

MISHKAN

A THEOLOGICAL FORUM ON JEWISH EVANGELISM

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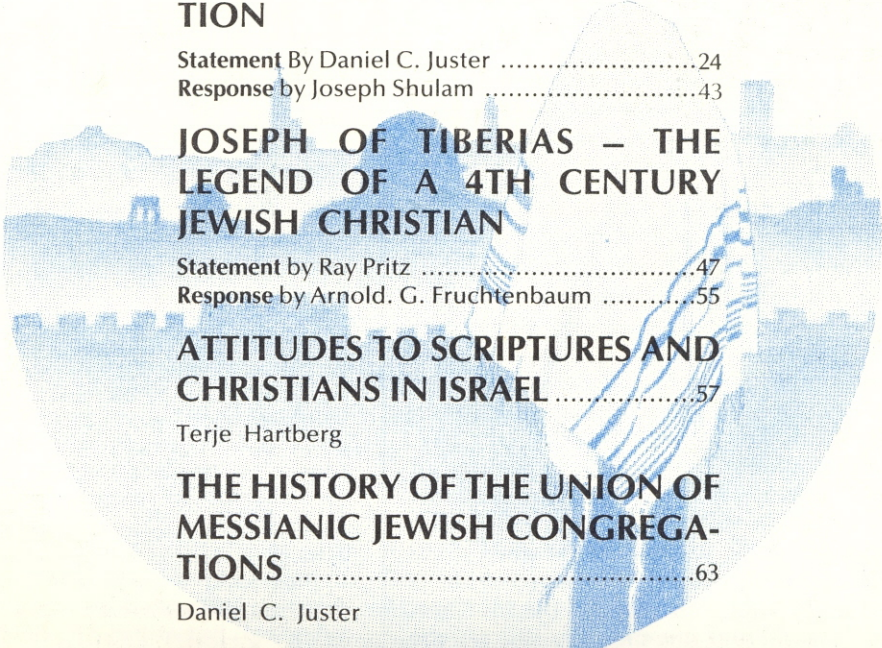
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MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

“MESSIANIC JEWISH THEOLOGY”

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Editorial

Jewish Evangelism and Messianic Judaism.

It is basic to New Testament faith that the Gospel does not negate Jewish identity but fulfills it. The goal of Jewish evangelism can therefore never be to assimilate Jewish believers into Gentile churches, but it must be the consistent growth of a Hebrew-Christian/Messianic-Jewish movement – as part of the Body of Christ and of Israel.

The second issue of MISHKAN – as a theological forum on Jewish evangelism – is therefore largely devoted to the issue of Messianic Jewish theology. In sharing the Gospel with Jewish people, we must occupy ourselves with a number of corollary questions: Is it today possible to renew and reflect the original Jewish context of the Gospel? How can we most meaningfully communicate the Good News to Jewish people today? What is essential for the maintenance of Jewish identity among Jewish Christians? What are the important theological, ideological and practical issues in the development of a consistent movement of Jewish believers?

In “The Quest for a Messianic Theology” Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum discusses theological developments in Early Judaeo-Christianity and tries to understand what lessons are to be learned for the development of the Hebrew-Christian and Messianic-Jewish movements today. With regard to Early Judaeo-Christianity we are also glad to present the historical contribution of Ray Pritz, “Joseph of Tiberias – the legend of a fourth century Jewish Christian.” Daniel C. Juster in “Covenant and Dispensation” discusses the critiques of Messianic Judaism that have come from Dispensational and Covenant theology. He then proposes a Messianic Jewish theology, which is somewhere between these two theological systems, that has gained from a knowledge of both: its greatest affinity is with Covenant Pre-Millennialism and this theology stresses the nation of Israel and the validity of Jewish identity and practice under the New Covenant. Fruchtenbaum and Juster write from the perspective of the American scene and with different approaches to the Messianic-Jewish movement in the U.S.A.; the first somewhat critical, the second its spokesman. But both see the necessity of Messianic Jewish theology for the sake of the identity of the Jewish believers in the Body of Christ and for the testimony to the Church and the Synagogue that both have lost something. Following up our intent to be a “forum”, the responses to the two contributions from the U.S.A. are written from the perspective of the Israeli scene, by David Stern and Joseph Shulam.

The Messianic assemblies, the evangelical congregations and the evangelistic outreach among Jewish people in Israel have received considerable attention from the Israeli media in the last months. No doubt this comes against the background of growth among the Jewish believers and new vigor in the Gospel ministry. In “Public Attitudes and the New Testament in Israel” the Executive Secretary of the Bible Society in Israel, Terje Hartberg, provides a penetrating survey of the Israeli scene, which may help our readers to a better understanding of the actual context of the Gospel ministry in this country. Hartberg's article is a report on a survey which the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research undertook on behalf of the Bible Society in 1983, and in which the main interest of the Bible Society was to learn about the

public attitudes towards Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, and towards institutions involved in distributing and communicating the biblical message.

The report of Elizabeth Hill on Jewish-Christian relationships in France, “Frères Mais Adversaires”, adds to the contributions from Israel and the U.S.A. and demonstrates the multi-faceted character of Jewish Evangelism in various parts of the world. The historical perspective and the realism of Elizabeth Hill’s report should serve as a call to us to remain faithful in our humble love toward the Jewish people and in our ministry for the salvation of all Israel – also throughout the Diaspora.

With Shalom from Jerusalem,

Ole Chr. M. Kvarme General Editor

THE QUEST FOR A MESSIANIC THEOLOGY

Statement by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

Dr. Fruchtenbaum is director of Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, Texas. He has authored Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History and Philosophy, 1974/1983, and is serving as the U.S.A. area coordinator for the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.

Introduction

It is the purpose of this paper not to try to develop a Messianic theology, but to deal with the quest to do so, and to raise specific questions with which the development of a Messianic theology must deal. In order to be sure that we understand our subject, we must start with some "working" definitions of terms and concepts.

First, what is the difference between a Hebrew-Christian theology and a Messianic theology? For most of the Jewish-Christian history in this century, the terms Hebrew/Jewish Christian and Messianic Jews were used interchangeably and without any real distinction. Only in the 70's did various factions develop in the Jewish-Christian movement so that one may now distinguish between Hebrew/Jewish Christians and Messianic Jews, though there is no agreement as to just where that line should be drawn. It is not the purpose of this paper to deal with these issues, though some comments and questions will be necessary as we proceed with the issues facing us today in the quest for a Messianic theology. For the purpose of this paper, the term Jewish Christian, Hebrew Christian, and Messianic Jew will be used interchangeably, meaning the same thing, unless otherwise stated.

Secondly, how does a Messianic theology differ from a Gentile theology?

The bottom line should be that there is no difference. Both Gentile believers and Jewish believers accept the Old and the New Testament as the Word of God. So why should there be any real difference? Of course, there may be differences of opinion about the meaning of specific passages of Scripture and a disagreement {2} concerning certain points of theology; but these differences are to be found among Gentile Christians as well as among Jewish Christians. In fact, for the most part the difference between Gentile Christianity and Hebrew Christianity has been largely a matter of emphasis. Jewish Christianity simply emphasized certain things that Gentile Christianity ignored, tolerated, or tried to deny. These points usually concern the role of Israel in our day, the concept of evangelism as being "to the Jew first", the Messianic Kingdom and similar issues.

However, it is possible to see the Scriptures from the viewpoint of a Jew and the viewpoint of a Gentile. The Jewish eyes may interpret Scripture on the basis of pro-Semitism, even to the point of anti-Gentilism, and indeed, a Judaizing tendency was already a danger in first century Christianity, at a time when the distinction between Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity was not all that clear. On the other hand, the Gentile eyes were often coloured and programmed by Hellenism and Hellenism's many descendants, by Gentile culture and a Gentile frame of reference. It is a fact that Gentile eyes in the past also have interpreted Scripture on the basis of, or as a result of anti-Semitism. The difference between a Jewish and a Gentile approach to Scripture began soon after the Gentiles became predominant in the Church – as early as the

apostolic period. The fact that Paul had to deal with the question, "Has God cast away His people?" (Romans 11:1) shows that such a question was being raised by many of the Gentile Christians in the Church of Rome, and no doubt elsewhere in the Christian world of that day. Throughout much of Church history, the Jewish Christian was simply forced to be gentilized, even to the point of having to change his name. Often that which was considered "Christian" was nothing more than being "Gentile".¹

Ideally, the purpose of theological research should be to develop a proper systematic theology based upon the exegesis of Scripture from the grammatical-historical hermeneutical principles in order to get to the actual meaning intended by the original writers, and in our case, particularly the New Testament writers. If we were all to agree on the results, there would never be any difference between Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity. However, the previously referred to historical development of Christian theology today makes it necessary to develop a Messianic theology based on the following assumptions:

- {3} Messianic theology is first and foremost an attempt to develop a systematic theology deduce from the fact that the writers of the New Testament were Jews, and that the New Testament was written against a backdrop of first century Judaism, Jewish culture, and a Jewish frame of reference.
- Secondly Messianic theology is an attempt to maintain and to accommodate Jewishness in the face of a Gentile majority.
- Thirdly, since Messianic theology must be biblical theology, it can also correct Gentile theology by separating that which is biblical from that which is merely Gentile

With these introductory remarks, we now first turn to a survey of theological movements in early Jewish Christianity and then secondly to the quest for a Messianic theology in our own times. This may then help us in the concluding third chapter to outline the basic questions and issues ahead of us in the development of a Messianic theology.

1. THE EARLY QUEST

Theology has often developed as a result of conflict and controversy. The same is true for Messianic theology. With Jewish Christianity of the first four centuries, this conflict came from the sources. The first was the Jewish community which, at a time when rabbinical Judaism was being developed, tended increasingly to ostracize the Jewish believers. Some time after the first Jewish revolt of 66-70 A.D., around A.D. 90, a curse formula against Jewish Christians and "other heretics" was introduced into the daily prayers of the synagogue (the Birkat-Ha-Minim of the Shmoneh-Esreh), and this effectively separated the Jewish Christians from the synagogue. One result of the second Jewish revolt of 132-135 A.D. (the Bar-Cochba Revolt) was the separation of the Christians from the Jewish community.

¹ Cf. H. Ellison, Why Jewish Christianity Disappeared, Good News, Vol 33 Jan.-Feb. 1983.

The second source of conflict and controversy was the predominant Gentile Church with all of its pressures on the Jewish Christians to the Gentile majority in culture, practice and theology. One example of this theological conflict was the issue as to when the resurrection of Jesus should be celebrated: Easter Sunday or two days following the first night of Passover. The conflict with the Gentile Church also influenced the course of Messianic theology, especially in the realm of the observance of Jewish holy days and their Christological/Messianic significance continuance.

{4} In the second century A. D., the Jewish-Christian movement began to splinter and separate itself into two major groups, orthodox and heterodox with each segment having some minor divisions among themselves. Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with Trypho saw four different groups of Jewish believers in his day, which were separated on the basis of specific theological issues. These four were: first, those Jewish Christians who kept the Law but did not try to force their own ways on Gentile Christians; secondly, Christian Jews who kept the Law and also insisted on Gentile believers keeping the Law; thirdly, those Christian Jews who were part of the Gentile Church and accepted basic Christian doctrine; and, fourthly, those Jews who believed Jesus to be the Messiah but did not believe in His pre-existence or in His deity.

1a. The Nazarenes

The orthodox group is generally known as the Nazarenes. The early community of Jewish believers was called "the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5), and it seems that we can follow their existence from Jerusalem and Judea and to the Aleppo-area in Syria at least into the fourth century A.D.² The basic doctrines to which they held to were largely the same as those of the Gentile Christian Church, except that there were special Jewish emphases placed upon them, and Jewish practices and rituals were often observed.

Concerning their Christology, the Nazarenes clearly held to the deity of Christ and affirmed Jesus as the Son of God and a member of the Trinity. One special Jewish emphasis was on the reference to Jesus as "the Name of God", clearly arising from the rabbinic concept of "Hashem" ("the name"), as a substitute for the Old Testament name of God (YHVH). The Nazarenes clearly affirmed that the Jesus of the New Testament was the YHVH of the Old Testament. This usage is, for example, found in the Gospel of Truth, one of the second century manuscripts that was found in Nag Hammadi in 1945 and that seems to rest on first century Jewish-Christian theology. It has been pointed out that this reference to Jesus as the Name contains three aspects: the divine nature of Jesus; Jesus as one in whom the divine nature manifests itself; and Jesus as a person distinct from the Father.³

Concerning the incarnation, the Nazarenes accepted the accounts of Matthew and Luke on the virgin birth. However, more significant {5} for the Nazarenes than the birth and the nativity of Jesus was His baptism. In fact, it is at this point that the heterodox groups deviated from the norm. But, the Nazarenes gave these accounts much greater cosmic dimensions. At His incarnation, Christ passed through the angelic worlds. At His nativity, He dispossessed the demonic powers. At His baptism, He confronted the prince of the abyss.

² Cf. the recent study on the Nazarenes by R. Pritz, *The Jewish Christian Sect of the Nazarenes*, Jerusalem 1981 (Mimeogr.; doctoral thesis).

³ Danielou pg. 158; Hort pgs 179-180; and Longenecker pgs. 41-46

The Jewish-Christian writings saw the Church as an entity distinct from Israel though it shared many of the rabbinic concepts concerning Israel that were now applied to the Church. For example, the rabbis had taught that the world was created on behalf of Israel, but some early Jewish-Christian writings stated that the world was created on behalf of the Church.

Also significant were the two rituals of baptism and communion. Half a century ago the general opinion was that these rituals were developed with the main influence coming from the Hellenistic mysteries. Today this view no longer holds the ground, and J. Danielou is probably right in maintaining that it is "in the organization of worship that Jewish Christianity has made its deepest and enduring mark on the Church. "⁴ The Jewish Christians emphasized the need of living water for baptism and that communion should take place in conjunction with a common meal, often containing a mixture of milk and honey. However, these emphases were changed when these rituals were taken out of their original Jewish context and put into a Greek-Roman milieu.

It is also worth noting that the Jewish Christians in Eretz Israel organized a course of preparation for baptism. This course included moral instruction according to the teaching of the Two Ways, a distinct heritage from the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism, and further: a period of fasting, a personal undertaking to observe the precepts that have been taught, and a break with the old life.⁵

The evidence also points to the fact that the weekly worship day of the Nazarenes was Sunday rather than Saturday. The institution of Sunday is a heritage from the first community of Jewish believers. The early Jewish-Christian writing called "Didache" (the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) gives the following instruction: "And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks" (14,1). Similarly, the Epistle of Barnabas from the beginning of the second century states: "We also celebrate with gladness the eighth day, in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into Heaven" (15,9). The early Jewish believers celebrated Sunday side by side with the social observance of the Sabbath, and {6} according to the evidence of Epiphanius⁶ the Nazarenes continued this practice. The rabbinical response to this was to forbid fasting on Sunday, in order to avoid showing respect to the day held as special by the Jewish believers.⁷

One of the most distinctive features of Jewish-Christian theology was the emphasis on the Millennium: the belief that there will be an earthly reign of the Messiah before the end of time. The Jewish Christians applied Old Testament prophecies or those of Christ regarding the world to come to the future reign of the Messiah, and promises to Israel were taken literally. The Millennium was interpreted by some as the triumph of the chosen people. In his description of the early Jewish-Christian theology, J. Danielou makes it clear: taken within the Jewish frame of reference in which the Scriptures were written, there is a literal Millennium, but when reinterpreted Hellenistically, then one becomes an a-millennialist.⁸

⁴ Cf. Danielou, pg 315

⁵ Cf. Danielou 323

⁶ Cf. Danielou pgs. 342-343

⁷ T. B. Ta'nit 27 b.

⁸ Cf. Danielou pgs. 377-78

The orthodox Nazarene group, then, can be summarized as follows: The basic doctrines of the faith were adhered to as they were among the Gentile Christians, though the Nazarenes gave the faith a special Jewish emphasis; they often had their own congregations; they accepted the writings of Paul; they continued the many

Jewish practices, such as circumcision and Passover but gave them national rather than Judaistic significance; however, to a large extent they rejected Pharisaism and Rabbinic Judaism as is seen by their observance of Sunday and fast days which were different from those of Pharisaic Judaism. Nevertheless, it is a sad fact that Gentile Christians often viewed the Nazarenes in a negative way because of their continuance of certain Jewish practices.

1b. Heretical Groups

The pressure from the Jewish and the Gentile-Christian sides of the Jewish-Christian movement quickly resulted in heretical movements. The earliest heresy already evident in the pages of the New Testament is the Judaizing heresy in which Jewish believers insisted that Gentile believers convert to Judaism, take upon themselves the obligation of the Law, and initiate this obligation by the act of circumcision (Acts 15, Galatians). There was a strong pull upon Jewish believers, especially those still in the land, to go back to the Temple rituals (this is reflected indirectly in the letter to the Hebrews), though this issue was settled once and for all in 71 A.D. with the destruction of the Temple. The Judaizing tendency, however, survived beyond the writings of the New Testament {7} as the writings of Ignatius of Antioch from the second century clearly show. According to Ignatius, the mark of a Judaizer was the practice of three elements: the Law, circumcision, and the Sabbath, but more so, the insistence that the Gentile Christians do likewise. He writes: "But if anyone interprets to you Judaism, do not listen to him, for it is better to hear Christianity from the circumcised than Judaism from the uncircumcised."⁹

The largest heretical group which split the Jewish-Christian movement was known as Ebionism. The Ebionites derived their name from the Hebrew *evyon* (poor), probably regarding themselves as "the poor ones" according to Matthew 5:3. The sect was founded in the beginning of the second century by Theobuthis who was soured by the fact of not being chosen over Simon, son of Clopas, as the new head of the Jerusalem Church. He was rejected after a theological struggle and so began a heretical wing of Hebrew Christianity. The history of the Ebionites continues at least into the fourth century, and they also had a stronghold in the geographical area of Syria.

If the Nazarenes could be called "Judaic Christianity", then Ebionism could be called "Judaistic Christianity". They believed Jesus to be the Messiah, which they defined merely as one who would be the greatest of the prophets but not the Son of God. They rejected both the virgin birth and the deity of Jesus. Jesus was a man who kept the Law perfectly and for that reason he was chosen to be the Messiah. They set up their own churches to celebrate their own rites.

The fourth century theologian Epiphanius writes of the Ebionites: "Besides the daily ritual bath they have a baptism of initiation and each year they celebrate certain mysteries in imitation of the church of the Christians. In these mysteries they use unleavened bread, and for the other part, pure water. They say that God has established two things: Christ and the Devil. To the former has been committed the power of the world to come, and to the other the power of this world. They

⁹ Ignatius letter to the Philadelphians, IV 1. Cf. Hort pgs. 184-185

say that Jesus was begotten of human seed, and chosen, and thus called by election son of God, Christ having come upon him from on high in the form of a dove. They say that he was not begotten by God the Father, but that he was created, like the archangels, but greater than they. He came into the world and he taught, as it is written in the Gospel ¹⁰"I have come into the world to destroy sacrifices, and if you do not give up sacrificing the anger of God shall not cease."¹⁰

The Ebionites only accepted the Gospel of Matthew, rejected the other Gospels and saw Paul as an apostate from the Law. They exalted James and emphasized his superiority over both Peter and Paul because of his attitude toward the Law.

{8} Thus in their Christology, the Ebionites saw Jesus as a man chosen by God. They denied His virgin birth and taught that at baptism a power came from God and descended upon Him. They were anti-trinitarian. In their soteriology, they did not see the Christian faith as a religion of salvation, but rather that Christ's mission was simply one of teaching. They observed the Mosaic Law and saw the keeping of circumcision and Sabbath as both being mandatory. They viewed Jesus as a reformer of the Law who brought it back to the true ideals of Moses, and they rejected the temple worship and the blood sacrifices.

Ebionism had some strong resemblances to Essene Judaism, especially in three areas: ritual baths, the concept of the two principles of good and evil (Christ and the Devil), and the condemnation of sacrifices. Because of this, some scholars believe that after 70 A.D. many Essenes joined the Ebionite branch of the Jewish Christian movement.

Closely akin to Ebionism was Elkesaism. Like the Ebionites, they regarded the practice of certain Jewish customs as mandatory. They rejected certain portions of the New Testament, especially the writings of Paul, and denied the virgin birth and the deity of Christ. The new element added by the Elkesaites is the teaching that a special revelation was given to their founder, Elkesai, by an angel who was 96 miles high. Accompanying the angel was a feminine being. The angel was identified as the Son of God and the feminine being as the Holy Spirit. The content of the book which the angel gave to Elkesai was the announcement of remission of sin after baptism and the allowance of a second repentance. The Elkesite movement rose in the first part of the second century, but disappeared after a short while.¹¹

1c. The End of the Early Hebrew-Christian Movement and the Early Quest

As if the orthodox Nazarenes did not have enough problems which stemmed from heretical wings that insisted on too much "Jewishness" (actually Judaism), the Gentile Christians attacked the Nazarenes for too much Judaism (actually Jewishness). The best example of this struggle was over the issue of the date of Easter. It became the practice of Gentile Christianity to observe this day on the first Sunday after the spring equinox, but the Jewish Christians observed the day during the Passover season. As early as 196 A.D., the Council of Caesarea ruled in favor of a Sunday Easter. There was no Jewish Christian representation at this {9} council, as Epiphanius

¹⁰ Ephipanius, Panarion 30. 16 quoted according to Danielou, pgs. 56-57

¹¹ Other Heretical Jewish-Christian groups mentioned by the Church Fathers are e.g. the Cerinthians, the Symmachians. Cf. Danielou, pgs. 55-85, and Bagatti, pgs. 30ff. Cf. also Klijn-Reinink, pp. 3-73

wrote: "Controversy came into being after the bishops of the circumcision had disappeared."¹² The decision was rejected by the Jewish Christians.

In the third century, as Gentile Christians penetrated into the main part of Israel which was still largely Jewish and came in closer contact with Jewish believers, the opposition to Jewish practices was pursued with renewed vigor. Gregory of Nyssa attacked the Jewish Christians for believing in three resurrections, the millennium, and the future restoration of the Temple and its blood sacrifices. Eusebius attacked them for interpreting the Scriptures literally and for maintaining millennial beliefs.

The Council of Nicea of 325 A. D., which met to settle the issues of Arianism and Ebionism, unfortunately went further and firmly established a Sunday Easter. The Council was attended by 318 bishops, 18 of whom were from the land of Israel but not one was a Jewish believer. The Council of Antioch of 341 made strong indictments against other Jewish practices and went even further by issuing an Edict of Excommunication to those who refused to observe a Sunday Easter.

By the end of the fourth century, the Hebrew-Christian movement had largely ceased to exist as a movement and with its demise ended the quest for a Messianic theology. By then, it showed an inability to defend itself from both Gentile Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. There are a number of causes for this and among them we would include the following: First, there was a tendency among Jewish Christians in the third and fourth centuries to keep to themselves. As a result, the majority Gentile Christianity had no Jewish representation, no exposure to Jewish concepts, and little, if any, opportunity to be taught by Jewish Christians. Secondly, they often tried to become too acceptable to the Jewish community and began to over-emphasize the Law and play down or reject the writings of Paul. This aspect in particular led to heretical movements. Thirdly, trained Jewish Christian theologians disappeared. As a result, very few Jewish believers could hold their own in discussions with the rabbis, nor could Hebrew Christianity defend itself against misconceptions by Gentile Christians. In the course of time the Gentiles became the best theologians and were allowed to determine what the theology should be for the Jewish Christians. Unfortunately, these Gentile-Christian theologians did not understand the issue of Jewishness, often confusing nationality with religion.

Through most of history since the fourth century, Jewish people continued coming to faith in Christ in lesser or greater numbers throughout Europe, but they were assimilated into the larger Gentile {10} Church. Their theology was the Gentile theology of the church of which they were members and no unique or special Messianic ever developed.

Periodically one sees writings by Jewish believers that obviously show a strong Jewish background, such as Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889), Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), and Augustus Neander (1789-1850). Edersheim wrote heavily about the Jewish background of the life of Christ and the Jewish culture of First Century Israel, which was the womb in which the Christian faith was born. His writings are much appreciated for the insights they give into Jewish backgrounds.¹³ Disraeli, who at best was a second generation Jewish believer, in various novels

¹² Cf. Bagatti, pg. 80ff

¹³The Life and the Times of Jesus, 2 Vol., 1907

clearly painted a very positive picture of the Jews in the context of their suffering, and he was obviously proud of his own Jewish origin.¹⁴ Neander, born David Mendel, became known as the Father of Church History and defended conservative Christianity against the attacks from the liberal Schleiermacher.¹⁵ Though all Jewish Christians, they did not develop or reflect a unique Messianic theology.

2. THE MODERN QUEST

The modern Hebrew-Christian movement has its origin in the 1800's coinciding with a new interest in evangelizing Jews within a Jewish context. The seeds were planted in Germany, took root in England, and came to fruition in the United States. The theology of the movement was largely the same as that of the Nazarenes of former days in that the new believers adhered to the basic fundamentals of the Christian faith. Here and there were signs of Ebionism as well, but it was never a major problem until more recent days. The majority of the Jewish believers found a place within the larger Gentile-Christian churches of various denominations. Now and then, especially in East Europe, Jewish congregations were formed, mostly patterned after the form of a Hebrew-Christian church, though occasionally one finds the creation of a Hebrew-Christian synagogue. Well into the twentieth century this was the picture of the Hebrew-Christian movement: most became members of regular churches and then met among themselves for special Jewish functions, such as the observance of the Passover. The terms Hebrew Christian, or Jewish Christian, and Messianic Jew were used interchangeably and without particular distinctions. {11} But this picture began to change around the late '60s or early '70s, through a new movement that has come to be called the Messianic Jewish Movement. There was a strong push to change the direction of the movement of Jewish believers toward a more separatistic approach through the establishment of Messianic-Jewish congregations and by a revamping of terminology: dropping such terms as Jesus for Yeshua, Christ for Messiah, Christian for Messianic, baptism for Mikvah-bris, to name a few. Only now was a distinction drawn between the terms Hebrew/Jewish Christian and Messianic Jew, though exactly where the line is drawn is never clear. Two major accomplishments of the new force were the changing of the name of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America to the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America and the formation of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (U.M.J.C.). Both groups follow a worship system that combines elements from rabbinic Judaism and from the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement which of itself is a product of the Gentile Christian Church. In fact, some of the early leaders of the Messianic approach were Gentiles who were graduated from Fuller Seminary.

David A. Rausch, a strong Gentile supporter of the Messianic Jewish movement, wrote in 1982: "At one end of the spectrum is the Hebrew Christian movement, made up of missionary societies and individual missionaries who regard themselves primarily as an evangelistic arm of the evangelical church to the Jewish community. At the other end of the spectrum are the most orthodox of the Messianic congregations and individual adherents who regard themselves primarily as Jewish, Jews who believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Between the ends of this

¹⁴ Cf. Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 6, pgs. 103 ff

¹⁵ Cf. Jocz, pgs. 246ff.

spectrum fall an array of congregations and individuals. And to complicate the matter, some Hebrew Christians now call themselves Messianic Jews."¹⁶

However, such a dichotomy as presented by David Rausch is far from valid, and his definitions for Messianic Jew as differentiated from Hebrew Christian are simplistic. In response to Rausch's article, Sue Perlman of Jews for Jesus, wrote: "Dr. Rausch makes the false distinction between Messianic Jews and Hebrew Christians, as if somehow Messianic Jews are not Christian or the first priority is their Jewishness rather than their belief in the Messiah. His exaggerations of differences give the reader a distorted picture of a growing movement of Jews who believe in Y'shua (Jesus)."¹⁷

My own reading of Rausch's articles has in several places caused me to reach the same conclusion. If we have to resort to simple definitions, it would be far more correct to say that if a major difference between Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews exists, it is that the Hebrew Christian sees the priority of Scripture in {12} dealing with the issue of Jewish expressions, whereas the Messianic Jew sees the priority of Judaism over Scripture. Let me hasten to say that this too is a simplistic definition and is only stated to show that this definition would be more accurate than that of Dr. Rausch.

The sad thing is that "Messianic Judaism" has not yet been theologically defined in a specific doctrinal statement as such. What the U.M.J.C. may pass for Messianic Judaism is not necessarily agreed to by the members of the Messianic Jewish Alliance. Others who clearly claim the title of "Messianic Judaism" define themselves in such a way that they clearly become Ebionite and heretical.

Most who call themselves Messianic Jews, in contradistinction to Hebrew Christians, do not deny basic Christian beliefs. However, one thing with which many Messianic Jews do have a problem is their *identity*. Some of the leaders of the present Messianic movement, though very "kosher" on the issue of who Jesus is, have boldly stated that they are not a church but a synagogue. Instead of seeing themselves as the Jewish wing or branch of the Church, they see themselves as a fourth branch of Judaism. Certainly this reflects a problem of identity.

The doctrinal statement of the U.M.J.C. is sound in the basic fundamentals of the faith. Yet a tinge of Ebionism is seen in the fact that to be a member congregation, it is necessary to hold meetings either Friday night or Saturday. While there is no mandatory Sunday worship in the New Testament, would it not be equally wrong to insist on a Friday or Saturday meeting?

The newsletter published by the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations periodically reflects Ebionite tendencies in matters such as the position of the Law today. It should be remembered that in ancient Ebionism the Torah took priority over Jesus. The following statements were made in a 1983 issue: "If, as some believe, the First Covenant has been set aside, if we as Jews have no responsibility to it, then, in my opinion, we are not Jews. Furthermore, there could have been no

¹⁶ In the Christian Century, September 15-22, 1982

¹⁷ Sue Perlman in a letter to the editor in the Christian Century, October 13, 1982.

Jews since the coming of Jeshua because it was the Mosaic Covenant which *officially* established us as a unique people. Only as that covenant exists do we exist as a people."¹⁸

However, is Jewishness really that dependent upon the Law? Were there no Jews in existence between Abraham and Moses? Are not {13} Jews called a people even before the giving of the Law? And if there can be a Jewish people before the giving of the Law, could there not also be a Jewish people if the Law were to be terminated with the coming of the Messiah?

It is those kinds of statements with an inherent theological weakness that have caused the Messianic movement as a whole to be somewhat suspect. The issue is not that of Jewishness, but that of the authority of the Scriptures, especially the authority of the New Testament.

3. Questions and Issues for the Development of a Messianic Theology.

In conclusion, I would like to raise some questions and issues that would need to be addressed in any true quest for a Messianic theology which would bring Jewishness and Jewish expression into conformity to a biblical theology, especially in the form revealed by the New Testament.

1. One major area is that of definitions. These definitions do not merely delineate between Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews, for in the end, there may not be any such necessity. But the terms Jewishness and Judaism need to be clearly defined and delineated. Building upon a definition, one must answer questions such as: Is Jewishness dependent upon Judaism? Can Jewishness be divorced from Judaism? Is not Jewishness to be defined more in terms of a nationality and a people hood whereas Judaism is a religion with various religious expressions (Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, etc.)? If Judaism is to be defined in religious terms and divorced from Jewishness as a nationality or a peoplehood, to what extent can Judaism be practiced without violating the teachings of the New Testament?

2. Building on the previous, how clearly is Biblical Judaism to be delineated from Rabbinic Judaism? Having done so, to what extent could a Jewish believer biblically practice either mode? In the case of Biblical Judaism, on what basis can he practice the dietary laws and not practice the sacrificial system? In the case of Rabbinic Judaism, suppose certain practices of Judaism, adopted by Jewish believers, actually contradict New Testament teaching? On this point I cite two examples. Some Messianic congregations give their spiritual leader the title of "rabbi". Rut does not Matthew 23:8 clearly state that the Jewish believer should not adopt that title as well as others listed there? Other congregational members wear a yarmulkah or kippah, and yet Paul clearly teaches in 1 Cor. 11:4 that in the meeting of the church, the man's head should remain uncovered. What do we do with such passages of Scripture where the reasons given are theological and not {14} cultural? To simply relegate what we do not like as applying to the first century only is somewhat subjective.

¹⁸ Messianic Judaism Today, the Newsletter of the U.M.J.C., 1983, Vol. 2. No. 3.

3. Still thinking in terms and concepts of Judaism as a religious system, should the Messianic movement and congregations see themselves as a Jewish branch of the Church or part of the umbrella of Judaism? Some do claim to represent "the fourth branch of Judaism". Furthermore, what about the subject of evangelical believing Gentiles undergoing a process of conversion into the religion of Judaism in order then to be able to class themselves as Messianic Jews? In sections of the Messianic Jewish movement, such action on the part of Gentiles is sometimes encouraged, but do the rabbis really have the authority to change a Gentile into a Jew? If they do, do they not also automatically have the authority to decree Jewish believers non-Jews? Indeed, Acts 15 and the book Galatians teach against Gentile conversion to Judaism and Paul encourages believers to remain in the state in which they were called: so if one was saved as a Jew, he should not seek to become a Gentile, and one saved as a Gentile should not seek to become a Jew (1 Cor. 7,18-20).

4. One of the justifications for several of the issues above is the basis that Judaism and Christianity worship the same God of the Old Testament who is not shared by other religions. But is this really true? While the name is the same, is it the same God? The God of the Scriptures, on one hand, is the Father of the Messiah Jesus and, on the other hand, exists as a Triunity. This is exactly the type of God that Judaism claims not to believe in.

5. Another major issue that needs to be clearly addressed for the development of a Messianic theology is the role of the Mosaic Law in the life of the Jewish believer. Has the Mosaic Law been terminated with the death of Christ or has it not? Though many "Messianic Jews" insist that the Mosaic Law is still in effect, even here there is a strong inconsistency in that they would not adhere to all of the Mosaic Law and would insist that sections of it have been rendered inoperative (such as the sacrificial system) but then would insist that other points have not. Does not the New Testament treat the Law as a singular unit that is either in effect or not in effect? It would appear to me that the Ebionites were more consistent. They recognized that Paul clearly did teach that the Law was no longer in effect and therefore they rejected the writings of Paul as being inspired Scripture. It is the role {15} of the Law that perhaps is the strongest stumbling block for Jewish believers to accept the full authority of the whole New Testament. It is on this score that many word games are being played. Is not the U.M.J.C.'s emphasis on the necessity of observing the sabbath for membership in clear opposition to New Testament truth?

6. This leads to the crucial issue of the authority of the New Testament. Elements in the Messianic movement have already disparaged Paul to some extent because his teachings seem to contradict their desires for certain Jewish practices. It is quite easy to "acculturate" Paul away and thereby not have to deal with the passages of Scripture as they read. But Paul simply won't go away, and his writings must be dealt with as having the same inspiration as any other part of Scripture. Nor can it be said, as some have, that what Paul wrote was only meant for Gentiles. Nor should it be forgotten that Paul was a Jew, and a Pharisee at that.

7. Another issue concerns what these congregations should be called. Is it really proper to call them synagogues? When Jesus stated what He was coming to build in Matthew 16, He clearly used a word that is different than *synagogeis* : He used the term *ekklesia* , which is distinguished from the synagogue. I do understand the problem that has occurred in Church and Jewish history in that the term "Church" has taken on a very negative meaning in the Jewish mind because of the centuries of persecution in the name of the Church.

But, is using the term "synagogue" necessarily the only alternative? Certainly there can be other terms used which are neutral, such as fellowship, congregation or assembly. Such usage would cause fewer identification problems.

8. Then what about the style of worship? Certainly the Bible allows for much freedom of expression here. But why call a style "Jewish" when it is typically Pentecostal/Charismatic? What about the tallis which represents the 613 commands of the Law of Moses? Why use confusing terminology such as the "mikva bris" when a term such as "immersion" would suffice? Or to be more Hebraic, the term "tvilah" would be more correct.

Other issues and questions could be raised, and this is only a sample of some very key ones. A failure to deal with these questions and issues in a satisfactory manner could easily lead to another Nazarene-Ebionite split that would certainly weaken the movement, if not destroy it once again as it did in the fourth century. Because loyalty to Jewishness sometimes supercedes loyalty to the Scriptures in the Messianic movement, this could very easily occur. {16}

Dr. Louis Goldberg has written: "The Messianic Jewish congregations remember the Jewish calendar and observe the holidays which occur within the calendar. However, in each of the holidays, pains are always taken to emphasize the fulfillment which Jesus came to proclaim from within the Jewish context. The Thailand statement, however, does indicate that the efforts at this type of contextualization must be faithful to Scripture and cannot include anti-Christian elements. ... There is obviously going to be a contextualization of theology, but what will be modified is not the biblical message of either the Hebrew Scriptures or the New Covenant. Rather, there has to be an application of biblical truth to the culture and lifestyle expressed by the traditions. Whatever models of worship are developed – daily expressions of specific lifestyle of Jewish believers and the expression of the biblical message – must always be under the guidance of revealed truth. Only in this sense can we have a genuine Messianic Jewish congregational type worship that will be an authentic expression of the life of the members of the group."¹⁹

All of those questions, problems and issues I have raised must be answered satisfactorily in consistency with the teaching of Scripture in general and the New Testament in particular, or there will always be a degree to which the Messianic-Jewish movement will tend to be suspect and many of us whom Rausch would label as Hebrew Christians (in contradistinction to Messianic Jews) would feel very uncomfortable with the movement. It is our feeling that the movement largely does reflect a theological weakness, although that could easily be resolved by a return to the authority of the Scriptures in all matters of faith and practice.

There are more Jewish believers today than have existed for centuries. It would be ideal if we all could be united and show strength in this manner. Yet the theological issues will not go away. As Jewish believers concerned about theology and practice consistent with the Word of God, we cannot allow Jewishness to become more important than the Scriptures, and on this we stand with the Apostle Paul (Philippians 3:3,11).

¹⁹ Sharing with Jewish People, Trinity World Forum, Spring 1981, pgs. 4-5.

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THE QUEST FOR A MESSIANIC THEOLOGY

Response by David H. Stern

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The Messianic Jewish movement is beginning to produce pastors, but it is lagging behind in developing theologians. In this paper Arnold Fruchtenbaum brings together a number of seminal ideas that will be grist for the mill of anyone who aims at helping to create Messianic Jewish theology, and I wish to express my appreciation for this. My criticism will largely concern what I believe he left out and what I consider unsatisfactory ways of dealing with the topics he raises. The reader could conclude from some of my remarks that I am critical or disrespectful of him. I am not; he is a friend. Rather, it is my character, when presented with a paper to review, to chew on it. Mastication, though necessary for nourishment, rarely improves the appearance of the food. Accordingly, I ask the reader to bear in mind that I regard Fruchtenbaum's bringing up the issues as outweighing any and all of my critical comments.

“Messianic” and “Messianic Jewish”

This paper, beginning with its title, follows a widespread practice which I wish to protest, namely, the substitution of "Messianic" for "Messianic Jewish." "Messianic" and "Christian" are etymologically different but have the same meaning. All "Christian" theology is "Messianic", and neither word denotes "Jewish". Since the essence of the theology under discussion is to be Jewish as well as Messianic, the name used for it should reflect that distinctive.

The Nature of the Quest: Messianic Jewish Theology, Ideology and Programmatic
According to Fruchtenbaum's introductory remarks, a Messianic Jewish theology is needed, not because Jewish eyes see differently from Gentile eyes, but because the history of the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people has produced facts which theology has yet to face. Therefore his three purposes of Messianic Jewish theology might be restated as : (1) to relate to what was – namely, the Jewishness of the New Testament writers and its first-century background, (2) to relate to the Jewish aspect – namely, the fact that both Scripturally and sociologically Jews are not Gentiles and never will be, and (3) to relate to the Gentile-Christian aspect – namely, that the prevailing theologies, created by Gentile ' Christians, stand in need of correction in the direction of taking better account of Jewishness.

But there is a fourth purpose for Messianic Jewish theology, and that is to guide and circumscribe the ideology and program for action of Messianic Judaism. If our quest is {19} only for theology we will not develop a conceptual infrastructure adequate for our purposes.

We will not be able to deal responsibly with elements in the interfaces between the Church and the Jewish people and between Christianity and Judaism which are intellectual, psychological, social and historical in character rather than theological. Scripture offers occasional theological guideposts for discussing such topics, but often the subject matter is not properly a part of theology.

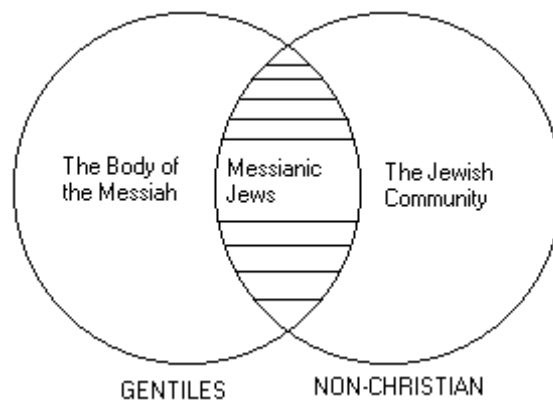
For example, consider what institutions, if any, Messianic Judaism needs to accomplish its purposes. In the nineteenth century Isaac Mayer Wise saw that Reform Judaism in America could succeed only if it established a congregational association, an organization for rabbis and a rabbinical school; so he worked tirelessly to found the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Central Council of American Rabbis and Hebrew Union College. For Messianic Jews the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations is bidding to become the congregational association, and the other two institutions do not yet recognizably exist. Do we need institutions like these? Why, or why not? To accomplish what? How should we develop them? These are questions of ideology and programmatics, not theology.

Our theology, then should be developed together with our ideology and program, not by itself. Scripture is Truth, but theology is not Truth; rather, it is a tool which relates Truth to real situations, needs, purposes, plans and actions. Theology thus considered in its practical setting will help us to live the "life of good actions already prepared by God for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10).

Messianic Jewish Identity

Much of the author's thinking is concerned with the problem of Messianic Jewish identity. The issue is present just below the surface in his discussions of terminology – "Messianic", "Christian", "Jewish", "Gentile", "Hebrew", and the various permutations and combinations thereof. He also addresses it directly in Section 2, for example, when he admonishes Messianic Jews to decide if their assemblies are churches or synagogues.

The following diagram (which appeared in the magazine *Eternity*, September 1975, (pp, 15-16), shows how the identity problem is to be resolved.



There is no need for a Messianic Jew to decide whether he identifies basically as a Christian or basically as a Jew. Since the circles representing the Body of the Messiah and

the Jewish Community are not separate but overlapping, with the Messianic Jew occupying the intersection, for him it is not a matter of either/or but both/and. Whether he is Jewish on the one hand or Messianic (Christian) on the other, or primarily this or that, or some admixtures of the two, is a non-issue. He is 100 percent both. Messianic Judaism is indeed a fourth, fifth, or sixth branch of Judaism – just like "the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). But that does not make it any less a part of the Body of the Messiah, the Church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, "one new man" (Ephesians 2:11-22).

Constituencies

There is another issue besides identity, which has to do with what I call "constituencies". The same diagram is useful in understanding this too. The people of the world fall into four categories, corresponding to the four regions of the diagram: (1) non-Messianic Jews (Jews who do not accept Yeshua as Messiah, Saviour and Lord), (2) Messianic Jews or Hebrew Christians, (for purposes of this diagram the terms are {20} interchangeable); (3) Gentile Christians; and (4) Gentile non-Christians (Gentiles who follow other religions or who follow none).

A Messianic Jewish theology must deal with issues arising in one or another of these four camps, consider how each of these four camps is involved in the issue itself, and anticipate the reaction of each of these four camps toward its pronouncements.

For example, whether a Messianic Jewish man should wear a kippah arises as a Jewish issue. Messianic Jews relate to the wearing of a kippah as a means of expressing Jewish identity. Non-Messianic Jews speak of "misusing Jewish *sancta*." Gentile Christians sometimes object on the ground of I Corinthians 11 (see my refutation below). Gentile non-Christians are uninvolved.

Another example: the contrast between law and grace arises as a Gentile Christian issue, since Jewish theology finds no conflict between them.

When I theologize, I find it useful to imagine that I am writing for an individual in a specific one of these four constituencies. I try to communicate directly with this imaginary person and to keep in mind his likely presuppositions. But at the same time I try to remember that representatives of the other three constituencies will be "reading over his shoulder." in writing for the one, I seek not to embarrass myself in the sight of the others or say things that will be misunderstood in constituencies whose presuppositions are different from those of my target reader. I commend this approach to those who would help create Messianic Jewish theology, ideology and programatics.

Messianic Judaism and Hebrew Christianity

My most serious criticism of Fruchtenbaum's paper is its tone. In the name of neutrally discussing the quest for a Messianic Jewish theology, the author has a hidden agenda, which is to take pot-shots at the Messianic Jewish movement. The last two paragraphs of the article bring this agenda out of hiding. There the author counts himself among those "whom Rausch would label as Hebrew Christians (in contradistinction to Messianic Jews), and believes the Messianic Jewish movement reflects "a theological weakness" by having allowed

"Jewishness to become more important than the Scriptures," so that it needs to "return to the authority of the Scriptures in all matters of faith and practice."

Earlier he accuses the Messianic Jewish movement of "a separatistic approach" which "sees the priority of Judaism over Scripture." I cannot believe that his reason for writing this is merely to compete with Rausch in offering a "simplistic definition," for that game is not worth the candle. Therefore, I must treat the remark as a serious expression of what he thinks. But nowhere in this paper has he proved that the Messianic Jewish movement has left the authority of the Scriptures. Whether Hebrew Christians actually are more faithful to Scripture than Messianic Jews is simply not analyzed in this paper, nor is it the paper's stated purpose (see its opening sentence). It is wrong to set up a gratuitous, tendentious and invidious comparison between "the way *others* do things" and "the *Scriptural* way," which, by implication, is "the way *we* do them."

Furthermore, in discussing the Messianic Jewish movement the author sets up straw men, highlights minor matters as if they were major and uses elephant-guns on mosquitoes. Here are examples of what I mean:

- (1) He quotes and attacks a few poorly expressed lines from the U.M.J.C. newsletter as if they expressed the general sentiment of the movement or had the authority of a creed.
- (2) Twice he criticizes the awkward term "*mikveh-bris*", but his phrase (literally, "covenant immersion-bath") was invented by one of the Gentile Fuller graduates to whom he alludes. Few Messianic Jews still use it, if they ever did, while many already use the term he has suggested, "immersion", in place of the Gentile-toned "baptism". In Israel, of course, we use the word *t'vilah*. {21}
- (3) Moreover, since no one can prevent anyone from "claiming the title of 'Messianic Judaism'," is wrong to criticize Messianic Judaism because some abuse it. People also abuse the name and authority of Yeshua the Messiah, but that is no ground for criticizing Him.
- (4) Must Messianic Judaism take responsibility for occasional individuals who "define themselves in such a way that they clearly become Ebionite and heretical"? "Ebionite" and "heretical" are elephant-guns which should be saved for elephants.
- (5) The U.M.J.C. is criticized as unscriptural for requiring its member congregations to hold a worship meeting on Friday night or Saturday. Does this make the U.M.J.C. Ebionite? The Bible says nothing about what requirements congregational associations may make of their members; in fact, it does not speak of such associations at all, so that the whole matter is adiabphoric. A congregation which does not meet the U.M.J.C.'s requirement is no less a part of the Messiah's Body. The requirement is not for salvation but for membership in a voluntary association with a limited purpose, namely, to unite congregations that wish to express New Testament faith in a distinctively Jewish way. There is a fellowship of Christian airplane pilots which serves the Body by transporting missionaries to distant mission fields; I presume that a requirement for being a member is knowing how to fly, about which the New Testament also says nothing (except that one day we will all meet our Lord in the air).

(6) It is stated that the U.M.J.C. and the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America both “follow a worship system that combines elements from rabbinic Judaism and the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.” There is no monolithic approach to worship accepted by all Messianic Jews. Some Messianic Jewish congregations are Charismatic, others are not. It does not contribute to clarity in theologizing to confound the Charismatic issue with Messianic Judaism.

Messianic Judaism is admittedly at an early state in its development. Childhood does not normally display the signs of maturity. Rather than regarding it as a “sad thing... that 'Messianic Judaism' has not yet been theologically defined in a specific doctrinal statement as such”, I regard it as a sign of life and vigor that such matters are in a state of ferment. At this stage of our growth they ought to be.

In any case, we Messianic Jews and Hebrew Christians, instead of branding each other heretical, ought to cooperate in developing clarity and maturity in our theology. This requires determining what Scripture really says – which is hard work. As the author notes, conclusions long accepted in the Church may not stand up when the Jewish context and authorship of the New Testament are given their due weight. And it is to some of these conclusions, as expressed by the author, to which we now turn.

Theology and Scriptures

Although the stated purpose of the paper in its opening sentence is “not to develop a Messianic theology”, the author makes a number of theological statements, generally without proof, and generally in the form of raising a question in order to criticize the Messianic Jewish movement's answer to it. Because these statements are presented in this *ex cathedra* manner they deserve rebuttal.

It is *not* unscriptural to call a congregation a synagogue. The term is used of an assembly of believers in James 2:2, where the Greek text does not read *ekklesia* but *synagogue*. It is *not* unscriptural for a congregational leader to be called “rabbi”, because Yeshua's point in Matthew 23:8 is not to prohibit the use of three specific terms but to foster humility and to prevent individuals from taking upon themselves undue honor and privilege. His point is that if a leader is given any title at all, he is not to let himself become puffed up, and everyone in the community is to guard against making unwarranted distinctions between clergy and laity. My own objection to the use of the title “rabbi” today is not theological but ideological and practical. In common parlance the term “rabbi” implies a degree of Jewish {22} knowledge which, to be frank about it, very few Messianic Jews today have. Therefore, a Messianic Jewish congregational leader who accepts the title “rabbi” is accepting honor which he has not earned and to which he is not entitled; and this does violate Yeshua's injunction of Matthew 23:8. Moreover, a rabbi is generally presumed to have been granted *s'mikhah* (ordination) by an appropriate accrediting entity, and Messianic Judaism at this time has no such entity. But it is a misinterpretation of Matthew 23:8 to say that it prohibits Messianic Jews from ever calling their leaders “rabbis”.

It is not unscriptural for Messianic Jewish men to wear yarmulkes when worshipping, as is evident from the meaning of the Greek words used in I Corinthians 11:4-5a, 7a. A literal

translation of this passage is: “Every man praying or prophesying having [something] down over his head shames his head, but every woman praying or prophesying with head unveiled shames her head... For a man indeed ought not [to have] the head to be veiled.” Paul is writing about veils, which come down over one's head. A *kippah* is not a veil, and it does not come down over one's head. Therefore there is no conflict between I Corinthians 11 and a man's wearing a skullcap.

These three "problems" are thus seen to fade away. But the author does not mention a problem which is also an issue of Messianic Jewish theology, in connection with how Jews and Gentiles are to relate to each other in the Body, but which touches on Gentile-Christian practice rather than Messianic Jewish practice. Acts 15:20 enjoins Gentile-Christians to “abstain... from what is strangled and from blood.” Leaving aside whether “blood” refers to murder or diet, these prohibitions seem to make the Jewish method of animal slaughter (*sh'chitah*) a requirement for Gentile believers today. What do we do about that? As the author says (in the discussion of *kippot* where it proves irrelevant), “To simply relegate what we do not like as applying to the first century only is somewhat subjective.” I mention this not to foreclose the conclusion but to point out that the author's selection of issues is one-sided. In the paragraph about whether Gentile Christians may ever convert to Judaism is an interesting question, “Do the rabbis really have the authority to change a Gentile into a Jew? If they do, do they not also automatically have the authority to decree Jewish believers as non-Jews?” Where the Gentile is also a believer, the author is correct in pointing to I Corinthians 7:18-20 as the key passage. But in general, being Jewish can arise either by birth or by choice; that is, it *is* possible for a Gentile to become a Jew. In biblical times, *e.g.*, in the case of Ruth, rabbis were not involved in such conversions; today they are. There would be a common-sense logic in arguing that if the rabbis can turn a Gentile into a Jew, they can also make him a Gentile again. But since it is not the rabbis but God who makes a born Jew Jewish, it is only God who can de-Jew-ify him. My answer to the question, therefore, is that the rabbis do not automatically have the authority to decree Jewish believers non-Jewish. The author deserves credit for raising the question. Questions are often more important than answers.

Whether it is the same God being worshipped by Christians and non-Messianic Jews is a question not unique to the Jewish-Christian encounter. The question arises whenever Christianity is compared with another religion. Not only that, it can arise between two branches of Christianity. For example, is the God who might rapture a Dispensationalist before the Tribulation the same as the God expected by Post-Tribulationists to send Yeshua afterwards? Whether one makes a practice of regarding another person's conception of God as dead, wrong, inadequate, or different and possibly correct is itself a theological issue; moreover, it is arrogant to suppose that one's own ideas about God, even if correct at one point, are better as a whole. Scripture, of course, is the ultimate authority; but even so, our knowledge at present is “partial” (I Corinthians 13:9).

Fruchtenbaum mentions the role of Israel in our day, the concept of evangelism as being “to the Jew first”, and the Messianic Kingdom as points of special emphasis in Messianic Jewish theology. Concerning Israel, I {23} would note that although many Christians are standing firmly with the State of Israel, the Messianic Jewish movement has yet to catch that vision in its fullness. In particular, with a few notable exceptions, the Jewish believers in

the Diaspora concern themselves very little with the Messianic Jewish community of Israel, and they do very little to promote Messianic Jewish *aliyah*. Isaiah 51: 11 says that “the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head.” If “the redeemed of the LORD” are not Messianic Jews, then who are they?

Nevertheless, if I were asked to pick the most problematical issue for Messianic Jewish theology, I would say it is the role of Torah. Of the three topics Jews consider central to Jewish theology – God, Israel and Torah – it is the last which has received the least theological attention from believers both Jewish and Gentile. Fruchtenbaum raises this subject as point 5 in Section 3. The questions he asks there are but a sampling of those which must be addressed. But serious study of this subject is not fostered by needling the U.M.J.C. a second time for requiring *Shabbat* worship.

On the question of Paul paragraph 6 of Section 3): Often the material in Paul's writings thought to be anti-Torah is in fact pro-Torah, provided it is understood that Paul is presenting general principles for cross-cultural presentation of the Gospel in language which applies to a particular culture, namely, Gentile (Greek and Roman) culture. That is to say, he urges Gentiles not to be bound by Jewish cultural rules. If he were addressing Jews, he would equally urge them not to give up their Jewish practices in order to become Gentilized. This can be seen from Acts 18:18, 21 :20-27; Romans 7:12, 9:4-5; I Corinthians 7:18-20, I Timothy 1:8, and many other passages (see also H. L. Ellison's article, “Paul and the Law -'All Things To All Men””, pp. 197-202 in W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin's anthology, *Apostolic History and the Gospel*) It is not “that what Paul wrote was only meant for Gentiles”, but that he expressed principles applicable to Jews and Gentiles alike in letters that were *sent* to Gentiles. Messianic Jews do not need to set Paul aside, as did the Ebionites. Instead, like the Nazarenes, by understanding him from a Jewish perspective the whole Church will understand him better and will see that he is the most articulate promoter of Torah in the New Testament.

A Cautionary Word for Messianic Jewish Theologians

Of especial interest to me in the first section of the paper is the summary of why the Jewish-Christian movement ceased to exist after the fourth century. It seems to me that these reasons for failure then constitute a cautionary word for us now, and I close my remarks with it- (1) We Jewish believers must not retreat and keep to ourselves. If we do, the Gentiles in the Church will suffer, and thus the whole Body. (2) We must not play down our being Messianic in order to win favor in the Jewish community. Rather, we must show that the whole counsel of God – New Testament as well as *Tanakh*, Sha'ul as well as Yeshua – is both fully true and fully Jewish. (3) We need “trained Jewish Christian theologians” who can both “hold their own in discussions with the rabbis” (so that “the rabbis” will have to face the fact that commitment to New Testament truth is entirely Jewish in character and not dismiss it as attractive to a marginal few), and who can defend Messianic Judaism “against misconceptions by Gentile Christians who might see Ebionism where there is none.

COVENANT AND DISPENSATION

Toward a Messianic Jewish Perspective⁰

Statement by Daniel C. Iuster

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Critiques of Messianic Judaism by Christians are often based upon an undisclosed system of theology. If we are fully to understand the quotation of biblical texts against Messianic Judaism, we need to understand those systems of theology which underlie the interpretation of the passages of Scripture involved. Because the system of theology is not declared as the basis for criticism, real communication is often lacking and the discussion of issues is superficial. Systems of theology have validity as long as they square with the data of Scripture and tie this data together in a consistent, coherent, and comprehensive way. The system of theology underlying a person's critique needs to be spelled out so that discussion will enable participants to discover if Messianic Judaism really can be squared with the system of theology involved, or if Messianic Judaism actually calls the system of theology into question.

In my extensive reading of statements directed against Messianic Judaism, I have noticed two primary systems of theology within Christianity which lie behind current criticisms. The most widespread system of theology in critiques is Dispensationalism while the other system of theology involved is called Covenant Theology. These two theologies are opponents within evangelism. I therefore propose to give a brief sketch of these theologies with a critique based on recent biblical research. This is no exhaustive attempt at a final position, but an attempt to clarify my own thoughts and to bring discussion of the issues to a more foundational level.

I. Dispensational Theology

Dispensational Theology has its roots in the writing of J.M. Darby founder of the Plymouth Brethren in Great Britain. Long {25} before Darby, there were those who held to some aspects of Dispensationalism but the systematization of this theology awaited Darby's contribution. Dispensationalism was given its greatest impetus in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible (1909) and spread throughout the United States to most fundamentalist Bible schools. Dallas Theological Seminary is Dispensationalism's major intellectual centre. In the "Systematic Theology" of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder and first president of Dallas, we find the fullest elaboration of this system of theology. It is an elaborate system with implications for most issues of biblical interpretation. However, an excellent short statement and defence of a moderate Dispensationalism is given in Charles Ryrie's "Dispensationalism Today".

Dispensationalism teaches that Scripture reflects "distinguishable economies in the outworking of God's purpose". Some features of these economies may be similar, some may be different. Ryrie states:

⁰ This paper was presented to the Theological Commission of the International Hebrew-Christian Alliance (IHAC) in 1982 and printed in the symposium in honour of the 80th birthday of H. L. Ellison, *Torah and other Essays*, IHCA, Ramsgate 1983. It is reprinted in *Mishkan* with kind permission from the IHCA

“...the distinguishing characteristics of a different dispensation are a change in God's governmental relationship with man resulting in a change in man's responsibility, and corresponding revelation necessary to effect the change.”¹

This is clarified by listing some of the basic dispensations there is:

- (1) The pre-fall stage in which God's governmental relationship with Adam and Eve is direct;
- (2) After the fall, during which God's relationship was indirect because of a barrier between God and man;
- (3) The dispensation of law in which God's principal mode of government was the Mosaic Law;
- (4) The dispensation of grace in which God's governing relationship is by grace and not by the Mosaic Law;
- (5) The next dispensation is a special period of God's testing of Israel (the Great Tribulation). During this period, the Church will be absent from earth, because the rapture of the saints into Heaven will have occurred.
- (6) After the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah's reign on earth will be established. {26}
- (7) The Millennium will be followed by Eternity.

We may or may not find these distinctions to be helpful. Our purpose is not to discuss all of them. Our concern is the distinction between the two dispensations of Law and Grace and the distinction between Israel and the Church which is integrally related to these two dispensations.

It is at this point that Dispensationalism is most related to the theology of Messianic Judaism. We shall treat the relationship between Israel and the Church first.

Daniel P. Fuller wrote, “The basic premise of dispensationalism is the two purposes of God expressed in the formation of two peoples who maintain their distinction throughout eternity.”² As Chafer put it:

“God is pursuing two distinct purposes; one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people, which is Christianity.”³

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1965

² Daniel P. Fuller, *The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*. Unpublished. Th. D. Dissertation, Northern Baptist Seminary, Chicago, 1957, p. 25

³ Lewis S. Chafer, *Dispensationalism*. Dallas Seminary Press, 1928

The dispensationalist seeks to understand Scripture in a natural or literal sense. When the prophets speak of the promise of the land of Palestine to be given to Israel and of peace on earth under the reign of the Messiah, the dispensationalist believes that this will occur as predicted. The great discovery of Dispensationalism is that God is not finished with Israel; He will still fulfill the promises to Israel. There is a steadfast refusal to “spiritualize” Scripture by applying these passages to a spiritual fulfillment of peace in the Church as the new and true Israel.

On the other hand, the position we are summarizing maintains that since Yeshua, a new people which is separate and distinct from Israel has come into being. This people is the Bride of the Rook of Revelation; it is the Church. That these two peoples are to be kept distinct is axiomatic. Israel is the nation of God's choice, a people by physical descent to whom will be given the land and the fulfillment of the earthly promises of the prophets. The Church, on the other hand, is a people constituted not by physical descent, but by spiritual rebirth. The Church is given spiritual or heavenly promises. The Church is composed of all Jews and Gentiles who are saved during this dispensation of Grace (the Church Age) which will end at the beginning of the seven-year Great Tribulation. Thus there is a sense in which a Jew who becomes a Christian both is and is not a Jew! In the sense of national origin (e.g., German, Russian, Norwegian), he is a Jew. In the sense that he is now part of the heavenly people, he has {27} ceased to have a future portion with Israel. This would, of course, have great implications for Messianic Judaism.

The other great distinction is that between the dispensations of Law and Grace. The dispensation of the Mosaic Law is an order in which people were responsible to live by the commandments of the Torah. Mature dispensationalist thinkers do not teach that anyone was saved or even could he saved by the Mosaic Law. Rather the Law was a test of stewardship between the times of Moses and Yeshua (Jesus). However, imprecise statements by many dispensationalists and the misunderstandings of many of their disciples have often led non-dispensationalists to believe that dispensationalists hold that there was an age in which man was told to achieve salvation by observing the Law. Some dispensationalists have made blanket unqualified statements to the effect that the Law has been done away with. This has brought strong reaction from non-dispensationalists. Even Ryrie gives examples of statements which could lead to such conclusions with the implication that the Law has been disparaged; he argues that the giving of the Law was part of amalgamating Israel into a nation.⁴ (What nation has no law?!) Sophisticated dispensationalists see the Law as a way of testing which will lead the nation on to the Messiah. The way of salvation during this period was by grace through faith. Since the Messiah has come, however, this Law has been done away with, for we are now said to be under a new standard. This standard is the new law written on the heart by the Messiah, or the Law of Christ. Consequently, we are not to look to the Ten Commandments or to any other law as *directly* applicable to us (there may be indirect applications). The whole Mosaic system was for pre-Christian times. There may be principles of conduct in the law of Moses that are similar to principles in the Law of Christ. We may find teachings in the Mosaic Law which have applications to the Age of Grace, but this is only because they square with the Law of Christ which forms the principles of living in this age. The Law of Christ is primarily found in the moral instructions of the epistles of the New Testament.

⁴ Ryrie, pp. 112, 116-118

Keeping these distinctions in mind, we can understand the criticism that some dispensationalists have made against Messianic Judaism. For example, when a Messianic Jew has a Passover seder, or practises other laws of the Torah, he is seen to be confusing the distinctions between the old and new dispensations (e.g., Law and Grace). If he becomes part of a Messianic congregation, he {28} acts as if he were part of Israel and its earthly promise when he is part of the Church and its spiritual heavenly promises. Such confusion is said to cast aspersion upon the work of the Messiah and the results of that work in ushering in the Age of Grace.

On the other hand, there are Messianic Jews who hold to the dispensationalist distinctions but argue that they commit none of the sins of which they are accused. Their practice is said to be part of a national identity and not a spiritual identity. All is done in such a way that the meaning of the new Age of Grace is even accented. A Messianic congregation, by having open membership for all, is said even more clearly to bring out the nature of the new spiritual people of God. They defend their practice as voluntary, not mandatory as shown by the example of the apostles and especially Paul (Acts 21, etc.).

To contrast Dispensationalism with the next system of theology to be summarized, we should mention something about Dispensationalism's view of the Kingdom of God. Dispensationalists teach that Israel was given a real offer of the Millennial Kingdom during the ministry of Yeshua. Had Israel accepted this offer when the "Kingdom of God" was at hand (Mark 1:15) the Millennium would have begun. Instead, Israel rejected this offer and by the providence of God, Yeshua was delivered as a Sacrifice for all people. The Kingdom has therefore been postponed (Postponed Kingdom Theory) and a parenthetical Church Age has been established in the interim until the Kingdom is again offered to Israel at the Second Coming of Jesus. At this point, Israel will accept the offer. The Kingdom is future in this view and relates to Israel. Israel has been placed on a storage shelf, so to speak, until the Great Tribulation and the Rapture of the Church. When Israel is again in the centre of God's work in the world, the Kingdom will again become near. Covenant Theology disagrees with this view with great fervour. This will become clear in our next section. We shall return to Dispensationalism for a brief critique later. Our point now is to clarify this theology so that all can understand the basic theological system out of which some critiques of Messianic Judaism have been given. We need to understand that the criticism comes not from one clear passage, but from a system of theology in which passages are given certain interpretations.

II. Covenant Theology

The emphasis of Covenant Theology is on God's Covenant of Grace. There are crucial distinctions between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism. John Murray would be an exponent of Covenant Theology in its classical form. He states, "A covenant of *b'rith* {29} is a sovereign dispensing of grace on God's part with corresponding obligations"⁵ Dispensationalists would acknowledge many of the covenants Murray describes such as the Noachic, Abrahamic Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenants. However, the covenant theologian interprets the meaning of these covenants differently. He emphasizes the unity and consistency of the Grace of God in all ages. In his view, God has never dealt favorably with a sinful man but by His grace in the Messiah. Every Covenant is a gracious one, and during every age salvation is offered by grace

⁵ John Murray, "The Covenants", in *New Bible Dictionary*. Ed D. J. Wiseman, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962

through faith. Nothing in God's government ever hid or invalidated this central principle. The covenant theologian reacts vigorously against any statement which would seem to imply that God offered man salvation, in reality or hypothetically, for keeping the Law. The Mosaic Covenant was a covenant of grace every bit as much as the New Covenant. Covenant Theology found its greatest elaboration in the theologians of the Princeton School of Theology at the turn of the century. It has strong roots in Calvinism. From this basic stance, many further positions are enunciated.

The covenant theologian sees the New Covenant as a replacement of the Mosaic Covenant with Israel God's government and principle of action are similar in both covenants. Both offered man salvation by grace in the Messiah, but in the fullness of the New Covenant this salvation is offered to all the world, including Israel, through the preaching of the life, death and resurrection of Yeshua. This new broader covenant is now the only basis for the offer of salvation to all people. When Israel rejected the New Covenant, they were cut off from God's grace; however, salvation is offered to them through the New Covenant as it is to all peoples. All who respond to the New Covenant by faith are spiritually of the seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham by faith is the only ongoing seed which receives the promises of God. Thus all of the promises to Israel are said now to be fulfilled in the Church which is the continuation of "True Spiritual Israel". In other words, physical Israel has no real significance to classical Covenant Theology. The regathering of Jewish people in Israel is not a fulfillment of prophecy to these theologians because all such prophecies are spiritually fulfilled in the peace and prosperity of the Church. There is one people of God in Covenant Theology, not two. This one people consists of all saved people from Adam until the present time. Most Covenant theologians believe that the Millennial reign of the {30} Messiah (Rev. 21), with the accompanying images from the Prophets of peace and prosperity on earth, is a symbolic expression for the present age of blessing in the Church. There is therefore no future Jewish-oriented millennium to come, but the return of the Messiah will usher in Eternity.

The emphasis of the unity of the Covenants of grace has given Covenant theologians a strong respect for the Law as a major source for moral instruction and guidance under the Spirit. Since obedience to the commandments is emphasized as the product of true faith under all covenants, the Covenant theologian sees the moral aspects of the law as permanent and applicable to all believers now in a very direct way. The ceremonial aspects of the Law are said to be fulfilled in the New Covenant and no longer applicable to present practice, but the Moral Law reflects God's eternal standards. This high respect for the Law goes back to John Calvin who taught the need of the Law for believers. He even called opinions saying that the Law had been abrogated (except as yielding salvation) pernicious!⁶ Since God's eternal standards are the same, we may directly apply the teaching of both Testaments to the lives of all Christians so far as the commandments reflect the eternal principles of God. Calvin even says in the most forceful terms:

“Certain ignorant persons, not understanding... rashly cast out the whole of Moses, and bid farewell to the two tables of the Law. For they think it obviously alien to Christians to

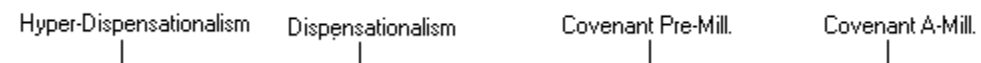
⁶ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian religion. Book II, Sec 7

hold a doctrine that contains the 'dispensation of death'. Banish this wicked thought from our minds."⁷

We can readily see how a Covenant theologian might criticize Messianic Jewish practice as contrary to the New Covenant, even with their high respect for the Law. The Messianic Jew might be seen as carrying on aspects of *ceremonial Law* which have been replaced by the New Covenant. Despite the similar nature of all the covenants, the broadness of the New Covenant does away with the national limits of the Mosaic Covenant and its ceremony. Furthermore, there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the New Covenant (Gal. 3:28) and all are part of one people in the Messiah. This one people, composed of all the saved from Adam until today, should not allow such distinctions because there are no spiritual distinctions between national groups. A Messianic Jewish congregation could be seen as a division in the one people of God that is unwarranted.

A Messianic Jew might defend himself as a Covenant theologian in this way. He could say that his practice implies no spiritual {31} inequality nor any distinction between Israel and the Church as having any separate spiritual calling. His practice is only one of many cultural adaptations of Christianity. Indeed there are Black, Spanish and Asian expressions of Christianity, why not a Jewish expression? He could defend himself in this framework by the example of the apostles who maintained their national heritage in such a way that the fulfillment was extolled above all. However, he would have to hold that there is no special significance for the physical nation of Israel, but that all the saved are part of one people and one purpose of God.

A very interesting development in recent years has been that of a new theology that calls itself Covenant Pre-Millennialism. Covenant Pre-Millennialism is distinguished from the previous view by teaching the return of Yeshua before a literal thousand-year reign on earth. (A-millennialism is the view of symbolic fulfillment of the Millennial Age in the Church as expounded above.) The scholar of this persuasion often holds to a place for the physical nation of Israel in prophecy and the fulfillment of the special promises in the Old Testament referring to the nation. However, the future of the saved nation will be to become a special part of the Church rather than to be part of a separate earthly programme of God. As with all Covenant theologians, the emphasis on the unity of the Covenants of Grace and a high respect for the Moral Law of Moses are prominent. Many scholars of renown, especially G. E. Ladd, J. Oliver Buswell and J. Barton Payne, have given this view exposure. It would seem that this view is gaining more and more adherents in the Church. Were we to plot these theologies on a line we would find more of a continuum than that of two separate hard systems.



Covenant theologians (both A-Millennial and Pre-Millennial) believe that Yeshua never offered the literal kingdom to Israel at His first coming. Rather, His announcement of the Kingdom heralded the arrival of the rule of God in a new universal form. The Kingdom of God

⁷ Ibid.

is the manifestation or place of God's rule. Through the work of Yeshua and the outpouring of the Spirit, the Kingdom has come in a fuller, more universal form. The partial reality of the Kingdom is a pointer to that day when Messiah shall {32} return, and the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Therefore this age is no parenthesis between offers of the Kingdom to Israel, but is a continuation of the ongoing expansion of God's rule to be climaxed in the Messiah's return. Israel was offered leadership in this expansion, but was not offered the Messianic Age. Therefore, the teaching of Jesus concerning life and conduct in God's kingdom (Matt. 5-7) is directly applicable now, not only indirectly as in Dispensationalism. We must also bear the theological distinctions of Covenant Theology in mind if we are to respond to criticisms of Messianic Judaism. We now enter into a critique of these theologies.

III. A Critique

I should mention my indebtedness to both Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology. I am sympathetic to features in both and disagree with both. Only a comprehension of both will enable us to anticipate the usual criticisms against Messianic Judaism. Both systems of theology grew into their basic form during the 19th century. Since this time, biblical research has added greatly to our understanding of the Scriptures. The test of any system of theology is its ability to tie together the teaching of Scripture understood in its cultural and grammatical context. The task before us is to make some observations on the basis of biblical research.

We give dispensationalists high marks for seeking to interpret Scripture in its natural sense. The understanding of a passage must be according to the rules of grammar and language. The question for understanding is: "What did the biblical writer intend to teach, and what would his readers understand him to mean?" It is difficult in the extreme to dismiss the biblical promises to the nation of Israel and the hope of God's rule of peace on earth if we take our principle of interpretation seriously. Dispensationalism has therefore accepted a positive future for the nation of Israel (see passages at the end of Jer. 33:19-22 and most of the prophetic books).

On the other hand, we have many reservations. Although many of today's dispensationalists hold that God never sought to offer a way of salvation by following the Law, some statements have certainly led to this conclusion in the popular mind. Indeed, Dispensationalism has perpetuated the popular distinction between the Old Testament era as an era in which God acted as a legal judge and the New Testament era as the era of God's Love. Daniel Fuller, in speaking of the dispensationalist distinction between the Age of Law and the Age of Grace, says:

{33} "if... God is always gracious, then it is confusing to distinguish a particular age by a term which characterizes all ages."⁸

New research is increasingly showing the Covenant of Moses to be an astonishingly gracious covenant with very similar principles to the New Covenant. The work of G. Mendenhall has revolutionized our understanding of the material in the Torah. Merideth Kline summarizes much of this material as follows. The legislation in the Torah is in the form of a suzerainty treaty. A Suzerain was an ancient king. He would offer his subjects a treaty recounting all of

⁸ Fuller, p. 164

his goodness to them. In return for this undeserved goodness, he demanded their obedience. The form of the Book of Deuteronomy and other parts of the Torah fit the exact structure of such a treaty with prologue, historical review, stipulations of obedience, and blessings and cursings. God, however, is the great Suzerain. Kline states:

“...the two tables were rather a suzerainty treaty or covenant rather than a legal code... not law but covenant... It is a covenant of God's love to the nation.”⁹

The structure of the New Covenant is the same. God offers a gracious covenant in the Messiah. Yeshua then clearly taught that if we love Him, or accept this covenant truly, we will keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15). The esteemed Chairman of the Department of Biblical Studies at Wheaton College, Dr. Samuel Schultz, after a lifetime of study, affirms the essentially gracious nature of the Mosaic Covenant. The title of a recent book by Dr. Schultz is “The Gospel of Moses”¹⁰. This is certainly a refreshing approach.

It would seem that under Moses, God offered no Dispensation of Law, but a gracious Theocratic Covenant. Only a perversion of this Covenant produced a Dispensation of Law against which the apostles taught. Since Israel is a nation, its obedience to grace will be expressed through a national legal system. What nation has no law? Even during the New Covenant, the government is to be respected (Rom. 13). The basis for law and government in Israel is the Torah. Therefore, the Law could not have been done away with in every sense. The offer of personal redemption within the Theocratic period of history is, of course, possible through Yeshua's coming atoning sacrifice.

The dispensationalist is correct in stating that there are two {34} chosen peoples. Israel is chosen as a nation, and the Church is chosen as a universal people from all nations. On the other hand, there is no reason why a person cannot be part of both. Personally, I have not been able to find the dispensationalist distinctions between an earthly and a heavenly people and earthly and heavenly programme in Scripture. There is rather one purpose of world salvation worked out in history through both a chosen nation and a universal pilgrim people. Paul's actions of identity and practice along with the practice of the other apostles, demonstrate that national-cultural practice (through the Torah) was not considered antithetical to coming under the fuller blessing of the New Covenant (Acts 20:6, 21:20, 23-26; 22:12-13; 25:8, etc).

In light of all of this, we affirm with the Covenant theologian the unitary nature of the Covenants. He is also correct in holding that moral teachings of both the Old and the New Covenants reflect the universal moral standards of God. The New Covenant does not repeat laws against incest, or of just weights and measures, etc. (Lev. 18:6, Deut. 25:13-16). However, a believer would certainly follow such principles as an expression of his response to grace. Covenant theology is correct in seeing the Law as done away with only in the sense of a system of works-righteousness, as, i.e., a necessary practice of ceremony to point to the Messiah's coming. This does not eliminate the Law as a standard of God's righteousness or as Israel's national cultural heritage of identity such as is possessed by all nations (e.g., Passover is Israel's national birthday). Part of the problem with much theologizing is that it assumes the same

⁹ Meridith Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963. pp 16, 17

¹⁰ Samuel S. Schultz, *The Gospel of Moses*. New York: Harper and Row 1974

meaning for words, whereas words are given vastly different meanings in different contexts.¹¹ This is especially so in the use of the word “Law” in the New Testament. In our next section we shall try to give some insight into the various meanings.

However, we have strong disagreements with the position that there is no future for the nation of Israel in a real millennial kingdom. We do not believe that the promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Church even though the Church has been grafted into the stock of Israel to partake of the blessings of God. Thus A-millennialism does not square with the plain sense of Scripture. Our next section will outline a new positive position which seeks to incorporate the best insights of both theologies.

IV. Toward a Messianic Jewish Perspective

A. The Covenants and God's Historical Plan.

If we take the results of contemporary scholarship seriously, Messianic Judaism should emphasize the unity of all the covenants {35} as covenants of God's grace and the commandments as stipulations of obedience which follow from true faith.¹² In Abraham's call, we see a gracious offer by God leading to a response of obedience. Abraham is justified by faith (Gen. 15:5). The promise of nationhood is fulfilled when Israel is graciously rescued from Egypt through no merit of her own (this being a major theme of Deut. 8-10). This rescue from Egypt issues in a covenant of grace. Since this covenant is with a nation, many of the stipulations for obedience have reference to national law for the nation of Israel in the situation of the Middle East three millennia ago. This is why it is sometimes hard to see the applicability of the principles of the Law for our day; but the eternal principles of God can be discerned in the Torah. God's call to the nation of Israel is still in effect. Israel is still a chosen people kept as one people through a common law (Torah or instruction) and heritage. In this sense the Law is no more invalid today than is the need for law and heritage in every nation. The Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7) is also a gracious covenant which promises the ultimate Messianic Kingdom. During this whole period, which may be called the Theocratic Dispensation God's grace was manifested to, and partially through, Israel.

In the New Covenant, there is an expansion of God's offer of grace both in its effectual nature through the power of the Spirit and in the world-wide spread of the gospel. This Covenant is offered to all, irrespective of whether or not they are Jews or Gentiles (Matt. 28:19,20). In the New Covenant, a new people of God in which Jews and Gentiles are one is created (Gal. 2:11-14). This would then be the age of the pilgrim people called from all nations. However, Israel is still nationally called by promise. The promises to the nation of Israel are forever (Jer. 33:19-22), and the gifts and the calling of God to Israel are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).

In this light we can understand the self-identification of Paul. He certainly was part of the new people of God; his emphasis on this was most prominent (Gal. 3:26-29; Eph.

¹¹ James Barr, *The Semantics of biblical language*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961. This is the best exposition of this issue to my knowledge.

¹² Kline, pp. 23, 24

2:14) Yet he saw no contradiction in describing himself as a Jew and maintaining this identity through voluntary Torah observances (Acts 18:18, 20:6, 21:20, 23:26, 25:28; I Cor. 9:20). There was no conflict in being both part of his people Israel and part of the new people of God in which spiritual equality had higher priority than God's call to the nation (Eph. 2:12-16). Yet he saw himself as still called both as an Israelite and as part of this new people (Acts 25:8; Phil. 3:5-7). {36} In light of this, we might ask: in what sense were the older covenants superseded? Certainly not in the festivals that Israel was called to remember. These festivals were simply celebrations of God's gracious acts in history for the nation and His continuing graciousness in agricultural provision. The nation was told to celebrate these festivals (Sabbath, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) "forever and to all your generations" (Lev. 23:14, 21,41) without qualification. The validity of such remembrance celebrations certainly was not impugned. This is Israel's cultural-national heritage. Certainly the promises of the older covenants are still valid. The promises to Abraham, Israel and David are being fulfilled and shall yet be totally fulfilled. These promises must be understood in the natural sense of language. In no way can the promise of land and an everlasting covenant be *spiritually* fulfilled in the Church, although there is a promise in the *Tenach* of a New Covenant which would be world-inclusive (Jer. 31:31; Is. 9:6,7; Zech. 9:9,10). Indeed, the older covenants were intended to lead on to this broader inclusiveness. The Torah is not superseded so far as it reflects God's eternal standard of righteousness. Even the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:7) is an exposition of these standards to bring out their full import and it never contradicts Torah. The Law of Christ (I Cor. 9:12) as Ladd argues is no replacement of Torah, but is Torah applied, understood and fulfilled.¹³ When Israel practises Biblical Torah, they do what is proper to maintain their national existence. Parts of Torah have application to Israel as a nation and parts have application to all peoples even under the New Covenant. As Ladd says:

"The permanence of the Law is further reflected in the fact that Paul appeals to specific commands in the Law as the norm for Christian conduct... (Rom. 13:8-10; Eph. 6:2). It is clear that Law continues to be the expression of the will of God for conduct, but that the permanent (I would say universal) aspect of the Law is ethical and not ceremonial."¹⁴

The older covenants are superseded in this: that the fullest covenant of grace which brings the greatest blessing to all mankind has come through Yeshua. The issue of our response to this covenant makes all else pale in significance (II Cor. 3:12-18). It is this that Paul emphasizes, and it is this that is misunderstood through the polemical style of Paul's relentless criticism against any form of works-righteousness. This polemic must be harmonized with Paul's other actions and statements. Our response to this new revelation is the most crucial issue and test of faithfulness to God. That Israel yet has a covenant of promise which justifies {37} the secondary importance and validity of Jewish identity is maintained by the explicit statements of Scripture (Jer. 33:19-22; Rom, 11:29) along with being vouchsafed by the example of the apostles, including Paul. The early practice of the Nazarenes (early Jewish believers) as attested by early accounts (Josephus, Hegessippus and Eusebius) brings further corroboration.

¹³ George Ladd, *A theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974. pp. 509-510.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 510

The older covenants are superseded in this way: they are not re-placed, but in Yeshua the rule of God takes a new form. The rule of God is the meaning of God's Kingdom (Ladd in "Jesus and the Kingdom" expounds this theme with his usual brilliance). The rule of God is no longer limited to a theocratic state, but is manifested in a universal people of God throughout the world as well. This real presence of the Kingdom in partial form (Matt. 13; Mk. u:21-32) points to the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness. This age is not the result of the postponement of the literal Kingdom because of Israel's rejection, but is a planned stage of the Kingdom and necessary prelude to the coming of the Kingdom in fullness in its literal form (Rev. 20:1-3). Israel was offered leadership in spreading the good news to extend the Kingdom, but was not offered the Millennial Kingdom. Israel as a nation, especially through its survival and regathering to the land, is also a pointer to the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness. In this way, the New Covenant is broader than all previous covenants, although these covenants point toward the greater universality of the New Covenant and even promise this broadness (e.g., Gen. 17:1-3).

The older covenants remain in terms of their promises but have been superseded through the replacement of the sacrificial system by the Messiah's sacrifice and priestly work. This is a major emphasis of the Book of Hebrews. Therefore, any sacrificial element in the festivals is now replaced by recognizing Yeshua's sacrifice as part of the festival.

B. Israel and the Church

It is true that God has a special purpose for the nation of Israel and a purpose for His universal pilgrim people, the Church. The Church cannot be the fulfillment of the specific national promises to Israel. However, there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that this distinction of two callings is mutually exclusive. The identity of the apostles with Israel shows that one could play a part in both purposes. Therefore it may be more correct to see that Israel will ultimately have a distinctive future within the universal Church as some covenant pre-millennialists teach. The {38} distinctions between a heavenly purpose for the Church and an earthly purpose for Israel as God's earthly people seem to be unwarranted. One may possess an identity with the universal people of God and with Israel. Therefore we need to expand the categories of the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church, to include the Messianic Jew who is part of Israel and the universal people of God. Such an identity is indeed the apostolic one.

C. Nature of Fulfillment

Often the Messianic Jew is chided for seeking to maintain his Jewish Biblical and cultural practice even though he seeks to do this consistently with the New Testament. It is said that there is now one people of God from all nations and that he should really conform to the Church. Such an argument does not take cognizance of the fact that the forms of the Church developed centuries after Yeshua with little Jewish input. These forms may be appropriate in some contexts. However, pagan dating and holidays often became the basis for the year's cycle of holidays in the Church; there are often images in churches (very non-Jewish.. even non-Torah). The problem is not our unity in the Messiah, but to see a form of worship and practice develop for the benefit of

all which would reflect the *Tenach* (Old Testament) and the Hebraic back-ground of the New Testament. To which form of the Church is the Jew expected to conform? Episcopalian ritual, Baptist revivalist forms, Presbyterian forms? The Church is already diverse in form. What is sorely lacking is a valid Hebraic form!

The issue of worship form is related to our concept of fulfillment. Is the past to be reflected in the forms expressing New Covenant fulfillment, or is the past forgotten and even abrogated Jakob Jocz, influenced by Oscar Cullmann's writings, has beautifully said:

“The past is seen as salvation history in the light of the present, but the present cannot be recognized at all as salvation history without the positive 'presentation' of the past. This is so because, again I quote, 'salvation-history forms a whole that as such remains ever present'.”¹⁵

It is the present meaning of the past in the presence of fulfillment that Messianic Judaism seeks to keep alive. Simply to dissolve ourselves in churches is neither a service to the universal Church nor the Jewish community. The Hebraic congregation is one way to make this meaning clear to all and to preserve it for all. A Messianic Jewish congregation re-erects no “wall of partition”. It testifies by the presence of Jewish and Gentile members to a {39} unity of all believers; but this unity is expressed in more Hebraic ways of life and worship rather than the recently developed Gentile forms. It makes the meaning of fulfillment in Yeshua clear and therefore extols it all the more.

D. Paul and the Law

One of the greatest causes for misunderstanding comes from a lack of insight into the complexity of Paul's statements about the Law. There is an excellent article related to this issue by N. L. Ellison.¹⁶ A new understanding of rabbinic argumentation and its implications for interpreting Paul is shedding great light on this issue. Actually, the same word "law" denotes several meanings, and this is where the confusion arises. Richard M. Longenecker and George Ladd, two of America's foremost New Testament scholars, explicate these several meanings. There is the Law as the standard of God reflected in the Torah.¹⁷ In this sense the Law is good if one uses it rightly (1 Tim. 1:8). There is the Law "as it became used in its connection with righteousness during the Inter-Testamental period".¹⁸ The Law is abrogated in its connection with righteousness with God. When we look at the Messiah's Sacrifice, we can no longer understand righteousness in terms of the works of the Law. Righteousness is found in being in the Messiah. Longenecker goes on to say:

"Yet we must be careful to note that in all of the Pauline expressions, there is no hint that the Law as the standard and judgment of God is also ended."¹⁹

¹⁵ Jakob Jocz, "The Old Testament as Common Ground for Dialogue between Church and Synagogue, or Christians and Jews", in *The Hebrew Christian*, Vol. XLVIII, No.4, 1975, p. 186

¹⁶ H.L. Ellison, "All Things to All Men", in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*. Ed. W. Gasque and W. Martin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1970.

¹⁷ R. M. Longenecker, *Paul the Apostle of Liberty*. New York: Harper and Row, 1964, p. 125

¹⁸ Ladd, p. 497

¹⁹ Longenecker, pp. 125. 126

God cannot change His eternal standards for behavior. By the Law the Spirit still reveals sin and disciplines us under grace as Calvin well taught.²⁰

Thus the Apostles could recognize a freedom from the Law as a way of works-righteousness while yet respecting the proper place of the Law. They could also practice their heritage in such a way that Yeshua's fulfillment was extolled. W. D. Davies can conclude with firmness that Paul remained an Orthodox practicing Jew till the day of his death.²¹ Longenecker can propose three reasons why Jewish followers of Yeshua could correctly justify their continued practice of the Law. We summarize these reasons.²² Referring to the disciples and the first Jewish Christians, he says:

1. Since the fulfillment of the Messiah is based on what went before, "Israel, religion, and life all possessed new significance to the believer; so that the practices of Judaism could be viewed in a new light and used as expressions of devotion to Christ. While a {40} relationship with God is not to be gained by such observance, certainly the liberty which is in Christ allows the Christian to express that relationship with old forms which have been given new significance."
2. On a nationalistic basis the Law "was a national institution as well as a divine covenant. As embodying decrees and usages of his country, it still demanded his allegiance... he was not required to be a bad citizen."
3. "As members of the remnant of Israel, they were duty bound to continue their practice of the Law if they were to remain in a position to gain a hearing for their central message."

The sense in which the Law has a continuing validity, but no longer can be considered an external standard of righteousness is just what gives rise to the seeming ambivalence to the value of the Law in the New Testament. This ambivalence finds its roots in First Century Judaism which expected the Law to continue in some sense as the external Will of God in the Messianic Age, but that some abrogation or alteration would take place in that Law as a result of the Messiah's presence and the ability to do the Law in spirit when it is written on the heart (Jer. 31:31-35; Ezek. 37: 21-28). W. D. Davies, J. Jocz, and R. M. Longenecker all argue with cogency that Paul's attitude arises from his rabbinic training. To Paul the Messianic Age had come, but it had not come in its fullness or in a full external form.

Paul's statements are calculated to destroy all boasting in works and to eliminate the pressure on Gentiles to conform to the Jewish national Law for acceptance into the larger community of believers. J. Yoder states this eloquently:

"The heresy Paul was struggling against was not that the Jewish Christians continued to be committed to keeping the Law. Paul was quite tolerant of those who held to such a conviction. He went out of his way to share their ritual faithfulness in Jerusalem. Nor was it their thinking that by keeping the Law they would be saved, for the Jewish Christians did not believe that. The basic heresy he exposed was the failure of those Jewish Christians to recognize that since the Messiah had come, the Covenant of God had been broken open to include the Gentiles... The point of Paul's explanation is that now that the

²⁰ Calvin, Institutes. II:7.

²¹ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. New York: Harper, 1947, p. 321

²² Longenecker, p. 211

Messiah has come, the Gentiles do not need to pass by way of the Law, but can be incorporated directly into the community. "²³

{41} V. Summary

Therefore, I propose a Messianic Jewish theology which expresses the unity of the covenants of grace. This is a theology which has gained from a knowledge of Covenant Theology and Dispensationalist Theology, but seeks to test both of these theologies by biblical research. It is a theology that recognizes the Jewish context of the whole Bible. It is a theology that reaffirms the call of the nation of Israel as God's chosen nation along with God's call of the universal people of God within the New Covenant. It recognizes the proper place of the Law along with a full exposition of salvation by grace through faith alone. Lastly, it is a theology that gives a biblical rationale for the maintenance of Jewish identity through feast and festival as part of extolling the fulfillment in the New Covenant. Fulfillment does not eliminate the past.

A professor once said that he knew of many people with extreme positions who present themselves as a balance between extremes. Perhaps I have fallen into expressing my position as a balance between extremes too. The position I am espousing has its greatest affinity with Covenant Pre-Millennialism and is somewhere between Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology. However, it stresses the place of the nation of Israel and the validity of Jewish identity and practice under the New Covenant.

Messianic Judaism is a testimony to the Church and the Synagogue that both have lost something. The Church has lost the Jewish context for a more accurate understanding of God's revelation. It is simply not true that the Church now continues as the true people of God with the true heritage of God in every way. The early paganization of the Church, Greek modes of theologizing, the continuing Gentile modes of worship and practice, not to mention anti-Semitic interpretations of Scripture in which Jews become veritable devils, Christ-killers, and the reprobate people, all combine to demonstrate that the Church has much to gain in recovering the rich root of Israel (Rom. 11:18). The Synagogue needs to gain the true Messianic Content of the Scriptures. Synagogue and Church need to learn from one another. May Messianic Judaism hasten the day of true spiritual understanding and brotherhood under Yeshua the Messiah, the King of all the earth.

²³ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1972, p. 220

COVENANT AND DISPENSATION

Toward a Messianic Jewish Perspective

Response by Joseph Shulam

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My dear friend Daniel C. Juster has given an excellent treatment of criticism that comes toward Messianic Judaism from two major theological systems of Evangelical Christianity – Dispensationalism and Covenant theology. For an article of this length the Rev. Juster has been keen to touch all the bases and to express a gracious attitude toward both the Dispensationalists and the Covenantalists. I must agree with most of what is written in the article. However, there are some things that I could have wished to be different.

Messianic Judaism cannot and ought not to be treated as a Christian "system of theology". Throughout Christian history there have been many "Theological Systems" based on contemporary philosophic influences. These "systems have had their impact, and served their purpose in a particular time and place in history. Take, for example, Puritanism, or the German Pietistic movements. And, although in each such "system of theology" there are many points of value and truth, one cannot say that the "System" itself is either true or divine. On the contrary, we must state dearly that theological systems – dogmatic creeds – and Christian philosophic: schools of thought are all human institutions which cannot ever be used as standards of God's truth or tests of fellowship between Christians. These same "theological systems" have also been the greatest cause for disunity and estrangement and even the gallows among Christians of differing "theological systems"". As Messianic Jews we ought to busy ourselves with a process of discovery of the treasures in our own backyard, rather than with attempting to deal with the problems of "Christian systems of theology". The Christians themselves have not been able to sort out the mess in their theological systems which have brought division and fighting throughout the "Christian" world. The Rev. Juster has stated the same in a much more diplomatic fashion: "The test of any system of theology is its ability to tie together the teaching of Scripture understood in its cultural and grammatical context... The understanding of a passage must be according to the rules of grammar and language. The question for understanding is: "What did the Biblical writer intend to teach, and what would his readers understand him to mean?"

It is my opinion that Messianic Judaism ought not perpetuate the "systematic theological" dogmatism of Christianity. If we as Jews believe that God is dealing with our nation throughout history, and that as the Rev. Juster stated in his article "It is true that God has a special purpose for the nation of Israel and a purpose for His universal pilgrim people, the Church" then we must realize that the events of Israel's return to the land are a show of God's grace to Israel and a beginning of our salvation. The Galut (exile) is an "Old Testament" doctrine which has to do with the hiding of God's face from His people, and not with

rejection and annulment {44} of His eternal election (Ezk. 39:28-29). The Church is not an afterthought in God's mind as the Dispensationalist might presume.

For many Dispensationalists the overview of the Bible looks like this:

God who is good and gracious chose the people of Israel in spite of the fact that He knew that they are rotten. He gave them a law which they could not keep anyway and watched them live up to His worst expectations of them. When Israel did finally fail, God sent His Son, with some slight chance that they might change. But Israel did not change. Israel lived up to every evil expectation: they killed the prophets and they killed God's son. Therefore, God finally gave up on Israel and took away all their blessings and good promises and gave them to the Church, which is much better than Israel ever was. Now Israel has been replaced by the universal Church until the time of the millennium, when Israel will be punished at the tribulation.

No doctrine has produced more injustice than the one which has set the "Church" in place of Israel. In fact, what this doctrine really says is that God made a mistake when he chose Israel, else why should He have had to choose somebody else in their place? Separation between Israel and "the People of God" robs the Church of the life-line which only physical Israel can provide. If Christianity has a definite message to bring to Judaism, Judaism also has a message to bring to Christianity. We must learn to find fellowship and communion in the Messiah and in the Messianic teaching and values which are true and valuable for both. Jews and Christians alike have to acknowledge and even to experience in their spiritual life the eminence of the Messiah for Israel, and the eminence of Israel for Christianity. The "Christian theological systems" have tried to deal with this by either allocating all of this relationship to the far future – the last dispensation or, like Daniel Juster remarked about Covenant Theology, "Covenant theology is correct in seeing that the Law is done away with only in the sense of a system of works-righteousness..." The reader must realize that both of these systems allocate Israel and Judaism to totally unpractical areas. They make it possible to continue the perennial Christian enmity with the Israel of God. These theological systems make it impossible to live again like the early Jewish believers who "continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46). The object of Messianic Judaism, and for that matter the object of any Christian who really wants to know that he is doing God's will and not only rehearsing the dogmas of his particular denomination or tradition, is to search the Word of God for himself.

I remember Dan Juster in "Messiah 1977" saying that as Messianic Jews we ought to busy ourselves with a search for authenticity. Authenticity can only be found in the Word of God. Although some might think that this statement is an old cliché, I believe it is truth when it is understood that our understanding of God's Word is bound to the historical and linguistic setting of the divine events. If this was the case, then we, like the early believers, would learn to live in the Messianic communion between Jew and Gentile in Yeshua. Then, all these issues like Law and Grace, Israel and the Church, the Gospel of Moses or the Gospel of Jesus, would be of no consequence at all. When the Word of God is clear we would all agree, and when we have differences of opinion we would leave them as opinions, and as good Jews learn to understand that there are 70 faces to the Torah.

I commend Daniel C. Juster for the fine job he has done in his article. But, I do not think that as Messianic Jews we ought to politic between the "Gentile" problems of Christian history or systematic theology. As to a defence of our Messianic position-the best defence is going ahead and doing the will of our Father in Yeshua Ha-Messiah as he declared it in the whole corpus of divine {56} scriptures. It should, however, be perfectly clear that Yeshua and the New Covenant are essential to both Jew and Gentile for salvation and for fulfillment of God's ultimate will for Israel. The importance of the New Covenant is seen most clearly in the fact that to forsake the New Covenant is tantamount to abandoning one's place in Israel. For the Gentile to accept the New Covenant is to be added and to become a part of the Commonwealth of Israel through Yeshua. Therefore, Yeshua is both a continuum and a climax of Israel's history and destiny, and He cannot be neatly packaged into some "systematic theology" made by human hands.

JOSEPH OF TIBERIAS – THE LEGEND OF A 4TH CENTURY JEWISH CHRISTIAN

by Ray Pritz

Dr. Pritz, an American living in Jerusalem is a Bible teacher and a lecturer on Early Christianity, presently also working for the Bible Society in Israel on the Annotated Hebrew New Testament Project. His doctoral thesis from the Hebrew University in 1981 was on the topic The Jewish-Christian Sect of the Nazarenes.

How long did Jewish Christianity continue to exist in the land of Israel after the period of the New Testament? What did those surviving communities look like and how did they relate, to their kinsmen, the Jews who did not believe in Jesus? It is doubtful that we will ever have truly satisfying answers to these and questions like them, but it is the study of the smaller individual cases that will throw light on the wider picture.

One of the latest figures we know of by name is Joseph of Tiberias, sometimes referred to as Count Joseph because of privilege bestowed on him by the Emperor Constantine. Our only source of information for the life of Joseph is found in the work *Against All Heresies*¹ by Epiphanius, the Fourth Century bishop of the Cypriot city of Constantia. It is sometimes mooted that Epiphanius himself was of Jewish birth, although this is far from certain. We do know that he was born in Palestine, near Eleutheropolis. After doing his time as a monk, Epiphanius was ordained and became one of the 4th Century's strongest crusaders against heresy in the Church. In his major work against the heresies, the *Panarion*, he attacked no less than 80 groups he considered to be erring from the truth. Among these we find some 20 pre-Christian groups, significant and well-known Christian sects such as Arians and Novatians, and more modest deceivers of the faithful such as those who denied that God set the stars in place every night and removed them every morning.

In the thirtieth hook of the *Panarion*, against the Ebionites Epiphanius relates the lengthy story of Joseph of Tiberias.² Unlike much of his information in the remainder of the work, he heard his story directly from the man himself, albeit some 16-18 {48} years earlier. The occasion of the meeting was a visit by Epiphanius and others of Nicene faith to the city of Scythopolis (Beth Shean) to receive instruction from the Italian bishop, Eusebius of Vercelli. Eusebius had been banished from his see after the council of Milan in 355.³ He was

¹ K. Holl, *Griechische Schriftsteller*, Vol. 25.

² The only complete English translation of Pan. 30 that I know of is G. A. Koch's, *A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius' Knowledge of the Ebionites: A Translation and Critical Discussion of Panarion 30* (Dissertation, 1976), from which all Epiphanius quotes in this article are taken.

³ Our main source for the life of Eusebius is Jerome, *de viris illustribus*. Ambrose, Ep. 63, says he was the first Western bishop who was at the same time a monk, and this must have been an added attraction for Epiphanius. In 354 Liberius, bishop of Rome, asked him and others to request from Constantius II a council on the Arian problem. The main question at that council, held in Milan the following year, was whether or not to condemn Athanasius. Eusebius steadfastly refused, and the Emperor banished him to Scythopolis, where his "jailer" was the Arian bishop Patrophilus. Eusebius was far from a model prisoner, refusing to accept food from Arians and almost starving

reinstated some six years later by Julian, but already before that he had left Scythopolis for Cappadocia and Egypt. While in Scythopolis, Eusebius stayed in the sumptuous home of Joseph, who was at that time at least 70 years old.⁴ The attention of Epiphanius soon turned from the visiting bishop to his host, the Jewish Christian Joseph, one of only two non-Arian residents of the city.

“For when we met with Joseph at his home and asked questions about him and knew that in regard to his public life he lived in accordance with the Jews, we discussed both his way of life and how he converted to Christianity.”⁵ We may note here that Joseph seems to have continued – at least as far as Epiphanius could see – to live like a Jew. “There was also another younger man from the Hebrews in the city who was orthodox in belief, who did not dare to consort with us openly, but visited us secretly.”⁶ Both of these Jewish Christians, then must have continued outwardly to live like Jews; the older man was already known as a believer in Jesus and so had no fear of being seen in open association with Christians, while the younger man evidently kept his faith secret.

It is tempting at this point – before telling the story of Joseph – to try to relate him to one of the known Jewish Christian sects. *Panarion* 30 is, as we have said, aimed at the Ebionites. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that Joseph belonged to that group. If Epiphanius calls him orthodox, and if Eusebius of Vercelli was willing to stay in his home, then we can safely assume that no one considered him an Ebionite. One need only read Epiphanius’ own polemic against the sect in the same book to see how little he considered their doctrine to be orthodox.⁷ In fact, the only Jewish Christian sect treated by Epiphanius to which he attributes more or less orthodox beliefs is the Nazarene sect. The only thing the feisty father can find to say against them is that they continue to observe the commandments of the Law.⁸ Interestingly, it is precisely this characteristic which he implies regarding Joseph and the younger Jewish Christian, yet without vitriol. We have no record of Nazarenes or other Jewish Christian sects in {49} Scythopolis, although it should be noted that the city sat in full view of Pella, directly across the Jordan River. Pella, of course, was one of the acknowledged homes of the Nazarenes.⁹

There are, however, some difficulties in trying to make a Nazarene out of Joseph. First of all, Epiphanius says explicitly that Joseph was the one non-Arian in Scythopolis. Secondly, it is far from certain that the Nazarenes still maintained recognizable communities as late as the mid-4th Century. Thirdly, the whole story of Joseph is one of a man alone, coming to his faith in Jesus from outside of any active Christian community. In the end, we must probably see him as a Jew who identified with the greater Church, even taking a known stand on the christological controversies of the day. For all that, it is significant that he is able – even in a prominent position – to sustain his Jewish way of life without evidently incurring any condemnation for doing so. But what then, we might well ask, was the difference between Joseph and the

himself twice. It was not long before he was moved to Cappadocia and then to Egypt. See *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, s.v. “Eusebius (93)”

⁴ Pan. 30 5.1

⁵ Pan. 30 5.3

⁶ Pan. 30 5.7

⁷ Koch, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 380-383. in his analysis of the Ebionites and the Joseph story finds little to indicate that Joseph should be viewed as an Ebionite and concludes that the story “adds nothing to our understanding” of the sect.

⁸ Pan. 29 7,2; 8, 1-7

⁹ Pan. 29 7.7

Nazarenes that caused Epiphanius to praise the one and attack the other? It may be simply that he had known and listened to Joseph but had never personally met the Nazarenes.

But back to Joseph's story, as told to Epiphanius many years before. He was a personal envoy of the Jewish patriarch, who was then living in Tiberias. This was the position of "shaliah", or apostle, responsible among other things for traveling to the various communities to collect monies for the patriarchate.¹⁰ Epiphanius adds that they "serve the patriarch night and day, counseling him and reciting to him things pertaining to the Law".¹¹ The old patriarch was sick and near death. Being on good terms with a bishop near Tiberias, he invited him to come disguised to his home. The bishop came as a doctor, ordered the attendants (including Joseph) to bring large amounts of water ostensibly for medical purposes, and then sent everyone out of the room. Joseph peeped through a crack as the bishop administered baptism to the patriarch and then "gave him the holy mysteries".¹² Joseph was naturally surprised and troubled by what he had seen, but he kept it to himself as the bishop continued his visits for the next two or three days until the patriarch died. Before his death he entrusted the education of his young son to Joseph and to another elder.¹³

In Tiberias at that time there was a certain sealed room to which Epiphanius gives the name "gazophylakion"¹⁴ Graetz¹⁵ refers to it as the patriarch's library, but the word (which means treasury) is more probably to be understood as a geniza.¹⁶ There was speculation (Epiphanius does not say among whom) that the room contained money. After the death of the patriarch, {50} Joseph entered this room secretly and there discovered that it contained only books, among them the Hebrew version of Matthew and Hebrew translations of John and Acts. Joseph read these, was again troubled, but "he was hardened in heart". The involved story which follows tells of his problems as guardian of the wild young Hillel (our knowledge of the character of Hillel II from talmudic sources cannot be reconciled with this

¹⁰ Cf. Codex Theodosianus (CT) 16 8, 14, where in April 399 the Roman government appropriated these revenues for itself. The same emperors rescinded the law five years later.

¹¹ Pan. 30 4.2

¹² Pan. 30 4.7

¹³ A major complication in deciphering Epiphanius' notice on Joseph is the names he gives to the old patriarch (Hillel) and his son (Judah). In my analysis below I suggest that the earlier activity of Joseph (and hence the latter period of the old patriarch) may be dated around the start of the Fourth Century. The dates for Judah II ("Nesiah") , are 250-295. He was followed by Gamaliel IV (295-320), Judah III (320-345) and Hillel II (345-365) and his son Gamaliel V. All of these dates must be considered as approximations which may vary widely. Graetz (*History of the Jews II* (1893,1956), 364ff) dated Judah III and Hillel II somewhat earlier. He considered that they were the men spoken of by Epiphanius but that he reversed them. If we accept his earlier dating, this is probably the best solution. Schoeps (*Theologie u. Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (1949), 381f) simply sees the events related as happening much later. Koch (op. cit., 374-383) goes earlier than the framework given by Epiphanius. and while admitting that his solution does not fit the historical details given, suggests that we must look at Judah II and his brother Hillel (who was never patriarch). It seems to me that a vital consideration in any attempted solution is the repeated admission by Epiphanius (Pan. 304,3; 7,1) that he is not sure of these names and may have confused them because of the passage of time. In this light either of two solutions may be accepted: 1) Graetz's, where the names have been reversed and their dates are a bit earlier, or 2) Epiphanius has remembered Judah's name correctly but has wrongly given us Hillel for the old patriarch instead of Gamaliel. (Here we should note that at the place where Epiphanius admits his lapse of memory (30 4,3) he refers to the old Patriarch as Hillel "of the family of Gamaliel"). In either case the error must be ascribed to Epiphanius faulty memory, and the basic outline of the story should not be doubted.

¹⁴ Pan. 30 6.7

¹⁵ Pan. 30 4.7

¹⁶ Cf Mt 12.41.43: Lk 21.I: Jn 8.20

description). We read of several other occasions on which Joseph was confronted with Christianity, and the whole description has the ring of a personal testimony of a man resisting at every turn until he becomes a believer in Jesus.

At one stage he relates a series of personal appearances to him by Jesus. After the first of these Joseph remained unconvinced and became extremely ill. Once again Jesus appeared to him saying he should believe and be healed. At this point Joseph made a tentative profession of faith in Jesus, was indeed healed, and then changed his mind. The sickness returned with such force that he was given up and preparations were made for his death. At this point, Epiphanius tells us that Joseph received a visit from “a certain elder of those learned in the Law (who) came and proclaimed into his ear saying ‘Believe on Jesus, the one crucified in the governorship of Pontius Pilate, the pre-existing Son of God and who was later Born from Mary, who was the Christ of God and arose from the dead and comes to judge the living and the dead.’”¹⁷ Joseph decided to put this to the test on a local demonized man who regularly would tear off his clothes and run around naked. The exorcism in the name of Jesus, with the sign of the cross, was successful and yet Joseph still stubbornly refused to believe in Jesus. It is evidently only after some years that this finally happened.

Upon reaching maturity and receiving the patriarchate, “Judah” appointed Joseph an apostle to collect revenues in Cilicia. In a particular city there he befriended the local bishop and asked for a copy of the gospels. It was only at this point that he finally believed in Jesus. Joseph seems to have been overly zealous in the pursuit of his office, and he thus incurred the opposition of a number of synagogue officials, among whom he had been conducting a purge of some sort. Deciding to make their own investigation of Joseph, they broke in on him while he was reading the gospels and proceeded to beat him. He was rescued by the bishop on that occasion, {51} but shortly afterward he was grabbed by an irate crowd, thrown into the Cydnus River, and left for drowned. Not long after this he was baptized and went to the imperial court where he told his whole complicated story to Constantine the Great.

It is just possible that we have some small corroborating evidence of the Joseph story at this point. The Theodosian Code preserves for us two laws of Constantine which may reflect his friendship with Joseph. The first (TC 16 8, 1) is dated October 18, 315, and reads in part, “it is our will that Jews and their elders and patriarchs shall be informed that if, after the issuance of this law, any of them should dare to attempt to assail with stones or with any other kind of madness – a thing which we have learned is being done – any person who has fled their feral sect and has resorted to worship of God (i.e., the Church), such assailant shall be immediately delivered to the flames and burned, with all his accomplices.”¹⁸ This law was subsequently

¹⁷ Pan. 30 9.3. At this point Epiphanius states that this sort of thing “is always communicated” by the Jews to one about to die, and he relates the following illustration. He was walking one day from Jericho up to Bethel in the company of a Jew “who was still a Jew” but feared Jews and honored Christians. Epiphanius asked him about the coming of Christ, and the Jew did not speak against it. He then told how once, when he was about to die, some of his co-religionists had come and whispered in his ear, “Jesus Christ, the crucified son of God, is about to judge you.” It is on the basis of this story and the rest of the Joseph account that Graetz (loc. cit.) wrote that “many Jews, including the most learned and worthy among them nourished at this period a secret predilection for Christianity.”

¹⁸ Translation of C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code* (1952), ad loc

renewed in 339 by Constantius II. About a year before his death, Constantine issued a shorter version of the law (CT 168, 5; May 8, 336): “Jews shall not be permitted to disturb any man who has been converted from Judaism to Christianity or to assail him with any outrage. Such contumely shall be punished according to the nature of the act which has been committed.”

The formulations of these two laws raise questions of chronology. The law of 315 seems to hint at the kind of personal information we are told that Joseph gave Constantine. While the more general wording of the version of 336 would seem to indicate that cases of conversion are still happening, there is no special reason to connect it to an interview with a Jewish personal advisor like Joseph.

An objection might be raised that Epiphanius places the activity of Joseph “in the latter days of Constantine” (Pan. 30 4,1). This, however, comes in the context of the special title of “comes” which the Emperor bestowed on Joseph along with the authority to establish churches and could just as well refer to the time when the special honor was conferred. It might also be objected that if Joseph was in his 70's in 358, then he would have been only in his mid-30's at the time the first law was passed in 315, leaving little time for all that preceded. He might seem especially young to have been entrusted with the guardianship of the patriarch's minor son some years earlier. To this one would reply that Epiphanius gives Joseph a minimum of 70 years at the time Eusebius of Vercelli visited him. Even at that minimum, Joseph could have been in his late 20's when given co-responsibility for the patriarch's son. It is not, then, to be ruled out that Joseph may have been the direct cause of the 315 legislation. {52} Might we speculate that his own subsequent evangelistic activity among Jews gave rise to the need for a re-emphasis of the law in 136?

But if we are going to credit Joseph with initiating this legislation with its less-than-positive attitude toward Jews and Judaism, let us suggest that he might also have been responsible for other laws of the same period. One of the most feared occurrences in the life of the well-to-do of the Fourth Century was appointment to the decurionate, with all of its financial burden. During Constantine's reign he found it necessary to legislate that people could not avoid these burdens by joining the Christian priesthood (CT 16 2,3; 2,6). However, we find other laws of the same period which somewhat surprisingly exempt Jewish leaders from the burdens. CT 16 8,2:

If any persons with complete devotion should dedicate themselves to the synagogues of the Jews as patriarchs and priests (“elders”) and should live in the aforementioned sect and preside over the administration of their law, they shall continue to be exempt from all compulsory public services that are incumbent on persons, as well as those that are due to the municipalities. Likewise, such persons who are now perchance decurions shall not be assigned to any duties as official escorts, since such men shall not be compelled for any reason to depart from those places in which they are. Moreover, such persons who are not decurions shall enjoy perpetual exemption from the decurionate.¹⁹

In 321 this privilege was limited to two or three persons in any locality, but in December 331, the exemption was re-extended (16 8,4): “We command that priests, rulers of the synagogues, fathers of the synagogues, and all others who serve the synagogues shall be free from every

¹⁹ The given date for this law is 29 Nov 330, but Pharr (ad loc.) has suggested, based on MS evidence, that the correct date is 317

compulsory public service of a corporal nature.” This was contrary to the trend of policy at the time and would seem to indicate some successful lobbying at court. Might that lobbyist have been Joseph, a former member of the class now exempted and the only Jew we know of in Constantine's retinue?

About Joseph's specific evangelizing methods we know little. We read that Constantine told him to ask a boon and that the new count's desire was that he might build churches in exclusively Jewish areas. Armed with letters from high officials and from the Emperor himself, Joseph returned to Tiberias intending to convert {53} a large, unfinished temple of Hadrian into a church. There ensued a kind of duel in the supernatural with potions and magic pitted against water made holy by the sign of the cross. As Epiphanius describes it, Joseph may perhaps have won the battle but his opponents played rough, and in the end, only part of the church was completed (along with a small chapel) before Joseph removed himself to Scythopolis. He did succeed in completing structures in several other cities, including Diocaesarea (Sepphoris) and probably Capernaum and Nazareth.²⁰

What was Joseph's motivation in seeking to build church structures in cities where no Christian communities existed? Several possible answers may be suggested: 1) Joseph may have been intending (and indeed may have succeeded) to bring to those churches some sort of resident caretaker Christian presence, thus injecting Christianity into those purely Jewish cities; 2) Related to this, Joseph perhaps remembered the usefulness of the several bishops in his own odyssey; if even a priesthood could be established focally, perhaps curious or secretly believing Jews could be served as he himself (and his patriarch) had been served; 3) We must not exclude the possibility that Joseph saw the building of the churches simply as an excuse for confrontation, creating a situation where God could prove himself the God of the Christians, thereby stimulating jealousy and faith; this too had been part of his own early experience (30 7-8; 30 10,3-7).

²⁰ Archeologists have found no remains of a church in Nazareth old enough to be associated with Joseph of Tiberias. There is a 5th Century basilica to Mary, and it has been suggested by I. Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament* (1969), 30f, that the earlier structure might have been torn down to make way for it.

JOSEPH OF TIBERIAS – THE LEGEND OF A 4TH CENTURY JEWISH CHRISTIAN

Response by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

Dr. Fruchtenbaum is director of Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, Texas. He has authored Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History and Philosophy, 1974/1983, and is serving as the U.S.A. area coordinator for the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.

I greatly appreciated this article by Ray Pritz and learned many things from it. I believe it is a helpful contribution to the study of early Hebrew Christianity. Therefore my response is largely on the positive side. I would like to list the following points in which I find that the article makes a contribution to the Hebrew-Christian movement.

First, – Jewish believers were a force to be reckoned with within the borders of Eretz Yisrael even as late as the Fourth Century A.D. Not only do we have names of Jewish believers, such as Joseph of Tiberias, but also secret believers. Included among the latter is the young man whose identity Epiphanius kept confidential. The story of Joseph hints that some prominent Jewish leaders and rabbis had a favorable attitude toward the Messiahship of Jesus, if not being actual secret believers themselves. This is not only a conclusion by modern-day Jewish believers who are looking for historical validity for their beliefs, but also, (as Mr. Pritz has footnoted) of Jewish historians such as Graetz. I wish it were possible to substantiate Epiphanius' story about one of the Patriarchs being a secret believer. Such historical evidence is very scanty. But there is no question that the story of Joseph of Tiberias further supports what others have already noted: that the rabbis felt that Jewish believers in the Messiahship of Jesus were a force to be reckoned with even as late as the middle of the fourth century.

Secondly, – also noteworthy is the fact that the various Jewish groups that somehow identified themselves with Jesus of Nazareth were still as distinct as they were in the fourth century. Previous history shows that the Ebionites were already known for their unorthodoxy. But the Jewish group known as the “Nazarenes” were considered orthodox with the exception of their attitude toward the Law, and as Mr. Pritz has pointed out, Joseph of Tiberias was also considered orthodox. The account of the Nazarenes shows that they were Jewish believers who had their own community and were characterized by the observance of the Law. But the story of Joseph of Tiberias shows that one could be a Jewish believer, within the context of the larger Gentile church, and still insist on living as a Jew at the same time. Mr. Pritz does not feel that Joseph of Tiberias should be identified with the Nazarene community for reasons stated in his article. If that is true, I think it would have been beneficial if Mr. Pritz had elaborated in just what way Joseph of Tiberias “lived as a Jew” as distinct from the Nazarene pattern.

Thirdly, – the story of Joseph of Tiberias helps to determine what was considered to be orthodox belief concerning Jesus. A basic doctrinal statement can be deduced from the quotation of the “certain elder of those learned in the law”. The quotation points out the following specific beliefs: (1) that it {56} was necessary to believe in Jesus for salvation; (2) that this Jesus was crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate; (3) that Jesus was the Son of God; (4) that the Son of God preexisted (which from the viewpoint of Epiphanius probably pointed

to the deity of Jesus); (5) that Jesus was born of a virgin; (6) that Jesus was the Messiah of God; (7) that Jesus was resurrected from the dead; (8) and that Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. This was the gospel presented to Joseph of Tiberias by this unnamed elder, and it contains a number of points that would now be considered “the fundamentals of the faith”.

Fourthly, – another contribution the paper makes is knowledge as to one Jewish believer’s method of evangelism: the building of church buildings in almost totally Jewish cities where the known Christian population was minimal or non-existent. The paper concludes with three options as to why Joseph of Tiberias may have chosen this method. I might add a fourth possibility trying to mark “holy sites” that would be revered by Christians. This would be especially true in the towns of Capernaum and Nazareth. Joseph of Tiberias lived at a period of time when the marking of holy sites was a rather popular thing to do.

My only criticism of the article, and it is a very minor one, is that the relationship of Joseph of Tiberias to the Theodosian Code is a little bit too speculative and detracts from the more definite historical deductions in the paper. I hope that those who see no such connection will not let this speculation keep them from considering the historical value of Joseph of Tiberias to the history of Hebrew Christianity.

ATTITUDES TO SCRIPTURES AND CHRISTIANS IN ISRAEL

by Terje Hartberg

Terje Hartberg is Executive Secretary of the Bible Society in Israel. A graduate of the Oslo School of Business Administration and of Cranfield School of Management, England, he has specialized in the area of Market Research for non-profit organizations.

Prologue

A hard-working farmer has plenty to eat, but it is stupid to waste time on useless projects. (Proverbs 12:11 GNB)

But how do we know which projects are useless and therefore wasteful? The Bible Society in Israel, like so many other nonprofit organizations, lists the following two among their major problem areas:

- * How can we measure the effect of our operation?
- * With limited resources at our disposal, which project should be given priority in our planning?

My thesis is that proper research is the one major tool with which these problems can be approached, and that there is far too little research done in most Christian institutions to insure the best stewardship of God-given resources.

Research Methodology

The Bible Society in Israel decided in early 1983 to undertake a professional study of attitudes toward Scriptures and religious institutions in order to gain a better understanding of its market. To this effect, the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research was commissioned to carry out the data gathering and computer analysis in collaboration with the Communications Institute of the Hebrew University.

The main interest of the Bible Society was to learn about public attitudes toward Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, and toward institutions involved in distributing or communicating the biblical message. However, to avoid the possible bias of people reacting to a survey dealing only with “Christians” or “the mission”, it was decided to widen the scope of the study. The survey, therefore, included questions concerning the three major religions in Israel: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. This article will focus mainly on findings related to the Tanach and the New Testament and to Christian institutions.

The survey was conducted during July 1983 among a sample of 1,153 men and women representing the adult Jewish population in Israel. Respondents were presented with a total of 34 questions (in Hebrew) during personal interviews. This writer does not intend to dwell on

lengthy interpretations of the results, but rather to present the findings in an objective and informative manner.

Ownership of Religious Books

The first part of the study gives information about book ownership in general, and then focuses on the Holy Scriptures of the three religions. {58} “Approximately how many books do you have in your home?” was the first question. 57% of those interviewed reported to have more than 100 books in their homes, while only 1% said they had no books at all. This marks a significant increase in book ownership as compared to the figures reported in a study made 17 years previously.¹ In 1970 only 36%, of home libraries contained over 100 books, and 4% of the households studied had no books on their shelves. The size of the average library in Israeli homes can be roughly estimated at 150 books in 1970 compared to 300 books in 1983.

As expected, education is an important factor in book ownership. Among those with four years of schooling or less, only 20% have more than 100 books at home. This percentage raises to 80% for people with a university education.

“What proportion of these books is on religious topics?” was the next question. As examples of religious books we can mention Tanach, Bible commentaries (Pirushim) and Talmudic literature. Nine percent reported that more than half their books were on religious topics, while 46% said none or almost none. Homes with large libraries tended to have a much lower proportion of religious books than homes with only a few books. Furthermore, the proportion of religious books is naturally related to religious (Jewish) observance. Nineteen percent of religious homes reported that the majority of their books were on religious subjects, while in secular homes this percentage was only three.

Then followed a series of questions as to whether or not the respondents had each of the following books in their homes:

Table I:

Ownership of Certain Religious Books

Tanach	94%
Sidur Tfilah (Prayerbook)	81%
Talmud	41%
The Koran of the Moslems	3%
The New Testament of the Christians	12%

¹ Katz & Gurevitch: The Culture of Leisure in Israel, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1973

The wording "The New Testament of the Christians" was chosen for the questionnaire on the assumption that this is the way most Israelis would identify the New Testament, in spite of the fact that most of the New Testament was written by Jews and to a large extent for a Jewish audience. The relatively high number of New Testaments found in Jewish homes might challenge this assumption. The research institute, in the preparatory stages of the survey, expressed doubt as to whether there would be enough New Testaments around to show up as even 1% in the survey findings, and voiced surprise when learning of the result: 12% of Jewish homes in Israel have New Testaments!

Half the New Testaments were reportedly bound together with the Tanach, the other half were separate New Testaments. Six out of 10 New Testaments were in Hebrew and two out of 10 were in English. Incidentally, less than one in 10 owners of Hebrew New Testaments were able to identify which translation they had.

Ownership of the Koran, albeit rather low, was found to be higher among the completely observant Jews (5%) than among those not observing the Jewish law (2%).

Book and Bible Reading

After ownership *of* books, the interviewer moved on to the subject of book reading. "Approximately how many books do you read per year?" The responses were as *follows*:

Table 2:

Book Readership

5 or less	37%
6-10	15%
11-20	19%
21-50	13%
More than 50	16%

As was the case with book ownership, readership shows a significant increase over the results reported in 1970. In that year 48% {59} said they read 5 books or less per year while only 9% plowed through at least 50 in a year. The average number of books read by Israelis in one year can be roughly calculated at 19 in 1970 compared to 27 books in 1983. Israelis are among the most active book readers in the world. A report published in 1976² puts Israel at the top of a list of book readership in several European countries. 42% of the population in Israel was reported to read more than 7 books per year. This compares with 39% for England and Denmark, 35% for the Netherlands and 33% for France. At the bottom of that list were Portugal (15%), Austria (14%) and Italy (9%). A recent UNESCO report³ finds the Israelis

² Katz & Gurevitch: The Secularization of Leisure, Faber & Faber, 1976

³ "Israel is first in world reading and publishing", article in the JERUSALEM POST, June 14, 1984

the most frequent book readers among all peoples of the world, and more books are being published in Israel per capita than in any other country.

Does this intensive reading activity include religious literature? Asked how often they read the Tanach, 20% answered “very often” and a further 28% said “sometimes”. The combined figure of 48% reported here for those who read the Tanach at least sometimes (20% & 28%) marks a significant decrease compared to the 65% recorded in 1970. In other words, the number of people who regularly use their Tanach is down by over one quarter!

Still, Bible reading in Israel compares well with, for example, England or West Germany. In a survey from 1978, only 15% of West Germans were found to use their Bible regularly outside church services.⁴ A study from England reported the corresponding figure there to be 28% in 1982.⁵ (For the sake of comparison, it must be noted that the question in the Israeli survey does not exclude the use of the Tanach during religious worship).

The respondents were then asked if they had ever read anything from religious literature somehow related to the Tanach.

Table 3:

Readership of Other Religious Literature (in %)

	Have Read Some	Read Very Little	No
Torah literature	21	8	71
Koran	3	3	94
New Testament	12	11	77

By combining the “some” and “very little” responses above, we find that nearly as many people have once referred to the New Testament (23%) as to Torah literature (29%). The Torah literature (Sifrut HaYehuditToranit) includes various interpretations of the Torah, such as the Talmud. It must be noted that this question was phrased in such a way that even the slightest contact with the books mentioned could be assessed. The percentage of positive response to this question is, therefore, not directly comparable to the findings on reading of the Tanach in which the question was worded differently.

Demographic Variances

Not surprisingly, ownership and reading of both the Tanach and the New Testament are related to various demographic variables, particularly education and religious observance. Generally, the less educated and the more religious a person is, the less likely he is to be interested in the New Testament. Below are some of the most interesting results of the demographic break-down.

⁴ “The Bible Distributor”, No. 18, June 1982, United Bible Societies, London

⁵ J. Harrison: “Attitudes to Bible, God, Church “, Bible Society, London, 1983

- Only 4% of those who had less than 12 years of schooling had a New Testament in their homes as compared to 36% among university graduates.

- Similarly, 9% of those with less than 12 years in school had once read something from the New Testament, a percentage rising to 51 for those with a university education.

- Ownership and reading of the Tanach was not significantly related to education.

{60} - 7% of religious households admit to owning a New Testament, while 22% of secular homes have a New Testament on their shelves.

- 82% of those claiming strict religious observance use the Tanach regularly as compared to 25% of the non-religious.

- A person of Western origin is more likely to own and to have read from the New Testament than a person with an oriental background. However, Sabras whose families have lived in Israel for two or more generations had higher New Testament ownership and readership than any other ethnic group. Interestingly, the same group of Sabras had the lowest ownership of Talmud and scored second lowest on reading of Torah literature among the five different ethnic groups in the study.

- Age and sex did not seem to affect reading and ownership of the Tanach or the New Testament.

Further examination of responses to the question on New Testament reading revealed that a person who has read something from the New Testament is somewhat more likely than others to use his Tanach regularly. Has a person with a New Testament on his bookshelf at home actually read from it? Three out of four who said there was a New Testament in their home, also claimed to have read something from it at least once. Among those with no New Testament at home, 15% were reported to have read from it, however little.

How Many New Testaments in Israel?

The 1983 census found that 3,373,000 Jews live in Israel, in approximately 960,000 households. We found that 12% of these households contain a New Testament, which means that there should be some 115,000 New Testaments in Jewish homes in Israel. Fifty-nine percent of these according to the present survey – or nearly 68,000 – should be in Hebrew. This number compares with about 76,000 Hebrew New Testaments distributed in Israel by the Bible Society in the 10 years previous to this study. No accurate figure is available on the number of Hebrew New Testaments distributed by other agencies; a figure close to the Bible Society's distribution is but an educated guess.

Attitudes Toward the New Testament

Two questions in the survey referred to peoples' tolerance of the New Testament in Israel.

The first question had the following wording: "Sometimes the New Testament or extracts from the New Testament are used in teaching history and religion in schools. In your

opinion, is this desirable or undesirable?” Nine percent answered “very desirable” and a further 34% answered “desirable”. Thus, somewhat less than half of those surveyed (43%) viewed favorably the use of the New Testament in compulsory education. At the other end of the scale, there were 34% who found the use of the New Testament in schools “not at all desirable” and 22% who responded “not so desirable.”

The second question dealt with New Testament distribution: “In your opinion, is the distribution and sale of the New Testament in this country harmful to the Israeli society in any way?” Three out of seven responses to this question expressed concern about New Testament distribution – 17% terming it “very harmful” and 25% answering “harmful.” The majority however – four out of seven respondents – did not have serious reservations: 27% found the sale of New Testaments “not harmful at all” and 30% said “not so harmful”.

Among those who said they had read some of the New Testament, there were still nearly two in five opposed to the use of the New Testament in schools, and more than one in five considered New Testament distribution harmful. The younger generation was more open to include the New Testament in the school curriculum than their parent’s generation. Of those under the age of 30, 50% support the use of New Testaments. This support drops to 34% for those aged 50 and above.

{61} The strongest opposition to the New Testament came from those with the lowest education, from the Sephardic community and from the religious Jews. Among those with less than five years of schooling, for example, 71% regarded the distribution and sale of the New Testament as harmful, but for university graduates, the figure is 19%. It is worth noting, however, that even among the religious Jews there is a fair amount of tolerance. One in four of those claiming complete religious observance will favour the use of New Testaments in schools, and one in three will see little wrong with New Testament distribution in Israel.

Moreover, the opposition to the Koran in the Jewish schools was significantly higher than the opposition to the New Testament. This difference was most pronounced among those under 30.

Attitudes Toward Churches and Missionaries

The sponsor of this study, the Bible Society in Israel, is neither a church nor a missionary society. It does not engage in congregational or evangelizing work. Its sole purpose is to make the Holy Scriptures available to everyone in his own language in suitable formats and at affordable prices. Working toward this objective, however, the Bible Society counts many churches and Christian organizations among its customers and contacts. Furthermore, with the concept of “The Mission” being as fluid as it is in this country, many Israelis would associate the Bible Society with “The Mission”, for better or for worse. Consequently, it was decided to include a series of questions on religious institutions and groups in order to make a better assessment of the institutional environment in which the Bible Society finds itself. The respondents were asked to what extent, in their opinion, the Christian churches and missionary groups have the right to operate as they do. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 4:

Perceived Legitimacy of Churches and Missions (in %)

	Christian Churches	Christian Missionary Groups
I'm sure they have the right to operate as they do	27	10
I think they do	40	27
I think they do not	17	25
I'm sure they don't have the right to operate as they do	16	38

It is revealing to note how the activities of the churches on one hand and the missionaries on the other are viewed differently by the Israeli public. By combining the first two response categories in the above table, we find that while 67% will approve the churches' activities, only 37% extend this approval to the missionaries. Apparently, the churches are for the most part viewed as institutions legitimately catering to the spiritual needs of non-Jews in this country. The missionaries, on the other hand, are seen by the majority as breaking the barrier of acceptability in their endeavours to communicate their message to the Jewish People.

Identical questions were asked about Jewish and Moslem institutions. It appears that the Rabbinical councils' activities were approved by 86% and the Islamic councils' activities by 65%, compared to the 67% for the Christian churches. The 37% approval of missionaries should be viewed alongside a 37% approval of Naturei Karta and Haredim (Jewish Orthodox activists) and 32% for Moslem zealots (a less than accurately defined group of fanatics). These three groups of activists were singled out for this survey as they were considered to be viewed by the public as minority extremist groups from within the three main religions. However, obvious differences between these groups must be acknowledged.

{62} The question regarding the various groups right to operate was separated from the question regarding the disturbance felt by the respondents as a result of religious activism. Asked to what extent the activities of the missionary groups bother them, 32% of the respondents said they were "not at all bothered". Another 20% said they were "not much bothered". The remaining 48% were either "bothered" or "very much bothered". The combined 52% not bothered by the missionaries compares with only 34% who say they are not disturbed by Naturei Karta and Haredim, and 39% who say the same about the Moslem zealots. From this it follows that although nearly half of the population feels disturbed by the missionaries, a much higher proportion of Israelis feel bothered by Jewish Orthodox and Moslem activists.

Most readers will be aware that "The Mission" in Israel is a term with more negative than positive connotations. The media will often publish unsubstantiated stories connecting "The

Mission” to various offenses such as bribery to convert, or encouraging desertion from the army and emigration. Every group of Christian or Jewish believers in Jesus of the New Testament is likely to be accused of harbouring aspirations to “destroy the Jewish heritage” whether openly or in secret. Against this background one must be allowed, to assume that part of the opposition to “The Mission”, as assessed by this survey, is the result of misconceptions about missionary groups rather than being based on knowledge of facts.

There is, however, a large proportion of the Jewish population in Israel, perhaps approaching one half, who genuinely believe that the message of the New Testament should not be freely proclaimed among Jews in the democratic State of Israel. A smaller, but much more determined and dangerous opposition reveals itself in the last question: “People who feel offended by the activities of Christian groups in this country sometimes take action against Christian institutions. To what extent do you justify such actions?” Seven percent of those asked said they “definitely justify” such anti-Christian activity and a further 15% said they “justify” them. In other words, two out of every nine Israelis would defend the use of force to stop Christian activities in Israel. Among those claiming strict observance of Jewish law, as many as two in five would support such violence.

Similar expressions of support for violent actions have been documented on a number of occasions. A recent opinion poll found, for example, that 19% of Israelis favor the idea of creating a Jewish group to fight terror with terror.⁶

Follow-up Research

The survey carried out by the Bible Society in Israel was the first attempt ever to add empirical facts to a sketchy and incomplete knowledge of public attitudes to Scripture distribution and evangelism in Israel. In presenting such a pilot study, the report is bound to lack the in-depth analysis which can only be gained over time and with repeated surveys. Furthermore, a number of important survey subjects had to be dropped due to the costs involved. However, confident that the monies put into this type of research is as sound an investment for non-profit organizations as it is for the business sector, I would like to encourage an increase in research activity in order that we all can become better stewards of the resources put at our disposal.

⁶ “A significant minority backs ‘Jewish Terror’”, article in the JERUSALEM POST, January 13, 1984

THE HISTORY OF THE UNION OF MESSIANIC JEWISH CONGREGATIONS (U.M.J.C.)

by Daniel C. Juster

Rev. Juster is the spiritual leader of the Beth Messiah Congregation., Rockville, Maryland, U.S.A. and President of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations in the U.S.A.

The mid 1970's saw a mushrooming of Messianic Jewish congregations in North America. The early leaders of those congregations desired a more Jewish expression of the New Covenant in a congregational setting. Partly, this was a reaction against a life-style among Jewish believers which was merely a memory or an acknowledgement of ethnic roots with no significant Jewish practice. Messianic congregations reflected Jewish life in music and dance, in connection to the Sabbath and holidays as well as in support of Israel.

Several congregational leaders saw a need for deeper mutual cooperation in order to foster the congregations in cooperative efforts and to aid in training leaders. A number of these leaders were board members of the Messianic Jewish Alliance. Hence, discussion ensued with regard to creation of a union as part of the Alliance. However, the Alliance board as a whole felt it was improper for the board to perform the function of explicitly relating congregations together. For one thing, it was noted that the task of the Alliance was to relate all Jewish believers together in a broad way. This included Messianic congregational Jews as well as Jewish believers who were part of a variety of Christian churches. It was not considered appropriate to explicitly favor Jewish congregations. Secondly, the Alliance saw itself as a para-congregational organization. Hence, it was considered improper for the Alliance to be a board over the congregational affiliation. The mid-seventies Alliance board therefore passed a resolution stating that it would look with favor upon the formation of a union.

During Alliance conferences from 1976-1978, discussions were held on the formation of a union with most leaders voicing a positive desire for the same. However, it was not until the spring of 1979 that the Chicago Messianic congregations invited leaders from all over North America to launch the Union. Committees were organized on constitution, worship, education, theology and conferences. Then in July of 1979, the official constituting meeting took place in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and 19 congregations joined as members and associate members. Since 1979 the Union membership has swelled to almost 50 members.

Union congregations are New Covenant congregations for Jew and Gentile who maintain a Jewish expression and a call to share the Gospel with Jews. All have a Sabbath dimension in worship as well as a focus on Israel, the feasts and Jewish needs.

The Union performs several functions for congregations and intends to do more. Presently we have an annual conference with seminars for both the general membership of congregations and for leadership and pastors. In addition, workshops in education, worship, dance, etc. are held.

The Union also has started a summer yeshiva {68} school that meets for an intensive week consisting of 30 hours of instruction every year. This past summer 20 students from all over

North America came to study *Messianic Jewish Theology*, *A Biblical Survey* and *The Spiritual Life of the Messianic Leader*.

The Union has also adopted a program for certifying and ordaining spiritual leaders. Spiritual and academic standards have been approved for this program. Ordination is in cooperation with local congregational leadership.

The first few years of the UMJC education curricula are being placed on a word processor and the publication of educational materials will expand in years to come. The discipleship book, *Growing to Maturity*, is a full 270 page presentation and is presently being readied for a second edition.

The planters program and fund are recent editions to the Union program. These efforts are intended to provide financial support and spiritual oversight for men who are planting new congregations. Planned giving programs will also be developed for this fund.

The Union leadership also provides a wealth of counsel and guidance to congregations and leaders around the country. Regional pastors' fellowships and conferences are also features of Union life.

However, all of this is less central than is the spirit of the Union. The Union is an organization with an amazingly sweet spirit. Difficult issues are discussed in a spirit of love and understanding. The Union also embraces the need for an affirmation of the Christian Church in a very full way. We are part of one universal body. We are also part of Israel. All of this is by the grace of God, whose exhortation to us is to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

FRÈRES MAIS ADVERSAIRES

An historical profile of Jewish-Christian relationships in France

by Elizabeth Hill

Elizabeth Hill is the Paris representative of the Church's Ministry among the Jews, and editor of the Bulletin of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.

The Archbishop of Marseilles recently told a synod of French bishops, "We have a mission of penitence because of our centuries-old attitude towards the Jewish people... We must learn how to ask forgiveness from God and from our brothers so often affected by the 'teaching of contempt' and submerged under the horrors of the Holocaust" (October 1983). This is but one of a number of statements that has been made by French church leaders during the last few years, in which the need for a reconciliation between Christians and Jews, going deeper than mere words, has been recognized.

Some 700,000 Jews live in France today – the fourth largest Jewish population in the world. Of this total, 380,000 have made their home in Paris – a considerably higher number than that boasted by either Jerusalem or London. There has been a Jewish community in France since the earliest centuries of the Diaspora, but relationships between Jews and their fellow Frenchmen, the so-called 'Christian' majority, have been far from peaceful during a long and bloodied history.

Beginnings

The first known Jewish presence in the territory covered by France today was that of Archelaus, ethnarch of Judaea, who was banished there in 6 C.E., to be followed by his brother Herod Antipas, exiled by the Emperor Caligula in 39 C.E. Legend has always told that ships of Jewish captives landed in Arles and Bordeaux following the fall and destruction of Jerusalem. Recent archaeological study appears to be attesting the veracity of these old, hitherto unproven stories.

The small, scattered Jewish communities of the first millennium of the Diaspora enjoyed a settled, peaceful way of life in a society into which they were generally well integrated. Relations between Jews and Christians were free at this time as is illustrated by the occasional church edicts asking Christians to refrain from eating with Jews: instructions that had to be repeated because they were evidently widely ignored! Numerically, the Jewish population was augmented by immigrants from Italy and Spain (the latter following persecution there) and also by an increasing number of proselytes from the poorer classes. Enjoying judicial equality with Christians, the Jewish people were engaged in intensive agricultural, economic and commercial activity. During this period, the occasional outbursts of anti-Jewish feeling only served to underline the security of their normal position in French society.

Centuries of Tragedy

The 11th century witnessed an upsurge of Jewish learning, with the spreading fame of the schools of Limoges, Narbonne and Troyes. Portents of the tragic years ahead, however, began to appear in the form of localized persecutions of the Jewish people, who were typically offered the choice of {65} baptism or expulsion (or, in the last resort, death). The earliest mass persecution of French Jews by the Christians was sparked off by the rumor of alleged Jewish involvement in the Sultan's desecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. As preparations for the first Crusade began in northern France, with French noblemen gathering their armies to rescue the holy sites, an anarchic section of the populace launched out on a crusade of a very different character: ridiculing the idea of crossing half the world to rescue the tomb of Christ from the infidels, while his supposed killers lived in their own midst, they embarked on riotous forays of terror with a ferocity previously unparalleled in France.

The Jewish communities of Rouen and Metz were the first to be pillaged and destroyed. Less than a century later, King Philip Augustus imprisoned all the Jews of Paris (releasing them on the payment of a substantial ransom) and then expelled all Jews from his kingdom. He allowed them back some 16 years later, again for reasons of financial insecurity. The long years of medieval persecutions and expulsions of the Jews of Europe had begun, hurried along by the ill-informed ramblings that passed for theology in the pulpits of the day. In 1215, there took place the sorry episode of the Fourth Lateran Council of the Church, which decreed the wearing of a distinctive badge compulsory for all Jews. Blood libels began. Wave after wave of imprisonment, confiscation of possessions and widespread massacres preceded the eventual expulsion of the Jews from France in 1394. They did not return in any great numbers for more than three centuries.

A New Freedom?

A few Jewish families of Spanish and Portuguese origin settled in the south-west of France during the 16th century, and refugees from the Ukraine and Poland reached Alsace and Lorraine in eastern France during the 17th Century. Not until the 18th century did any Jews take the step of returning to Paris, and even then their presence was tolerated rather than welcomed.

The French Revolution with its motto of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" was the turning point, leading toward the new emancipation of the Jewish people of Europe. Although the overwhelming majority of the 40,000 Jews in France were Yiddish-speaking and did not at that time embrace French culture, they were granted full French citizenship – the Sephardim first and then the Ashkenazim in 1791. During the 19th century, they were able to make great social and economic advances: their number doubled in the first half of the century. The population of Jews in Paris increased from a mere 500 at the time of the Revolution to 40,000 a hundred years later, swelled partly by the movement of the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine to the safer ground of Paris when these territories fell into German hands. These Jews became far more assimilated into French society, and it was no longer uncommon to find a Jew in a position of public prominence. The growing assimilation, however, led to a number of conversions of the new generation away from Judaism into the prevailing

Catholicism. The year 1826 saw the conversion of the subsequent founder of Notre Dame de Sion, an order dedicated to missionary work among Jews. The challenge of maintaining the Jewish faith in an open, modern society gave birth to the early Reform movements within French Judaism; none of these however, made great advances at this stage.

Then came “l'affaire Dreyfus”. There had been a worrying increase in anti-Semitism in clerical and royalist circles in Paris, and various anti-Semitic newspapers had begun circulating (for example, "La Croix" in 1883, “La Libre Parole” in 1892). In the midst of the campaign of defamation, a leading Catholic bank collapsed and the Jews were found to be a convenient scapegoat. In this atmosphere, Captain Dreyfus (the first Jew ever to reach the General Staff of the French Army) was arrested on charges of treason. He was declared guilty after an illegal trial, degraded and exiled. A bewildered Theodore Herzl watched the vicious unleashing of anti-Semitism in this supposedly most enlightened nation.

{66} Eleven years later, Dreyfus was formally pronounced innocent of the charges against him. In the meantime, however, his fate had served to rock both the establishment of France and the security of Jewish people throughout the world. In a startling disproportion between the origin of the case and its consequences, Dreyfus was unwittingly the cause of an upheaval in French political life, leading to the eventual separation of church and state at the beginning of this century. Like all religious groups, the Jews lost their official status at this time (1905) and had to adjust to living without state support for their schools and other institutions.

Wars and Rumors of War

The anti-Semitic campaigns found themselves halted in 1914, with the onset of war demanding national unity above all else. Once again, Jewish cultural life began to flourish, particularly in Paris. Artists such as Chagall and Modigliani, writers such as Durkheim and Proust, formed part of a whole galaxy of brilliance. The year 1936 saw the rise of Leon Blum as the first Jewish premier of France.

Paris fell under German occupation in 1940. Some 85,000 Jews were deported, of whom only 3000 survived the Holocaust. France became, however, the only country in Europe to which Jews immigrated in significant numbers after the war; in the following quarter of a century, the Jewish population more than trebled. A large influx of North African Jews made up part of this increase: in 1962-63, virtually the entire Jewish population (about 110,000) of newly-independent Algeria arrived in France, accompanied by those of Tunisia and Morocco. This factor (and a high Sephardi birthrate) has brought about a Sephardi majority in France for the first time. France now has a Sephardi chief rabbi ...although it has an Ashkenazi Catholic cardinal!

Where formerly the only sizeable Jewish communities (after Paris) were found in Marseilles, Lyons, Toulouse, Nice and Strasbourg, today there are Jewish families in many smaller towns. Roughly half of the former North African Jewish population came to settle in France (the remainder mostly making aliya to Israel) and, for economic reasons, the sheer numbers caused a wider dispersion of the French Jewish community than had previously been the

case. Thus the number of localities with a sizeable Jewish presence more than doubled, from 128 in 1957, to 293 less than ten years later.

In This Generation

Today, only a tiny minority practice their religious faith (only 1% of French Jews belong to the central Consistoire). The majority of Jewish children are educated in the secular state system, with a mere 5% attending Jewish schools. There is, however, much social, cultural and philanthropic activity within the different communities. Jewish publications abound and Paris alone boasts three Jewish radio stations.

It came as a shock to the well-integrated Jewish community when an anti-Israel political stance surfaced in the aftermath of the Six Day War (witness De Gaulle's notorious comment, "Un peuple d'elite, sur de luimeme et dominateur", November 1967). The so-called "students' revolution" of May 1968 was also accompanied by violent anti-Israel propaganda (in spite of the fact that several of its prominent leaders were Jewish). Fear of a possible anti-Semitic backlash among the middle classes caused an upward spiral in emigration to Israel from France in the late 1960's.

That fear has not disappeared with the passing years. Today, a solitary policeman stands guard outside each building known to be identified with the Jewish community. Metal barriers prevent cars from parking too close to synagogues. Terrorist actions of the kind that are reported by the general media – the bombing of the Rue Copernic synagogue in 1980, the machine-gunning of Goldenberg's Restaurant in 1982 – are under girded by many other incidents which never receive public attention. French Jews live in close proximity to the North African Arabs (about one and a half million of them in Paris) who play a distinctive role in public life, and who, by their very presence, remind North African Jews of what they fled a generation ago. The {67} Jewish community as a whole makes no effort to be 'visible'; the strong ethnic consciousness of, for example, American Jews has no French variant. There is an intermarriage rate of an estimated 60% on the Jewish side. The rise of the radical right (who surprised everyone by performing well in this year's European elections) has heightened the fears in the hearts of many Jewish people. Unhappy incidents are reported almost weekly in the Jewish press: the crowds at rallies who jeer at the names of Jewish public figures, the right-wing element who try to jam the Jewish radio programmes, and so on.

The Prevailing Culture

There is a continuing trickle of Jewish families converting to Catholicism. The family of Prime Minister Fabius did so at the end of the Second World War, and Archbishop Lustiger of Paris talks readily of his own Jewish origins, seeing nothing unusual in his decision to become a Catholic after his war-time experiences. In its public pronouncements today, the Catholic Church in France appeals for reconciliation and friendship between Christians and Jews.

Evangelism, however, is hardly on the agenda. With some 80% of the French people already Catholic (at least nominally), the cutting edge of evangelistic activity appears lost for the

time being. With only a very small minority practicing their Christian faith with any regularity, the Catholic Church seems riddled internally with theological and practical difficulties. The French fail to take evangelism seriously.

Messianic Stirrings

The Protestant churches are perhaps stronger in faith, but remain insignificant in numbers. There is (as a result?) a deeply felt commitment to evangelism-and an increase in the desire of Christians to seek renewal and reconciliation among themselves in order to provide a more effective public witness is an encouraging sign for the future. Evangelists linked with the Protestant churches have worked among the Jewish people of Paris (and occasionally of other cities such as Marseilles) for many years, but rarely in teams of more than two. The fragmented and sometimes divisive nature of such outreach has, not unnaturally, hindered its effectiveness. Statistics of 'results' are hard to come by. Many 'converts' in the past have been absorbed into the life and cultural norms of the mainstream churches without so much as a backward glance to bid farewell to their Jewish roots. But today, as in other countries around the world, there is increasing evidence of the wish of Jewish Christians to find patterns of worship and witness in which their faith in Jesus the Messiah is integrated with the background of their Jewish heritage. Perhaps one in 10,000 of the French Jewish population would define their identity as 'Messianic Jewish'.

Tiny groups of Messianic Jews have come together in Paris, Lyons and Marseilles, among other places. In Paris, several different groups function (with little or no reference to each other at present). A Pentecostal assembly presided over by a Messianic Jewish pastor runs an enthusiastic program of worship and outreach in one of the eastern neighborhoods of the city where a high concentration of Jewish people exists. Another group meets monthly for a teaching program designed to supplement regular church membership for Jewish believers, and to provide a reference point for those actively seeing the truth about the Messiah.

A small independent Messianic congregation used to hold twice-weekly public meetings for worship and Bible study until about a year ago. Its very independence, however, proved to be its downfall as its leaders marched it away unchecked into doctrinal tangents to orthodox Christian belief and practice. After months of confusion and division, a remnant of the original membership continues to meet in private homes but has publicly severed its links with all other Christian presence in Paris. This has not endeared the ideals of Messianic Judaism to those Christian leaders whose pastoral duty is now to clear out the wreckage in the lives of individual Jewish believers.

The Alliance Francaise des Juifs Messianiques (the French branch of the International {68} Hebrew Christian Alliance) was temporarily powerless to intervene in the situation, being itself sucked into the whirlpool of division through the unfortunate circumstance of sharing some common leadership with the former congregation. Those leaders having resigned their membership, the Alliance is going through the process of retreating to regroup and move forward once again.

The divisions at present apparent in the Messianic Jewish community in Paris are perhaps the inevitable problems faced by a numerically weak group with few leaders and no recognizable

process of consultation and communication. As French Messianic Jews search for identity reinforcement, the wealth of experience and resources available from abroad lies scarcely tapped. Materials written from a Messianic Jewish perspective (whether evangelistic or educational), which exist in such quantity in English and (increasingly) in Hebrew, are virtually unknown in France. There still exists a general lack of quality Christian literature in the French language: this problem is simply magnified many times over for believers of Jewish background.

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Book Reviews

THE CHURCH AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Witness of the Jews to God

Edited by David W. Torrence, The Handsel Press: Edinburgh 1982. VIII + 180 pgs.

When one sees the list of authors who have contributed the twelve essays of this book – *D. W. Torrence, G. W. Anderson, C. E. B. Cranfield, G. F. A. Knight, J. K. S. Reid, M. A. Macleod, H. L. Ellison, T. F. Torrence, M. Kinzer and J. R. Dobschiner*, – then one expects high quality. Having read the book, the present reviewer wishes to commend the contributors for their superb collection and to express his hope that it will become standard reading for students seeking an introduction to Christian-Jewish relations and for all concerned with the Gospel and the Jewish people.

The twelve essays cover important issues in the theology of Christian-Jewish relations. In addition, the book also contains as appendices documents on Christian-Jewish relations from the Overseas Council of the Church of Scotland, from the Protestant Church of the Rheinland (Germany) and from the German Roman Catholic Bishops as well as three helpful, statistic tables on World Jewish Communities.

In this review I will point to four basic questions which I see raised by the book and in connection with these questions I will highlight and briefly comment upon the major essays.

The Vocation of Israel

The first question, which seems to run as a major thread throughout the book, is this: *If we maintain that the NT confirms the continued chosenness of the Jewish people after the coming of Christ and their rejection of Him, how are we then to understand their present vocation?*

Many of the authors seem to stand in a tradition significantly influenced by *Karl Barth*. He understood the people of Israel in our age as “witnessing to (a) the judgment of God, (b) the obduracy and misery of man, and (c) the sentence and punishment God himself endured.” (pg. 57) However, in his article “Israel – People, Nation, State” *J. K. S. Reid* criticises Barth for allowing the judgment and mercy of God to be separated and for representing the witness of Israel primarily as a witness to God’s judgment. It is then the merit of *J. K. S. Reid* and of *D. W. Torrence* and *T. F. Torrence* that they go beyond Barth and advance our biblical thinking concerning God’s positive purpose for Israel and its role after the coming of Christ. In his programmatic article “The Witness of the Jews to God” *D. W. Torrence* gives expression to a significant hermeneutical principle for our understanding of the Jewish people: there is an organic bond and an essential relationship between Jesus and the people. This organic bond is for Torrence related to the vicarious mission and the continued role of the suffering servant for the Jewish people. It is emphasized that Jesus alone was able to fulfill the servant role and accomplish salvation for Israel and mankind, but this does not

imply that Israel lost the servant role to which God called her: the appalling suffering of Israel portrays Christ's suffering on the cross, and the remarkable {70} delivery from the Holocaust and the restoration to the promised land portrays Christ's resurrection. The witness of Israel is thus understood as a continuing witness to divine revelation, to God's judgment *and* mercy, to God's grace and our hope in Christ.

In his essay, "The Divine Vocation and Destiny of Israel in World History", *T. F. Torrence* develops further the dialectical understanding of the servant role on the background of God's interaction with the People in the Old Testament: God used the reactions of the people – whether of obedience or disobedience – to penetrate into Israel's existence and as instruments to communicate His Word to man. It is on this line that T. F. Torrence also sees the role of the people even in the period of the New Covenant: Israel had to be disobedient in our place and for our sake, that the world might be reconciled to God. The inner organic bond between Israel and Jesus was consummated in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and it is by virtue of this bond that Israel's abandonment in history, in the pogroms and the extermination camps, should be seen as pointing ahead to its own resurrection and reaffirmation in the fullness of the Covenant.

In a broad sense T. F. Torrence captures the meaning of Israel's vocation under three headings that show his line of thought: 1. Israel is the unique partner of divine revelation. 2. Israel is the only people with Messianic promise. 3. Israel will have a critical place in the consummation of all things. And from these points he goes on to outline three things that Israel may help us to understand: Jesus, the atonement and God's interaction with the world.

These essays show that the question of the continued chosenness of the Jewish people implies two corollary questions: How are we to understand the continuing organic bond between Jesus and His Jewish people? What biblical concepts do we have that may help us to understand the present role of the people? The essays quoted answer both questions through the application of the role of the suffering servant, although their arguments do not rest upon this concept alone. I have been impressed with this answer, but I am still struggling with some problematic aspects of it.

First of all, from the point of exegesis and biblical theology, do we not have to assert that the picture of Israel as a servant and the picture of the One Servant who suffers for Israel and the nations, are two distinct and different pictures in the Book of Consolation (e.g. Isa. 41,8f; 42,19; 44,1 e.a. vis-a-vis 42,1-9; 49,1-6; 50,4-9; 52,13-53,12)?

Secondly, we must ask if this identification of the role of Israel will not lead to an underestimation of the seriousness of the present crisis in the relationship between 'unbelieving Israel' and the One Suffering Servant, and to lack of urgency in the sharing of the Good News with Jewish people? Admittedly, T. F. Torrence also stresses that we are called to help Jews understand something of the finality of what took place in the crucifixion of Jesus – and yet the question remains.

Thirdly, as a corollary to the first and the second question: if we accept the finality of Christ's crucifixion and the sacrificial and atoning meaning of His death, does then the role

of a suffering servant for Israel really answer the problem of evil in the horrors of the Holocaust?

And *finally*, we must also ask how the line from the resurrection of Jesus, to the restoration of Israel to the restoration of all mankind can be developed without ending up with a theology of universal salvation?

By these questions I want to stress that the essays quoted have developed biblical concepts for our understanding of the present vocation of the Jewish people with which we must continue to work and reflect upon, and they challenge us to search for proper biblical concepts in our understanding of the bond between Jesus and His Jewish people.

Israel and its Land

The second question is this: *How are we to understand the link between the people and the land, and has the renewed presence of the people in their land theological significance today?*

{71} G. F. A. Knight in a paper on “Israel – the Land and Resurrection” begins by discussing the place of the land in salvation history and ends up by stressing the organic relationship between Jesus and the land: Jesus became the focal point of all of God’s promises, and His physical body, composed of the produce of the land, revealed finally what the choice of the land was for. The Risen Christ is now the place of God’s redemptive purpose; He is the eschatological significance and the ultimate outcome of God’s ancient promise of the land.

With a different approach *J. K. S. Reid*, in his previously mentioned article, asserts that the identity of Israel as a people has priority over against the land, nationhood and statehood. He maintains that the initial occupation of the land – the conquest by Joshua – must be understood either as a possession to be reiterated with similar divine right, or simply as a divine lesson to be learned but not as an example to be followed. Reid confirms the second interpretation and asserts that the phasing out of nationhood and statehood for Israel throughout most of its history has left the people as such unimpaired, and even enhanced its reality as a people. He sees no discernible role for the people today that would require possession of the land and nationhood and concludes that the role for the people in the present age is to bring witness – of both Christological and anthropological character – to the condition of mankind without Christ.

With regard to the significance of the land, the contributions of *D. W. Torrence* and *T. F. Torrence* have a more positive approach. T. F. Torrence stresses “the deep interconnection between the People of Israel and the Holy Land”. He sees the significance of the land in the light of “the concrete particularity of their existence in the space and time of this world where God has set them and preserves them. In the unitary outlook of the Jews, so powerfully represented in the Old Testament, the physical and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, the moral and the religious, are held inseparably together within the covenant faithfulness of God as it takes actual shape and form in the life and existence of Israel” (p. 103). T. F. Torrence thus sees the link between the people and the land as a fundamental, biblical identity-relationship – as expressed in Gen. 12, 1 where three elements are mentioned: people, land, blessing for the nations, – and he understands their return and

renewed presence in the land as a significant witness to God's interaction with the world in our day. If the relationship between the people and the land in our day is understood primarily in the light of the above mentioned biblical identity of Israel (Gen. 12, 1), one could probably avoid the rather sterile debate about contemporary events in the Middle East, if they are fulfillment of particular prophecies or not, and one could also avoid the difficult problems that arise if one sees the return to the land as a reiteration of the Joshua conquest. The emphasis would then be that the return identifies the Jewish people for the Church and the world as the Israel of God, chosen in Abraham, and it demonstrates the continuing faithfulness of God towards His people and His salvational will for Israel and the world. But the question remains: has the renewed presence of the people in their land any significance for their relation to Christ? Should not the return to the land also be interpreted in accordance with biblical theology and terminology and with a Christological orientation: their return (teshuvah) is God's call to repentance and salvation (yeshu'ah) for them in Yeshua' HaMashiach.

Biblical research and systematic theology have more work to do concerning the present link between the people and the land. One must ask, for example, if recent research on the New Testament and the land has given enough consideration to the original Jewish and Eretz-Israeli (Land of Israel) context of the New Testament scriptures, and if more consistent interaction with Jewish theology should not be regarded as both necessary and even helpful?

The Messianic Fulfillment of Jewish Faith

The third major question raised by the book is this: *If we see the schism between the Church and the Jewish people as a tragedy {72} for both, how are we today to regard the development of movements of Hebrew Christians/Messianic Jews both in Israel and in the Diaspora?*

None of the essays are actually devoted to this question, but the Hebrew-Christian contributors do touch upon it. *J-R. Dobschiner* writes movingly and to the point about "Christ, the fulfillment of the Jewish faith." She laments over the "widescale attitude of ignoring the origins of our faith and salvation, which robs the Christian Church and the individual believer of the riches which are theirs in Christ Jesus, the Christ Who was born and brought up in a Jewish setting, tradition and faith" (pg. 129). And in a personal statement – though with theological implications – she says: "Here, I must stretch as a bridge between the Church, in which I now find myself, and the Jewish life and faith into which I was born. Believe me, if only I could be that bridge, it would then be so easy for both Jewish people and my brothers and sisters in Christ to identify with the reality of Paul's words in Eph. 2, 14-18: He (Christ) is our Peace, Who has made the two one" (p. 126).

H. L. Ellison, in his short essay on "The Witness to God of the Covenant People", ends with a similar note. He discusses the problems of the Church's traditional criticism of Judaism and its tendency to assimilate Jewish Christians into their new Gentile environment. He then concludes: "It could well be that just as the Holy Spirit used mainly Jewish Christians to interpret the riches of Christ to the infant Church, so He may well use their descendants today to bring us a richer understanding of those riches" (p. 84).

It seems to me that it is with this remark from H. L. Ellison in mind that one should read the essay of *M. Kinzer*, “The Messianic Fulfillment of the Jewish Faith”. In explaining his Messianic-Jewish identity he describes how experience has confirmed what he knows to be theologically true – that “faith in the Messiah is the fulfillment of Judaism.” He demonstrates this by seven points, to which faith in the Messiah has led him: an experienced personal relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; a great love and reverence for the Hebrew Scriptures; a great zeal for the Torah; an immense appreciation of Jewish worship; a great love for the Hebrew language; a new love for the Jewish people; and a new love and appreciation for his own family.

For some decades the Hebrew-Christian issue has been almost a taboo in Christian-Jewish dialogue and in the encounter between representatives of Church and Synagogue. It is to the merit of the editor that the essays quoted have been included in the present collection, and they call for further biblical and theological reflection upon the significance of the growing body of Jewish believers both for Israel and the Church. Certainly, their witness is essential when we are dealing with the overall theme of the witness of Jews to God.

The Witness to the Jewish People

The fourth and last question then is this: *If we confirm the continued vocation of the Jewish people and assert that salvation is exclusively in Christ for Jews and Gentiles, how should then the Church relate to the Jewish people in its own witnessing ministry?*

M. A. Macleod who deals with this question in his paper “The Witness of the Church to the Jewish People”, shares some of the basic conceptions referred to above from the two Torrences concerning the continued vocation of Israel. But he emphasizes that the controversy and the conflict between the Church and the Jewish people – from a biblical point of view-can ultimately only be resolved in the acceptance of the person of Jesus Christ. It is this question about Jesus which is the basic motivation as well as content of our witness to Jewish people. In explaining the theological background and horizon for this witness Macleod points to two fundamental factors: First, it belongs to the essence of the Body of Christ that it has been commissioned to proclaim the Good News. And secondly, in the Gospel proclamation to Israel, it is essential to underline the unity of the Church and Israel, that the Church has not taken the place of Israel and {73} arrogated to herself prerogatives that belong peculiarly to Israel, but that the Church has been grafted into Israel. Keeping these two factors together, Macleod then maintains the need for a particular proclamation of the gospel to the Jews, and that this proclamation should have priority in the evangelistic ministry of the church: the Gospel is for the Jew first.

M. A. Macleod, who is Director and General Secretary of Christian Witness to Israel (London), is also President of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism. His contribution should therefore be regarded as representative of many of the societies that are today involved in Jewish evangelism: with the emphasis on the particularity, the priority and the urgency of our Gospel ministry to the Jewish people. However, it seems that the practical implications of “the priority” still need to be worked out. Also, the essays of Macleod and others in this book indicate that we are in need of some terminological clarifications – is it in accordance with NT terminology to say that the *Church* has been grafted into Israel? – so

that we may keep before our eyes the integral relationship and eschatological unity of “Israel and the Church”.

In Search of a Biblical Balance

In the last decades Christian theologians favoring an exclusive dialogue approach to the Jewish people have tended to emphasize Rabbinic Judaism as the way of life and salvation for Jews in such a way that the New Testament teaching of exclusive salvation in Christ has by implication been set aside. On the other hand, a traditional emphasis among conservative and evangelical theologians on the exclusive salvation in Christ has tended to give absoluteness to the Christian Church as a non-Jewish entity which implies a rejection of the Jewish people and their traditions. From this perspective it has been refreshing to read the essays of this book. Despite differences among the authors on many points, they seem united in their effort to keep the biblical balance between the exclusive salvation in Christ and the continued chosenness of the Jewish people and, in their attempts, to understand the one in the light of the other. Both this united approach and the differences stimulate further reflection, and the book deserves to be read widely and to influence our concern for the Gospel and the Jewish people.

It is my hope that the readers will heed the call of *C. E. B. Cranfield* in his excellent article “Light from St. Paul on Christian-Jewish Relations” – to pray seriously and wholeheartedly, earnestly and faithfully and to work persistently, with humility and grace and in truly brotherly fashion, for the salvation of the Jews.

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ISRAEL AND ITS LAND

Whose Promised Land?

by Colin Chapman,

Lion Publishing: Tring, Herts, England 1983.

This article is a response from the author to the review of his book by Halvor Ronning which appeared in *MISHKAN* Issue no.1.

May I say how grateful I am for the review of Whose Promised Land? and for this opportunity to reply. I'd like to comment briefly on what I understand to be the five main criticisms of the book expressed in the review by Halvor Ronning.

(1) “This is a book written out of sympathy for the Palestinian refugees. This sympathy basically colors all that follows.”

{74} I don't deny that I have sympathy for the Palestinian refugees. But I hope it's possible to have sympathy for both sides in the conflict. I certainly tried to express the genuine sympathy, which I feel for the Jewish people; and if the reviewer didn't find any traces of that sympathy, my Arab friends certainly did!

Isn't it a rather telling slip, by the way, that the reviewer talks about sympathy for the “Palestinian refugees”? The Palestinians feel themselves to be “a people”, and their sense of peoplehood is not altogether different from that of the Jews. If the world still thinks of the Palestinians as “refugees”, can we blame them for concluding that they will have to shout louder still in order to make the world take seriously their longings to be recognized as a people, a nation with their own homeland?

(2) “Omitting and misrepresenting historical facts.”

The first third of the book is deliberately devoted to the history of the land. But since no examples of serious omissions or misrepresentations are given by the reviewer, there can't be any dialogue at this point.

Any brief survey is bound to omit some of the facts. But if there's deep disagreement in our understanding of what has happened in history, it's not surprising that we'll be even further apart in our interpretation of the Bible. Doesn't this therefore underline the need not to cut corners in our discussion, and to be prepared to discuss history while we're studying the Bible, or even – dare I say it? – before we turn to the Bible?

(3) “quoting various sources (Arab, Jewish and ‘neutral’) commenting primarily on the negative traits of Israelis... and applying the moral condemnation of the Hebrew prophets primarily against the Israelis, with very little attention to the injustices common in other societies of the Middle East.”

There are certainly quotations in the book, which comment on the negative traits of the Israelis. But these are balanced by several quotations, which speak of the negative traits of the Arabs. Moreover, one whole section (pages 182-188) is entitled “Non-Selective judgment”, and tries to bring the conduct of all the parties in the conflict under the judgment of God's Word.

If in spite of this there's still an imbalance, perhaps it's because we're talking about the people who are in a special position of responsibility, because of their unique calling: “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins” (Amos 3:2).

It is Jews and Christians, and not the “other societies of the Middle East”, who are using the Bible to support a political cause. If they want to be “under the torah” in this sense, they need to be willing to “hear what the torah says”(Gal 4:21). The more they appeal to the OT to support their claim to the land, the more they are asking to be judged by the moral law of the OT.

(4) “using the kind of theology which spiritualizes biblical promises made to the Jewish people...”

The assumption here seems to be that there is only one legitimate way of interpreting these promises, and that is to interpret them literally. Part of the problem here, I would suggest, is that we are not simply dealing with the fulfillment of “promises made to the Jewish people”, but with the larger question of how the whole of the OT is interpreted by Jesus and the NT writers. The OT, for example, speaks of Israel as “my son” (Exodus 4:22-23 and Hosea 11:1) and as “the vine” (Psalm 80:8-16). How then was Jesus interpreting and using the OT when he spoke of himself as “the son” (Matt. 11:27) and “the true vine” (John 15:1)? We cannot begin to answer this question if we approach it with the assumption that our interpretation of the OT can only be “literal”.

The choice between these two basic categories puts the discussion into an impossibly tight strait jacket. What if we take a prophecy about the Jewish people from Ezekiel, which uses the word *mishkan*? “My dwelling place (my *mishkan*) will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among {75} them forever.” (Ezek. 37:27-28). Before we ask “should we interpret this literally or spiritually?” the basic question ought to be: “How did Jesus and the Apostles interpret prophecies of this kind?” It seems clear from John 2:19-21 that Jesus claimed to be in some sense “the new Temple”. And when John says “the Word became flesh and lived for a while (i.e. ‘tabernacled’) among us” (John 1:14), he must have thought of Jesus as the fulfillment of all that the Tabernacle had stood for in the OT. If this interpretation of the promises of Ezekiel is a “spiritualized interpretation”, what would a “literal interpretation” be?

As a further example of the inadequacy of this approach, let us take Amos 9:8-15, since this is quoted in the review as an example of the inconsistent way in which I take parts of prophecy “literally” and “spiritualize” other parts which don't fit my theology. Verses 11-12 are quoted by James at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:16-17, and we therefore have

here an instructive example of how one of the Apostles interpreted an OT prophecy in the light of the coming of Christ:

a) He related Amos' words about the blessing of the nations ("the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name" Amos 15:17) to the recent inclusion of Gentile believers in the Church ("God... showed His concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for Himself" 15:14).

b) He understood the words of Amos to mean that the inclusion of the Gentiles was something which follows on after, and as a result of, restoration of the people to the land and the rebuilding of "David's fallen tent" ("I will return and rebuild... and restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles..." 15:16-17).

c) The conclusion would seem to be that in the mind of James, the rebuilding of "David's fallen tent" must already have taken place. The fact that Gentiles were now being filled with the Spirit and incorporated into the church meant that the return, the rebuilding and the restoration prophesied by Amos had already taken place, or at least begun to take place. It is hardly conceivable that James could "spiritualize" the reference to the inclusion of the Gentiles in verse 17, and at the same time believe that this had no connection whatsoever with the return to the land and the rebuilding of the nation described in verse 16. I personally don't see how he could believe that the promise about the Gentiles had already been fulfilled spiritually, but that the promise about the return and the restoration could only be fulfilled literally at some time in the future.

May I simply plead for a moratorium on accusations about taking "the first step down this dangerous road to spiritualizing" until we have openly and frankly discussed the most basic hermeneutical question of all: How did Jesus and the Apostles interpret the OT promises and prophecies?

(5) "it takes those promises away from the Jewish people, and applies them to the Church as if the Church had totally replaced Israel..."

I confess to being puzzled about the charge that I hold "the unbiblical, proud, Gentile replacement theology..." "I do not believe that "all prophecy relating to salvation is already fulfilled in Jesus' First Coming" or that "all promises made to the Jewish nation now apply to the Church," and I suspect that the reviewer is jumping to conclusions which are not there in the book.

In my discussion of Romans 9-11, I try to make at least three basic points:

- a) "The Jews are still heirs to all the promises made to their forefathers. Simply by virtue of being the physical descendants of Abraham, the privileges and blessings of the covenant are still theirs..." (pp 213-214).
- b) "Israel' means 'the Jewish people' and not 'the Church'" (p 213). I do not believe that "all Israel" means "the whole Church".

- c) Paul's main purpose in these chapters was to challenge and rebuke the pride {76} and arrogance of Gentile Christians who believed that God had totally rejected His people (p 216).

I agree entirely with the reviewer that "by joining the remnant of Israel, we enter a special family kind of relationship also with non-Christian Jews." But my theology of the Jewish people also has to take into account the fact that titles which in the OT belonged exclusively to the Jewish people are applied by Peter to both Jewish and Gentile believers (1 Peter 2:9-10), that Jews who do not believe are "broken off because of unbelief" (Romans 11:20), and that God's purpose is to create in Christ "one new man out of the two" (Eph 2:15).

If we all agree that Jesus of Nazareth is God's *mishkan*, we do at least have a common starting point!

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