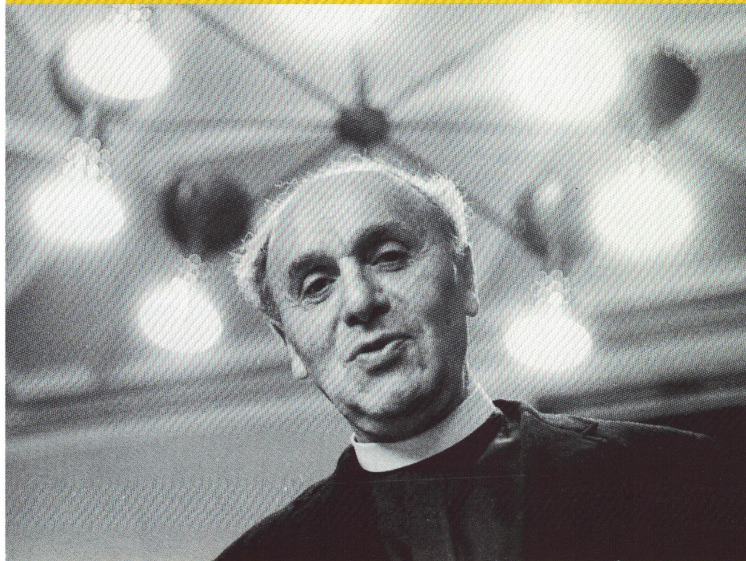


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# THE REV. DR. JAKOB JOCZ

CMJ EVANGELIST  
AND THEOLOGIAN



BY  
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## THE REV. DR. JAKOB JOCZ: CMJ EVANGELIST AND THEOLOGIAN

By Dr. Theresa Newell

### INTRODUCTION

When I was asked by the then General Secretary of CMJ, the Rev. Walter Barker, to open the CMJ USA office in 1980, I received a short list of names of CMJ contacts in America. One of those names was Dr. Jakob Jocz. His address was listed as Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

I learned that Dr. Jocz had retired as Dean of the School of Theology at Wycliffe College in 1976 but continued to write articles for various publications. I was intrigued by the fact that this third-generation Jewish believer in Jesus had ended his migrations in life on North American soil. I wanted to know more about this former CMJ missionary to his people.

Jocz died on August 14, 1983. His obituary appeared in *The Anglican* newspaper. The article stated that "The Reverend Jakob Jocz, M.A., Ph.D., D. Litt., was born on October 18, 1906, in Vilno, Lithuania." It did not report that his grandfather, an Orthodox Jew, had come to faith in Jesus as had his father and mother. However, there was mention in the obituary that "Dr. Jocz entered the Canadian Church October 1, 1956 when he was appointed Priest-in-Charge and Superintendent of the Nathanael Institute, Missions to Jews in Toronto."

Searching for the history of The Nathanael Institute and its tie to CMJ, these facts came to light: "The Church of England in Canada began its work among the Jews by raising funds for the London Society with Good Friday Appeals. Soon diocesan associations were established and then a Canadian Auxiliary to the London Society. The Diocese of Toronto was the first to appoint an organising secretary in 1882, the Rev. Johnstone Vicars. He established the Toronto Diocesan Association of the London Society and laid the foundations of the Canadian Auxiliary."<sup>1</sup>

I realized that Jakob Jocz had been called to Toronto to shore up what was by then the failing Nathanael Institute Mission to the Jews. This Institute was a successor to CMJ's work in Toronto. Many Jewish young people had come to faith in Yeshua through Nathanael's summer camp programs.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the Institute was beyond resuscitation and on September 1, 1960, Jocz became a Professor of Systematic Theology at Wycliffe College where he remained until his retirement in 1976.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.anglican.ca/archives/holdings/fonds/missions-to-the-jews-collection/>. Cited June 10, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Yohanna Chernoff, *Born a Jew. . . Die a Jew: The Story of Martin Chernoff* (Philadelphia, PA: EBED Publications, 1996). Martin Chernoff and other Jewish people came to faith in Jesus at the Nathanael Institute summer camps. Many went on to pioneer the Messianic movement in America. Chernoff reported that at the time of her husband's attendance at the Institute's camp in the 1940s, Morris and Ida Kaminsky were its directors (23).

I wrote a brief obituary for our fledgling CMJ USA newsletter at the time, wanting to honour this 20<sup>th</sup> century CMJ missionary to the Jews, but knowing very little about him. I realised as the years passed that the work and memory of this erudite, deeply committed evangelist to his Jewish people was being lost. By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century his books were out of print and even at Wycliffe College, Toronto, theology students did not know his name or history. So my interest and a desire to restore Jakob Jocz to his rightful place began to grow. I found his books through internet used books sites. A former CMJ worker's Master's thesis supplied an annotated bibliography of Jocz's works<sup>3</sup>, so I ordered a copy of her thesis and began to search for articles and monographs penned by Jocz. I secured a copy of an unpublished semi-autobiographical novel which Jocz had written telling of his early life in Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Jocz wrote in the preface of his first major book, "Writing as a Jewish Christian I stand between Church and Synagogue. In this unusual position I owe a debt to both."<sup>5</sup> Jocz argued that it was only in this encounter that the Church understands its true nature, acknowledges its Jewish roots and can "face the acid test of its loyalty to its Lord. Will it in obedience to him seek to evangelise the Jewish people?"<sup>6</sup>

May the Church again awaken to the urgency of God's eternal love for His Jewish people and His desire for them to know His Son, their Messiah. It was to this end that Jakob Jocz wrote and preached.

## THE REV. DR. JAKOB JO CZ

"No serious Christian thinker will feel the need for an apologetic approach to Jewish missions," Jakob Jocz began an article titled "The Validity of Jewish Missions."<sup>7</sup> The Church must commit itself to Jewish mission as a priority, Jocz would contend.

I first saw the name of this former CMJ missionary in a list that was sent to me from England as I was opening the first CMJ office in the United States in 1981. It appeared on a print-out of North American names of those who were CMJ supporters. A few years later, I received news that the Rev. Dr. Jakob Jocz had died. I wrote a brief notice of his death and his past connection to CMJ, with a photo, and published it in the CMJ USA newsletter. I learned that Dr. Jocz's last

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Louise Myers, "The Literary Legacy of Jakob Jocz" M.A. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Jakob Jocz, *War Without Peace: The Life and Times of Moishe Litvak* (unpublished, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Jakob Jocz, preface to *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ: The Relationship Between Church and Synagogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 3x ed., 1979), n.p.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Glasser, "The Legacy of Jakob Jocz," *International Bulletin of Missiological Research* (April 1, 1993). <http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/1993-02/1993-02-066-glasser.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Jakob Jocz, "The Validity of Jewish Missions." Reprinted in *World Christian Summer Reader* titled "Mission to the Jewish People," 1989, 71. This article first appeared in *International Review of Mission*, 36 (July 1947), 357-369.

job had been as head of the Systematic Theology School at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto.

I had no further thought about Jakob Jocz from that time until a few years ago, when I began to re-read the few books written by him that I had on my shelves. Those led me to find and read his other books, most now out of print. I became taken with the vast expanse of knowledge and thought of this brilliant theologian and lover of his Jewish people.

We might ask, "Why should I be interested in Jakob Jocz today? What can I learn from him that would be important for those working in Jewish evangelism?"

These questions focused me as I thought of the many books, articles, and lectures Jocz had written and given in his 77 years on earth. How would I answer those questions? Jocz's approach to the missionary task, from the perspective of the Church in its encounter with the Synagogue, is unique among 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians and missiologists. His work as a CMJ missionary in multiple countries and his insights as a third-generation Jewish believer and theologian cannot be reduced to a bumper sticker. The incredible breadth of his learning can intimidate, but the clarity of his arguments underlines his burning convictions.

My first thought was that Jocz needs to be listened to because his seminal thoughts on issues critical to Jewish mission hold deep and basic truths that we in the work of taking the Gospel to the Jewish people should give time to thinking more deeply about. Like many of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish believers and scholars, Jocz understood Orthodox Judaism of the Eastern European variety. Also, like his near contemporaries, he wrote assuming that his readers would be fluent in at least Greek, German, English or Hebrew - even though Yiddish was his first language!

Because of his background and his call to Jewish evangelism, Jocz wrote sound theological treatises on the subject with an eye to both the Synagogue and the Church - and especially on where the two intersect and where they divide. The obvious and main division is over the person of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. But Jocz's writings take us more deeply into these ebbs and flows of Church and Synagogue.

Jocz's Christology is strong and consistent throughout his writings, but his love and compassion for his Jewish people, their history of suffering (often at the hands of those who called themselves Christians), is also strong and consistent. Above all, Jocz had Paul's heart of anguish over his people who are separated from the One who came to His own Jewish people to bring them salvation and to lead them back to the Father. Dr. Art Glasser described Jocz as "a missionary, a theologian, and a missiologist - an outstanding Jewish Christian of the twentieth century."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Glasser, "The Legacy of Jakob Jocz," 68.

The title of Jocz's dissertation, which became his first major book, tells a lot about his heart: *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*. Jocz calls the Church to distinguish between the Jewish people and Judaism. One of his theses is that the early Church was much closer to the Old Testament than is rabbinic Judaism today. In his chapter on "Primitive Hebrew Christianity," Jocz wrote, "We venture to say that the influence of the Old Testament upon the Messianic movement far outweighs all other considerations."<sup>9</sup>

Jocz's most controversial writings concerned what he called "God's quarrel with religion." By this he meant that man's religion of all varieties puts man at the centre with everything subservient to his needs. It rejects that ALL people are rebels given to evil.

Jocz lived from 1906 to 1983. We know something about his early life mostly from an unpublished semi-autobiographical novel that he wrote in 1973 about his upbringing in Lithuania as a young Jewish boy under a heavy Russian Czarist hand. The title is *War Without Peace: The Life and Times of Moishe Litvak*. In this book, based on family stories about his father's brother, Moishe, Jocz also recalls details of his own boyhood experiences.<sup>10</sup>

So first, let's look at who this man Jakob Jocz was and then examine a few of the major topics which he addressed, which might be informative to us in Jewish mission today.

## HIS LIFE

Jakob Jocz (pronounced yotch and rhymes with watch) was a third generation Jewish believer born in 1906 in a small shtetl near Vilnius, Lithuania. Over the years he achieved his Ph.D. and D.Litt. degrees in England and wrote a half dozen books and many articles on Jewish evangelism and theology - in spite of the fact that he had very little formal education as a boy.

For all of his literary abilities, Jakob Jocz was at heart an evangelist to his own Jewish people. It was his maternal grandfather, Johanan Don, the local milkman in his village, who first encountered the Good News of Jesus. It happened when Johanan was seeking medical help for his 14-year-old daughter Hannah, who had been crippled in a fall.

Reluctantly, he went from the little shtetl of Zolse (Zelse), where the family lived, to the Lutheran Medical Mission clinic in Vilnius (Vilno in Polish). There he met Dr. Paul Frohwein, a Jewish believer and the doctor in charge. By reading a Hebrew New Testament which the doctor gave him, Johanan became a believer. When pogroms broke out in his village, Johanan moved his family into Vilnius. There he found a small group of believers in Yeshua near their house; there he was baptized.

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<sup>9</sup> Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, 157.

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Rich Robinson for a copy of *War Without Peace* sent electronically in 2016.

Not long after he had come to faith, Johanan died. To make ends meet, his widow Sarah took in a boarder, a young rabbinic student of the Vilno Ga'on.<sup>11</sup> The student's name was Bazyli Jocz. One day he read Isaiah 53, which brought many questions to his mind. He asked his teacher, "Who is the prophet speaking about?" The teacher hit him on the head, called him a "detestable gentile" and told him not to ask foolish questions. Shocked by the furious response, Bazyli sought out the same Dr. Frohwein for an answer to his question, which he got and while he continued his studies, he came to believe in Yeshua.

One day the boarder, who had taken notice of Johanan's daughter Hannah, told her his "secret" - which prompted her to tell hers! She too believed in Jesus! "My father was a believer in the Messiah," she told him. "Before he died, he told me never to forget about Yeshua."

And so Bazyli Jocz, a young rabbinic student, married Hannah! Their first son was Jakob, born in 1906. It was a terrible time for Jews in Eastern Europe, even for those who confessed Jesus as their Lord. Bazyli and Hannah had two other sons, George born in 1908 and Paul born in 1911.

Bazyli and Jakob went to Warsaw where they were drafted to work in the barracks serving Polish soldiers for a season. In 1920, Bazyli became an evangelist with CMJ. Seven years later Jakob enrolled in CMJ's newly formed training centre in Warsaw for three years, doing missionary service there. After further study at an Episcopal Methodist seminary in Frankfurt am Main, CMJ sent him to England where he trained for Anglican ordination at St Aidan's College in Birkenhead. There he met his future wife, Joan Celia Gapp, an Anglican missionary volunteer. After his ordination in 1935, Jakob and Joan were married the next year and returned to the CMJ centre in Warsaw.<sup>12</sup>

A gifted linguist, Jakob assumed leadership for the Yiddish-speaking messianic congregation at the mission.

## WHAT WAS CMJ MINISTRY LIKE IN 1930'S POLAND?

Jewish mission was begun in Warsaw by CMJ (known then as the London Jews Society) in 1821 by Alexander McCaul. This mission centre endured until 1939. From 1882-1920, the Jews of the area had suffered through three major pogroms. Dr. Mitch Glaser wrote in his doctoral

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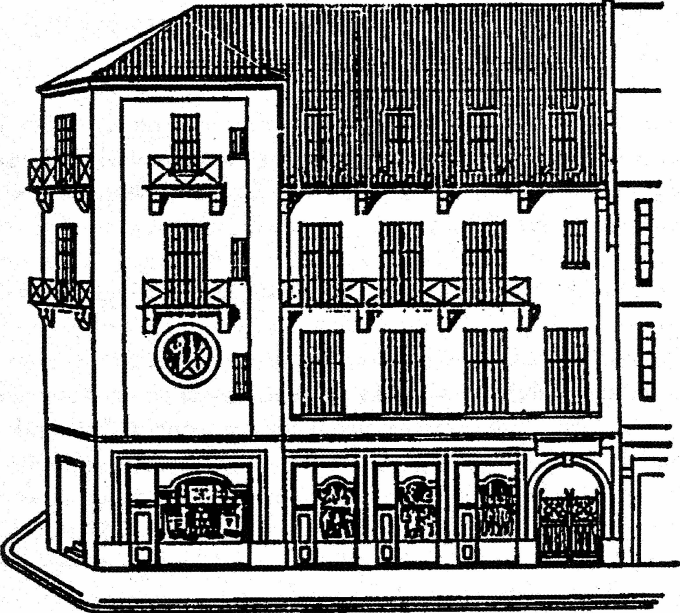
<sup>11</sup> Elijah ben Shiomon Zalman (1720-1797) a foremost leader of non-Hasidic Jewry. Vilno was a centre of Orthodox Jewish scholarship throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment movement) made inroads into the area. Cf Ruth Ellen Gruber, "Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide To Eastern Europe" (National Geographic, 2007), 69.

<sup>12</sup> I am indebted for some of the biographical information in this paper to the work of Elizabeth Myers in her Master's thesis "[The Literary Legacy of Jakob Jocz](#)," School of World Missions, Fuller Seminary, 1989.

dissertation, "The poverty of the Polish Jews, along with the anti-Jewish policies of the government made life in Poland very difficult for the Jews."<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, W. T. Gidney in his centenary history of CMJ reported in 1908 that "949 Jewish people have been baptized by" CMJ missionaries since its work began in Warsaw.<sup>14</sup>

**C.M.J. Warsaw Mission Buildings**



**What we are longing and praying for.**

<b>AMOUNT</b>	Required -	£10,000.
	Expended -	£3,183.
	Received -	£4,700..

*The House at Sewerynow*  
*Jewish Missionary Intelligence, XVII:12,*  
*December 1936*

<sup>13</sup> Mitch Glaser, "A Survey of Missions to the Jews in Continental Europe 1900-1950." (PhD diss., Fuller Seminary, 1998), 31-34.

<sup>14</sup> *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, from 1809 to 1908.* (London, 1908), 191.

Following the suffering during World War I, the Jews who had not emigrated became even more open to the Gospel. By the end of the work in Warsaw in 1939, CMJ reported a total of 11,323 baptisms of Jewish people. It was the most fruitful time of Jewish mission in Warsaw.

Glaser documented that after World War I, as Poland became independent of Russia, "street preaching and other means of evangelism were able to be resumed in Warsaw."<sup>15</sup> In 1927, CMJ constructed a new centre in Warsaw called the Emanuel Center and Church. This building served as a training centre for new workers. It was here that the Jocz family worked and where Jakob studied for three years. In 1934, Martin Parsons became head of the CMJ Warsaw work where the Jocz family was serving.<sup>16</sup> It was the most fruitful and the most horrifying era in European Jewish mission work.

Based on regular reports from Warsaw, Parsons noted that with 3.5 million Jews in Poland "in a condition for the most part of dread and depression," CMJ needed a staff of "over 700 instead of ten"! His reports are filled with calls for more workers. Jakob was among five Jewish believers in training at the time.

The Mission had these works of outreach among the Jews of Warsaw in 1937:

1. English classes where "over three hundred were registered."
2. Bible and tract publications and distribution. Parsons reported that four were assigned to this duty, but "forty would not be too many" as "this work was not unfruitful."
3. A Yiddish Gospel magazine, *Der Weg* (The Way), which was clearly evangelistic. Jocz was its editor.
4. Meetings (in Yiddish and Polish) on Saturday and Sunday evenings with "up to a hundred" in attendance.
5. A Bible class in German.
6. A club for children.

Parsons reported, "The burden of the evangelistic work falls upon Mr. Jacob Jocz. He is a ready speaker in Yiddish or Polish, but his most valuable work is in personal interviews." Jocz wrote that he saw two or three Jewish people in his study every day answering questions of the faith.

In his own report, Jocz wrote: "The great event of the year (1936) was the mission journey. In spite of anti-Semitism and increasing hatred, the Jews met us in many places with an open mind and with great readiness to hear the Gospel." This mission seemed to have been a series of visits to small Jewish villages in Poland, speaking with Jews on the street and in their shops. Jocz wrote, "I only wish we could devote more time to them."

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<sup>15</sup> Glaser, 36.

<sup>16</sup> Myers, "The Literary Legacy," 8.



Often Jocz reported that the Church would be filled as he and others preached, and "a bigger crowd was sent home than the one which was inside"! He attested to the ministry in Poland prior to the Nazi assault being very fruitful. "Today when the cross is being twisted into a swastika ... Jewish men and women flock into the mission halls to hear and to learn about the wonderful Savior," he wrote.<sup>17</sup>

## THE CURTAIN COMES DOWN IN WARSAW

In May of 1939, Joan Jocz returned to England to await the arrival of their first child, with Jakob remaining in Warsaw. Due to illness, the main speaker of The Church Missionary Society's annual summer conference cancelled. That August, Jocz was called to urgently come to England to replace him. This was indeed a miraculous deliverance as members of his family died at the hands of the Nazis soon after, when German armies invaded Poland on September 1.

In 1932, Jakob's parents, Bazyli and Hannah, left Warsaw's CMJ Mission and went to work in CMJ's mission in Lwow. They remained in Lwow and it was there that Bazyli was betrayed to the Gestapo and shot to death.

But it was not until after the war, that Jakob learned of his father's death at the hands of the Nazis. There are many details missing from this story (which Kelvin Crombie is researching now for his current project re Jewish believers who died during the Holocaust). For example, I have not found info on how Jakob's mother and brother made it to England and joined Jakob and his family. Did the father stay alone in Lwow to work at the mission and send his family away when the war began? I found no info on who betrayed Bazyli or the circumstances of his death other than he was shot by the Gestapo.

*"Four bombs fell on the mission premises of the Church Mission to Jews in Warsaw, which were destroyed together with the residences of the missionaries. Property valued at £20,000 was lost."*<sup>18</sup>

Jakob was then appointed to head CMJ's work in London during the war years from 1939 to 1948. During that time, he took graduate studies at the University of Edinburgh, and in 1947 he served an Anglican congregation in Hampstead. His doctoral dissertation was published in 1949 with the title, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ: The Relationship between Church and Synagogue*, the first of his major literary works. Unfortunately, Jocz's six major books are now out of print, although some of them can be found on used book internet sites.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> From CMJ Annual Report. (1936), 54,56-61

<sup>18</sup> London Jews Society Annual Report (1940), 1.

<sup>19</sup> The one exception is a reprint in 1999 of Jocz's book *The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Pub.; previously published by Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1968).

Early in his missionary career in Poland, Jocz had written *The Essence of Faith* (1936) and edited the Yiddish journal *Der Weg* (The Way). Publications ceased in Warsaw after 1939.

As the Third Reich stormed across Europe, Jocz wrote of the suffering of his people in a booklet, *Is it Nothing to You?* In this 30-page tract Jocz appealed to the churches to speak out against the persecution and killing of his Jewish people. The Anglican Bishop for North and Central Europe at the time, Staunton Fulham, wrote in the foreword to the booklet, "He [Jocz] rightly calls attention to apathy in the Christian Church on the subject of missionary effort amongst the Jews."<sup>20</sup>

Since his Warsaw years, Jocz had been involved in the work of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA). In 1957 he became its president and travelled widely in this capacity. That year Jocz was invited to Toronto to direct the Toronto Nathanael Institute, a large Jewish evangelism centre. The Nathanael Institute was an off-shoot of CMJ's work in Toronto from the early 20th century. Many Jewish believers came to faith there, and many became leaders of Jewish congregational movements.<sup>21</sup> For example, Yohanna Chernoff tells the story of how her husband Marty attended the Nathanael Summer Camp, then under the direction of Morris and Ida Kaminsky. When he was 20, Marty prayed with the Kaminskys to receive Yeshua. Ed Brodsky also came to faith there in the 1940s.<sup>22</sup>

By 1957 the Jewish families of Toronto had moved away from the centre of the city and into the suburbs. As a result, The Nathanael Centre lost members from its messianic congregation. At the same time, the Canadian Church was becoming theologically liberal and losing its urge to reach Jewish people with the Gospel. Jocz tried to find a property outside the city where Jews were living, but could find nothing. After several years of struggle, the Institute was closed.

Jocz went on to teach at Wycliffe College at Toronto University, and from 1960 onward he occupied its chair of Systematic Theology. He retired from teaching in 1976 but continued writing, preaching and teaching until his death on August 15, 1983.

## JOCZ'S STRONG CONVICTIONS

Jocz was adamant that there are not two ways to God, one for Jews (Sinai) and one for Gentiles (The Cross of Yeshua). A noted evangelist, he consistently advocated for Jewish missions and challenged the theological absurdity that Jesus Christ is without salvific significance to the Jewish people.

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<sup>20</sup> Staunton Fulham, forward to "Is it Nothing to You?" by Jakob Jocz (London: Church Missions to Jews 1940; revised 1941).

<sup>21</sup> For details on this Institute, read an excellent paper by Daniel Nessim titled "The History of Jewish Missions in Canada" at <http://lcje.net/PapersConference.html>, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Chernoff, *Born a Jew ... Die a Jew*.

At the same time he knew the impasse between the Church and the Synagogue over the acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Nevertheless, Jocz's lifelong concern was that the Synagogue and Church should continue to engage each other in discussion. He wrote: "It is important for a Christian writer to place Judaism in its right perspective and to see it not only negatively as has been done for centuries; but also positively, as the opposite number of the Christian Church. The juxtaposition of Synagogue and Church is an essential part of the theologian's task in his effort to understand the meaning of revelation. We have tried to do this in our book: *A Theology of Election*."<sup>23</sup>

In an article, he wrote: "The Church knows of the mystery of its own existence only in its encounter with the Synagogue. Judaism is thus the only and legitimate partner in the theological discussion that the Church carries on with the religious world."<sup>24</sup> Jocz's ongoing theme is that only in Judaism does the Church meet its equal in ethical code, social vision, spiritual tradition and cultural standards. He pointed out the true meaning of "dialogue" writing that "In the New Testament *dialogomai* is used in the context of missions and means 'to argue,' 'to reason,' 'to dispute,' etc." not to debate or dispute with. This is the kind of dialogue and engagement that Jocz urges the Church to take with the Jewish people, seeing the apostle Paul as a model.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, Jocz rejected the teaching by some Jewish scholars and accepted by many Christian scholars that there was an unbroken line of development between the Old Testament and later rabbinism. He taught that after the destruction of the second temple in AD 70, Judaism removed a central aspect of religious life from the Jewish people, i.e., substitutionary sacrifice as a way to approach a holy God. It reoriented its teaching to a preoccupation with the study of the law, Jocz said.

Jocz also saw modern Judaism's optimistic humanism (that man is not sinful in essence) as a misunderstanding of a biblical view of human depravity and man's inability on his own to make himself fit for a relationship with God. He saw that these ideas led to the mistaken notion that all Jews, by virtue of their birth, could automatically gain acceptance into covenantal relationship with God.

He rejoiced to see the emergence of Hebrew Christianity as a remarkable sign of our times - that Jewish people could hear the message of Yeshua from Jewish lips, in a Jewish idiom, and in the context of a Jewish life. At the same time Jocz saw unity of the human race in the Messiah as a higher scriptural goal than Jewish survival. He advocated Jewish believers to fulfill the prophetic call to take the Gospel to all the nations.

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<sup>23</sup> Jakob Jocz, *The Spiritual History of Israel*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode Publishers Ltd, 1961), 165.

<sup>24</sup> "The Validity of Jewish Mission," op. cit., 72.

<sup>25</sup> Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ After Auschwitz* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 168.

Jakob Jocz thought, wrote and taught with clarity and depth about the biblical and theological ideas which challenge all of us committed to witness to Jewish people. It is regrettable that his writings are not readily available today, when so many of his Jewish people are finding Yeshua to be their Messiah. Here is a list of some of his books:

- *A Theology of Election* (1958)
- *The Spiritual History of Israel* (1961)
- *Christians and Jews: Encounter and Mission* (1966)
- *The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny* (1968)
- *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ After Auschwitz* (1981)

## JOCZ AND BARTH<sup>26</sup>

Jocz was fluent in Yiddish (his first language), Russian, Polish, German and English. He was among the first to translate Karl Barth's writing from German for English speakers before official translations had been done. Jocz took issue with Barth's understanding of the Jews place in salvation history. Put simply, Barth believed the Jews non-acceptance of salvation through the work of Jesus is temporary, and that this Jewish rejection of Jesus' work fits within God's salvific plan for humanity. He saw Jewish unbelief as actually serving God's larger purposes: "Israel cannot alter the fact that even in this way [the rejection of Jesus] it discharges exactly the service for which it is elected."<sup>27</sup>

Barth saw the Jews as God's "elected community" but that they do not receive Jesus because God has *ordained* their rejection of Him. What was God's purpose in ordaining unbelief of the Jews? According to Barth, it was to reflect the judgment of God, to exemplify the sorry state of humanity when it is in rebellion against God.<sup>28</sup>

Barth's position is similar to, but more optimistic than Augustine's who maintained that Jewish suffering since the fall of Jerusalem at Roman hands was a judgment upon them for their lack of faith in Christ, and that they served as a warning to all about the perils of rejecting the Christian Saviour.

Jocz, like Barth, was insistent that the Jews are designated as God's chosen people. He believed that the Jews rejection of Jesus could not change what God intends for them. Supersessionism

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<sup>26</sup> Karl Barth was a Swiss Reformed theologian who is often regarded as the greatest Protestant theologian of the twentieth century. His influence expanded well beyond the academic realm to mainstream culture, leading him to be featured on the cover of Time on April 20, 1962. Barth was born in Basel, Switzerland on May 10, 1886 and died there on December 10, 1968.

<sup>27</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol II, Pt. 2 (trans G.W. Bromiley et al: Edinburgh: T &T Clark, 1957), 209.

<sup>28</sup> John J. Johnson. "A New Testament Understanding of the Jewish Rejection of Jesus: Four Theologians on the Salvation of Israel," JETS 43/2 (June 2000), 237.

received no support from Jocz. There can be no "new Israel." He wrote "there can be no plural to Israel."<sup>29</sup> He continued, "for the Church to reduce her high Christology in order to accommodate the Synagogue would spell dissolution. She stands or falls with the confession that Jesus is Lord."<sup>30</sup>

Jocz saw Barth's ideas to overestimate the election of the Jewish people to the detriment of their salvation. The place of prayer for their salvation and an active Gospel mission to them was lost in Barth's ideas of God's plan for Jews and their salvation. Where Barth saw corporate Israel saved en masse sometime in the future, based on their special status as God's chosen people, Jocz strongly rejected such an idea. Jocz saw clearly that membership in God's family is not based on ethnicity, but on individual decisions to follow the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. He taught that salvation occurs for Jews "only by returning, by believing, by submitting to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit of God."<sup>31</sup> Thus, his lifelong commitment to Jewish mission. He could not accept Barth's assumption that God's plan would include unbelief of the Jews - or any other group - as part of His purposes. Barth saw a sharp division between the Church and Synagogue. Jocz wrote that Jews and Gentiles reveal themselves to be in or out of the elect of God by their response to Christ.

Jocz disagreed with other modern theologians on the subject of missions to Jews. "Reinhold Niebuhr made his position clear in a passage which has been widely quoted and much discussed. He regards the missionary attempts as not only futile but definitely wrong: 'They are wrong because the two faiths despite differences are sufficiently alike for the Jew to find God more easily in terms of his own religious heritage than by subjecting himself to the hazards of guilt-feelings involved in a conversion to a faith, which, whatever its excellencies, must appear to him as a symbol of an oppressive majority culture.'" Jocz found similar reasons to reject Paul Tillich's equally critical attitude toward Jewish mission.<sup>32</sup>

## JOCZ'S THEOLOGY OF MAN

Jocz grasped the reality of the depravity of man and the truth that Jesus' work on the cross was the only answer for remedying the lostness of mankind, Jew or Gentile. He wrote in his doctoral dissertation, "Deeply imbedded within the human soul is the inexorable will of man to work out his own salvation and to remain the master of his fate. This will to self-assertion is as much a fundamental fact in the Christian as in the Jew."<sup>33</sup> While this truth is commonly held by orthodox Christianity, Jocz saw beyond the accepted doctrine and observed that the Church had not fully

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<sup>29</sup> Jakob Jocz, *A Theology of Election* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1958), 97.

<sup>30</sup> Jakob Jocz, *Christians and Jews: Encounter and Mission* (London: SPCK, 1966), 33.

<sup>31</sup> Jocz, *A Theology of Election*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ after Auschwitz*, 174.

<sup>33</sup> Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, 9.

seen that humility is needed from the Church that wants to reach the Jews for Jesus - that Christians were only believers because of grace through faith and no better than their Jewish counterpart. There was no place for a superior attitude in a Christian toward a Jewish person, an attitude which Jocz saw had unfortunately marked Christian history.

He put away the notion propagated by both Jewish and Christian scholars that Jesus was only accepted by Gentiles and never Jews. He cites not only the early Church which was obviously Jewish, but that through every century since there have been Jewish people who have said yes to the claims of the Jewish Jesus. He wrote, "The truth is that *some* Jews and *some* Gentiles have accepted him as their Master and Lord, while many Jews and many Gentiles have remained either indifferent or hostile to the claims which he makes upon men."<sup>34</sup>

Something that particularly troubled Jocz was that Jewish scholars had successfully persuaded many Christian writers of two things: that there was an unbroken continuation and line of development between the Old Testament and later rabbinism and secondly that Pharisaic Judaism was the religion in which Jesus was reared and had been acceptable to Jesus. Jocz countered both of these notions and cautions Christians in the strongest terms against agreeing with these theses. He observed that the First Century Church was much more in touch with Old Testament understandings than Rabbinic Judaism is in our day. Post-AD 70 Judaism moved away from priest and prophet - the very OT themes which Jesus proclaimed. He is the Lamb sacrificed who calls all to *tsuvah* (repentance). Jocz cites the loss of the call in Isaiah 45:22 - "*Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for Jam God, and there is no other.*"

Jocz stood firmly against the rabbinic concept of man as unbiblical. Judaism's idealistic and optimistic humanism ignored or at least downplayed the Fall, the great Rebellion against God. This idea created the belief that man is fit, of himself, to stand in the presence of a Holy God and be accepted by Him - without the substitutionary atonement provided for in the cross of Jesus. The rabbis, he said, teach that while man *sins*, he is not *sinful* by nature or in essence. He can do wrong but is not innately estranged from God. This leaves the Jewish person confident that he needs no mediator or saviour. This was one of Jocz's strongest convictions and persistent themes in his writing. **Rabbinic Judaism has its anthropology wrong.**

At the same time, Jocz expresses deep sorrow for his Jewish people and saw the tragedies that came into Jewish religious thought after the AD 70 destruction of the Temple. Suddenly there was no possibility for blood sacrifice or priesthood. There was no place where sin could be acknowledged or forgiveness asked. There was no one to stand in an intercessory place for the people and lead them to God. Jocz saw that this removal of the sacrificial system without their acceptance of the "once and for all times sacrifice" of Jesus led Judaism to a preoccupation with the study of the law - a law which, ironically, was anchored in the fact that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin" (Leviticus 17:11). Jocz lamented that making Torah into a religion robbed it of life.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 4. Italics his.

## JESUS OR PAUL?

Often we hear it said when we engage with a Jewish person that "Jesus is fine, but Paul is the problem." But Jocz wrote, "Paul was not against the Torah; he was against the perverse idea that man in his own strength, but obedient to the minutiae of rabbinic Law, can ingratiate himself into God's favour."<sup>35</sup> Perhaps it was this grievous fact which caused Jocz to become a tireless evangelist to his people.

This removal of the priesthood and sacrifice inevitably caused the prophetic aspects to fade out of Judaism. The reasoning, says Jocz, goes like this: if there is no innate sin in man's nature and a Jew can stand before God only on the grounds that he is part of the covenant people of God, then there is no need to have prophetic voices calling him to repentance, whether he is religious or not. This is in contrast to the biblical, continual, prophetic call to repent, return to the Holy One of Israel and to seek a personal relationship with Him.

It was around such teaching that Jocz called believers to look for ways to interact with Jewish people, but never in a spirit of Christian triumphalism. Jocz repeatedly pointed out that "only a repenting Church can be a missionary Church."<sup>36</sup> In this posture, the Church discovers the true nature of the Gospel, namely, that salvation is entirely a matter of grace. "None are righteous, no not one," wrote the prophet.

Jocz was insistent that if Christ is indeed the Messiah, then He is Messiah for all and this means there can be no ambivalence on the question of a conversionary mission to the Jews. Not only *should* the Church engage in such a mission, it *must* do so. Mission to the Jews is the "inevitable result of the claim that Jesus is Lord," he wrote.<sup>37</sup> He firmly believed that if the Church has no Gospel for the Jews, it has no Gospel for the world.

## JOCZ AND THE VALIDITY OF JEWISH MISSIONS

Jocz wrote that the validity of Christian mission is innate to the very meaning of the Church. While Judaism's growth is based on physical descent, the Church's growth depends upon "the conversion of the sinner to Jesus Christ."<sup>38</sup>

He wrote that salvation is God's gift based on His limitless love and that it is for *all* people. Jocz would agree with Soren Kierkegaard when he wrote "Before God humans are always guilty"

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<sup>35</sup> Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ After Auschwitz*, 120.

<sup>36</sup> Jocz, *Christians and Jews*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Jocz, "The Validity of Missions," *op. cit.*, 71.

Jocz stood on the premise that "loyalty to Jesus Christ is the ultimate test of the disciple ... there is only one valid reason for preaching the Gospel: loyalty to Jesus Christ. We must know "the efficacy of the Gospel and its ultimate triumph."

Regarding Election (he wrote an entire book on the subject), Jocz saw that Romans 11:2, 29 makes it clear that "the call is irrevocable", that "God is faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13), and "I the LORD do not change. So you descendants of Jacob are not destroyed" (Malachi 3:6). He stated, "In this dialectical position of being chosen and rejected at the same time lies the mystery of Jewish life." but quickly adds "it is the same for the Church and even worse!" A fact, he says, which "is completely overlooked by Christian thinkers."<sup>39</sup>

While salvation is for all, "conversion of the Jews can only mean of individual members of the Jewish people." Jocz rejected the idea of the wholesale salvation of any ethnic group. He stated that "The Christian movement is a revolt on the part of the individual conscience against mass loyalty ... The Jew who accepts Jesus as Messiah claimed the right to decide about truth for himself." However, he saw that "there is no such thing to the Synagogue as personal salvation."<sup>40</sup> Judaism defines itself as a community with God, while Christian theology begins with personal salvation.

## GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Not only does Jocz express a high Christology, but a high view of God's sovereignty. He wrote that no man can frustrate God's purpose. God is no one's debtor, Israel or the Church. In the relationship between God and humanity, it is all about God's freedom, not human trustworthiness. Election is and remains a sovereign act of God.

Regarding Jewish Missions in relation to Universalism, Jocz is clear about where this logic leads: "In the last resort, everyone is right because no one is wrong." "Commitment to Jesus Christ makes universalism impossible." If one does not know God in Jesus Christ and know oneself a sinner saved by grace "anthropology takes the place of Christology and the Church becomes a synagogue."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>41</sup> Jakob Jocz, "Jewish Missions in Relation to Universalism," Reprinted in *World Christian*. Summer Reader titled "Mission to the Jewish People," 1989, 76. This article was first published in 1967 World Wide Publications, Minneapolis, MN.



## IN CONCLUSION

Why should those involved with Jewish mission be interested in the life, ideas, theology and biblical view of the Rev. Dr. Jakob Jocz?

While Jocz's sheer breadth of learning that we find in his writings can tend to intimidate, his work reflects the heart of a Christian who has utter confidence in the authority of Scripture. He conveyed his ideas with clarity and orderly precision. His background in rabbinic scholarship as well as biblical and theological thought allowed him to convey his major points with logic and well thought-out arguments. This is true especially regarding the Church and its relationship to the Synagogue which was a main theme in his writing. His unwavering dedication to the uniqueness of Jesus and his blood sacrifice on the cross as the only way of salvation remained central in all of Jocz's work. While he wrote, as all must, from the platform of his own time period, his seminal ideas can yet inform today's scholars, be they Christian or Jew.

At the same time, the love that Jocz expressed for his Jewish people - his heartrending anguish at their lostness without Jesus their Messiah and his acute pain over the Church's persecution and missionary neglect of them - form a double wedge of compassion. He saw the tragedy of rabbinic Judaism which has kept his people from their Saviour and yet he urged the Church in the strongest way to seek out Jewish people and share the saving work of Jesus with them. He counted the Synagogue as the best partner for the Church for such discussions.

He challenged the Church to become missional as its *raison d'etre* and to remember the call in that mission is "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16). He condemned anti-Semitism and racism in all of its forms. The evidence of God's grace and love towards the Jewish people must be executed by the compassion shown by true believers to His chosen people.

Jakob Jocz longed for the day when all of God's faithful covenant promises are fulfilled for the Jews. He saw that a day is coming when Gentile and Jew will worship the one true God together under the cross of Messiah Jesus. God will be vindicated in history, Jocz proclaimed, and all of His promises will come to pass. He saw in his day that Hebrew and Gentile believers were witnessing to the unbeliever and prophetically pronounced that this mission to the Jews will continue until "all Israel is saved" through Jesus to the glory of the Father!