these texts together. Christians are more apt today to understand the elements of collective **identity** that suppose that the Servant is the people of Israel (cf. Grelot). Modern Jewish commentators, on the other hand, are confronted with the significance in these texts of an innocent figure who carries the sins of the multitude, suggesting a redemptive theology of **atonement** through vicarious suffering. Joint Jewish–Christian study of the texts holds out much promise for the overcoming of centuries of biblical **polemics**. *DAVID M. NEUHAUS*

Sukkot

As one of three annual pilgrim festivals (with **Passover** and **Shavuot**) in ancient Judaism, Sukkot or the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in autumn the harvest of grapes and olives at the end of the season. It became associated with prayers for rain, and in the post-exilic period involved a water-drawing ceremony at the pool of Siloam and water libations at the **Jerusalem** altar, while the people processed carrying fruit and palm branches. To this day booths are built in remembrance of the Israelites dwelling in the wilderness and are decorated with branches (*lulav*) and fruits. It is possible that Sukkot came to signify Jewish national hope, it being the festival when Judas Maccabaeus rededicated the **Temple** on the first celebration of **Hanukkah** (1 Macc. 4), and it seems to have developed an **eschatological** dimension, as reflected in Zech. 14, which may then have been utilised by Rev. 7. For that reason there may be a resonance of the feast in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11), even though it is at the wrong time of year. John's Gospel, which mentions a celebration of the feast (John 7.2), draws on the water imagery of Sukkot in its designation of **Jesus** as the living water. In Jewish tradition, especially in the **Targumim**, the Tabernacles came to denote the indwelling presence of God, and it is perhaps a combination of that and the eschatological connotations that explains Peter's desire to build tabernacles at the Transfiguration of Christ (Mark 9.2–8 and parallels). As an annual **pilgrimage** festival the evangelical organisation the **International Christian Embassy** in Jerusalem has chosen Tabernacles for a gathering of Christians in **Israel** to witness and pray for the welfare of the country.

JAMES K. AITKEN

Supersessionism

From Latin *supersedere*: to sit above or be superior to. In general parlance to supersede means to take the place of someone or something, while to be superseded means to be set aside as useless or obsolete in favour of someone or something that is regarded as superior. In recent decades the term 'supersessionism' has gained currency among theologians and biblical scholars to refer to the traditional Christian belief that since Christ's coming the Church has taken the place of the Jewish people as God's chosen community, and that God's **covenant** with the Jews is now over and done. By extension, the term can be used to refer to any interpretation of Christian faith generally or the status of the Church in particular that claims or implies the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people. Supersessionism is thus substantially equivalent to **replacement theology**, and the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Although never formally defined as a **doctrine** by the **early Church**, supersessionism has stood at the centre of Christianity's understanding of its relationship to the Jewish people from antiquity until recent times. During the second and third centuries Christian theologians (e.g. **Irenaeus**, **Tertullian**) often articulated its main elements in opposition to Marcionism (*see* **Marcion**) on the one hand and Judaism on the other. They condemned Marcionites for denying that the one God and Father of Jesus Christ had spoken in the **Old Testament**, and that he had indeed entered in some fashion into a special relationship with **Abraham**'s descendants according to the flesh. But they equally condemned Jews for failing to recognise that after Christ's **incarnation** God had irrevocably transferred all the benefits of this relationship from Abraham's carnal descendents to his spiritual ones, that is, to the Church, where the benefits were moreover available in superior form. After Christianity became the official religion of the **Roman Empire**, supersessionism provided a theological rationale for imperial policy towards Jews, with similarly two-sided implications. In contrast to paganism, which was driven underground and eventually extinguished, Judaism continued to enjoy some measure of official **toleration** and self-government, but on terms increasingly subordinate to Christianity and disadvantageous to Jewish institutions. Supersessionism also figures prominently in modern Christian thought, which has often portrayed the origin of the Church as a victory of universal,

humanising values over ancient Judaism's narrow, self-interested, particularistic ones (**Kant**, Schleiermacher (1768–1834), **Harnack**).

After the Second World War, and particularly in the light of the **Holocaust**, Christians in Europe and North America gradually began to question the soundness of supersessionism on the grounds of its consistency with scripture (especially **Romans 9–11**), its coherence with other Christian beliefs (e.g. the fidelity of God) and its practical consequences (e.g. the inculcation of contempt toward Jews). By the 1990s many Church bodies had issued public teaching documents (e.g. the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland's *Toward Renovation of the Relationship of Christians and Jews* (1980) and the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s *A Theological Understanding of the Relationship Between Christians and Jews* (1987)) repudiating the belief that Christ's coming entails the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with **Israel**. Alternatives to supersessionism concur in affirming the ongoing validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people, but beyond that vary widely among themselves. Some emphasise the relative independence of Christianity and Judaism as different but equally valid appropriations of a common religious inheritance rooted in biblical Israel (often called 'two covenant' approaches). Others interpret the Church and the Jewish people as interdependent players in a common history of **salvation** (so-called 'one covenant' approaches). To date North Atlantic Christians have taken the initiative in seeking **post-supersessionist** ways to express Christian faith; the long-term viability of their efforts will depend in part on whether and to what degree Christians in South America, Asia and Africa also begin to consider and address the fundamental theological issues at stake.

See also **recognition theology**

R. KENDALL SOULEN

Switzerland

Switzerland has had a Jewish community since the thirteenth century, made up of Jews from **Germany** and **France**. The medieval community flourished until the mid-fourteenth century when, during the **Black Death**, Jews were accused of poisoning wells and of murdering a Christian boy named Rudolf (*see* **blood libel**). Many Jews were killed and Jewish children forcibly baptised. Regular **expulsions** followed, and although Jews often returned to their homes within a few years, in some cities such as Basel (edict in 1434) they were required to attend proselytising sermons. Jews began to return in greater numbers in the sixteenth century when Christian printers began printing **Hebrew** texts. **Emancipation** was granted in 1874. Prior to and during the Second World War Switzerland gave refuge to about 23,000 Jewish refugees, and its role in the **Holocaust** has become the object of fierce debate, notably in the 1990s. For example, the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Switzerland issued a statement on the subject in 1997, acknowledging the failure of the Churches. In 1947 Switzerland hosted a group of Jews, Protestants and Catholics in **Seelisberg** to consider the implications of the Holocaust; this marked the establishment of the International **Council of Christians and Jews**. The **World Council of Churches** and the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate are based in Switzerland, increasing its importance in modern Jewish–Christian **dialogue**. In 1977, for example, an Orthodox Christian–Jewish conference took place in Lucerne, a city that houses an institute for Jewish–Christian dialogue founded by Swiss Catholic theologian Clemens Thoma (b. 1932) who has written a number of important works on Christian–Jewish relations.

EDWARD KESSLER

Synagogue *see* Church and synagogue

Syriac Christianity

The Syriac language is a form of **Aramaic** spoken in the region of Edessa from shortly before the beginning of the Christian era. It is therefore closely related to the form of Aramaic spoken by **Jesus** himself. Syriac Christianity refers to the form Christianity took in the lands where Syriac was spoken, where there were active Christian communities from the beginning. It was a region where there had long been important Jewish communities, especially in Edessa. From the beginning relations between Jews and Syriac Christians were close, displaying both shared traditions and sharp antagonisms. This is illustrated by the fifth-century *Doctrine of Addai*, which on the one hand accuses Jews of killing Christ but on the other indicates that Christians had friendly relations with Jews and may have attended the synagogue. Because Syriac Christianity retained its original Semitic expression, it was thus less affected than Christianity in the rest of the **Roman Empire** by the need to negotiate the thought-world of **Hellenism**, and remained

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CAMBRIDGE