

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Inclusive Quarantine:
The Pathology and Performance of Jewish Existence
in the *Erlangen Opinion on the Aryan Paragraph*

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Introduction. The equivocal nature of the *Erlangen Opinion*

In the spring of 1933, Lutheran theologian Paul Althaus (1888-1966) greeted the rise of National Socialism as a “gift and miracle of God.”¹ Having served as a military hospital chaplain among German expatriates in Poland during the First World War, he was a nationalist for whom the discipline and order of Nazism did indeed look like good news. And he was by no means the only one; at the twilight of the Weimar Republic many clergy hoped that the new government would usher in Germany’s spiritual and moral renewal. But the Nazi seizure of power did radically alter the landscape of German church life. Soon the church would fragment under the pressure of the “church struggle” [*Kirchenkampf*] as the “German Christian Movement” [*Deutsche Christen*] and the “Confessing Church” [*Bekennende Kirche*] wrestled for control of the Protestant churches.²

The German Christians embraced Nazi “coordination” [*Gleichschaltung*], complete with an effort to deJudaize

¹ Paul Althaus, “Das Ja der Kirche zur deutschen Wende,” in *Die deutsche Stunde der Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934), 5. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German texts are my own.

² For further discussion of the politics of the *Kirchenkampf* during the late Weimar years, see Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 1: Preliminary History and the Time of Illusions, 1918-1934*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1987).

the Christian faith and to create a doctrineless church defined by antisemitism, jingoism, and chauvinism.³ On the other side, the Confessing Church sought to safeguard the church's autonomy against state interference. With respect to the place of Jews in the German churches, however, its legacy is not without significant ambiguities.⁴

As a representative of the Erlangen School, long a stronghold of confessional Lutheranism, Althaus was an active player in the church struggle, though his mediatory theological approach makes him difficult to locate within the German Christian / Confessing Church matrix. Indeed, Althaus quarreled with both sides, though on different grounds. He was openly critical of the crude antisemitism of the German Christians and resisted their unsophisticated supersessionist theology, though he held sympathies with the *völkisch* impulse behind the movement.⁵ At the same time, he had a longstanding dispute with Confessing Church leader Karl Barth over the nature of general revelation. Althaus' doctrine of "primal revelation" [*Uroffenbarung*], by which God was thought to reveal himself in historical and political events (such as National Socialism's rise), drew Barth's fierce criticism.⁶

Althaus' mediatory temperament would soon be tested—along with the ambivalent attitudes of the broader Protestant community toward the "Jewish Question"—as the new state quickly took measures to exclude Jews from public

³ See Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁴ See Robert Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, "Introduction," in *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Ericksen and Susannah Heschel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) for a helpful overview of Protestant attitudes toward Jews and Judaism in the late Weimar and early National Socialist eras.

⁵ See Paul Althaus, "Politisches Christentum: Ein Wort über die Thüringer 'Deutsche Christen,'" *Theologia Militans* 5:5 (1935), 4-32.

⁶ Following the release of Althaus' *Religiöser Sozialismus* in 1921, the two exchanged pamphlets well into the 1940s.

life. From the beginning, Protestant reactions were varied. For example, public resistance to events such as the April 1, 1933 boycott of Jewish businesses was unfortunately lacking, despite signs of the churches' unease with Nazi methods.⁷ The churches faced perhaps their stiffest challenge in the *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service* of April of 1933. The law's so-called "Aryan Paragraph" dismissed citizens of "non-Aryan descent" from civil office.⁸ Shortly thereafter, the Prussian General Synod of the *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche* (DEK) appealed to the theological faculties of Marburg and Erlangen for a word of expertise regarding the application of the "Aryan Paragraph" to the question of Jewish pastors within the DEK. In Erlangen, the task fell to its two prized theologians: Althaus and his colleague Werner Elert.

Althaus and Elert's *Erlangen Opinion on the Aryan Paragraph* has not aged well—especially in comparison to its Marburg counterpart, authored primarily by Rudolf Bultmann.⁹ In the end, the Erlangen professors recommend that the DEK's Jewish Christians "be restrained from taking pastoral office."¹⁰ But at the same time, the *Opinion* stops short of total application of the "Aryan Paragraph" by allowing for hypothetical exceptions by which "Jewish" pastors could minister to "German" congregations.¹¹ The document is just ambiguous

⁷ See Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, trans. and ed. Victoria Barnett (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), especially 9-24.

⁸ The text of the legislation and its subsequent addendums is reproduced in Bernard Dov Weinryb, *Jewish Emancipation under Attack* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1942), 40-42.

⁹ See Paul Althaus and Werner Elert, "Theologisches Gutachten über die Zulassung von Christen jüdischer Herkunft zu den Ämtern der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche," *Theologische Blätter* 12:11 (1933): 321-24 and "Opinion der theologischen Fakultät der Universität Marburg zum Kirchengesetz über die Rechtsverhältnisse der Geistlichen und Kirchenbeamten," *Theologische Blätter* 12:10 (1933): 290-04.

¹⁰ *Erlangen Opinion*, §5, 323.

¹¹ *Erlangen Opinion*, §7, 324. Althaus and Elert allow for exceptions. Jewish pastors can retain their posts, for instance, if they had demonstrated their "willingness to offer their lives for Germany" during World War I. I

enough to leave room for competing interpretations of its spirit.

Some have defended the *Erlangen Opinion* by emphasizing its exemptions for Jewish pastors. For instance, Gotthard Jasper has suggested that what makes the document problematic is not its theology, but its lack of clarity. Before we conclude that the *Opinion* targets the Jews for persecution, argues Jasper, we must listen for the statement's "nuances," which make space to include pastors of Jewish descent in the DEK. As such, it stands in opposition to the universal application of the "Aryan Paragraph" in the church.¹² More forcefully, Karlmann Beyschlag has argued that the *Opinion* "flatly excludes" any legal restriction on Jewish pastors.¹³

There is a contrast here with interpreters such as Robert Ericksen, who has characterized the *Opinion* as "an apology for the Aryan paragraph [*sic*]," albeit it an ambiguous one.¹⁴ Likewise Wolfgang Gerlach considers the *Opinion*, its exemptions for select Jewish pastors notwithstanding, as a compromise with the "hyper-German *völkisch zeitgeist*" of the era.¹⁵ A close reading of the statement, however, suggests

do not acknowledge the National Socialist regime's racialized "Jewish" / "German" vocabulary. However, for facility of reference, the essay will proceed using the language of "Jewish" and "German" because Althaus and Elert accept these terms.

¹² Gotthard Jasper, *Paul Althaus (1888-1966): Professor, Prediger und Patriot in seiner Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 235-38.

¹³ Karlmann Beyschlag, *Die Erlanger Theologie* (Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1993), 163. In Beyschlag's judgment, "[T]he *Erlangen Opinion* reveals itself as an extremely skillful and tactical attempt to safeguard not only the regulation of the Aryan-question [*Arierfrage*], but along with it ecclesial autonomy with respect to the state (a traditional Erlangen desideratum) in the face of a supremely dangerous precedent" (164).

¹⁴ Robert Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 108-09. Ericksen does make note of the *Erlangen Opinion's* exemptions for Jewish pastors, which demonstrate a "compromise [...] very representative of Althaus."

¹⁵ See Gerlach, *And the Witnesses were Silent*, 38-43.

above all that it is equivocal; in the words of Victoria Barnett, the Erlangen faculty “avoided the issue.”¹⁶

Given the ambivalence of Protestant attitudes toward the “Jewish Question” in general and that of the *Erlangen Opinion* in particular, my aim here is to investigate the unique way in which Althaus and Elert “avoided the issue.” That is to say, there are nuances within the *Opinion’s* prescription for the place of Jewish persons in the DEK that are only fully discernable against the backdrop of Althaus’ prior comments about the nature and meaning of Jewish existence.

Namely, I argue that careful attention to the *Opinion’s* nuances actually reveals the clear but dialectical theology of the “Jewish Question” that Althaus developed first in the years of the Weimar Republic. Althaus’ vision for the place of Jewish persons in human societies is dialectical—alternating between the poles of inclusion and exclusion. Thus it is only by reasoning dialectically that we can grasp this vision, which I call *inclusive quarantine*—inclusive, because the Jews are conceived as an indispensable factor in the life of the *Volk*; quarantine, because Althaus invokes the language of pathology and infection to characterize the nature of Jewish relationship to other peoples. In this paradoxical framework, Jewish persons simultaneously threaten to destroy the communities in which they are situated—both societal and ecclesial—while also performing constructive theological functions for those same communities.

I further argue that Althaus fits this wider theological vision to a microcosmic scale in the *Erlangen Opinion*: Christians of Jewish descent emerge as a *necessary danger* for “German” Christians and must be confined to the margins of the church. In this way, Jews, on account of their dialectical relationship with Germans, are suspended precariously between total belonging and total alienation, marginalized to an inclu-

¹⁶ Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 129.

sive quarantine within the walls of their own religious communities. André Fischer captures something of this dialectic when he proposes that Althaus imagines the Jews as a “foreign *Volk next to*—but not *against*—Germans.”¹⁷ However, as I will demonstrate below, Althaus conceptualizes the Jews rather as a foreign *Volk within and apart from* other human communities.

I. The theology of the “Jewish Question” in Althaus’ Weimar writings

“Jewry [*das Judentum*],” writes Althaus in 1930, “represents an ethnic-national [*völkisch*] question, without doubt. But today it is more important to emphasize that Jewry poses a theological question! Each question is fundamentally different than the other.”¹⁸ For Althaus, the so-called “Jewish Question” has two distinct yet interrelated dimensions: one socio-political and one theological.

Ostensibly, the *Opinion* maintains this bifurcation between the social and theological dimensions of the “Jewish Question.” However, as is the case across Althaus’ Weimar writings, these two dimensions relate dialectically within the logic of the *Opinion*. The result is a vision in which the Jews, whose existence is charged with a mysterious theological purpose, appear as a *necessary danger*. Jewish persons perform a number of constructive functions within a dialectic of election and curse. As signs of God’s judgment, Jews are condemned to wander on the edges of all human societies as irritants that disrupt the total ethnic homogeneity of other peoples.

¹⁷ André Fischer, *Zwischen Zeugnis und Zeitgeist: Die politische Theologie von Paul Althaus in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 522. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁸ Paul Althaus, “Die Frage des Evangeliums an das Moderne Judentum,” *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 7 (1930), 196.

A. The Jews as social and spiritual threat: *Kirche und Volkstum* (1927)

In his 1927 speech *Kirche und Volkstum*, Althaus welcomes enthusiastically an hour of “a new consciousness of our national type and responsibility, a passionate desire for the rebirth of our *Volk* out of the procreative power of our *Volkstum*.”¹⁹ Though the address begins as a challenge for the preservation of *völkisch* identity in ethnic German expatriate communities, its focus turns quickly toward the alienation of the *Volk* taking place on German soil. In this framework, the Jews emerge as a foil to the German national type and as an impediment to the realization of the German destiny.

Althaus situates his thinking about the “Jewish Question” within the broader ethical schema of the orders of creation. These orders—such as government, the legal system, business and commerce, and marriage and family—structure creation in its postlapsarian state to preserve it from chaos. Most critical for our purposes is Althaus’ designation of the *Volk* as an elemental order of creation:

We mean by *Volkstum* the unique spiritual vitality [*Seelentum*] which distinguishes us from others and appears in the collective feelings, values, desires, and thoughts of all of our ethnic compatriots...A primordial givenness [*Eine ursprünglichen Gegebenheit*]...a spiritual reality, mysteriously born of spiritual primal origination...²⁰

Althaus’ fear of the Jews is only intelligible with the understanding that for Althaus the *Volk* is a spiritual entity. The *Volk* derives its power not primarily through its bloodlines, but through its spiritual vitality: “However great the importance of blood in spiritual history may be, once a

¹⁹ Paul Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” in *Evangelium und Leben: Gesammelte Vorträge* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1927), 113-14, 142-43.

²⁰ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 114.

nationality has been born, the prevailing factor is still *Geist* and not blood.”²¹

Althaus understands the *Volk* as a manifestation of God’s creative will and as the expression of God’s own self-revelation.²² Thus the defining characteristic of Germanness is a Christian spiritual vitality [*Seelentum*]. The German *Volk* is a Christian *Volk* entrusted with a divine mission in the world. Althaus speaks of “the burden of German loneliness” unique to the bearers of an onerous spiritual genius as Germans have been “consecrated as a special priesthood of the knowledge of the last things.” The Germans are a nation of priests: to be German is to be Christian.²³

But the Christian character of the German *Volk*, along with its concomitant mission in the world, is disintegrating. The twin pressures of “civilization” [*die Zivilisation*] and “foreigners” [*die Fremde*] conspire to corrode German society.²⁴ In Althausian idiom, though, the two are actually the same thing: the “foreign infiltration” [*Überfremdung*] whose chief symbol is the Jews. Tanja Hetzer has identified Althaus’ use of the term “civilization” as a culturally encoded reference to Jews: “Without using the word Jew even once, Althaus portrays the corrosive enemy of the peoples’ community in the cultural code of the time, which connected all of these things with Jews.”²⁵ Through these rhetorical associations—the key words “rootless,” “homeless,” and “big-city”—Althaus targets

²¹ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 114. In Althaus’ lexicon, *Geist* connotes not only rationality, but a *Volk*’s spirit, i.e. its spiritual sensibilities as well as its ways of thinking, speaking, and perceiving the world.

²² Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 123-24.

²³ See Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 121-22, 125-26.

²⁴ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 115.

²⁵ Tanja Hetzer, “*Deutsche Stunde*”: *Volksgemeinschaft und Antisemitismus in der politischen Theologie bei Paul Althaus* (München: Allitera Verlag, 2009), 152-53.

the Jews as the prime cause of the “fracturing of our *Volk* and the decay of our national community.”²⁶

Althaus suspects that the moral degeneracy of Weimar is symptomatic of the spiritual sickness of the Jews, which threatens the very constitution of the *Volk*. The rise of “Jewish power and the Jewish spirit” is a problem that can only be addressed with “an eye and a word for the Jewish threat to our national values.”²⁷ Althaus approaches the “Jewish Question” here:

It is not a matter of Jew-hatred [*Judenhaß*]*—*one can even come to an agreement with serious Jews on this point*—*it is not a matter of blood, it is not even a matter of the religious faith of Judaism, but rather it is a matter of a threat posed through a certain demoralized and demoralizing big-city spirituality [*großstädtische Geistigkeit*] whose bearer is now primarily the Jewish *Volk*.²⁸

The logic of Althaus’ thinking about the “Jewish Question” is encoded here. Jews are not a threat when they confine themselves to the synagogue and practice their religion in private. The Jews do become dangerous, however, when they intrude into public life, when they blur the bloodlines between Jew and German, but above all when they appear to assimilate into German society. The problem arises when Jews violate the orders of creation*—*when they try to overcome the primordial spiritual origination of the *Volk**—*that is, when they try to become Germans. But *why* are Jews dangerous? Not because they are an inherently inferior race, but because they bear a foreign spirituality.

This sickness of the Jewish *Geist*, if allowed to infect German spiritual life, threatens to shipwreck the divine mis-

²⁶ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 116.

²⁷ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 130.

²⁸ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 131.

sion of the German nation. “The churches must recognize and show where the powers stand that again and again hinder our *Volk* in its self-determination and purification [*Selbstbesinnung und Reinigung*].”²⁹ The Jews are now a “power” whose pollutive influence is poised to thwart the realization of the German destiny and sap Germany’s spiritual vitality. Althaus therefore calls on the church to “struggle alongside all who fight for the rejuvenation of an already sick folk-life, work courageously for the preservation and renewal of old morals, organic connections, and for the overcoming of the big-city decay of the *Volk*, for a return to a healthy folk-life rooted in our soil.”³⁰

By using the language of pathology, Althaus targets Jews—especially assimilated Jews—as contagions who contribute toward a “sick folk-life” and obstruct German “purification.” Nonetheless, the Jews, abstracted into a rhetorical symbol, perform a critical function as the foil against which a revitalized Christian Germany must concentrate its renewed spiritual vitality in order to fulfill its divine mission in the world.

B. The Jews as the bearers of a “difficult fate”: *Leitsätze zur Ethik* (1929)

Althaus’ clearest interpretation of the “Jewish Question” appears in *Leitsätze zur Ethik*, in which he again addresses the question within the ethical framework of the doctrine of the orders of creation.³¹ Before offering his own provisional solution to the problem of Jewish existence in Germany, Althaus begins with an overview of failed proposals. In so doing, he rejects both the total inclusion and the total exclusion of the Jews.

²⁹ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 131.

³⁰ Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 139.

³¹ Paul Althaus, *Leitsätze zur Ethik* (Erlangen: Merkel, 1929), 47.

Despite over a century of debate about the civil reform of the Jews, “Enlightenment liberalism” [*aufklärerischer Liberalismus*] has failed to provide a workable solution: “[the question] is posed, in spite of all the assimilation, through the foreignness between the Jewish and German ethnic types, which is now felt more strongly than ever...”³² Ironically, all of the efforts of emancipation and assimilation throughout the prior centuries had only exacerbated—not diminished—the differences between Jews and Germans. For Althaus, Jews cannot become Germans because the boundaries of each *Volk*, pursuant to the orders of creation, are impermeable.

These laws of the orders of creation trump the assumptions of Enlightenment discourse, which relies on the concepts of universal human dignity and equality to flatten fixed and intrinsic ethnic differences. Humanity’s historical existence, argues Althaus, is not characterized by basic equality, but is instead governed by the elemental “law of conflict” [*Konfliktgesetz*].³³ Each *Volk* is created by God to be essentially segregated from every other *Volk*, and each is charged to protect itself against the influence of other peoples.³⁴ This results inevitably in violent conflict between the peoples as each pursues its unique destiny within the same historical space. But conflict, in Althaus’ christianized alternative to social Darwinism, drives history through the dreadful mandates of the “law of struggle” [*Kampfgesetz*] and the competitive “law of displacement” [*Verdrängungsgesetz*], by which one *Volk* may overtake and replace another.³⁵ This haze of violence that envelops human life—what Althaus elsewhere calls the “spirit of Cain”—is a curse, but it is also the means by which God administers creation after the Fall.³⁶

³² Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 54.

³³ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 63-64.

³⁴ See Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 53.

³⁵ Paul Althaus, “Kampf,” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 3., ed. Hermann Gunkel and Leopold Zscharnack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1929), 595-96.

³⁶ See Althaus, “Kain und Christus” (3 April 1931), in *Der Gegenwärtige: Predigten* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932), 54-55. Cf. Althaus, “Die Ge-

In the face of these “ethnic laws of life, the Enlightenment [*aufklärerische*] appeal to the concepts of tolerance, equal rights, and universal human dignity makes no sense.”³⁷ The assimilation of one people into another violates God’s design for the *Volk* as an order of creation. The Jewish and German *Völker* are in competition, each trying to realize its respective destiny in history. When Jews disappear into German society, they forget their own unique vocation as a *Volk* and at the same time threaten the German destiny. Hence the total inclusion represented by the political project of emancipation and assimilation is an untenable solution.³⁸

But Althaus also rejects “racial-antisemitism” as a way forward; “ethnic hatred” against the Jews as a “race inferior in themselves” holds no promise for solving the “Jewish Question.”³⁹ He questions the stability of the term *Rasse*—a buzzword of racist pseudo-science—as a discursive tool to make universal judgments about ethnic groups.⁴⁰ As we have seen, Althaus does point to “indisputable spiritual differences” between the races, but qualifies this present “racial diversity” as a temporary state that will be abolished at the eschaton.⁴¹ Like the other orders of creation, race is a penultimate condition intended to govern human life in its postlapsarian state. *Rasse* and *Volk* are not ultimate categories, but they nevertheless must be maintained in historical existence to safeguard against chaos.

stalt dieser Welt und die Sünde: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Geschichte,” *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 9 (1932), 335.

³⁷ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 55.

³⁸ “The solution to the Jewish Question can be expected neither through the completion of emancipation and assimilation nor through the external or legal expulsion [of the Jews] from the life association [*Lebensverband*] of our state.” Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 55.

³⁹ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 55.

⁴⁰ “Yet in physically-descriptive anthropology, the concept is absolutely precarious, as there is a consensus neither about racially demarcating physical characteristics nor about the racial classification of humanity, except for in the most general of terms.” Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 67.

⁴¹ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 67.

Chaos, however, now threatens the order of creation as Jews encroach into German *Volkstum*—not primarily through the contamination of German blood, but through the corruption of German values through foreign spirituality. In particular, for Althaus “the danger of Jewry exists above all in the fact that...it has become the chief bearer of the rational-critical, individualistic spirit of the Enlightenment, and as such a predominate force in the struggle against the historical ties, customs, and traditions of our people.”⁴² The Jews, then, are not only aliens, but also agents of alienation.

In particular, over the previous century, a modern constellation of Judaism had created a distinct subculture based on the ideals of the Enlightenment in the hopes of attaining equal standing with ethnic Germans by way of *Bildung*. As more Jews embraced the progressive vision of the *Haskalah*, the visible distinction between Jews and Germans started to blur. Consequently, emancipation and antisemitism shared a symbiotic relationship—a byproduct of what Shulamit Volkov has called the “paradoxes of becoming alike.”⁴³

Unnerved by these paradoxes, Althaus instead hopes for a provisional solution to the “Jewish Question” in a stringent and visible delineation between Jews and Germans through “Jewry’s intensified awareness of its own unique *Volkstum*, its own special destiny [*Schicksal*], and its own particular situation.” Since in Althaus’ view the Enlightenment project had failed, Jews should now “openly profess” their Jewishness by embracing their distinct historical vocation.⁴⁴

However, implicit in Althaus’ proposal is the fear that, despite his attestation to the contrary, assimilation *had* worked—at least partially. The call for Jews to “come out” [*sich bekennen*] and identify themselves hints at Althaus’ fear and

⁴² Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 67.

⁴³ See Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 202-23.

⁴⁴ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 55.

suspicion of assimilated Jews who were now impossible to distinguish from Germans. Only when Jews openly confess their Jewishness can the appropriate boundaries between Jews and Germans be established. With these boundaries in place, Althaus envisions a “worthy community” characterized by mutual respect.⁴⁵ It is critical to recognize, however, that Althaus does not envision separate societies for Germans and Jews, but rather clear and visible demarcation between Germans and Jews in a shared societal space.

Althaus’ view has dramatic implications because of the undesirable nature of the Jewish vocation. In contempt of the orders of creation, the world’s peoples have become jumbled in the unfolding of history. In this “muddle of peoples...not every *Volk* finds the possibility of the formation of its own national state.”⁴⁶ While some peoples are privileged to realize the destiny of nationhood, others must bear the “difficult fate” [*schweres Schicksal*] of living as exiles within a foreign state to testify to “the limits of the national state’s authority.”⁴⁷ Althaus describes the Jews’ alleged divine commission in nearly identical terms:

...the mystery of the Jewish destiny among and for the peoples has, in the judgment of faith, a serious purpose. The question of this scattered, homeless Jewry exhibits the open question of history in general, reminds us of the limits of ethnic segregation and ethnic national-community [*völkischer Geschlossenheit*], and directs our gaze to the coming Kingdom of God.⁴⁸

The Jews’ socio-political purpose and their theological purpose are virtually synonymous. It is precisely as the “scattered, homeless Jewry” that Jewish persons fulfill their unenviable national mission as signs of the unresolvability of human history,

⁴⁵ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 55.

⁴⁶ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 61.

⁴⁷ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 61.

⁴⁸ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 55.

as free-floating alien bodies that prevent the total ethnic homogeneity of other peoples, and as mysterious portends of the coming Kingdom.

Echoes of the ancient libel of the eternally wandering Jew are obvious, especially because Althaus links the Jews' disinherited state with their rejection of Jesus.⁴⁹ But it is striking to note how Althaus reframes what many Christian theologians have considered as the Jews' "curse" (i.e. their exilic existence among the nations) as the Jews' "destiny." More accurately, perhaps, he conflates the concepts of curse and vocation. The curse of the Jews is, paradoxically, also their unique calling: to dwell on the fringes of all human societies as a perpetually dispossessed sign of judgment over other peoples with more glorious destinies to fulfill. In the end, Althaus rejects the inclusion/exclusion binary represented by the ideologies of assimilation and racial antisemitism. Instead, he offers a dialectical vision of Jewish existence wherein the place of Jewish persons is both inside and outside of human communities—both everywhere and nowhere.

C. The Jews as disrupters of "ethnic national unity": *Gott und Volk* (1932)

By the time Althaus' essay *Gott und Volk* appears in 1932, nationalistic fervor is reaching its boiling point. Althaus perceives a danger at each opposite pole of the public debate about the surging *völkisch* movement. On the one hand, the rise of non-Christian *völkisch* ideology—whether in the form of secular nationalism or neo-paganism—threatens to drown out Christian proclamation regarding the relationship between God and the German nation. On the other hand, Althaus distrusts "a truncated concept of theology, indeed of revelation," which precludes the possibility of divine self-revelation in political and historical events.⁵⁰ The Althausian brand of Christian

⁴⁹ Althaus, *Leitsätze*, 55.

⁵⁰ Paul Althaus, "Gott und Volk," in *Die deutsche Stunde der Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934), 34.

nationalism emerges here: German renewal lies in a Christian spirituality that can venerate the *Volk* without idolizing it.⁵¹

Althaus basically affirms the *völkisch* impulse, but fears that it has become untethered from Germany's Christian heritage by elevating the *Volk* over its creator. To temper the threat of idolatry, he warns that "all earthly bonds have been 'called into question before God.'" It is therefore impossible to speak of an "eternal nationality" [*ewige Volkstum*] because "The *Volk* is a creation and just a creation, God-given, but truly not immortal and not divine; it is instead mortal and transient, limited and sinful."⁵²

It is at this point that the "Jewish Question" actually provides a constructive resource for the christianization of nationalism: "However we Germans solve it, one thing will not change: the Jews will remain seated in our country, as they are among the other peoples of the world."⁵³ Even though Jewish existence represents a danger, it is nevertheless a permanent fixture in all societies. For Althaus the Jews have a special significance for Germans as proof of the limits of ethnic solidarity. In other words, he recruits the Jews as a tool to combat idolatrous nationalisms: "It seems to me that their destiny, beyond all of the difficult tasks and hardships that it brings with it, has a clear purpose from God..." The purpose of Jewish existence is threefold:

- 1) to "disrupt the ethnic national unity" [*völkische Geschlossenheit*] in human societies everywhere, but "particularly acutely" in Germany,
- 2) to "point to the limits and relativity of ethnic segregation" [*völkische Sonderung*], and
- 3) to "direct our gaze to the coming Kingdom of God."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Althaus, "Gott und Volk," 46.

⁵² Althaus, "Gott und Volk," 47.

⁵³ Althaus, "Gott und Volk," 47.

⁵⁴ Althaus, "Gott und Volk," 47.

The themes expressed in this passage capture the complexity of Althaus' theology of the "Jewish Question" during the Weimar period. The Jews, though dangerous, are actually indispensable for his theology of *Volk*.

Within his christianized *völkisch* nationalism, Althaus thus puts the Jews to work as a "thorn, which painfully disturbs gentile self-segregation in national identity."⁵⁵ The Jews therefore must remain an unsolvable problem. The expulsion of German Jews, according to the logic of *Gott und Volk*, is a theological impossibility. Jews are indispensable not because they are intrinsically valuable, but because they have been charged with a strange and difficult vocation: to testify to the limits of national achievement in the fallen state of creation. Jewish persons are evidence of the provisional nature of ethnic segregation and of the limitations of the ideal of ethnic national-community. In a paradoxical way, Althaus uses the Jews as a rhetorical device to expose a fatal flaw in secular and pagan ethnic nationalisms: the idolatrous exaltation of the *Volk* above its creator. For this reason, Althaus proposes not that Jews be expelled or assimilated, but quarantined within German communities as an exhibit to prove that no *Volk* stands above its creator.

D. The Jews as riddle of the coming Kingdom: *Der Brief an die Römer* (1932)

Althaus also puzzles over the "dark, depressing riddle" posed by Israel's existence in his *Der Brief an die Römer* of 1932: "The people of salvation history [*Heilsgeschichte*] has become the salvation-less people."⁵⁶ His interpretation of the destiny of the Jews in Romans 9-11 exhibits the same dialectic-

⁵⁵ Jörg Baur, "Vermittlung in unversöhnten Zeiten: Zum Gedenken an Paul Althaus 1888-1966," *Kerygma und Dogma* 34 (1988), 189.

⁵⁶ Paul Althaus, *Der Brief an die Römer. Übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932), 79.

cal quality of much Christian discourse about the Jews within the “witness people” tradition.⁵⁷

Positively, Althaus emphasizes Israel’s continuing, though qualified, election by God. In contrast to the radical elements of the *völkisch* movement, which aim to discount completely Israel’s salvation-historical importance, Althaus maintains that a *remnant* of ethnic Israel will figure prominently in the climax of salvation-history. Likewise, his affirmation of the Jewishness of Jesus is not without significance in a time when some Christian theologians were trying to aryanize him.⁵⁸

But even though the religious history of the people of Israel is critical, the church is now the true “Israel of God.”⁵⁹ Althaus, generally following a classical supersessionist model, reconfigures Israel as a theological category so that “bodily descent from the people of Israel does not necessarily mean belonging to the true Israel as the community of the children of God, that is, the church of God.”⁶⁰ In the negative dimension of the dialectic, then, the people of Israel were once the bearers of salvation-history, but have squandered that original vocation by rejecting grace in favor of a dead religion of works righteousness. As a result of Israel’s obstinacy, “God’s way of salvation has become for Israel a doom and a curse through their unbelief.”⁶¹

Althaus resolves the dilemma of Israel’s simultaneous election and reprobation by appealing to the “remnant”—a small remainder of Christians of Jewish descent who fulfill Israel’s election and stand as evidence of God’s faithfulness to

⁵⁷ See Stephen Haynes, *Reluctant Witnesses: Jews and the Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 8-10.

⁵⁸ Althaus, *Römer*, 79. See Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁵⁹ Althaus, *Römer*, 80.

⁶⁰ Althaus, *Römer*, 82.

⁶¹ Althaus, *Römer*, 87.

his covenant with Israel. It is Jewish Christians, in addition to Gentiles, who now constitute the true Israel, occupying the space vacated by the majority of ethnic Israel. Israel's lapse is, paradoxically, the fulfillment of its original salvation-historical function: to bring salvation to the Gentiles.⁶²

These comments on the text, though often antagonistic toward Judaism, generally exhibit the same tension between Jewish reprobation and preservation evident in classical Christian exegesis.⁶³ However, in a concluding excursus Althaus seeks to connect his interpretation of Romans 9-11 to the contemporary socio-political discourse about the "Jewish Question" in Germany.⁶⁴ In the transition from biblical text to social commentary, Althaus relies on antisemitic libels and anti-Judaic clichés.

In the first place, Althaus suggests that Israel's destiny has been forever altered by its confrontation with Jesus Christ. He writes that, "In Israel's history with God, its encounter with Christ was the decisive hour. Israel's fate [*Schicksal*], both inward and outward, is sealed decisively through its rejection of Jesus." The crucifixion is the pivotal moment in which *Israel*—the vessel of salvation-historical—becomes *the Jews*—the present-day ethnic population with no direct salvation-historical significance. Althaus' radical re-orientation of the purpose of Jewish existence now comes into view. The failure to recognize Jesus as God's Messiah signals the end of Israel's *direct* role in the drama of salvation history. Since the crucifixion, one can now speak of "the eternal Jew" [*der ewige Jude*], who is destined to roam the earth disrupting the peace of others because he himself can find no peace.⁶⁵

⁶² Althaus, *Römer*, 93-94.

⁶³ See Haynes, *Reluctant Witnesses*, 25-63.

⁶⁴ Althaus, *Römer*, 100.

⁶⁵ Althaus, *Römer*, 100-01. Althaus had taken up the theme of the Jews' guilt for the crucifixion, and their subsequent curse, in his sermons, "Die Herrlichkeit in der Passion," in *Der Lebendige: Rostocker Predigten* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1926), 146 and "Die Stimme des Blutes," in *Der Gegenwärtige: Predigten* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932), 162-63.

In this rhetoric, Jewish existence is parasitic, sapping the vitality of the societies to which it is attached:

This scattered, homeless people that everywhere disrupts the ethnic national-unity [*völkische Geschlossenheit*] of their host-peoples, and which in many cases represents an open wound, embodies the open question of history in general, reminds the peoples of the limits of their ethnic national-community and of the provisional nature of their segregation [*Sonderung*], and directs their gaze to the coming Kingdom of God.⁶⁶

By plaguing the national body as an “open wound” that will not heal, the Jews again enact their “indirect eschatological significance” as a living symbol to remind Germans of the provisional nature of their ethnic national solidarity.⁶⁷ The continued existence of Jewish communities, in other words, is a sign of God’s judgment over the “self-assertion” of the *Volk* against God.⁶⁸ Though the Jews are no longer the bearers of salvation history, they retain a critical, if indirect, theological purpose—even while they, like an open wound, threaten to infect an otherwise healthy body.

II. Pathology and performance in Althaus’ theology of the “Jewish Question”

These four documents provide us with a useful framework through which to interpret the *Erlangen Opinion*. The dialectic of pathology and performance that animates Althaus’ theology of the “Jewish Question” during the Weimar period can be outlined as follows:

⁶⁶ Althaus, *Römer*, 101.

⁶⁷ The language is André Fischer’s. See *Zwischen Zeugnis und Zeitgeist*, 500.

⁶⁸ Althaus, *Römer*, 101.

- 1) Jewish persons are dangerous. Althaus confronts the “Jewish Question” within his militant permutation of the Lutheran doctrine of the orders of creation, the elemental “laws of life” which express God’s design for the segregation of human communities according to ethnic type.⁶⁹ Jews violate God’s elemental design for creation when they hide their Jewishness and pose as Germans. The Jews thus represent a threat to the orders of creation in general and a spiritual danger to Germans in particular. Althaus therefore frequently uses the language of pathology and infection to characterize Jewish existence.
- 2) Even under the curse, Jewish persons are indispensable because Jewish existence is performative. The people of *Israel* have become *the Jews* at the crucifixion, and now exist within the dialectic of election and curse. Having failed their original salvation-historical vocation, ethnic Jews have now been re-commissioned to wander the earth as disrupters of socio-political communities and signs of divine judgment.
- 3) Jewish persons perform constructive symbolic functions in the *socio-political* sphere. The Jews’ “peculiar self-assertion” as a *Volk* in the socio-political sphere serves as evidence of the limits of ethnic nationality.⁷⁰ Confined as visible exhibits on the margins of society, Jews testify that the *Volk*, no matter how healthy or powerful, will never achieve full ethnic solidarity, purity of blood, or total authority.
- 4) Jewish persons perform constructive symbolic functions in the *theological* sphere. As they live out their

⁶⁹ This motif is common in Althaus’ Weimar writings, but reaches perhaps its fullest expression in Althaus’ 1935 edition of *Theologie der Ordnungen*, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1935): “In the classification of humanity into races and peoples, we recognize the creative richness of God, which establishes individual life here as it does everywhere. But this classification is at the same time segregation [*Sonderung*]. The peoples not only live next to each other, but also, to an extent, stand against each other” (53).

⁷⁰ Althaus, *Römer*, 101.

precarious mission to prevent total ethnic homogeneity in all human societies, the Jews portend theologically that the *Volk* will ultimately be transcended in the Kingdom of God. Though divested of their original vocation, Jews still exercise a critical prophetic function by confronting their host societies as a living safeguard against the idolization of the *Volk*.

In both the socio-political and the theological spheres, the Jews are for Althaus a *necessary danger* who must remain both *inside and outside* of surrounding communities to fulfill their purpose as a *Volk*. On a societal scale, the relationship between Jews and Germans is dialectical, and thus can be characterized neither by total exclusion nor total inclusion. Althaus rejects, therefore, both the assimilation and the expulsion of Germany's Jews. Instead, he projects an *inclusive quarantine model* in which Jewish danger is to be contained within but not eliminated from its host societies. Below, I propose that Althaus transposes the ecclesial question of the place of Jewish persons in the DEK onto this broader national vision of inclusive quarantine.

III. Inclusive quarantine in microcosm: the *Erlangen Opinion* (1933)

The Prussian General Synod had ruled that persons of non-Aryan descent, or those married to persons of non-Aryan descent, are to be prohibited from ordination. Those pastors of non-Aryan descent already serving should be forced into retirement, with the exception of those who can produce evidence of outstanding service to the German spirit.⁷¹ Though it does offer important qualifications, the *Opinion* legitimates the findings of the Synod. "The requirement of Aryan ancestry" is seen as an acceptable criterion for evaluating a ministerial candidate because the church has always made such judgments on the basis of "age, gender, and physical fit-

⁷¹ *Erlangen Opinion*, 321.

ness.”⁷² But in this judgment, the *Opinion* accepts uncritically the antisemitic discursive vocabulary of the Aryan Paragraph.⁷³

From the start, the *Opinion* anticipates the objection that the difference between Jew and German is overcome in the spiritual unity of the church.⁷⁴ Althaus and Elert grant that “no person, let alone an entire *Volk*, is to be excluded from the universal application of the Gospel.” Pursuant to this Gospel, Jews and Germans are indeed equals before God, for “in communion with Christ there is no distinction between Jew and non-Jew before God.” Yet under God’s self-revelation in the Law, “the common community that all Christians share as children of God does not abolish [*nicht aufhebt*] biological and societal differences.”⁷⁵ Because the Law “obligates us to the natural orders to which we have been subjected, such as family, *Volk*, and race (that is, blood relationship),” spiritual communion and ethnic solidarity are two separate questions.⁷⁶ A common confession may make a Jew a Christian, but it does not make a Jew a German.

The *Opinion* roots this exclusivist dimension of its ecclesiology in a specific interpretation of the church’s history. Althaus and Elert point to “evidence that, in the early church, the Jewish Christians [*Judenchristen*] followed a different church-order than non-Jewish Christians.” The churches of the Reformation in turn adopted this custom to produce a distinct form of ecclesiastical ordinance that conforms to “the classification [*Gliederung*] of Christian people according to history and ethnicity.”⁷⁷ To preserve the unique character of the German church through ethnic demarcation, as the Prus-

⁷² *Erlangen Opinion*, 321.

⁷³ The *Erlangen Opinion* employs the dubious racial language of “non-Aryan” [*nichtarischer*] as defined in the *First Racial Definition* of April 11, 1933. See Dov Weinryb, *Jewish Emancipation Under Attack*, 41-42.

⁷⁴ An objection raised, for example, in the *Marburg Opinion*.

⁷⁵ *Erlangen Opinion*, §1, 322.

⁷⁶ *Erlangen Opinion*, §1, 322.

⁷⁷ *Erlangen Opinion*, §2, 322.

sian General Synod has recommended, does not violate but rather upholds the Reformation tradition:

The national churches [*Kirchentümer*] which emerged from the Wittenberg Reformation, according to these fundamental principles, have adapted themselves to the boundaries between different peoples, and have preserved those boundaries not only in the vernacular language used in worship and in the shape of each national particularity [*Eigentümlichkeiten*], but have also contributed essentially to the cultivation and maintenance of those boundaries.⁷⁸

The DEK is therefore authorized to restrict the admission of Jewish Christians to pastoral office without violating the nature of the church because “being one in Christ [*Eins-Sein in Christus*] is for the Lutheran confessions not a question of external organization, but of faith.”⁷⁹

On the one hand, then, Althaus and Elert subordinate ecclesiology to the *Volk* within the doctrine of the orders of creation. The *Opinion* presupposes that the *Volk* is a fixed ordinance of creation to which the church must accommodate itself, rather than vice versa: “The ethnic plurality of external church ordinance is a necessary result of ethnic classification [*völkischen Gliederung*] in general, which is to be affirmed as both a matter of destiny [*schicksalhaften*] and as a matter of ethics...”⁸⁰ By this logic, a pastor must be connected organically to his congregation in order to meet the community’s spiritual needs. That is to say, a pastor must belong to the same *Volk* as

⁷⁸ *Erlangen Opinion*, §2, 322. I render *Kirchentümer* as “national churches,” but this word also connotes the concept of churches that conform to each ethnic group’s historical and spiritual particularity, such as vernacular language and social custom.

⁷⁹ *Erlangen Opinion*, §2, 322.

⁸⁰ *Erlangen Opinion*, §3, 322-23.

the members of his congregation, with whom he shares a common destiny.⁸¹

Althaus and Elert doubt that a Jewish pastor will be able to gain credibility with a German community. Should Jewish pastors remain in their posts, the *Opinion* anticipates “cases in which insurmountable difficulties arise between the pastor and the community on account of the Jewish ancestry of the pastor” due to the “breakdown of the relationship of trust between the pastor and the congregation.”⁸² This conclusion signals a continuation of the notion of incompatible, primordial spiritual types that Althaus developed in the Weimar period.⁸³

After subordinating ecclesiology to the *Volk*, the *Opinion* addresses the crux of the Aryan Paragraph—whether Jewish persons can really be considered German. On the face of it, Althaus and Elert leave the determination of the civil status of Jews to the discretion of the state: “The first question is whether the Jews who are residing in Germany are members of the German *Volk* in a full sense or whether they are their own *Volkstum* living as a guest-people [*Gastvolk*]. The church as such cannot decide that.” This reticence is due in part to the unique theological character of Jewish existence as “the salvation-historical *Volk* in its election and curse [*Erwählung und Fluch*].”⁸⁴

Here, the Jews fulfill a vital performative function in the *Opinion* precisely by suffering under the curse. Just as in Althaus’ Weimar writings, the Jews can enact their critical symbolic function only as the people destined to be perpetually scattered:

⁸¹ *Erlangen Opinion*, §3, 323. Cf. Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 131-34.

⁸² *Erlangen Opinion*, §7, 324.

⁸³ See Althaus, “Gott und Volk,” 35-36, Althaus, “Kirche und Volkstum,” 114, and Althaus, *Leitsätze zur Ethik*, 54.

⁸⁴ *Erlangen Opinion*, §4, 323.

In its landless dispersion throughout the peoples, [Jewry] reminds us of the limits of all ethnic national solidarity [*völkischen Geschlossenheit*], the provisional nature of ethnic segregation [*der Sonderung der Völker*], and of the Kingdom of God, which will come through the Christ that has been promised to Israel.⁸⁵

Through this excerpt we glimpse Althaus' consistent theological vision in which the Jews fulfill a constructive theological function not in spite of the curse, but through it.

Yet in the political sphere as well, the Jews are not a people just like any other. The *Opinion* characterizes this "alien *Volkstum*" as a "threat" [*Bedrohung*] and a "danger" [*Gefahr*] to the life of the German *Volk*.⁸⁶ Here again Althaus recalls the theology of the "Jewish Question" he had constructed during the Weimar period. Just as before, the Jews appear as a unique obstacle for the realization of the German destiny.⁸⁷ Because the perceived menace of emancipated Jewry is so acute in the present historical crisis, Althaus and Elert authorize the state to take extreme action to neutralize the threat: "In the struggle for the renewal of our *Volk* the new state is excluding men of Jewish or half-Jewish descent from offices of leadership. The church must respect the fundamental right of the state to take such legislative measures."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *Erlangen Opinion*, §4, 323. Althaus again characterizes Jewish existence as intrinsically "landless" because the Jews are destined to roam among other peoples of the earth. The language is taken virtually verbatim from Althaus' Weimar writings. See Althaus, *Leitsätze zur Ethik*, 55, Althaus, "Gott und Volk," 48, and Althaus, *Römer*, 101. In all three passages, as in the *Erlangen Opinion*, the Jews are commissioned to disrupt "ethnic national solidarity" [*völkische Geschlossenheit*] and to limit "ethnic segregation" [*völkische Sonderung*].

⁸⁶ *Erlangen Opinion*, §5, 323.

⁸⁷ Althaus spoke of the "threat" [*Bedrohung*] and "danger" [*Gefahr*] of the Jewish spirit in "Kirche und Volkstum," (119, 130-31, and 134-35), *Leitsätze zur Ethik* (54-55), and "Gott und Volk" (35). In *Leitsätze zur Ethik*, Althaus had expressed particular concern over the threat posed by an emancipated and invisible Jewry (54-55).

⁸⁸ *Erlangen Opinion*, §5, 323.

At this point, Althaus' Jew-as-affliction language resurfaces, but this time the Jew not only saps the strength of society in general, but of the church in particular:

In the present situation, to have men of Jewish stock [*Judenstämmigen*] occupy the church's offices would mean a severe strain on and inhibition of [*eine schwere Belastung und Hemmung*] the church's position in the life of the *Volk* and for the fulfillment of its tasks. Therefore the church must require that its Jewish Christians be restrained from taking pastoral office.⁸⁹

The *Opinion* reasons under the assumption not only that the Jewish and German spiritual types are in competition, but also that the Jewish type is especially dangerous. The language of *Belastung*—which connotes both “strain” and “pollution”—is symptomatic of a deeply anti-Judaic *völkisch* theology: a Jewish pastor will only “pollute” the life of the *Volkskirche* and inhibit the implementation of its mission.⁹⁰ On this pathological pole of the dialectic, then, the *Erlangen Opinion*, and the Althausian theology of the *Volk* in which it is rooted, is characterized by its profound distrust of Jewish persons.

Nevertheless, the *Opinion* does make final recommendations that controvert the more aggressive policy of the Prussian General Synod. Despite the document's suspicion of Jews, its authors maintain that to dismiss currently serving pastors solely on the basis of their ancestry would violate the essence of the pastoral office. For this reason, Althaus and Elert conclude that “here the church cannot simply adopt the regulations of the state's legislation in every regard, but it must

⁸⁹ *Erlangen Opinion*, §5, 323.

⁹⁰ I render *Belastung* as “strain,” but it also connotes “pollution.” The image of the Jewish pastor as a pollutant is evocative of the National Socialist obsession with ethnic and spiritual purity.

act according to the rules which arise out of its nature as the church.”⁹¹

This is where the critical nuance is to be emphasized. Though Christians of Jewish ancestry are to be disqualified from leadership, the membership of Jewish persons in the DEK must not be denied or otherwise restricted.⁹² It is precisely in this recommendation that we discern that, at the level of its structural logic, the *Opinion's* prescription for Jews in German church life parallels closely Althaus' broader vision for the place of the Jews in German public life. In spite of the danger they pose, Jewish Christians must be maintained within the community. At the same time, they are nevertheless quarantined off from their fellow Christians, even, paradoxically, within the church's walls.

As the concrete evidence of the continuing election of the Jews, Christians of Jewish descent perform a crucial salvation-historical role and therefore must exist in the church, though not in positions of influence.⁹³ In the same way, the Jews fulfill a critical symbolic function in German society as living cautionary tales that warn of the dangers of ethnic presumption—but always from the margins and never from the center. In both contexts—within the church and in secular society—the Jews exist in dialectical relationship to Germans as a problem that must be contained but not expelled, a threat that must be neutralized but not eliminated. In each case, Jewish persons are pushed to the edge of the community—away from public office, away from pulpit and altar—to serve as voiceless exhibits to be seen but not heard.

⁹¹ *Erlangen Opinion*, §7, 324.

⁹² *Erlangen Opinion*, §5, 323. While it is not entirely clear whether Althaus and Elert are calling for the establishment of separate churches for Jewish Christians, that is a plausible reading of the *Opinion*. However, for reasons that I have argued throughout, I am convinced that the prevailing logic of Althaus' thought makes space for Jewish Christians in the DEK even while he recommends that they be removed from pastoral office as a rule.

⁹³ Althaus had argued that the continuing election of Israel is maintained in Christians of Jewish descent in *Römer*, 93.

Conclusion. A people who belong everywhere and nowhere

I have argued that the entire trajectory of the *Erlangen Opinion*—that the Jews, conceived as a force that destabilizes the orders of creation and pollutes German spirituality, are to be confined as pieces of evidence on the margins of the church community—parallels Althaus’ broad theological vision for the Jews on a microcosmic scale. The recommendations of the *Opinion* are illuminated fully only when contextualized within Althaus’ Weimar writings on the “Jewish Question.” By tracing the themes of these Weimar writings, I have shown that the *Erlangen Opinion* exhibits a complex and dialectical theology of Judaism in which Jews simultaneously appear as critical witnesses to be included and as pathogens to be quarantined.

An exclusion/inclusion binary thus cannot fully reckon with Althaus’ dialectical vision for Jewish existence. The *Erlangen Opinion* calls neither for the total exclusion nor for the total inclusion of Jewish persons in the DEK, just as Althaus has rejected both extremes in the civil sphere. Rather, through the language of pathology and performance, Althaus identifies the Jews as dangerous but indispensable signs who stand both *within and apart from* the communities around them. For Althaus, it is the Jewish destiny to cleave to a tenuous existence on the periphery of the church, just as the Jews are destined to fulfill their precarious mission as perpetual wanderers on the fringes of every society. This side of the eschaton, the Jews belong both everywhere and nowhere, treated reluctantly in an inclusive quarantine.