz, a Christian missionary who published several works on Jewish-Christian relations in the 1940s, acknowledged that the primary cause of strife between the two religions was Christology. See McGarry, Michael. *Christology after Auschwitz*, New York: Paulist, P. 64.

broad term that refers to this notion, stems from Christology. She maintains that Christology establishes a paradigm in which Christians are considered the “new messianic people” and the Jews are considered the “old people.”¹²

Ruether primarily supports this argument by citing the New Testament. However, she also cites the history of Christianity’s inception, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the history of medieval and modern Christianity.¹³ She attempts to mesh an analysis of Christian theology with a history of the development of Christian anti-Semitism to advance the contention that the two are fundamentally intertwined and that Christology is the source of the intertwining.

Ruether concludes *Faith and Fratricide* by listing proscriptions that she believes Christianity must undertake to extract its anti-Semitic elements. Unsurprisingly, her primary contention is that Christology needs to be drastically altered. Because of her belief that Christology and supersessionism are intimately connected, she holds that Christianity must retract the belief that Jesus is Messiah. According to her, Jesus cannot be viewed as having defeated all evil and as enabling humanity to achieve salvation. Instead, she asserts that he should be viewed as a universalistic expression of hope and longing for salvation.¹⁴ Discussing the Messiah she contends:

“The person who exemplifies it [Jesus] may then be remembered as a paradigm of that final hope which has not yet been accomplished, but still lies ahead of our present

¹² Ibid., 246

¹³ Interestingly, the accusation that the Jews committed deicide by killing Jesus, which gained widespread acceptance by the Middle Ages, is largely ignored by Ruether. She sees the charge of deicide as stemming from the anti-Semitism of the Church Fathers and not as a cause of Christian anti-Semitism. Moreover, she claims that the charge was not fully developed until Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in approximately 315 CE. See Ruether, Rosemary. *Faith and Fratricide*. New York: Seabury, P. 129-130.

¹⁴ Ibid., 256

possibilities. This memory may then be re-experienced as a paradigm again and again, in that community which preserves this memory, providing the pattern for experiencing the eschatological in history. But this experience and person in the past does not become the final eschatological event of history, placing all history before that time in an obsolescent and morally inferior relation to itself or invalidating the access to God of those who go forward on other grounds. The ultimate eschatological event, the ultimate ‘coming’ of the Messiah, must still signify that final future when ‘every tear will be wiped away.’¹⁵

Ruether also maintains that Christianity must drastically alter its conception of history.

According to her, Christianity largely ignores all Jewish history that occurred post-Jesus and she contends Christianity must embrace post-Jesus Jewish history. She holds that this, in combination with accepting the Oral Torah as a legitimate expression of the Old Testament, would significantly help to eliminate the notion that Christianity has replaced Judaism as the “true Israel.”¹⁶ Additionally, Ruether asserts that Christian leaders need to make the common Christian more aware of the anti-Semitism that Christianity has advanced throughout its history. To enable this to occur, she proposes that Christian theological schools provide courses on the history of Christian persecution of the Jewish people and that they provide their students with Jewish perspectives on Christian theology.¹⁷ Finally, she holds that Christian preaching and educational materials must rebuff anti-Semitic language and tropes.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., 248

¹⁶ Ibid., 257

¹⁷ Ibid., 259

¹⁸ Ibid., 260

Chapter II: Responses to *Faith and Fratricide*

Surveying the responses to Ruether's work is illuminating. Many of the responses probe or sophisticate aspects of Ruether's argument. Additionally, they highlight the fact that Ruether's thesis is explosive and hypersensitive. For many of the scholars – both those who accept and those who reject Ruether's thesis – *Faith and Fratricide* is an affront to their entire belief systems. It questions the worthiness and legitimacy of their religion. Thus, it prompts the recognition that some scholars who reject the book, especially those who are officials of a church, might be motivated by a desire to defend Christianity. Furthermore, it also indicates that some scholars who applaud the book, especially Jews intimately aware of the horrors of the Holocaust, might be motivated by a desire to castigate Christianity.¹⁹ It is important to note, however, that while it is certainly beneficial to be aware of these potential predilections, the possibility that they might have influenced arguments is largely irrelevant for the purposes of the paper. The vast majority of scholars attempt to support their contentions with tangible evidence. Therefore, even if some arguments are inspired by prejudices or personal perspectives, analyzing the merits of these arguments can still be helpful in evaluating Ruether's thesis.

Negative Responses

A considerable amount of the criticism of *Faith and Fratricide* stems from the contention that Ruether draws too direct of a connection between Christianity and the Holocaust. Eugene J. Fisher, a Catholic theologian who has served as the Executive Secretary of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, is representative of

¹⁹ Alan Montefiore, a former professor of moral philosophy at Oxford University, actually contends that complete neutrality is impossible. He argues that no scholar has "access to a realm of pure and evaluatively neutral facts." See Montefiore, Alan. *Neutrality and Impartiality*. London: Cambridge UP, P. 19.

this school of thought. He disparagingly asserts that Ruether uses a “straight line method” to reach her conclusions.²⁰

Fisher argues that Ruether ignores the fact that during the lengthy period between Christianity’s inception and the Holocaust, events and movements unrelated to Christianity played a significant role in creating circumstances that enabled the Holocaust to occur. To support this contention, he cites the work of Ronald Modras, a theology professor at the University of Saint Louis. In particular, Fisher focuses on a study conducted by Modras that concluded that the majority of Polish anti-Semitic writings during the interwar period were influenced not by Christian theology but by “post-Enlightenment, ‘secular’ conspiracy theories.”²¹ Fisher explains that the study found that most of the anti-Semitic literature of the period was inspired by the belief that the Jews were using communism and international banking to gain control of the world.²² Fisher also notes that in addition to the work of Modras, his ideas regarding *Faith and Fratricide* have been significantly influenced by the former Harvard historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. Fisher notes that his thinking was impacted by Yerushalmi’s contention that Christian anti-Semitism was a “necessary but not sufficient cause to explain the racial antisemitism of Nazi genocide.”²³

In an essay entitled “Response to Rosemary Ruether,” Yerushalmi articulates this criticism of *Faith and Fratricide* as well as several others.²⁴ Yerushalmi begins by claiming that Ruether overestimates the extent to which the Church persecuted the Jews throughout Late

²⁰ Rittner, Carol, and John K. Roth. *From the Unthinkable to the Unavoidable: American Christian and Jewish Scholars Encounter the Holocaust*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997. P. 45.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 48

²² *Ibid.*, 48

²³ *Ibid.*, 48

²⁴ Yerushalmi critiqued a draft of *Faith and Fratricide* for Ruether and in the beginning of his article he is complimentary of her work. However, he articulates weighty criticisms.

Antiquity and the Middle Ages.²⁵ Yerushalmi believes that during these periods Jews were actually treated relatively well. He maintains that “medieval Jewry has an entire gamut of well-defined rights which, on the whole, made the socioeconomic status of the Jews superior to that of the Christian peasantry.”²⁶

Additionally, he argues that in claiming that throughout its history the Church has promulgated anti-Semitism, Ruether treats the Church as too much of a “monolith.”²⁷ He maintains that even during periods of history in which Christian anti-Semitism was particularly rampant, the Church was never wholly supportive of anti-Semitic measures. To support this contention, he mentions two bishops, John of Speyer and Bernard of Clairvaux, who attempted to protect Jews during the Crusades.²⁸ Furthermore, Yerushalmi contends that throughout history different segments of the Church treated the Jews differently. According to his understanding of history, “in the Church it is generally the lower clergy who are the true enemies of the Jews, while the episcopate and the papacy are their protectors.”²⁹

Yerushalmi uses this point as a foray into his primary criticism of *Faith and Fratricide* -- the previously stated contention that Ruether misunderstands the causes of the Holocaust. Yerushalmi rejects Ruether’s assertion that because of Christian anti-Semitism, the Holocaust was inevitable.³⁰ He shares Ruether’s belief that Christian anti-Semitism enabled the Holocaust to occur, acknowledging Christianity “helped create the climate and mentality in which genocide, once conceived, could be achieved with little or no opposition.”³¹ However, he

²⁵ Yerushalmi, Yosef Haim. *Auschwitz, Beginning of a New Era?: Reflections on the Holocaust*. Ed. Eva Fleischner. New York: KTAV Publ. House, 1977. P. 98-100.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 99-100

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 101

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 102

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 102-103

³¹ *Ibid.*, 103

contends that Christian anti-Semitism did not cause the Holocaust to occur. He supports this assertion by noting that the Holocaust did not occur in a Christian country but rather in a secular country and that it occurred after the Church had lost a significant amount of its influence.³²

Professor Stephen R. Haynes of Rhodes College shares this belief. In an article entitled “Changing Paradigms: Reformist, Radical and Rejectionist Approaches to the Relationship Between Christianity and Judaism,” he argues that if Ruether’s thesis were correct, the Holocaust should have occurred much earlier in history when Christianity was a significantly more dominant force.³³ He rhetorically asks “if religious hatred was a sufficient condition for the Holocaust, why did it not occur until Christianity had lost its cultural hegemony?”³⁴

The heart of Yerushalmi’s criticism lies in a historical distinction he believes Ruether overlooks. Yerushalmi contends that Ruether does not recognize the fact that during the Middle Ages the Church ensured that the Jews would not be exterminated and that in the 20th century the Church abandoned this practice. He asserts that by not protecting the Jews during the Holocaust, Pope Pious XII “broke, *in essence*, with the tradition of the medieval popes.”³⁵ To support this claim, Yerushalmi provides several examples of instances from the Middle Ages in which the Church provided Jews with protection. He notes that when purity of blood statutes were established in Toledo in 1449, Pope Nicholas V “immediately denounced” them and excommunicated the writers of the legislation.³⁶ Similarly, he mentions the *Constitutio pro Judaeis*, which was an edict issued by Pope Calixtus II in 1120, that asserted that Jews had the

³² Ibid., 103

³³ Fisher, *From the Unthinkable to the Unavoidable*, 46-47

³⁴ Haynes, Stephen. “Changing Paradigms: Reformist, Radical and Rejectionist Approaches to the Relationship Between Christianity and Judaism,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 1995.

³⁵ Yerushalmi, *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era*, 104

³⁶ Ibid., 103-104

right to “life and property.”³⁷ Yerushalmi believes these and other similar examples demonstrate that Christian anti-Semitism did not have to culminate in the Holocaust. For him, the Holocaust is an event that could have been avoided if the Church had maintained its practice of protecting the Jews.

Yerushalmi concludes his essay by denouncing Ruether’s recommendations for Christian conciliation with Judaism. He doubts that Ruether’s recommendations are feasible. He contends that if anti-Semitism is as integral a component of Christianity as Ruether argues, then it is unrealistic to believe that Christianity will shed its anti-Semitic nature no matter the measures that are implemented. He explains that if Ruether’s beliefs are correct, then in order for Christianity to improve its relationship with Judaism, Christians must “repudiate their entire heritage.”³⁸ Additionally, he expresses concern that Ruether’s call for significant reform could have negative consequences for the Jewish people. He notes that throughout history Christian reforms “have often been accompanied by an even more virulent anti-Semitism.”³⁹ According to him, the reforms of Martin Luther, Calvin and the Cluniacs all worsened the welfare of the Jewish people.⁴⁰ Finally, Yerushalmi is also concerned that Ruether’s call for a “massive repentance” could adversely impact the Jewish people. He fears that such an action would cause Christians to feel a considerable amount of guilt, which he believes could lead to sadistic behavior.⁴¹

John Meagher, a Roman Catholic theologian and a professor at the University of Toronto, also rejects Ruether’s thesis. Similar to Yerushalmi, Meagher believes that Ruether misunderstands the history of anti-Semitism. In particular, he disapproves of the manner in

³⁷ Ibid., 101

³⁸ Ibid., 106

³⁹ Ibid., 105

⁴⁰ Ibid., 105

⁴¹ Ibid., 106

which Ruether interprets the anti-Semitism that existed in ancient Egypt. He acknowledges that “Ruether rightly distinguishes among the ancient evidences about the Jews ‘a special strain of anti-Judaism that has a specifically Egyptian provenance.’”⁴² He notes that some of the most vitriolic anti-Semitic statements of the period were composed in ancient Egypt and that the most “consistent” and vicious anti-Semitic violence occurred there.⁴³ However, he contends that Ruether provides a faulty explanation for this phenomenon and that this misunderstanding is a key reason she misjudges Christian anti-Semitism. Namely, he argues that Ruether overstates Christianity’s culpability for the establishment of virulent, racial anti-Semitism; according to him, the ancient world deserves more blame.⁴⁴

Meagher’s critique primarily stems from the fact that he understands *Faith and Fratricide* as arguing that Egyptian anti-Semitism was largely a result of the fact that the Jews were afforded a privileged status in society. According to him, this argument that because the Jews served as middlemen between the government and the general public, they were afforded preferential treatment that sparked the ire of the common people is erroneous. He contends “the story is much more complex than this.”⁴⁵ He emphatically rejects Ruether’s contention that the Jews of ancient Egypt enjoyed a privileged status. Aside from the fact that they were exempted from state-sponsored religious activities, Meagher maintains that the Jews were not afforded any special rights. Furthermore, he notes that the city of Alexandria, which is where the majority of the Egyptian Jewry resided, was governed by the Roman Empire and that the Roman Empire most certainly did not provide the Jewish people with special rights. In sum, he bluntly

⁴² Meagher, John. *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*. Ed. Alan T. Davies. New York: Paulist, 1979. P. 8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9

maintains that Alexandrian anti-Semitism was not caused by “any socio-economic or political privilege that distinguished the Jews.”⁴⁶

Meagher also finds fault with Ruether’s ancillary assertion that Judaism’s characterization of Egypt was a key cause of Egyptian anti-Semitism. He disagrees with Ruether’s contention that a considerable amount of Egyptian anti-Semitism is attributable to resentment emanating from the fact that Judaism considers the Israelites’ escape from Egyptian bondage to be one of its foundational events.⁴⁷ He explains that the majority of the anti-Semitic riots that occurred in ancient Egypt were conducted by Greeks, not ethnic Egyptians. He also notes that while Egyptian religious leaders certainly resented Judaism’s portrayal of Egypt, the general population was not especially bothered by it. He maintains “there is no reason to suppose that the Egyptian populace, let alone the Greek, was much interested in this issue.”⁴⁸

Additionally, Meagher provides an alternative explanation for the development of ancient Egyptian anti-Semitism to further support his claim that because Ruether misunderstands ancient Egyptian anti-Semitism, she mischaracterizes Christian anti-Semitism. He asserts that Jewish separatism was the primary cause. Although he does not provide tangible support for this claim, he asserts that the “animus seems to have derived from a bitter resentment of Jewish apartheid.”⁴⁹ Moreover, Meager argues that the behavior of the Jews played a larger role in causing Egyptian anti-Semitism than Ruether recognizes. He contends that extremely severe Jewish responses to anti-Semitism compounded Egyptian Jew-hatred. He does not provide specifics to support this assertion either but claims that recently discovered Egyptian papyri indicate that “as the history of strife developed, the Jews gradually gained a reputation for being

⁴⁶ Ibid., 9

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9

⁴⁸ Ibid., 10

⁴⁹ Ibid., 9

dangerously cruel and merciless to those enemies who fell into their hands.”⁵⁰ Similarly, according to him, ancient Egypt took offense at the fact that the Jews appeared to believe they were superior to other cultures. He notes that “Jewish writers attempted to exalt Jewish history, culture and general prominence at the expense of the Egyptians in both their ancient and their Hellenistic forms.”⁵¹ He views the fact that the Jewish Egyptian historian Eupolemus claimed that Moses invented the alphabet and that the Jews were “the originators of important Egyptian learning” as examples of Jewish behavior that likely provoked the Egyptians.⁵²

Meagher also disagrees with Ruether over the extent to which Christianity should be seen as culpable for the development of anti-Semitism for reasons unrelated to her interpretation of Egyptian anti-Semitism. Meagher understands *Faith and Fratricide* as using the fact that Christianity was the first to institutionalize or codify anti-Semitism as proof that Christianity is responsible for the creation of virulent anti-Semitism and he considers this argumentation to be too simplistic. He claims that solely because Christianity was the first to formally codify anti-Semitism “does not demonstrate a discontinuity that lays the blame on specifically Christian developments and frees the Roman world from having been the historical progenitor.”⁵³ He contends that Ruether overestimates the significance of Christianity’s codification of anti-Semitic attitudes and underestimates the significance of pagan anti-Semitism.⁵⁴ According to him, Ruether’s method of historical analysis places “too much faith in the continuity of ideas and too little in the continuity of sentiment ... A more discriminating analysis will suggest a greater continuity between the forces of pagan antisemitism and those of its Christian counterpart than

⁵⁰ Ibid., 9

⁵¹ Ibid., 10

⁵² Ibid., 10

⁵³ Ibid., 11

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11

Ruether is disposed to see.”⁵⁵ According to him, pagan anti-Semitism influenced Christian anti-Semitism significantly more than Ruether recognizes.

Meagher also contends that Ruether’s understanding of Christian anti-Semitism is oversimplified for another reason. According to him, Ruether’s assertion that Christian anti-Semitism primarily stems from Judaism’s refusal to accept Jesus is an incomplete account of history. He contends that Judaism’s behavior towards the early followers of Jesus should also be seen as a cause, asserting “there is more to blame within the Jewish camp than her story acknowledges.”⁵⁶ Meagher maintains that Judaism’s charge that by holding that Jesus was the Messiah, the early followers of Jesus were “abusing Torah” should not be ignored.⁵⁷ According to him, this accusation was seen as weighty and actually caused Jews to persecute the early followers of Jesus. Unlike Ruether, Meagher does not believe that Christian anti-Semitism simply arose due to the Jews’ refusal to accept Jesus.

Lastly, to further dispute Ruether’s understanding of Christian anti-Semitism, Meagher focuses upon another aspect of her understanding of early Christianity’s factious relationship with Judaism. According to him, “the emergence of Christianity within the Jewish world did not have the kind of Jacob-Eau neatness about it that is suggested by Ruether’s story.”⁵⁸ He believes that Ruether views the Jewish environment in which Christianity developed without adequate nuance. He asserts that she does not appreciate that many disparate Jewish sectarian groups existed while Christianity developed. For example, he argues that Ruether views the beliefs, particularly the eschatological beliefs, of the Qumranites as representative of all Jewish sectarian groups and that this supposition is false. According to him, “Ruether tends to blur and

⁵⁵ Ibid., 11-12

⁵⁶ Ibid., 19

⁵⁷ Ibid., 20

⁵⁸ Ibid., 18

amalgamate the sectarian movements ... They did not all share the dreams of Qumran communitarian documents, nor were they all apocalyptic.”⁵⁹ Likewise, he contends that Ruether’s representation of Hellenistic Judaism as a uniform entity is also too simplistic. He maintains that the fact that some forms of Hellenistic midrash embraced a strict reading of Torah while others embraced a more allegorical reading demonstrates that Hellenistic Judaism was not uniform.⁶⁰

For Meagher, all of these criticisms of *Faith and Fratricide* attack the heart of Ruether’s contentions regarding the development of anti-Semitism. According to him, they disprove her assertion that Christianity is almost entirely responsible for the development of the most heinous forms of anti-Semitism. He argues that his critique of *Faith and Fratricide* demonstrates that Ruether reaches her conclusion because of an insufficiently sophisticated understanding of history.

John Oesterreicher, a Roman Catholic theologian who played a leading role in the Second Vatican Council, also responds negatively to *Faith and Fratricide*. In a review of Ruether’s book entitled “Anatomy of Contempt,” Oesterreicher voices several criticisms. Similar to Yerushalmi and Meagher, he maintains that Ruether displays an insufficiently nuanced understanding of history.⁶¹ He believes that this causes Ruether to misportray certain aspects of Christianity, which in turn, discredits her thesis. Oesterreicher uses Ruether’s portrayal of the Church Fathers as a primary means of advancing this line of argumentation. According to him, Ruether portrays the Church Fathers as having a more negative attitude toward the Jewish people

⁵⁹ Ibid., 14

⁶⁰ Ibid.,17

⁶¹ Oesterreicher, John M. *Anatomy of Contempt; a Critique of R.R. Ruether's "Faith and Fratricide."* South Orange, NJ: Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall U, 1975. P. 4-5.

than they actually possess.⁶² He asserts that certain writings of the Church Fathers portray aspects of Judaism positively and that Ruether is remiss for not acknowledging any of these writings. To support this claim, Oesterreicher highlights the works of Hugh of Saint Victor and the Venerable Bede on the topic of circumcision. He explains that they view circumcision “as a means of purification, even sanctification for ancient Israel, a healing aid against the wound of original sin.”⁶³

Oesterreicher also contends that Ruether’s portrayal of the Church Fathers is unsatisfactory because she does not properly acknowledge the context in which their writings were composed. He asserts that Ruether should have acknowledged that the Church Fathers lived during a period in which there was great strife and competition between Christianity and Judaism. Denouncing Ruether’s analysis, he notes “none of the writings by the Church Fathers is ever put into its existential context or seen as shaped by psychological, social and cultural circumstances; each is presented as if it were an essence, a thing-in-itself, untouched by time or space.”⁶⁴

Ruether’s portrayal of Jesus and Paul also contributes to Oesterreicher’s belief that *Faith and Fratricide* is plagued by a lack of nuance. He asserts that Ruether misunderstands Jesus, claiming that Ruether is wrong to hold that Jesus denounces all of Israel.⁶⁵ Oesterreicher claims Jesus only denounces certain Jewish leaders. He maintains “[Jesus’] bitter words were addressed, not to people, but to ‘some scribes and Pharisees.’”⁶⁶ According to him, Ruether does not realize that the remarks she views as directed towards all of Israel contain scriptural

⁶² Ibid., 16

⁶³ Ibid., 17

⁶⁴ Ibid., 5

⁶⁵ Ibid., 11

⁶⁶ Ibid., 11

figures of speech that were commonly used to disparage leaders, not the common people.⁶⁷

Similarly, Oesterreicher claims that Ruether does not account for the complexity and contradictions that he believes are inherent in Paul's writing. He contends that because Paul's writings on Judaism are convoluted and complex, it is difficult to reach an understanding of Paul's opinion of Judaism. Therefore, he takes issue with the fact that *Faith and Fratricide* seems to him to castigate Paul bluntly as an anti-Semite. He notes that Ruether does not reference any Jewish scholars of Paul despite the fact that a noted Jewish scholar, Rabbi Leo Baeck, has articulated a favorable opinion of him.⁶⁸

In addition to a lack of nuance, Oesterreicher asserts that Ruether's argument should be discredited because it is colored by her anger at the Church. He maintains that Ruether distorts Christian theology due to her indignation that, over the course of history, Christianity has been responsible for a large amount of Jewish suffering.⁶⁹ According to him, the manner in which Ruether understands the Parable of the Tenants demonstrates how her anger at the Church causes her to misinterpret Christian theology. Oesterreicher holds that despite the fact that the parable "clearly" criticizes Jewish leaders and not the Jewish people, Ruether understands the parable as delegitimizing the Jewish people.⁷⁰ He, therefore, suggests that her anger at the Church "compels her to 'throw' that contempt 'back' to Christian beginnings."⁷¹ According to him, Ruether views the parable through an anti-Semitic lens because her anger causes her to assume that the parable was written with an anti-Semitic bias. He contends that she understands the parable "the same way theological Jew-baiters have always done."⁷²

⁶⁷ Ibid., 11

⁶⁸ Ibid., 13

⁶⁹ Ibid., 7

⁷⁰ Ibid., 7

⁷¹ Ibid., 7

⁷² Ibid., 7

Similar to Meagher, Oesterreicher also critiques *Faith and Fratricide* because he rejects Ruether's assertion that virulent anti-Semitism was a Christian creation. He argues that virulent anti-Semitism predated Christianity.⁷³ He shares Meagher's belief that the Pagan world did not simply serve as "fertile soil" for Christian anti-Semitism.⁷⁴ Oesterreicher argues that the vast majority of anti-Semitic ideologies and tropes that have been advanced since Christianity's establishment existed in the Pagan world. He quotes the well-respected historian Salo Wittmayer Baron as opining "almost every note in the cacophony of medieval and modern anti-Semitism was sounded by the chorus of ancient writers."⁷⁵ Oesterreicher does not provide examples of violence against Jews in the pagan world to support his contention. Rather, he contends that the disdain for the Jewish people that existed in the pagan world serves as proof that bona fide anti-Semitism existed before Christianity's creation. In particular, he uses ancient Egypt and Rome to support this argument. He asserts that in ancient Egypt the Jews were maligned as a "leprous lot" and that Rome's intellectual elite harbored the notion that Jews were an immoral and inferior people.⁷⁶

Moreover, Oesterreicher disputes Ruether's assertion that the development of Christian anti-Semitism was largely uninfluenced by pagan anti-Semitism. He rejects her contention that Christology is the root of Christian anti-Semitism. He maintains that all forms of anti-Semitism throughout history have been a response to Jewish exceptionalism, asserting "ultimately, all hatred of Jews, be it pagan or Christian, ancient, medieval or modern – real differences notwithstanding – is rancor against the ways of God."⁷⁷ According to him, all Jew-hatred stems from anger that the Jews claim that they possess a unique relationship to God and Christology is

⁷³ Ibid., 21

⁷⁴ Ibid., 23

⁷⁵ Ibid., 21

⁷⁶ Ibid., 22-23

⁷⁷ Ibid., 24

simply the vehicle Christian anti-Semitism uses to express itself.⁷⁸ He explains “it was not theology that begot hostility, rather was it resentment [sic] that made Christology serve its purpose.”⁷⁹

These differences in the understanding of the origin and cause of Christian anti-Semitism lead to Oesterreicher’s primary criticism of *Faith and Fratricide* – the belief that Ruether’s reinterpretation of Christology is neither necessary nor appropriate. Oesterreicher asserts that Ruether needlessly removes Jesus from Christianity and that this destroys the very essence of Christianity. He summarizes his opinion by explaining “if the man Jesus is no more than the prototype of man everlastingly hopeful, indeed, longing for the ultimate fulfillment of all things; if He but points to, or anticipates, that realm where God will be ‘all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28), the ‘moment’ when sin will be no more and righteousness reign, then He means very little to us.”⁸⁰ Oesterreicher contends that Ruether’s Christology unnecessarily sabotages Christianity’s viability.

Finally, Oesterreicher also considers some of Ruether’s recommendations for Christian conciliation with Judaism to be problematic. For example, he believes that her proposal to have Christians study the Talmud is untenable. He explains that in order to understand the Talmud one must study it for a significant period of time and he argues that it is simply unrealistic to expect Christians to do that.⁸¹ Additionally, he takes issue with the fact that Ruether presents her recommendations without acknowledging that many proposals for improving Christian-Jewish relations already existed. Oesterreicher thinks this demonstrates that Ruether is attempting to present herself as playing “a magisterial role on past, present and future Christian-Jewish

⁷⁸ Ibid., 24

⁷⁹ Ibid., 24

⁸⁰ Ibid., 32 & 35

⁸¹ Ibid., 25 - 26

relations.”⁸² He questions Ruether’s motives, suggesting that she wrote *Faith and Fratricide* due in part to a desire to gain notoriety or prestige.

Semi-Positive Reactions to Faith and Fratricide

Douglas John Hall, a Protestant theologian who is a professor of Christian theology at McGill University, is representative of the class of theologians who partially accept Ruether’s thesis. Hall believes *Faith and Fratricide* is a great contribution to the field of Christian scholarship. He agrees with Ruether’s contention that Christology by its very nature is anti-Semitic and appreciates her willingness to openly acknowledge her judgment. He explains “I have found her diagnosis to bear an exciting and helpful resemblance to the theological reflections I myself have entertained over the past decade.”⁸³

However, he advances a method for reimagining Christianity that he contends is better than the one Ruether advances. According to him, Ruether does not present all of the possible manners in which Christology could be reimagined. Hall believes that there is an obscure but important concept within the New Testament – the theology of the cross – that Ruether ignores.⁸⁴ He notes that within Christianity the prominence of the ideology of triumph naturally drowns out this concept that was developed by Martin Luther; Hall openly acknowledges that the ideology of triumph, which holds that because of Jesus, evil has been defeated and goodness exists throughout the world, has been dominant in Christianity since the fourth century C.E. According to him, the idea that because of Jesus “the triumph of good over evil, life over death, righteousness over sin, light over darkness has been achieved” pervades Christian theology and

⁸² Ibid., 30

⁸³ Hall, Douglas John. *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*. Ed. Alan T. Davies. New York: Paulist, 1979. P. 168.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 178

culture.⁸⁵ However, he maintains that the theology of the cross, which holds that “the triumph of Christ” has not yet occurred and that in order to achieve salvation the suffering that God allowed himself to endure on the cross must be recognized and appreciated, serves as a valuable concept for reimagining Christology.⁸⁶ He explains that instead of viewing Christianity as having already brought about salvation, Christianity should embrace the more modest and humble beliefs that are advanced by this concept.

Hall holds that by maintaining that the “triumph of the Christ is not yet fully realized” Christianity would become able to advance a more inclusive theology. He claims it would enable Christianity to undercut the triumphalist idea that the Jews are damned because Jesus has already provided Christians with salvation.⁸⁷ According to Hall, the cross of the suffering ideology promotes the idea that Christianity should focus on improving the future of all of humanity. He asserts it encourages the notion that all of humanity should strive to work together to eliminate evil from the world because it holds that Jesus did not complete the project of redeeming the world; he only began it.⁸⁸ To further support the implementation of this recommendation, Hall claims that it better accounts for humanity’s current situation. He argues that the existence of terrible tragedies, such as the Holocaust, is incongruent with the triumphalist idea that Jesus has already brought about salvation.⁸⁹

Michael McGarry, a Paulist priest who is the rector of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem, is another Christian theologian who responds to *Faith and Fratricide* ambivalently. In *Christology after Auschwitz*, he acknowledges that Ruether’s contention that the New Testament is overtly anti-Semitic is plausible. Although he does not endorse this view, he

⁸⁵ Ibid., 172

⁸⁶ Ibid., 178

⁸⁷ Ibid., 183

⁸⁸ Ibid., 183

⁸⁹ Ibid., 179

recognizes that throughout history the New Testament has often been interpreted in an anti-Semitic manner. He maintains “there is no dispute that it [the New Testament] was read in an antisemitic way by some in the Church, especially by some of the early Fathers.”⁹⁰ McGarry, however, strongly questions Ruether’s assertion that supersessionist ideology exists in the New Testament. Although he does not altogether reject Ruether’s contention as totally implausible, he makes it clear that he does not embrace it. He cites the Lutheran scholar Nils A. Dahl as persuasively arguing that the New Testament does not advance the notion that Christianity replaced Judaism as the true religion of God. McGarry quotes Dahl, as opining that “the simplistic doctrine that Israel was rejected and the church chosen to be a new people of God is not really found within the New Testament.”⁹¹

Douglas R. A. Hare, a Professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, is another Protestant cleric who has qualified appreciation for Ruether’s work. Similar to Hall, he embraces Ruether’s contention that Christian theology must be altered because it is anti-Semitic. According to him, Christian theology should be reworked “in such a way that theological space be granted to Judaism as a valid way of worshiping the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus.”⁹² However, similar to Meagher and McGarry, he disagrees with Ruether’s contention that Christology in and of itself is anti-Semitic and that it is the primary source of Christian anti-Semitism.

Hare understands *Faith and Fratricide* as maintaining that Christology stems from the intertwining of messianic and anti-Semitic synoptic exegesis and he contends that this supposition is erroneous. Ruether’s contention that Christology developed in conjunction with

⁹⁰ McGarry, Michael B. *Christology after Auschwitz*. New York: Paulist, 1977. P. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 7

⁹² Hare, Douglas R. A. *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*. Ed. Alan T. Davies. New York: Paulist, 1979. P. 27.

anti-Semitic theology and, therefore, anti-Semitism is embedded within Christology conflicts with his understanding of Christianity's development. He argues that the development of Christology and anti-Semitic theology were largely unrelated. According to him, these two components of Christian theology should not be seen as interwoven because they were developed to serve different purposes. He contends that Christology developed from exegesis that postulated about the death of Jesus and anti-Semitic theology is derived from exegesis that postulated about Judaism's refusal to accept Jesus as the messiah.⁹³

To support this assertion, Hare delineates several forms of anti-Semitism that he claims emanated from the New Testament but were uninfluenced by Christology. "Prophetic anti-Judaism" is the first type of anti-Semitism he describes.⁹⁴ He explains that this was the first type of anti-Semitism expressed in the New Testament and that it was wholly unrelated to Christology. He contends that it emanated from Jesus' message that God was displeased with the behavior of the Jews and that the Jews needed to alter their behavior in order to avoid divine punishment.⁹⁵ According to Hare, simply due to chronology it is impossible that this first form of Christian anti-Semitism could have been influenced by Christology; he notes that it was clearly established before the development of Christology. Additionally, he argues that because Christianity began as an off-shoot of Judaism, the fact that Christianity claimed that its forbearer religion was awry was unavoidable. He asserts that this form of anti-Semitism was an inexorable development stemming from Christianity's need to distinguish itself from Judaism; he maintains it was unrelated to any specific aspect of Christian theology.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid., 27-28

⁹⁴ Ibid., 29

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29

⁹⁶ Ibid., 29

Hare lists “Jewish-Christian Anti-Judaism” as another type of New Testament anti-Semitism that is unrelated to Christology.⁹⁷ He explains that this strand of Christian anti-Semitism developed shortly after the death of Jesus and resulted from the fact that followers of Jesus actively proselytized Jewish communities.⁹⁸ He contends that the Jews viewed Christianity as a threat to their religion and rebuffed Christian proselytization forcefully, which created a particular strain of Christian animus towards the Jews. Similar to Meagher’s contention that Egyptian anti-Semitism was partly attributable to Jewish responses to persecution, Hare maintains that some Christian hostility towards Judaism is attributable to Jewish backlash against proselytization.⁹⁹ Hare succinctly encapsulates this argument by remarking “it was not Paul’s proclamation of Jesus that aroused the deepest animosity against him in Jerusalem, but the report, perhaps largely untrue but not entirely without basis, that he was teaching Jews in the Diaspora to forsake Moses.”¹⁰⁰ Hare asserts that this strand of anti-Semitism was not caused by Christology or any other theological precept but simply by the fact that Christianity imperiled Judaism’s existence.

Hare also analyzes the manner in which Christology is expressed in the New Testament to refute Ruether’s argument that Christology is inherently anti-Semitic. He asserts that even in the Book of Matthew, which he considers to be the most anti-Semitic book in the New Testament, a strong connection between Christology and Christian anti-Semitism does not exist. It is important to note, however, that Hare’s argument is predicated on the idea that anti-Semitism simply refers to the notion that the Jews are inherently incapable of finding favor in God’s eyes. According to Hare, the Christology of Matthew is not anti-Semitic because it allows

⁹⁷ Ibid., 29

⁹⁸ Ibid., 29-30

⁹⁹ Ibid., 32

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 29-30

for Jews to accept Jesus without repudiating their Judaism. He explains that the Christology advanced in Matthew is not anti-Semitic because it “presents Jesus in such a way that it is not necessary for a Jew to cease being a Jew in order to accept the martyred prophet from Nazareth as the one appointed by God to perform the yet-to-be-fulfilled functions of the Messiah.”¹⁰¹ For Hare, this conclusion definitively disproves Ruether’s claim that anti-Semitism is deeply embedded in Christology.

Not surprisingly, this conclusion also causes Hare to reject Ruether’s contention that in order for anti-Semitism to be removed from Christianity, Christology must be significantly altered. He derisively notes that “the theological goal of providing positive theological space for Judaism can be accomplished apart from the total dismantling of Christology.”¹⁰² Because he does not think that Christology is fundamentally tainted with anti-Semitism, he does not believe that Christology must be significantly altered.

Alan Davies, a Protestant scholar who is a professor of religion at the University of Toronto, is another Christian theologian who embraces Ruether’s general critique of Christianity but has serious reservations about specific aspects of her argument. Davies believes that Christianity played a role in enabling the Holocaust to occur, maintaining “the religion which watered the cultural soil of the West throughout the centuries with its negative myth of Jewish existence was no minor factor in the success of Nazi propaganda.”¹⁰³ However, he disagrees with Ruether’s contention that Christianity was the root cause of the Holocaust. He shares Yerushalmi’s belief that Ruether does not sufficiently account for the fact that modern developments unrelated to Christian theology were a key cause of the Holocaust. He maintains “the dominant religious tradition [Christianity] was aided by the depraved children of modernity,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 40 & 43

¹⁰² Ibid., 43

¹⁰³ Davies, *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, 203

who were not the bastard offspring of Christianity alone.”¹⁰⁴ He asserts that modern developments and upheavals were the primary causes of the Holocaust. In particular, he contends that in the nineteenth century “a profound sense of alienation” brought about by changes in the political, economic and social fabric of society overwhelmed Europe and caused it to develop racist ideologies that led to Nazism.¹⁰⁵

Unlike Ruether, Davies argues that modern anti-Semitism was primarily motivated by a desire to restore Greco-Roman civilization to Europe. He rejects Ruether’s claim that the development of modern anti-Semitism was significantly influenced by Christian theology or tropes. According to him, the vast majority of the nineteenth century anti-Semitic ideologues, who developed modern anti-Semitism, opposed Christianity. He mentions that one of the primary ideologues, Charles Maurras, referred to Christianity as a “Semitic leprosy.”¹⁰⁶

Davies contends that the root cause of the anti-Semitism that arose in the nineteenth century was the belief that Europe’s ills would be alleviated if paganism was restored. According to him, the proponents of this delusional theory conflated their sense of alienation with a perceived decline in European society; this, Davies continues, prompted them to advocate for a return to what they considered to be Europe’s authentic culture, which preexisted Judaism.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, for Davies, it is only natural that this phenomenon caused Jews to be

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 203

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 191

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 195

¹⁰⁷ Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein, a scholar of the Holocaust, supports this claim. He contends that a desire to reinstitute Paganism was prevalent in German society throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Interestingly, he contends that this attraction to Paganism caused Germans to resent both Judaism and Christianity. He explains, however, that German society primarily targeted Judaism because it was a significantly easier target. See Rubenstein, Richard. *After Auschwitz: History, Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. 1992. P. 33-34.

viewed as “foreign, hostile elements which, by definition, could not be assimilated into the classical soul.”¹⁰⁸

Davies cites the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution as the two major events that created the sense of alienation. He especially focuses on the French Revolution, noting that it did not simply affect France. He contends that it “unsettled” governments throughout Europe.¹⁰⁹ He focuses, however, on the effects it had on French society because he believes that France’s reaction to the Revolution is emblematic of reactions across Europe.

Davies explains that the Revolution promoted the French bourgeois to a position of power over the upper class, which caused the upper class to feel alienated and to attempt to regain their standing in society. According to him, this, in turn, prompted the upper class to attack the concept of egalitarianism. Davies explains that many members of the upper class viewed egalitarianism as the cause of their downfall and, therefore, they turned to its logical opposite -- racism.¹¹⁰

Davies mentions Count Gobineau, a nineteenth century French social commentator described as the “father of racist ideology,” as representing this phenomenon.¹¹¹ He contends that Gobineau’s “alienation was the mirror of French upper class alienation in general.”¹¹² For Davies, Gobineau is the archetypical example of an upper class Frenchman whose anger at the fact that he lost his distinguished place in French society caused him to promulgate racist ideology.¹¹³ Davies argues that both Gobineau’s claim that European society was in decline and his development of a racist theory to explain the decline were caused by a sense of alienation.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 195

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 192

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 192-193

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 192

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 193

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 193

Moreover, he views Gobineau's contention that the Jewish people are "the debasers of Aryan stock" as exemplifying his contention that the French Revolution triggered the development of racist ideologies and that these ideologies directly contributed to the development of Nazism.¹¹⁴

Davies does not focus as much on the Industrial Revolution as on the French Revolution. However, he maintains that the Industrial Revolution also brought about the alienation of a class of European society, which led to the development of racist ideologies. For Davies, the difference between the two revolutions is simply that unlike the French Revolution, which diminished the standing of the upper class, the Industrial Revolution diminished the well-being of the lower class. According to him, the Industrial Revolution caused significant portions of the European lower class to move from the countryside to cities where living conditions were considerably worse. Mirroring his understanding of the effects of the French Revolution, Davies contends that in response to this drastic societal change, many radical ideas were developed.¹¹⁵ Davies notes that the Industrial Revolution created a "concoction of new ideologies" and that some of them were anti-Semitic.¹¹⁶ He does not, however, provide examples of specific racist ideologies that were triggered by the Industrial Revolution.

Lloyd Gaston, a former Calvinistic Protestant who was a professor of the New Testament at the Vancouver School of Theology, is another Christian theologian who partially accepts Ruether's thesis. He embraces certain aspects of her argument but explains that because he is a Protestant he views Christianity with a slightly different perspective than the Catholic Ruether. In an article entitled "Paul and the Torah," he highlights the role the Epistles of Paul played in

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 193

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 192

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 192

the development of Christian anti-Semitism and credits Ruether with drawing attention to this.¹¹⁷ However, he does not accept Ruether's contention that Paul's writings are inherently anti-Semitic. According to him, Paul can be interpreted as suggesting that Judaism is a legitimate expression of religion.¹¹⁸ This debate will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Full Agreement with Faith and Fratricide

Gregory Baum, a Roman Catholic theologian who wrote the introduction to *Faith and Fratricide*, wholeheartedly supports Ruether's thesis. In an article published five years after the release of *Faith and Fratricide*, he defends Ruether's book against many of the criticisms that were lodged against it. In particular, he focuses on the claims that Ruether's reimagining of Christology is unnecessarily drastic. He cites John Oesterreicher, discussed above, as a theologian who is representative of this school of thought. Baum disparagingly remarks that these scholars largely counter Ruether's assertion that Christology needs to be altered by contending that Christian anti-Semitism is simply a result of a psychological and or sociological disorder that is unrelated to Christian theology. Baum considers these contentions to be untrue, referring to them as "weak arguments."¹¹⁹ He maintains that their arguments are tangential to Ruether's fundamental assertion. According to him, they do not "weaken the central thesis of Ruether's book that the negation of Jewish existence, from the earliest records of the New Testament on, is implied in the Christological affirmations."¹²⁰ He emphatically contends that their arguments do not undermine Ruether's contention that since Christianity's inception, Christology has served as the root source of Christian anti-Semitism.

¹¹⁷ Gaston, Lloyd. *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*. Ed. Alan T. Davies. New York: Paulist, 1979. P. 48.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 67

¹¹⁹ Baum, *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, 145

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 145

Baum also claims that many of Ruether's detractors do not fully comprehend her thesis. He asserts that contrary to the contention of many of her critics, Ruether does not articulate a Christology that is "devoid of specifically Christian elements."¹²¹ He maintains that the concern that Ruether's Christology would destroy the very essence of Christianity is unfounded. According to him, Ruether's proposed Christology "retains Jesus unalterably as the source of God's judgment and new life for the believing community."¹²²

Clark M. Williamson, a former professor of theology at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana, is another scholar who supports Ruether's argument. Since the 1980s, he has written several works that explore the connection between Christianity and anti-Semitism and these works explicitly support Ruether's belief that Christology is the root cause of Christian anti-Semitism. In *A Guest in the House of Israel*, he notes "Christology, is as Rosemary Ruether designates it, the key issue."¹²³ He wholeheartedly shares Ruether's belief that Christology advances the notion that Christianity has superseded Judaism as the true religion of God. According to him, Christology holds that "God is the God who displaces Jews and replaces them with Christians. Christ is the mediator on behalf of Christians who cut a displacement deal with God."¹²⁴ Similarly, in the opening chapter of his 1989 book, *Interpreting Difficult Texts: Anti-Judaism and Christian Preaching*, he references Ruether to present the claim that traditional Christianity promotes anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, later in the book, he writes "the most vigorous stimulus for re-examining the attitudes towards the Jews which are found in scripture has come from Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Faith and*

¹²¹ Ibid., 145

¹²² Ibid., 146

¹²³ Williamson, Clark M. *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993. P. 167.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 5

Fratricide (1974). In a sizzling chapter, Ruether charges that the synoptics and Acts, Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel all explicitly reject Judaism.”¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Williamson, Clark M., and Ronald J. Allen. *Interpreting Difficult Texts: Anti-Judaism and Christian Preaching*. London: SCM, 1989. P. 30.

Chapter III: Disputed New Testament Verses and Doctrines

Now that the responses to *Faith and Fratricide* have been surveyed, the actual New Testament teachings that serve as the underpinnings of Ruether's argument will be explored. These doctrines are interpreted in a myriad of ways and, in many cases, they serve as the impetus for critique or support of Ruether's work. Therefore, analyzing the manner in which other scholars understand them in comparison to Ruether will serve as helpful preparation for evaluating *Faith and Fratricide* in the final section of the paper.

Christology

Christology, the fundamental element of Christian theology that explains the nature and function of Jesus, serves as the foundational tenet of Ruether's belief that Christianity is intrinsically anti-Semitic. As was mentioned in the first section of this paper, Ruether believes that the very idea that Jesus is the Messiah is anti-Semitic because it establishes supersessionism.¹²⁶ According to her, Christology castigates and delegitimizes Judaism by establishing an account of history that portrays Christians as God's current people and portrays the Jewish people as God's former people, who have been scorned by Him. She bluntly asserts "the character of anti-Judaic thinking in the Christian tradition cannot be correctly evaluated until it is seen as the negative side of its Christological hermeneutic."¹²⁷ Ruether does not pinpoint a specific New Testament passage as the source of her perception of Christology. Rather, she cites passages throughout the New Testament to delineate her argument.

¹²⁶ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 246

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 64

Among New Testament scholars, Ruether's view has become increasingly popular. Scholars have reevaluated traditional Christology and concluded that it promotes anti-Semitism. Furthermore, in addition to declaring traditional Christology problematic, many scholars have attempted to develop alternative understandings of Christology. They share Ruether's desire to develop a more universal, pro-Jewish Christology.

John T. Pawlikowski, a leader in the field of Jewish-Christian relations, who is a Catholic priest and a professor at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois, writes about these developments. In a 1993 essay entitled, "The Shoah: Continuing Theological Challenge for Christianity," he surveys the field of Christological scholarship. According to him, the promulgation of the landmark "Nostra Aetate" document by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which was spurred by the Holocaust, has triggered a wave of new interpretations of Christology. He reports that the Catholic Church's call to improve Christianity's relationship with Judaism created an environment that encourages the development of alternative interpretations of Christology. Discussing this development, he notes that since the 1960s "considerable progress has been made on the constructive restatement within the church of the theological relationship between Christianity and the People Israel."¹²⁸

In addition to surveying interpretations of Christology, Pawlikowski has produced foundational philosophies and ideas on the subject. In *Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, which was published in 1982, Pawlikowski provides a thorough evaluation and exposition of Christology. He supports Ruether's belief that Christology is the root cause of Christian anti-Semitism, crediting her with causing him to think more critically about Christian

¹²⁸ Pawlikowski, John T. *Contemporary Christian Religious Responses to the Shoah*. Ed. Steven L. Jacobs. Lanham: U of America, 1993. P. 152.

anti-Semitism.¹²⁹ He notes in the introduction of the book “no lasting resolution of the historic Christian-Jewish tension is possible unless the Church is ready to significantly rethink its traditional interpretation of Christology. Rosemary Ruether’s writings, especially her volume *Faith and Fratricide*, have brought the issue to a head for me.”¹³⁰ Additionally, Pawlikowski shares Ruether’s opinion that Christology needs to be radically altered. He openly acknowledges that this requires discarding the notion that the “messianic prophecies” of the Hebrew bible have been fulfilled by Jesus.¹³¹ Pawlikowski, however, does not accept the Christology that Ruether articulates. He describes her proposal as portraying Jesus as a utilitarian symbol of longing for salvation, which he believes shortchanges Christianity. According to him, Ruether’s Christology is too radical; he balks at her proposal because he believes it strips away the uniqueness of Jesus, rendering Him “one among many experiences of messianic hope.”¹³²

For this reason, Pawlikowski attempts to strike a compromise between Ruether’s Christology and traditional understandings of Christology; he does not want to wholly dismiss the notion that Jesus will definitively play a tangible role in the ultimate salvation of humanity. According to him, Jesus should be thought of as having brought humanity closer to achieving salvation. He emphasizes that God’s interactions with humanity through Jesus have made it easier for humanity to embrace God. Discussing humanity’s relationship with God after Jesus died, Pawlikowski contends “the human community could now more easily accept its dependence on God as a gift, for God had acknowledged the dignity of humanity through his

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 151

¹³⁰ Pawlikowski, John. *Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue*. New York: Paulist, 1982. P. 3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 3

¹³² *Ibid.*, 3

presence in the Son Jesus.”¹³³ Pawlikowski argues that Jesus and the suffering he endured as a human has made humanity more amenable to embracing God.¹³⁴

Despite the differences between the Christologies’ of Pawlikowski and Ruether, there is one important similarity between their proposals. In contradiction to traditional understandings of Christology, their proposals do not promote supersessionism. Pawlikowski contends that Jesus should not be viewed as replacing or invalidating Judaism. He emphasizes the importance of God’s covenant with the Jewish people, holding “the revelation in the Incarnation coupled with the revelation of Sinai has given humankind the blueprint and the power to achieve full wholeness as individuals and as the basic community of the children of God.”¹³⁵ According to Pawlikowski’s Christology, Jesus in combination with the covenant at Sinai provides humanity with the ability to achieve salvation. Pawlikowski posits that Jesus should not be viewed as annulling the covenant at Sinai because without the Jewish people’s relationship with God, salvation cannot occur.

Clark Williamson, previously discussed, is another scholar who shares Ruether’s belief that Christology should be altered. As alluded to in the previous chapter of the paper, in *A Guest in the House of Israel*, Williamson devotes a chapter to analyzing and interpreting Christology and does this in a manner that is consistent with *Faith and Fratricide*. He supports Ruether’s contention that Christology is the primary incubator of Christian anti-Semitism.¹³⁶ He wholeheartedly agrees with Ruether’s assertion that traditional Christology promotes the notion that believers in Christ have supplanted the Jewish people as God’s covenantal people and, therefore, the Jewish people are obsolete and cursed. He explains that according to the

¹³³ Ibid., 134

¹³⁴ Although Pawlikowski is likely well-intentioned, it is important to note that he does not appear to account for the fact that Judaism does not view Jesus as divine.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 133-134

¹³⁶ Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel*, 167

traditional understanding of Christology, Jesus “sides with us [Christians] against Israel in making it possible for Christianity to be everything new, creative, spiritual and universal, which the old, stubborn, carnal and ethnocentric Jews by definition cannot possibly be.”¹³⁷ Moreover, Williamson actually goes a step further than Ruether with regard to his refutation of traditional Christology. According to him, traditional Christology is not simply immoral but also dependent upon flawed logic. He maintains that it contradicts an essential Christian dogma -- God’s ‘free grace.’ According to Williamson, traditional Christology’s assertion that one who does not accept Jesus is damned, is incompatible with this dogma that advances the idea that God is just and gracious to all of humanity. Williamson contends that God cannot be gracious to all of humanity if He will only provide one segment of humanity with salvation.¹³⁸

Williamson maintains that Jesus should not be thought of as humanity’s only source of salvation. Similar to Ruether, he posits an understanding of Christology that attempts to emphasize that Judaism is a legitimate expression of religion. Williamson simply employs a less drastic approach. He describes Jesus as the means by which Christians can achieve salvation. According to him, there are multiple methods that can bring about salvation and acceptance of Jesus is simply one of the many methods. Additionally, to further support his attempt to establish a Christology that is pro-Jewish, he emphasizes the notion that Jesus was brought to humanity by the God of Israel. He argues that Jesus should be seen as a gift from the “God of Israel” to the Christians so that they can achieve salvation. Williamson contends that Judaism and its God enabled Jesus to serve as the savior of the Christians.¹³⁹

A. Roy Eckardt, a clergyman in the United Methodist Church and one of the first scholars to explore the connection between Christianity and anti-Semitism, also expresses a similar

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 168

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 200

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 201

understanding of traditional Christology. In *Elder and Younger Brothers*, which was published in 1967, Eckardt asserts that Christology poses a grave problem for Christianity. Discussing the importance of establishing a new interpretation of Christology, he exclaims “there is no other cure to this plague [anti-Semitism,] no other atonement for the dreadful crimes of Christendom against the people of God [the Jews.]”¹⁴⁰ This judgement is especially important to explore because it was developed before the publication of *Faith and Fratricide*; it indicates that certain individuals reached the conclusion that Christianity was plagued by a deep-seated connection to anti-Semitism uninfluenced by Ruether’s work.

Eckardt advances, however, an understanding of Jesus that is significantly less universalistic than the ones advanced by Ruether and many other modern scholars troubled by traditional Christology. Writing before *Faith and Fratricide* sparked an examination of Christianity and spurred scholars to develop alternative understandings of Christology, Eckardt maintains traditional Christology’s assertion that Jesus is humanity’s source of salvation. He does not deviate from its avowal that God will redeem the world through Jesus.¹⁴¹ Eckardt simply rebuffs the idea that God has rejected the Jewish people. According to him, both Christians and Jews will achieve salvation.¹⁴² His understanding of Jesus emphasizes the kindness of the God of Israel. Eckardt posits that Christians should be grateful that they will be able to achieve salvation. Similar to Williamson, he contends that Jesus should be thought of as the means by which God permits non-Jews to enter into His covenant with Israel. Eckardt cites the New Testament to emphasize this notion. He quotes the Epistle to the Ephesians as noting

¹⁴⁰ Eckardt, A. Roy. *Elder and Younger Brothers; the Encounter of Jews and Christians*. New York: Scribner, 1967. P. 159.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 158

¹⁴² Eckardt appears to suggest that the Jewish people’s covenant with God will be sufficient for their salvation. For example, he contends that Christians should only proselytize non-Jews. This Judeo-Christian-centric view will be further examined later in the paper. See p. 158.

that through Jesus, the God of Israel allows non-Jews to “no longer [be] aliens in a foreign land but fellow-citizens with God’s people, members of God’s household” (Eph. 2:19).¹⁴³ Eckardt asserts that God created Jesus to enable non-Jews to share in the benefits of following God, not to damn the Jewish people. Unlike Williamson, however, Eckardt does not view Jesus as one of many paths to salvation. Eckardt’s significantly less universalistic Christology is predicated upon the supposition that belief in the Judeo-Christian god is necessary.

Eckardt’s Christology asserts that Judaism should be considered a legitimate expression of religion for several other reasons as well. Primarily, he articulates two interrelated retorts to the contention that religion cannot be practiced properly without acceptance of Jesus. Firstly, he contends that worshipping Jesus without worshipping God – the god of both Christianity and Judaism – is sacrilegious. Eckardt claims that in order to worship Jesus properly one must view Jesus as a vehicle through which God is worshiped. According to him, simply worshipping Jesus “is a terrible form of idolatry.”¹⁴⁴ Secondly, Eckardt maintains that Jesus cannot truly be worshiped properly unless there is harmony among humanity. He explains “until the worship of Christ means the reconciliation of men, Christ must remain ashamed and sorrowful in the presence of those who bear his name.”¹⁴⁵ Eckardt suggests that anti-Semitism is antithetical to the worship of Jesus.

Paul van Buren, a former Episcopalian priest who was a professor of religion at Temple University, is another scholar who contends that Christology needs to be reworked. Similar to the scholars previously discussed, he believes that traditional Christology is anti-Semitic. In *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*, he bemoans the lack of tolerance towards those who do not accept Jesus that he believes traditional Christology engenders. He writes that traditional

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 158

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 160

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 160

Christology creates a situation whereby “if your understandings of the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth are not identical with mine, then you are the enemy of the truth and fit only to be cast aside.”¹⁴⁶ For this reason, he too attempts to develop a new understanding of Christology. Similar to Williamson and Eckardt, he emphasizes the notion that the God of the Jewish people gifted Jesus to the non-Jews so that they could enter into His covenant. Citing Romans 15:8-9, he claims that Jesus is God’s representative for the non-Jews. According to him, Jesus served as a “servant” of Israel so that non-Jews could be accepted by God.¹⁴⁷

Despite the confidence with which these arguments are presented, other scholars disagree with Ruether’s understanding of Christology. Brian Hebblethwaite, a scholar of Christian theology at Cambridge University and an ordained priest of the Church of England, is representative of this class of theologians. In contrast to Ruether, Hebblethwaite rejects the contention that traditional Christology must be altered; he maintains that modifying traditional Christology would be a grave mistake. Hebblethwaite acknowledges that Christologies that downplay the divinity and importance of Jesus encourage interfaith dialogue and coexistence. However, he opposes such interpretations because he believes they “represent a serious threat to the faith of the Christian Church.”¹⁴⁸ In fact, although he does not explicitly mention Ruether, he notes that he published *The Incarnation: Collected Essays in Christology* in response to the fact that many contemporary theologians are advancing alternative understandings of Christology. In these essays, all of which were written by him, he argues that the doctrine of Incarnation, which holds that Jesus is unimpeachably divine, is an integral component of Christology. He explains:

¹⁴⁶ Van Buren, Paul. *A Theology of the Jewish Christian Reality*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. P. 3-4.

¹⁴⁷ Van Buren, Paul. *A Christian Theology of the People Israel*. New York: Seabury, 1983. P. 347-348.

¹⁴⁸ Hebblethwaite, Brian. *The Incarnation: Collected Essays in Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987. P. 1.

“There can be no doubt that the doctrine of Incarnation has been taken during the bulk of Christian history to constitute the very heart of Christianity. Hammered out over five centuries of passionate debate, enshrined in the classical Christian creeds, explored and articulated in the great systematic theologies, the doctrine expresses, so far as human words permit, the central belief of Christians that God himself, without ceasing to be God, has come amongst us, not just in but *as* a particular man at a particular time and place.”¹⁴⁹

According to Hebblethwaite, Jesus was a human but he also was God and ignoring or deemphasizing this component of Jesus strikes at the very essence of Christianity.

To defend this stance, Hebblethwaite explains that many religions hold that God has communicated with individuals; however, a distinguishing feature of Christianity is its belief that in order to communicate more intimately and poignantly with His adherents, God actually transformed Himself into a human being. Hebblethwaite argues that ignoring this component of Christianity causes the loss of the “peculiarly Christian contribution, namely that experience of God can now take a much more direct and personal form, since God himself has humbled himself and come among us as one of us.”¹⁵⁰ To further support the assertion that the godliness of Jesus is fundamental to Christianity, he notes that a large number of hymns and devotional rites express the idea that Jesus’s godliness is the central tenet of Christianity.¹⁵¹

Additionally, Hebblethwaite posits several other arguments in opposition to Ruether’s interpretation of Christology. For example, he argues that traditional Christology possesses moral and religious value. According to him, traditional Christology enables humanity to better

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2

comprehend God and to more effectively connect with Him; Hebblethwaite contends that “the character of Christ *is* for us the revealed character of God, and becomes the criterion for our understanding of the nature and will of God.”¹⁵² He also argues that by emphasizing the eternal holiness of Jesus, traditional Christology promotes the notion that Jesus should be understood and celebrated as existing in both the past and the present. According to him, traditional Christology teaches that Jesus should not simply be worshiped as a figure that existed in the past, asserting that it teaches Christians that they live among God and partake in His plan for humanity. He explains that traditional Christology instills in Christians the idea that they “become by adoption and grace, instruments in the history of divine action.”¹⁵³

Carl Braaten, a professor of theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, also defends traditional Christology. Similar to Hebblethwaite, he published a book, *No Other Gospel*, in response to the fact that many contemporary Christian theologians are advancing Christologies that deemphasize the significance of Jesus. In *No Other Gospel*, which was published in 1992, Braaten refers to these theologians as ‘universalists’ and shares Hebblethwaite’s contention that their theologies pose a serious threat to Christianity. According to him, by altering Christology in an attempt to make it more accepting of other religions, the essence of Christianity is lost. He explains that in order to practice proper Christianity, Jesus must be viewed as God’s final revelation to humanity and as the sole savior of humanity.¹⁵⁴

In further opposition to Ruether, Braaten rejects the contention that traditional Christology is inherently anti-Semitic. Unlike Hebblethwaite who does not explicitly address the charge that traditional Christology is anti-Semitic, Braaten addresses the charge and asserts that traditional Christology can be interpreted as promoting a positive understanding of Judaism.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 35

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38

¹⁵⁴ Braaten, Carl E. *No Other Gospel!: Christianity among the World's Religions*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992. P. 3-4.

According to Braaten, all religions stimulate belief in God and Christianity holds that Jesus is the ultimate expression of God. Therefore, he contends that Christology promotes the embracement of all religions; according to him, it teaches that all religions bring humanity closer to salvation. Related to this contention, Braaten also maintains that ultimately Jesus will bring about a total revolution that will benefit all people. Braaten contends that, at the end of time, adherents of all religions will learn to accept Jesus – the ultimate expression of God – and benefit from his generosity. He explains that eventually “Christ will be revealed as the universal future and fulfillment of the totality of nature, history, culture and religion.”¹⁵⁵

Dissecting Braaten’s theology is particularly helpful in analyzing Christology. It strikingly highlights a telling aspect of many of the arguments advanced in support of traditional Christology. It serves as an especially transparent example of the fact that, for the most part, scholars who defend traditional Christology acknowledge, at least implicitly, that traditional Christology is problematic. These scholars claim that they wholeheartedly reject Ruether’s contention that Christology needs to be modified. However, they largely concede that traditional Christology delegitimizes other religions. They assert that they are defending traditional Christology. Yet, they often propose modifications to traditional Christology in an attempt to make Christianity more accepting of other religions, particularly Judaism. For this reason, these scholars, at least implicitly, acknowledge that Ruether’s overarching claim that traditional Christology is prejudicial is largely correct.

Romans 9-11

In addition to Christology, Ruether’s understanding of Christianity is also heavily influenced by Romans 9-11. She holds that these chapters, which consist of Paul grappling with

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 80

the fact that he believes that the Jews possess an eternal covenant with God even though they refuse to accept Jesus, are anti-Semitic. According to her, they articulate a doctrine of election that can only be interpreted as proclaiming that Christianity has replaced Judaism as the true religion of God. She explains that she interprets the chapters as asserting that “Christians, not Jews, are the true offspring of Abraham and heirs of the promise.”¹⁵⁶ For her, the chapters unmistakably promote supersessionism; she believes that they clearly assert that the Jews have been scorned by God and are inferior to those who accept Jesus.

However, scholars’ interpretations of Romans 9-11 cover a wide-range of views and standard understandings of these chapters have evolved considerably over the last fifty or sixty years. Therefore, surveying the field of scholarship and analyzing macro-level developments in the field is essential to providing a thorough evaluation of *Faith and Fratricide*. The paper will begin by discussing trends and then move to specific interpretations.

The previously mentioned A. Roy Eckardt was one of the first scholars to articulate the opinion that Romans 9-11 promotes anti-Semitism and to express the belief that this is problematical for Christianity.¹⁵⁷ In *Elder and Younger Brothers*, Eckardt notes “the view expressed in Romans 9-11, when taken in and out of itself – that is, without any relating of it to alternative Christian affirmations, including those made elsewhere in the New Testament by the apostle Paul himself – erects serious barriers against the realization of a positive relationship of Christians with Jews.”¹⁵⁸ In contrast to *Faith and Fratricide*, however, Eckardt asserts that the chapters can be interpreted in a pro-Jewish manner. Despite his belief that the traditional understanding of Romans 9-11 promotes anti-Semitism, he is optimistic that these three chapters of Romans can be understood in a pro-Jewish manner. According to him, the chapters can be

¹⁵⁶ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 98

¹⁵⁷ Eckardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers*, 58

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 66

used “as a point of departure for coming to positive grips with the question of Israel and the church.”¹⁵⁹ Discussing the field of Christian scholarship, he writes that he is pleased to see that scholars are beginning to produce alternative, pro-Jewish interpretations of Romans 9-11.¹⁶⁰

Since the late 1960s, this belief that the traditional understanding of Romans 9-11 is anti-Semitic but that the chapters can be interpreted in a manner that portrays the Jewish people positively has gained popularity. R. Kendall Soulen, a scholar at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., highlights this development in a detailed report entitled “Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11.” Soulen’s account, which he published in 2011, indicates that contemporary scholars largely reject Ruether’s belief that the chapters are inherently anti-Semitic. He notes that since the Holocaust, many Christian theologians have developed interpretations of these chapters that promote a positive understanding of Judaism. In fact, he views this development as so monumental that he describes it as comparable to “Josiah’s rediscovery of the book of the law in the Temple (2 Kings 22).”¹⁶¹ Soulen does not provide specific examples or actual statistics to support this claim. However, he notes that many churches have produced documents renouncing positions that were anti-Semitic and that these documents were largely inspired by reinterpretations of Romans 9-11. According to him, “Rom 9-11 has served as the scriptural catalyst for one of the most remarkable changes in Christian teaching.”¹⁶²

In particular, Soulen reports that theologians have been focusing upon the text’s use of the present tense when discussing the Jewish people’s covenant with God in 9:4-5 and 11:28. He reports that interpreters are using this to assert that the text teaches that not only were the Jews

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 54

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 54

¹⁶¹ Soulen, Kendall R. *Between Gospel and Election Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11*. Ed. Frank Wagner Schlerrit. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010. P. 497.

¹⁶² Ibid., 498

not scorned by God but that they actually possess an enduring covenant with God. According to him, the interpreters contend that the use of the present tense indicates that the special ancestral relationship between God and the Jewish people was never annulled. Soulen explains that many scholars hold that the present tense indicates that the Jewish people are “God’s beloved – not only in the primordial past and eschatological future – but *also* and *above all* in the abiding *now* of covenant history.”¹⁶³

Soulen also reports that contemporary interpreters are focusing upon the explanation as to why Israel rejected the gospel provided by this portion of Romans. He explains that scholars are emphasizing that the “hardening” of Israel (11:25) was an act of God to argue that these chapters are not intrinsically anti-Semitic. Soulen notes that scholars contend that because the text describes God as causing the Jewish people to reject Jesus, the Jews should not be seen as irreligious; their behavior was simply part of God’s plan for humanity. For these scholars, this point serves as strong support for the claim that the text is not inherently anti-Semitic. They use it to contend that these chapters indicate that Christians should not attempt to convert Jews to Christianity. Soulen explains that these scholars assert that Romans 9-11 provides Christians with “no apostolic commission to try to win the Jewish people to faith in Christ Jesus by means of direct proclamation.”¹⁶⁴

Summarizing the two developments that were described in the preceding paragraphs, Soulen sees similarities between the two. According to him, these two methods of reading the text maintain that the Jewish people continue to possess a covenant with God and that this connection to God should be respected. By emphasizing God’s covenant with Israel, these interpreters renounce supersessionism. They assert that the text suggests that Israel’s ancient

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 499

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 500

connection to God should not be ignored or discredited. Soulen explains that these alternative understandings of Romans 9-11 promote the notion that notwithstanding the formation of Christianity, God still values Judaism and its adherents.¹⁶⁵

N. Thomas Wright, a New Testament scholar at the University of Saint Andrews and a retired Anglican bishop, also provides a survey of the manner in which Romans 9-11 has been interpreted over the last approximately fifty years. Wright's report focuses upon the development of what he terms "the so-called new perspective on Paul," which is a school of thought that rejects Ruether's assertion that the chapters are anti-Semitic.¹⁶⁶ It contends that the text only appears anti-Semitic because it is either misinterpreted or misunderstood. Wright acknowledges that this school of thought was likely influenced by the Holocaust but maintains that a sincere desire to better understand Paul and his writings are the driving forces of the movement. He reports that the movement, which was largely spurred by an increase in knowledge of first-century Judaism, has caused scholars to believe that in order to accurately understand Romans 9-11, the context in which Paul wrote must be considered.¹⁶⁷ Wright recognizes that there are several variations of the 'new perspective' but explains that the common thread between all of them is the desire to reevaluate Paul's writing in light of a more nuanced understanding of Paul.¹⁶⁸

To explain this school of thought, Wright focuses upon an interpretation of verse 10:3, exclaiming that "the fresh reading of this single verse upon which I stumbled in 1976

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 501

¹⁶⁶ Wright, N. Thomas. *Between Gospel and Election Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11*. Ed. Frank Wagner Schlerrit. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010. P. 37.

¹⁶⁷ Wright acknowledges that *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, written by Ed Sanders in 1977, is widely considered to have birthed this movement but maintains that the movement had already begun before the publication of this book.

¹⁶⁸ Wright primarily attributes this increase in knowledge to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

encapsulates, for me, what the new perspective is all about.”¹⁶⁹ Focusing on the circumstances that existed during Paul’s time, Wright is heavily influenced by the belief that Paul views the Jewish people as mistaken for not embracing Jesus but as still possessing a unique bond with God. According to Wright, Paul’s comment that the Jews are “ignorant of God’s righteousness,” is not an attempt to suggest that the Jewish people are damned or that they have lost their place as God’s chosen people. Rather, Wright contends that Paul is simply attempting to rationalize the Jewish people’s refusal to accept the notion that Jesus is the Messiah.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, later in the verse, it is this same thinking that causes Wright to understand the phrase “God’s own righteousness” as indicating that God’s justness would prevent Him from disavowing His covenant with the Jewish people.¹⁷¹ Because of Wright’s understanding of the context in which Paul wrote, Wright reads the verse as affirming the Jewish people’s covenant with God and not as damning the Jewish people.

Now that the trends have been outlined, the paper will explore specific interpretations of Romans 9-11, beginning with interpretations that conflict with Ruether’s understanding of the text. The previously mentioned Lloyd Gaston provides an interpretation that is representative of the ‘new perspective’ outlined by Wright. Accounting for the context in which Paul wrote, Gaston contends that Paul does not attack the merits of Judaism; rather, Paul simply attacks the Jewish people’s refusal to accept non-Jewish worshipers of Jesus into their covenant with God. Gaston believes that Paul declares in verses 9:32 and 11:11 that the Jewish people have “stumbled” only because they were unwilling to allow gentiles to enter into their covenant with God through belief in Jesus. Similarly, Gaston contends that Paul’s comment that “Israel did not understand” (Rom. 10:19) solely implies that the Jewish community did not recognize that they

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 40

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 40

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 40

should incorporate gentiles into their covenant.¹⁷² According to Gaston, Paul does not disapprove of Judaism. Paul simply condemns the unwillingness of the Jewish people to accept that viewing Jesus as the Messiah could serve as a legitimate expression of religion.¹⁷³

Katherine Sonderegger, a priest in the Episcopal Church and a professor at the Virginia Theological Seminary, is another scholar who contends that Romans 9-11 can be understood in a manner that is not anti-Semitic. In an article entitled “The Doctrine of Election in Romans 9-11,” she presents an interpretation that is representative of the trend to emphasize Israel’s covenant with God that Soulen describes. Sonderegger highlights Paul’s comment in 11:29 that “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” to assert that the text underscores Israel’s enduring relationship with God. She maintains that this statement indicates that Paul does not hold that the covenant between Israel and God has been invalidated. Invoking Israel’s ancestral relationship to God as well as comments Paul makes in the beginning of Romans in which he highlights Israel’s special bond with God, Sonderegger contends that Paul’s comment in 11:29 is strong proof that he views Israel as possessing an enduring connection to God.¹⁷⁴

Sonderegger also focuses upon the olive tree metaphor of chapter 11. For her, this parable provides additional evidence that the text can be read in a pro-Jewish light.¹⁷⁵ She asserts that the allegory suggests that the ability of gentiles to enter into God’s covenant does not delegitimize Israel’s covenant with God.¹⁷⁶ Discussing this passage, she explains “doctrinally, Paul holds to an eternal covenant, traced to the full sovereign fidelity of God.”¹⁷⁷ Sonderegger

¹⁷² Gaston, *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, 66

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 66

¹⁷⁴ Sonderegger, Katherine. "Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11." *SCJR Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 7.1 (2010). P. 480.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 481

¹⁷⁶ According to Sonderegger, the allegory describes Israel as a cultivated, dignified olive tree. Despite the fact that some of its branches have fallen off, she maintains that the parable teaches that the tree should be respected by the gentiles, who are described as a new and thriving tree grafted to Israel.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 481

understands the olive tree allegory as strong indication that even though Paul believes that gentiles can enter into God's covenant without becoming Jewish and that Israel was mistaken for not accepting Jesus, Paul does not believe that the Jewish people are damned. Sonderegger believes that Paul is troubled by the fact that Israel, the supposed 'chosen nation,' does not accept Jesus. Yet, she asserts that Paul does not contend that God has rejected Israel. She maintains that this paradox is a driving force behind Paul's complex rhetoric in these three chapters. However, she claims that Paul does not promote anti-Semitism, noting that Paul highlights "the unshakeable covenant election of Israel."¹⁷⁸ According to her, these chapters suggest that the Jewish people have not lost their connection to God, which thereby mutes supersessionism.

A. Roy Eckardt, who has already been discussed at length, is another scholar who advances an alternative interpretation of Romans 9-11. Similar to Gaston's interpretation, Eckardt's interpretation emphasizes the importance of the context in which Paul wrote. In-line with the methodology of the scholars belonging to the 'new perspective,' Eckardt notes "we must take full account of the spiritual and personal situation out of which Paul composed Romans 9-11. In these chapters the apostle was facing up to the poignant truth that he was now both Jew and Christian."¹⁷⁹ Eckardt contends that in Romans 9-11 Paul simply seeks to resolve his befuddlement at the fact that Israel possesses a covenant with God but refuses to accept Jesus. Eckardt argues that in these chapters Paul's intention is not to promote the idea that the Jews are damned or that they are inferior to people who believe in Jesus. According to Eckardt, Paul attempts "to reconcile two great facts: his love for Israel and his devotedness to Christ."¹⁸⁰ Mirroring Sonderegger, Eckardt focuses on Paul's assertion in 11:29 that "the gifts and calling of

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 481-482

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 67

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 67

God are irrevocable” to maintain that Paul’s writings should be seen as an attempt to resolve these seemingly incompatible positions.¹⁸¹ Eckardt claims that in these chapters Paul is simply attempting to articulate the idea that God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, will ultimately conciliate the two in a just manner.¹⁸²

Eckardt also maintains that Romans 11 can be interpreted as highlighting the importance of Israel’s covenant with God. Eckardt focuses upon the olive tree metaphor in verses 11-24 that Sonderegger also highlights. He, however, provides an interpretation of these verses that is even more pro-Jewish. He contends that the parable suggests that Judaism should be seen as an integral component of Christianity’s viability. He notes that “while the branches (Israel) have been lopped off, it is nevertheless the root (also Israel) that sustains the church.”¹⁸³ For him, this parable indicates that not only the existence of contemporary Judaism but also its prosperity should be seen as necessary for Christianity’s ability to succeed.¹⁸⁴

Finally, in addition to providing alternative understandings of the chapters, Eckardt argues that part of the reason these chapters are understood as anti-Semitic is that they are misunderstood. He claims that that they are interpreted too literally. According to him, the notion that these chapters advance the idea that Christianity has replaced Judaism as the true religion of God is too simplistic. He views Paul as an Israelite prophet and acknowledges that in keeping with the prophetic tradition of Hosea and Jeremiah, Paul implies that Israel will be punished for its sins. However, Eckardt bemoans the lack of nuance with which this idea is understood, explaining “our own fault lies in subjecting his [Paul’s] views to a juridical fate: in

¹⁸¹ Levine, Amy-Jill, and Marc Zvi. Brettler. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. P. 278.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 67

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 69

¹⁸⁴ Eckardt does not explicitly indicate that he is referring to modern Judaism as opposed to the 1st century Judaism from which Christianity originated. However, it seems fair to assume that he is referring to modern Judaism because improving Jewish-Christian relations is one of the explicit aims of the book.

this group are ‘the Jews,’ the broken branches of Israel, while in *that* group, standing fresh and straight and tall, are the Christians, i.e., the *devoted* people.”¹⁸⁵ Eckardt contends it is too simple to read this chapter as implying that all Jews are sinners and all Christians are devout. As Eckardt views it, the sheep and goats parable in Matthew 25: 31-46, which claims that the blessed will not be aware of their goodness while the damned will not be mindful of their sins, supports this argument. For him, the parable supports the idea that the physical, external characteristics or traits of individuals are not viewed by God as highly important. Eckardt believes that the differentiation between righteous and impious cannot simply be viewed in terms of those who accept Jesus and those who do not. He maintains that Paul’s statements about those who do and do not accept Jesus should not be seen as blanket statements that are applicable to all Jews and all Christians.¹⁸⁶ To further support this point, Eckardt notes that many Christians reject Jesus on a daily basis.¹⁸⁷

Now that interpretations of Romans 9-11 that conflict with Ruether’s understanding of the text have been surveyed, the argument that her understanding is correct will be explored. Although it appears that the vast majority of post-Holocaust scholars do not believe that the chapters are intrinsically anti-Semitic, it is still important to acknowledge that some scholars accept her contention. The previously discussed Gregory Baum is one such scholar. In the introduction to *Faith and Fratricide* that he wrote, he provides a passionate argument in support of the contention that Romans 9-11 is anti-Semitic. According to him, these chapters indisputably proclaim that the Jews are cursed because Christianity has replaced Judaism as the true religion of God. He maintains that Romans 9-11 unmistakably asserts that “the religion of

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 68

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 68

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 68

Israel is now superseded, the Torah abrogated, the promises fulfilled in the Christian Church, the Jews struck with blindness.”¹⁸⁸

In and of itself, this stance is interesting because it is quite rare. However, it is also noteworthy for another reason; Baum has not always held this view. In 1955, he published *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?* in which he argues that Romans 9-11 is not inherently anti-Semitic. To defend this stance, Baum primarily relied upon German scholar Karl Hermann Schelkle’s work, *Paulus, Lehrer der Vater*, which compiles all of the patristic commentaries on Romans 1-11. Baum contended that this work indicates that the primary reason these chapters are considered to be anti-Semitic is that the Church Fathers misconstrued them. According to him, their misconstructions spread and eventually became seen as canonical. Baum bemoaned this development, lamenting “this unfortunate tendency has endured throughout the Middle Ages almost to our own century and has greatly obscured the profound significance of the three chapters.”¹⁸⁹ According to him, in these chapters Paul actually portrays the Jews positively, and due largely to the animosity between Christianity and Judaism that existed during the time of the Church Fathers, they intentionally perverted Paul’s opinion of the Jewish people. Baum explains “the spiritual climate produced by controversies between Christians and Jews was not conducive to the understanding of the great vision Paul proposed in these three chapters of Romans.”¹⁹⁰

Baum also supported his argument by attempting to provide additional reasons as to why these chapters are seen as anti-Semitic. For example, he claimed that there are several instances in these chapters where the Jewish people are spoken about in positive terms but that these are often overlooked or discounted because these chapters are frequently viewed as a superfluous digression or as an attempt by Paul to placate the Jews. Similarly, Baum also contended that the

¹⁸⁸ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 6

¹⁸⁹ Baum, Gregory. *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?* Glen Rock: Paulist, 1965. P. 275-276.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 276

pro-Jewish passages are seen as corrupted by the fact that Paul's Jewish upbringing causes him to possess an irrational affection for Judaism. After making this argument, Baum discussed the manner in which he believed the chapters should be interpreted. He primarily focused upon the idea that the text holds that God remains loyal to Israel because He does not disavow His covenants. His reading is very similar to many of the pro-Jewish interpretations of the chapters that have been surveyed.¹⁹¹ Although Baum ultimately reneges upon this view that Romans 9-11 can be viewed in a pro-Jewish light, declaring his original view "wishful thinking," studying both of Baum's works serves as a fitting conclusion to the investigation of Romans 9-11; it highlights the fact that these three chapters are quite complex and are interpreted in a variety of manners.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 280-287

¹⁹² Baum, Gregory. Introduction. *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*. Ruether. New York: Seabury, 1974. P. 6.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Since the publication of *Faith and Fratricide*, many scholars have criticized the book. These scholars have employed a wide variety of arguments, focusing among other subjects on theology, history, sociology and psychology. Some of these criticisms highlight legitimate flaws in Ruether's argument. Therefore, examining the implications of some of the more forceful arguments serves as a logical place to begin an evaluation of her work.

The most powerful arguments posited against Ruether's book utilize history and psychology. Several scholars adeptly turn to the history of anti-Semitism to dispute *Faith and Fratricide*. In particular, Yerushalmi employs this method especially effectively. By analyzing the social status of Jews during the Late Antiquity and Middle Ages, as well as the behavior of certain Church officials during the Crusades, he persuasively contends that Ruether's understanding of anti-Semitism is imperfect. His assertion that Ruether overestimates the extent to which the Church promulgated anti-Semitism throughout the Late Antiquity and Middle Ages carries weight and suggests that Christianity is not as inherently anti-Semitic as *Faith and Fratricide* claims. Additionally, it weakens the simplistic notion that Christian anti-Semitism made the Holocaust inevitable.

Oesterreicher is one of the few critics who challenge *Faith and Fratricide* on psychological grounds. However, his contention that Ruether's analysis of Christianity is corrupted by her anger at the Church is compelling. He convincingly asserts that the heinous acts of anti-Semitism that have been promulgated by the Church throughout its history have caused Ruether to believe that certain New Testament passages are inherently anti-Semitic, even though significant evidence suggests otherwise. Oesterreicher does not assert that this anger

influenced Ruether's understanding of the components of Christianity that serve as the basis of her argument. He only makes the contention with regards to ancillary components, such as the Parable of the Tenants. Moreover, even if his accusations were to be proven true, they would not summarily invalidate Ruether's argument. As was previously mentioned, no scholars are free of predilections and these influences should not be seen as invalidating an argument. However, notwithstanding these weaknesses, Oesterreicher's argument is compelling. By suggesting that Ruether's understanding of Christianity is tinged by her personal feelings towards the Church, he strikingly highlights the notion that Ruether's understanding of Christianity is not without reproach.

These arguments are likely the most damaging arguments that have been advanced. Yet, even they do not seriously refute Ruether's ultimate argument. If Yerushalmi's assertions are wholly accurate, they would indicate that Ruether has exaggerated the magnitude of Christian anti-Semitism. However, this would not weaken Ruether's fundamental thesis. In fact, Yerushalmi does not question her assertion that traditional Christianity promotes anti-Semitism. Similarly, if Oesterreicher's assertions are wholly accurate, they would indicate that some of the ancillary examples Ruether utilizes to support her argument are invalid and that she is not an objective judge of Christianity. However, even if this is true, it too would not discredit her ultimate thesis. Not one of these contentions suggests that Ruether's argument is fundamentally flawed.

Moreover, it is telling that these arguments, and not arguments actually disputing the notion that anti-Semitism is fundamentally embedded within traditional Christianity, are the more persuasive ones. Contemporary New Testament scholars largely accept Ruether's assertion

that traditional understandings of the New Testament promote anti-Semitism.¹⁹³ Pawlikowski's assertion that Christology is the fundamental root of Christian anti-Semitism is largely representative of the field. Even the scholars who defend traditional understandings of Christianity largely acknowledge that traditional understandings of the New Testament are prejudicial. In fact, these scholars actually provide strong proof that traditional understandings of Christianity are anti-Semitic. They largely contend that traditional Christianity should not be altered because doing so would devastate Christianity. These scholars, therefore, imply that traditional Christianity is so prejudicial that if its anti-Semitic components were removed, the fundamental theological precepts of Christianity would be undermined.

This evidence supporting Ruether's thesis does not, however, indicate that Ruether's assertions about the implications of her conclusion are correct. While there is little debate regarding Ruether's understanding of traditional Christianity, there is an intense argument over the ramifications of her conclusion. The debate regarding whether Christianity needs to be radically rethought lies at the heart of the controversy that *Faith and Fratricide* engendered. Many scholars persuasively argue that Ruether's beliefs about the implications of her conclusion are too extreme. They provide understandings of the New Testament that indicate that it can be read in a manner that is not anti-Semitic without drastically altering the central tenets of Christianity.

An abundance of pro-Jewish interpretations of Christology that maintain the divinity of Jesus have been advanced. Williamson's contention that Jesus should be viewed as the means by

¹⁹³ Some claim that traditional Christianity is not inherently anti-Semitic because the New Testament passages that are supposedly anti-Semitic are only viewed in that light due either to misinterpretations or misunderstandings. This argument, however, does not weaken Ruether's thesis. By definition, the fact that the text has been understood in an anti-Semitic fashion since the beginning of Christianity indicates that this understanding of Christianity is a *traditional* understanding. Therefore, the acknowledgment that traditional understandings of Christianity can be seen as anti-Semitic, actually lends support to Ruether's argument.

which God has enabled non-Jews to enter into His covenant is representative of a convincing reworking of Christology that is significantly less drastic than the one advanced by Ruether. Instead of suggesting that Jesus be viewed as a universal symbol of the hope for salvation as Ruether does, Williamson maintains that the godliness of Jesus should not be removed from Christianity. He persuasively contends that the divinity of Jesus can be interpreted in such a way that it does not lead to anti-Semitism. Similarly, many alternative interpretations of Romans 9-11 that firmly reject the notion that the Jews are damned for not accepting Jesus have also been advanced. Gaston's contention that Romans 9-11 should be understood as suggesting that Judaism is a legitimate expression of religion is representative of alternative readings of the chapters.

It is these types of interpretations that cause me to reject Ruether's assertion that Christianity needs to be drastically altered. They appear to suggest that a significant reworking of Christianity is not necessary to removing anti-Semitism from Christian theology. Additionally, the simple fact that Christian leaders are making sincere and rational attempts to rid Christianity of anti-Semitism is in some ways as important as the soundness of these alternative interpretations. This development strongly indicates that Christianity in its conventional state is not irreversibly anti-Semitic. Discussing Jewish-Christian relations, Robert Goldenberg, a former professor of Jewish history, presciently remarks "troubling texts are only truly troubling if the tradition is not troubled by them."¹⁹⁴ Christianity's concerted effort to improve its relationship with Judaism suggests that it has the ability to recognize and reject its anti-Semitic elements.

¹⁹⁴ Carroll, James. *Toward a New Catholic Church: The Promise of Reform*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. P. 124.

To conclude the evaluation of *Faith and Fratricide*, the evidence indicates that while Ruether's contention that Christianity must be drastically altered is overblown, her ultimate thesis should largely be accepted. Certain ancillary components of her thesis are flawed. However, she convincingly argues that anti-Semitic ideologies and tropes are central to Christian dogma and theology. No plausible arguments have devastated Ruether's assertion that traditional Christianity promotes anti-Semitism.

This conclusion is quite important because of its implications. Christianity and anti-Semitism are two powerful entities that have existed for over two thousand years. Yet, despite the fact that the devastating effects of anti-Semitism have long been recognized, the nefarious aspects of Christianity have not. After the Holocaust, Christianity began to reckon with its relationship to anti-Semitism, with Vatican II serving as an instrumental starting point. However, in large measure it was not until the publication of *Faith and Fratricide* that Christianity began to truly acknowledge its deep-seated connection to anti-Semitism. The soundness of Ruether's argument forced Christianity to engage in deep introspection. It is for this reason that the evaluation of her argument is extremely important. If her argument were to appear faulty, one could suggest that all the criticism of Christianity that the book inspired is unfair and the corresponding development of alternative understandings of traditional Christianity is unnecessary.

Moreover, this conclusion is also important because there is some intriguing evidence suggesting that *Faith and Fratricide* has a broad impact on contemporary understandings of the New Testament, particularly the writings of Paul. Many of the scholars who discuss Christian anti-Semitism do not explicitly acknowledge that they are responding to Ruether's work. However, it appears that *Faith and Fratricide* has an unspoken but direct influence on

scholarship investigating Christianity's connection to anti-Semitism – a subfield of New Testament studies that affects all aspects of New Testament scholarship. Several scholars, who have surveyed the field, emphatically contend that Ruether's work is extremely impactful. Terence Donaldson writes in 2010 that *Faith and Fratricide* continues to serve as the authoritative work on the question of Christian anti-Semitism. He explains that the book serves as the culmination of Jules Isaac's inquiry into Christianity's connection to anti-Semitism.¹⁹⁵ Additionally, almost all books on the subject of Christian anti-Semitism cite Ruether, which further supports the notion that, to at least some extent, Ruether's works shapes the field. It indicates not only that her work continues to be read, but that it is seen as a work that must be acknowledged.

Finally, *Faith and Fratricide* serves as an excellent example of critical introspective analysis. As a committed Christian it must have been difficult and, even painful, for Ruether to investigate and then publicize a thesis so disparaging of Christianity. However, her work is persuasive and eloquent. It stands as a model of introspective analysis for adherents of all religions.

No religion is perfect; all religions have room for refinement and Ruether's example is becoming increasingly valuable as contemporary western society is becoming more aware of some of its prejudices, especially regarding issues of gender. For example, the growing recognition that transgender individuals exist and are deserving of respect and dignity is causing religions to grapple with the manner in which these individuals fit within the confines of their

¹⁹⁵ Donaldson, Terence L. *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations*. London: SPCK, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2010. P. 8.

religion.¹⁹⁶ As was alluded to previously, before the publication of *Faith and Fratricide*, a vast amount of scholarship on both Christianity and anti-Semitism existed. It was, however, the publication of her book that played a critical role in establishing a discussion about the relationship between the two. Her book was instrumental in causing people to become aware of a grave flaw of Christianity and to work to rectify it. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that there were certainly extenuating circumstances that fostered this development, all religions would do well to emulate Ruether's bold and thorough investigation of Christianity.

¹⁹⁶ See Mahan Ellison, Marvin and Plaskow, Judith. *Heterosexism in Contemporary World Religion: Problem and Robert Shore-Goss' Prospect and Queering Christianity: Finding a Place at the Table for LGBTQI Christians*, Cleveland: Pilgrim.

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