

REJECTION THEN HOPE: THE CHURCH'S DOCTRINE OF ISRAEL IN THE PATRISTIC ERA

Michael J. Vlach
Assistant Professor of Theology

The early church's hope for the future of Israel has often been overlooked. In writings of the Patristic Era, the fathers often connected the salvation of Israel with the comings of Antichrist and Elijah and the personal coming of Jesus Christ at some time in the future. To note their emphasis on the future of the nation is not to deny several other emphases of the early writers. Their view of Israel is best defined primarily as punitive supersessionism, because they viewed Israel as being judged by God for their rejection of Christ at His first coming. For them the two destructions of Jerusalem proved this. They felt that the church had replaced Israel as the people of God, at least for the present, and had taken over Israel's Scriptures, Israel's Covenants, and Israel's promises. Yet the message is loud and clear that the ancient church believed in the future salvation of Israel, some voices even predicting that the nation would return and possess the land that God had promised to Abraham. The early church as a whole, then, adhered to a moderate form of supersessionism, meaning that they concurred with the Bible's teaching that Israel had been rejected, but went beyond that to dwell on the great hope lying ahead for that people.

* * * * *

The Christian church of the Patristic Era (A.D. 100–500) is known for wrestling with several important theological issues. It defended the faith from unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. It responded to Marcion's heretical canon. Through the valiant efforts of Athanasius, the church fought off the errors of Arius in regard to the person of Christ. Augustine confronted the heresies of Pelagius on issues of anthropology and soteriology. The early church's doctrine of Israel was not as central or controversial as those other topics, yet at times the church did address the issue of Israel and her relationship to that nation. As a result, enough evidence is available to draw some general conclusions regarding the early church's doctrine of Israel.

Most studies concerning the early church's view of Israel focus on the church's supersessionist approach to Israel, in which the nation Israel was viewed as rejected by God and replaced by the new Israel—the church.¹ Though the early church did view herself as the true Israel, the early church's hope for national Israel has been a neglected subject. Many theologians of the Patristic Era believed in a future salvation for the nation.² That belief was so widespread that theologians such as Augustine and Cassiodorus claimed that such an understanding was the common view of their day.

The expected salvation of Israel was often linked with the comings of Antichrist and Elijah and the personal return of Jesus Christ in the end times. In other words, the early church did not ignore OT prophecy regarding Israel or Paul's words concerning the hope of Israel in Romans 11.³ Early theologians may not have gone far enough in discussing the full implications of what a restoration of Israel in Scripture means,⁴ but they did hold to a future hope for the nation—a hope that at the very least included an *en masse* salvation of the Jewish people. Apparently for some, a restoration of Israel to its land was also the expectation.

This article purposes to offer a balanced view of the early church's doctrine of Israel. When the writings of the church theologians of the Patristic Period are compiled, a consensus on five issues emerges:

1. Because of Israel's disobedience and rejection of Christ, the Jews have been judged by God.
2. Evidence for this judgment is found in the two destructions of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and 135.
3. The church is the new Israel.
4. As the new Israel, the church assumes the Jewish Scriptures and covenant blessings that were given first to the nation Israel.
5. Yet, a future conversion of the Jews in line with OT prophecies and Paul's statements about Israel in Romans 11 will occur.

¹One such example is Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1993). Williamson rightly describes the replacement theology of men like Origen and Augustine, but does not discuss the hope for national Israel that these early fathers espoused.

²This is not to claim that the early fathers agreed on all aspects of Romans 11 or the OT texts that speak of a restoration of Israel. Various disagreements exist on some details of these texts, yet a general belief prevails that a salvation of the Jews would come in the latter days.

³Soulen overstates matters somewhat when he says discussions of Romans 9–11 in the early church were “soon foreclosed” (Richard Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996] ix). As will be shown, many of the theologians of the Patristic Era used Romans 11 as evidence for a future salvation of Israel.

⁴In this writer's view, the early fathers did not adequately address the implications of the restoration texts in regard to Israel such as Matt 19:28, Luke 22:30, and Acts 1:6.

In sum, the position to be argued is that the church of the Patristic Era adopted a moderate supersessionist view on Israel and the church in which (1) the church is the new Israel; but (2) the nation Israel will be converted in line with the predictions of the OT prophets and Paul's words in Romans 11.

Supersessionism Defined

Since this article will note the early church's adoption of a moderate supersessionist approach concerning Israel, a definition of supersessionism is necessary at this point.⁵ Supersessionism is the position that the NT church supersedes, replaces, and/or fulfills Israel's identity and role in the plan of God.⁶ Along with supersessionism is the belief that the church is now the new and/or true Israel that assumes or fulfills the covenant promises given to the nation Israel in the OT.

Supersessionism takes various forms. The first is "punitive" or "retributive" supersessionism which believes Israel to be rejected by God and replaced by the church because of its disobedience and rejection of Christ.⁷ Punitive supersessionism emphasizes Israel's *disobedience* as the primary reason for Israel's rejection by God. A strong form of punitive supersessionism emphasizes the *permanent* rejection of Israel while a milder or moderate form of punitive supersessionism is open in some sense to the idea of a future for national Israel.

Another variation of supersessionism is "economic supersessionism." According to R. Kendall Soulen, economic supersessionism is the view that "carnal Israel's history is providentially ordered from the outset to be taken up into the spiritual church."⁸ With this form of supersessionism, national Israel corresponds to Christ's church in a prefigurative way. Christ, with His advent, "brings about the

⁵The primary purpose of this article is to show what the early church believed about Israel and is not primarily an evaluation of their views. For more information concerning a refutation of the doctrine of supersessionism, see Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* (Rome: Istituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000). See also this author's work, Michael J. Vlach, "The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004).

⁶Often, the title "replacement theology" is used as a synonym for "supersessionism." Some reject the title replacement theology since they view the church more as a *fulfillment* of Israel and not a *replacement* of Israel. The term "supersessionism" is preferable since it is a broader term that can encompass the ideas of replacement and fulfillment.

⁷As Gabriel J. Fackre explains, this form of supersessionism "holds that the rejection of Christ both eliminates Israel from God's covenant love and provokes divine retribution" (Gabriel J. Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993] 148). With punitive supersessionism, according to Soulen, "God abrogates God's covenant with Israel . . . on account of Israel's rejection of Christ and the gospel" (Soulen, *God of Israel and Christian Theology* 30).

⁸Soulen, *God of Israel and Christian Theology* 181 n. 6.

obsolescence of carnal Israel and inaugurates the age of the spiritual church.”⁹ With economic supersessionism, Israel is not replaced primarily because of its disobedience but because its role in the history of redemption expired with the coming of Jesus. It is now superseded by the arrival of a new spiritual Israel—the Christian church. Thus, with economic supersessionism, the church *fulfills* Israel more than *replacing* Israel.

Which form of supersessionism did the early church affirm? As will be shown, primarily the early church affirmed punitive supersessionism—Israel was viewed as rejected by God and replaced by the church because of the nation’s rejection of Christ. Yet this punitive supersessionism is modified in that many believed that the nation Israel would experience salvation in the latter days.

Israel’s Rejection

One theme espoused by the early church was that Israel was rejected by God because of her disobedience and rejection of Christ. For instance, Irenaeus (130-200) wrote, “For inasmuch as the former [the Jews] have rejected the Son of God, and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him, God has justly rejected them, and given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation.”¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria (c. 195) claimed that Israel “denied the Lord” and thus “forfeited the place of the true Israel.”¹¹ Tertullian (c. 155-230) declared, “Israel has been divorced.”¹² For Origen (185-254), the people of Israel were “abandoned because of their sins.”¹³ He also said, “And we say with confidence that they [Jews] will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Saviour of the human race in that city where they offered up to God a worship containing the symbols of mighty mysteries.”¹⁴ According to Origen, “The Jews were altogether abandoned, and possess now none of what were considered their ancient glories, so that there is no indication of any Divinity abiding amongst them.”¹⁵ Cyprian (d. 258) too promoted a supersessionist approach when he wrote,

⁹Ibid., 29.

¹⁰Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 36.2, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter *ANF*), eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 1:515. Though Irenaeus made a strong statement of punitive supersessionism here, Soulen asserts that Irenaeus also held to a form of economic supersessionism: “In sum, Irenaeus sees God’s history with Israel as an episode within the larger story whereby God prepares a fallen humanity for the incarnation” (Soulen, *God of Israel and Christian Theology* 46).

¹¹Clement, *The Instructor* 2.8, *ANF* 2:256.

¹²Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews* 1, *ANF* 3:152.

¹³Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.22, *ANF* 4:506.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., *ANF* 4:433.

I have endeavoured to show that the Jews, according to what had before been foretold, had departed from God, and had lost God's favour, which had been given them in past time, and had been promised them for the future; while the Christians had succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world.¹⁶

The belief concerning Israel's rejection sometimes drifted toward anti-Semitism as some began to stereotype the Jews as Christ-killers. Melito of Sardis (c. A.D. 150) stated, "The King of Israel slain with Israel's right hand! Alas for the new wickedness of the new murder."¹⁷ Ignatius (c. 36-108) wrote that Jesus Christ suffered, "at the hands of the Christ-killing Jews."¹⁸ As these quotations show, some Christian fathers blamed the crucifixion of Christ on the Jews as a people. Stephen Wylen summarizes this trend:

As Christians abandoned the mission to their fellow Jews and proselytized among the Gentiles they shifted blame for the crucifixion of Jesus from the Romans to the Jews—not just some Jews, but the Jewish people as a whole. The Jews were branded as deicides—killers of God. This accusation became a deep source of hatred against the Jews.¹⁹

The Two Destructions of Jerusalem

According to the early church, the primary evidence that Israel had been rejected by God was the two destructions of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70²⁰ and 135.²¹ The fathers took the destructions as tangible evidence that God had punished the Jews as a people.

Justin Martyr, for example, in his *Dialogue With Trypho*, argued that the destructions of Jerusalem were God's judgment on Christ-rejecting Jews. He stated that the Jews "justly suffer," and that the Jewish cities were rightly "burned with fire."²² He also described the Jews as "desolate" and forbidden to go to Jerusalem.²³

¹⁶Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, ANF 5:507.

¹⁷Melito, "On Faith," ANF 8:757. Melito also stated, "God has suffered from the right hand of Israel" (ibid., 8:760).

¹⁸Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians* 11, ANF 1:64.

¹⁹Stephen M. Wylen, *The Jews in the Time of Jesus* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996) 191.

²⁰In 63 B.C., Pompey conquered Jerusalem and brought the city under Roman control. In A.D. 66, Jewish Zealots, who chafed under the authority of Rome, took military action to remove the yoke of Rome from Israel. In A.D. 70, however, the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple.

²¹This second uprising against Rome was led by Bar-Kokhba, whom many Jews believed to be the Messiah. Under his leadership, hundreds of Jewish villages fought for freedom from the Romans. The revolt, however, was a disaster as more than half a million Jews died.

²²Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho* 16, ANF 1:202.

²³Ibid.

In speaking to the Jews about the destructions of Jerusalem, he said, "Accordingly, these things have happened to you in fairness and justice, for you have slain the Just One . . . and now you reject those who hope in Him."²⁴

The belief that the two failed Jewish revolts were evidence of God's rejection of Israel is evident also in the writings of Origen:

For what nation is an exile from their own metropolis, and from the place sacred to the worship of their fathers, save the Jews alone? And these calamities they have suffered, because they were a most wicked nation, which, although guilty of many other sins, yet has been punished so severely for none, as for those that were committed against our Jesus.²⁵

For Origen, the destruction of Jerusalem functioned as a divorce decree from God to Israel: "And a sign that she [Israel] has received the bill of divorce is this, that Jerusalem was destroyed along with what they called the sanctuary of the things in it which were believed to be holy."²⁶

As Philip S. Alexander has pointed out, the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem handed Christians "a propaganda coup" in that it gave them the opportunity to argue that the catastrophe was "a divine judgment on Israel for the rejection of Jesus."²⁷ The same was also true concerning the failed second Jewish revolt in A.D. 135. Marcel Simon observes that the destruction of Jerusalem in 135 "appeared to Christians as the confirmation of the divine verdict on Israel."²⁸ Richardson states, "The war of A.D. 132-5 did what the Synagogue Ban did not: to all intents and purposes it severed the two groups, freeing later Christians from the need to assert close contact with Judaism and providing for them evidence of the full 'judgment' of God upon Israel."²⁹

The two destructions, especially the one in A.D. 135, caused many in the church to believe that God had permanently rejected Israel and that the church was the new Israel. In elaborating on this view, Lee Martin McDonald notes, "The church fathers concluded from God's evident rejection of the Jews, demonstrated by the destruction of their Temple, and their displacement from Jerusalem, that the

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.8, ANF 4:433.

²⁶Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 19, ANF 10:507.

²⁷Philip S. Alexander, "'The Parting of the Ways,'" in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 20.

²⁸Marcel Simon, *Versus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135-425)*, trans. H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University, 1986) 65.

²⁹Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969) 203.

Christians themselves constituted the ‘new Israel.’”³⁰ That led to an observation regarding the identity of Israel.

The Church as the New Israel

As the second century developed, the church of the Patristic Era did what the apostles of the first-century church did not do—namely view itself as the new or true Israel that assumed the title of Israel for itself.³¹ As Alister McGrath has observed, a “wide consensus” was formed that “the church is a spiritual society which replaces Israel as the people of God in the world.”³²

Justin Martyr is significant in this regard. Around A.D. 150, he became the first Christian writer to explicitly identify the church as “Israel.”³³ He declared, “For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham . . . are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ.”³⁴ He also said, “Since then God blesses this people [i.e., Christians], and calls them Israel, and declares them to be His inheritance, how is it that you [Jews] repent not of the deception you practise on yourselves, as if you alone were the Israel?”³⁵ Justin also announced, “We, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelite

³⁰Lee Martin McDonald, “Anti-Judaism in the Early Church Fathers,” in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 230.

³¹Galatians 6:16 and Rom 9:6 are sometimes used as evidence that the church was called Israel. The contexts of these two passages, however, makes it unlikely that this is the case. In Gal 6:16 Paul offered a blistering critique of the Jewish Judaizers who were trying to add circumcision to faith in regard to salvation. His reference to the “Israel of God” in Gal 6:16 was Paul’s way of acknowledging the Jewish Christians who had not followed the dangerous errors of the Judaizers. According to Hans Dieter Betz, the Israel of God refers “to those Jewish-Christians who approve of his *κανών* (‘rule’) in v 15” (Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 323). In Rom 9:6 the spiritual Israel Paul refers to involves believing Jews, not Gentiles. See William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1923) 240. See also Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 574.

³²Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998) 461-62. See also E. Glenn Hinson, *Understanding the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 6; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 447; Richard B. Hays and Joel B. Green, “The Use of the Old Testament by New Testament Writers,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 222.

³³Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 11, *ANF* 1:200. See also *ibid.*, 1:261, 267. Peter Richardson has observed that the first explicit identification of the church as “Israel” was made by Justin Martyr in A.D. 160. See Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* 1.

³⁴*Ibid.*, *ANF* 1:200.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 123, *ANF* 1:261. He also says, “Those who were selected out of every nation have obeyed His will through Christ . . . must be Jacob and Israel.” (1:265).

race.”³⁶

Origen also taught that the church was the new Israel. In his debate with Celsus, for example, Origen stated, “Our Lord, seeing the conduct of the Jews not to be at all in keeping with the teaching of the prophets, inculcated by a parable that the kingdom of God would be taken from them, and given to the converts from heathenism.”³⁷ N. R. M. De Lange summarizes Origen’s supersessionist perspective: “Crucial to the whole argument [of Origen] is the paradox that Jews and Gentiles suffer a reversal of roles. The historical Israelites cease to be Israelites, while the believers from the Gentiles become the New Israel. This involves a redefinition of Israel.”³⁸

Origen also saw a distinction between *carnal* Israel and *spiritual* Israel. Physical Israel functioned as a type for the spiritual Israel—the church, in whom the promises would find their complete fulfillment.³⁹

As the Patristic Era’s most influential theologian, Augustine (354-430) contributed to the view that the church was now Israel. As James Carroll points out, Augustine’s attitude toward the Jews was rooted in “assumptions of supersessionism.”⁴⁰ According to Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Augustine introduced a “negative element into judgment on the Jews.”⁴¹ He did so by advancing the “‘theory of substitution’ whereby the New Israel of the church became a substitute of ancient Israel.”⁴²

In line with supersessionist theology, Augustine explicitly stated that the title “Israel” belonged to the Christian church: “For if we hold with a firm heart the grace of God which hath been given us, we are Israel, the seed of Abraham. . . . Let therefore no Christian consider himself alien to the name of Israel.”⁴³ He also said, “The Christian people then is rather Israel.”⁴⁴ He impacted later Christian theology heavily in taking this position. According to Augustine, when Gentiles believe and

³⁶Ibid., 135, ANF 1:267.

³⁷Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.5, ANF 4:431.

³⁸N. R. M. De Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976) 80.

³⁹Origen said “corporeal Israelites” [Jews] were “the type” for “spiritual Israelites” [the church]. *On First Principles* 4.21, ANF 4:370; See also Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* 89.

⁴⁰James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001) 219.

⁴¹Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, “Christianity and Judaism, a Historical and Theological Overview,” in *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 20.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Augustine, *On the Psalms* 114.3, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter *NPNF*), Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 8:550.

⁴⁴Ibid.

become part of the new covenant, their hearts are circumcised and they become part of Israel:

Now what the apostle attributed to Gentiles of this character, how that “they have the work of the law written in their hearts;” must be some such thing as what he says to the Corinthians: “Not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.” For thus do they become of the house of Israel, when their uncircumcision is accounted circumcision. . . . And therefore in the house of the true Israel, in which is no guile, they are partakers of the new testament.⁴⁵

Concerning Israel’s role in the plan of God, Augustine argued that *national* Israel prefigured *spiritual* Israel—the Christian people:

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob three fathers, and one people. The fathers three, as it were in the beginning of the people; three fathers in whom the people was figured: and the former people itself the present people. For in the Jewish people was figured the Christian people. There a figure, here the truth; there a shadow, here the body: as the apostle says, “Now these things happened to them in a figure.”⁴⁶

Augustine’s supessionist views were largely consistent with the Patristic tradition that preceded him. But one original contribution appears in his reasons for Israel’s continued existence. During Augustine’s time, the existence of the Jews and Judaism posed an apologetic problem for the church. If the church was the new Israel, for what purpose did the nation Israel exist?

Augustine offered an answer for this perceived dilemma. For him, the Jews functioned primarily as witnesses. They were witnesses to the faith preached by the prophets, witnesses of divine judgment, and witnesses of the validity of Christianity. He wrote, “But the Jews who slew Him . . . are thus by their own Scriptures a testimony to us that we have not forged the prophecies about Christ.”⁴⁷ The Jews, according to Augustine, shielded Christians from accusations that Christians invented OT prophecies that pointed to Jesus. Thus, the existence of non-Christian Jews was not a problem but an essential testimony to the truth of Christianity.

Hood views Augustine’s contribution as “ingenious” because it “provided a foundation for tolerating Jews within a Christian society.”⁴⁸ Augustine’s contention

⁴⁵Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 46, *NPNF'* 5:102-3.

⁴⁶Augustine, *On the Gospel of St. John* 11.8, *NPNF'* 7:77. Augustine also stated, “In that people [the Jews], plainly, the future Church was much more evidently prefigured” (Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed* 19.33, *NPNF'* 3:304). Augustine expressed a supessionist perspective when he wrote, “But when they [the Jews] killed Him, then though they knew it not, they prepared a Supper for us” (Augustine, *Sermons on New Testament Lessons*, Sermon on 62, *NPNF'* 6:447).

⁴⁷Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 18.46, *NPNF'* 2:389.

⁴⁸John Y. B. Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995) 12. Carroll states, “It is not too much to say that, at this juncture, Christianity ‘permitted’ Judaism to endure because of Augustine” (Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword*, 218). See also Jeremy Cohen, “Introduction,” in

that the Jews were witnesses to Christianity became especially important when the crusades began and the church began to persecute heretics. Augustine's views "shielded the Jews of western Europe from the full force of Christendom's coercive powers."⁴⁹

The Takeover of Jewish Blessings

Israel's Scriptures

As a result of viewing herself as the new Israel, the church believed that it had become the primary owners of Israel's blessings. In regard to the Scriptures, House declares, "The church not only appropriated the special status of the Jewish people, it took over their Bible, the Septuagint (LXX)."⁵⁰ For example, in addressing Trypho about truths concerning Jesus, Justin declared, "Are you acquainted with them, Trypho? They are contained in your Scriptures, or rather not yours, but ours."⁵¹

Israel's Covenants

The church also believed she had inherited the covenants of Israel. This was the view of the *Epistle of Barnabas*: "I further beg of you . . . take heed now to yourselves, and not to be like some, adding largely to your sins, and saying, 'The covenant is both theirs [Jews] and ours [Christians].'⁷ But they finally lost it."⁵² The *Epistle of Barnabas* also stated the new covenant was never intended for Israel. Instead, it was intended for the church, the true inheritor of the promise through Christ: "But He [Jesus] was manifested, in order that they [Israelites] might be perfected in their iniquities, and that we, being the constituted heirs through Him, might receive the testament of the Lord Jesus."⁵³ Summarizing the supersessionist approach of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Ronald E. Diprose writes, "The writing, as a whole, manifests the latent presupposition that the Church, the true heir of the

Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University, 1991) 13-14.

⁴⁹Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews* 13.

⁵⁰H. Wayne House, "The Church's Appropriation of Israel's Blessings," in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 97. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, vol. 1, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971) 19; Simon, *Versus Israel* 69.

⁵¹Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho* 29, ANF 1:209.

⁵²*The Epistle of Barnabas* 4, ANF 1:138.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 14, ANF 1:146. Horbury argues that the anti-Judaistic tone and supersessionist approach to Israel's covenants in this work can be linked to the author's fear of Christian assimilation to the Jews during this time. See William Horbury, "Jewish-Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 323-27.

promises, occupies the place that Israel had always been unworthy of occupying.”⁵⁴

Israel’s Promises

Some also viewed the church as assuming Israel’s promises. Justin Martyr reapplied OT promises so that the church, not Israel, was viewed as the beneficiary of its promised blessings. Justin declared to Trypho:

And along with Abraham we [Christians] shall inherit the holy land, when we shall receive the inheritance for an endless eternity, being children of Abraham through the like faith. . . . Accordingly, He promises to him a nation of similar faith, God fearing, righteous . . . but it is not you, “in whom is no faith.”⁵⁵

As Siker points out, “According to Justin, the patriarchal promises do not apply to the Jews; rather, God has transferred these promises to the Christians and . . . to Gentile Christians in particular.”⁵⁶

The Salvation of Israel

The early church went beyond the biblical witness and viewed itself as the true Israel that inherited national Israel’s blessings. Yet, on the other hand, also a consensus existed among the theologians of the Patristic Era that a future salvation of the Jews would come in accord with OT prophecies and Paul’s words regarding Israel in Romans 11.⁵⁷

Denis Fahey, in reference to a list from Father Augustine Lemamn, gives the names of theologians through the twelfth century who believed “that the Jews will be converted.” The list includes Tertullian, Origen, St. Hillary, St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Prosper of Aquitaine, Cassiodorus, Prentissius, St. Gregory the Great, St. Isidore, Venerable Bede, St. Anselm, St. Peter Damian, and St. Bernard.⁵⁸ In fact, Fahey points out that the view that “the Jews

⁵⁴Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* 78.

⁵⁵Justin, *Dialogue With Trypho* 119, ANF 1:259.

⁵⁶Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting The Jews: Abraham In Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1991) 14. Diprose asserts that Justin “adopts a typically Greek attitude” toward the characters in the OT, referring to Abraham, Elijah, and Daniel’s three friends as “barbarians” (*Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* 79).

⁵⁷In response to the debate going on among some Roman Catholics regarding the future salvation of Israel, Mark Cameron researched the issue of the future of Israel in church history. He states, “I come away more persuaded than ever that there was a broad Patristic, Medieval, and Counter-Reformation consensus about a final conversion of the Jews.” He also writes, “The more I search the Fathers, the broader the consensus seems to be” (online at www.catholic-legate.com/dialogues/jewsreturn2.html, accessed 6/21/07).

⁵⁸Dennis Fahey, *The Kingship of Christ and the Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (Kimmage, Dublin: Holy Ghost Missionary College, 1953) 107.

will be converted . . . towards the end of the world can be proved from the texts of the Fathers, century by century.”⁵⁹

Salvation of the Jews, as expected by the early church theologians, was not merely a trickle of believing Jews throughout history but an eschatological *event* that took place with the prophesied comings of Elijah, Antichrist, and Jesus. For early theologians, the salvation of Israel would be a spectacular “last days” occurrence.

For example, Justin Martyr held that the tribes of Israel would be gathered and restored in accord with what the prophet Zechariah predicted:

And what the people of the Jews shall say and do, when they see Him coming in glory, has been thus predicted by Zechariah the prophet: “I will command the four winds to gather the scattered children; I will command the north wind to bring them, and the south wind, that it keep not back. And then in Jerusalem there shall be great lamentation, not the lamentation of mouths or of lips, but the lamentation of the heart; and they shall rend not their garments, but their hearts. Tribe by tribe they shall mourn, and then they shall look on Him whom they have pierced; and they shall say, Why, O Lord, hast Thou made us to err from Thy way? The glory which our fathers blessed, has for us been turned into shame.”⁶⁰

In regard to this comment by Justin, Charles Hauser states, “Justin also links the Jews with the second advent of Christ. It will be at this time that Christ will gather the nation Israel and the Jews shall look on him and repent tribe by tribe.”⁶¹ Significantly, Justin not only held to a future hope for the literal tribes of Israel, he did so on the basis of OT promises to the nation—in this case Zechariah. For Justin, the hope for Israel presented in the OT was alive.

Tertullian discussed the future blessings and salvation of Israel when he said, “He [God] will favour with His acceptance and blessing the circumcision also, even the race of Abraham, which by and by is to acknowledge Him.”⁶² He also urged Christians to anticipate eagerly and rejoice over the coming restoration of Israel: “[F]or it will be fitting for the Christian to rejoice, and not to grieve, at the restoration of Israel, if it be true, (as it is), that the whole of our hope is intimately united with the remaining expectation of Israel.”⁶³

Origen too affirmed a future salvation of the nation Israel. As Jeremy Cohen has observed, “He [Origen] affirms Paul’s commitment to—and confidence in—the ultimate salvation of the Jews.”⁶⁴ This belief was linked to “the glorious forecast of

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Justin, *First Apology* 52, ANF 1:180.

⁶¹Charles August Hauser, Jr., “The Eschatology of the Church Fathers” (Ph.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1961) 112.

⁶²Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 5.9, ANF 3:448.

⁶³Tertullian, *On Modesty* 8, ANF 4:82.

⁶⁴Jeremy Cohen, “The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation: Romans 11:25-26 in Patristic and Medieval Exegesis,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98/3 (2005):256.

[Romans] 11:25-26.”⁶⁵ For example, in his comments on the *Song of Songs*, Origen mentions “two callings of Israel.” In between these two callings is God’s call of the church. But after the call of the church Israel will experience salvation:

For the Church was called between the two callings of Israel; that is to say, first Israel was called, and afterwards when Israel had stumbled and fallen, the Church of the Gentiles was called. “But when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then will all Israel, having been called again, be saved.”⁶⁶

According to Cohen, “Origen does appear to assume that the Jewish people as a whole will regain their status as a community of God’s faithful, that all Jews will ultimately be saved.”⁶⁷ This is true even though Israel, for a time, has rejected Christ. As Cohen points out, “Despite the Jews’ rejection of Jesus and his apostles, the potential for restoration and renewal remains inherent within them.”⁶⁸

Origen’s belief in a salvation of Israel can also be seen in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*:

Now indeed, until all the Gentiles come to salvation the riches of God are concentrated in the multitude of believers, but as long as Israel remains in its unbelief it will not be possible to say that the fullness of the Lord’s portion has been attained. The people of Israel are still missing from the complete picture. But when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and Israel comes to salvation at the end of time, then it will be the people which, although it existed long ago, will come at the last and complete the fullness of the Lord’s portion and inheritance.⁶⁹

Belief in a future salvation of the Jews was also held by several others. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386), when discussing events regarding “the end of the world drawing near,” discussed the coming of the Antichrist and his *temporary* deception of the Jews. For him, the Antichrist will deceive “the Jews by the lying signs and wonders of his magical deceit, until they believe he is the expected Christ. . . .”⁷⁰ Thus, for Cyril, the coming Antichrist would deceive the Jews for a time until they believed in Jesus.

John Chrysostom (349-407), who often made harsh statements against the Jews, still believed in a future salvation of the Jews. He linked the coming salvation

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Origen, *The Song of Songs*, in *Ancient Christian Writers* (hereafter *ACW*), eds. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1957) 26:252.

⁶⁷Cohen, “Mystery of Israel’s Salvation” 263.

⁶⁸Ibid., 260.

⁶⁹Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* [hereafter *ACC*]: *New Testament*, ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998) 6:291.

⁷⁰Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures*, in William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 3 vols. (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press) 1:356-57.

of the Jews with the coming of Elijah:

To show therefore that [Elijah] the Tishbite comes before that other [second] advent . . . He said this. . . . And what is this reason? That when He is come, He may persuade the Jews to believe in Christ, and that they may not all utterly perish at His coming. Wherefore He too, guiding them on to that remembrance, saith, "And he shall restore all things;" that is, shall correct the unbelief of the Jews that are then in being.⁷¹

According to Chrysostom, the coming of Elijah means "the conversion of the Jews."⁷²

Chrysostom also taught that Romans 11 holds future significance for the nation Israel. In reference to Rom 11:27 and the statement, "For this is my covenant with them, when I will take away their sins," Chrysostom declared, "If then this hath been promised, but has never yet happened in their case, nor have they ever enjoyed the remission of sins by baptism, certainly it will come to pass."⁷³

Some of the strongest statements affirming the salvation of Israel come from Augustine. As Cohen points out, "Augustine speaks of the ultimate salvation of the Jewish people, ostensibly as a whole."⁷⁴ Like Chrysostom, Augustine, in his *City of God*, linked the salvation of the Jews with the coming of Elijah:

It is a familiar theme in the conversation and heart of the faithful, that in the last days before the judgment the Jews shall believe in the true Christ, that is, our Christ, by means of this great and admirable prophet Elias who shall expound the law to them. . . . When, therefore, he is come, he shall give a spiritual explanation of the law which the Jews at present understand carnally, and shall thus "turn the heart of the father to the son," that is, the heart of the fathers to the children.⁷⁵

Significantly, Augustine mentions that his view concerning the salvation of the Jews was "familiar" to believers of his day. In other words, his belief in the salvation of the Jews went beyond just his own personal view. This perspective was common for those of his generation.

Augustine also adopted a literal approach to Zech 12:10 in regard to the salvation of Israel. In doing so, he shows that at least some OT prophecies still had continuing relevance for the salvation of Israel:

"And they shall look upon me because they have insulted me, and they shall mourn for Him as if for one very dear (or beloved)", and shall be in bitterness for Him as for an only-begotten." For in that day the Jews—those of them, at least, who shall receive the spirit of grace and mercy—when they see Him coming in His majesty, and recognize that it is

⁷¹St. John Chrysostom, *The Gospel of Matthew* 57, *NPNF*¹ 10:352.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 353.

⁷³St. John Chrysostom, *The Epistle to the Romans* 19, *NPNF*¹, 11:493.

⁷⁴Cohen, "The Mystery of Israel's Salvation" 275.

⁷⁵Augustine, *City of God* 29, *NPNF*¹ 2:448.

He whom they, in the person of their parents, insulted when He came before in His humiliation, shall repent of insulting Him in His passion.⁷⁶

Augustine also offered a chronology of end-times events. In connection with the coming of Elijah and other events, the nation of the Jews will be saved:

And at or in connection with that judgment the following events shall come to pass, as we have learned: Elias the Tishbite shall come; the Jews shall believe; Antichrist shall persecute; Christ shall judge; the dead shall rise; the good and the wicked shall be separated; the world shall be burned and renewed.⁷⁷

Augustine also took a literal view of the prophecy of Hos 3:5: “But let us hear what he adds: ‘And afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall be amazed at the Lord and at His goodness in the latter days.’ Nothing is clearer than this prophecy. . . .”⁷⁸

Augustine also believed that the people of Israel would be saved in accord with what Paul taught in Romans 11: “That, forasmuch as in that humble coming [first advent] ‘blindness hath happened in part unto Israel, that the fullness of the Gentiles might enter in’ [Rom. 11:25], in that other should happen what follows, ‘and so all Israel should be saved’ [Rom. 11:26].”⁷⁹

This salvation of Israel is linked with the removal of Israel’s captivity: “[F]or the Jews, as it is here, ‘Who shall give salvation to Israel out of Sion?’ ‘When the Lord shall turn away the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.’”⁸⁰

Augustine also argued that the church had not permanently supplanted the Jews:

What! have we supplanted the Jews? No, but we are said to be their supplanters, for that for our sakes they were supplanted. If they had not been blinded, Christ would not have been crucified; His precious Blood would not be shed; if that Blood had not been shed, the world would not have been redeemed. Because then their blindness hath profited us, therefore hath the elder brother been supplanted by the younger, and the younger is called the Supplanter. But how long shall this be?⁸¹

Augustine then answers this question of “But how long shall this be?” Israel has been

⁷⁶Ibid., *NPNF* 2:450.

⁷⁷Augustine, *The City of God* 20.30, *NPNF* 2:451. Augustine states that we cannot know with certainty the exact order of the events although “My opinion, however, is, that they will happen in the order in which I have related them.”

⁷⁸Ibid., 18.28, *NPNF* 2:375-76.

⁷⁹Augustine, *On the Psalms*, Psalm 15, *NPNF* 8:47.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Augustine, *Sermons on New-Testament Lessons*, Sermon 72, *NPNF* 6:472.

supplanted to bring blessings to the church, but this time of being supplanted will come to an end: "The time will come, the end of the world will come, and all Israel shall believe; not they who now are, but their children who shall then be."⁸²

Like Augustine, Jerome (347-420) believed in a future salvation of the Jews. He said, "[W]hen the Jews receive the faith at the end of the world, they will find themselves in dazzling light, as if our Lord were returning to them from Egypt."⁸³

St. Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390-455) argued that Israel's current state of blindness is being used by God for the salvation of the Gentiles. But after this Israel will be saved:

As we have already said above, it is not given to any human study or genius to explore the decree and design according to which God . . . *hath concluded all in unbelief, that He may have mercy on all*. . . . He delayed for centuries, while He was educating Israel, to enlighten the countless peoples of infidels; and now He allows that same Israel to go blind till the universality of the Gentiles enter the fold. He allows so many thousands of this people to be born and die to be lost, when only those whom the end of the world will find alive will attain salvation.⁸⁴

The idea of Israel's salvation after the time of Gentile blessing is also found in the following statement of St. Prosper of Aquitaine:

But He has shown His mercy for all men in a far more extraordinary manner when the Son of God became the Son of man. . . . Since then the glory of the race of Israel shines not in one people only. . . . The promised heritage falls no longer to the sons of the flesh, but to the sons of the promise. The great parsimony in bestowing grace which in the past ages befell all other nations, is now the lot of the Jewish people. Yet, when the fulness of the Gentiles will have come in, then a flood of the same waters of grace is promised for their dry hearts. . . . When the Apostle Paul stopped in his knowledge and discussion of this problem and gave way to utter astonishment, who would be so presumptuous as to believe that he could try and explain it rather than admire it in silence?⁸⁵

Ambrose (c. 340-397) connects Miriam's conflict with Moses and Paul's declaration in Romans 11 that Israel would be saved:

[T]his murmuring refers to the type of the Synagogue, which is ignorant of the mystery of . . . the Church gathered out of the nations, and murmurs with daily reproaches, and envies that people through whose faith itself also shall be delivered from the leprosy of its unbelief, according to what we read that: "blindness in part has happened unto Israel,

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³St. Jerome, *Commentary on St. Matthew*, 2, cited in Fahey, *The Kingship of Christ and the Conversion of the Jewish Nation* 108.

⁸⁴St. Prosper of Aquitaine, *The Call of All Nations*, 1.21, *ACW* 14.69 (emphasis in the original).

⁸⁵Ibid., *ACW* 14.103.

until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved.”⁸⁶

In his commentary on Rom 11:26, Theodoret of Cyrus (393-457), like Augustine, stated that the Jews would believe in connection with the coming of Elijah in the end times:

And he [Paul] urges them not to despair of the salvation of the other Jews; for when the Gentiles have received the message, even they, the Jews, will believe, when the excellent Elijah comes, bringing to them the doctrine of faith. For even the Lord said this in the sacred gospels: ‘Elijah is coming, and he will restore all things.’⁸⁷

According to Joel A. Weaver, hope for a salvation of Israel in relation to the coming of Elijah “is not an isolated reading but rather part of a larger, widespread . . . expectation in Christianity.”⁸⁸

Others affirmed a future for Israel. In regard to Rom 11:26, St. Cyril of Alexandria (378-444) stated with confidence that Israel would be saved after the calling of the Gentiles: “Although it was rejected, Israel will also be saved eventually, a hope which Paul confirms. . . . For indeed, Israel will be saved in its own time and will be called at the end, after the calling of the Gentiles.”⁸⁹

Cyril offers one of the more extended discussions on the future salvation of Israel in his *Commentary on Genesis*. For him, the salvation of Israel is something that cannot be doubted by the readers of Scripture:

At the end of time our Lord Jesus Christ will be reconciled with Israel, his ancient persecutor, just as Jacob kissed Esau after his return from Haran. No one who listens to the words of holy Scripture can actually doubt that with the passing of time Israel also will have to be received again into the love of Christ through faith.⁹⁰

Cyril then quotes Hos 3:4-5 for proof of this belief and then says,

While Christ, the Savior of us all, gathers believers from the nations, Israel is deserted, since it has no law to elect its leaders, and it cannot offer to the divine altar the sacrifices prescribed by the laws. It therefore awaits Christ’s return from his action of converting the nations, so that he may receive it as well and unite it with the law of his love to the

⁸⁶St. Ambrose, *Letters*, Letter 63, 57; in *NPNF*,. Series 2, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 10:464-65.

⁸⁷Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Saint Paul, Patrologia Graeca* (hereafter *PG*), ed. J. P. Mince, trans. Joel A. Weaver, 82:180, *Theodoret of Cyrus on Romans 11:26: Recovering an Early Christian Redivivus Tradition* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 15.

⁸⁸Weaver, *Theodoret of Cyrus on Romans 11:26* 150.

⁸⁹St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanation of the Letter to the Romans*, PG 74:849. See *ACCS:NT* 6.298-99.

⁹⁰Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Genesis*, PG 69:261, translation from *ACCS:OT* 1.225.

others. See how Jacob, who rejoiced in the generation of his children and in his numerous herds of sheep, came back from Haran and received again Esau into his friendship. In time Israel itself will be converted after the calling of the nations and will admire these riches in Christ.⁹¹

Cyril also held that Matt 23:38-39 had relevance to the coming salvation of Israel. In reference to Jesus' statement to unbelieving Israel that "You shall not see Me until you say 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,'" Cyril said, "That which has been spoken possesses an interpretation that comes through the vision of faith. For when 'the fullness of the nations comes in' and they believe in Christ, then the Jews who believe after these things see the beauty of the divine nature of Christ."⁹²

Writing in the last third of the fourth century, Ambrosiaster stated, "However seriously the Jews may have sinned by rejecting the gift of God . . . nevertheless, because they are the children of good people, whose privileges and many benefits from God they have received, they will be received with joy when they return to the faith, because God's love for them is stirred up by the memory of their ancestors."⁹³

Slightly outside the Patristic Era, Cassiodorus (c. 485-585) linked the salvation of Israel with Psalm 102. Commenting on verse 9—"He will not always be angry, nor will he be wroth for ever"—he declared, "This verse can be applied also to the Jewish people, who we know are to be converted at the world's end. On this Paul says: *Blindness in part has happened in Israel, that the fullness of the Gentiles should come in, and so all Israel should be saved.*"⁹⁴ When Cassiodorus states "we know" it appears that this belief in a future salvation of Israel was quite common in his day. He does not appear to be presenting a novel idea.

In sum, the testimony of the theologians of the Patristic Era is that the nation of Israel will be saved in accord with OT prophecies and the teachings of Paul in Romans 11. This future event will take place in conjunction with other last days events such as the comings of Elijah, Antichrist, and Jesus Christ.

That most of the early theologians believed in a future salvation of Israel is beyond doubt. But did the Patristic theologians go beyond the idea of a salvation of Israel to a *restoration* of Israel? Though the heavy emphasis is on the salvation of Israel, it does appear that some did expect a restoration of Israel to its land. For example, in reference to Joel 3:1-2 Jerome said, "For those who believe, salvation is in Mount Zion and Jerusalem. In the latter days, the Lord will gather the called remnant from the people of Judah, who with the apostles and through the apostles

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Cyril of Alexandria, *Fragment 264*, *ACCS:NT* 1b.185.

⁹³Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*, *ACCS:NT* 6.299.

⁹⁴Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms*, *Ancient Christian Writers*, eds. Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawler (New York: Paulist, 1991) 53.22-23.

believed. He will return the captives of Judah to Jerusalem.”⁹⁵

Cyril of Alexandria gives a spiritual interpretation of Mount Zion as the church in Obadiah 16,⁹⁶ but he may indicate that the Jews will possess their land according to Obadiah 19:

“Those in the south” signifies the area where the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem led by Nebuchadnezzar. The entire province of Judea was laid waste, sinking back into misery so that it was reduced to absolute silence and appeared entirely deserted. However, when God will enter into the misery of the captives, he will return them to the land of their ancestors after his wrath has subsided. In their return from Babylon the entire multitude of Israel will possess the region of the nations that is equal to Edom. This is a sign of blessing from God.⁹⁷

Cyril also said,

At this place in the text, the migration of Israel back to the land is mentioned, more specifically from those Jews taken away into Babylon. . . . Perhaps here he is saying that everything that is to the south and to the north and to the east and to the west will be fully occupied by Israel as they will easily possess the whole region around them. And people will ascend, gathered on top of Zion, which sums up the goal of the prophecy. For the inhabitants of Zion, he says, are saved by God, who will burst through their chains of servitude.⁹⁸

The main emphasis of the early theologians was on the salvation of Israel, but some appear to have affirmed a restoration of Israel to its land as well.

Conclusion

The early church adopted a moderate form of supersessionism in regard to Israel and the church. The church believed that the nation Israel had been rejected by God because of its disobedience and rejection of Christ. This rejection appeared to be confirmed by the destructions of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and 135. Going beyond the biblical witness, the early church held that the church was now the new Israel and that the scriptures, covenants, and promises given to Israel were now primarily the possession of the Christian church.

Yet a consensus among the theologians of this era held that the nation Israel would be converted in the last days in connection with the promises of the OT

⁹⁵“*Saluatis credentibus in monte Sion, et Hierusalem, et uocatis residuis de populo Iudaeorum, qui cum apostolis et per apostolos crediderunt, in tempore illo postquam conuerterit Dominus captiuitatem Iuda et Hierusalem*” (Jerome, *The Prophet Joel*, in *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina* [Turnhout, 1953-] 76, 198).

⁹⁶Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Obadiah*, PG 71:591.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, PG 71:593. See *ACCS:OT* 14.125.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, PG 71:595-96. See *ACCS:OT* 14.126.

prophets and Paul's words in Romans 11. According to some, this salvation was to be accompanied by a repossession of Israel's land by the tribes of Israel. Thus, the early church's doctrine of Israel included the elements of rejection and hope.