

MISHKAN

A THEOLOGICAL FORUM ON JEWISH EVANGELISM

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ISSN 0792-0474

Jerusalem



MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

"CHRISTIANITY AND THE LAW"

ISSUE 8-9 / 1988

General Editor: Ole Chr. M. Kvarme

United Christian Council in Israel · Jerusalem

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{Inside front cover} Editorial

As editors, we have been heartened by the response MISHKAN continues to evoke among many of our readers, who see our journal as systematically addressing an area of persistent need in theological thinking. MISHKAN is providing a forum for Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in which they can relate to each other theologically, without the need to hedge the strength of their respective positions. This is true dialogue, one in which we are delighted to participate!

It is our hope that the present issue will provoke further discussion in an area of Christian theology wherein a great deal of work remains to be done: Christians have traditionally found it very difficult to relate positively to “the Law.” Much Christian theology speaks of “the Law” in ambivalent or negative terms, relegating it to the role of a pre-Christian, graceless necessity from which Christ has mercifully delivered us. “The Law” was understood as serving “to lead us to Christ,” and then leaving us there, with nothing further to add to our Christian experience of God’s goodness. “The Law” has been seen as a mere shadow, now replaced by the substance, a plentiful source of illustrations for Christian moralizing or a quarry for the allegorizing inventiveness of Christological preaching. It is seldom viewed in its own right. Most preaching from “the Law” can hardly be distinguished from preaching from the NT.

Your editors wish to raise for your consideration the possibility that “the Law” has a far more positive and contemporary role to play in Christian living. Indeed, I (not wanting to risk the theological necks of my fellow-editors) would venture to suggest that one vital, necessary step towards a more fully-orbed biblical approach to the subject before us is the creation of a terminology not suffering from the confusing ambivalence of that presently in use. What do we mean by “the Law”? The Old Testament? The Mosaic Covenant? Aspects of the latter (moral, ceremonial or civil)? Wenham, Bowler, and Kaiser introduce us to the theme. We invite our readers to submit contributions of their own.

The second area of discussion addressed in this issue is one of methodology and should probably require as much repenting as it does new fresh thinking.

{143} How do Christians use the rabbinic writings? How should they do so? Boskey, an associate editor of MISHKAN, provides us with a provocative critique that we would all do well to heed. Responses by Juster, Pearl, and Brandt provoke further thought. The main issue here has to do with integrity: how faithful are we to the sources we use? Once again, we encourage further discussion from our readers. Another issue, raised particularly by the responses from Brandt and Juster, is the right of Jewish Christians to appropriate Jewish cultural terminology. Not all acknowledge such a right - and they are not all on the same side of the theological divide!

Space will not permit reference to our other articles, nor more than a mere “welcome” to David Smith, who serves our readers as MISHKAN’s linguistic editor. It is a pleasure to have him with us.

MISHKAN is unabashedly committed to thoughtful evangelism. Its editors recognize that some of what has gone by the name of Jewish evangelism was as unworthy of the name as it was of the Gospel it claimed to represent. This is something we would like to see remedied,

and we shall continue to engage ourselves to that end. Not all Jewish criticism of evangelism is invalid; all of it should be given a fair hearing. MISHKAN has committed itself to being a forum in which, among other things, such criticism may be voiced.

Dialogue is no easy task. It requires a confidence in one's own convictions and a respect for the persons of those who differ from us. Such a respect exposes us to the awful possibility that, in some area, we may have been wrong. May it please God to help us all - both friends and foes of Jewish evangelism - to engage in such an endeavor, and thus lead us ever closer to His perfect Truth.

On behalf of the MISHKAN editors,

Baruch Maoz.

{1} Jesus and the Law:

An Exegesis on Matthew 5:17-20

David Wenham

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The very strong statements about the continuing validity of the Old Testament law ascribed to Jesus in Matthew 5:17-20 have caused great difficulty to many Christian interpreters. Some have felt that they are in contradiction to Jesus' more liberal attitude to the law¹ attested in Mark's Gospel (and elsewhere); others have wondered how they can possibly be reconciled with the teaching of Paul, the writer to the Hebrews and others, who suggest that the Christian is at least in some senses freed from the law.

A common solution to these problems is to ascribe the views expressed in Matthew 5:17-20 to the Jewish Christians of Matthew's church rather than to Jesus. But this solution, however plausible it may seem, is not without objection on critical grounds,² and it is in any case no final solution for the person who wishes to interpret Matthew 5:17-20 as part of the Word of God.

How then can we make sense of these verses? Dr Robert Banks has made some important suggestions on this, which, if accepted, would go a long way to answering our question.³ His views in general on Jesus' view of the Old Testament law are summed up by the editor of *Themelios* as follows:

Jesus did not 'expound' the law, nor did He 'abrogate' it, or even 'radicalize' it. The law was not, as such, any more the object of His attention than the traditions. His own new teaching moves on a plane above and beyond the law. The question is not Jesus' attitude to the law, but the law's relevance to Him. It points forward to Him, and in that sense it is fulfilled in His coming, and particularly in His teaching. 'It is only in so far as it has been taken up into that teaching and completely transformed that it lives on' (p 242). Even the Decalogue does not remain in force as 'eternal moral law'. Only the teaching of Jesus has that status.⁴

{2} This general position is in accord with and is supported by Banks' detailed discussion of Matthew 5:17-20. Among the points made by Banks, the following are particularly important (and controversial): in v. 17b, 'I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them,' Banks argues that the Greek word translated 'fulfill', *plerosai*, should not be interpreted to mean 'establish'; rather it means to 'fulfill' all that the law pointed forward

¹ For example, about the sabbath

² The partial parallel in Luke 16:17 should prevent us from quickly concluding that these verses are Matthean

³ In *JBL* 93 (1974), pp.226-242 and in his book *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge CUP 1975), which was reviewed in *Themelios* Vol. 2, No. 1 (1976), pp. 29, 30. The present writer has been able to consult only the *JBL* and *Themelios* articles when writing this. [The relevant section of the book (pp. 203-226) is in fact a virtually unaltered reprint of the *JBL* article -Ed.]

⁴ *Themelios*, art. cit., p. 29

to, and thus to transcend and replace the law. The law, like the prophets, pointed forward to Christ, and now that Christ has come the law is included in and superseded by Him.

In the following verse (v. 18), which speaks of not an iota, not a dot, passing from the law until all is accomplished, Banks takes the phrase ‘until all is accomplished’ to mean ‘until all is fulfilled in Christ’ (in the way described already). Once Christ has come, the law is replaced by His teaching. V. 19 warns against relaxing ‘one of the least of these commandments’, and Banks takes this to refer to Jesus’ commands, not to the Old Testament law.

On the basis of such exegetical arguments Banks can conclude that Matthew 5:17-20 is not concerned to teach the abiding validity of the Old Testament law so much as superiority and authoritative character of Jesus and His teaching.

Objections to Banks’ View

Banks argues carefully, and aspects of his interpretation are attractive. But his exegesis of Matthew 5:17-20 is open to serious questions.

1. V. 17. Banks’ argument that *plerosai* should be interpreted to mean ‘fulfill and transcend’ rather than ‘establish’ is not entirely convincing. We may agree with Banks that *plerosai* is normally used in Matthew to mean ‘fulfill’ (especially of the fulfillment of prophecy), and that quite possibly that thought is present here in Matthew 5:17 - not only the prophets, but also the law are seen as pointing forward to Jesus and as finding their fulfillment in Him. But whereas Banks believes that Matthew’s thought is that of ‘fulfilling and so transcending’, the context suggests rather that the thought is that of ‘fulfilling and so establishing’. The contrast in v. 17b, ‘I came not to abolish but to ...’, favors this view: ‘abolish - fulfill/establish’ are a more natural pair of opposites than ‘abolish - fulfill/transcend. And the subsequent context also favors this interpretation: the fact that Jesus is the fulfiller of the law leads on to the practical ‘therefore’ of v. 19: Jesus’ followers are to uphold, not abolish, the law.⁵

2. V. 18. The clause ‘until all (literally all things) is accomplished’ is taken by Banks to mean - until all the law’s demands and expectations are fulfilled, i.e. until the coming of Christ. The weakness with this interpretation is the preceding parallel clause ‘until heaven and earth pass away’; this clause clearly suggests that the law’s validity is until the end of time. Banks argues on tradition-critical grounds that this earlier clause means simply that it is extremely difficult for the **{3}** law to pass away. But that is not exactly what it says: in Matthew’s version the clause is a statement of time ‘until ...’, and, even if we allow a measure of rhetorical exaggeration, it clearly suggests that it will be a very long *time* until the law passes. The clause ‘until all is accomplished’ may be correctly interpreted to mean ‘until all that the law points forward to is fulfilled’;⁶ but the parallel ‘until’ clause and also the wider context in Matthew (and in Jesus’ ministry) suggest that the

⁵ Banks, of course, has a different interpretation of v. 19. It is possible to argue that *plerosai* simply means “establish” here and that it does not have the more usual Matthean connotation of “fulfillment”. The absence of *pleroun*, as a translation of the Hebrew *qum* in the LXX, is scarcely a decisive point against this. H. Ridderbos understands the verse to mean that Jesus “maintained and interpreted in its radical sense” the law and the prophets (*Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 285).

⁶ So Banks. Compare Matthew 1:22; 24:34; 26:56

reference is to the long-term future (i.e. the Second Coming) not to the near future (i.e. to Jesus' earthly ministry).

3. V. 19. Banks' interpretation of this verse is the weakest point in his exegesis: as France comments, it is improbable 'that Matthew could have allowed the term *entolai* (=commandments) to follow so closely on a reference to the Old Testament laws in verse 18 and yet expected it to be understood in a quite different and, in his Gospel, unique sense.'⁷ It is not necessary to add much to that comment,⁸ except to say that something similar might be said about Banks' whole exegesis: despite his careful detailed work on the individual verses, it is hard to read the Matthean paragraph as a whole and to accept Banks' conclusion that it is not a statement about the abiding validity of the law, but rather a statement teaching the prophetic and provisional character of the law of Jesus' transcendence over it.

We might go on to question Banks' general thesis about Jesus' attitude to the law: his view that 'the law was not, as such, any more the object of His attention than the traditions'⁹ and his argument that 'It is only so far that it has been taken up *into* that teaching and completely transformed that it lives on'¹⁰ seems debatable at least: it would be unusual for a Jew of Jesus' day not to have the law as a major objection of his attention, and, although Jesus was unusual and revolutionary in many ways, it is arguable that He does continue to give the law an important place in His teaching and thinking (e.g. Mark 7:9f., 12:28f.).¹¹ The same is even more clearly true of Matthew.¹²

Jesus' Self-defense

If, then, Banks' explanation of Matthew 5:17-20 seems unconvincing, what are we to make of these verses? Do they express a rigorist attitude to the law, at variance with Jesus' known teaching elsewhere? I don't think so. The key to the interpretation of the verses seems to me to lie in a recognition of the context in Matthew's gospel and also of the probable context in Jesus' ministry. In Matthew 5 the preceding context in v. 16 is a call to good works, and the subsequent context in v. 20 and the verses that follow is a comparison of Jesus' standards of righteousness with those of the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew's concern then in this section of his Gospel, and indeed elsewhere, is for righteous living. It is not unlikely that Matthew is answering a Jewish accusation that Jesus' way represented a departure from Jewish moral standards and a destruction of the law; so Matthew emphasizes Jesus' righteousness and His condemnation of *anomia* (e.g. Matt. 13:41; 25:31f., etc.).

⁷ *Themelios*, art. cit., p. 30

⁸ We may note a further link between v. 17 and v. 19 in the verbs *kataluein*, and *luein*.

⁹ *Themelios*, art. cit., p. 29

¹⁰ *ibid.*, quoting *Jesus and the Law in the synoptic tradition*, p. 242.

¹¹ Banks would not deny that the law has a significant place in Jesus' teaching and thinking, and I would, of course, not deny that in New Testament theology the law comes to have a secondary place to Christ and that our relationship to the law is now only through Christ. But Banks' view that the law has passed away except as continued and transformed in Christ is to my mind too negative a way of expressing the truth; I would prefer to say that the law continues as eternal moral law, though now only as a part of the full and perfect revelation of Christ.

¹² E.g. 23:3.23. Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 246f. on Matthew's 'Jewish Christianity' and on the exegesis of the whole passage. Although I have disagreed with Banks' exegesis in certain respects, his discussion remains of the greatest importance, and I have not been able to do justice to many aspects of his argument in this short comment.

{4} If that is the Matthean context, much the same may have been the original context in Jesus' ministry. People were, I suggest, comparing Jesus' revolutionary life and message with the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, and their charge was that Jesus was a libertarian who was abandoning the high standards of the Old Testament law, for which the scribes and Pharisees stood so firmly. We know for certain that this accusation was made against Jesus because of His freedom towards the Sabbath law and because of His friendship towards the sinners and outcasts (Matt. 9:10f.; 11:19).

In this context Matthew 5:17-20 makes sense. v.17 is itself phrased as a denial of the accusation: 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law ...' Banks regards the phrase 'Think not ...' as a rhetorical device strengthening the following positive statement;¹³ but there must surely be some slight implication that some people could think that Jesus was abolishing the Old Testament. Jesus says: no; in fact He came to 'fulfill them' - in the sense 'fulfill and so establish'. Jesus came not to denigrate or displace, but to uphold the Old Testament revelation.¹⁴

In vs. 18,19 Jesus goes on to stress the divine authority of the Old Testament law: as the Word of God it must all stand 'until heaven and earth pass away'¹⁵ or (to describe the same period in different words) 'until all is accomplished'. Jesus then points out the consequence that follows from this: that to ignore or to teach others to ignore parts of the law will meet with disapproval in the kingdom of God. Jesus' new message of the kingdom of God does not mean the overthrow of the Old Testament law; on the contrary, it is maintained.

Having thus decisively denied the charge that He is teaching a lax attitude to the law and to morals, Jesus in v. 20 goes positively on the offensive, claiming (on the contrary) that the standards of the kingdom are actually far higher than those of traditional Judaism: indeed you will not even enter the kingdom, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. The verses that follow expound this daunting statement, showing how Jesus' understanding of the law is again and again more radical and demanding than that of the Pharisees: Jesus' standard is in fact nothing less than perfection (v. 48).

To sum up the thrust of these verses then: Jesus rejects the charge that He is a lawbreaker who is lowering standards by asserting His endorsement of the Old Testament and by claiming that His standards are actually higher, not lower, than those of the supposedly pious defenders of the law, the scribes and Pharisees.

The Continuing Validity of the Old Testament Law

If this is the thrust of what Jesus is saying, then there is surely no great problem in reconciling this with Jesus' teaching elsewhere. There is plenty of evidence of Jesus' high view of the Old Testament as a whole, as well as of the law in particular; He saw it as the authoritative Word of God.¹⁶ There is also plenty of evidence for the radical and demanding nature of Jesus' ethics: going with the Gospel of free forgiveness is a demand for a total commitment far deeper than much Jewish {5} observation of the law.¹⁷ There is also no great problem in reconciling the main thrust of the verses with the teaching of Paul and other New

¹³ And he compares 10:34

¹⁴ Cf. Romans 3:31..

¹⁵ Cf. Isaiah 40:7.8

¹⁶ See J. W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (London: IVP, 1972)

¹⁷ E. g. later in the Sermon on the Mount

Testament writers, who share Jesus' view of the Old Testament and who call for the same standards of perfection from those who are in Christ.

But what then of those New Testament passages that teach that the Christian is free of the Old Testament and other ceremonial law (e.g. Mk. 7:19)? The simple answer to that is that this passage (Matt. 5:17-20) is not a detailed statement concerning every single aspect of the Christian's relationship to the Old Testament law; its scope and frame of reference are more limited. As I have argued, the purpose of these verses is to answer the accusation that Jesus is an antinomian who favoured a lowering of moral standards; and the question of whether or not the Old Testament food laws should be binding on all is not here in question.¹⁸

It is true, of course, that there is a *prima facie* contradiction between v. 19 with its insistence on maintaining even the least of the law's commands, and the statements in Mark and Hebrews about foods being clean and about the old covenant passing away. But if we are right to insist that Matthew's concern is with Jesus' general attitude to the Old Testament law and in particular to ethical standards,¹⁹ then this is not in conflict with the views of Mark or the author of Hebrews, neither of whom can properly be accused of destroying the law and the prophets or the moral standards of the Old Testament.

In arguing this I am coming near to reviving the traditional distinction between the moral and the ceremonial law, which Christians have so often used to explain their ambivalent attitude to the Old Testament law. Matthew's concern in these verses, I have suggested, is primarily at least, for the moral law, which is upheld by Christ, whereas Mark and the writer to the Hebrews are concerned with the ritual and ceremonial law, which they believe is fulfilled in Christ and in the new covenant in such a way that Christ's followers need no longer observe it. Modern scholars have argued that the distinction between the moral and ceremonial law is not one made by the New Testament and is of doubtful validity. Banks himself seems to try to avoid the distinction by insisting that the whole of the law and the prophets are fulfilled in and superseded by Christ.

In one general sense we may accept Banks' view: Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (the law and the prophets), and He has certainly superseded the law in the sense that our relationship to God is now through Christ, not through the law. But Christ has not fulfilled and superseded the law in the sense that all Old Testament law ceases to be binding on a Christian. No; we have to distinguish {6} between those laws, which may be said to point forward to Christ and which are therefore unnecessary after His coming (e.g. the ceremonial laws according to Hebrews) and the moral laws, which do not so obviously point forward to Christ (though they were explained more fully by Him) and which continue to be binding eternal, moral truths for the Christian. These moral laws are 'fulfilled' by Christ in a very different sense from the ceremonial laws: they are not superseded, but rather are included in the new Christian framework of reference. So,

¹⁸ Was it ever a question in Jesus' teaching and ministry? Mark 7:19b is the evangelist's comment. Certainly Jesus set Himself against the distorting scribal interpretations of the Old Testament laws, but He did not speak out on the question of Gentiles and the Old Testament food laws. Had He done so, the Church would not have had so much difficulty over the issue.

¹⁹ The following verses in Matthew (and indeed Matthew's whole gospel) suggest that this was his main concern. It would be hard to prove from Matthew that He would have insisted on Gentiles keeping all the ritual and ceremonial laws, though these had a place (Mt.23:23). But see Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 247f. Dunn's argument is that Matthew has judaized Mark 7, whereas it is possible to argue that at some points at least in Matthew 15 (e.g. v. 24) Matthew retains the earlier form of words which Mark has modified for his Gentile readership.

although the New Testament may not spell out the distinction between the moral and ceremonial law, in practice it seems to recognize it.²⁰

That does not mean that when Matthew records 5:17-20 he is consciously limiting his statement to the moral law; no, his statement is a broad one about the law and the prophets in general. But still he is looking at the whole law from a particular angle, with the question of the moral law and Jesus' ethical standards at the front of his mind.²¹ Had we been able to press Matthew with questions as to the relevance of this passage for the question to the Gentiles and the Old Testament ritual laws, he would probably have said that he had not been thinking of that question at all. But he might also (with no inconsistency, I suggest) have gone on to accept that the ritual laws, though no less divine and authoritative, have been fulfilled by Christ in the sort of way suggested by Banks, and so that they are not binding on Gentile Christians in the way at first sight suggested by 5:19.

Some of the same arguments apply to supposed inconsistencies between Matthew 5:17-20 and Paul's statements about the Christian's freedom from the law. Paul in these statements is not denying either of the things that Matthew wishes to assert here - the divine givenness of the law and the high ethical standards expected of Christians. Paul does teach that the Christian's relationship to the law has changed: now that we are in Christ, the law is no longer our schoolmaster. But that does not mean the abolition or destruction of the law; on the contrary, the law is God-given, holy and just and good. And although the law is no longer a schoolmaster terrorizing us, yet our new life in Christ and in the Spirit does involve us in a fulfilling of the law's demands and in the highest ethical standards (Rom. 8:4; 13:8f., etc).

My conclusion, then, in brief is that Matthew 5:17-20 is correctly interpreted as a strong statement about the continuing authority and relevance of the Old Testament and its laws for Christians. But (when the statement is understood in the context of a dispute about Jesus' attitude to the law and His ethical standards) there is seen to be no necessary contradiction between this and other more 'liberal' New {7} Testament passages. The passage in Matthew affirms Jesus' high view of the Old Testament law and His lofty ethical standards; but it does not answer the questions about the Gentiles and the ceremonial law, which were such a burning issue for other New Testament writers.²²

²⁰ So Ridderbos, *op. cit.*, p. 284. His whole discussion of the matter is valuable

²¹ The same point might be made in reverse about statements such as Hebrews 8:13: The writer does not mean that all aspects of the old covenant, including the ten commandments, are obsolete

²² I am grateful to colleagues for helpful criticisms and questions on this article, in the light of which some modifications have been incorporated. Some questions, however (for example, the question of how Sabbath fits in), have not been answered here.

{9} James' View of the Law

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

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The view on the Mosaic Law contained in the Epistle of James is regarded by some as proof that it could not have been written by James. The objection generally goes like this: how could so strict a legalist as James, in whose presence Peter would not have dared to eat with Gentiles, have written a letter in which there is no mention of the ceremonial law, and in which the perfect law gives liberty? Whoever wrote James must have looked on the old law as a law of bondage, it is claimed. James' law must not be the Mosaic law in its concrete essence; it must be a type of the essence of the Law distilled for personal freedom.

The incident referred to in Galatians 2:12 is not properly understood¹. It was not the presence of James that caused Peter's withdrawing from eating with Gentiles, but "certain men [who] came from James" (Gal 2:12). It is most probable that these brethren did not represent the real attitudes and feelings of James. In Acts 15:24, James complained of unauthorized persons speaking in his name ("We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said"). On the other hand, James was included in the number of those who approved of the conduct of Peter in eating with Cornelius (Acts 11:1-3. 18). Later on, he described to Paul the problem he had in controlling zealots who belonged to his party (Acts 21:20-25; 15:5), that is, to the converted Pharisees.

James can hardly be accused of inventing a law of his own. If the author of the epistle we now know as the Epistle of James was indeed the half-brother of Jesus, brought up with him from infancy, and who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah while Jesus was still here on earth, it is only fair to claim that he is most likely {10} have been influenced by Jesus' teaching. James' attitude to the Mosaic law would naturally reflect that of Jesus.

In the view of our Lord Jesus, the Law was not kept by mere observance of its letter. The great commandment on which all the Law and the prophets hung was the law of love to God and love to one's neighbor. Christ did not impose a heavy burden, such as did some of the scribes in the seat of Moses. Jesus' yoke, instead, was easy and his burden was light. Even in the Tanach the Law was described as "perfect" (Psa. 19:7), and one could "walk about in freedom ... [as they] sought out [God's] precepts" (Ps. 119:45). James did not invent a different law from the one received from Moses. His was the same Law that Jesus claimed to have come to fulfill (Matt. 5:17-21) and that Paul affirmed was established by faith (Rom. 3:31)- the law God gave to Moses in the Torah.

¹ I am indebted to Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954, (a reprint of 1913), pp. clxxxiii for the line of argumentation used in this paragraph and the one that follows

James uses the Greek term *nomos*, (“law”), only once in James 1:25 and four times in James 4:11. The most important of these in relation to the term where discussion is generally agreed to be, James 2:8-14. In this passage, James quotes from Leviticus 19:18, describing it as “the royal law found in Scripture.”

So close is James 2:8-14 to the words and sentiments contained in Galatians 5:14, Romans 13:8, and Matthew 19:16-22, that a charge is often made that James is dependent on these sources for his teaching on the Law.

O. J. F. Seitz disagreed:

When these passages are examined, the following results emerge

1. Romans and Matthew each cite the Decalogue before the command to love one’s neighbor, which for James introduces the subject of the law.
2. Romans and Matthew both introduce the precepts with the neuter article and both use the future tense of the verb; James puts the verbs in the subjunctive.
3. Romans and Matthew quote the Decalogue more fully².

There is only one strong point of agreement between James and Romans (in contradistinction to Matthew): James and Romans follow the Septuagint’s order of commandments by placing the precept against adultery before the one against murder, while Matthew follows the usual Hebrew text.

James, then, appears to introduce the subject of the Law into his letter without any necessary dependence on alleged similar passages in Matthew, Romans, or Galatians. What James says concerning the Law implies more than what has been traditionally referred to as “the moral law.” He deliberately joined his discussion of the “royal law” of “love” with the Torah’s condemnation of partiality. Thus, by introducing the words “but if you show partiality;” James showed that he had in mind the command that came a few lines before (Lev. 19:18).

It is precisely this linking of the two verses from Leviticus that has created a new awareness: James was aware of the Levitical context of the “royal law” and he **{11}** deliberately made reference to keeping “the whole law” (James 2:10, found in Scripture” 2:8) in just such a context!

Even more startling is the discovery made by Luke T. Johnson³ that the book of James may well be a message, or a series of messages, taken from the section of the Torah known as the “Law of Holiness” (Lev 18-20), focusing particularly on Lev. 19: 12-18. In addition to the two definite citations already mentioned (the royal law of love = “Love your neighbor as yourself,” James 2:8 = Lev 19:18b; and “Do not show favoritism,” James 2:1, 9a = Lev 19:15), there are six other verbal similarities or allusions between the book of James and Lev. 19:12-18.

² O. J. F. Seitz, “James and the law,” in *Studia Evangelica II, Part I, The New Testament Scriptures*, Ed. , F. L. Cross, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964, pp 474-475.

³ Luke T. Johnson, “The Use of Leviticus 19 in the letter of James,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*

A chart of the parallels reveals these similarities.

ACCORDING TO THE LEVITICUS ORDER OF THE TEXT

Leviticus	James
19:12 “Do not swear falsely by my name...”	5:12 “Do not swear...”
19:13 “Do not hold back the wages of a to hired man overnight	5:4 “Behold, the wages you failed pay the workman who moved your fields are crying out against you.
19:14	(no parallel)
19:15 “Do not show partiality”	2:1 “Do not show partiality.” 2:9 “If you show partiality...”
19:16 “Do not go about spreading slander”	4:11 “Do not slander one another, brothers”
19:17b “Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.”	5:20 “Know that whoever turns a sinner back from his error will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins.”
19:18b “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”	2:8 “You shall love your neighbor yourself”

Note that only verse 14 is without parallel. This is not because it is too ceremonial or too culturally related. The content of verse 14 has already been given in principal form: “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in the path of the blind, but fear your God! I am the LORD! (NIV).

It would appear, then, that four of the six verbal parallels listed above are fairly certain. Only two, Lev. 19:17b, 18a, are less likely. It may even be, as Johnson {12} suggests,⁴ that James 3:13-4:10 may reflect Leviticus 19:11, which reads: “Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.”

In the thinking of James, this portion of the Torah is part of “the Scriptures,” or the inspired writings from our Lord, which must be carried out and fulfilled. Keeping the royal law of love cannot be fulfilled simply by utilizing love; there is also a warning against being a “law-breaker” in James 2:9. Thus none should observe the Law in order to obtain his or her salvation. There still is the necessity of demonstrating the reality of that prior confession of Messiah by way of a willingness to observe commandments, such as those found in the Decalogue (Jam 2:11) and in the teaching of the Law of Holiness as exemplified in Leviticus 19:12-18.

⁴ Johnson, “Leviticus 19 in James,” p. 399, n 29. See also our parallel discussion, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Applying the Principles of the Ceremonial Law: Leviticus 19; James, “ in *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1985, pp. 221-224

Such an analysis of the law fits well with the apostle Paul's conclusions. The Torah's "law is holy, just, good, and spiritual" (Rom. 7:13-14), but we must "... use it rightly" (1 Tim. 1:8). Believers are called to "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). This is the obedience which springs out of real saving faith, such as Moses referred to in Deuteronomy 8:2; 30:11-16,51.

All too frequently it has been stressed that the law of the older testament was fulfilled simply by meeting the demands of love. This is only part of the picture, for love is a "how" word; it will not tell us what it is that we must do. For the content of our ethic, in the fulfilling of which we shall use love, we must go the Scriptures, there to learn what we must do. James identifies as part of those Scriptures the items found in the Ten Commandments and the Law of Holiness.

{13} Montefiore, Paul and the Law

By Maurice G. Bowler

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The Apostle Paul is for Claude Montefiore a very important and influential figure, not only because of Paul's obvious relevance for Christian theology, but also because of the relevance he had for Montefiore's vision of Judaism. Montefiore, like Paul, was faced with the challenge of presenting his fellow Jews with a revolutionary view of his and their shared Jewish heritage, while at the same time preserving the universal implications of his Jewishness for the wider world.

The great obstacle to this endeavor, for both Paul and Montefiore, was the Law and Israel's attitude to it. Montefiore was not attracted to the distinctively Christian themes in Paul's message, such as the Deity of Christ, his resurrection, and the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ. He was, however, fascinated by the way in which Paul came to a position of universalism, freedom and spirituality. Without endorsing Paul's specifically Christian tenets, Montefiore could see in Paul and in his approach to the Law a model for his own pioneering role in the Jewry of his day.

Paul's teaching on the Law is most clearly set out in his letters to the Roman and Galatian churches. The basic term he uses to describe Law is *nomos*¹ which is defined by the Grimm-Thayer Lexicon as:

*Anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, usage, law.*²

An interesting general comment on Law is relevant here. John Austen, a 19th century professor at University College, London, said, "Law is the command of the Sovereign." Obvious questions present themselves if this axiom is accepted: "Who is the Sovereign?" "What has he commanded?" Such questions will continually arise as we consider the many and apparently conflicting references to the Law or *nomos* principle in Paul's letters. When Austen's principle is applied in the sphere of religions, God is taken to be the sovereign. Paul's Pharisaic opponents placed great emphasis on knowing what God, as Sovereign, had commanded. The {14} Unitarian writer, R. Travers Herford, wrote in his famous defense of the Pharisees in 1924:

*Now Judaism in general, and Pharisaism in particular, was a religion which put the doing of God's will in the first place, and faith in the second place; faith, moreover, not in a Person, but in God Himself.*³

¹ R. Loewe, ed., *Studies in Rationalism, Judaism & Universalism*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, pp. 215-230.

NB the interesting title "*Torah & Nomos in Medieval Jewish philosophy* (by Erwin Rosnethal) appears in this volume. The writer uses the term *nomos* to denote the corpus of non-Jewish Philosophical wisdom as distinct from "Torah." Torah is used to describe Jewish religious teaching. As this is much later use of *nomos*, and as it specifically excludes "Torah" from the *nomos* category, the essay is not germane to a study of Paul's inclusive use of the term *nomos*.

² Grimm-Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Edinburgh, Clark, 1901, p. 427

Considerable controversy has raged about the tension between Paul and his Pharisaic opponents, of whom Paul could say:

...they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. (Rom. 10:2,3 RSV).

This negative evaluation of first century Judaism raised no problems for later Christians, as it later did for Jewish and non-Jewish defenders of the Pharisees and their rabbinic successors. Travers Herford is quite blunt in his criticism of Paul, who, according to Herford, in his approach to the Pharisees:

...offered them a salvation of which they felt no need, recommended by a theory whose premises they denied, and involving a conception of their own religion which they repudiated.⁴

Montefiore's solution to the problem of "... that amazing divergence ... between Rabbinic Judaism and Paul"⁵ was that "Paul was no Rabbinic Jew"⁶; "... he was a Hellenistic Jew"⁷. Solomon Schechter makes it clear that he feels that Paul is "quite unintelligible"⁸. However, any debate with Paul which presupposes his ignorance, lack of intelligence or intelligibility, must face the undoubted fact that he was almost nineteen centuries nearer to original Pharisaic religion (which, for his modern critics, is largely a literary matter rather than an experience), as well as the generally recognized marks of genius in his writings. It is helpful to find that W. D. Davies, while taking a very positive view of Pharisaic religion, is prepared to defend Paul's understanding of both Palestinian Judaism and Pharisaism by saying:

There is no justification for making too rigid a separation between the Judaism of the Diaspora and that of Palestine, and particularly is this true in the case of a man like Paul whose home was, most probably, a bit of Jerusalem outside Palestine.⁹

Davies' own interesting explanation of Paul's position is that Paul saw Jesus as "The New Torah." The Pharisaic and later Rabbinic tendency was to conceive of the Torah as an exalted entity in its own right. Although the reference to the pre-existence of the Torah in Pesachim 54a is later than Paul, its rather mystical approach to the Torah would not sound strange to Paul's Pharisaic contemporaries. Davies uses the term "Torah" in its wider sense of "teaching," and takes the term {15} *nomos tou Christou* (Gal 6:2) as pointing to Christ as a replacement for the Torah of Judaism, the new focus for religion. This, however, seems to belong more to the realm of mysticism and of poetry than to Paul's argument. It has little application to the world of legal discussion, of Halachah and of jurisprudence which occupies so much of Paul's critique of Pharisaism. With regard to Paul's arguments, although it will be shown that he is positive towards the Law, Paul's aim is to divert attention away from it to the person of Christ. Any emphasis on Christ as the "New

³ R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees*, Boston, Beacon, 1924, reprint 1962, p. 231

⁴ *ibid*, p. 221

⁵ C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism & St Paul*, London, Max Goschen, 1914, reprint, p. 64.

⁶ *ibid*, p. 91

⁷ *ibid*, p. 92

⁸ S. Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, London, A & C Black, 1909, p. 18

⁹ W. D. Davies, *Paul & Rabbinic Judaism*, London, S.P.C.K., 1948, reprint 1979, p. 8.

Torah” would have clashed with the main thrust of his argument. Torah is not a solution in Paul’s scheme. Torah is, rather, a challenge, to be met and overcome only in Christ.

A further development in the discussion is provided in a 1977 book by E.P. Sanders, *Paul & Palestinian Judaism*. Sanders endorses Davies’ positive estimates of both Paul and Pharisaism, but does not take up Davies’ concept of the “New Torah.” Instead, he makes his own contribution to the interpretation of Paul’s view of the Law:

...Paul did not so much misunderstand the role of the law in Judaism as gain a new perspective which led him to declare the law abolished.¹⁰

Sanders also agrees with W. D. Davies (except in his emphasis on messiahship) when he said:

The confirmation of the Messiahship of ... Jesus Paul saw in his power to draw those outside the Law, even Gentiles, to Himself. In Him the people of God could be constituted and that not in terms of Torah.¹¹

Sanders underlines Davies’ comment by saying:

The salvation of the Gentiles is essential to Paul’s preaching; and with it falls the law; for as Paul says simply, Gentiles cannot live by the law. (Gal 2:14)¹²

Sanders is here suggesting that, notwithstanding Paul’s knowledge of Pharisaism and Torah, he was capable of maintaining a position contrary to that of Israel’s religious teachers. The reason for this was the introduction of a new factor, that of his dedication to Christ. His further comment to the effect that Paul’s affirmation that the Law had been abolished served interests of his wider desire to include the Gentiles, brings the parallels between Paul’s position and that of Montefiore into even sharper focus.

Montefiore could not accept the Mosaic position, which we shall describe by the term *nomian*. He could not accept the post-Mosaic, post-Temple position of the Yavne rabbis which could be described as *neo-nomian*. As a moralist, he would abhor an *anti-nomian* position. Paul’s position, although it emerged out of a Christian context which Montefiore could not accept, was an option which held {16} great promise for a man with Montefiore’s aspirations. It was a metanomian position which acknowledged the worth and merit of the Law, while at the same time considered it part of an honored past, now to be left behind as the new era dawned. Montefiore did not want to contradict nor destroy the Law, anymore than did Paul. But, like Paul, and as Sanders so aptly observes, he needed to get beyond the Law, to a non-legal realm of freedom and spirituality. This was the meaning of Liberalism as he understood it.

¹⁰ E. P. Sanders, *Paul & Palestinian Judaism*, London, S.C.M., 1977, p. 496.

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 496.

¹² *ibid*, p. 496

The Law In the Roman Epistle (using NIV and Nestle Greek text)

In chapter 7:1 of his letter to the Romans Paul says, "I am speaking to men who know the law." This he later exemplifies by taking his evidence from the Mosaic Law. It may therefore be safely concluded that Paul had Jews in mind when he penned this part of his letter. But, as he says in 11:13 "I am also talking to you Gentiles," we know that he also had non-Jews in mind, and in a city like Rome he could pre-suppose a wide spectrum of Jewish and Hellenistic thought behind his readers' concept of *nomos*... This does, however, mean that the specific connotation of each use of the word must be noted from the context, if Paul's argument is to be followed. Unlike some of his later interpreters, Paul was not free to make a straight antithesis between Law and Grace, nor could he proclaim a clear discontinuity between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, nor oppose the Church to Israel on a basis of partisan animosity. Paul was not a rebel proclaiming a revolution, nor a renegade "cursing the bridge that carried him across the stream." Rather, his whole argument is based on development, transposition, and consummation, and he must establish the congruity of his new arguments with all that has gone before in Jewish history and Scripture, if he is to establish his case.

Law of Conscience & Law of Code (Romans 2:12 - 29)

Paul speaks of Gentiles who are *anomos*, without law (2:12), who do not possess the law (2:14), in the sense that the Mosaic code had never been given to them, but he says that in another sense they do have a law. This is a law written in their hearts (2:15), which we would call "conscience," and Paul says that this inner law will sometimes be in harmony with the moral standards of the Mosaic code, leading non-Jews to live in some measure within the requirements of the Mosaic law (2:26). This leads him to contrast this "natural morality" with that of the person who has a status within the Mosaic system (2:12), who knows the law (2:20) and believes that he knows God's will (2:18).

The Jews of Paul's day were *en nomo*, within the law (2:12), in the sense that they belonged to a community which had been formed by the covenant at Sinai, the **{17}** basis of the Code of National Discipline. Because this code was so comprehensive that it included only moral precepts as well as laws for dress, hygiene, building, agriculture and a great many other matters, as well as the whole framework of the Temple cultus, it was the charter of a full fledged theocracy. The Mosaic code was a rule for *total* living. An order of priests was available to interpret the law in relation to every situation (Deut 17:18-13, cf Ezra). By the middle of the first century AD, however, the *Oral Law*, as sponsored by the Pharisaic party, was already a major factor in Jewish life. The nominal head of the community and of the Sanhedrin was still the High Priest and the Sadducees under his leadership controlled the Temple, the focal point of the nation. But the Pharisees seem to have been very influential in the Sanhedrin, and to enjoy great influence among the people, this in spite of there being in their fraternity only:

... a little over six thousand members (J. Antiq. 17:42) as against four thousand Essenes, whereas the total ... Jewish population is estimated to have amounted to two to two and a half million.¹³

In the context of Paul's argument, the special use of the word *nomos* with regard to the "Code of National Discipline," and the Pharisaic estimate of the term and their understanding of its role is crucial to Paul's thesis. Paul says of the Jews in Romans 3:2 that "they have been entrusted with the very words of God (*ta logia tou Theou*). Paul goes on to quote from Isaiah and the Psalms, referring to these scriptures under the heading "the law," (3:19) from which we gather that he used the term to connote the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures. In Romans 3:19 *en nomo* (2:12) is expanded to *en to nomo* (3:19), and in 6:15 it is further expanded to *hupo nomon* – "under the law." This same term is used of Jesus in Galatians 4:4. The status of being "under the law" - within the scope of the law, under the yoke of the National Code of Israel - inspired pride and confidence (2:17), and, as Paul concedes, it conferred an advantage over the non-Jew (3:2). But Paul tells his Jewish readers that being "under the law" does not automatically imply justification. He says in Romans 3:20 that "no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law." In 10:5, Paul quotes Moses regarding the Law, the *nomos*, saying that the one who "does" or carries out the law, will *live* by it (Lev. 18:5). But because he has already shown from Psalm 14:3 (*eyn oseh tov*) that none are righteous (Romans 3:10), the law (*nomos*), or principle of works (3:27) is excluded as a way of salvation; the "law" or the "principle" of faith (*nomou pisteos* 3:27) alone brings justification. This justification takes place outside the law (*choris nomou* 3:21). It is not based on human obedience to the law, but on the redemptive death of Christ (*apolutroseos* 3:24), who died as a ransom (*lutron*) and a propitiation (*hilasterion* 3:25). Although justification is provided outside the framework of the law which is concerned with commands and punishments and not with forgiveness, it has a very considerable relevance to that law. Paul asks: "Do we, then, nullify the Law (*nomos*) by this faith? Not at all! Rather we uphold the Law" (3:31). So, if a Jew or a Gentile is declared righteous (*dikaiousmenoi* 3:24) through faith in Christ, Paul says that the law is not thereby violated. Even though justification takes place outside of the Mosaic system, it is not contrary to **{18}** it. Rather, it meets the law's requirements, as will be seen when Paul's presentation of Christ as the *Telos* or End or Consummation of the Law is considered.

The Abrahamic Covenant Precedes and Outshines the Sinaitic (Rom. 4:13 - 5:14)

Any Jewish reader who had followed Paul's argument thus far might feel threatened as he saw the Mosaic Law, in which he placed his confidence as a self-sufficient ground of acceptance with God (2:17), being undermined. But Paul now shifts his argument away from Moses and the covenant of Sinai, and focuses on Abraham, who lived many generations before Moses and the Sinaitic covenant. Paul detaches the Law (*nomos*) from the Promise (*epangelia* 4:13) and shows that the true affinity of the promise is with faith (*pisteos*), not with law. Paul shows that if law is forced into a saving role, for which it was never designed, the result will not be salvation but the emptying of faith and the destruction of promise (4:14). Indeed, the presence of Law introduces a standard against which behavior is inevitably evaluated and judged (4:15). This is particularly true of the comprehensive national code which Israel received at Sinai, but it is also true of the "law" of conscience, referred to in Romans 2:14. By disassociating the national code (whose covenantal sign was

¹³ G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, London, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, 1974, p. 15.

circumcision, 4:9) form the promise of world inheritance (4:13), Paul shows that the scope of this inheritance goes out beyond those who are *en nomo*, within the covenant community, to those who are *anomos*, outside the Law, but not outside the scope of God's grace (4:16-17).

In 5:13 and 14 the term *nomos* occurs again. Here we may have an instance of Paul's anticipating an objection before it is raised. If the Sinaitic covenant is law "*par excellence*" and his saying in 4:15 to the effect that "where there is no law there is no transgression" is true, how can any pre-Sinaitic sin be characterized as "law-breaking"? Paul argues back from punishment to sentence to offence. His axiom of 6:23 ("the wages of sin is death"), when placed alongside the inescapable presence of death in Adam's descendants before Sinai, shows that the inner law referred to in 2:15 gives sufficient ground for sin to be imputed and death to be inflicted as a punishment "from Adam to Moses" (5:14).

Law of Sinai Precipitates Sin (Romans 5:20 - 6:22)

Paul's next use of the word *nomos* is very controversial: "The law was added so that the trespass might increase" (5:20). Paul's statement has to be read in the context of his previous statement. He is not saying that the Law creates evil or produces sinners, because he has already said in 5:19 that, through the disobedience of Adam, Adam's descendants were *constituted*, or reduced to the condition of, (*kat'estathesan*) sinners. What the law did was to produce a situation in which the out-working of a sinful "constitution" would be revealed as an offence against God's law, just as litmus paper reveals certain chemical conditions and medical tests reveal the presence of disease, without being responsible for their introduction.

{19} In the next chapter, in 6:15, Paul faces the deadly challenge of "antinomianism" (*anomia*). He rejects the proposition that the only alternative to legalism is license, insisting that Christ offers more than a mere release from the restrictions of the law (*hupo nomon* 6:15). This release is only available as a consequence of being "under grace" (*hupo charin* 6:15), which is also a kind of restriction, as he later explains. There is no hiatus between the reign of Law and the reign of Grace, the former is only left behind as the latter is entered. Just as one who walks out of Switzerland into France, Italy, Austria or Germany, so the redeemed sinner walks over the "border" and steps out of one realm into another - there is no void adjoining the borders of the realm of Law. Just as believers had been bondservants (*doulos* 6:16) to sin which the Law had revealed in them, they must move on - not to a vacuum or moral anarchy - but to a different form of service: they are still bondservants, but of obedience to righteousness (*hupakoes eis dikaiosunen* 6:16). Their freedom is not freedom from service or freedom from restraint of any kind, but freedom from sin (6:22).

Law of Sinai exposes Sin and Bondage (7:1 - 23)

In Romans 7:1 Paul says that the Law "lords it: (*kurieuei*) over a man until death breaks the connection between him and the law." Paul uses the marital relationship (verse 2) to illustrate the lifelong bondage to the Law, but in verse 4 he says that believers have become "dead to the Law." Again, in verse 6, he says that "by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law ..." This reiterates what Paul has said in 6:3, that believers were baptized into Christ's death, and "because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (6:7) ... "we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (7:6). We shall have to

return to this point again. Paul is saying that the written Law, which in context must mean the Sinaitic code with its amplification in the rest of the Pentateuch, has no more application to a redeemed person than it would have to one dead. It never applied to the non-Jew because he was *anomos*, outside the National Covenant, and it does not apply to the redeemed Jew because he has been given the status of a dead person in relation to the Law. He is no longer under the Law. However the Law is still part of the Scriptures, and because it is from God, it reveals a great deal about God and His requirements of man. But it is not the basis for his relationship with God and it is not the means through which he is justified in God's sight.

Once again Paul seeks to avoid any suggestion that he is attacking the Law. He merely says that the Law does not do what it was never designed to do and that it cannot help doing what it was designed to do. The Law is not sin (7:7), but its presence precipitates sin. A chemical process cannot precipitate a substance whose constituents are not present. A drop in temperature cannot precipitate rain from a completely dry atmosphere. Similarly, the Law cannot precipitate sin where there is no sinful drive, but a command is a catalyst which enables sinful dispositions to express themselves in sinful action. As seen already, the presence of conscience in the human personality makes this a universal possibility (2:15) as soon as the age {20} of moral awareness is reached, but the problem is obviously more acute in a fully legislated situation such as Paul and his fellow-Jews confronted under the Mosaic National Code. In 7:9 Paul says "Once I was alive apart from (choris) law." As Paul was formally received into the Mosaic covenant at his circumcision, on his eighth day, this must refer to a time before he considered himself morally accountable - perhaps before the thirteenth year which is mentioned in the second century AD by Eleazer ben Simeon and which later became Bar Mitzvah age of assuming legal responsibility.¹⁴ In any case, the inevitable happened, and the Law, which was holy (7:12), became the means through which sin brought about spiritual death (7:13).

Paul then, once again, takes up the challenge of the antinomian position, arguing against it by stating that the law is spiritual (*pneumatikos* 7:14) and good (*kalos* 7:16). He then goes on to use the word *nomos* in three different ways. In order to avoid confusion, it will be necessary to follow his argument rather closely:

In 7:21 he says:

So I find this law (nomos) at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me...

As this is a force working against the urge to do good, we could call it an evil principle (similar to the rabbinic *Yetzer Ha-ra*.) Paul's use of *nomos* here has nothing to do with legal system, Mosaic or otherwise; it is merely a principle or urge, just as the *Yetzer Ha-ra* is a principle or urge which predisposes a person to do wrong.

In 7:22 he says:

"In my inner being I delight in God's law (nomos)."

¹⁴ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 4, Jerusalem, Keter Press, 1974, p. 243

As this use of *nomos* is associated with God, it must be interpreted in the highest sense, as Divine Law which lies behind all that is of eternal significance in the Mosaic code.

In 7:23 he says:

*I see another law (**nomos**) at work in the members of my body.*

This is the evil principle again, active in producing behavior. Paul goes on:

*...waging war against the law (*nomos*) of my mind.*

As this latter principle, like the evil principle, is subjective (“of my mind”) rather than objective, we could compare it with the rabbinic “*Yetzer Ha-tov*” - the good inclination.

{21} In 7:25b Paul sums up the situation thus:

*So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law (**nomos**) but in the sinful nature a slave to the law (*nomos*) of sin.*

Some see this as a picture of Paul’s unregenerate condition. Others understand it as describing the ongoing struggle against sin. In any case, Paul’s presentation does manifest a diversity of uses of the word *nomos*, which all serve to describe a variety of concepts.

“Law of Sinai’s” Limitations (8:2 - 9:31)

In Romans 8:2 Paul again uses the word *nomos* to describe distinct principles at work in a person’s life: “the law (*nomos*) of the Spirit of life” which sets free from “the law (*nomos*) of sin and death.” When, however, he goes on to speak of “what the law (*nomos*) was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature” (8:3), it is obvious that he is referring to the limitations of the Mosaic code, which could isolate and diagnose the disease of sin but could not provide a cure. He then refers to “the righteous requirements of the law (*nomos*)” which, although unattainable through what the law itself provides, are available outside the Law in the redemption which Christ alone can provide. When, speaking in 8:7 of the law of God (*nomos tou Theou*), Paul uses terms which refer to the basic condition of humanity, in which “the sinful mind is hostile to God.” It follows that in his statement “he does not submit to God’s law (*nomos*), nor can do so.” the law is the absolute “Will of the Sovereign” or “Command of the Sovereign” which was given earlier as a definition of Law.

In Romans 9:4 Paul refers to the *nomothesia*, the giving of the law to the Israelites. This can only refer to the law given through Moses at Sinai. In 9:31 Israel is described as pursuing a law (*nomos*) of righteousness but being unable to attain it. This because they pursued it “not by faith but as if it were by works” (9:32). Paul, in his critique of the Pharisaic approach, seems to be referring to the concept of “*Halachah*” or prescriptive morality, which, although not yet codified or “completed,” was already a major influence in Judaism alongside the Mosaic code and as its interpreter. Paul asserts in Romans 10:3

that this Pharisaic endeavor turned them away from the offer of God's righteousness by causing them to concentrate on a righteousness to which he refers as "their own."

Christ as the Telos of the Law (10:4 - 21)

Paul sums up the principle of living by legal prescription with a quotation from Leviticus 18:5: "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law (*nomos*): 'the man who does these things will live by them'" (Romans 10:5). Not all commentators would agree with Travers Herford in his assertion that Pharisaism "was a religion which put the doing of God's will in the first place."¹⁵ E. P. Sanders, in particular, goes to much trouble to illustrate the wide range of Pharisaic and {22} Rabbinic interest beyond the law and its associated works of righteousness¹⁶. Considerable development took place in Jewish thought after Paul's day, especially after the fall of the Temple and the eclipse of the cultus. In terms of Paul's argument, however, it seems that the Pharisaic view of law was his particular concern. Other Pharisaic emphases, repentance and forgiveness, covenant and grace, are not mentioned very much perhaps because they were not in dispute.

"Living by Law," then, was conceived by Paul as the great barrier preventing his fellow-Israelites from submitting to the gift of "God's righteousness" (Rom. 10:3). Paul refused to attribute continuing validity to the Mosaic National Code after the watershed events of Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension. In Romans 10:4 he presents Christ as the *telos* or *end* of the Law (*Nomos*). This does not mean that Christ was the ruin, destruction or collapse of the Law, but its goal and glorious consummation. This interpretation of Paul's words accords well with the words of Jesus:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfill (Matt 5:17) KJV.

Paul contends that Jesus, who was born under the law, lived in obedience to it and then, by His death on the Cross, paid the full penalty for human sin and thus provided full satisfaction for the penalties which the Law demanded from sinful humanity. It is in this sense that the Age of Law came to a close - in completion and satisfaction - rather than in rejection and defeat.

The Law in the Galatian Epistle

Although the Law is a major theme in the Galatian epistle and Paul's conclusion there is similar to that in Romans, his approach is different because he is dealing with a more clearly defined situation. Romans sets out a formal argument against what Paul considered to be a basic flaw in Judaism's view of the Law. Because he was dealing with a major element in the Jewish heritage, he had to argue carefully, with due respect for his people, the scriptures, and their heritage. In Galatians, however, he is not speaking outwards, from a Christian base to an external Jewish establishment. Rather, he is being challenged from within the Christian community. His opponents are not rejecters of Christ but professing Christians, who had approached the Galatian believers in order to:

¹⁵ R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees*, Boston, Beacon, 1924, reprint 1962, p. 231

¹⁶ E. P. Sanders, *Paul & Palestinian Judaism*, London, S.C.M., 1977, pp. 84-233

... compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:12 RSV)

Paul recalls a confrontation he had had with Peter at Antioch over the movement which sought to “compel the Gentiles to live like Jews” (Gal. 2:14), and he makes {23} the same assertion concerning the Law as he made in Romans, “a man is not justified by works of the law (nomos) but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16).

As in Romans, Paul says the believer is “dead to the law” (Gal. 2:19). He then points to the benefits that have come to them as believers through the Spirit, and not through the law (Gal 3:2-5). Because he is dealing with an emergency, not conducting a calm debate, Paul emphasizes the negative properties of the law, which pronounce a curse on the non-observant (Deut 27:26 quoted in Gal 3:10). Once again Paul emphasizes the promise to Abraham as being prior and superior to the Law given through Moses (3:16 - 17). There are, however, interesting metaphors used by Paul in the Galatian epistle which amplify what has been said in the epistle to the Romans.

The Law as School-slave (Gal. 3:23-4:10)

In answer to those who consider “living by law” as a higher stage to be sought following the preparatory stage of Christian experience (as also hinted later by Yehuda Halevi, Maimonides and Travers Herford), Paul asserts that the Law is not an end in itself but a means to an end. He compares the Law to a paidagogos, a tutor, trainer or school-slave who conducted pupils to a place of instruction. The very presence of such a functionary implied the inferior and subordinate status of his charge, and Paul refers to the person under law as being “guarded” and “shut up” under the law (Gal 3:23). The school-slave is presented as a benefactor, but his office does keep an heir or pupil from enjoying his full freedom. Pupils look forward to their freedom and manhood. They should allow themselves to be conducted by their “guardian” to Christ, who is the *telos*, the goal to which the Law, as properly understood, leads.

The Law-keeper as Bondman (Gal. 4:21 - 5:6)

The bondman metaphor is a negative one. It speaks of the harmful consequences which Paul attributes to the teaching of the Judaizers. The paidagogos or “school-slave” referred to above is a great help so long as his influence is not extended beyond that which is proper. In his reference to Hagar, however, Paul likens the disciples of the Judaizers to Ishmael, the outcast son of a slave. He compares their longed-for “promotion” to legalism as a fall from grace. His strongest words, however, are reserved for the Judaizing teachers, against whom he levels a curse (1:9) and a wish that they might be “cut off” or mutilated (5:12).

The severity of Paul’s words is clear evidence to the effect that Paul did not consider the question of the role of the Law to be merely an academic one. His strong words are reserved for those whom he considers to be the mis-interpreters of the Law; they are not against the Law itself. His comments about the Law are intended to ensure that God’s good gift is not turned by misuse into a deadly incubus on those it was intended to benefit.

{24} Paul’s approach to the Law theme is of particular relevance to Montefiore’s guest. Like Paul, Montefiore was confronted in his spiritual quest by the challenge of Torah, and, as a careful student of the New Testament, will have examined closely Paul’s own address to the

challenge. In Paul's case, the confrontation was precipitated by his acceptance of Jesus. In Montefiore's case the confrontation was occasioned by his negative appraisal of conventional orthodox Judaism. His later work with the Rabbinic sources, culminating with *A Rabbinic Anthology* (1938) would give him a more positive and informed understanding of the metaphysical approach to Jewish observance.

{25}The Messianic Use of Rabbinic Literature

By Avner Boskey

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly 2,000 years ago the Apostle Peter advised Jewish Christians in the Diaspora to

sanctify Messiah as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense (Greek: apologian) to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Messiah may be put to shame (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Peter's exhortation stresses that Messianic reserves of honesty, humility and diligence are needed in apologetics, and that the defense of the Messianic gospel must be carried out with Messianic integrity.

It comes as no surprise to most readers that, in the latter part of the twentieth century, an ongoing and organized campaign of muckraking is being directed against Jewish believers, whether in Israel or in the Diaspora. These attacks, orchestrated by leaders in the Jewish community, are directed against both the Jewish believer's integrity, and his commitment to maintain a Jewish expression of his New Covenant faith in Messiah Yeshua. The presupposition lying behind these attacks stresses the supposed incompatibility between faith in Yeshua and Jewishness, and the purportedly dire threat to Jewish existence were such a link to be forged.

One of the more popular exponents of such an agenda states succinctly:

Hebrew Christians also insist that they constitute the only truly fulfilled Jews ... In fact, by sprinkling their Christian lives of faith with Jewish customs and {26} rituals taken out of their proper, historic context, they pervert Jewish symbols and make a mockery of the Jewish faith ... Christians would do far better ... to abandon and denounce the overly zealous and deceptive means usually employed by various Hebrew Christian groups. (emphasis mine).¹

Messianic Jews would adamantly disagree that Jewishness and Yeshua are mutually exclusive and would stoutly defend both the Messiahship of Yeshua and His impeccable Jewish credentials on convincing exegetical grounds. Under no circumstances would they allow any challenge to either the integrity or the Jewishness of the Messianic gospel go unanswered. The Apostle Paul clearly testifies that if Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel, then He is also the Messiah *for* Israel:

¹ Yehiel Eckstein, *What Christians Should Know about Jews and Judaism* (Waco: Word, 1984), pp. 295, 299.

And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day ... I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Messiah was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles. (Acts 26:6 - 7, 22 - 23)

Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon us to ask the question: have Christians always demonstrated the same exegetical honesty, scholarly care, and respectful treatment in their use of rabbinic literature as has been the custom in regard to the biblical text? Rabbi Eckstein and others would charge that Messianic Jews and Gentiles are dilettantes and deceivers who pervert Jewish symbols. Unless we maintain high standards in our use of rabbinic materials, we leave ourselves wide open to the valid charges of pseudo-contextualization and poor scholarship. Were this to happen, the focus of our dialogue with the larger Jewish community would shift from the claims of Yeshua to the question as to whether Messianic Jews, in their use of rabbinics, have unwittingly involved themselves “in great matters, or in things too difficult for them” (Psalm 131:1).

It is with the intent of clearing the air, refocusing priorities and laying down some methodological guidelines, that this article is presented. Critical comments brought to bear against Christian use of rabbinics will be examined; historical and present examples of such abuse will be analyzed; finally, guidelines will be suggested which may be of help in encouraging an honest, humble and diligent approach to rabbinic literature worthy of the epithet “Messianic.”

I. MODERN CRITICISMS OF MESSIANIC USE OF RABBINIC MATERIALS

Christian use of rabbinic literature, both past and present, is viewed with a jaundiced eye by many in Judaism. Conservative Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser states that:

the conventional attitude of Christian teachers toward the Oral Torah was to ignore it ... when they did concern themselves with it, they generally sought to belittle it ... Christian writings often abound in all kinds of derogatory characterizations of rabbinic Judaism, all of it generally deriving from the one over-all complaint that the Rabbis taught ... a system of legalism rather than a faith which speaks to the heart of man ... There is ultimately no way to answer the distortions of the Oral Torah which abound in Christian writings, except to engage in a detailed study of the nature of the Oral Torah and its vast literary sources.²

Claude G. Montefiore is not as sharp but no less firm when discussing the Christian *tendenz* seen in parallels drawn between the New Testament and rabbinic sources:

... a main interest for most Christian writers is to vindicate, so far as they can, the originality of Jesus, and, for that purpose, the question of dates is for them a matter of the utmost importance ... I am not concerned to deny the originality

² Ben Zion Bokser, *Judaism and the Christian Predicament* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), pp. 8-10.

*of Jesus in that, so far as we know, he was, let us say, the first to enunciate a particular doctrine, even though all parallels from the existing Rabbinic literature are later in date than A.D. 30 ... A given parallel to a Gospel saying may be much later than Jesus: from the point of view of chronology, the originality of Jesus is completely vindicated. That vindication having been secured, the interest of the Christian writer in the Rabbinic 'parallel' usually ceases. For his purpose the parallel is of no value. He has bowled it over; he has knocked it down.*³

Though both Bokser and Montefiore charge Christians with an ignorance of rabbinics and a desire to champion the superiority of the Gospels at rabbinic expense, it could be noted that many rabbis are similarly ignorant of the New Testament and have no problem championing the superiority of Judaism at Christian expense. Nevertheless it behooves us as believers in Messiah to listen to these charges, as many of us have indeed been guilty of such behavior.

Dr. Samuel Sandmel points out some of the pitfalls into which Christian novices have fallen in their encounter with rabbinic materials:

*The rabbinic literature... is in Hebrew and Aramaic, and represents a field of study for which arduous preparation is required. It is immense in quantity. In {28} style it is both terse and yet replete with allusiveness, and both factors make it difficult to comprehend. Moreover, it is technical, for it was the compiled answers to questions of meticulous Jews concerning religious law, and therefore it presupposes on the part of the reader an abundance of quite technical knowledge. At a number of stages in the Renaissance and in the rise of Humanism, Christian scholars made anthologies of rabbinic literature which they translated into Latin; a New Testament scholar could, as it were, have access to excerpts, merely excerpts, in these translations. Some difficulties with these excerpts escaped both the compilers and the users. First, the excerpted material entered the anthology only if it seemed to impinge on the New Testament, with the result that the excerpts answered the implied question; what bearing does the rabbinic literature have on New Testament? and not the important prior question, what is it that the rabbinic literature is saying? Citations devoid of context are always dangerous; one can "prove atheism by Scripture." (There is a passage, in Psalm 14:1, which says, "There is no God"; the whole passage reads: "The fool has said in his heart that there is no God.") What the somewhat knowledgeable excerpter provided and what the novice inferred from this provision of rabbinic material could well be as different as night from day. Second, the quintessence of the spirit of rabbinic literature could lie quite outside the excerpted passages, and the novice could be misled into supposing that he knew the spirit when he was in reality only in the periphery. Third, the man who deals only in excerpts necessarily lacks that mastery which alone provides a personal sense of authority. Fourth, since the rabbinic literature is difficult (and the mere translation of it is in reality only the prelude to understanding it), the texts have, for the most part, gone without scientific editing or scientific commentary, even today.*⁴

Sandmel also notes that Christians sometimes bend over backwards in order to make a Jewish rabbinic source seem pro-Christian, rather like some maiden ladies who detect a marriage

³ Claude G. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (New York; Ktav, 1970), XXXVI-VII

⁴ Samuel Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) pp. 69-70.

proposal behind every kind gesture from an eligible male.⁵ Their use of Joseph Klausner's writings are a case in point:

(Klausner's) approach to the Gospels exhibits a unique capacity to have reviewed much of the Gospel scholarship and to have remained immune from reflecting it; Klausner was the amateur Talmudist and amateur psychologist applying dilettantism rather whimsically to the Gospel passages. These comments are directed, of course, to Klausner's scholarship on the Gospels, and {29} not to his being Jewish. Yet there is the curious situation relating to Jesus, that Christians are often inordinately eager to cite some Jewish opinion in support of a Christian contention - my own writings have inadvertently served this purpose to some limited extent - with the result that Klausner is often cited by Christians who attribute to him an authority that with all deference he does not deserve. Conservatives especially have taken him to represent not only the Jewish mind, but also the epitome of rabbinic learning, apparently unaware of how severely rabbinites have taken him to task.⁶

Ignorance, denigration, derogation, distortion, *tendenz*, misuse of context, no scholarship, no mastery of material - all of the above charges have been made against Messianics'⁷ use of rabbinic materials. A brief review of the historical evidence will allow us to determine whether or not these charge have historical validity.

II. THE HISTORICAL ENCOUNTER

Part A. Second to Twelfth Centuries

The purpose of this section is to show that Messianic Jews were aware of, and made use of, developing rabbinic materials. Their apologetic goals were to prove Yeshua's Messiahship from Scripture, and they made use of rabbinic parallels whenever such parallels agreed with their case.

Tannaim and Nazarenes (Second - Fourth Centuries A.D.)

Although it might be argued that the first encounters between a Messianic and a Rabbinic perspective take place in the Gospels,⁸ the bulk of this investigation focuses on events from the second century A.D. onward. Various texts in the Gemara and Midrashim refer to the interaction which took place between the Tannaim⁹ and Messianic Jews regarding the interpretation of Scripture¹⁰ as well as the occasionally frustrating nature of the debate.¹¹ Yeshua Himself was described as one who mocked the words of the Sages and was

⁵ I am indebted to Dr. Maurice Bowler for this illustration.

⁶ Sandmel, pp. 92-93

⁷ In this article the terms "Messianic" and "Christian" are used interchangeably, as are the proper names "Yeshua" and "Jesus" (ed.)

⁸ cf. Matthew chapters 5-7 and 23, especially 5:21, 22, 27-28, 31-34, 38-39, 43-44 where Yeshua contrasts "You have heard it was said' ...'but I say to you..."

⁹ The term *Tanna* (plur. *Tannaim*) refers to the spiritual descendants of the Pharisees, who were engaged in the study and propagation of the Oral tradition in Israel from 70 AD until the codification of the Mishna ca. 200 AD. The post-mishnaic scribes of the Talmud are referred to as *Amoraim* (sing. *amora*). (ed.)

¹⁰ TB A.Z. 16b-17a; Eccl. Rabb. I:8:3.

¹¹ TB. A.Z. 4a, b; Ber. 7a; Eccl. Rabb. I:8:4. The view that Messianic Jews are the focus of these passages is also held by Dr. Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson (cf. "Disputation and Polemics," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 6, pp. 82-83), H. Travis Herford, *Christianity in Talmid and Midrash*, etc.

subsequently punished for such behavior.¹² During the same period warnings were issued by the Sages to avoid discussions with His disciples, the Messianic Jews, who also refused to accept the authority of the Sages. No one, not even a tanna, was to engage the Messianic Jews in discussion of scriptural topics, unless the debater was sufficiently skilled in refutational techniques.¹³

Of particular interest is the knowledge some rabbis possessed about the Gospels: in TB Shabbat 116b, reference is made by Rabban Gamliel of Jabneh (second century A.D.) to Matthew 5:16 - 17, as well as to a corpus of literature called “the Gospels.”¹⁴

Justin Martyr and Trypho (Mid Second Century A.D.)

{30} Mention must also be made of Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*. Justin was a Gentile Christian from Samaria, and yet his arguments with Trypho seem to reflect some awareness of, and interaction with, traditions of Messianic exegesis preserved in the Targumim. Dr. Skarsaune, in his book *The Proof from Prophecy*, suggests that Justin’s Messianic *testimonia* show a much greater correspondence to Talmudic and Targumic *testimonia* than to those of New Testament writers.¹⁵ He concludes:

*This review of Jewish parallels to Justin’s material shows that all the main texts were familiar Messianic testimonies within Jewish exegesis prior to, contemporary with, and later than, Justin. There are even parallels and points of contact in some textual and exegetical details, and in the combination of texts. This would seem to indicate that Justin’s material evolved in a milieu being in close contact with Jewish exegesis. This close contact may also be indirectly witnessed in some possibly anti-Christian motifs in the rabbinic exegesis, or in the grappling with problems raised by Justin.*¹⁶

Skarsaune’s tentative conclusions point to Christian awareness of developing rabbinic messianic traditions and their incorporation in the developing body of Christian *testimonia*.

Ben-Sasson has these comments to make about Justin:

The lists of testimonia from the Hebrew Bible prepared by early Christian teachers (was) ... to be used not only to convince pagans but also, in most cases, to persuade Jews to accept the Christianity clauses ... This relatively early encounter between a separated Christianity and Judaism establishes the main themes and groundwork of future Jewish-Christian testimonia, the polemical statements by Tertullian against the

¹² TB Gitt. 57a.

¹³ TB A.Z. 4a, 27b; Eccl.Rabb. I:8:3; TB San. 38b.

¹⁴ Puns are made on the Greek word for Gospel (*evangelion*) by R. Meir and R. Johanan, while Rabban Gamaliel’s Messianic opponent is made to assert that “the Law of Moses has been taken away and the Law of the *Evangelium* has been given.” (per. Cod. Oxford.)

¹⁵ Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition: Text-type, Provenance, Theological Profile* Suppl. To *Novum Testamentum*, Vol LVI (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 260-62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269

*Jews in the same century, and the fragments of Jewish-Christian disputation found in tannaitic and amoraic literature...*¹⁷

The Nazarene Interpretation of Isaiah (late Fourth Century A.D.)

The first Messianic Jewish perspective on Rabbis and their literature passed on by Christian hands comes from the latter quarter of the fourth century A.D. In his commentary on Isaiah, Jerome makes reference to a contemporaneous Nazarene interpretation of Isaiah, from which he loosely quotes. In Isaiah 8:11 - 15 the Nazarene interpretation applies “the two houses” to the two Schools of Shammai and Hillel. R. Akiba, Aquila and R. Meir are mentioned as are R. Johanan b. Zakkai, R. Eliezer, R. Tarphon, R. Joshua and R. Jose Ha-Gelili.¹⁸ F.C. Burkitt, referring to the above passage, states “I do not think that there is another passage in any of the Church Fathers which betrays so much acquaintance with Talmudic Judaism”¹⁹. Dr. Ray Pritz, in his *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, dates this work as being no earlier than the latter half of the second century.²⁰

{31} In Isaiah 8:19 - 22, the Nazarenes say, “When the Scribes and the Pharisees tell you to listen to them, ... you must answer them like this...”²¹ Pritz states that this “is surely an indication of an ongoing dialogue and polemic, one which we see frequently attested to in the talmudic sources.”²² Other passages make reference to “the errors of the Scribes and Pharisees” and “the very heavy yoke of the Jewish *traditiones*”²³ as well as to the fact that “the *deuterotai* passed away, who earlier deceived the people with very vicious traditions.”²⁴ Pritz suggests that the latter two terms are technical and refer to the Mishnah and the Tannaim respectively.²⁵ Whether or not this is in fact the case, it is obvious that this Jewish-Christian Nazarene source makes use of Tannaitic traditions and offers an appraisal of both their spiritual value and authority.

The above sources do not permit extensive conclusions, but at least this can be said: during the first four centuries, Rabbis and Nazarenes were somewhat aware of each other’s traditions, perspectives and literature. Though perhaps some help on the specifics of their debate and the various points of contention might be found in the various Talmudic passages concerning the *minim*, the historical sources from the period tantalize more than they clarify. What is clear is that Jewish and Gentile Christians were aware of and made use of rabbinic traditions in their evangelistic dialogue with the Jewish community.

B. Medieval Europe (Sixth to Sixteenth Centuries A.D.)

Although Jews could be found scattered across the Roman Catholic continent of Medieval Europe, they were still a distinct minority, one with a different religion,

¹⁷ Ben-Sasson, pp. 82, 85.

¹⁸ A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*, Suppl. To Novum Testamentum, Vol. 36 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 220-21.

¹⁹ F. C. Burkitt, *Christian Beginnings* (London: 1924), p. 73.

²⁰ Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Jerusalem-Leiden: Magnes- E. J. Brill, 1988), p. 62

²¹ Klijn and Reinink, pp. 220-23

²² Pritz, p. 63

²³ Klijn and Reinink, pp. 222-23, comment on Isaiah 9:1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23, comment on Isaiah 29: 17-21

²⁵ Pritz, pp. 63, 66-68

language and literature. Christianity being the dominant religion in Europe, the tolerance granted both to Rabbinic Judaism and to its literature was subject to the vagaries of Catholic religious sentiment and prejudice.

Bokser notes that, philosophically speaking, the Oral Torah is

*by its very being a denial that the Hebrew Bible moved naturally and inevitably toward one fulfillment, that of Christianity. It exemplifies another path of development - the Jewish path. The presence of another path... constitutes a challenge to Christianity.*²⁶

He adds:

*The Talmud as a body of literature became a target for Christian attacks in the Middle Ages. After Christianity had consolidated its power, the Jews were {32} the only dissident element who insisted on retaining their distinctiveness, thereby challenging the claim of Christianity to total religious sway over European civilization. Considering the basic logic by which the Church was guided, the opposition to the Talmud becomes understandable ... The offense of the Talmud to Christianity stems ... from its refusal to acknowledge the claims of Christianity and from its positive contributions to the strengthening of Judaism as a distinctive faith.*²⁷

In 553 A.D. Emperor Justinian enacted Novella 146, which forbade the use of the *deuterosis* (the Mishnah) for exegesis.²⁸ Flannery notes that “the banning of the Mishnah ... prefigured the burning of the Talmud of later times.”²⁹ Since Justinian I was emperor of the Christian Eastern Roman Empire, one must unfortunately view his legal injunction as representative of official Christian attitudes to Rabbinic literature.

In 1240 A.D. Nicholas Donin, a French Jew who became a Franciscan, instigated a public disputation directed against the Talmud, with four rabbis appointed for its defense. It seems that Donin had been excommunicated by R. Jehiel b. Joseph of Paris prior to his conversion to the Franciscan faith for repudiation of the Oral Law as well as for Karaite tendencies.³⁰ Ben-Sasson notes that Donin’s arguments “were to a large extent a continuation and development of the anti-Talmudic arguments of the Karaites.”³¹ His 35 accusations against the Talmud included charges of blasphemies against Jesus and Mary, attacks on the Church, pronouncements hostile to non-Jews, obscenities and gross anthropomorphisms. As a result of the trial held in June 1242, 24 wagon loads of books totaling thousands of volumes were torched in Paris by the public executioner.

²⁶ Bokser, p. 8.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 144-45

²⁸ For an English translation see James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York: Atheneum), appendix 2, pp. 392-93.

²⁹ Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 69.

³⁰ Judah M. Rosenthal, “Donin, Nicholas.” *EJ*, vol. 6. pp. 167-168.

³¹ Ben-Sasson, p. 92.

The logic behind this attempt to discredit the Talmud is explained by Bokser:

*The original text of Scripture was to be interpreted by Christianity in one way, and by Judaism in another way. Faithful to the Oral Torah, the Jews dismissed the Christian interpretations as untenable. The resistance of the Jews to Christianity thus centered in the literature of the Talmud...It became the bulwark of Judaism and the basis of its rejection of the competing claims of Christianity. It therefore seemed to Christians that if they could overcome the hold of the Talmud on the Jews they would automatically break the resistance to the missionary efforts of the Church.*³²

Barcelona of 1263 A.D. was host to a second very important disputation, this one instigated by Pablo Christiani, another French Jew who had taken upon himself Dominican vows. Christiani's opponent of choice was to be Nahmanides (R. Moses b. Nahman). Dr. Haim Beinart tells us that Christiani attempted to use the Talmud in order to prove three points:

*{33}...that the Messiah had already appeared; that he was "both human and divine," and had died to atone for the sins of mankind; and that, in consequence, the precepts of Judaism had lost their validity. Against this Nahmanides argued that the literal meaning of the passages quoted from the Talmud do not admit this christological interpretation.*³³

It evidently escaped the attention of the Dominicans that the very Talmud they had attempted to burn for blasphemy in 1240 A.D. had suddenly become such an effective tool for proving the Messiahship of Yeshua.

Results of the disputation were severe; in August 1263 A.D. James I of Aragon ordered the deletion of all blasphemous references to Jesus and Mary in the Talmud; failure to do so was punishable both by fine and by burning of the uncensored books. Jews were forced to listen to Dominican conversionist sermons. Nahmanides was arraigned before the Inquisition on blasphemy charges, and he subsequently fled Spain for Palestine. As a result of the disputation, in 1264 A.D. Pope Clement IV ordered the surrender of all Jewish books in the Kingdom of Aragon to the Dominicans and Franciscans for examination and censorship. Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* was also condemned to the fire as a result of its brief references to Jesus.

One of Christiani's fellow Dominican disputants was Raymundus Martini (Ramon Marti), who published his *magnum opus* in 1280 A.D. entitled *Pugio Fidei* (Dagger of the Faith). This treatise, printed in Aramaic, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin,

altered the course of the Christian anti-Jewish polemics for several centuries. The chief innovation of this school of apologists was the use of rabbinic literature to prove the truth of Christianity in much the same way that Jewish polemicists used the New Testament to prove the truth of Judaism ... Although Talmud and Midrash had been used in this way before, never had there been such a thorough search for rabbinic passages which could be interpreted Christologically. Despite the fact that the Talmud had been burned in Paris only twenty-three years before, the underlying assumption that allowed its use as a

³² Bokser, p. 144.

³³ Haim Beinart, "Barcelona, Disputation of," EJ, vol. 4. p. 213.

*witness for the Church was the notion that the rabbis knew the truth of Christianity but obdurately withheld it from the masses.*³⁴

{34} Another by-product of these Inquisitorial times was the condemnation of the Talmud by Popes Innocent IV in 1244, Alexander IV, John XXII in 1320 and Alexander V in 1404. In 1442 - 43 Pope Eugenius IV published a bull prohibiting Jews in Leon, Castile and Italy from studying any Hebrew book except the Pentateuch. In 1554, severe censorship of the Talmud was included in the first *Index Expurgatorius*; in 1565 Pope Pius IV decreed that the Talmud be deprived of even its name.

Schechter wryly notes that these debates always elicited nervousness and humility

*on the side of the Jews, who know that, whatever the result may be, the end will be persecution; arrogance is always on the side of their antagonists, who are supported by a band of Knights of the Holy Cross, prepared to prove the soundness of their cause at the point of their daggers.*³⁵

Adler, in his book *The World of the Talmud*, points out:

*Probably no other work in world literature has been as consistently maligned and as fiercely condemned as has the Talmud. It is a work that is paradoxically little known and greatly misjudged. It has been censored, banned and publically burned. The history of its persecution, it has been said, parallels that suffered by the people that created it.*³⁶

In summary, a cursory examination of history shows that Christian use of rabbinics during the Medieval period attempted either to discredit the Talmud or to prove the truth claims of Christianity by proof-texting Messianic passages in rabbinic literature. Coercion, censorship and burning of rabbinic works did not lie beyond the scope of Christian behavior during this time.

* * *

The purpose of this section has not been to present an exhaustive historical overview of Christian attitudes to rabbinic literature; Pfefferkorn and Eisenmenger have not been discussed; Reuchlin or Rosenberg have not been mentioned. What does stand out clearly is that Christian rabbinics has not always concerned itself with exegetics and apologetics, but has often degenerated into gross superstition, coercion, bigotry and persecution. We who are called by Messiah's name must fall {35} to our knees in sorrow and broken-heartedness, confessing to the Jewish people how grieved and horrified we are by this Satanic misrepresentation of Messiah to His own people. Only a clear understanding of how anti-Semitism has masqueraded under a cloak of anti-Talmudism, and a spiritual repugnance for that masquerade, can prevent such anti-Christian behavior from re-occurring.

³⁴ Frank E. Talmage, *Disputation and Dialogue: Readings in the Jewish-Christian Encounter* (New York: Ktav, 1975), pp. 72-73.

³⁵ Solomon Schechter, "Nachmanides" in *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism: From Talmudic to Modern Times*, ed. Jakob Neusner (New York: Ktav, 1974), p. 218.

³⁶ Morris Adler, *The World of the Talmud* (New York: Schocken, 1958), p. 12

III. DATING OF RABBINIC LITERATURE

Caveat lector is an appropriate warning for all who would attempt to date rabbinic materials. Rabbinic literature spans a gap of up to 2,000 years, if one takes modern halachic works into consideration. In his book *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament*, Dr. Sandmel suggests to the Christian reader that a healthy caution is absolutely necessary for the one attempting to date pericopes found within rabbinic literature.

Many of the statements attributed to Jesus are paralleled in the ancient Jewish literature. Some Jewish scholars have used this circumstance to deny originality to Jesus, while others have used it to show the "essential Jewishness" of Jesus. One needs to note that the parallels have usually been scrutinized for facets of similarity, and not nearly so often for facts of difference. Moreover, the rabbinic literature has been used with considerable carelessness, not only by Jewish scholars, but also by Christians. Not only has the motive existed either to glorify Jesus at the expense of the rabbis or the rabbis at the expense of Jesus, but ordinary cautions of primary concern in the historians' method have been tossed aside. Excerpts from the difficult rabbinic literature, available in convenient translation, especially in a highly commendable five-volume German commentary (known as Strack and Billerbeck), have encouraged both the imprudent and, one must say, the impudent. ... the earliest rabbinic collections, which contain the oldest material, were written down two centuries after Jesus. The material in the collections includes some which undoubtedly antedates Jesus - but to separate the layers in the rabbinic literature is a task of great delicacy, and one which has yielded, for the few who have tried, no abundant agreement. Much of the parallel material comes from rabbinic collections, which were made in Babylonia, and not in Palestine, in even later centuries; these later collections admittedly also contain very old material, but again the uncertainty exists about the age of relevant passages. Some Jewish scholars seem to believe that since some of this material is demonstrably older than Jesus, potentially all of it is; and some Christian scholars, overlooking the fact that late collections contain quite ancient materials, declare that the true priority and hence the inherent virtue of originality belong to Jesus. But since controlling criteria are absent, these quarrels about priority are as useful, and truly as relevant, as that about the chicken and the egg. Even when rabbinic literature is used in a non-partisan manner, it does not furnish a full and exact understanding of the time of Jesus. ... in their own peculiar way, the rabbinic collections reflect the interest of the editors. Pharisaic in its outlook, rabbinic literature has little that is charitable to say about the Sadducees. So selective is it in what it {36} offers that it mentions neither Philo nor Josephus; we should not know from the rabbinic literature about the mere existence of most of the other preserved Jewish writings called Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Traditions older than the year 70 are to be found in the rabbinic literature, but only in the form of stray bits. It is to be remembered that between the time of Jesus and the time of the recording of rabbinic literature, the tremendous upheavals of 70 swept the Pharisees into the ascendancy. The destruction of the Temple in 70 ended the Temple cult and the Sadducean movement which presided over it. The Pharisees, who had been until then an

*active but possibly small minority among many minorities, rose with their institution, the synagogue, to become practically synonymous with Judaism. ... Since the period before 70 in Palestine is not readily to be recovered from rabbinic literature because of its Pharisaic one-sidedness, these variables tantalize the historian. ... The end result is that the more closely we look for exactness in details, the more elusive it is. ... We are on the safest ground when we are the most general; when we proceed to specific matters, definiteness eludes us.*³⁷

Sandmel's perspective reflects a broad consensus, and he has ably understated his case. E.P. Sanders raises the same problem in his own discussion of the use and dating of rabbinic material:

*How sharp the controversy is with regard to the question of the date and reliability of Rabbinic material can be seen from an exchange between Wacholder and Morton Smith which was occasioned by Wacholder's review of Neusner's Development of a Legend, an analysis of the traditions concerning R. Johanan b. Zakkai. In his review, Wacholder wrote: "This book suggests that the science of Talmudics has a long distance to go before it reaches the present state of N.T. scholarship. There is an urgent need for basic chronological, historical, and literary studies of early rabbinic literature before ambitious monographs such as Neusner's could be productive." (editor: JBL 91, 1972, p.124). Wacholder especially referred to Neusner's failure to recognize late features in the halakic midrashim. Morton Smith replied to the review, suggesting, among other things, that Wacholder's late dating of the midrashim is idiosyncratic.*³⁸

Stuart Miller in his *Studies in the History and Traditions of Sepphoris* makes the following observations regarding careful use of rabbinics.

{37}*The question to be addressed here, however, is how the information provided in rabbinic literature is to be used for such an inquiry. ... the rabbinic evidence must be utilized with extreme caution. Attempts to extrapolate historical information from rabbinic literature are made even more complicated by the nature of the sources. Seemingly relevant information can often be found in contexts which give no obvious indication of the time or place intended. Or else, the composite nature of the material may suggest several different possibilities. Even when the text or its contents can be reasonably assigned to a particular period or locale, it is by no means certain that the historical information it provides is original to it. Very often, parallels found in other collections lack the information, expand upon it, or contradict it altogether. As much of the material was redacted long after the time it reflects, it is difficult to discern what constitutes an editorial gloss and what is germane to the text. Finally, we are dependent upon those manuscripts and editions available to us. Indeed, the obstacles to fruitful historical inquiry seem formidable. Several attempts, however, have been made to investigate historical topics using the rabbinic sources critically. ... With regard to the usage of rabbinic sources,*

³⁷ Samuel Sandmel, *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1957), pp. 199-201.

³⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). p. 65

Lieberman has stated, "Every single passage of Talmudic literature must be investigated both in the light of the whole context and as a separate unit in regard to its correct reading, meaning, time and place." (editor: "The Martyrs of Caesarea," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Salves* 7 [1939 - 44], p. 395) ... In *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70* ..., Neusner proposes a method for dating traditions attributed to a given rabbi. Neusner considers a tradition to be verified if it is quoted or alluded to by a later authority. The period in which the later authority taught can be regarded as a firm *terminus ante quem* for the tradition ... Other methods of verifying traditions can, of course, be suggested. As mentioned earlier, parallels found in sources external to rabbinic literature can be used to verify a particular tradition. Unfortunately, this type of information is not always available. The date of compilation of a collection in which a tradition appears can also be used to establish a *terminus ante quem* for that tradition. This approach, however, does not always permit as precise a dating as possible. ... Any historical inquiry which utilizes rabbinic literature as its main source must consider the problems addressed by Lieberman, Bloch, Sperber and Neusner. The mere collating of data and harmonization of divergent sources can no longer be considered a valid approach to this type of inquiry. The studies presented below attempt to illustrate how philological, literary, textual and historical considerations can help elucidate some of the rabbinic traditions pertaining to Sepphoris.³⁹

The above comments convince us of the need for extreme care and cautious scholarship in regard to dating rabbinic materials. Very few adherents of rabbinic {38} Judaism, let alone Messianic Jews or Gentiles, have the necessary training to meet the high standards of scholarship enjoined by the above men. As a result, Messianics using rabbinics have occasionally made unwise or even incorrect statements. Often the philosophical presuppositions on which such statements are based reflect the popular consensus of either the Jewish or Christian communities at-large, consensi which are historically incorrect. Sometimes a *tendenz* may be seen at work, operating under the influence of apologetic need. At other times, lack of clarity is due to excessive mysticism, ignorance or simply difficulty in dealing with the material. Whatever the source, such occasional abuses can make Messianic believers seem boorish or even deceptive in the unfriendly eyes of our opponents. The resultant caviling not only dishonors the name of our Messiah - it hobbles our cause. In the interests of improving our track record and maintaining higher standards, let us examine some of the above-mentioned examples.

Part A. Quotations and Concepts - Contemporaneous?

Bivin and Blizzard, in their *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, state that "rabbinic parallels give us a clear indication of the language in which Jesus taught. Jesus was thoroughly versed in the written and oral law. As we noted above, he followed rabbinic custom and taught in parables..."⁴⁰ Two points may be noted. Since Oral Torah was not codified in the Mishnah until c. 200 A.D., and in the Gemara not until between 400 - 550 A.D., it is both an unproven and an etiological generalization to say that Yeshua *followed* rabbinic custom and was

³⁹ Stuart S. Miller, *Studies in the History and Traditions of Sepphoris*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, Vol. 37 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), pp. 7-8, 10-11.

⁴⁰ David Bivin and Roy B. Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* (Arcadia: Makor Foundation, 1983), p. 76.

thoroughly versed in the Oral Torah. Though undoubtedly many of the traditions preserved in the Talmud go back to Pharisaic times, each parallel must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Unfortunately, the authors make their assertions based on rather late evidence. The “king parables,” referred to above, are given in the Talmud in the names of three Tannaim (late first, early second centuries A.D.) and one Palestinian Amora (mid fourth century A.D.). Therefore it is beyond the bounds of proper scholarship to assert that Jesus *followed* rabbinic custom when the only evidence brought forward refers to customs coming from a period between 50 to 300 years later than Yeshua.

Another example from the same work states that “Jesus is in complete agreement with the Rabbis” and then goes on to quote three Midrashim whose authors are either anonymous or second century A.D Tannaim.⁴¹ Since the only evidence presented comes from a period at least 100 years after Yeshua, it would be more fitting for Bivin and Blizzard to state that the Rabbis are in complete agreement with Yeshua! The authors make a third such mistake when they state “we can be sure, however, that this expression is good Hebrew because it is found in the Hebrew literature contemporary with Jesus, in what is known as Rabbinic Literature.”⁴² This time the reference is to two anonymous *beraitot* found in tannaitic works, coming from a period between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D., and not redacted before the fourth century A.D. Here, then, rabbinic material is used in an attempt to prove that it either precedes or is contemporaneous with Yeshua. Since most of the quotations are given in the name of rabbis at least one century {39} later than Yeshua, one must come to the conclusion that the authors have not marshaled sufficient data to prove contemporaneity with, and certainly not priority over, Yeshua.

Incorrect dating of rabbinic materials can occasionally be found in Messianic music. An example of this is in the song “Today I am a Man” on the Liberated Wailing Wall’s *Times and Seasons* release. The writer affirms that, as his son faces his Messianic bar-mitzva (during which time he will publicly read from the Scriptures), “it comforts him to know that, in Jerusalem, a bar-mitzva Boy confounded older men. For now, like me, he’s found Yeshua and believes in Him, and he approaches his bar-mitzva born again.”⁴³ The song is a highly enjoyable, catchy, up-tempo number replete with *freilach* riffs. It presupposes that the background of Luke 2:41 - 51 entails a bar-mitzva ceremony in Jerusalem; indeed, many non-Messianic Jews also presuppose that the bar-mitzva service dates from hoary antiquity. It comes therefore as a surprise to many that the use of the term “bar-mitzva” to denote the ceremony when young Jews assume religious and legal obligations, first appears in the fifteenth century, in *Sefer Ziyiyoni* of R. Menahem Ziyiyoni.⁴⁴ Various references from the second and third centuries A.D. refer to the responsibility incumbent on a Jewish lad, on reaching the age of thirteen years plus one day, to fulfill all the commandments⁴⁵ but this refers to legal obligations, not to a Torah-reading ceremony.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 152-153: Gen R. 10:1 and Ex. R. 6:1 (both anonymous but cf. Lev. R. 19:2 where ascriptions is to R. Joshua b. Levi and R. Simeon (Bar Yohai)

⁴² Bivin and Blizzard, p. 158

⁴³ Gina Ciavolino Moss and Stuart Dauermann, “Today I am a man,” *Times and Seasons*, recorded by the Liberated Wailing Wall (San Francisco: Jews for Jesus, 1986)

⁴⁴ Zvi Kaplan, “Bar Mitzva,” EJ, Vol. 4, p. 243

⁴⁵ TB Avot 5:21 given in the name of R. Judah b. Temai or possibly Samuel the Lesser (n.b. Soncino edition’s editor comments on p. 75: “This, of course, underlies the *Bar Mitzva* institution, which, however, in the present usage of the term, appears to be of much later origin.” Yoma 82a, in the names of R. Nahman and R. Johanan; Gen R. 3:10, in the name of R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon; Mishnah, Niddah 5:6

The modern ceremony of being called up to the Torah actually owes itself to late Medieval origins. Though it may make us feel more Jewish to think of Yeshua as a *bar-mitzva bocher*, it seems that there is no historical evidence for assuming that either He or any of His contemporaries celebrated such a ceremony. Biblicists might note that Luke accounts for Joseph and Mary's *aliyah* to Jerusalem on the basis of Exodus 23:14 - 17, the thrice-yearly pilgrim's ascent. As well, Yeshua is described as just having turned twelve, and not thirteen—the latter being the age when Jewish boys are traditionally bar-mitzva!⁴⁶ This error in dating rabbinic materials is most probably due to an unqualified acceptance of a modern Jewish consensus or “folk-history,” though the folk consensus is, in this case, historically without foundation.

{40} In Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum's excellent book *Jesus Was a Jew*, dating problems can also occasionally be found. Targum Jonathan on Isaiah is *conclusively* dated to be from the first century A.D. and, since “this was before Christianity ever became an issue, ... Jonathan ben Uzziel could hardly be accused of adapting the ‘Christian interpretation’.”⁴⁷ The Zohar is similarly ascribed: “(it) dates to about A.D. 100 and is thought to have been written by Simon ben Yohai.”⁴⁸ A few pages later one finds this addition: “Also from the eleventh century we have the writings of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai.”⁴⁹

Targum Jonathan's final redaction is thought to have occurred by the seventh century A.D.,⁵⁰ and its traditions are thought to have originated in the early centuries A.D. By the beginning of the fourth century, it was recognized as being of ancient authority.⁵¹ It does not seem possible, therefore, based on the evidence presented, to make either as bold a statement or as unassailable a conclusion as Fruchtenbaum has done. The Zohar, according to one of the world's greatest authorities on Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem, is purported “to be the utterances of the *tanna* Simeon b. Yohai and his close companions (*havrayya*).”⁵² But,

*... according to the clear testimony of Isaac b. Samuel of Acre, ... the book was published, part by part, not all at once, by the Spanish kabbalist Moses b. Shem Tov de Leon, who died in 1305, after he had met Isaac of Acre. ... (Moses' widow) and daughter maintained that ... (Moses) had written the whole work on his own initiative ... The question, therefore, is whether Moses de Leon himself was the editor, author, and publisher, or whether a Spanish kabbalist, associated with him, wrote the book and gave it to him to edit.*⁵³

It should be noted, of course, that it is physically impossible for the same Rabbi to have written works both in the second and eleventh centuries; neither of these writings is accepted by serious scholarship as being the product of R. Simeon bar Yohai.

⁴⁶ N. b. Mishna Niddash 5:6!

⁴⁷ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Jesus Was a Jew* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), p. 26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 27.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 31.

⁵⁰ Bernard Grossfeld, “Bible-Translations,” *EJ*, vol. 4. p. 846

⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 846-848.

⁵² Gershom Sholem, “Zohar,” *EJ*, vol. 16, pp. 1194

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 1209.

In Fruchtenbaum's *Footsteps of the Messiah*,⁵⁴ a comprehensive and systematic approach to Dispensational eschatology, the author bases both the name of his book and a significant eschatological observation on an interesting interpretation of Matthew 24:1 - 8. What is the "one single event that will determine that the last days have begun and that we are indeed living in the last days"?⁵⁵ The answer revolves around Yeshua's phrase "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." The key to this idiom, Fruchtenbaum states, is to be found in the Jewish context of the day when it was spoken. Support is then adduced from Isaiah 19:1 - 4 (written ca. late eighth century B.C.) and 2 Chronicles 15:1 - 7 (referring to events in the early ninth century B.C.) wherein similar (though not the same) terms are used. Fruchtenbaum then turns to two sources purporting to be from Christ's day ("in Christ's day the expression ... was a Jewish idiom of a world war preceding the coming of Messiah"⁵⁶), which turn out to be quotes from Ravina (a {41} third to fourth century Amora) in *Bereshit Rabbah* and the *Zohar Hadash* (late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries A.D.). The author's use of rabbinic material is meant to establish a specific idiomatic usage in Yeshua's day. In that the quotations are either 800 years before or 300 to 1300 years after Yeshua, such conclusions do not appear to be well-grounded.

A methodological note is in order: were authors not only to quote from rabbinic material but also forced to date that material in print, many of the abovementioned problems would be avoided.

Part B. Reading, Writing and Redaction

A widespread practice among Christian commentators is to assume that tannaitic traditions (second century A.D.) reflect Pharisaic usage (first century A.D.). As Sandmel has pointed out (*supra*), such conclusions cannot be taken for granted. An example of the above can be found in Daniel Juster's *Jewish Roots*: "Halakic reasoning is pre-Yeshuic ... the body of Oral law found in the Talmud is sometimes most ancient and at other times reflective of very late applications (1st - 4th century)."⁵⁷ Since Juster does not refer to percentages, it is impossible to fully evaluate his statement; however, even a cursory examination of the Talmud will reveal that the vast majority of its "applications" and halakha date from the second to fourth centuries A.D.

Ole Chr. M. Kvarme, in his article "Jesus, the Kingdom and the Torah"⁵⁸, uses a similar methodology,

This may also be seen in the healing of the man with the withered hand. The rabbis of the N.T. times also state that the Sabbath was given for the sake of man and not vice-versa. The contemporaries of Jesus were concerned with putting a hedge around the Torah and with establishing what were the exceptions when Sabbath-precepts could be overruled. They agreed on the principle (later given in

⁵⁴ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, (San Antonio: Ariel Press, 1982)

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 62

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 64

⁵⁷ Daniel Juster, *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology for Messianic Judaism* (Rockville; Davar, 1986), p. 229

⁵⁸ Ole Chr. M. Kvarme, "Jesus, the Kingdom and the Torah," *MISHKAN* Issue No. 4. pp. 20-38.

*the congnomen pikuah nefesh) that danger to life could overrule the sanctity of the Sabbath, though not in the case of chronic disease.*⁵⁹

The rabbis of New Testament times to which Kvarme refers in his footnotes turn out to be Simeon b. Menasya (second to third century Tanna and contemporary of R. Judah the Prince), R. Ishmael b. R. Eleazar, R. Akiba, R. Eleazar b. Azariah and R. Mattiah b. Heresh, all second century Tannaim. The principle of *pikuah nefesh*, then, is not found in rabbinic material dating back to Yeshua's day. Either other earlier examples are needed to prove Kvarme's point, or more tentative conclusions should be drawn.

Occasionally, attempts are made to date various liturgical elements to the same time as Yeshua and so to prove that Yeshua's utterances were truly within the mainstream of His Jewish milieu. A question presents itself as to whether this {42} method is tautological, for it could perhaps equally prove that synagogue liturgy is dependent on Yeshua! Would such liturgy then be considered Jewish, Messianic or Christian? One such example is found in Marvin R. Wilson's essay "An Evangelical Perspective on Judaism": "The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9 - 13) is thoroughly Jewish, reflected in such ancient Jewish prayers as the *Kaddish* and the 'Eighteen Benedictions' (*Shmoneh Esrai*)."⁶⁰ A cautionary note is provided by Dr. Joseph Heinemann of Hebrew University:

*It is almost certain that by the end of the (Second) Temple period the eighteen benedictions of the weekly Amidah had become the general custom. However, their exact sequence and the content of the individual benedictions probably still varied ... Soon after the destruction of the Temple, the Amidah was "edited" finally in Jabneh, by Rabban Gamaliel II and his colleagues (Ber. 28b - 29a). Even then, only the order, general content, and benediction formula were standardized; the actual wording was left to be formulated by the individual worshipper or reader. Attempts to reconstruct the "original" text of the Amidah or to ascertain the date when each section was "composed" are pointless, especially in view of the ruling that benedictions were not to be written down (Tosef, Shab. 13:4 ...).*⁶¹

A comparison of the *Kaddish*, the *Amidah* and the Lord's Prayer may reveal common traditions, but neither priority nor dependence is easily established.

One more issue must be considered regarding dating, and that is the difference between source documents and traditions. Sandmel has pointed out (*supra*) that more recent documents may contain quite ancient traditions; however, just because some of the traditions in a document may unquestionably be very old, nothing can be concluded with certainty regarding the dating of the passages in question. Caution is the watchword here.

Dr. Oskar Skarsaune, in his book on Justin Martyr, suggests that testimonial traditions found in Targum or Talmud obviously antedate New Testament *testimonia*: "It is this process of enriching the dossier of Christological proof-texts with more of the traditional

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 28: MRI to EX. 31:14; TB Yoma 85b; M. Yoma 8:6

⁶⁰ Marvin R. Wilson, "An Evangelical Perspective on Judaism," in *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation on scripture, Theology and History*, ed. Mark H. Tanenbaum, Marvin R. Wilson, and A. James Rudin (Grand Rapids; Baker, 1978), p. 16.

⁶¹ Joseph Heinemann, "Amidah" *EJ* vol. 2, pp. 839-40.

Jewish testimonies which comes to its climax in Justin's material."⁶² This can only be stated confidently when the dating of those *testimonia* can be clearly shown to precede Justin. The general evidence brought forward by Skarsaune is all tannaitic (second century A.D.), and amoraic (third century AD)⁶³; the evidence which he adduces for Psalm 24:7 is to be found in {43} Targum, Midrashim and *Moed Katan* 9a (the latter in the name of Rav, a third century Babylonian Amora and founder of the Sura academy). Skarsaune then posits a "transition from Jewish exegesis to the one we meet in Justin, because we possess an intermediate link in the *Apocalypse of Peter*."⁶⁴ Skarsaune has not adequately defended his dating so as to allow for such generalizations regarding rabbinic Jewish exegesis (perhaps firm conclusions are not easily attainable). Furthermore, since the *Apocalypse of Peter* is normally dated to the early second century,⁶⁵ Skarsaune's marshalling of rabbinic evidence from the second and third centuries does not prove his point. Were he able to prove the priority of the abovementioned traditions preserved in the Targum, he could be excused for concluding that "the *Apocalypse of Peter* is only a slight Christianization of the Jewish exegesis quoted above, especially as found in the Targum."⁶⁶ Perhaps a presupposition exists here regarding the priority of some of the traditions preserved in the Targumic material. Note that all bases are covered by Skarsaune's final conclusion:

*This review of Jewish parallels to Justin's material shows that all the main texts were familiar Messianic testimonies within Jewish exegesis prior to, contemporary with, and later than Justin ... This close contact may also be indirectly witnessed in some possibly anti-Christian motifs in the rabbinic exegesis, or in the grappling with problems raised by Justin.*⁶⁷ (emphases mine)

IV. TEXT AND CONTEXT

A familiar hermeneutical principle reminds us that "a text without a context is a pretext." In attempting to extend the field of *testimonia* from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Talmud and other rabbinic writings, Messianics have occasionally run afoul of the above-stated principle of interpretation. Two presuppositions have lain behind such uses of rabbinic literature: the *concealment* position would hold that the Rabbis believed in Yeshua's Messiahship but were too obdurate to reveal this truth to the common people; the *precedent* position would attempt to show that rabbis in times past have understood certain Scriptures to have clear Messianic content or allusions - therefore one cannot *a priori* condemn the attempt to ascribe those passages to Yeshua as being either far-fetched or "un-Jewish."

Certain difficulties sometimes arise from the above-mentioned attempts: occasionally, errors in dealing with the text are made (such as spelling errors, category mistakes, unqualified use of inaccurate secondary sources, inaccurate quotations, etc) due to lack of

⁶² Skarsaune, p. 262

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 260

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 268

⁶⁵ ---"Peter, Apocalypse of St." *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 2nd Edition, p. 1069

⁶⁶ Skarsaune, p. 268.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 269

technical skill in Semitics; at other times contextual blunders occur, whereby the context of a pericope is violated, or a more fully-blown Christian interpretation of the text is perceived than is rightly warranted, this due to lack of command of the relevant material. Errors in handling the text and contextual blunders both serve to present an image which most Christians would be hard put to appreciate - that of an ignorant fellow (at best) or of one guilty of negligence bordering on malpractice (at worst) in our use of rabbinic materials.

{44} One late example of errors in handling the text would be that of Francisco Machado and his *Mirror of the New Christians* published in Portugal in 1541. Talmadge notes that

*there are ... certain difficulties in his use of the material. Passages are seldom quoted accurately and at times are distorted almost beyond recognition. Furthermore, Machado was under the impression that certain tractates of the Talmud and other literary works were people. Thus, he speaks of "Midrash your doctor" and "Rabbi Bereshit," i.e. Rabbi Genesis (Midrash Genesis Rabbah).*⁶⁸

Modern examples or the same errors would include Mal Couch's *Rabbinical Views of Messianic Passages*. In this short booklet, the author states that

*after an intensive six-month study of the Old Testament Messianic passages, I decided to compile the key quotes from the major rabbinical writings and Jewish scholars of the last 2,000 years ... Their traditional expectation of the Messiah correlates almost perfectly with our Christian viewpoint.*⁶⁹

Couch then proceeds to quote rabbinic writings, but gives the names of John Bowker, Hal Lindsey, E.W. Hengstenberg, etc as the authors of these excerpts! In most cases the original rabbinic references are not given; often quotations are ascribed to the wrong sources; titles of books or tractates are given in bad Hebrew or in incomplete fashion; one book is simply called "Soncino." These types of compendia are of little value to the student, since they are so full of errors; furthermore, such lack of scholarship reflects poorly on the cause of Christ among those acquainted with rabbinics.

One good example worth noting, both in terms of accurate standards of spelling and of dating, is the evangelistic book *Y'shua* by Moishe Rosen.⁷⁰ An appendix at the back of the book lists rabbinic sources with their approximate date of compilation or recension. Though such simple cautions would seem to be elementary, it bears stressing that too few authors are doing their required homework in this area.

Contextual errors are of a different sort: attempts are often made to read more into the text than intended. One such example will be given here - that of the rabbinic interpretation of Isaiah 53. Rabbinic opinion is unanimous (that is, until Rashi's novel interpretation in the eleventh century A.D. that the main personage in Isaiah 53 refers to the nation Israel) that Isaiah 53 refers to Messiah,⁷¹ though it is true that, in modern times,

⁶⁸ Talmadge, p. 131

⁶⁹ Mal Couch, *Rabbinical Views of Messianic Passages* (no place or date given), p. 1.

⁷⁰ Moishe Rosen, *Y'shua* (Chicago: Moody, 1982).

⁷¹ Neubauer, Adolf and Driver, S. R. *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters* (New York: Ktav, 1969), 2 volumes; cf. Fruchtenbaum, Jesus op. cit., pp. 25-35 for a historical survey of this rabbinic position.

this fact tends to be either overlooked or brushed under the carpet. It must be noted, however, that although a messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 once was the commonly accepted consensus, not all such Messianic interpretations described the Suffering Servant in terms applicable to Yeshua. For example, Targum Jonathan, though accepting the passage as messianic, deliberately de-emphasizes the nature of the Messianic Servant's {45} suffering, ascribing it either to the nations, to Israel, or to Messiah's own martyrdom. Sampson Levey concludes, as a result, that "at the very least, this passage shows beyond a doubt that in Jewish Messianic thought of the Targum there is no room whatsoever for a suffering and dying Messiah."⁷²

Messianics often make use of Targum Jonathan in order to show that a Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 is consistent with ancient rabbinic traditions, and so it is.⁷³ Nevertheless, few Messianics point out that Targum Jonathan's agreement lies only in the area of general subject matter (the Messiah) and not in all of the specifics (what is the role of Messiah). It is the present author's opinion that many of those making use of such literature are themselves unaware of these distinctions, and are perhaps over-confident as to what such texts actually *do* prove. In defense of Messianic believers, it must be noted that modern Jewish refutation literature either deliberately ignores one and a half millennia of rabbinic thought (since such information would be self-defeating for their argument), or else attempts to belittle the importance of such information.⁷⁴ It would be neither appropriate nor honest for the above-mentioned authors of refutation literature to accuse Jewish Christians of *tendenz* on this point, since they themselves ignore or downplay much more significant information for their own apologetic purposes. Nevertheless, it would be advisable for the Messianics to "go the extra mile" (Matt. 5:41) and, with all candor, explain where Targum Jonathan (and other such materials) agree with our position and where they disagree.

A good example of the above methodology is found in Burt Yellin's article "Messiah in Rabbinic Thought," published in *The Messianic Outreach*. Having demonstrated that rabbinic literature also accepts the messianic nature of many biblical passages understood by Christians to be christological, he notes that this in itself does not decisively prove whether or not Yeshua of the New Testament is the Messiah prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures⁷⁵. The solution to such a quandary, he concludes, involves careful study of the Scriptures and personal prayer to God Himself.

Another area of abuse has been that of Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah. Gershom Scholem gives us a brief historical perspective on Messianic use of Kabbalah.

{46} *From the late 15th century onward, in certain Christian circles of a mystical and theosophical persuasion a movement began to evolve with the object of harmonizing kabalistic doctrines with Christianity, and, above all, of*

⁷² Samson H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation* (New York: Hebrew Union College, 1974) P. 87

⁷³ F. Kenton Beshore, *The Messiah of the Targums, Talmuds and Rabbinical Writers* (Montrose: International School of Biblical Research, 1971), chart 21: Rosen op, cit., pp. 75-77; Fruchtenbaum, *Jesus*, p. 26; etc.

⁷⁴ Samuel Levine, *You Take Jesus, I'll Take God: How to refute Christian Missionaries* (Los Angeles: Hamoreh Press, 1980) pp. 23-28; Gerald Sigal, *The Jew and the Christian Missionary: A Jewish Response to Missionary Christianity* (New York: Ktav, 1981), pp. 35-68. Neither of these books discusses the rabbinic consensus prior to Rashi. David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, *Jews and "Jewish Christianity"* (New York: Ktav, 1978, pp. 47-50). These authors attempt to belittle the evidence, mentioning it only in a footnote with a heavily slanted emphasis, cf. p. 49.

⁷⁵ Burt Yellin, "Messiah in Rabbinic Thought," *The Messianic Outreach* (Cincinnati: Messianic Literature Outreach) vol. 5:1, Fall 1985, p. 14.

demonstrating that the true hidden meaning of the teachings of the Kabbalah points in a Christian direction. Naturally, such views did not meet with a friendly reception from the kabbalists themselves, who expressed nothing but derision for the misunderstandings and distortions of kabbalistic doctrine of which Christian kabbalah was full; ... Historically, Christian Kabbalah sprang from two sources. The first was the christological speculations of a number of Jewish converts who are known to us from the end of the 13th century until the period of the Spanish expulsion, such as Abner of Burgos and Paul de Heredia, who pseudepigraphically composed several texts of Christian Kabbalah entitled Iggeret ha-Sodot and Galei Rezaya in the name of Judah ha-Nasi and other tannaim. Another such tract put out by Jewish converts in Spain toward the end of the 15th century, and written in imitation of the styles of the aggadah and the Zohar, circulated widely in Italy. Such compositions had little effect on serious Christian spiritualists, nor was their clearly tendentious missionary purpose calculated to win readers ... Furthermore, the number of Jewish converts to Christianity from kabbalistic motives, or of those who claimed such motives retrospectively, remained disproportionately small among the numbers of converts in general.⁷⁶

Dr. Jakob Jocz adds a Jewish-Christian perspective:

It is unfortunate that excess of zeal on the part of Jewish missionaries, especially converts, has led to extending the field of evidence from the Old Testament first to the Talmud and then to Jewish mysticism. In the search for a starting-point the temptation to elaborate any affinity of ideas is very natural. Paul in Athens seized upon the inscription Agnosto Theo in order to make known the God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ; he even quotes a Stoic poet to give force to his argument against idolatry. But occasional reference to a familiar quotation from an alien source is one thing, and the adducement of proof that the source is only apparently alien is another ... When the mystical literature of the Synagogue became more widely known amongst Christian scholars, the apparent affinity with Christianity led to the conviction that it actually contained in esoteric language the doctrines of the Church. Thus, the Zohar was held to be an important witness to the truth of the Christian faith. Some resemblance to the Christian doctrines of the Atonement, Mediation, the Holy Trinity, etc, and the metaphysical speculations of the Cabbalah (sic., et passim) has led to the assumption of an internal harmony between Christianity and Jewish mysticism. Medieval scholasticism was specially attracted by the speculative, fanciful method of exegesis employed by the Zohar. Fascination for Jewish mysticism has survived to our days.⁷⁷

{47} A modern example of such excessive zeal is seen in the work *The Great Mystery or How Can Three Be One?* by Tzvi Nassi (Hirsch Prinz). Prinz quotes liberally from the Zohar and from other kabbalistic writings, coming to his final conclusion:

⁷⁶ Gershom Scholem, "Kabbalah," *EJ*, vol. 6, pp. 643, 645.

⁷⁷ Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ: The Relationship Between Church and Synagogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 209

I now appeal to every candid and unprejudiced Israelite or Christian, who has read these pages, whether I am not right in maintaining that the Jewish Church before the Christian era, and in the first two centuries of the same, held taukas tzt, the Doctrine of the Trinity, as a fundamental and cardinal article of the true faith?⁷⁸

Prinz's conclusion, based on the Zohar, is that the doctrine of the Trinity was a cardinal article of faith of the Jewish Synagogue prior to Yeshua and up *until the 200's A.D.*, a sort of "trinitarian *Ani Ma'amin*." Of course, Prinz's dating of the Zohar is inaccurate by a minimum of only 1200 years. It may be rightly asked, however, if the Zohar has ever represented fundamental or mainstream Judaism. Dr. Jocz again makes a valuable contribution:

Christian writers have rightly found in Jewish mysticism the weakest spot in the Armour of the Synagogue which is ever ready to defy the missionary propaganda of the Church. But while older writers have worked on the principle that good evidence from any source may be used for missionary purposes, .. (t)he association of Cabbalah with Christian theology throws a shadow of suspicion upon the Church. Christianity is more than speculative mysticism. The mystical elements in the Christian tradition are not the main characteristics of the Church. Besides, the Cabbalah itself owes some debt to Christian ideas, having drawn upon a large variety of sources. Orthodox Judaism, on the whole, has looked upon its mystical speculations with suspicion. Judaism, though making room for a certain amount of mysticism, is essentially a religion of law and reason. Mystics in Judaism, as in every other religion, have always been a small minority ... While there is an undeniable affinity of outlook between Jewish and Christian mysticism, Jewish mystical speculations cannot serve as a bridge leading to Christian orthodoxy. The underlying principles of Judaism and Christianity are such that they automatically exclude each other. A. Fuerst has shown the precariousness of the missionary approach via Jewish mysticism. The divergence between {48} Jewish mysticism and the Christian Faith is fundamental. Spiegel rightly says: "The Kabbalah teaches nothing less than that this deliverance of God can be brought about by man and by man alone." It is here that the disparity appears in all its force.⁷⁹

Minimal rules of conduct become clear as we conclude this section. Attempts to use rabbinic literature must be accompanied by an effort to spell, quote and transliterate accurately; the student should check the primary sources rather than rely on secondary materials; one's knowledge of Hebrew or Aramaic should be sharpened; one should read broadly and particularly on the subject; one should be acquainted with the literary genre under consideration on a variety of subjects; and one should resist the ever-so-powerful temptation to read foreign meanings into the texts. An excellent opportunity is afforded here to engage in dialogue with Jewish scholars so as to bounce one's tentative conclusions off those more fluent in, and knowledgeable of, that literature. We who accept the Bible as God's infallible revelation to men and women, must always remember that the defense of Yeshua's Messiahship is found primarily and finally in the Scriptures; though supporting evidence may

⁷⁸ Rabbi Tzvi Nassi (Hirsch Prinz), *The Great Mystery or How Can Three Be One?* 91pp., (no date or place given), p. 89.

⁷⁹ Jocz, pp. 210-11.

come from other sources, including rabbinic literature, none of that evidence can usurp the Bible's primacy. That reminder should circumscribe the extent of what one attempts to prove from rabbinic literature.

V. MODERN MESSIANIC PHILOSOPHY CONCERNING RABBINICS

At the close of the twentieth century, all the uses of rabbinics mentioned in this article (both negative and positive) are still to be found among Messianics. The occasional charlatan still makes his furtive appearance, like Michael Esses, who forged a rabbinic certificate of ordination from a non-existent yeshiva and who for many years was a "bright light" on the Charismatic circuit, proclaiming himself a "Judean rabbi" and claiming great skill in rabbinic exposition.⁸⁰ On the other hand, Christian works are still to be found which caricature rabbinic literature in pejorative terms, classifying the entire rabbinic corpus as trivial, disingenuous, hair-splitting, flimsy and full of foibles.⁸¹ Between these two extremes lies the vast majority of Messianic believers, far removed from ethical deception or anti-Judaic feeling.

It may be fairly stated that a less skittish and less phobic approach toward rabbinics can be seen across the board among Messianic Jews today, though this {49} increasingly interested attitude is not without its problems. What follows is an exposition of general philosophical guidelines and caveats set down by various Messianic thinkers today which may prove of interest to the reader.

Part A. "No Negatives"

Occasionally Messianics still try to prove how right we are by proving how wrong Judaism is. Jocz's criticism of Professor Alexander McCaul's *The Old Paths*⁸² points out that his writings were based on

*the exaltation of Christianity at the expense of Judaism. The result of such an approach invariably led away from the main purpose of Christian witness into the inconclusive discussion as to which "religion" is superior ... his digressions are such that they seem to include every possible superstition in order to show the absurdity of Rabbinism.*⁸³

History reveals to the impartial observer how anti-Rabbinism has easily degenerated into anti-Semitism. It would be an asset to all Messianic believers were *argumenta ad hominem* to cease immediately in our use of rabbinic literature.

Part B. The Great Omission

A greater appreciation for things rabbinic has occasionally led some evangelicals into an immature befuddlement regarding the Gospel. Ole Chr. Kvarme sadly notes:

⁸⁰ Betty Esses De Blasé, *Survivor of a Tarnished Ministry* (Santa Ana: Truth Publishers, 1983), pp. 69-77/

⁸¹ Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel* (Fort Washington: C. L. C. 1954), pp. 79-85.91.

⁸² Alexander McCaul, *The Old Paths or The Talmud Tested by Scripture* (London: London Society's House, 1886)

⁸³ Jocz, p. 215.

In the last decades evangelical theologians have been much concerned to develop a new and positive understanding of the Jewish People as the elect people of God, as well as a prophetic understanding of the land and the state of Israel. I have myself welcomed this reorientation in evangelical theology, but I have been perplexed when I have seen evangelical theologians also embracing Judaism and the rabbinic faith tradition in such a way that all witness to Jesus as Messiah and Lord has silenced. At the same time I have been very impressed by the honest and straightforward attitude of many Jewish theologians in the Jewish Christian encounter.⁸⁴

The study of rabbinics is a praiseworthy and helpful endeavor; it should never be used, however, to conceal a cooling spiritual ardor or to excuse a lack of evangelical courage.

Part C. Sisterhood is Powerful

The opinion is often voiced that Christianity is a daughter religion of Judaism, a headstrong and rebellious upstart which broke away from its mother. The presuppositions behind such a viewpoint accept both the priority and spiritual {50} authority of rabbinic Judaism while rejecting any similar claim by first century Messianic Jews. As a result, Messianics who study rabbinics often are made to feel like poor, distant relatives who must approach the rabbinic table apologetically, hat in hand. History, however, does not justify such an hypothesis.

Rabbinic Judaism after 70 A.D. is not identical to the Judaism of Jesus and the first disciples ... Judaism at the time of Christ was a complex entity, which housed distinctively different parties and tendencies; Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots and others we only know by name. None of these could claim a monopoly on Judaism, nor did any deny the Christian Jews their Judaism when they emerged as a new Jewish religious faction after 30 A.D. But after the Jewish-Roman conflict and the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., most of these factions disappeared. Only two groups survived the catastrophe - the Pharisaic-Rabbinic and the Christian-Jewish. The Pharisaic tradition eventually established itself as the only legitimate Judaism, while the Christian church became more structured and delimited itself from rabbinic Judaism. It is therefore not completely accurate to call Christianity the religious "daughter" of Judaism, if one means rabbinic Judaism. It is more fitting to say that Judaism and Christianity are "sister" religions, having the same "mother" in pre-70 A.D. Judaism.⁸⁵

Dr. Jocz, in rebutting the arguments of E.P. Sanders, notes:

Pharisaism is not the only offshoot of Old Testament religion. This is a fallacy which has obscured the vision of many writers. The question, therefore, whether Jesus intended to separate himself from Judaism is fallacious. It presupposes that Rabbinic

⁸⁴ Ole Chr. M. Kvarme, "The Approach to Rabbinic Theology in Jewish Evangelism," unpublished address to Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism, August 1986 conference in Easneye, 27 pp., p. 15

⁸⁵ ---, "To The Jew First," *MISHKAN*, issue no. 4 pp. 59-60.

*Judaism in New Testament times was the sole heir of Old Testament tradition. Jewish writers have vigorously asserted that Pharisaism is the only legitimate offspring of the prophetic tradition and the direct heir of the Hebrew Bible. It has retained its original purity and "has no Greek strand" like Christianity. L.I. Finkelstein goes so far as to assert that half the world derives its faith from the Pharisaic tradition. The final argument for the truth of Pharisaism is usually seen in the fact of its survival. But it may be questioned whether Rabbinic Judaism continued in a straight line the Hebrew tradition. In the New Testament period, representing the last stages of the formative process of Judaism, there still existed a parallel tradition closely related to the Prophets of the Old Testament. Prof. Burkitt maintains with good reason that Christianity and Judaism are both two daughters of what he calls "Old-Judaism." Christianity has as much a claim upon heirship as Judaism has, unless spiritual rights are narrowed down to physical descent.*⁸⁶

This realization means that believers who approach rabbinic material for study purposes do not need to feel in any way intimidated. They are studying one Jewish expression and tradition which underwent a major and decisive transformation {51} after 70 A.D., a tradition which is opposed to Yeshua's Messiahship and deity. Messianic believers belong to a competing Jewish tradition which disagrees with rabbinic Judaism on many basic issues. It is worth remembering that, although rabbinic Judaism is seen by many as normative Judaism today, according to Josephus, at one time the Pharisees themselves were a small minority of 6,000 within a larger Jewish population of perhaps two to two-and-a-half million.⁸⁷ It would be quixotic for the Pharisees' spiritual descendants to look askance at Messianic Jews today, merely because our numbers are at present small, in the vicinity of 100,000.

Part D. "By What Authority... ?

Voices are heard within Messianic Judaism which argue for the legal authority of rabbinic halakha in the life of Messianic believers. Though they are by no means the majority, these voices have been granted and are still granted an inordinate amount of space to plead their cause. One such example is found in David A. Rausch's book *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology and Polity*. There an argument is advanced for the obligatory nature of the Oral Law.

*As to the oral tradition and Talmud, there is diversity of opinion among traditional Messianic Jews. Some believe the oral tradition was given at Mt. Sinai with the Biblical Law - others do not. Some are not sure ... In the final analysis, not many traditional Messianic Jews would say outright that Talmud is divinely "inspired" (many frankly do not know), but they would assure one that God "authorized" Talmud ... Yeshua said to do what the rabbis do - so he authorized it also.*⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Jocz, pp. 31-32.

⁸⁷ Josephus Flavius, *Ant.* XVII. 2, 4)42=ö cf. E. Schuerer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* ed. G. Vermes, Fl. Miller, M. Black (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), vol. 2., p. 396

⁸⁸ David A. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology and Polity*, Texts and Studies in Religion Volume 14 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), pp. 137, 139

In another place in this book we find a continuation of that argument:

*Is the Talmud inspired? This is an awkward question to ask. The Torah is inspired in its entirety. The Oral Tradition is the Torah's integration into one's person, and thus, is in a sense inspired ... A non-Jew, who almost by definition does not understand the Oral Tradition, cannot have (the Oral Torah's commandments - ed.) applied to him.*⁸⁹

The vast majority of Messianic Jews would reject the above hypotheses as inaccurate, untenable and unbiblical. Juster offers this perspective in his *Jewish Roots*:

{52} *All practices and traditions are to be evaluated according to Scriptural teaching, taking great pains to study it with depth and care ... Messianic Jews should respect the Jewish application of the Torah, Halakah, while at the same time reserving the right to criticize it in love. Yeshua Himself warned, "You make vain the Word of God by your traditions."*⁹⁰

The Norwegian Mission to Israel (DNI) also makes its position very clear in their statement "To the Jew First":

*... (A)vailable sources show that the law-abiding Christians of Jewish descent did not accept without question the rabbis' interpretation of the Law, especially after the reconstruction of Pharisaic Judaism in 70 A.D., after the destruction of the Temple ... No longer did the Jewish believers in Jesus regard the rabbis as the highest authority in questions of the Law, but this place was filled by Messiah Jesus ... The rabbinic tradition incorporates several elements which are negatively disposed towards Jesus as Messiah and to Christian belief in Him. At the same time it also contains important elements which date back to the time of Jesus and which, for one wanting to remain Jewish, are natural to identify with. There is much work waiting to be done in this area for the Christian Jew, though it is impossible to prescribe blanket solutions. However, an unconditional acceptance of rabbinic tradition cannot be considered.*⁹¹

Any tradition which would place itself above Scripture as an interpretative grid would not only violate the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*; it would run interference against the principle which Paul laid down in an ancient yet similar situation:

See to it that no one takes you captive ... according to the tradition of men ... rather than according to Messiah. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority. (Colossians 2:8 - 10)

Part E. What's on the Agenda?

One question which must be faced by Messianic Jews and Gentiles making use of rabbinic literature and traditions is this: have the theological presuppositions of rabbinic

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, Appendix, "In Defense of Talmudic Law," by Andrew P. Pilant, pp. 258, 60

⁹⁰ Juster, p. 228

⁹¹ "To the Jew First," pp. 58, 60

theology, its emphases and agendae, been weighed and understood? This is a question of fundamental significance, for one's response to it will serve as a hermeneutical grid guiding one's use of rabbinic literature and tradition.

An example is in order: in *Jewish Roots* Daniel Juster first discusses modern halakhic matrilineal descent, and then contrasts this with original biblical patrilineal descent. Having shown that biblical and halakhic positions are in disagreement, Juster concludes with a *volte-face*: "Therefore, to the traditional definition of who is a Jew, we must add the element of descent from the father."⁹²

{53} This seems to be a case of rabbinic theology modifying our biblical theology and creating a synthetic *tertium quid*; in this regard, note Juster's final statement: "Suffice it to say that the Scriptural role of the father and descent from the father is also crucial."⁹³

This trend can also be seen in Juster's comment on bar-mitzvas and Jewish identity. In his chapter entitled "Extra-Biblical Practices," Juster discusses, among other subjects, that of bar-mitzvas. In that chapter he unequivocally states that "we are not bound by tradition as a legalistic straight-jacket."⁹⁴ However, in his discussion of the same subject in his book *Growing to Maturity* one finds the statement "The full scope of being a loyal Jew includes ... bar-mitzvah's."⁹⁵ Is the reader to understand that one's loyalty and full commitment to Jewish identity will be considered somewhat deficient unless one embraces an extra-biblical religious practice of Medieval Judaism? Surely Juster must have intended to express himself more clearly on this point. A note of caution should also be sounded regarding a further comment by Juster that non-Jewish members of Messianic congregations should not have bar-mitzva services; they should be confirmed by a different ceremony as the bar-mitzva service is "specifically connected to affirming a Jewish identity."⁹⁶ Is there biblical warrant for placing such an extra-biblical practice off-limits to non-Jewish members of the Body of Messiah, or for having separate confirmation services in one and the same congregation with the discriminating factor being that of race? Furthermore, is the affirmation of Jewish identity the goal here, considering that the bar-mitzva tradition was totally unknown to such impeccable Jews as Abraham, Moses, Yeshua or Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, the redactor of the Mishnah? Perhaps we are dealing with the desire to affirm a specific type of Jewish identity, one which would be similar in appearance to that of the mainstream rabbinic tradition, and thus in some way more "kosher" in the eyes of Messianics because of that similarity.

The main theological problem that surfaces in the Messianic use of rabbinic materials is one of emphasis: since rabbinic liturgical tradition places no emphasis on Yeshua, His deity, His atonement, the Gospel and its offer of salvation, on the Jewish-Christian remnant of Israel, Gentile believers and the Second Coming, in what way does it show itself to be an ideal vehicle for the believer's liturgical and devotional exercises? Furthermore, since rabbinic Judaism is on record as disagreeing most strongly with the above Messianic elements, and since that opposition has expressed itself quite clearly over the past two millennia in rabbinic {54} literature and tradition, aren't Messianic Jews and Gentiles facing an intrinsically unsuitable corpus with an insurmountable task?

⁹² Juster, pp. 191-192

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 193; italics are Juster's

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 227

⁹⁵ Daniel C. Juster, *Growing to Maturity (A Messianic Jewish Guide)*(1982), p. 204

⁹⁶ Juster, *Roots*, p. 223

The first step for anyone wishing to make use of rabbinic traditions is to understand them - where they agree and where they disagree with the Messianic faith. Having become aware both of points of confluence and tension, the creator of new liturgical traditions must not sweep these differences under the carpet; he must find an artistic and positive way of removing those elements which are unsuitable for Messiah's worshipping body, and of adding those elements which express a fully-blown Christian perspective. Suffice it to say that the creator of such traditions must be informed by, and adept in, the length and breadth of New Covenant teaching, lest his or her additions be sub-Christian in nature. Occasionally the rabbinic mold will be found brittle and unsuitable for holding New Covenant truth, and it should be gently left to rest, an old wineskin unfit for new wine (Luke 5:36 - 39). At other times it may become a most suitable vessel for Messianic joy and worship. Unless Messiah's teaching comes through the rabbinic filter with unmistakable clarity, however, the whole attempt should be scrapped.

It would be helpful to examine five liturgical elements which have been embraced to varying degrees by different Messianic congregations in the U.S.A. The examination will focus on specific areas of tension or disagreement with New Covenant teaching, and on ways of resolving those tensions, if at all possible.

1. *The Amidah*

As noted previously, the *Amidah* or *Sh'moneh Esrei* has ancient origins, though the specific wording of its Second Temple expression is at present impossible to determine. The difficulties associated with a Messianic use of the *Amidah* are twofold. Negatively, the *Amidah* is lacking the fully Messianic teaching found in the New Covenant. Though God is praised in the *Amidah* for His faithfulness, He is not praised for revealing His faithfulness in the inauguration of the New Covenant; though His resurrection and healing power are lauded, no hint is given that these events are most clearly fulfilled in the mighty resurrection and miracles of Yeshua, etc. If the borrowing of a theological term from another context is acceptable to the reader, then the main criticism of the *Amidah* is that it is not "full Gospel" liturgy - it does not reflect the fullness of New Covenant teaching.

On the other hand, believers are often wont to downplay one element of the *Amidah* which tends to stick in the throat of the present author - that of the addition to the Twelfth Benediction, the "Nineteenth" or so-called *Birkat HaMinim*. In this blessing, formulated by Samuel the Lesser at the request of Rabban Gamliel II in Jabneh and soon after arranged by Simeon Ha-Pakuli⁹⁷, and imprecation is made against the Nazarenes, effectively placing them beyond the pale of participation in the synagogue liturgy.⁹⁸ Since some Messianic Jews are unaware of the above history, their recitation of the *Amidah* will not regurgitate this rather bitter historical memory. But for those who choose to remember the {55} prophetic fulfillment of John 16:2 - 4, a somewhat hollow feeling will always accompany the reading of the *Amidah*.

2. *The Thirteen Principles of the Faith*

⁹⁷ TB Ber. 28b; Meg. 17b.

⁹⁸ For a fuller discussion cf. Jocz, pp. 51-57; p. 336n. 258; Pritz, pp. 102-107

Alexander Altmann remarks that the Maimonidean “Thirteen Principles” marked an attempt by that author

to invest his principles with the character of dogma, by making them criteria of orthodoxy and membership in the community of Israel; but it should be noted that his statement was a personal one and remained open to criticism and revision... Of (its) many poetic versions, the best known is the popular Yigdal hymn (c. 1300). ... The formulation of ikkarim was designed to accentuate the vital beliefs of Judaism and to strengthen Orthodoxy. It was also meant to define the position of the Jewish faith vis-à-vis Christianity.⁹⁹

Juster mentions that the *Yigdal* has been revised for Messianic Jews (and Gentiles too, we would hope!). Yet he gives no explanation for such a revision.¹⁰⁰ A quick examination of the *Thirteen Articles* reveals that, in Rambam’s mind, a loyal Jew is one who denies the Trinity, the possibility of the Incarnation, the Messiahship of Yeshua, and the possibility of a future New Covenant. Since eight of the Thirteen articles fundamentally disagree with the Messianic faith, one is led to ask if perhaps another medium could be found which does not view God’s revelation in Messiah so negatively. At the very least, an almost complete recasting of the entire Thirteen Articles is needed in order for them to present a faith which is both wholesome and Messianic. It is worth mentioning that in the 1880’s the famous Messianic Jew Joseph Rabinowitz of Kishinev did just that when he “drew up a list of thirteen articles of faith and labor, after the pattern of the thirteen Principles of Faith set down by Moses Maimonides. the substance of the articles was that Jesus is the only Savior of Israel, as well as of the whole world.”¹⁰¹ It might also be suggested that all Messianic believers making use of such a recast version, be educated as to the Maimodean form, as well as to what the biblical reasons are which cause Messianics to differ from Rambam.

3. *Adon Olam*

This hymn focuses on the eternity of God, as well as on His unity, majesty and faithfulness; the listener is thus exhorted to place his absolute trust in Providence. A popular hymn in the synagogue which boasts of many beautiful melodies, this song is no less appreciated in gatherings of Messianic Jews and Gentiles, both in the Diaspora and in Israel. According to a debatable tradition, the hymn was composed by Solomon ibn Gabirol in the eleventh century A.D.

It is to be noted that its third verse begins with the words “hba ihtu sjt tuvu” (“For He is one, and there is not a second”). For Messianic believers who understand the Trinity to be a biblical expression of God’s unique unity, this verse poses no problems; nevertheless, the average Orthodox Jew understands this verse as championing the absolute unity of God in true Judaism, as opposed to “false” Christianity’s belief (so he thinks) in “three Gods.” Furthermore, his perception of {56} the hymn’s intent is not far off course; the language of this verse is peculiarly reminiscent of certain Midrashim of the fourth century A.D. In the Midrash on Ecclesiastes 4:8, the words “uk iht jtu ic od ‘hba ihtu sjt ah” (“There is one,

⁹⁹ Alexander Altmann, “Articles of faith,” *EJ*, vol. 3, p. 656

¹⁰⁰ Juster, *Roots*, p. 245.

¹⁰¹ Jacob Gartenhaus, *Famous Hebrew Christians*, (Chattanooga: Baker, 1979), p. 149.

and he has not a second”) are made to refer to the God of Israel who, it is sworn, has no Son.¹⁰²

Another homily in Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:33 has R. Aha recount a conversation between Solomon and God. The Lord prevails on Solomon to counteract belief in a divine Son, and as a result Solomon fulfills the divine request by composing the words of Ecclesiastes 4:8: “hba ihu sjt ah” Both Midrashim seem to be pushing in the same general direction - a polemical and anti-Christian denial of the deity of the Son. In Exodus Rabbah XXIX:5, R. Abbahu attempts to draw a similar conclusion to the above homily, and in the tractate Ta’anit of the Jerusalem Talmud Abbahu unmistakably connects these thoughts together in the following saying:

If someone will tell you “I am God,” he is a liar; “I am the son of man” his end is that he will regret it; if he says that “I am going to heaven,” he says this but he will not fulfill it.”¹⁰³

It would appear that these parallels are not accidental, and that the similarity of phraseology between *Adon Olam* and the Midrashim bespeaks a similarity of theological conviction and of polemical intent. Could it be that this intent has slipped by the majority of Messianic believers who heartily sing this song? Could it be that we are making use of rabbinic theology and tradition unawares?

4. *Shalom Aleikhem*

This soulful hymn is usually sung at home, at the beginning of the *Erev Shabbat* meal. In the song a welcome is extended to the *malakhei ha-sharet*, the ministering angels of God Most High who come from before the presence of the King of kings. This terminology is derived from the *aggadah*, wherein the archangels Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and Uriel are referred to by the above title.¹⁰⁴ The actual tradition upon which this hymn is based comes from an *aggadah* given in the name of R. Yose b. Judah, a second century A.D. tanna:

Two ministering angels accompany man on the eve of the Sabbath from the synagogue to his home, one a good angel and one an evil angel. And when he arrives home and finds the lamp burning, the table laid and the couch bed covered with a spread, the good angel exclaims, “May it be even thus on another Sabbath too,” and the evil angel unwillingly responds “Amen.” But if (all is) not (in order), the evil angel exclaims “May it be even thus on another Sabbath too,” and the good angel unwillingly responds “Amen.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Eccl. Rabb. IV:18:1

¹⁰³ TJ Ta’anit 2:1, 651; cf. Mordecai Margalio, “Aha,” *EJ* vol. 2, p. 435 and “Apologetics,” *EJ* vol. 3, p. 191 for the same position.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur Marmorstein, “Angels and Angelology,” *EJ* vil. 3, p. 968.

¹⁰⁵ TB Shabb. 119.b.

{57} During the seventeenth century, the kabbalistic books of *Tikkunei Shabbat* are the first to state that it was the kabbalistic custom to recite *Shalom Aleikhem* and *Eshet Hayil* before the Sabbath meal.¹⁰⁶

The Messianic believer who utilizes this tradition must ask himself some hard questions: does he or she believe that one good angel and one demon accompany him or her home from synagogue on Friday nights? Does he even go to synagogue on Friday nights? Is it biblically proper or even desirable to invoke the presence of archangels, and, for that matter, is such a spiritual authority given to men and women? Is the Messianic believer aware of the kabbalistic connotations of this song? How does this kabbalistic tradition fit into the parameters of biblical angelology? Could it be that, once again, a rabbinic aggadic tradition has caught us unprepared, taking us into areas about which we know nothing?

5. *Lekha Dodi*

This song is a favorite hymn sung at the inception of the Sabbath, wherein the Sabbath is welcomed as a queen. The song is based on a passage in *Baba Kamma*:

*On a Sabbath evening (before sunset), why is (running) permissible? As shown by R. Hanina: for R. Hanina used to say: "Come, let us go forth to meet the bride, the queen!" R. Jannai, however, while dressed in his Sabbath attire used to remain standing and say: "Come thou, O queen, come thou, O queen!"*¹⁰⁷

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Lurianic customs had become the vehicle which expressed kabbalistic doctrines about the Sabbath. One mystical function which could be fulfilled by the keeping of such customs was the actualizing or symbolizing of the "sacred marriage" between God and His *Shekhinah*. According to Scholem, the Kabbalists thought that

{58} *Human action on earth assists or arouses events in the upper worlds, an interplay that has both its symbolic and its magical side. Indeed, in this conception of religious ceremony as a vehicle for the workings of divine forces, a very real danger existed that an essentially mystical perspective might be transformed in practice into an essentially magical one ... A special atmosphere of solemn celebration surrounded the Sabbath, which was thoroughly pervaded with kabbalistic ideas about man's role in the unification of the upper worlds. Under the symbolic aspect of "the marriage of King and Queen," the Sabbath was enriched by a wealth of new customs that originated in Safed, such as the singing of the mystical hymn *Lekhah Dodi* and the recital of the Song of Songs and Chapter 31 of Proverbs ..., all of which were intended as meditations on the *Shekhinah* in her aspect as God's mystical bride.*¹⁰⁸

Messianic believers, if they are to make use of kabbalistic liturgical traditions, must carefully discern and understand the Gnostic theological origins of such traditions, and then find some

¹⁰⁶ Efraim Gottlieb, "Sabbath," *EJ*, vol. 14, p. 569

¹⁰⁷ TB *Baba Kamma* 32a, b; cf. *Shabb.* 119a.

¹⁰⁸ Scholem, "Kabbalah," pp. 641-42

way both of cleansing that liturgy and refocusing it on Yeshua, and not on the feminine aspect of a dualistic and shattered divinity. One would have to ask whether the whole endeavor, as far as kabbalism is concerned, is worth the candle.

In all five of the above examples, it has been noted that various motifs or concepts are expressed in certain rabbinic liturgical traditions, which, at best, are not in line with or, at worst, are downright opposed to biblical and Messianic teaching. Unqualified use of these traditions helps to propagate a theology which is foreign to that of the New Covenant, with the result being the unwitting establishment of a rabbinic agenda. When these theological differences are ignored or brushed away, the ability of Messianic believers to engage in critical and biblically based thinking on the subject of rabbinic literature and tradition is gradually discouraged, slowly eroded and finally destroyed. If we would make judicious and biblically-filtered use of these above traditions, then it is incumbent upon us to let our fellow Messianic believers understand the theological presuppositions behind many of these traditions, especially when those traditions may not agree with clear scriptural teaching.

Another problem must be considered - that of contextualization and the Gospel. When Messianic believers make use of certain rabbinic traditions or customs, having recast and changed their meanings, will this metamorphosis or plastic surgery be obvious to other Messianics or even to non-Messianic Jews? The latter may assume that we are using these forms with the meaning that Orthodox Judaism has given to them, and, as a result, unless we make our recast meaning crystal clear, these non-Messianic Jews may later discover the disparity in meaning and accuse us of deceptive practices. Reform Judaism has been accused of similar things by Orthodox Judaism, as has the Conservative Movement. It is fair to ask, in such cases, to what extent this type of contextualization confuses more than it helps. It may even be that the contextualization process described above ends up {59} confusing more Messianic believers than any other single group, since not a few Messianics are simply unaware of the above-mentioned tensions.

A similar and related issue is that of target audience: does our excitement concerning rabbinic traditions arise out of our desire to become "as a Jew to the Jews," as Paul put it in 1 Cor. 9:20? That is certainly a praiseworthy motive. But perhaps we are becoming as rabbinic/Orthodox Jews (who are approximately 15% of the Jewish people) in order to reach secular Jews (who are the overwhelming majority at approximately 85% of the Jewish people). That is not contextualization - it is a missiological blunder of epic proportions!

A third question must be asked, albeit with humility: could it be that one motive lying behind Messianic attempts to employ rabbinic literature is a nagging feeling of insecurity vis-à-vis, and a lack of acceptance from, the Jewish community, which feelings it is hoped will be assuaged the more closely one's practices resemble that of "authentic" (that is to say, rabbinic) Judaism? Could it be that some of us are attempting to prove to the Jewish community that we have not become heretics by believing in Yeshua, and the proof of this is to be seen not as much in biblical reasoning and godly living, as in our strikingly visible use of rabbinic liturgy and traditions?

Only God can truly discern the motives of men's and women's hearts, dividing between spiritual and carnal motivations. It might not be out of place to ask Yeshua to search our own hearts on this issue, to point out if there might be any wicked way within us, and to lead us afresh on the everlasting way. (Psalm 139:23,24).

CONCLUSIONS

Some brief comment may now be offered as to the value of Talmudic studies for Messianic believers, and one or two caveats may also be noted. Questions concerning the chronological priority of texts can not always be dogmatically answered, nor are they always a fruitful topic of discussion. Nevertheless, the Gospel documents are one of the earliest sources available to us from the period in question, and much productive study awaits the one who will make bold and scholarly use of the Gospels, both in historical research and in comparative study with rabbinic literature.

Enough has been written to caution those who would blindly assume that rabbinic Judaism was the womb out of which our Messiah emerged. One must examine all {60} such presuppositions carefully - it could be that long-cherished views have no historical basis and are in need of revision. Not every aspect of the life and times of Yeshua the Messiah is recoverable (if at all) by a quick glance at the Mishnah. The decisive importance of R. Johanan b. Zakkai's reconstruction of Judaism in the post-70 A.D. period must also inform our study of rabbinic literature, as well as the effects of the Bar-Kokhba revolt (132 - 135 A.D.) upon the Messianic hope of rabbinic Judaism. These two periods are significant turning points both for Judaism and for Messianic-Rabbinic relationships; their importance as milestones on the changing road of Judaism can all too easily be overlooked, especially with regard to central issues such as that of atonement.

Talmudic studies can contribute to Messianic believers' understanding of how rabbinic Judaism and the Messianic movement of Yeshua developed side by side, of how their own theologies were shaped and hammered out through wary interaction and heated debate. The study of rabbinic literature could further aid the Messianic in understanding modern forms of Judaism, and how aspects of Jewish religious thought have been shaped by events which occurred over the past millennia. Judaism has shaped the Jewish people's thinking for a long time, and anyone attempting to understand the Jews as a people will quickly see that a thorough grounding in rabbinics is both a welcome and an important prerequisite.

A final word: our study of rabbinic literature and our creative use of rabbinic traditions must be guided by three concerns: that these actives be glorifying to God and in accordance with His Word; that they should be done in the name of Messiah and consistently point to Yeshua as Lord and Messiah; and that they should be accomplished under the guidance, and by the empowerment, of the Holy Spirit. So help us God.

{65} RESPONSES

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I found Boskey's paper to be an excellent corrective to the usual simplistic use of Rabbinic parallels in Messianic Jewish circles as well as others. He rightly points out the difficulty of using this material to prove either the veracity of Messianic Jewish beliefs or to provide a indisputable background for New Testament interpretation. This does not mean that the material may not be more carefully used with good scholarship to provide some enlightenment of the New Testament text, since the roots of both Rabbinic Judaism and Messianic Judaism lie in the older first century Judaism (in Kvarme's words) out of which both grew. It is however notoriously difficult to prove whether the Talmudic idea of the New Testament idea was original as Boskey rightly demonstrates.

Boskey's historical review of the use of Rabbinic literature is very helpful. Few were those who used this material judiciously. Having reviewed most of this history Boskey makes some telling criticism of the adoption of Rabbinic tradition and literature among Messianic Jews, as if Rabbinic Judaism were a faith compatible to ours. He even criticizes this author concerning the use some of these traditions. However, it should be noted that the new addition of *Jewish Roots* by this writer includes a new preface and corrections where I come to many of the same conclusions as Boskey and correct my former overly positive attitude to Rabbinic Judaism. One tradition Boskey criticizes is the Bar Mitzvah. I did not wish to imply that the present practice in Judaism was a first century tradition; however, noting the almost universal cultural practice of rites of passage (Judaism's Bar Mitzvah, Christianity's Confirmation etc.), it seems fitting to me though (not biblically enjoined) that children would be given opportunity to profess their faith and loyalty to Israel as Jews at this crucial age and, if Gentiles, to express their loyalty as spiritual children of Abraham (but not to profess that they are responsible to be part of national Israel). It also seems likely to me that the incident in Luke concerning the 12 year old Jesus in the Temple is not a Bar Mitzvah but the event demonstrates significance in that He so engaged the scholars just before He would have been considered religiously responsible.

{66}As to Boskey's other comments on the use of liturgy, I am in almost complete agreement. Other corrective words would be so minor that they are not worth stating.

Although Rabbinic literature is misused as proof for Christian or Messianic beliefs, this does not mean that conceptual parallels are not important. One of the areas that Boskey does not adequately note is this that the existence in Judaism of ideas parallel to New Testament theology opens the door of argument whereby we can claim that some of our key ideas are not as foreign to Jewish conceptualizations as other might argue. This does not at all prove our doctrine; however, if these ideas were allowed in the Jewish community in these other forms (aggadah, mysticism) why must parallel concepts be totally abhorred when Messianic Jews teach them (though I would agree it is not always done in a totally honest way)?

Boskey's article is worth publishing in a booklet form and being given wide distribution, because the problem he addresses is so widespread in Messianic Jewish circles.

Chaim Pearl

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Avner Boskey's essay contains much food for thought for Messianic Jews. As I understand him, he argues against the indiscriminate use of rabbinic literature in such circles, either to support their position or to argue against it. From one point of view this may seem remarkable to some - especially to those who believe that the early Church and its literature is coterminous with classical rabbinic Judaism. But this very issue of the dating of rabbinic Judaism is itself a question which is wide open. The old debate whether the sayings of Jesus were original or rabbinic depends almost entirely on the dating of the rabbinic material. Friedlander, for example, in his book on the *Sermon on the Mount in Rabbinic Judaism*, finds rabbinic sources for nearly every phrase and idea in the Sermon. Later scholars of the rabbinic literature are not so certain about this when they suggest later dates for much of the rabbinic teaching. The problem is made more complicated when it is recognized that rabbinic teaching which is held by some to be post-Jesus, may simply be reflecting the norms of first-century Judaism.

{67} For example, the frequently quoted statement of the rabbis that the Law was given to Man and not Man for the Law, and which is also a prize jewel of Christian teaching, can easily be dated second or even third century. The temptation to regard the ethic as original with Jesus must be resisted however, since the "late" rabbinic submission merely repeats and reflects a norm which had already been accepted in the Judaism of the rabbis some one hundred and fifty years before Jesus. The first critical battles of the Maccabees against the armies of Antiochus Epiphanes in 164 B.C.E. brought tragedy to the Jewish soldiers who refused to take up arms on the Sabbath, even in defense of their lives. The rabbinic leaders then made it clear that the Torah was given to Man to enhance his life - not that it should be the cause of death. From that historical point and for all time after that, Pharisaic Judaism insisted that the preservation of life takes precedence over every Torah law except three - idolatry, sexual immorality and murder. Clearly then, Jesus' teaching and attitude to the Sabbath is not so original after all.

The whole problem of which came first - rabbinic or the Christian ethic - is further complicated by the uncertainties and the debates which still go on with regard to the dating of the New Testament books. This question frequently adds confusion to obscurity. Boskey is therefore on sound ground in his advice against using rabbinic sources indiscriminately. The whole question of dating is still moot and the Christian student of Talmud and Midrash should therefore not be too hasty in drawing conclusions one way or the other. He should study rabbinics for their own value and beauty. Sometimes, perhaps even often, he will see parallels in the Christian Scriptures. Sometimes he might find ideas which are antagonistic to his own religious beliefs. No matter; he can study rabbinic literature for its own intrinsic value and as source material for understanding the classical Judaism of the rabbis.

Though Boskey is correct in his warning against the attempt to interpret the Oral Law to suit Christian dogma, I would extend this warning as well to the use of the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Prophets. Thousands of volumes have been written in all languages in an attempt to find prophetic support for the Christian doctrine of Jesus as Messiah. I consider this

a sheer waste of time and effort! The Prophets lived centuries before Jesus: their words - when they had political significance - were concerned with their contemporary situation. Thus, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah is a metaphor for Israel. Chapter 53 of the book is not to be read as a forecast of the Messiah. To read it in that way is fantastically irrational as well as a rejection of every standard of biblical scholarship. The same objection can be raised in principle against every vain attempt to read the Prophets as forecasting the coming of Jesus. The Hebrew Bible has to be read, studied and hopefully understood within the parameters of the historical background and the theology of those times. If, as the author of the paper says, "The defense of Jesus' Messiahship is found primarily and finally in the Scriptures..." then I argue that it is only in the Christian Bible that this notion is to be found, and not in the Hebrew Bible.

{68} The books of the so called Old Testament contain not a single word that could be *reasonably* associated with Jesus. Every attempt to find Christian support from a text in the Hebrew Bible is false exegesis and theological bias.

This might be a convenient point to emphasize the rabbinic stand-point that the biblical books are certainly open to be interpreted. Indeed, as Solomon Schechter pointed out in his *Studies in Judaism*, "Judaism does not rest on the Bible alone, but on the Bible as it has been interpreted throughout history and tradition." Fair enough; every student of Judaism knows the truth of this. Indeed, the main literary corpus of rabbinic Judaism is concerned with this "interpretation." In essence, the interpretation - found in the Talmud, Midrash and later writings - is the Oral Law. For the Jew the Oral Law is as significant as the Written Law of the Bible. Moreover, this interpretation of the rabbis went on for nearly eight hundred years and reflects the views of about one thousand scholars in Palestine and in Babylon. With the close of the Talmud, the interpretation continued. It is no exaggeration to say that the Oral Law continues to grow even in our own day. It is significant that in almost two thousand years of Bible interpretation by countless rabbis, teachers and scholars, the text of the Hebrew Bible has never been read with Christological implications (that is, except for an insignificant number of writers with Messianic beliefs). The theology of the Old Testament is based on three pillars - the Unity of God, the Divine Revelation of the Law, and the Chosenness of Israel as the people of God to keep the Law. All else is an extension of these three principles. But no interpretation or extension is valid in Judaism which diminishes from the concept of the uncompromising Unity of God, the centrality of Torah as expressing the will of God, and the responsibility of Israel as the chosen people of God to uphold and teach those concepts.

It is in respect to these considerations that Christianity took a different road, not only in the matter of the Law but in respect also of the other two above mentioned principles. Pauline Christianity decided on a parting of the ways with Judaism, not only on a question of the Law (this latter heresy, serious as it was, might have been bridged). After all, the details of Halakhah were at that time the subject of intensive debate among the rabbis themselves. It is true that, with the destruction of the Temple in 70, it became more important than ever to codify a unifying religious law which could serve as a binding religious and cultural civilization for Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora. But such a process was difficult; it took centuries, and the rabbinic academies upheld and even welcomed free discussion, open debate and differences of opinion on this subject. There are over two hundred recorded differences between the Schools of Hillel and Shammai alone on this matter. So it is not unreasonable to suggest that, with the exception of basic laws such as circumcision, differences between the rabbis and the earliest Christian communities in secondary matters of the law need not have widened into the unbridgeable gap which ensued under Pauline teaching.

Though my understanding is that the more radical break with Judaism was instituted by Pauline Christianity with its teaching about Jesus, this is not the {69} place to enter into a discussion on this matter; nor is it central to Boskey's article. Suffice it to be said that the classical Christian theology which raises Jesus into a position of the Divine has always been the most outrageous doctrine for the Jew. The Jewish doctrine of the uncompromising Unity of God is really the only "dogma" in Judaism. And this Jewish dogma was severely wounded by the Christian teaching of Jesus as Son of God, as consort of God, as one of a Trinity with the Holy Spirit. For the Jew this is, has always been and will always be, totally unacceptable. Why didn't the Jews deify a Hillel or an Akiva or any other outstanding ethical teacher of Judaism? Because it insisted that man is man and God is God and God does not become man, no more than man becomes God. The Christian claim that Jesus was Messiah may not have been taken seriously by first and second century Jews; after all, there were no fewer than eleven such claims to Messiahship in the first century. The persecuted Jews under Rome needed such a belief. The story of the Resurrection in Christian theology similarly may not have caused such a stir. Rabbinic folklore of the period contains many stories of a similar genre. Ultimately the rationalism of the rabbis put that kind of folklore into its proper literary stratum as didactic parable. What historical Judaism, however, could never understand, let alone accept, was the attack on strict monotheism by the introduction of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Even more impossible for the Jew was the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation which - whatever its pagan origin - could only be regarded as a clear break with the spiritual concept of God, that jewel of Judaism.

In the same class of unbridgeable doctrines is the Jewish teaching of the Covenant of God with Israel and the Christian revolutionary theory of a new Covenant. The doctrine of the *brit* is central in Jewish theology and derives its source from the biblical record. It is clear, both from the history of Israel and the prophetic teaching, that Israel frequently offended against the Covenant relationship with God by breaking His Divine commandments. But the glory of biblical prophecy is that it taught that there was a way to heal Israel's sin by sincere repentance and a return to Torah. The Jewish reading of the Bible is emphatic on this point, and no amount of ingenious Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible can alter the straight and simple Jewish teaching. God made a Covenant with Israel; this is a *brit olam* - an eternal Covenant. Israel broke the terms of the Covenant through its rejection of Torah. But God is waiting patiently for Israel's return in penitence and in loyalty to Him. This is both the meaning and the challenge of being Jewish even to this very day. Here is no new Covenant, no substitution for Torah, no salvation by the blood of anything or anyone - only salvation by good deeds and steadfastness to the Torah.

Boskey's concluding remarks are interesting and their thrust is new to me. If I understand him correctly he is against Messianic Jews using the Synagogue liturgy indiscriminately. Some of his examples are apposite. So, I would agree with him that *Adon Olam*, sung in Church, would indeed be most odd. Among other things, this beautiful hymn is a celebration of the strict Unity of God. In fact, the unknown author may have had in mind a sort of anti-Christian polemic with the words, {70} *Vehu ehad ve'ein sheni lehamshil lo lehachbirah*, "For He is One and there is no other to compare with Him, to consort with Him." On the other hand he is a little harsh with the Sabbath Eve hymn, *Lecha Dodi* in which the 16th century Kabbalist Solomon Alkabetz sings of his love for the Sabbath which is compared to a bride, and he exhorts his brethren to go out to welcome the holy day. Still, perhaps Boskey can find hidden meanings, implications and mysteries in the *Lecha Dodi* which the average worshipper has failed to notice.

If my piece seems in parts to be too critical of the evangelical position, let me conclude by saying that the criticism is more general and not directed to Boskey's paper. For his chief thrusts find me somewhat neutral; perhaps in some of his statements I would really agree with him. Our Christian friends should study rabbinic literature because it is - next to the Bible - the chief source of Judaism. By studying such literature we can come to a clearer understanding of what Judaism is all about. We can also see how Christianity under Pauline teaching initiated the parting of the ways.

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Introduction

What place do the teachings and writings of the Rabbis deserve in the life and thought of Messianic Jews? This crucial question has at its root the more basic question: In what sense is a Messianic Jew "Jewish"? Have Messianic Jews cast off their Jewish roots in favor of another faith and culture? Is their faith in Messiah Jesus the fulfillment of Jewish hopes and dreams, or are they creating a hybrid faith which is neither authentically Jewish nor authentically Christian?

Avner Boskey ably sets forth the problems and categories that any discussion of the Messianic use of rabbinic literature must address. His candid summary of the Christian usage of Talmud, Midrash and Jewish liturgy, past and present, is a necessary first step, and every Christian and Messianic Jew must face up to the facts presented. At the same time, it must be unequivocally stated that the vast majority of Messianic Jews genuinely believe that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel, and that it is right and proper for them to live as Jews. Their use of Jewish symbols and rites is an attempt to express their faith, not an effort to deceive.

Following some general remarks about rabbinic literature and Messianic life, I would like to comment on the main categories of the use of Judaica by followers of {71} Jesus which Boskey delineates in his article: 1) the apologetic 2) the halakhic and aggadic 3) the liturgical and 4) the general category of contextualization.

Some General Remarks

The study of the Talmud requires a great deal of skill and training. It is all too easy for the uninitiated to misquote from translations and secondary sources, and to draw false conclusions which are tantamount to slander against Jewish tradition. The Apostle James warns teachers that "ours is the stricter judgment." James is probably warning readers lest they say "I didn't know." It is our job to know. "Not knowing" can lead other people into serious error. Messianic teachers, beware! Having gone to Hebrew school and had a bar mitzvah, or having an Orthodox grandmother, is not enough to qualify someone to teach about Judaism. We must do our homework, in order to be responsible teachers, or else forget the exercise of a teaching ministry.

My most serious critique of Boskey's article (which applies equally to most Messianic Jews I know) is that as he evaluates the rabbinic materials, he considers himself an outsider in their debate, one who stands outside the rabbinic community or the Talmudic heritage. As long as we stand outside, we will be incapable of making responsible evaluations of the rabbinic corpus. Some, if not most of us, will have to go to the trouble of learning the language and skills necessary to understand our heritage from within. I was once asked to teach a class entitled *A Christian View of the Talmud*. Before I could request a change of title, brochures were already printed up. I had to begin the class by saying, "I don't want to give you a Christian view of the Talmud; I rather hope to give you a Jewish view of the Talmud!" Only when we understand Jewish tradition as Jews, can we use it appropriately. The Sages are thus no longer strangers. They are uncles, grandfathers and cousins. One doesn't always agree with them. So what! They usually don't agree with one another. As participants in the debates, we are free to dissent with the best of them. I urge, the readers of MISHKAN to undertake this rewarding task.

1) The Use of Rabbinic Literature in Apologetics

It has long been assumed by Jews and Christians that Judaism and Christianity are mutually exclusive religions. The folly of this assumption is only now becoming clear. While serving as a helicopter pilot in the Army, it once occurred to me that, while military pilots use one set of maps, the airlines are using a different set, and private pilots use yet a third. I used to wonder if we all realized that we were flying in the same airspace! Some collisions might have been avoided had we occasionally exchanged maps, compared notes, and learned to talk to and listen to each other. Today, Jews and Christians are realizing that we share a common heritage and that, as Boskey points out, we are not mother and rebellious daughter faiths, but sisters descended from a common tradition. Judaism in Jesus' time was as pluralistic and turbulent as it is today. What we once thought was "normative," is {72} now known to have been a minority voice. In their day the Pharisees numbered far less than do Messianic Jews today!

It will not do to study the teachings of the Rabbis for the sole purpose of demonstrating that the teachings of Jesus are superior. Likewise, it serves no purpose to discredit the Talmud. People of understanding and good will must not engage in such folly. If where in the Talmud is wrong, let us demonstrate this to be the case with compassion and compelling reasoning, not with, patronizing rhetoric. We must categorically state that one cannot prove the Messianic claims of Jesus from rabbinic literature; every attempt to do so has met with disaster. The Rabbis did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and much of their teaching about Messiah was intended to prove the validity of their rejection. How can their writings be legitimately used to prove otherwise? We can only contrast the New Testament's assertions with those of the Rabbis. We can learn where and why we differ, and in what ways we share a common hope and understanding. But, as Boskey states, we must firmly rest our faith in Jesus on Scripture, regardless of rabbinic or Christian teachers who may or disagree.

2) The Authority of Rabbinic Literature for Messianic Halakhah and Theology

An important question raised by Boskey concerns the proper use of the Talmud and Rabbinic Codes in determining Messianic practice and belief. This is a pivotal matter for Messianic Jews. I begin by stating the obvious: we cannot establish what authority the Talmud should have while we have not yet understood it. On the other hand, it is quite possible to study literature without submitting wholesale to its authority. I find the following analogy to be useful: as a Messianic Jew, I hold citizenship in a number of realms. I am an American and as

such, subject to the laws and customs of the United States. I have been a soldier, and during my term of service I was subject to the laws and authority of the armed forces. I am a Christian, and as such I am subject to God and to the duly constituted leaders of His church. I am also a Jew. I do not say that I was a Jew; I am a Jew, and as a Jew, I am subject to the laws, customs, beliefs and standards that are binding upon all Jews. Most Jews today do not regard the Talmud as authoritative. Indeed, there is no universally recognized standard or authority in Judaism. But the Talmud, along with other aspects of our Jewish heritage, still affects the way Jewish people think and act. If I want to be recognized as a Jew, I believe I must know and live within the context of Jewish culture, however that may be defined. I am married to a non-Jew; but that is not exclusively a Messianic “ailment” so are thousands of my fellow Jews. I (thus far, anyway) do not keep kosher; but neither do most other Jewish people. I believe in Jesus. Many Jews believe in Buddha, or Krishna, or nothing at all. Who tries to stop them from being Jewish? Why should I be treated differently? Actually, I am glad when fellow Jews take issue with my faith in Jesus. In so doing, they treat me like family. It is an implicit acknowledgement of my Jewishness. After all, they’re not trying to convince Gentiles that *they* are not {73} Jewish! I hope some of them will come to believe as a result of their efforts to dissuade me.

Regardless of the current state of debate about patrilineal and matrilineal descent, my daughter has a Jewish daddy, Jewish grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles. Her Jewish heritage is there for her to claim if she wants it, both the Talmud *and* gefilte fish! And I consider it my obligation to help her, make a choice.

We belong to Israel. If we behave accordingly, we can expect to be treated as such. If we act like tourists, insisting on ducking into every non-Jewish haven of rest, persisting in shirking our Jewish responsibilities, we will be looked upon with all the disdain a tourist brings upon himself when he puts ketchup on his falafel. We claim that the Gospel is *Jewish*, so let’s live like Jews. If the President of the United States orders me to disobey God, then I must obey God and disobey the President. If a rabbi asks me to disobey Jesus, I am obliged to take the same firm, uncompromising stand. But as long as I obey Jesus first, I am free to be an American, or a Messianic Jew, in the fullest possible sense. That is my working assumption.

3) Rabbinic and Messianic Liturgy

Do we unwittingly pronounce curses on ourselves when we pray the *Amidah*? Do we deny our faith when we sing *Adon Olam* ? Do we revel in medieval superstitions as we sing *Shalom Aleichem* after services on Friday night? These and other questions are perceptively raised by Boskey. They must be answered responsibly. The issues are not easy, but neither are they beyond our reach.

The *Thirteen Articles of the Faith* were penned by Maimonides, and popularized in the hymns *Adon Olam* and *Yigdal*, for the purpose of defining a minimum set of Jewish beliefs. Corollary to this was the implicit denial of what the authors thought were Christian beliefs. Yet I find nothing explicitly unbiblical in the words of the creed and its derivative hymns. The creed affirms, for instance, that God cannot have a body; I believe that. “No man has seen God at any time.” |He dwells in unapproachable light.” “He is a Spirit.” Somehow in the mystery of the incarnation , our incorporeal God took on for a season human flesh, in order to reveal Himself to His people. The incarnation of Jesus is

not just a theological problem for Messianic Jews. This may be hard to understand, and even harder to explain, but it is consistent with what the Torah teaches about God.

Do we have the right to read Messianic interpretations into Maimonides' creed? I suggest that, being Jews, we have such a right. If we have abandoned our faith and people for another religion, then we do not have such a right. But as long as we can affirm the biblical beliefs that our people are supposed to hold, why should we not be able to affirm those beliefs in traditional terminology? But we must carefully think through these terms, and the excess baggage they carry with them, {74} so that our decisions will be thoroughly informed ones that honor our Lord and our people.

4) Contextualization and Rabbinic Tradition

Contextualization is the living out of the Gospel in terms of the surrounding culture so that our biblical faith will be properly communicated. What then is the appropriate Jewish cultural context for the Messianic faith? This is a two-pronged question: it has both evangelistic and ecclesiological implications. Do we want to use Jewish symbols and traditions as an evangelistic "filter," in our efforts to win Jews to Christ? Or do we want to live as Jews because we are Jews? If the latter is the case, what of those Gentiles who join Messianic communities? If a Messianic community were planted in China, should the cultural model for contextualization be Jewish, or Chinese? So far we have more questions than answers. But we can draw some encouragement from the sage who said, "Who is wise? The one who knows how to ask a question." We may be confident that, as we formulate the right questions, we will be on the road to arriving at the right answers.

We need to consider many things as we talk about the right model for contextualizing the Gospel among Jews, . There is no uniform Jewish culture. We face religious and secular aspects of the Jewish culture, ancient or modern, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, Israeli and or Diaspora, official, and "folk" traditions! We need to ask two questions: 1) Do the traditions adequately express our identity as Jewish disciples of Yeshua? and 2) How will our Messianic traditions be understood by Jews and non-Jews, by Christians and non-Christians? Somehow, we must learn to hold all sides of the issue in balance.

Conclusion

Before any of these pressing matters may be appropriately discussed, there must be a much greater number of Messianic Jews adequately trained in biblical and Judaic disciplines, able to make sense of the complexities of our calling. We need to continue experimenting. We must continue to witness. We must continue to sharpen our skills for the theological and hermeneutical tasks ahead. Most of all, I believe every Messianic Jew must take the responsibility to inform himself or herself, to teach his or her children and meanwhile to build schools and worshipping congregations where God can work these things out. Let us walk before God with integrity, reason and devotion, to the glory of God and our Messiah Jesus.

{75}A Consensus Statement on Jewish Tradition

Compiled by the leadership and elders of Beth Messiah congregation, Gaithersburg, Maryland, USA (reproduced by kind permission of the leadership of Beth Messiah congregation, P.O.Box 7538, Gaithersburg, MD 20898-7533, USA). MISHKAN reproduces the statement because it represents an influential voice within the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations concerning this issue's main topic.

As human families go, the Jewish family (that is, Israel) is a fairly old one. Abraham lived roughly 2000 years before Messiah's birth. At that time God called our people into existence. Approximately 550 - 650 years later, Moses was given the Torah, God's law for Israel.

Between the time of Moses and Yeshua, Israel worshipped God at the Tabernacle and the Temple. The sacrifices were accompanied by prayers, and rituals were embellished with time. In all this time, innovation became custom; custom became tradition; tradition sometimes became common law. When the Temple was destroyed, the Jewish people found themselves in a crisis. How could a faith previously centered on blood sacrifice go on without an altar or sacrifice? As many historians have noted, Rabbinic/Talmudic Judaism was the solution that was embraced by many. Religious leaders established elaborate codes of conduct along with specific prayers in order to preserve a strong sense of order and continuity. Jewish tradition of the last 1900 years has largely accumulated in this context, while preserving some biblical roots at the same time.

Prior to the Temple's destruction, God's Messiah, Yeshua, the ultimate sacrifice, gave His life and was raised back to life. Yeshua fulfilled the prophets' predictions of a suffering Redeemer and accomplished the fullness of which Temple sacrifice was the foreshadowing. Thus, Messianic Judaism was born. The Messianic Jews continued to obey God's Torah, yet rejoiced that Messiah had come as its ultimate expression. Their Judaism, as recorded in the Book of Acts and other sources, was biblically based rather than rabbinically constructed.

We do not have elaborate descriptions of their worship services. There is no 'Messianic Jewish' tradition per se. However, their mode seems to have been one of direct access to God through Messiah, fervent affection expressed in prayer, and lively celebrations of the Torah festivals (Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, etc.). What {76} were their traditions? We don't really know, although we do know that the Lord's Supper observance, for instance, was regularly held (1 Corinthians 11) and that new believers were immersed in water (Acts 3, 8,10).

As 20th century Jews, each of our lives has been influenced, to one degree or another, by the Rabbinic Judaism which has continued to develop and has held sway for 1900 years. Yet it is Messianic Judaism, with its 1st century biblical roots, that is our true predecessor. Hence, while we have regard for certain aspects of Rabbinic tradition and worship forms that have developed since the Temple was destroyed, our true roots are what give us life.

The challenge before us is to affirm biblical Jewish identity, enjoy that which is scriptural and beautiful preserved in the post-Temple era, and center upon our beloved Messiah Yeshua who has brought us the true knowledge of God.

The following thoughts are prayerfully offered to bring clarity and unity as we seek together to honor the living God.

1. God has recently revealed much to us about the meaning of Israel and our identity as Jewish and Gentile people in God and in a Messianic Jewish Congregation. This must receive full and adequate reflection in our worship.

2. Traditions are to be judged by their fidelity to the Word of God as either direct or indirect applications of Scripture or as neutral forms of usage. We must not be improperly wed to extra-biblical (yet allowable) traditions in a way that violates God's scale of values. This would be idolatry. Nor can we assume that, because these traditions are 'Jewish,' they are inherently spiritual, biblical or valuable.

3. Beth Messiah's use of Rabbinic prayer material in the past must be understood in terms of our growth in God. In light of new insights given by the Spirit and through the Word, we now recognize that much of the traditional material either contradicted or neutralized certain aspects of New Covenant Truth.

4. Although there is much material in the Siddur from the Hebrew Scriptures, there are parts which are not consistent with Scripture. However, even the material consistent with the Bible is at best incomplete since it approaches God from a pre-Yeshua perspective whereby the meaning and power of Yeshua, the center of the New Covenant faith, is left out. This would be analogous to Israel's worship leaving out the Exodus after it had already happened. After the Exodus, Israel's worship was permeated by Exodus themes without forgetting the patriarchal foundations.

5. On the basis of point 4, we must develop an expression of New Covenant Messianic Jewish worship material which reflects the fullness of our faith and theology. This will reflect what we truly believe about Yeshua, Israel, the {77} Church, the Sabbath, the Feasts and the Age to Come. Yeshua's atoning death, resurrection and return are crucially important themes.

6. The content of the Tanach should not be lost in a worship that is New-Covenantal, but is to be present and caught up in New Covenant meaning. This is the meaning of fulfillment.

7. In light of points 4-6, we see that there is very little room for post 1st century Rabbinical prayer material in our services.

8. New material may appropriately be created that relates to certain older Jewish forms. The content, however, will be Biblical, New Covenantal, and hence very different.

a) Messianic faith confessions serving a similar purpose to the Synagogue's Amidah prayers.

b) Instead of the Synagogue's A1 Chet (for the sins) prayers for forgiveness, there would be truly intercessory prayer material reflecting our understanding of Israel's corporate sins in the light of the New Covenant and will be a genuine point of inspiration for intercession for Israel and the Church.

9. Legitimately Biblical material and traditions, consonant throughout with the revelation of the Cross, may be used in the context of Yeshua's fulfillment. Yeshua needs to be central in all we do.

a) Public Scripture readings and processions of the Word (any Torah readings, if playing a central role in the service, must be tied in to New Covenant fulfillment).

b) The Sh'ma: Yeshua is the one mediator between God and man, the Messiah, the Son of God. Our confession of the Sh'ma should culminate in our confession of Yeshua as LORD.

c) Fringes: We are royal priests in Him, clothed with His righteousness, and empowered by the Spirit to keep God's commandments.

d) Instead of the Yigdal, a powerful hymn written to the same tune ('The God of Abraham praise') could be substituted.

e) Giving thanks to God for the Word before Scripture reading. Blessings which reflect our fuller understanding yet maintain the richness of Hebraic roots and tradition.

10. Old national cultural traditions may be renewed in Yeshua, e.g. Bar Mitzvah and confirmation, as the Spirit leads. Children publicly confess their faith in {78} Yeshua in a transition to adulthood at 13, and show their love commitment to God's covenant by reading God's Word in its original Hebrew. This, however, must be done with a view towards the edifying of the congregation as a whole and must not get in the way of the atmosphere of the Spirit's presence and work.

11. The revision of great Christian hymns with Messianic innovations in content and musical style where these hymns preserve a depth of Biblical meaning that is hard to duplicate.

12. The material we use should be varied and have a depth of meaning reflecting the fullness of the themes of our faith, our history and our prophetic destiny. Roteness and formalism is to be avoided by seeking to be conspicuously led by the Spirit in our choice of worship material. All material, even charismatic choruses, can be over-used and become remote.

13. If our worship is to have depth and power according to our calling, it will require more than singing choruses. We need a depth of content whereby within a few months of visiting us, newcomers will know who we are in God. This material must be rich in themes from the Bible, material for the feasts and Sabbath, rich with varieties of material from choruses, hymns, prayers and processional, full of celebration, praise and intimate worship. It must honor God and build us in faith. It is too easy to use only what has already been created. It takes real spiritual sweat to creatively produce what God desires.

Let us join together in faith to blaze a trail that has been abandoned for 1,900 years. Let us exalt the name of Yeshua. Let us rejoice in our ancient Biblical heritage. And let us walk in loving, honest deference toward each other as God's Spirit leads us in unity.

{79} Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust

Part Two

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THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS

It is imperative that a truly biblical set of responses be applied to the Holocaust. The place to begin is the covenants established by God with the nation of Israel. These covenants lay the foundation to God's eternal relationship with Israel. What is meant then when the term "covenant" is used? The following definition is given by Lincoln:

A divine covenant is (1) a sovereign disposition of God, whereby he establishes an unconditional or declarative compact with man, obligating himself, in grace, by the untrammelled formula, "I WILL," to bring to pass of himself definite blessings for the covenanted ones, or (2) a proposal of God, wherein he promises, in a conditional or mutual compact with man, by the contingent formula "IF YE WILL," to grant special blessings to man provided he fulfills perfectly certain conditions, and to execute definite punishment in case of his failure.¹

It is apparent, then, that there are two different types of covenants: an unconditional covenant and a conditional covenant. This chapter will investigate how the four unconditional covenants (i.e., the Abrahamic, the Palestinian, the Davidic and the New) and the one conditional covenant (i.e., the Mosaic) bear on the nature and consequences of the Holocaust.

{80} The Abrahamic Covenant

Without a doubt, the Abrahamic covenant must be considered the most important covenant that God initiated with Israel. Its implications are not only far-reaching, but are eternal. Walvoord correctly stresses the all-importance of this covenant:

It is recognized by all serious students of the Bible that the covenant of God with Abraham is one of the important and determinative revelations of Scripture. It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament and reaches for its fulfillment into the New.²

¹ Charles Fred Lincoln, "The Covenants" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1942), 25-26.

² John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 139. For the historical setting of the Abrahamic covenant, see Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., "The Covenant with Abraham and Its Historical Setting," *BS* 127 (July-September 1970): 241-56

This covenant, therefore, must be the place to begin when searching for biblical insight related to the Holocaust.

The Nature of the Covenant

As mentioned above, the Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant. Chafer, in summarizing this covenant, brings out this point:

The Abrahamic covenant records Jehovah's sovereign purpose in, through and for Abraham. The covenant is unconditional in that no obligation is imposed upon Abraham; he contributes nothing, but rather is the recipient of all that Jehovah proposed to do for him. While this covenant (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-7; 17:1-8) provided personal blessings and great honor to Abraham, its more important features reach out in two other directions, namely, that of Abraham's seed and that of the land of promise³.

To demonstrate the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant, Walvoord summarizes ten lines of evidence, which he feels constitute a strong line of proof: (1) All of Israel's covenants are unconditional except the Mosaic, in that they are stated to be eternal (e.g., the Abrahamic in Gen. 17:7, 13,19; 1 Chron. 16:17; Ps. 105:10; etc.; the Palestinian in Ezek. 16:60; etc.; the Davidic in 2 Sam. 7:13, 16,19; 1 Chron. 17:12; 22:10; Isa. 55:3; Ezek. 37:25; etc.; and the New in Isa. 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Heb. 13:20; etc.); (2) There are no conditions stated except for the original condition of leaving his homeland and going to the promised land (which Abraham fulfilled); (3) The covenant is confirmed on several occasions without any conditional stipulations added; (4) The covenant was confirmed by an unqualified oath of God (Gen. 15:7-21; Jer. 34:18); (5) Circumcision was never made a condition for the fulfillment of the covenant, only for the experienced blessing within the covenant (cf. Gen. 17:14, which came after the land promises were given); (6) When the covenant was confirmed and reconfirmed both to Isaac and to Jacob, no condition was required of them (cf. Gen. 17:19; 26:2-5; 28:12-15); (7) The covenant was confirmed time after time, in spite of continual disobedience; (8) Even apostasy did not destroy the covenant (cf. Jer. 31:36; and the Minor Prophets, concerning Israel's continued existence as a nation); (9) The covenant was declared immutable (Heb. {81} 6:13-18; cf. Gen. 15:8-21); (10) Israel's revealed programme confirms the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant, in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Second, the Abrahamic covenant is a foundational covenant which Pentecost asserts, "must be considered as the basis of the entire covenant programme."⁴ He therefore concludes:

Thus it may be said that the land promises of the Abrahmic covenant are developed in the Palestinian covenant, the seed promises are developed in the Davidic covenant, and the blessing promises are developed in the New covenant. This covenant [the Abrahamic], then, determines the whole future programme for the nation Israel and is a major factor in Biblical Eschatology.⁵

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols., vol. 5: "Christology," p. 317.

⁴ Pentecost, p.70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72. Lincoln (pp.206-7) draws the comparisons between the foundational aspect of the Abrahamic covenant and the other three unconditional covenants in the following manner:

The general, basic covenant with Abraham	The other covenants
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The Provisions of the Covenant

First, the scope of the covenant can be seen to cover three major areas (Gen. 12:1-3): (1) Personal promises to Abraham himself; (2) National promises to the line coming through Abraham; and (3) Universal promises to all who come under Abraham's influence.

In other words, Abraham was called by God to receive a blessing from God, but he in turn was to become a blessing, as well as to produce a nation that would eventually bless the entire world. The blessings and promises of God were not to be selfishly hoarded by either Abraham himself or by the nation arising from him; they were meant to be extended to the whole world. God's grace and truth are for all men. Second, the content of the covenant can be divided into seven divisions (Gen. 12:1-3); (1) "I will make you a great nation;" (2) "And I will bless you," (3) "And make your name great," (4) "And so you shall be a blessing," (5) "And I will bless those who bless you," (6) "And the one who curses you I will curse," (7) "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." In other words, the content involves: land, seed, and blessing. Abraham was promised a literal land (Gen. 13:14-17; 15:18-21; confirmed in the Palestinian covenant, Deut. 30:1-8), an eternal seed (Gen. 13:15-16; 15:1-6; also, confirmed in the Davidic covenant, 2 Sam. 7:12-16), and an unconditional blessing (Gen. 15:7-17; likewise, confirmed in the New covenant, Jer. 31:31-34).

The Protection in the Covenant

With this background to the Abrahamic covenant, one particular clause must now be dealt with, since it has a direct bearing on the Holocaust. It is the protection, or better - the anti-Semitic clause in Genesis 12:3, "And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse." In other words, God has committed Himself to the protection of His chosen people. The way in which a person or a nation treats Abraham and his people is the same way that God will treat them.

{82} This protection clause is closely related to the mission that God gave to Abraham and his descendants, that is, to be a "blessing" on the earth. Gerhard von Rad asserts that God is now beginning to bring salvation and judgment into the world in a new way:

The promise given to Abraham has significance, however, far beyond Abraham and his seed. God now brings salvation and judgment into history, and man's

The promise of a national land (Gen 12:1, 13:14-15, 17)	The Palestinian Covenant gave Israel particular assurance of final, permanent restoration to the <i>land</i> . (Deut 30: 3-5, Ezek. 20:33-37, 42-44)
The promise of <i>redemption</i> , national and universal (Gen 12:3, 22:18, Gal 3:16)	The New Covenant has particularly to do with Israel's blessing and <i>redemption</i> . (Jer. 31:31-40, Hebr. 8: 6-13 etc)
The promise of numerous descendants to from a great nation.)Gen 12:2, 13:16, 17:2-6 etc.	The Davidic Covenant has to do with promises of <i>dynasty, nation and throne</i> . 2 Sam 7:11, 13, 16. Jer. 33:20,21; 31: 35-37 etc.

*judgment and salvation will be determined by the attitude he adopts toward the work which God intends to do in history.*⁶

It is doubtful that Moses saw anything in this promise outside of Abraham and his descendants. Nor is it possible to limit this protective clause to just the times when Abraham and his descendants are involved in doing the work or mission of God. This will be demonstrated below. However, it is entirely within the scope of this anti-Semitic clause to see God's universal blessing being mediated through Abraham and his descendants. The question that now must be answered is how did this anti-Semitic or protective clause find its fulfillment in Scripture?

Stated Fulfillment

First, there are numerous passages that actually state (i.e., using the terms "bless" or "curse") that this protective clause was in effect. Israel's entire history is based on this seminal clause in the Abrahamic covenant. In fact, this is actually a part of God's philosophy of history for the nation Israel. This protective clause is at work both on the individual and the national levels, in Israel's past and in her future.

The two most obvious cases (and perhaps the most important) are on the individual level. In both cases a form of the Genesis 12:3 clause is actually quoted and applied to the particular situation. Also, it is important to notice that in both cases Israel (actually Jacob in the first case) is either in some form of deception or discipline before God, thus reaffirming the unconditional nature of the clause itself. In other words, the fulfillment of this anti-Semitic clause does not depend on the nation Israel's fellowship or walk with God. Even when she is in disobedience, the clause is faithfully applied by the covenant God who originally gave it. All that actually matters is how the individual or nation "blesses" or "curses" Abraham and his descendants.

The first case in point is the stolen blessing by Jacob (Gen. 27:1-46). Jacob robbed his brother Esau of his rightful blessing by a deceptive strategy urged on by his mother Rebekah. The lying and deceiving finally earned Jacob the blessing from his old and blind father Isaac. The blessing included both a benediction (v.28) and a prediction (v.29). The prediction contains the reference to Genesis 12:3.

{83} *May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. **Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you** (emphasis added).*

Isaac thought that he was passing on the blessing to his oldest son Esau (i.e., the rightful, first-born son - the legitimate heir to the blessing by tradition), but in reality, it was passed on to Jacob. And with all the pleading of Esau (vv. 30-38), the blessing still remained in Jacob's possession. In other words, the protective clause was passed on to Jacob in the midst of lies and deceit, yet it remained steadfast because it was not dependent on Jacob's faithfulness, but God's sovereign grace (cf. Rom. 9:10-12; Mal. 1:2-3; etc.). The Abrahamic covenant itself was initiated on the basis of God's sovereign grace (cf. Deut. 7:6-11; Josh. 24:2-3; etc.), and the protective clause, a part of that covenant, is continually enforced on the same basis. The clause was passed

⁶ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 160.

on from Abraham, through Isaac, to Jacob, and was still in force. Kidner concludes this episode by saying: “Finally the protective curse and blessing are made to speak of what will hinge on the attitude of *every one* (29b) to the true Israel.”⁷

The second case where a form of the Genesis 12:3 protective clause is quoted on an individual level is with the aborted cursing attempt by Balaam (Num. 22:1 - 24:25). Although this was actually a national level attempt to curse Israel (i.e. Moab), it was launched by an individual, a pseudo-prophet. Nevertheless, this particular incident will forever bar any Moabite male from the congregation of Israel. Throughout Israel’s long history, this one incident was paraded in front of the nation as a reminder of the danger of tampering with the anti-Semitic clause in the Abrahamic covenant. Moses reminded the people about it (Deut. 22:3-6), as did Joshua (Josh. 24:9-10) and finally Nehemiah in the post-captivity community (Neh. 13:1-3). Throughout Israel’s history the Moabites remained a thorn in their side (cf. Isa. 15-16; Jer. 9:26; 25:21; 27:3; 48:1-47; Ezek. 25:8-11; Zeph. 2:8-11; etc.). But they sealed their own doom on that day when they hired Balaam to curse Israel.

The incident occurred in the third Balaam oracle (Num. 24:3-9). The setting is crucial to see. Israel was wandering in the wilderness, following their disobedience to enter the promised land (Num. 13:1 - 20:13). In other words, they were under the just discipline and judgment of God. Almost all of that original generation would die off in the wilderness; nevertheless, the protective covenant was still in force. For it did not depend upon Israel’s faithfulness, but upon the other nations (or {84} individuals) and their attitude toward Abraham and his descendants (notice that this incident did not involve the Patriarchs, only the nation as a whole; i.e., the protective clause had already been passed down to Moses and his generation, the descendants of Abraham). Balaam closed this third oracle by referring to Israel in the following words:

*He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him? **Blessed is everyone who blessed you, and cursed is everyone who curses you.*** (emphasis added).

Keil summarizes this closing portion of Balaam’s third oracle by saying:

*Balaam closes this utterance, as he had done the previous one, with a quotation from Jacob’s blessing, which he introduces to show to Balak, that, according to words addressed by Jehovah to the Israelites through their own tribe father, they were to overcome their foes so thoroughly, that none of them should venture to rise up against them again. To this he also links on the word with which Isaac had transferred to Jacob in Gen. xxii.29 the blessing of Abraham in Gen. xii. 3, for the purpose of warning Balak to desist from his enmity against **the chosen people of God**⁸ (emphasis added).*

When God chose Abraham and his descendants to be His people, He did it on an unconditional basis, and bound Himself to their eternal protection (even when they are in disobedience).

Two more stated fulfillments are important to mention, for they are both future in Israel’s history. The first future stated fulfillment is in Deuteronomy 30:7, “And the Lord your God will inflict *all these curses* on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you” (italics added). This statement comes in the midst of the re-gathering of Israel from all the nations to which she

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, p. 156

⁸ Keil, 3:191

has been scattered (Deut. 30:1-10). This is the great assurance of the Palestinian covenant - Israel who has been scattered throughout all the nations because of her disobedience and who has herself suffered the detailed curses enumerated in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 will not only be returned to her homeland, but will also see these very same curses imposed upon all of her enemies (Deut. 29:1 - 30:10). Again, it should be well noted that the unconditional nature of Genesis 12:3 comes to the forefront. Israel, who has been under a judicial, worldwide scattering and under the curses of the nations in which {85} she dwells, nevertheless, sees these very nations cursed by God because they violated the protective clause of Genesis 12:3.

The second future stated fulfillment is in Matthew 25:31-46. This passage refers to the future judgment of the Gentile nations at the close of the tribulation period.⁹ Chafer summarizes this judgment and the basis for its severity:

The period designated as “the times of the Gentiles,” which times but for the intercalary age of the church extend from the Babylonian captivity to the close of the great tribulation, ends in judgment upon the nations. Unlike other judgments which reach backward to include past generations, this judgment falls only upon the then existing generation of Gentiles upon the earth. This is an equitable arrangement since those involved are to be judged for their treatment of Israel during the seven years of the tribulation. But one generation is thus involved. God has judged individual nations in the past because of their treatment of Israel and it has never failed to be true that a curse has rested upon those nations which have cursed Israel, and a blessing has rested upon those nations which have blessed Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3); but a specific curse and a specific blessing await the nations who in the great tribulation have either cursed or blessed Israel...

The basis of the judgment of the nations will be recognized only as it is seen that the one nation Israel is chosen of God above all the nations of the earth. For this elect people God has an unchangeable and imperishable love and purpose. No right approach will be made to an understanding of the divine programme for the earth unless the sovereign, divine favor is acknowledged. If that sovereign favor is acknowledged, little difficulty will arise respecting the issue upon which the nations are judged at the end of the tribulation.¹⁰

As Chafer has noted the words of Genesis 12:3 are used in Matthew 25:34 (“blessed”) and 25:41 (“accursed”). Once again, the anti-Semitic clause will be enforced, the final time in all of history, for the Messianic kingdom follows this particular judgment. This is the kingdom in which all of the promised blessings of the Abrahamic covenant will come to fruition for the nation Israel. In a profound editorial just following the close of World War II, Chafer applied this same passage to Hitler and all of the other Hitler-like nations. It is still a solemn warning against any who would seek, either on an individual or a national level, to violate the anti-Semitic or protective clause of Genesis 12:3.

One more nation has gone to confusion having persecuted the Jew. How little this Christ-rejecting world believes in or gives attention to the Word of God! They imagine that because of vast numbers and mighty armament God is left far behind

⁹ For support of the position that this judgment is of the Gentile nations at the close of the Tribulation period, see: Pentecost op. cit, pp. 415-22; Walwood, pp. 284-88; *Thy Kingdom Come*, pp. 199-204; Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, pp. 288-92; etc.

¹⁰ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols., vol. 4; “Ecclesiology – Eschatology,” pp. 409-10. See also Walter K. Price, *The Coming Antichrist*.

if He exists at all, and what He has said weighs not at all. It would have been difficult indeed to have made Hitler believe that his cause and his nation would certainly come to grief if they attacked and destroyed the few. It is difficult to make modern Gentiles - even many nominal Christians - recognize the order of cause and effect which God unfailingly imposes when the {86} Jew is attacked. Did God not say to Abraham when promising his vast posterity, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3)? This purpose of God has been in force since Abraham's day. History faithfully records Jehovah's faithfulness to His word respecting Abraham's seed.

What confusion has been wrought among so-called Christian nations by the all but universal theological notion that God is done with the Jew or that the promises to Israel are realized in the Church, can never be estimated. People thus indoctrinated look with little sorrow on the massacre of five million Jews and with no sense of the direct challenge to God which such a massacre really is. Hating the Jew is not the only sin nations commit; but an attack on the Jew is, according to Jehovah's covenant, to invite a curse.

When the nations have run their course in this age of utter repudiation of God, they are seen to stand for judgment before the throne of Christ's glory here on the earth and are divided on His right hand and on His left. Their judgment then is their treatment of the Jew during the Tribulation (Matt. 25:31-46, where Christ styles the Jewish nation "my brethren"). It is not accidental that Christ should use the same words as so long ago were employed in the Abrahamic Covenant: "Come ye blessed" and "Depart ye cursed."

We would that the real cause of the curse which has fallen upon Hitler and the German people might be recognized and proclaimed, that anti-Semitism might be checked in this and other lands.¹¹

Price reflects on the apathy of the Gentile world toward the Jews during the Holocaust and predicts the same response during the period just prior to the judgment mentioned in Matthew 25:31-46:

... the nations will be judged at the second coming of Christ according to the way that they deal with Israel during this time when she is fleeing from the wrath of the Antichrist. During the Nazi Holocaust, the world conveniently ignored the plight of the Jew. Much of the world may do so again during the great tribulation. However, for those nations who do provide protection and sustenance for fleeing Israel, there is promised a special blessing.¹²

Unstated Fulfillment

Not only are there numerous passages that actually state (i.e., in the terms "bless" or "curse") that the protective clause of Genesis 12:3 was (and will be again) in effect, but second, there are also many passages that, while not specifically using either the term "bless" or "curse," still demonstrate the ongoing dynamic of the clause itself. Again, this can be seen both on an individual level and a national level, as well as in Israel's past and

¹¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, "The Jew a World Issue," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 102 (April-June 1945): 129-30

¹² Walter K. Price, *Next Year in Jerusalem*, p. 132

in her future. The following summary of the unstated fulfillment of the anti-Semitic or protective clause of Genesis 12:3 relates to the individual level:¹³ (1) The Pharaoh and his house were cursed for taking in {87} Abram's wife Sarai, even though Abram instigated it through his deceit; i.e., the outworking of the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen.12:10-20); (2) Abimelech and his house were cursed for also taking in Sarah, once again at the deceitful instigation of Abraham (Gen. 20:1-18); (3) The Hebrew midwives were blessed by God because of their protection of the Jewish first-born males (Exod. 1:8-21); (4) Rahab was blessed by God because she protected the Hebrew spies (Josh. 2:1-21; 6:22-25; Matt.1:5; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25); and (5) the Persian politicians who sought to destroy Daniel were cursed, along with their families (Dan. 6:1-28). The following summary of the unstated fulfillment of the protective clause relates to the national level: (1) the Egyptians were cursed by God because they instituted a national anti-Semitic policy (Exod. 1:8-22; 4:22-23; 5:1 - 14:31; cf. Isa.19:1 - 20:6, Joel 3:19); (2) the Amalekites were cursed for declaring war on Israel (Exod. 17:8-16; Num. 24:20; 1 Sam.15:1-5, 7-8); (3) the Kenites, descendants of Jethro the Midianite, were blessed, on the other hand, because they aided Israel during the exodus period (Exod. 2:16-22;18:1-27; Num.10:29-32; 24:21; Judg. 1;16; 4:11; 1 Sam. 15:6); (4) the Moabites and the Ammonites were cursed because they persecuted the Israelites (Ezek. 25:1-7; Zeph. 2:8-11; etc.); (5) the Assyrians were cursed for their brutal treatment of Israel, even though they were raised up by God as His rod (Isa. 10:5-19, 24-27; 14:24-27; 37:21-38); (6) the Babylonians were likewise cursed for their devastating abuse of Israel, again in spite of the fact that they were raised up by God as His means of punishment (Isa. 13:1 - 14:23; Jer. 51:34-64; Hab. 1:1 - 2:20); and (7) Haman and the Persians were cursed by God for their attempted extermination of the Jewish people, even when Jews were out of the will of God by not returning to the land of Israel along with the rest of the post-captivity community (the Book of Esther).¹⁴

There are also some unstated fulfillments in relation to Israel's future: (1) the great future conclave of nations from the uttermost part of the north (i.e. of Israel) and in league with some nations to the south will be utterly cursed and destroyed because of their attack on Israel in the latter days (Ezek. 38:1 - 39:29); (2) all of Israel's oppressors will be cursed and dealt with at the beginning of the messianic age (Zeph. 3:11-20); and (3) the final battle of the age, the battle centered around Israel with all of the nations seeking to destroy her, will bring all of her enemies to an end in a final curse and judgment (Zech. 2:8-9; 12:2-3; 14:1-4; 12-13; cf. Jer. 30;16; etc).

¹³ For a more detailed analysis of the outworking of the protective clause in Genesis 12:3, both on an individual and a national level, as well as in biblical and post-biblical history, see Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its theology, History and Philosophy*, pp. 59-80. Also, see Joseph Hunting, *Israel – A Modern Miracle: Curse or Coincidence?* For a historical survey, to which the anti-Semitic clause of Genesis 12:3 could be applied, see both Richard E. Gade, *A historical Survey of Anti-Semitism*, and W. N. Carter, *The Shame of Christendom*.

¹⁴ Fruchtenbaum cites a related incident during the Holocaust period (p. 72): "The chief propagandist for the Hitler regime was Julius Streicher, who through his Nazi newspaper spread Jew-hatred all over Europe. After World War II he was captured by the Allied Forces, tried at Nuremberg, and sentenced to be hung. As he went up the scaffold he spoke his last two words, 'Purim – 1946.' Julius Streicher recognized the part he played in history. He tried to destroy the Jews, but now in the closing minutes of his life he realized that the Jews he had tried to destroy would celebrate his failure as they have Haman's." For other works relating the Holocaust to the Book of Esther, see Sandre Beth Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure*, pp. 173-84; Robert Gordis, *Megillat Esther*, pp. 9-17; and Meir Zlotowitz, ed., *The Megillah: The Book of Esther*, pp. xv-xxxviii.

The Unity of the Covenant

Some have concluded that since only the universal aspect of the Abrahamic covenant is quoted in the New Testament [Gen. 12:3, “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed,” quoted in Acts 3:25 and Gal.3:8], the anti-Semitic clause is no longer in effect. This must be rejected for at least six reasons. First, it ignores the plain facts of history - no nation, to this very day, has survived while maintaining an anti-Semitic posture. To call this a mere coincidence begs the imagination. Second, it is an argument from silence. Just because the New {88} Testament states that the universal aspect of the Abrahamic covenant is in effect does not necessarily mean that the protective aspect of the covenant is *not* in effect. Nowhere, in either testament, does it say that the anti-Semitic clause of Genesis 12:3 is no longer in effect. Third, it ignores the progressive revelation of the Abrahamic covenant itself. In no single passage are all of the details either initially presented or later reaffirmed - they are presented and reaffirmed progressively, with only certain specific clauses detailed when God found it necessary (cf. Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18; 26:2-5, 24; 27:27-29; 28:3-4, 13-15; etc.). To assume that only one clause is in effect because the other clauses are not mentioned in that same passage is to overlook the progressive revealing and reaffirming nature of the covenant. Fourth, it ignores the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 15:1-21; 27:18-29; Num. 24:9; Hab. 1:1 - 2:20; Lam. 3:65; etc.). The anti-Semitic clause never did depend upon Israel’s faithfulness, but rather on the responsiveness of the nations to Israel. The clause was in effect most of the time when Israel was actually disobedient to God. This would also include her rejection of Messiah. Fifth, it ignores the eternal nature of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron. 16:16-18; Ps. 105:8-11). And sixth, it ignores the unity of the covenant. This is the cumulative effect of the five above reasons. Although the covenant was initially given and later confirmed and reconfirmed in progressive stages, it nevertheless remained one, unified covenant. All of the parts of the covenant, adding up to the total covenant, were sovereignly bestowed by God in His grace. But in particular, the anti-Semitic or protective clause was in effect, and to this day remains in effect, because of the response of individuals and nations to Israel, not Israel’s response to them, or, for that matter, even to God.

In concluding this discussion of the Abrahamic covenant, and in particular the Genesis 12:3 protective clause, with its bearing on the Holocaust, it is fitting to quote Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Pseudonym: Mark Twain) and his immortal question on the Jews (first appearing in 1899):

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian, rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and

they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have {89} vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality ?¹⁵

The answer to Clemens' question is simple: the Abrahamic covenant in general and the anti-Semitic or protective clause in particular (Gen. 12:3).

The Palestinian Covenant

The second unconditional covenant that God initiated with Israel was the Palestinian covenant (Deut. 30:1-10). Pentecost summarizes the setting of this strategic land covenant:

“In the closing chapters of the book of Deuteronomy the children of Israel, the physical seed of Abraham, are facing a crisis in their national existence. They are about to pass from the proved leadership of Moses into the unproven leadership of Joshua. They are standing at the entrance to the land that was promised to them by God in such terms as:

Unto thy seed will I give this land [Gen. 12:7]. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever [Gen. 13:12]. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God [Gen. 17:7-8].

But this land is possessed by Israel's enemies, who have shown they will resist any attempt by Israel to enter the land promised them. It is impossible for them to return to their former status as a slave nation and the land to which they were journeying as 'strangers and pilgrims' seemed shut to them. As a result, certain important considerations must be faced by the nation. Is the land of Palestine still their possession? Did the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant, which all agree was conditional, set aside the unconditional Abrahamic covenant? Could Israel hope to enter into permanent possession of their land in the face of such opposition? To answer these important questions God stated again His covenant promise concerning Israel's possession of and inheritance in the land in Deuteronomy 30:1-10, which statement we call the Palestinian covenant, because it answers the question of Israel's relation to the land promises of the Abrahamic covenant.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Pseudonym: Mark Twain), “Concerning the Jews,” in *Mark Twain on the Damned Human Race*, pp. 176-77

¹⁶ Pentecost, op. cit., p. 95.

The Provisions of the Covenant

The provisions of the Palestinian covenant can be divided into seven major sections:¹⁷

{90} (1) the nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (2) there will be a future repentance of Israel (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (3) their Messiah will return (Deut. 30:3-6); (4) Israel will be restored to the land (Deut 30:5); (5) Israel will be converted as a nation (Deut 30:4-8; cf. Rom. 11:26-27); (6) Israel's enemies will be judged (Deut. 30:7); and (7) the nation will then receive her full blessing (Deut. 30:9).

The Character of the Covenant

Pentecost also asserts that this is an unconditional covenant and supports this with four major reasons:

First it is called by God an eternal covenant in Ezekiel 16:60. It could be eternal only if its fulfillment were divorced from human responsibility and brought to rest on the Word of the Eternal One. Second, it is only an amplification and enlargement of parts of the Abrahamic covenant, which itself is an unconditional covenant, and, therefore, this amplification must be eternal and unconditional also. Third, this covenant has the guarantee of God that He will effect the necessary conversion which is essential to its fulfillment. Romans 11:26-27; Hosea 2:14-23; Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 11:16-21 all make this clear. This conversion is viewed in Scripture as a sovereign act of God and must be acknowledged to be certain because of His integrity. Fourth, portions of this covenant have already been fulfilled literally. Israel has experienced the dispersions as judgments for unfaithfulness. Israel has experienced restorations to the land and awaits the final restoration. Israel's history abounds in examples of her enemies who have been judged. These partial fulfillments, which were literal fulfillments, all indicate a future fulfillment of the unfulfilled portions in like manner.¹⁸

Moses had earlier stated the seriousness of violating the covenant which God had made with Israel, a violation that would eventually scatter the nation throughout the world, forcing them into repentance "in the latter days." He made this clear in Deuteronomy 4:23-31:

*So watch yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely **perish** quickly from the land where you*

¹⁷ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols, vol 4: "Ecclesiology – Eschatology," pp. 317-23.

¹⁸ Pentecost, op. cit., p. 98

*are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly **destroyed**. And the Lord will **scatter** you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, {91} where the Lord shall drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will **seek** the Lord your God, and you will **find** Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, **in the latter days**, you will **return** to the Lord your God and **listen** to His voice. For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget **the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them** (emphases added).*

The outworking of the Palestinian covenant takes place through three dispossessions of the promised land and three restorations back to the land.

The Dispossessions

The Jews have experienced three dispossessions from the land of Israel, and each for disobedience to God. The first was down into Egypt in the era of the Patriarchs (Gen. 15:13-16; 37 -38; cf. 43:32; 46:31-34; Exod. 8:25-26; etc.). The second was in two phases: (1) the captivity to Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kgs. 17:7-23; etc.); and (2) the captivity to Babylon in 586 B.C. (2 Chron. 36:11-21; Ezek. 20:23-24; etc.). The third was into the Roman Empire in A.D. 70 and has lasted down to this very day, until 1948 (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:37-44; 21:20-24; etc.). That year marked the beginning of the end of the final dispossession of the promised land. However, it must be recognized that this dispossession will actually run up to the end of the Tribulation period, when Messiah returns; i.e. the entire period of "the times of the Gentiles" (cf. Matt. 24:15-22, 29-31; 25:31-46; etc.).

It is during these dispossessions or dispersions that Israel suffers at the hands of the Gentile nations. And this suffering is of an intensity unparalleled in human history. Muntz says:

This dispersion of Israel is one of the great tragedies of history. How bitterly and relentlessly have the Jews been persecuted! They have been banned and banished from almost every nation. They have been shamefully treated and downtrodden, ruthlessly plundered, abominably abused, diabolically tortured and barbarously martyred. But Israel, dispersed and persecuted is also the miracle of history in her preservation. No other people could have survived such treatment without extermination or utter degradation.¹⁹

The Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg maintains that the Nazi annihilation of six million Jews was the natural result of three consecutive policies against Jewry during its dispersion in Western civilization:

Anti-Jewish policies and anti-Jewish actions did not have their beginning in 1933. For many centuries, and in many countries, the Jews have been victims of destructive action. What was the object of these activities? What were the aims of those who persisted in anti-Jewish deeds? Throughout Western {92} history, three consecutive policies have been applied against Jewry in its dispersion ... Since the fourth century after Christ, there have been three anti-Jewish policies:

¹⁹ J. Palmer Muntz, "The Jew in History and Destiny," in *The Sure Word of Prophecy*, p. 228.

conversion, expulsion, and annihilation. The second appeared as an alternative to the first, and the third emerged as an alternative to the second ... The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The German Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live.

These progressively more drastic goals brought in their wake a slow and steady growth of anti-Jewish thinking. The process began with the attempt to drive the Jews into Christianity. The development was continued in order to force the victims into exile. It was finished when the Jews were driven to their deaths. The German Nazis, then, did not discard the past; they built upon it. They did not begin a development; they completed it.²⁰

It is no wonder that leading Jewish Orthodox theologian Joseph Soloveichik proclaims that the Holocaust is a decisive moment of “suffering unparalleled in the history of exilic millenia.”²¹

The Restorations

The Jews have experienced two restorations to their promised land, both within the sovereign grace and purpose of God. The first was under Moses and Joshua, when God restored the Jewish people from under the Pharaoh and Egyptian bondage, after four hundred years of slavery (Gen. 15:13-16; Exod.; Josh.). The second was under Nehemiah, Ezra, Zerubbabel, Haggai, and Zechariah, when God restored the Jewish people from under Cyrus and the Persians, following seventy years of captivity first to the Babylonians and then the Medo-Persian empire (Jer. 25: 1-11; 29:1-14; Dan.; Ezra; Neh.; Haggai; Zech.; etc.). There yet remains one more restoration to the promised land, the final return.

This final and permanent return will take place in two different phases:

(1) the Jews will be brought back in partial restoration to the land in unbelief, in preparation for judgment, the judgment of the Tribulation period (Isa. 28:14-22; 49:17-23; Jer.30:1-24; Ezek.20:33-38; 36:22-27; 37:1-14; 38:12; 39:7,22,23-29; Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 24:15-22,29-31; etc.); and

(2) the Jews will finally be brought back in total restoration to the land in faith, in preparation for blessing, the blessing of the Messianic Kingdom, to be established at the end of the Tribulation period when Messiah returns to the earth (Deut. 30:110; Isa. 11:11-16; 60:1-22; 61:4-9; Jer. 16:14-15; 23:1-8; 31:27-37; Dan.12;1-3; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 10:8-12; 13:7-9; Micah 4:11-13; 5:4-15; 7:11-20; Zech. 10:8-12; 12:1 - 14:21; Rom. 11:15-27; etc.).

{93}The twentieth century marks the beginning of a phenomenon that is unparalleled in all of human history. A tiny people, dispersed throughout the entire world, has begun to

²⁰ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, pp. 1, 3-4. See also Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-three Centuries of Anti-Semitism*; Paul E. Grosser and Edwin G. Halperin, *The Causes and Effects of Anti-Semitism: The Dimensions of a Prejudice*; Malcolm Hay, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism*; Franklin H. Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews*; George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*; Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism: From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*; Dagobert D. Runes, *The War Against the Jew*.

²¹ Joseph B. Soloveichik, “Kol Dodi Dofek,” in *Torah U'Meluchack*, p. 18.

return to its ancient homeland. After centuries of unmitigated humiliation and suffering, Israel is once again a nation. Scattered throughout the nations of the world, she has outlived them all. No other people has survived such a scattering - they have all been either conquered or assimilated. But God in His wisdom and power has kept the Jewish people distinct and unique. And He has kept His promises true and viable to this people of His own calling. Since 1948, Jews from all over the world have been regathering to their ancient homeland. It is, for sure, a regathering in unbelief, but that is how the prophets portrayed it. This is the first phase of the final restoration to the land.

The Davidic Covenant

The third unconditional covenant that God initiated with Israel was the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:1-17; 1 Chron. 17:1-15; Ps. 89:1-4,19-37,49; cf. 1 Kings 11:9-13,29-39). This particular covenant reaffirms the seed promises that God made with Abraham.

The Provisions of the Covenant

Walvoord summarizes the provisions in 2 Samuel 7: 12-16 into five major categories:

The provisions of the Davidic covenant include, then, the following items: (1) David is to have a child, yet to be born, who shall succeed him and establish his kingdom. (2) This son (Solomon) shall build the temple instead of David. (3) The throne of his kingdom shall be established forever, (4) The throne will not be taken away from him (Solomon) even though his sins justify chastisement. (5) David's house, throne, and kingdom shall be established forever.²²

The crucial provision in regard to this paper is the fourth, that chastisement or discipline would be exercised within a father/son relationship. And that this discipline would in no way abrogate the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant itself. It is obvious from Psalm 89 that this father/son discipline was not confined to just {94} Solomon, but indeed, extended to the entire Davidic line. This is affirmed both by Jewish and Christian commentators alike.

The Character of the Covenant

First, the Davidic covenant is an eternal covenant (2 Sam. 7:13,16: 23:5; 1 Chron. 17:12,14; 22:9-10; 2 Chron. 13:5; Ps. 89:1-4,28-29,36-37; Isa. 55:3; Jer. 33:20-22; Ezek. 37:25; Luke 1:32-33; etc.). Like the Abrahamic covenant, upon which it is founded, the Davidic covenant guarantees an eternal seed on the throne of David. This will, of course, be ultimately fulfilled by David's greatest son, Jesus the Messiah.

Second, the Davidic covenant is an unconditional covenant. This can be seen from its eternal nature, for only an unconditional covenant can truly be an eternal covenant. For ultimately, its complete fulfillment must rest upon the faithfulness of God Himself. Also, the covenant has built into it a father/son clause, which guarantees discipline to David's unfaithful descendants. This presupposes its unconditional and ultimate fulfillment. Scripture reaffirms this to be so by its numerous references to this covenant even after the many gross failures of David's seed.

²² Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 195

The Outworking of the Covenant

The Davidic covenant, with its disciplinary father/son clause (2 Sam. 7:14-15; Ps. 89:30-33), is worked out in two distinct ways. First, it is worked out in the Davidic line alone. And second, it is worked out in the nation as a whole.

The Davidic Line Alone.

It is obvious from both 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89 that the disciplinary father/son clause found its primary fulfillment in David's descendants. It began in the life of Solomon (1 Kings 11:9-13,29-39) and continued through both the kings of Judah and Israel (cf. the books of Kings and Chronicles). With rare exceptions, the kings of Judah and Israel were continually exposed to "the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men" (2 Sam. 7:14). The continual discipline they experienced is a profound testimony both to the depravity of the Davidic line and to the faithfulness of God to the Davidic promises. He continually chastised the line, but never cut it off.

The Nation as a Whole

Although the Davidic line experienced a continual discipline in accordance with the Davidic covenant, this form of chastisement was not confined merely to that line. It extended to the entire nation. For in one sense, the kingly line always represented the people as a whole. And when the king defected from the ways of God, he not only brought judgment upon himself, but also upon his people as well. When the king was conquered with "the rod of men," his people also suffered the same "strokes of the sons of men."

So it is not surprising that the Bible describes other pagan nations who are used by God as His instruments of divine chastisement upon the covenanted nation of Israel as a whole. Five specific nations are so described: (1) Egypt (Isa. 10:24-27; cf. Gen. {95} 15:13-16); (2) Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-41; Isa. 10:5-19,24-27, esp. v. 5 where the phrase "the rod of My anger" is used; 14:24-27; 30:30-32; 37:21-29); (3) Babylon (2 Chron. 36:17-21; Isa. 13:1-14:23; 42:23-25; Jer. 25:8-14; 27:4-11,16-22; 29:10; 43:8-13; 50:1-51:64; Lam. 3:1, where the phrase "the rod of His wrath" is used; Ezek. 21:8-17, where Babylon is described as "a sword"; Mic. 5:1; Hab. 1:1-2:20; Zech. 1:12-15); (4) Syria (Dan. 8:9-14,23-25; 11:15-35); and (5) Rome (Dan. 9:26; Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24; John 11:47-52). In His sovereignty, God is not only the Lord of His covenant people Israel, but He is also the Lord of the pagan nations, directing them (albeit, without their knowledge) to accomplish His perfect will (cf. Hab. 2:20).

The fifth nation in particular is pertinent to this discussion. Rome came to destroy Jerusalem because of the Jewish rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus. The destruction was total and cast the Jews into worldwide dispersion. Historian Max I. Dimont describes the A.D. 70 devastation in the following words:

The end was inevitable. With battering rams and portable bridges, the Romans stormed the walls of Jerusalem. Like termites they spilled into the city, slaughtering a populace reduced to helplessness by starvation. Four years of bitter defeats at the hands of the Jews had made mockery of the vaunted invincibility of the Roman legions, and only killing could now soothe their bruised vanity. The Temple was put to the torch, infants thrown into the flames, women raped, priests massacred, Zealots thrown from the wall. Survivors of the carnage were earmarked for the triumphal procession to be held in Rome, sold

*as slaves, held for the wild beasts in the arenas, or saved to be thrown off the Tarpeian Rock in Rome for amusement. At no time did the Romans more justly earn the grim words of their own historian, Tacitus, who said, "They make a desolation and call it peace." Altogether, Tacitus estimates 600,000 defenseless Jewish civilians were slain in the aftermath of the siege.*²³

Although the rabbis refused to see the destruction as a punishment for the Jewish rejection of Jesus' Messiahship, they, nevertheless, sought to explain it by different national sins. The Jerusalem Talmud (Shab. 119b) lists eight reasons for the destruction of the Temple: the Sabbath was desecrated, the reading of the shema in the morning and the evening was neglected, the education of schoolchildren was neglected, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were not ashamed of each other, the small and the great were made equal, the inhabitants of Jerusalem did not rebuke each other, scholars were despised in the city, and truthful men ceased to exist in the city.²⁴ The Babylonian Talmud (Yoma 9b) lists three main reasons for the Temple's destruction: idolatry, fornication, and the shedding of blood.²⁵

It is not possible to terminate God's use of "the rod of men" in the A.D. 70 destruction. The eternity of the Davidic covenant guarantees the continuation of the disciplinary father/son clause in 2 Samuel 7. Until the ultimate Messianic fulfillment of the Davidic covenant in the millennial kingdom, the nation of Israel as a whole (including the Davidic line, which is known only to God) is subject to the "rod of God's anger." The covenant nation is in disobedience to the covenant {96} God, but He has not rejected her. Nevertheless, He continues to raise up pagan nations as His instrument of chastisement during her years of dispersion (cf. Lev. 26:33,36-45; Deut. 28:64-68, 36:1-16).

And yet it is with tremendous difficulty that the one committed to biblical truth must affirm that Nazi Germany was one of those pagan nations. For the Jewish theologian it is an impossibility. Rubenstein graphically illustrates the general response to this truth among Jewish religious leaders:

*Traditional Jewish theology maintains that God is the ultimate, omnipotent actor in the historical drama. It has interpreted every major catastrophe in Jewish history as God's punishment of a sinful Israel. I fail to see how this position can be maintained without regarding Hitler and the SS as instruments of God's will. The agony of European Jewry cannot be likened to the testing of Job. To see any purpose in the death camps, the traditional believer is forced to regard the most demonic, antihuman explosion in all history as a meaningful expression of God's purposes. The idea is simply too obscene for me to accept.*²⁶

It is the emotional trauma of the Holocaust destruction that has paralyzed contemporary religious Judaism. But is the trauma of the Germans any worse than that of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. or the Babylonians in 586 B.C. or the Romans in A.D. 70? Thousands of men, women, and children suffered and died horrible deaths in all of these catastrophes. And yet the

²³ Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God and History*, pp. 105-6. For a detailed description of the destruction, see Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Books V – VII.

²⁴ See Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, pp. 167, 371. Also, see Rachmiel Frydland, "When Talmud is right," *The American Messianic Jewish Quarterly* 63 (Fall 1978). p; C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, p. 463; and Hugh J. Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity*, pp. 47-49.

²⁵ See Jocz, pp. 167-168

²⁶ Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, p. 153

Holocaust is seen as unique. Perhaps in degree it is, but certainly not in kind. In fact, a probable case could be made for the fact that the Holocaust was not even unique in degree. This is maintained by H.L. Ellison:

Let us look at the tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Commonwealth in A.D. 70 and the time of trouble that reached its climax in the crushing of Bar Cochba's uprising in 135. The figures in Josephus are unfortunately so unreliable that we cannot make any certain calculation of casualties. The most likely estimate of the number of Jews in the Roman empire in the 1st century A.D. is just under seven million, i.e. not that far short of the number within Hitler's reach. Of these about two and a half million will have lived in Judea. This number will have been reduced to about 800,000 at the end of the Bar Cochba uprising. But in the interval between A.D. 70 and 135 there was a tremendous loss of Jewish lives in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Cyprus and other {97} parts of the Roman world. In other words, the loss of life must have been comparable with those who perished under the Nazis.²⁷

This is certainly not to minimize the horrendous guilt and responsibility of the Nazis. For like the nations of old that God raised up, the Nazis ended where all the other anti-Semitic people have ended - in total annihilation and judgment (cf. Gen. 12:3; etc.). God's ways are indeed mysterious, in particular with His covenant nation Israel. And yet, His Word remains true: David's eternal kingdom will be established under the Messiah, but it will only arrive after the Messiah's nation is disciplined into submission and obedience. And "the rod of men" is yet to strike again, one final time, the worst time in Israel's history (cf. Zech. 13:7-9; Matt. 24:15-22; Rev. 12:1-17; etc.). In fact, each of the above Holocausts is like another wave, each building in intensity and violence, and finally spilling into the final time of Jacob's trouble (cf. Jer. 30:1-24; Ezek. 20:33-44; etc.).

The New Covenant

The fourth and final unconditional covenant that God initiated with Israel was the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; etc.). This particular covenant reaffirms the blessing promises that God made with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant included certain personal promises to Abraham, certain national promises to Israel, and certain universal promises to the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; etc.). It is this New covenant that spells out the detailed blessings that God has committed to the nation Israel.

The Provisions of the Covenant

Ryrie has adequately summarized the provisions of the New covenant:

The following provisions for Israel, the people of the new covenant, to be fulfilled in the millennium, the period of the new covenant, are found in the Old Testament:

(1) The new covenant is an unconditional, grace covenant resting on the "I will" of God. The frequency of the use of the phrase in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is striking. Cf. Ezekiel 16:60-62.

²⁷ H. L. Ellison, "The Impact of Auschwitz on Theology Today," *The Hebrew Christian* 54 (Autumn 1981): 89.

(2) The new covenant is an everlasting covenant. This is closely related to the fact that it is unconditional and made in grace... (Isa. 61:8, cf. Ezek. 37:26; Jer. 31:35-37).

(3) The new covenant also promises the impartation of a renewed mind and heart which we may call regeneration... (Jer. 31:33, cf. Isa. 59:21).

(4) The new covenant provides for restoration to the favor and blessing of God... (Hos. 2:19-20, cf. Isa. 61:9).

(5) Forgiveness of sin is also included in the covenant, “for I will remove their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34b).

(6) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also included. This is seen by comparing Jeremiah 31:33 with Ezekiel 36:27.

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(7) The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will be manifested, and the will of God will be known by obedient hearts... (Jer. 31:34).

(8) As is always the case when Israel is in the land, she will be blessed materially in accordance with the provisions of the new covenant... (Jer. 32:41)... (Isa. 61:8)... (Ezek. 34:25-27).

(9) The sanctuary will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, for it is written “I... will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them” (Ezek. 37:26-27a).

(10) War shall cease and peace shall reign according to Hosea 2:18. The fact that this is also a definite characteristic of the millennium (Isa. 2:4) further supports the fact that the new covenant is millennial in its fulfillment.

(11) The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of all the blessings of the new covenant, for “by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech. 9:11).

By way of summary, it may be said that as far as the Old Testament teaching on the new covenant is concerned, the covenant was made with the Jewish people. Its period of fulfillment is yet future beginning when the Deliverer shall come and continuing throughout all eternity. Its provisions for the nation Israel are glorious, and they all rest and depend on the very Word of God.²⁸

The Character of the Covenant

First, as has been already said, the New covenant is an eternal covenant (Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jer. 31:35-37,40; 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60-63; 37:26-28). Again, like the Abrahamic covenant, upon which it is founded, the New covenant guarantees an eternal blessing for the nation of Israel. This will ultimately be fulfilled in the Messianic kingdom.

²⁸ Charles C. Ryri, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, pp. 112-14. See also Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, pp. 210-13.

Second, the New covenant is an unconditional covenant. This also can be seen from its eternal nature, for only an unconditional covenant can truly be an eternal covenant. Its ultimate fulfillment must rest upon the faithfulness of God Himself. Since this covenant is based on the Abrahamic covenant, which is an unconditional covenant, it must also be unconditional. And finally, the strong emphasis on God's "I will" promise in Jeremiah 31:33 guarantees its unconditional and final fulfillment.

The Outworking of the Covenant

Since the New Testament contains five clear references to the New covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8; 9:15), as well as six other references (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Rom. 11:27; Heb. 8:10-13; 12:24), it is obvious that some aspect of the covenant is now in effect.²⁹ First, it must be assumed that the original covenant was made with "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31), since all of the biblical covenants were made with the nation of Israel (Rom. 9:4; Eph. 2:11-12). Second, when Jesus the Messiah instituted the Lord's Supper, He made reference to the New covenant (Luke 22:20). It can hardly be supposed that His disciples did not understand this as anything but the New covenant referred to by {99} the prophet Jeremiah. The Lord did not explain it as anything else, so it must be assumed that the Lord's Supper in some way relates to the New covenant in Jeremiah. Third, when the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper, He did not apply all of the provisions in the New covenant. He only applied the single provision of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:27-28). All of the other various provisions remain in abeyance, awaiting their ultimate fulfillment in Israel's Messianic kingdom. Fourth, Jesus Himself ratified the New covenant by His sacrificial death (1 Cor. 11:25) and, therefore, became the Mediator of the covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15-17; 12:24). Sacrificial ratification was required to initiate a covenant. This is affirmed by Pentecost:

According to the Old Testament principle that such a conversion [of Israel, referred to in Jer. 31] cannot be effected permanently without the shedding of blood, this covenant necessitates a sacrifice, acceptable to God, as the foundation on which it is instituted.³⁰

And fifth, the Gentiles "have been brought near by the blood of Christ," the Mediator of the New covenant (Eph. 2:13,19). This "mystery" has been revealed through the apostolic ministry (Eph. 3:1-12) and qualifies all who share in the New covenant to be "servants of a new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:6). In other words, the Gentiles share in the spiritual aspect of the New covenant (i.e., the forgiveness of sins) because God foresaw their inclusion in the universal provision of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:7-8,13-14). However, the remainder of the provisions of the New covenant are still valid for Israel and are currently held in abeyance until the second advent (Rom. 11:25-27).

In relation to Israel, the New covenant has two basic points of application: national blessing in the future and personal blessing in the present.

²⁹ For a summary of the various interpretations of the New Testament usage of the New Covenant and its relation to believers today, see Pentecost, op. cit, pp. 119-27

³⁰ Pentecost, p. 116

National Blessing in the Future

As already stated, Israel as a whole awaits its future fulfillment in the New covenant (Rom. 11:25-27). The context of the Jeremiah 31 exposition of the New covenant is quite clear on the timing of this future national blessing. First, there will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:1-17). Second, following this terrible tribulation will come Israel's restoration to kingdom glory (Jer. 30:18-24). Third, Israel will experience her national homecoming and salvation (Jer. 31:1-26). And fourth, the cause of this salvation will be God's new covenant with the nation, which will render it an everlasting nation to the glory of God (Jer. 31:27-40).

Personal Blessing in the Present

In the meantime, individuals from within the nation can experience the personal blessing of the forgiveness of sins. Each major crisis that the Jews face brings a renewed Messianic expectation. In a real sense, the crisis itself turns individual Jews back toward God and His plan for the nation. Such crises as the Nazi Holocaust are used by God to reach the "remnant according to God's gracious choice" (Rom. 11:5). Those from within the nation who are His "chosen" (Rom. 11:7) often {100} come to Him through great personal tragedy. The Holocaust was just such a tragedy.

Prior to the Holocaust there were numerous communities throughout eastern Europe that were populated by Hebrew Christians, those from the "remnant according to God's gracious choice."³¹ Most of these believers found themselves herded into Nazi ghettos and eventually shipped off to Nazi extermination camps.³² Although most of them perished in the flames of the Holocaust, they did not die in vain; for they maintained a vibrant testimony for their Messiah, thus echoing in their lives the words of the Apostle Paul, "if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them" (Rom. 11:14).³³

In addition to these godly ones from the remnant of Israel, there were a number of godly Gentiles who also found themselves in concentration camps because they refused to capitulate to Hitler's atrocities.³⁴ They also maintained a vital ministry to those suffering in the camps, primarily made up of Jews. They likewise modeled in their lives the words of the Apostle Paul, "But by their transgression [Israel's national rejection of Jesus' Messiahship] salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them [the Jews} jealous" (Rom. 11:11).

During this present age God is drawing both Jews and Gentiles to Himself, that as individuals they might experience certain aspects of the blessings of the New covenant (Rom. 3:21-30; 10:11-13).

³¹ For two sources on Jewish Christians living in pre-war eastern Europe see from a Jewish source Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars*, pp. 183-209; and from a Jewish Christian Source see Rachmiel Frydland, *When Being Jewish was a Crime*.

³² Again for two sources on Jewish Christians in the ghettos and the camps, see from a Jewish source Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom*, pp. 28-31; and from a Jewish Christian source see Frydland.

³³ For examples of Jewish Christian testimony in the camps see Johanna-Ruth Dobschiner, *Selected to Live*; Myrna Grant, *The Journey*; Jan Markell, *Angels in the Camp*; Elwood McQuaid, *Zvi*; Ulrich Simon, *A Theology of Auschwitz: The Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*; and A. M. Weinberger, *I Escaped the Holocaust*, Also Frydland again.

³⁴ For examples of godly Gentiles ministering in the camps see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*; *No Rusty Swords*; Maria Anne Hirschmann, *Hanse: The Girl Who Left the Swastika*; Linette Martin, *Hans Rookmaker: A Biography*; Basil Miller, *Martin Niemoeller: Hero of the Concentration Camp*; Jack Overduin, *Faith and Victory in Dachau*; Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place; A Prisoner and Yet...*

The Mosaic Covenant

There is a fifth covenant that God initiated with Israel. It was the Mosaic covenant. Whereas the previous four were unconditional in their ultimate fulfillment, the Mosaic covenant was a conditional covenant. Instead of being based on the unconditional “I will” promises of God, the Mosaic covenant or law was based on the conditional “if you” obedience of Israel (cf. Exod. 19:5; etc.).

Ryrie summarizes the content of the Mosaic covenant when he says:

The law which is involved... is the Mosaic law. Although the word “torah” was used quite widely in Judaism, it especially referred to the code that was given at Sinai...

The law is generally divided into three parts - the moral, the ceremonial, and the judicial. The moral part is termed “the words of the covenant, the ten words” (Ex. 34:28) - from which Greek equivalent we derive the label Decalogue. The judgments begin at Exodus 21:2 and determine the rights between man and man with attendant judgments on offenders. The ceremonial part, which commences at Exodus 25:1, regulated the worship life of Israel.³⁵

The specifics of the Mosaic covenant are found in Exodus and Leviticus, being given by Moses to the generation coming out of Egypt in the exodus. These particulars **{101}** were reaffirmed and supplemented by Moses in Deuteronomy for the next generation which would enter the promised land under the leadership of Joshua.

The Provisions of the Covenant

Pentecost summarizes the provisions or purpose of the Law under two broad categories: that which was revelatory and that which was regulatory³⁶. Under that which was revelatory are four purposes which abide eternally: (1) to reveal the holiness of God; (2) to expose the sinfulness of man; (3) to reveal the standard of holiness required of those in fellowship with a holy God; and (4) to function as a pedagogue, leading one to Christ as Savior.³⁷ These purposes reflect the lawful use of the Law (cf. 1 Tim. 1:8-11), as well as the abiding holy, just, and good character of the Law (cf. Rom. 7:12). Under that which was regulatory are six purposes which have a temporary function: (1) to be the unifying principle that made possible the establishment of the nation of Israel; (2) to separate Israel from the nations in order that she might become a kingdom of priests; (3) to provide forgiveness and restoration to fellowship for the redeemed people of Israel; (4) to provide a system of worship for the redeemed nation; (5) to provide a test as to whether one was in the kingdom or the theocracy over which God ruled; and (6) to reveal Jesus as the Messiah and Savior.³⁸

³⁵ Charles C. Ryrie, “The End of the Law,” *BS* 124 (July-September 1967): 239-40. Also see Alve J. McClain, “What is the Law?” *BS* 110 (1953): 333-41. For a Jewish perspective on the Mosaic Law cf. A. Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, pp. 125-58, 298-345; and Solomon Schlechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 116-218.

³⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, “The Purpose of the Law,” *BS* 128 (July-September 1971): 233.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-33.

It can be seen, therefore, that the Mosaic covenant (i.e., the Law) was given to Israel with certain particulars that only related to her as a theocratic nation, while certain other aspects of the covenant relate to all individuals living at any specific time (cf. Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 7:12-16; Gal. 3:10-13,23-25; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; James 2:8-13; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; etc.).

The Character of the Covenant

First, the Mosaic covenant was an additional covenant. It was added on to the Abrahamic covenant some four hundred and thirty years after the ratification of that covenant without nullifying any of the provisions or promises that God made to Abraham (Gal. 3:15-18). It was added on because of transgressions, that men might be made ready for the coming of the Messiah and Savior (Gal. 3:19-22). That is why Israel might experience all of the curses of the Mosaic covenant without ultimately being cut off from the eternal purpose of God (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 4:30-31).

Second, as has already been said, the Mosaic covenant was a conditional covenant. The Abrahamic covenant, with all of its supplemental covenants (i.e., the Davidic, Palestinian, and New covenants), unconditionally established the eternal relationship between the people of Israel and their God. The Mosaic covenant established the conditions upon which that eternal relationship might be enjoyed and blessed or distressed and cursed within time and space.

The New Testament does not disavow this relationship between the unconditional Abrahamic covenant and the conditional Mosaic covenant. Indeed, it reaffirms it. Wenham asserts this when he comments on Leviticus 26:

{102}.... the NT does consider that the nation of Israel is still God's covenant people and subject, therefore, to the blessings and curses entailed in this chapter [Leviticus 26]. Christ's warnings to his fellow countrymen presuppose that they are God's covenant people, liable to God's judgment if they do not listen to his word. Some of the curses in Lev. 26 have their counterparts in Christ's teaching about wars and famines and the destruction of the temple (Mark 23/Luke 19-21).

Paul categorically asserts that the covenant with the Israelites has not been invalidated by their unbelief. "The gifts and call of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29) simply means that they must suffer the covenant curses rather than enjoy its blessings. But one day he expects them to be saved (Rom. 11:26), just as Lev. 26 and Deut. 30 do. There seems to be a hint of this in Jesus' own teaching as well, when he speaks of Jerusalem being "trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24; cf. Rom. 11:25).³⁹

The Outworking of the Covenant

The Mosaic covenant, as a conditional covenant, is worked out in two specific ways. First, it is worked out in a temporary dispensational sense. And second, it is worked out in a permanent condemnatory sense.

³⁹ G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 333.

Temporary in a Dispensational Sense

It is clear from specific New Testament passages that the Mosaic covenant or Law in some sense has passed away. Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:18-19; Luke 11:37-41; cf. Acts 10:9-16; 11:5-10), as did the Apostle Paul (Rom. 14:1-12; Col. 2:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). Paul refused to have Titus circumcised according to the Law (Gal. 2:3; cf. 5:1-6). The early church did not observe the Sabbath, but rather worshipped on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). It would appear, therefore, that believers today operate under a different code than those who lived before the coming of Christ. As Ryrie insists one must distinguish “between a code and the commandments contained there in”⁴⁰ He goes on to explain:

*The Mosaic Law had been done away in its entirety as a code. God is no longer guiding the life of man by this particular code. In its place He has introduced the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; cf. Rom. 8:2). Many of the individual commands within that law are new, but some are not. Some of the ones which are old were also found in the Mosaic law and they are now incorporated into the law of Christ. As a part of the Mosaic law they are completely and forever done away. As a part of the law of Christ they are binding on the believer today.*⁴¹

Still there are other New Testament passages that would indicate that the Mosaic covenant has passed away in another sense as well. Jesus instituted a New covenant (Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Jesus is said to be the {103} Mediator of a better covenant [better than the Mosaic covenant] (Heb. 9:15; 12:24). Christ’s death has brought a new priesthood, which, by the very nature of the case, must also bring a change of law as well (Heb. 7:11-28). Since coming to faith in Christ, the believer is no longer under the Law as a pedagogue (Gal. 3:23-26). Christ is said to be “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). And believers are said to be “servants of a new covenant” (2 Cor. 3:4-11). Therefore, for believers today, the Law (i.e., the Mosaic covenant) has passed away both as a code for daily life as well as a curse requiring death.⁴²

Permanent in a Condemnatory Sense

From what has been said above, it is obvious that the Mosaic covenant must still be in effect for those outside of Christ. They reside under the just condemnation of the Law. According to Romans 10:4, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone *who believes*..” Nygren’s comment on Romans 10:4 is straight to the point:

Christ is the end of the law, the terminus of the law, the law’s telos.. And yet this must not be construed as an ordinary historical judgment, to the effect that the

⁴⁰ Ryrie, “The End of the Law,” op. cit., p. 246.

⁴¹ Ibid. See also Roy L. Aldrich, “Causes for Confusion of Law and Grace,” *BS* 116 (July-September 1959): 221-29; “Has the Mosaic Law been Abolished?” *BS* 116 (October-December 1959): 322-35; Sumner Osborne, “The Christian and the Law,” *BS* 109 (1952): 239-47. Also, Ryrie, *The Grace of God*; and *Dispensationalism Today*.

⁴² For further insight into the Apostle Paul and the Law, see C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” *SJTh* 17 (March 1964): 43-68; George E. Howard, “Christ the End of Law: the Meaning of Romans 10:4ff.,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 331-37; Walter J. Kaiser, Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do this and You shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (Winter 1971): 19-28 and Anne Lawton, “Christ, the End of the Law. A Study of Romans 10:4-8,” *TriJ* 3 (Spring 1974): 14-30

*law ceased to function at a given point in time. The statement about the telos of the law applies only to those who have through Christ been made sharers in the righteousness of the law. Otherwise, outside of the realm of faith the law still rules.*⁴³

Newell, likewise, graphically portrays the significance of Romans 10:4, when he says:

*To him that believeth, therefore, Jew or Gentile, Christ, dead, buried, and risen, is the end of law for righteousness, - in the sense of law's disappearance from the scene! Law does not know, or take cognizance of believers! We read in Chapter Seven (verse 6) that those who had been under the Law were discharged from the Law, brought to nought, put out of business (katargeo), with respect to the Law! The Law has nothing to do with them, as regards righteousness.*⁴⁴

In other words, the Law of God, which reflects the very character of God Himself, demands a perfect righteousness in thought, word, and deed. To fail to measure up to such a holy standard leaves one under the just condemnation of the Law (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; 10:1-3; etc.). The "curse" of the Law rests on all who reject Christ's death as God's perfect solution for that curse (Gal. 3:10-14).

It is not surprising then to discover that Israel's history is bound up with her relationship to God's Law or the Mosaic covenant. There is never a time when Israel *as a nation* is not under the Mosaic covenant. From the time of its inception until the realization of the New covenant, the Mosaic covenant rules over the nation of Israel. And since the New covenant has not been accepted and therefore **{104}** realized by the nation as a whole, the judgments of the Mosaic covenant rest upon the nation (cf. Lev. 26:1-46; Deut. 28:1-30:20).

The curses that were established in the Mosaic covenant can be traced throughout Israel's history: (1) Even before the official establishment of the Mosaic covenant Simeon and Levi were cursed by dispersion and scattering because of their cruelty (Gen. 49:5-7). This is almost a prototype of the nation's future. (2) The tribes of Israel bound themselves to the Mosaic covenant through a recitation of the blessings and curses on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Deut. 11:26-32; 27:26). This covenant renewal and ratification took place again under Joshua (Josh. 8:30-35) and later again under Nehemiah (Neh. 10:28-39). (3) Eli and his sons brought a curse upon themselves for their wicked behavior (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-25, 27-36; 3:10-18). (4) The psalmist reflected on God's cursing those who wander from His commandments (Ps. 119:21). (5) God cursed the people in Josiah's day because of their evil idolatry (2 Kings 22:8-20; 2 Chron. 34:14-28; cf. Exod. 20:3-6; Deut. 4:23-27; 5:7-10; 7:1-11; 11:13-17, 26-28; 17:2-7; 31:14-39). (6) Jeremiah denounced Israel and predicted God's curse on her because she broke His covenant (Jer. 11:2-5; 17:5-8; 23:10; 24:8-10; 25:15-29, esp. 18; 26:4-6; 29:15-23; 42:18; 44:7-10, 22-23). (7) Daniel confessed the sins of Israel, acknowledging God's just curse upon her (Dan. 9:11-14). (8) Zechariah acknowledged God's just curse on the people of his day (Zech. 5:1-4). And (9) Malachi also acknowledged God's just curse on the people of his day (Mal. 2:1-9, esp. 2; 3:7-12, esp. 9).

This dismal history of curses carried over into the day of Jesus' ministry as well. Just before His betrayal and arrest He pronounced a series of curses on Israel's national leaders

⁴³ Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 380.

⁴⁴ William R. Newell, *Romans: Verse by Verse*, p. 391

for leading the nation astray, a pattern that had been established in the nation's history (Matt. 23:1-39).

It is no wonder that Walvoord says, "No passage in the Bible is more biting, more pointed, or more severe than this pronouncement of Christ upon the Pharisees."⁴⁵

While it is true that Israel's past was replete with the curses of the Mosaic covenant, climaxing in Jesus' rejection of the nation, her future will see a removal of these curses: (1) Isaiah predicted a day when Israel would repent of her sins and see the curse turned into kingdom blessing (Isa. 65:15-16). (2) Zechariah also predicted a day when Jerusalem would no longer be a curse among the nations, but a {105} kingdom blessing (Zech. 8:11-15, esp. 13; 14:9-11, esp. 11; cf. Rev. 22:3). And (3) Malachi predicted a day when Elijah would come, just prior to "the great and terrible day of the Lord," in order to restore Israel's families and thus avoid a curse upon the land (Mal. 4:4-6). This final prophecy is directly related to the Mosaic covenant that was established "in Horeb for all Israel" (Mal. 4:4).

Until this blessed future of the nation arrives (i.e., with the nation as a whole entering into the blessings of the New covenant according to Jeremiah 31:27-40, which follows the time of Jacob's trouble according to Jeremiah 30:1-31:26), the nation abides under the curses of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-32). The Mosaic covenant or treaty was broken, and, therefore, is no longer in effect. In fact, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the nation's temple, God has made the whole Mosaic system impossible of functioning according to His design (cf. Luke 21:20-24; Deut. 28:64-68). Therefore, since the covenant has been broken and is no longer in effect (and impossible to re-establish), all that remains are the penalties for breaking it (i.e., the curses listed in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28-30). These curses relate to the nation as a whole, while individual Jews can experience the forgiveness offered in the New covenant by personally accepting God's sacrifice for these curses, a sacrifice provided by Jesus the Messiah, who bore the curses of the Law in order to redeem men on an individual basis (Gal. 3:10-14; cf. Lev. 18:5; Deut. 21:23; 27:26).

It was national disobedience that brought the nation under the Mosaic curses and it must be national obedience that removes the curses. This will come at the end of the time of Jacob's trouble (cf. Matt. 23:37-39; Deut. 4:27-31; Zech. 12:1-14:21; etc.). Westermann summarizes the relationship between disobedience and the curses in Deuteronomy when he says:

In Deuteronomy, however, it is characteristic of the concept of blessing that by being connected with the covenant it is tied to the obedience of the people. As a result, blessing is necessarily subject to possible limits. When the people are commanded as they enter the land (Deut. 11:29) not simply to place blessing on the land but to place blessing on Mount Gerizim and curse on Mount Ebal, a limitation of God's granting of blessing is depicted. Because blessing is tied to the people's obedience, the curse henceforth stands side by side with blessing as a possibility. These two possibilities confronting Israel are developed in chapters 27 and 28. The instruction mentioned above is repeated (27:11-13), and in 28:1 ff. and 28:15ff. the people are confronted in deadly earnest with the choice that will determine their future. The curse that will result from disobedience is described in

⁴⁵ John F. Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p. 172.

*terrifying terms unlike anything else in the Bible (28:15-68). It signifies disaster, terror, and destruction.*⁴⁶

The climax of the Mosaic curses was the worldwide dispersion of the nation; this was true in the original covenant (Lev. 26:35-45), as well as in the renewed covenant (Deut. 4:27-31; 28:36-37, 41, 47-48, 64-68; 30:1-4). Deuteronomy 4:30 places the final exile in “the latter days.” This corresponds with Jesus’ words in Luke 21:20-24, where Jerusalem would remain trodden down until the times of the {106} Gentiles be fulfilled. This period of dispersion began in A.D. 70 as a national judgment for the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus. When Israel is outside of the land, subject to the harassment of the nations, utter destruction is an ever present reality. This certainly was the case with Nazi Germany. The Jews were outside of the protective care, not only of the land, but also, of God Himself. For dispersion was the final climactic curse laid upon them by the hand of God. This has been recognized by some Jewish scholars from the ranks of orthodoxy, but it remains a rarity within Judaism.⁴⁷

Perhaps the most despicable aspect of the judgments found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 - 30 is the curse of cannibalism. It is found both in the original covenant (Lev. 26:29), as well as in the renewed covenant (Deut. 28:53-57). This is especially repulsive in light of the God-ordained position of the family in the nation of Israel and her theocracy (cf. Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Deut. 6:4-9; Pss. 127 - 128). The judgment falls when Israel, in her disobedience to God, is under attack by a foreign army. The siege would be so severe that starvation would ravage the cities of Israel. And this would lead to the unthinkable act of eating one’s own children.

This very curse of cannibalism has found its fulfillment in Israel’s past and will do so once again in her future. Jewish history records at least four major periods where the curse of cannibalism fell on the Jews: (1) the siege of Samaria by the Syrians (2 Kings 6:24-29); (2) the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (prophesied in Jer. 19:7-9 and Ezek. 5:7-10; fulfilled in Lam. 2:19-20; 4:8-11); (3) the siege of Jerusalem by Titus and the Roman legions in A.D. 70,⁴⁸ and (4) the Nazi Holocaust under Hitler and the Germans.⁴⁹ The future holocaust of the Great Tribulation will be the worst of all, and undoubtedly, will once again bring brutal starvation and the consequent curse of cannibalism (cf. Deut. 4:30; 31:29; Zech. 13:7-9; Matt. 24:15-22; Rev. 6:3-8; etc.).

One last word must be added since the curse of cannibalism has raised the issue of innocent children suffering along with their parents. During the Holocaust at least one million children

⁴⁶ Claus Westermann, *Blessing: In the Bible and the Life of the Church*, pp. 48-49

⁴⁷ For examples of Jewish religious leaders who take Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-30 curses as present day realities in regard to Holocaust, see Norman M. Bronznick, “A Theological View of the Holocaust,” *Jewish Education* 42 (Summer 1973): 12-20, 28; Abraham Besdin, “Reflections on the Agony and the Ecstasy,” *Tradition* 11 (Spring 1971): 64-70; also, by the same author, *Reflections of the Rav: Lessons in Jewish Thought (Adapted from Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik)*, pp. 31-39.

⁴⁸ See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, V, 10.4; 12.4; VI, 3.3-5. Cf. Matt. 27:25; Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24; 23:27-31.

⁴⁹ See *Holocaust*, Israel Pocket Library, pp. 67-68, 94-95; Victor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, p. 55; Gideon Hausner, *Justice in Jerusalem*, p. 160; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 172; and H. J. Zimmels, *The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust in Rabbinic Literature*, p. 93. See also Otto Friedrich, “The Kingdom of Auschwitz.” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1981, p. 33.

were slaughtered.⁵⁰ This is perhaps the major stumbling block for most Jewish historians and theologians.

The Bible treats this difficult problem on two different levels. First, it treats the suffering of children on an individual level, where each child must bear his own personal responsibility for his sins. The child will not suffer for the father's sins, nor the father for the child's (cf. Deut. 7:9-10; 24:16; Jer. 31:29-30; Ezek. 18:1-4, 19-23). But second, the Bible also treats the suffering of children on a national level, where each child born into the nation must share in the corporate solidarity of the nation. By the very nature of being born into the covenant nation, they share in the corporate personality of the nation - in its past, its present, and its future.⁵¹ It is possible that the concept of cumulative sin and its effects was in view. That is, the cumulative effect of sin could be passed down from the father to the children, to the third and fourth generation, especially with the sin of idolatry.⁵² It was almost {107} assumed that the child would embrace the ungodly lifestyle of the parent, choosing to worship foreign gods. And when the judgment inevitably fell, it fell on parent and child alike.

Not only was Israel's past replete with examples of judgments falling alike on parent and child, but so will be her future. She is yet to face another tempestuous judgment which will fall on parent and child alike. It will be the terrible time of Jacob's trouble, falling just prior to the Messianic return of Jesus (Jer. 30:10, 20; 31:8-9; Joel 2:16; 3:3; Zech. 13:2-3, 7-9; Matt. 24:19; Mark 13:17; etc.). The Holocaust may have brought on the children a unique suffering in degree, but surely not in kind. For Israel's history and destiny both testify to the nation's sins bringing upon her the heartrending grief of infanticide.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NATION ISRAEL

The biblical covenants establish the broad parameters of Israel's eternal relationship with God. But there are many other scriptures that set out the particulars of Israel's unique nationhood. This nation stands alone both in its inferno of suffering and its abiding survival. Secular theories abound for Israel's enigma in history, but they all fall short. For they are derived from a worldview that totally ignores the intervention of the divine.

Hatred, persecution, and suffering continue to be Israel's lot in this world. But for a brief respite here and there, the pattern remains the same in country after country. This section will attempt to bring the light of Scripture to bear on the sufferings of the nation Israel, in particular, the suffering of the Holocaust.

Israel's Election

The nation Israel did not slowly evolve into a people who belonged to God. Their origin was sudden, dramatic, and decisive. That nationhood was secure from the moment that God laid His hand on Abraham and said, "Go forth from your country..." (Gen. 12:1). In order to see how this election of the nation Israel relates to the Holocaust, three facts must be surveyed:

⁵⁰ Abba Eban, *My People: The Story of the Jews*, p. 430. See also Azriel Eisenberg, *The Lost Generation* passim.

⁵¹ Circumcision is an example of this concept of corporate identity (cf. Gen. 17:10-14, 22-27; Exod. 4:24-26; 12:43-51; Lev 12:1-3; Josh. 5:1-9; etc.). At eight days the child could not personally enter into the covenant, but his father, by the act of circumcision, identified the child with the nation and the covenant that God made with the nation.

⁵² For other examples of the cumulative effects of sin see Jeremiah 16:10-12; Matthew 23:29-36; 1 Thess. 2; 14-16; etc.

(1) the nature of the election; (2) the purpose of the election; and (3) the results of the election.

The Nature of the Election

First, the nature of Israel's election was sovereign. God did not have to choose Israel to become His people; He was not coerced into it. He simply made a decision arising out of His own sovereign will.

Four distinct features must be noted in relationship to this sovereign election of the nation: (1) The Scriptures directly assert that God Himself chose Israel above all the other nations (Deut. 7:6; 26:5; Isa. 51:2; Ezek. 16:1-14,22,43-45,60; 20:5; Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:6-13).

(2) This election of Israel raised her to a unique position (albeit, a position of service) among the other nations (Deut. 4:32-37; 7:6; 10:14-15; 14:2; Ps. 147:19-20).

{108}(3) In fact, even before Israel's election, God had already established the nation's boundaries according to their future relationship to Israel; i.e., Israel became the navel of the nations (Deut. 32:8-9; Ezek. 5:5; 38:12). And

(4) This election of Israel resulted in the nation belonging totally to God by virtue of the fact that the election itself included God's forming, redeeming, and calling the nation (Isa.43:1).

Second, the nature of Israel's election was gracious. This means that in its ultimate fulfillment, it is unconditional. Three distinct features of God's gracious election of the nation must be noted:

(1) The Scriptures directly assert that God chose Israel out of His gracious love (Deut. 4:37; Jer. 31:3; Mal. 1:2; Rom. 9:13).

(2) God's gracious love for Israel was in spite of her natural insignificance and unrighteousness (Deut. 7:7-8; 9:4-6). And

(3) This gracious love for Israel was supremely manifested in God's supernatural deliverance at the exodus. In fact, this becomes the supreme motive for Israel's obedience to the newly established Mosaic covenant (Exod. 19:3-4).⁵³

Third, the nature of Israel's election was eternal. It follows that if the nation's election was sovereign and gracious, it must also, by the very nature of the case, be eternal. Along with the direct statements concerning the eternal nature of Israel's four unconditional covenants, upon which the nation's election is founded, the Scriptures give eight guarantees that this election is eternal: (1) the unalterable character of God Himself (Mal. 3:6); (2) the inviolability of the covenant of God (Lev. 26:44-45; cf. Gal.3:15-22; Heb. 6:13-18); (3) the irrevocability of the gifts and calling of God (Rom. 11:1-2, 25-29); (4) the immunity of the earth from another universal flood (Isa. 54:7-9; cf. Gen. 9:8-17); (5) the immobility of the mountains (Isa. 54:10); (6) the immeasurability of the heavens and the impenetrability of the earth (Jer. 31:37); (7) the regularity of the planetary and tidal

⁵³ See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, pp. 366-67; and C. F. Keil, *The Second Book of Moses*, K & D, pp. 95-96.

motion (Jer. 31:35-36); and (8) the fixity of the earth's daily motion (Jer. 33:20-21, 25-26).

The Purpose of the Election

Israel's election was not without purpose: God's call to Israel was for service, not elitism. StuhlmueLLer echoes this sentiment when he summarizes the two basic components of Israel's election,

*In Israel the general idea of 'election' included two essential components: separation from other nations because of the particular love of Yahweh for Israel; and secondly, readiness for Yahweh's special task or commission.*⁵⁴

The Scriptures teach that God elected Israel for seven basic purposes. The first purpose for her election was that she would be a "blessing" to the entire earth. This universal blessing ultimately found its expression in Jesus the Messiah (Gal. 3:6-9) and will only be finally fulfilled in His millennial kingdom (cf. Isa. 19:23-25; 65:15-16; Zech. 8:13; Mal. 3:12).

{109} The second purpose was that Israel would be a special nation to God. She could only bless all the other nations if she maintained her special relation to the God who elected her.

The third purpose for Israel's election was that she was to be a kingdom of priests on God's behalf (Exod. 19:5). In other words, Israel was to be a nation mediating priestly access for the nations. She stood between God's holiness and the nation's sinfulness, and brought them into fellowship by priestly service.

The fourth purpose was that Israel was to be a witness to the one, true God. She was to be a light of testimony to the pagan nations that crowded in around her (Isa. 51:4; cf. Acts 13:44-47).

The fifth purpose for Israel's election was that she would demonstrate God's gracious and faithful dealings available to all men. Not only would the nation demonstrate the blessing that would come to a people who loved and served God (Ps. 33:12; 144:15), but also the cursing that would come to a people who hated and reviled Him (Exod. 9:16; Josh. 2:9-11; Ezek. 5:7-8; 36:22-32; 38:16,23; etc.).

The sixth purpose was that Israel was to be entrusted with the oracles of God, the written Word of God (Rom. 3:2). Cranfield, in commenting on Romans 3:2, says that "The Jews

⁵⁴ Carroll StuhlmueLLer, "God in the Witness of Israel's Election," in *God in Contemporary Thought: A Philosophical Perspective*, p. 353. For a further development of these two components of Israel's election, in an evangelical perspective, see Charles L. Feinberg, *Israel: At the Center of History and Revelation*, pp. 117-26. For differing views within Judaism see Martin A. Cohen et al., "Symposium: Are Jews the Chosen People?" *Dimensions in American Judaism* 2 (Spring 1968): 13-28; also, Jakob L. Halevi, "The Lord's Elect and Peculiar Treasure," *Judaism* 5 (Winter 1956): 22-30. For the idea of Israel as a "separate" people, and the ensuing problems from such a doctrine, see Gerhard von Rad, *God at Work in Israel*, pp. 81-96; Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, where he says, "The Chosen People doctrine has been the source of millennia of pathetic and unrealistic self-criticism by Jews. Because Jews felt under a special obligation to fulfill God's covenant, they have been convinced since the prophets that their religious performance was never good enough. They have interpreted every Jewish disaster, from the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. E. to the hideous disasters of the twentieth century, as God's attempt to punish His errant children in the hope that they would be restored to perfect fidelity to Him" (p. 148). Also see Eugene B. Borowitz, "The Chosen People Concept as it Affects Life in the Diaspora," *JES* 12 (Fall 1975): 553-68.

have been given God's authentic self-revelation in trust to treasure it and to attest and declare it to all mankind."⁵⁵

The seventh and final purpose for Israel's election was for her to bring God's Messiah into the world (Rom. 9:5). This was undoubtedly her greatest calling. Jesus came into the world as God's Messiah, born of the seed of Abraham (Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:7-16; 4:4-5) and in the line of David (Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:26-35; Rom. 1:3). That is why the Scriptures can accurately assert that "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22), for salvation comes only through Israel's promised Messiah (cf. John 4:25-26; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

The Results of the Election

If God has called Israel to these seven major purposes, it is no wonder that two major results must logically follow. First, Israel was to respond to this divine election with loving obedience. And second, if she refused to respond to her calling, God would be forced to reciprocate with severe judgment or discipline.

Loving obedience: The only reasonable response to God's gracious election was loving obedience. Moses made this clear in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, when he called the nation to respond to its divinely-elected Lord:

*Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall **teach** them diligently to your sons and shall **talk** of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall **bind** them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall **write** them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (emphases added).*

{110} In other words, Israel's response to God was to be total in each generation. And this response was to be characterized by a loving obedience to Him and His words. God's desire for the elected and covenanted nation was not mere legalistic obedience, but rather, a loving response from the heart that expressed itself in true obedience.

Severe discipline: God's election of Israel cannot be seen apart from the service that it demands. In the Scriptures, great privilege always brings great responsibility, as well as accountability. Once God initiated her election, Israel had to continually live under His stewardship, always accountable to Him personally. In other words, God's love is a tough love, a love of conviction and discipline (cf. Prov. 3:11-12). Cranfield clearly sees this true nature of God's love and its relation to His elected nation:

God's punishment of sin is no contradiction of His love; it was precisely because He loved that He took Israel's sin so seriously (cf. the 'therefore' in Amos 3:2). His love was love in deadly earnest and could be severe. It was willing to hurt in order to save, to shatter all false securities and strip Israel of His gifts, if so be that in the end, in nakedness and brokenness, they might learn to know their true

⁵⁵ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., 1:179. See also Bruce Corley and Curtis Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary*, p. 37. p. 32-33

*peace. But the severity was never separated from tenderness (cf. Hos. 11:8; Isa. 63:9, etc.).*⁵⁶

It was Moses who saw the shattering experience of the wrath of God against His people (e.g., Exod. 32:6-35; cf. 1Cor. 10:1-13; etc.) and who later sternly warned the next generation against the danger of forgetting the goodness of God (Deut. 8:11-20). In fact, Israel's entire history, right up to the Messianic kingdom, bears testimony to the severe discipline imposed on her by the God of her election (cf. Deut. 30:1-20; Ezek. 20:33-38; etc.).

Perhaps the clearest statement in Scripture concerning the relationship between God's love and wrath for the nation of Israel is Amos 3:2

*You [Israel] only have 1 **chosen** among all the families of the earth; therefore, I will **punish** you for all your iniquities.* (emphases added).

In summary, it can be said that Israel's election guarantees her existence. But it is not to be an existence free from national accountability to the God of her election. Just as the Holocaust can be related to the consequences of the divine covenants, so likewise it can be related to the consequences of the divine election. In fact, the divine covenants and the divine election are inseparably connected, as parts to a whole. For the covenants give the details or fine print of the election. The covenants spell out the obligations and privileges of the divinely-ordained election. And since the national election is eternal, so must be the national accountability.

{111} In summary, the woes of the Jewish people, including the Nazi Holocaust, do not repudiate the election of Israel. Quite the contrary, these woes reaffirm the election of the nation (cf. Amos 3:2).

Israel's Remnant

If Israel's continued existence is a profound mystery, so must be the existence of a remnant within that nation, but to an even greater degree.

*The remnant is a concept with two facts, one catastrophic - only a remnant will survive; the other full of promise - for a remnant will escape ..., however small the remnant may be, it is the germ, the root from which a new plant will be able to spring, for it is in favor of this remnant that the election and consecration granted formerly to Abraham's posterity are renewed.*⁵⁷

The remnant concept has at least three major ideas in relation to the nation of Israel: (1) national apostasy; (2) national judgment; and (3) surviving remnant. In other words, the nation's sin is followed by the nation's test, out of which will come the nation's hope (i.e., the remnant). God has always had a remnant within the nation of Israel, and He always will. For while the nation as a whole, for the most part, usually defected from the God of their election, the faithful remnant remained true to Him.

Basically, there are eight universal functions of the believing remnant of Israel. First, the remnant is to possess the promises of God (cf. Dan. 9:1-27; Rom. 11:25-27; etc.). The

⁵⁶ *TWBB*, s.v. "Love," by C. E. B. Cranfield, p. 132

⁵⁷ Jacob, p. 323.

covenant promises, sovereignly and graciously given by God, are only possessed and experienced by the believing remnant. Without the remnant, the promises of God, in relation to the nation of Israel, would go unclaimed.

Second, the remnant is to prove the faithfulness of God (cf. Dan. 1:1-21; Rom. 11:25-27; etc.). This is logically related to the first function. For if the promises of God go unclaimed, they testify to God's unfaithfulness in His original election of Israel. But because the promises are claimed by the remnant, the faithfulness of God is demonstrated. Even in the most difficult times of punishment there is a part of the nation that displays God's faithfulness and reliability. It is the believing remnant, sometimes even unto death, that trusts and obeys God, which once again demonstrates that God is trustworthy.

Third, the remnant is to preserve the nation of Israel (cf. Amos 7:1-6; Isa. 1:9; 65:8; Rom. 9:29; etc.). There are times when God leaves the nation "few in number;" only **{112}** to bring that remnant to its knees in surrender and submission to His perfect plan, even to "the latter days" (Deut. 4:27-31). It is this "few in number" that sustains the nation as a whole. Many times it was the prophets themselves that stood alone between God and the nation, which was only a hairbreadth away from extinction (cf. Isa. 65:8; Amos 3:7; 7:1-6; etc.).

Fourth, the remnant is to persevere with the nation of Israel (cf. Jer. 43:4-7; Lam.; Ezek. 3:10-15; Dan. 1:1-21; 2:49; 3:1-30; 6:1-28; Neh. 1:1-2:10; Num. 14:5-10, 30; etc.). The believing remnant is not to flee from the nation when it is under the judgment of God, but rather it is to suffer along with the nation. There may be times when God Himself removes the remnant before the judgment falls (eg. in A.D. 70; cf. Luke 21:20-24; etc.), but unless He does the removing, the remnant must stay with their brethren.

Fifth, the remnant is to pray for the nation of Israel (cf. Num 14:11-21; Amos 7:1-6; Dan. 9:3-19; Neh. 1:1-11; Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1; etc.). This is one of the reasons that the remnant is not to desert the nation when it is under judgment. It must pray with and for the nation. Prayer is always more effective when it comes from within the crucible itself. When the remnant prays for the sinning nation, God intervenes for His own glory (James 5:17-18; Isa. 48:9).

Sixth, the remnant is to press God to fulfill the covenant promises (cf. Dan. 9:3-19; Neh. 1:1-11; 1; Rev. 6:9-11; etc.). This is a major part of the content of the remnant's prayer on behalf of the nation. The remnant is to pray God's Word back to Him, especially the covenant promises, and then to press God to fulfill them.

Seventh, the remnant is to proclaim the truth of God to the nation (cf. Jer. 1:1-19; 2:1 - 45:5; Ezek. 2:1-10; 3:1-27; 11:14-21; 4:1 - 24:27; 33:1 - 48:35; Dan. 1:1 - 2:3; 8:1 - 12:13; Acts 2:14-41; 3:12 - 4:31; 5:12-42; 6:8 - 7:60; 13:13-41; etc.). This is the pre-eminent reason for the remnant not forsaking the suffering nation in its hour of pain - the nation must hear God's truth, especially when He has their attention through severe discipline. There are always some from within the nation who will respond and become a part of the believing remnant. In fact, that is one way that God brings the remnant to the surface.

And eighth, the remnant is to provoke the nation of Israel to jealousy (Rom. 11:13-14). The Gentile believers are to do the same during this age of grace (Rom. 11:11-12). The remnant is to remain in touch with the nation, displaying the blessings of the New covenant, in order that the nation might be driven back to God.

All eight of these functions of the believing remnant were manifested during the Holocaust, to a greater or lesser degree. One is not able to measure the depth of the eight functions, but it is possible to see them at work, especially in the lives of thousands of Jewish believers who not only suffered in the Holocaust, but also perished with their kinsmen according to the flesh. This is borne out by the {113} numerous written and oral records of both Jewish, Gentile, and Christian testimony.⁵⁸ Believer and unbeliever alike testify to the fact that the remnant of Israel was used in a great way by God in ministering to the nation as a whole during the Holocaust.

Israel's Adversary

Having studied Israel's election and defined her remnant, it is now appropriate to expose her adversary. God sovereignly and graciously chose the nation Israel to be His uniquely elected people in the world. Apart from a small but faithful remnant, the nation continually defected from its divinely-elected purpose; and in so doing brought continual suffering upon its head. The ultimate cause behind Israel's defection from God has always been Satan, the nation's adversary and pre-eminent anti-Semite. His purpose has always been to disrupt the plan and purpose of God.⁵⁹ It is not surprising, then, to find him attacking the elected nation, and in particular, the faithful remnant. For much of the plan of God is inseparably bound to the people of Israel. Walvoord makes this point quite clear:

The trials of Israel stem from the basic conflict between divine purpose and satanic opposition. The very fact that God selected Israel as a special means of divine revelation makes the nation an object of special satanic attack. Satanic hatred of the seed of Abraham is manifested from the beginning of God's dealings with Abraham and continues through the entire course of human history, culminating in the rebellion at the end of the millennium ... Undoubtedly

⁵⁸ Jacob Gartenhaus, *Famous Hebrew Christians*, makes the following statement: "During the Nazi genocidal onslaught against the Jew of Europe, Jewish converts numbering nearly *one and a quarter million* suffered the same fate as did non-Christian Jews. Most of these were slaughtered by the Nazis or met death through the horrors of the concentration camps" (p. 25, n. 2). For testimony concerning the remnant functioning during the Holocaust, from Jewish sources, see Eliezer Berkovits, *With God in Hell: Judaism in the Ghettos and Deathcamps*, pp. 12-14; Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom*, pp. 28-31; Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars*, pp. 183-209; and Leon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate: The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe*, p. 296. From Jewish Christian sources see Johanna-Ruth Dobschiner, *Selected to Live: Myrna Grant, The Journey*; James C. Hefley, *The New Jews*, pp. 57-67, 103-14; Arthur W. Kac, "Who is a Jew?" in *The Messianism of Jesus; What Jews and Jewish Christians Say*, p. 141; Zola Levitt, *Meshumed!*; Jan Markell, *Angels in the Camp*; Elwood McQuaid, *Zvi*; Ulrich Simon, *A Theology of Auschwitz: The Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*; and A. M. Weinberger, *I Escaped the Holocaust*. Another excellent description of the Holocaust from a Hebrew Christian is Rachmiel Frydland, *When Being Jewish was a Crime*. For Jewish Christians who led a large revival among Jews around the turn of the century see Gartenhaus. These men, for the most part, died before the Holocaust, but their ministries lived on in the lives of the Jewish disciples who had to face Hitler and the Nazis. They were prepared to function as the believing remnant because of the godly testimony and biblical training that they received from their teachers.

⁵⁹ For the satanic strategy against God see Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vol., vol. 2: "Angelology – Anthropology," pp. 33-121; by the same author, *Satan: His Motive and Methods*; C. Fred Dickason, *Angels, Elect and Evil*, pp. 115-49; F.J. Huegel, *The Mystery of Iniquity*; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Your Adversary the Devil*; Fredk. A. Tatford, *Satan: The Prince of Darkness*, and Merril F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology*.

*one of the principle causes for Israel's suffering has been the unending opposition of Satan to the fulfillment of God's purpose in the nation.*⁶⁰

It is only because of the sustaining hand of God that the nation still exists. It is as Feinberg attests, "Throughout the centuries Satan has longed to blot out Israel, but she knows God's protecting hand."⁶¹

The Old Testament Perspective

Satan's strategy in the Old Testament can be seen in two particular phases: first, in his attack on the godly line in general; and second, in his attack on the nation Israel in particular.⁶²

The attack on the godly line in general can be seen on two major fronts. First, Satan's attack on the godly line in general begins in Genesis 3. Following Satan's attack on the first couple, God put a division between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan (Gen. 3:15). As the nation would later look back on this record over and over again, it would continually be reminded that two lines of division existed in the world by God's design: the pro-Semite line and the anti-Semite line. This "enmity" is the Satanic cause of anti-Semitism, as Delaney states:

*What causes this deep-seated hatred toward the Jewish people? In one word - Satan. ... In this great prototype of the Gospel [Gen. 3:15], God spells out the conflict of the ages. The serpent is Satan, and his seed is the children of {114} darkness; the woman is Israel, and her seed is Christ. The English word enmity comes from the same root as the word enemy. Thus, we see in this great prophecy that Satan will be the enemy of Israel and his hatred for her will exist until her seed, the Messiah, crushes the old serpent's head. Anti-Semitism finds its source in the mind of Satan.*⁶³

What began in the Garden of Eden continues to this very day and will until Jesus the Messiah returns. This is affirmed by Fuchs:

*The struggle which started in Genesis continues through the ages. Later God chose a people, Israel, so that there might be a line for the Lord Jesus Christ. We must never forget that the enmity of Satan against the Jews is because God chose them as His channel of blessing for the whole world.*⁶⁴

Second, Satan's attack on the godly line in general is illustrated in the life of Job (1:6-12; 2:1-6; etc.). As the nation of Israel would again look back on this historical narrative, it would be reminded that behind many of their struggles and sufferings was the invisible war

⁶⁰ John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, p. 101-2; also p. 103. For a rabbinic view of Satan's accusing and inciting work against Israel, see C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 71-72, 98-99, 149, 168-69, 528-29, 535, 584-86; also see Elliot N. Dorff, "God and the Holocaust," *Judaism* 26 (Winter 1977); 31.

⁶¹ Feinberg, p. 53. See also Evans, pp. 120-28.

⁶² For a more detailed explained of Satan in the Old Testament see David L. Cooper, *Mand: His Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Glorification*, pp. 27-47; Dennis F. Kinlaw "The Demythologization of the Demonic in the Old Testament." in *Demon Possession; A Medical, Historical, Anthropological and theological Symposium*, pp. 29-35; Rivkah Scharf Kluger, *Satan in the Old Testament*; and Unger.

⁶³ Terryl Delaney, "Why Do People Hate the Jews?" *The Chosen People* 88 (November 1981): 10.

⁶⁴ Daniel Fuchs, "Satan's Rebellion Against God," *The Chosen People* 88 (November 1981): 6. Feinberg remarks on God's faithfulness in protecting the chosen line until the coming of the Messiah, "The line had been kept pure in spite of the attempts of Satan to destroy the seed" (p. 125). See also *Pascal's Pensees*, p. 200.

between God and Satan (cf. Ezek. 14:14,20; James 5:11). This would be a particularly relevant message for those who, like Job, belonged to the believing remnant.

The attack on the nation Israel in particular can be seen on three major fronts. First, Satan stood up against Israel in provoking David to number the people of Israel (1 Chron. 21:1; cf. Ps. 109:6). Actually God was using Satan (as he always does) to discipline Israel (2 Sam. 24:1), but David was, nevertheless, led away from trusting God by taking the census. He was moved to trust numbers and soldiers instead. Second, Satan stood up against Joshua the High Priest in Zechariah's day (Zech. 3:1-2). As Joshua was ministering before the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to accuse him, but the Lord rebuked him. This adequately prepared the way for the return of the priestly ministry in the post-captivity community. And third, Satan attempted to argue over the body of Moses, but Israel's guardian angel, Michael (Dan. 12:1), rebuked him again in the name of the Lord (Jude 9). This dispute demonstrated the tenacity of the devil against Israel and her theocratic legislator. It also exhibited God's sovereign, but unseen, angelic agents ministering on behalf of the nation in general.

The New Testament Perspective

Once again, Satan's strategy in the New Testament can be seen in two particular phases: first, in his attack on the manchild (i.e. Jesus the Messiah at His first advent); and second, in his attack on the woman (i.e. the nation Israel at Jesus' second advent).

The key passage for the record of this two-fold attack is Revelation 12. In capsule form, the Apostle John (himself a part of the present-day believing remnant) recorded the satanic strategy during the period that encompasses the two advents of Jesus Christ.⁶⁵ John is not concerned with the inter-advent period at this point, {115} but rather the two comings alone. For Satan launches his two most significant attacks on these two fronts.

Before reviewing these two assaults it should be noticed that three significant features about Satan are recorded in Revelation 12: (1) his titles, such as "the great dragon" (12:9, cf. vv. 3-4,7,13,16-17; referring to his power), "the serpent of old" (12:9, cf. v. 5) (2) his functions, such as deceiving the whole world (12:9) and accusing the brethren (12:10); and (3) his opposition, such as the merits of Christ's death (12:11), the word of the believers' testimony (12:11,17), their spirit of martyrdom (12:11), and their obedience to the commandments of God (12:17).

The attack on the manchild at the first advent: Satan launched his first attack on Christ at His birth (Rev. 12:1-5). This began with the slaughter of the babes by Herod, the precursor to Satan's final Antichrist (Matt. 2: 13-21). Is it any wonder that the Lord called Satan "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44)? The attack, however, did not stop with the birth of the Messiah, it continued through His temptation (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13, especially v.13), His controversies with the Pharisees (John 8:44 etc.), His interaction with Peter (Matt. 16:16-23; Luke 22:31-32), His confrontation with Judas Iscariot (Luke 22: 3-6; John 6:70-71; 13:21-30), and finally His own crucifixion (Col.2:13-15; etc.).

⁶⁵ See Gary G. Cohen, *Understanding Revelation: A Chronology of the Apocalypse*, pp. 134-39; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, pp. 165-75; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 234-47; and John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 187-98. Also, along with these works on the Book of Revelation, see Walter K. Price, *The Coming Antichrist*, pp. 187-90.

The attack on the woman at the second advent: Satan will launch his second attack on Israel in mid-Tribulation (Rev. 12:13-17). Once again, as God protected Jesus at His birth (as well as the other attacks during His life), so He will miraculously protect the believing remnant during this period of time. It is at this time, as Barnhouse says, that “Satan flings himself against the Jews in one final paroxysm of fury.”⁶⁶ This is the time that Satan’s superman, the Antichrist, will be on the loose, attempting to utterly destroy Israel (cf. Rev. 13; 2. Thess. 2:3-12; Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:24-27; etc.). It will be the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7ff. Ezek. 20:33-38; Matt. 24:15-22; etc.), when two-thirds of the Jews in the land will be slaughtered, the worst Holocaust that they will ever have to face (cf. Zech. 13:7-9 etc.).⁶⁷

One question still remains concerning this final attack by Satan on the woman. When the devil is thrown down to earth and when he knows that he only has “a short time” (Rev. 12:9,12), why does he set out to persecute Israel (Rev. 12:13)? First, he cannot attack the manchild, who is now waiting in heaven for His eventual rule over the nations (Rev. 12:5). He is not only out of reach, but He is no {116} longer a defenseless child - He is the Messianic King, having all the authority of God (Rev. 12:10). So, second, Satan must turn his fury on the woman who gave birth to the child, the nation Israel. If he can utterly wipe her off the face of the earth, Christ cannot come back at His second advent. Without a covenant people to receive His covenant promises, the program of God comes to a grinding halt. That is why Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, those who led the nation in their rejection of His Messiahship, that until they say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” they would not see Him again (Matt. 23:37-39). This confession must come from the religious leaders themselves. That is why Satan’s repeated attacks against the nation have been against the leaders (eg. Moses, David, Joshua the High Priest; etc). In other words, the second advent of Christ is conditioned upon the remnant coming to faith, being led by their religious leaders. That is the major purpose for the time of Jacob’s trouble (cf. Ezek. 20:33-38; Zech. 13:8-9; Luke 21:20-24; Rom. 11:25-27; etc.).

This puts the Holocaust in a completely different light. Down through the centuries, including the Holocaust years, Satan has been attempting to annihilate the Jewish people. Before the first coming of Christ it was so that the Messianic line might be utterly cut off, thus preventing the birth of the Savior. After the first coming it is so that there will be no covenant people left for whom the Savior can return. All of the covenant promises would then go unfulfilled (utterly impossible because of the character of God) and the program of God would collapse. The Holocaust was one of Satan’s best shots (perhaps his best shot up to this point) to accomplish this demonic goal. Greenberg realizes this when he says, “Since there can be no covenant without the covenant people, the fundamental existence of Jews and Judaism is thrown into question by this genocide.”⁶⁸

Not only was Hitler demon possessed and governed by Satan⁶⁹, but he paved the way for the final Hitlerian ruler, the Antichrist. In speaking of Hitler, Price makes the following remark:

⁶⁶ Barnhouse, p. 281

⁶⁷ See David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah*, pp. 419-532; Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, pp. 330-44; Raymond Hyman Saxe, *Israel’s Future Triumph: An Exposition of Zechariah 12-14*; and Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory.*, pp. 206-71.

⁶⁸ Irving Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Holocaust,” in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*, p. 8.

⁶⁹ See Jean-Michel Angebert, *The Occult and the Third Reich: The Mystical Origins of Nazism and the Search for the Holy Grail*; Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p. 231; Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical*

*Are we to see more in this man than just a defeated tyrant who articulated, and then implemented, a particularly virulent type of anti-Semitism? Were his aspirations for Nordic superiority at the cost of the annihilation of an entire nationality of people and his designs for personal aggrandizement merely the apparitions of a madman consumed with a pathological hatred for the Jews? Or was he the precursor of an even more sinister figure who will soon follow upon the stage of world history to reap an even greater horror upon the Jews?*⁷⁰

The Holocaust was a satanic onslaught that fell short of its intended goal - the extermination of the entire Jewish race (i.e. genocide). But nevertheless, it carried with it all the demonic fury that Satan could muster through Hitler and the Nazis. This is affirmed in a dramatic way by Israel Knox:

*The animosity of the Nazis for the Jews was irrational and pathological, and the resolve to bring about their total liquidation by means of a carefully {117} planned process of genocide was at once so shrewd and so diabolical that only such as were equally demonic could envisage it, least of all the Jews, who, through the victims of persecution throughout two millennia, were not practitioners of it. ... In Milton's **Paradise Lost**, Lucifer avers: "Evil, be thou my good." When evil is no longer just a deviation from the good, a heresy within the sphere of the good, but is itself enthroned as the good, then the moral universe has been turned upside down and the sovereignty of Satan has been established. The Holocaust Kingdom was the kingdom of Satan and those who served him. Isaiah's exhortation: "Woe unto those who call evil good, and good evil," was exchanged for Lucifer's challenge: "Evil, be thou my good" - and the logic of the Holocaust was now crystal-clear: it was the logic of a party, a country, a people, that proclaimed Lucifer, in the guise of Hitler, to be king, and decided to call evil good and to conduct themselves accordingly.⁷¹*

And yet there awaits in the wings of history another Holocaust, more demonic and more satanic - the final Holocaust for the Jewish people. Unger describes the satanic madness that will govern the final tribulation period, just prior to Jesus' return to set up His Messianic kingdom:

The mad cry will arise: "On to Jerusalem! Annihilate the Jew! Banish the names of God and Christ from the earth!" It will be the most desperate and devastating outburst of anti-Semitism the world has ever seen, the heinous culmination of demonic malignity and hatred against God and His plans for the earth. It will end in the colossal defeat and wholesale destruction of the impious armies by the glorious revelation of the all-conquering Christ from heaven, defending His earthly people Israel, slaying His enemies, consigning the beast and false

Demonology, pp. 197-98; etc. McCandlish Phillips, in *The Bible, the Supernatural, and the Jews*, says "Steal the influence of the Bible, once so great, away from the German youth and you have, at the end, a generation of storm troopers and goose-steppers - a youth mobilized by Satan for great destruction" (p. 78).

⁷⁰ Walter K. Price, *Next Year in Jerusalem*, pp. 111-12.

⁷¹ Jacob Glatstein, Israel Knox, and Samuel Margoshes, eds., *Anthology of Holocaust Literature*, pp. xviii-xix, xxii-xxiii. Gerald Green, in his novel *Holocaust*, put these real-to-life words on the lips of one of his characters who has spent some time in his first concentration camp, "I never really believed in Satan, or that there was pure evil in the world, until I came here" (p. 354).

prophet to Gehenna and Satan to the abyss, and setting up His own righteous and peaceful kingdom upon the earth (Rev. 19:11 - 20:3).⁷²

The Perspective of a Biblical Theodicy

Introduction

Having focused on the perspectives of contemporary Judaism, the biblical covenants, and the nation Israel, it is now imperative that the difficult problem of a biblical theodicy be addressed.

*Christianity (like Judaism and Islam) is committed to a monotheistic doctrine of God as absolute in goodness and power and as the creator of the universe **ex nihilo**. The challenge of the fact of evil to this faith has accordingly been formulated as a dilemma: If God is all-powerful, He must be able to prevent evil.... But evil exists. Therefore God is either not all-powerful or not all-good. A theodicy (from *theos*, god, and *dike*, justice) is accordingly an attempt to reconcile the unlimited goodness of an all-powerful God with the reality of evil.⁷³*

{118} In a world deeply troubled with evil and suffering theodicy is worthy of any man's thinking and pondering. The Holocaust poses an immense problem for those attempting to devise a biblical theodicy, especially among Jewish philosophers, theologians and rabbis. The existential reality of Nazi evil and suffering has caused many Jewish thinkers to reject any possibility of developing an adequate theodicy – God's action, or lack of action, during the rise and fall of the Third Reich can never be justified. Primo Levi, an Italian Jew and survivor of Auschwitz, recounts the persistent memories of the personal evil and suffering which he saw and experienced during his enslavement:

They crowd my memory with their faceless presences, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen.⁷⁴

Another survivor, Alexander Donat, one who escaped the Warsaw ghetto as well as Hitler's death camps, years later wrote to his grandson about the evil of the Holocaust, as well as the implications of that evil upon religious Judaism:

*The Holocaust was for every survivor a crucial religious experience. Day-in and day-out we cried out for a sign of God's presence. In the ghettos and in the death camps, before the gallows and the doors of gas chambers, when confronted with **ultimate incredible evil**, we cried: "Lord, where art Thou?" We sought Him, and we didn't find Him. The acute awareness of **God's puzzling and humiliating absence** was always with us. Memory of this experience is always with us...*

⁷² Unger, pp. 208-9. See also pp. 210-13

⁷³ *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Evil, The Problem of," by John Hick, 3:136

⁷⁴ Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, p. 82

*The far-reaching religious implications of the Holocaust have by no means been explored, nor has the process of coming to grips with its meaning been completed. It implies a profound revolution in the basic tenets of Judaism, and the rise of a new set of Judaic values. (emphases added)*⁷⁵

A further word must be added at this point before embarking on the task that lies ahead. In approaching the problem of evil and theodicy, it must be remembered that man faces certain inherent limitations in penetrating these issues. Berkouwer suggests that three factors limit one's knowledge in these matters. First, there is the common failure to reckon with the real and concrete wrath of God as it is revealed in Scripture. This, in turn, greatly impoverishes {119} one's experience with the holiness of God. When considering evil in all its forms, one must keep in mind that God is not only presently revealing his wrath from heaven (Rom. 1:18 ff.), but will also do so in the future, for all eternity (2 Thess. 1:6-10 etc.). In other words, God has not made His final statement as yet concerning evil. Second, there is human guilt as a real limitation to one's thought and understanding. Real moral guilt not only accounts for much human evil and suffering, but also prevents the human mind from clearly penetrating the mist of divine providence in matters of suffering and evil. And third, the neglecting of the Church's doxology also places a severe limitation on one's perception and experience of evil and suffering. The Church is assured that God has all things under His sovereign control and that He is working all things together for her good (Rom. 8:28-39; etc.). The Church may not always understand God's superintending of His creation, but she can rest in faith that He is about His business and will eventually bring all things to the light of His holiness (cf. Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 4:5; 13:12; etc.). Berkouwer summarizes:

*With this we deal with the profoundest point in all reflection on the problem of theodicy: is it possible to stand in this evil world and sing a doxology in the face of the incomprehensibility of God's world rule?*⁷⁶

This section will first look at theodicy from a philosophical perspective and then from a theological perspective.

A Philosophical Perspective of Theodicy

Two basic philosophical positions will be surveyed and found to be acceptable when applied to the evil of the Holocaust. Both will be contrasted with other possible positions on the specific matters dealt with and the implications of both will be developed. Actually, the two acceptable positions are closely related. The first deals with the possibility of a divine Creator, a certain kind of divine Creator - One who is both infinite and personal. This is called theism. The second deals with the possibility of a divine creation, a certain kind of

⁷⁵ Donat, pp. 43-4.

⁷⁶ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, p. 266. Culver Reaffirms that this "incomprehensibility of God's world rule" is at the heart of a true biblical theodicy when he says: "Now it is a matter of considerable importance that the Bible nowhere attempts to justify God (theodicy) in allowing evil in the world... Furthermore, the Bible makes no bones about assigning the existence of evil to the permission of God's government - providence" (Robert D. Culver, "The Nature and Origin of Evil," *BS* 129 [April-June 1972]: 107). Hick also affirms that "mystery" is the only positive answer to innocent suffering: "Our 'solution', then, to this baffling problem of excessive and undeserved suffering is a frank appeal to the positive value of Mystery. Such suffering remains unjust and inexplicable, haphazard and cruelly excessive. The mystery of dysteleological suffering is a real mystery, impenetrable to the rationalizing mind" (John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 371)

divine creation - one which is moral and fallen. This is called depravity. In other words, the first acceptable philosophical position deals with God's person, while the second deals with God's action (specifically in the kind of world that He has created). Only an understanding of both of these positions can bring a satisfactory explanation of evil and suffering (i.e., theodicy), especially the evil and suffering of the Holocaust.

In developing the theistic explanation of evil, Geisler presents two types of theistic options, demonstrating that only biblical theism is acceptable.⁷⁷ He then goes on to relate this position to the metaphysical and the moral problem of evil.⁷⁸

The Greatest World

The first acceptable philosophical position then is that of theism itself. Two basic options are open to a theism that adequately seeks to explain the evil in our world. First, there is "the greatest world" theodicy. This was advocated both by Augustine (354-430) and Leibniz (1646-1716). It maintains that of all the worlds that God could have created, this present world is the best of all worlds. The {120} present evil in the world is absolutely necessary in order to highlight the good in the world. It is also maintained that the very nature of God demands this view of the world. If God is the best of all beings (which He is), then the world that He creates must also be the best of all worlds (i.e., the world must reflect His character). There are at least two basic reasons that "the greatest world" theodicy is not the best theistic explanation of evil. It tends to pronounce evil as good, or at least have a distorted view of evil. And it tends to justify evil in view of some alleged overall good that it is supposed to portray.

The Greatest Way

A better option open to a theism that adequately seeks to explain the evil in the world is "the greatest way" theodicy. This has been advocated by various individuals, including Aquinas (1225-74). It does not maintain that this world is the best of all possible worlds. Quite the contrary, it insists that this world is thoroughly run over by evil and suffering. However, it also maintains that this present evil world is the best possible way to the best possible world.

In order to fully understand "the greatest way" theodicy Geisler applies it both to the metaphysical problem of evil and then to the moral problem of evil. The metaphysical problem of evil can be stated in the following manner: God is the author of everything; therefore, He must be the Author of evil as well. The solution to this problem is to be found in what Augustine called "privation." Evil is not a thing or a substance, but rather a privation or lack of something that should rightly be there. Augustine substantiated this concept by two postulates. First, God is totally good, and therefore, all created things are good as well. They were created good, but then became evil through privation or corruption. Second, evil does not exist in itself, but only in another as a corruption of it; therefore, evil is an ontological parasite. Augustine went on to make it clear that privation is not the same thing as mere absence or negation. But rather privation is the absence or lack of something that ought to be there (e.g., the lack of sight in a rock is merely an absence, but in a blind man it is a true privation).

⁷⁷ Geisler, *The Roots of Evil*, pp. 43-45

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-52. See also Geisler and Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, pp. 321-35

But the obvious question naturally arises: what is the source of such a privation? Augustine answered this question in two ways. First, God is the supreme and incorruptible good. He, therefore, created His creation good, in fact, “very good” (Gen. 1:31). And then His creation underwent corruption and experienced privation (cf. Gen. 3). God in His perfection cannot be destroyed, but His creation can. If something is created or composed then it can, by its very nature, be destroyed or decomposed. Second, it was free choice that led to privation. Man in his finitude has been given free moral choices and these choices are what lead to privation. Therefore, the metaphysical problem of evil is not really metaphysical at all, it is moral. Moral pride leads to free choices contrary to the revealed will of God and thus produces the evil of privation. Therefore, free choice arising out of moral pride is the first cause of evil. There is no other cause, especially metaphysical. And it must be concluded that the ultimate solution, therefore, to the metaphysical problem of evil is moral.

{121} Having applied “the greatest way” theodicy to the metaphysical problem of evil, Geisler then applies it to the moral problem of evil. This is both logical and necessary, since the ultimate solution to the metaphysical problem of evil is moral. There are two sources to the moral problem of evil. First, man in his finitude makes evil possible. And second, free choice by man is what has led to the reality of evil. Many Holocaust theologians appeal to this free moral choice in man as the ultimate cause of the Holocaust.⁷⁹ It was not God who caused it, but man in his morally depraved condition.

But the question must be asked: why did an absolute good God make creatures with free moral choice when He knew that they would choose evil? Geisler answers that only one of two responses can apply. First, is the response of “necessitarianism.” This can be traced back to pantheism, Plotinus (205-70), the founder of Neoplatonism, and through Spinoza (1631-77). It basically affirms that God, by His very nature, had to create. For the pantheist, creation flows necessarily from the very nature of God. This answer must be rejected as unnecessary and incorrect, for God does not have to do anything other than that which He wills to do. A second response is therefore better. It is the response of “self-determinism.” God created His world with free choice because He simply chose to do so. It was His own free choice, not made under any compulsion or restraint. This reflects His sovereign rule over everything.

The second acceptable philosophical position deals with the kind of creation that the God of biblical theism might have created. Is this present evil world the only acceptable creation that would accurately reflect the true nature of the God of biblical theism? Or were there other possible worlds that He could have created that would have reflected His perfections and

⁷⁹ See Robert Gordis, *A Faith for Moderns*, pp. 159-252; Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom*; Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism*, p. 35; Jack Bemporad, “Toward a New Jewish Theology,” *American Judaism* 14 (Winter 1964-65): 9, 50-51; Eliezer Berkovits, “Death of God,” *Judaism* 20 (Winter 1971): 84; Jerome Eckstein, “The Holocaust and Jewish Theology,” *Midstream* 23 (April 1977): 42-43; Emil L. Fackenheim, “Human Freedom and Divine Power,” *Judaism* 12 (Summer 1963): 338-43; Robert Gordis, “A Cruel God or None – Is There No Other Choice?” *Judaism* 21 (Summer 1972): 281-2; Yehiel Ilzar, “Theological Aspects of the Holocaust,” *Encounter* 42 (Spring 1981): 121, 125, 130; Norman Lamm, “Faith and Doubt,” *Tradition* 9 (Spring-Summer 1967): 43-45; Hershel J. Matt, “Man’s Choice and God’s Design,” *Judaism* 21 (Spring 1972) 219; Herbert H. Rose, “Auschwitz and God,” *The Jewish Spectator* 32 (February 1967): 8; Byron L. Sherwin, “The Impotence of Explanation and the European Holocaust,” *Tradition* 12 (Winter-Spring 1972): 105; Seymour Siegel, “Theological Reflections on the Destruction of European Jewry,” *Conservative Judaism* 18(Summer 1964): 4; and David Wolf Silverman, “The Holocaust: A Living Force,” *USQR* 32 (Spring & Summer 1977): 139.

purposes just as well? Again, Geisler suggests that only four possible options come into view when considering the various worlds that God could have made.

No World

The first moral option was “no world.” The theistic God could have chosen not to create any world at all.

Amoral World

The second moral option was an “amoral world.” God could have chosen to make a world without free creatures in it.

Morally Innocent World

The third moral option was a “morally innocent world.” God could have brought about a world where creatures were free but where they would never sin. This would have been a world where free men would simply never choose to exercise their free choice to do evil.

{122} Morally Fallen World

The fourth and last moral option was a “morally fallen world.” God could have created a world where men were free and also did evil. This is the world that He did create. It is not the best of all worlds, but it is the way to the best of all worlds. Some theists argue that God’s love eventually will win over all men (i.e., “soul-making”). This form of universalism neglects two major factors. First, the Bible does not affirm such a matter. Quite the contrary, the Old and New Testaments alike, if taken at face value, continually affirm that God will eventually separate the righteous from the unrighteous, the former to eternal blessing and the latter to eternal judgment (cf. Dan. 12:1-2; Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; etc.). And second, this view is a distortion of God’s love. Love does not coerce nor pressure. It waits patiently for a reciprocal response of love (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-7). It allows the loved one to decide for himself (i.e., “soul-deciding”). God, in His love for His creatures granted them the free choice of responding or not responding to His matchless love and grace.

One final question must be answered in regard to a philosophical perspective of theodicy. Granted that this is the best way to the best possible world and that this world is a morally fallen world, was it still necessary for God to allow so much evil and suffering in it? In other words, why has God allowed so much evil and suffering in this world that He created, especially the suffering of “six million” Jewish people? Could He not have accomplished His divine purposes for this world, as well as the world to come, with a lesser degree of evil and suffering in this present world?

Of course, God could have prevented the terrible degree of evil and suffering in the Holocaust, for He is all-powerful (i.e., omnipotent). And if He could have, He would have, all other things being equal, for He is all-loving. But apparently all other things were not equal. For God is also all-knowing (i.e., omniscient) and that means that the degree of evil and suffering that He does allow is the exact amount needed to accomplish the greatest good for man, as well as the greatest glory for Himself (if not in this present world, certainly in the one to come). A major part of the problem is that man is not all-knowing, and therefore, in

his finitude he must trust that God knows best and does best. This is not always easy, especially when one is caught in the fury of the evil and suffering of the Holocaust. That is why the Talmud says: "It is not in our power fully to explain either the prosperity of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous" (Pirke Aboth 4:15).

A Theological Perspective of Theodicy

Having examined the problem of evil and suffering from a philosophical viewpoint, it is now imperative that the theological viewpoint be considered. Specific Doctrinal Positions

In recent days some have tried to relate certain specific doctrinal positions to a biblical theodicy.⁸⁰ Using selected categories of systematic theology, they have {123} addressed themselves to the issue of evil and suffering. It is needful that several more categories of systematic theology be applied to this same problem.

Bibliology

The first category to be investigated is bibliology, the doctrine of the Bible. Two specific factors come into focus. First, related to the time periods of the Bible, is the unique portrayal of the dispensations. Each one of these specific time periods or economies is set up by God to test man in some specific ways in regard to His clearly revealed will.⁸¹ And each one of these historical dispensations ends in utter failure and judgment. Geisler suggests that at least two purposes surface in God's dispensational plan for the ages:

*First, He wants to prove to the universe (of rational creatures) that creatures always fail and bring evil (not good) on themselves when they disobey God's commands. Second, and conversely, God wants to prove that it is always right to obey His commands, for when individuals do they bring good and blessing on themselves. In that way heaven can be full of free creatures and yet justly rule out any rebellion again.*⁸²

A second factor also comes into focus in the doctrine of the Bible. Related to the supernatural origin of the Bible is the role of biblical prophecy and its fulfillment. The Bible does not predict that the world will end on a positive, victorious note, but rather that it will end in utter rebellion and judgment at the return of Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 1:3 - 2:12; Rev. 19:11-21; etc.). As the world has bathed itself in evil and suffering for all of its existence, so it will end in the same bitter fashion. The Bible truly gives an accurate picture of the world in its rebellion against its Creator, with all of the expected consequences for both man and God, and man with man. This is especially true of the prophetic picture of the nation Israel, including the suffering of the Holocaust.

Theology Proper

The second category is theology proper, the doctrine of God. As has been stated above, God must always act in total accordance with His nature. And His attributes reveal His character. Whatever the Holocaust meant, it certainly cannot be viewed apart from God's attributes. His holiness, justice, love, goodness, truth, freedom, omnipotence,

⁸⁰ See Geisler, "God, Evil and Dispensations," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, pp. 95-112.

⁸¹ See Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 22-64

⁸² Geisler, p. 104

immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, and sovereignty must all be brought to bear on the evil and suffering of the Holocaust. For whatever happened during that brief period, it in no way compromised on any of these attributes of God.

One example will suffice to illustrate this point. The Apostle Peter makes the following statement which reflects upon one aspect of the character of God (2 Pet. 3:9, 15):

“The Lord is not slow about His promise [of the second coming of Jesus], as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for {124} all to come to repentance... and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation....”

The second coming of the Lord will mark the end of all evil and suffering (2 Pet. 3:10-13), but as yet this anticipated coming has not arrived. Why the God so long delayed the alleviation of such suffering and misery (i.e., by not sending Christ)? The answer to this question is based on His character - God is patient or longsuffering. It is His great desire that all come to repentance which leads to salvation. He does not desire any one to perish in judgment. Therefore, He delays His coming so that those who will come to repentance (e.g., perhaps even through much suffering as in the Holocaust) might experience the greater good of salvation. His patience is prompted by His love, which is one of His attributes.

Angelology

The third category is angelology, the doctrine of angels, including Satan and demons. Two important factors relate to this doctrine. First, God's elect angels were certainly at work on behalf of the elect of the Church, especially the remnant of Israel, the Jewish Christians who suffered in the Holocaust (cf. Heb. 1:13-14). But, second, it is also true that Satan and his demons were heavily at work, trying to stamp out the nation of Israel.

Anthropology

The fourth category is anthropology, the doctrine of man. Suffering not only will produce God's greater glory, but also man's (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17; etc.). Suffering also will produce man's greater good (cf. Gen. 50:20; Job. 23:10; Rom. 5:20; 8:28; etc.). This is sufficient a theodicy in and of itself. But added to this is the biblical teaching on man's free, moral nature. As stated above, he is a free, moral creature, responsible for all of his actions and reactions.

Hamartiology

The fifth category is hamartiology, the doctrine of sin. Certainly the Holocaust bears witness to the biblical testimony concerning man's sinfulness, both his sinful nature (cf. Pss. 51:5; 58:3; Eph. 2:3; 4:18; etc.) and his sinful acts (cf. 1 John 1:8-10; etc.). The Bible well describes man as a sinner, potentially capable of any crime on the face of the earth. Apart from the grace of God every man could potentially be transformed into a Hitler.

Soteriology

The sixth category is soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. At least two factors can be related to this doctrine. First, it was evil itself that brought the Messiah to His eternally appointed death (cf. Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 3:18; etc.). He who was without sin came to remove sin and all of the suffering that results from it (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). And second, it is certainly true that men only come to God for salvation in their moment of personal need, sometimes in the frantic moments of suffering and desperation.

{125} Ecclesiology

The seventh category is ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. Again, two factors can be related to this doctrine. First, the Holocaust brought out the unique commitment of the body of Christ, the true church, as Gentile believers sought to hide many Jews from the invading Nazis.⁸³ They truly laid down their lives as Christ had (cf. 1 John 3:16-18; etc.). But second, the Holocaust also brought out the true nature of the false church, the apostate church, which not only denied the Savior, but also thousands of Jews and non-Jews fleeing from the Nazis.⁸⁴ In fact, in many cases, the apostate church actually helped in the slaughter of the helpless victims.⁸⁵

Eschatology

The eighth category is eschatology, the doctrine of last things. Once again, at least two factors can be related to this doctrine. First, if the Holocaust demonstrates anything, it is that worse is to come (cf. Zech. 13; etc.). In fact, the Holocaust is almost a precursor of what the Jewish people must face in the future, just prior to the Lord's return (cf. Matt. 24; Jer. 30; etc.). And second, the future holds a positive outlook, for God's eternal judgment will come and a new world will follow, one without any evil or suffering (cf. Dan. 12:1-3; 2 Thess. 1:3 - 2:12; 2 Pet. 3:1-13; Rev. 19:11 - 22:21). Israel will once again find herself at her rightful place, as the head of the nations (cf. Deut. 28:1-14; Zech. 14:16-21; etc.). Israel awaits her future worst holocaust, but it will certainly be her last.⁸⁶

⁸³ See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison; No Rusty Swords*; Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers*; Philip Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood be Shed*; Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, *He Who Saves One Life*; Fernande Leboucher, *Incredible Mission*; Linette Linette Martin, *Hans Rookmaaker, A Biography*; Basil Miller, *Martin Niemoeller: Hero of the Concentration Camp*; Jack Overduin, *Faith and Victory in Dachau*; Alexander Ramati, *The Assisi Underground: The Priests Who Rescued Jews*; Johan M. Snoek, *The Grey Book: A Copllection of Protests Against Anti-Semitism and the Persecution of Jews Issued by Non-Roman Catholic Churches and Church Leaders During Hitler's Rule*; and Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*; and *A Prisoner and Yet...*

⁸⁴ See Rachmiel Frydland, *When Being Jewish was a Crime*; etc.

⁸⁵ See John S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-1945*; *EJ*, s.v. "Holocaust and the Christian Churches," 8:910-16; Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The German Churches under Hitler: Background, Struggle, and Epilogue*; Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*; Peter Matheson, ed., *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*; John F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust 1939-1943*; Clark M. Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?*, pp. 125-58; and Gordon C. Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars: a Study in Social Control*.

⁸⁶ See Daniel Fuchs, "Satan and the Final Holocaust." *The Chosen People*, July 1982, pp. 12-13; Louis Goldberg, "Another Holocaust," *Issues* 3 (1982): 1-4; and Harold A. Sevener, "The Holocaust: Will It Ever Happen Again?" *The Chosen People*, July 1982, pp. 3-6. Richard L. Rubenstein expresses his "radical" view of eschatology in the following words: "Messianism's real meaning is the proclamation of the end of history and the return to nature and nature's cyclical repetitiveness. The end of history is characterized by the return to nature and its vicissitudes rather than the abolition of nature's tragic and inevitable necessities. History does not

Christology

The ninth category is Christology, the doctrine of Christ, in His person and work. As mentioned above in soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), Christ certainly came to die for all of the evil and suffering in the world. But He also came with a unique relationship to the Jewish people. The Lord in His incarnation was born, lived, died, and rose again as a Jew, on Jewish soil (cf. Rom. 1:1-4; etc.). He knew and loved His brethren according to the flesh. And He will one day return and reign as their Davidic king and Messiah (cf. Luke 1:26-38; Rev. 5:1-14; 12:5; 19:11-16; etc.). As He wept over Jerusalem because of her rejection of His Messiahship (Matt. 23:37-39), so He must certainly weep over her bitter calamity during the twentieth century. In fact, His lament over the city of Jerusalem undoubtedly saw her destruction down through the ages (cf. Luke 21:20-24).

Pneumatology

The tenth and final category is pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Again, the Spirit's work must be obvious to any observing the Holocaust from a biblical and theological perspective. His restraining ministry prevented two thirds of the Jewish people from being slaughtered (cf. Gen. 6:3; 2 Thess. 2:6-9). His convicting and regenerating ministries brought many Jews and non-Jews into a saving knowledge of the Messiah (cf. John 3:3-8; 16:7-11; Titus 3:4-7). He was at work before, during, and after the Holocaust, in bringing glory to the Saviour (John 15:26; 16:14).

{126} Specific Biblical Purposes

Having related certain specific doctrinal positions to a biblical theodicy, it now is fitting to relate certain specific biblical purposes to this same biblical theodicy. The Bible makes it clear that all humanity can be divided into major groups: the Church, the Gentiles, and the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32; etc.). And it will now be demonstrated that although all three groups experience evil and suffering for some similar purposes, each group individually also experiences these for quite unique purposes.

The Church

First, why does the Church experience evil and suffering in this present world? The New Testament cites eleven reasons or purposes for the Church's experience with evil and suffering in this present world: (1) to share in Christ's sufferings (Rom. 8:16-17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:13-14); (2) to draw us near to Christ, our faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 10:19-25); (3) to conform us to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:26-30); (4) to cause us to grow in the faith (Rom. 5:30; James 1:2-4; 2 Pet. 1:2-11); (5) to purify our faith and give us a greater love for Christ (1 Pet. 1:3-9; 4:1-3); (6) to discipline or child train us so we can share in His holiness (Heb. 12:5-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 11:17-34; cf. Heb. 2:10;

conclude with the abolition but with the restoration of *ananke* (necessity). Now nature's inevitabilities are seen as part of the tragic course of existence itself rather than as God's retaliation against human sinfulness... I believe that eschatology is a sickness with which man conceals from himself the tragic and ultimately hopeless character of his fate. There is only one Messiah who redeems us from the irony, the travail, and the limitations of human existence. Surely he will come. He is the Angel of Death. Death is the true Messiah and the land of the dead place of God's true kingdom. Only in death are we redeemed from the vicissitudes of human existence. We enter God's kingdom only when we enter His holy Nothingness. Eschatology has absolutely no meaning in terms of earthly existence. I do not desire to enter God's kingdom, because I prefer the problematics of finitude to their dissolution in the nothingness of eternity. No actual historical event can be identified with the coming of His kingdom" *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, pp. 135, 198.

5:8); (7) to give us a life message of comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-7); (8) to prepare us for glory and honor (Rom. 5:2; 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 Pet. 1:6-7); (9) to give us a greater experience with His grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10); (10) to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:12-19); and (11) to remind us of “old” truth (2 Pet. 1:12-15).

The Gentiles

Second, why do the Gentiles experience this same evil and suffering in this world? The New Testament again cites three specific purposes for the unbelieving Gentiles to experience evil and suffering in this present world: (1) to be exposed to God’s present wrath for suppressing the truth (John 3:16-19, 36; Rom. 1:18-32); (2) to act as a forewarning against God’s future wrath (Eph. 2:3; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; cf. 1 Pet. 4:17-18); and (3) to be drawn to the Spirit’s convicting and regenerating ministry (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; cf. John 3:1-8; 16:7-11; Titus 3:5).

The Jews

And third, why do the Jews experience this same evil and suffering in this world? The Bible records four major purposes for the unbelieving Jews’ experience of this world’s evil and suffering: (1) to receive punishment for specific covenant {127} violations (Lev. 26; Deut. 28-30; etc.); (2) to vindicate God’s own name before the Gentiles (Ezek. 20: 1-32, 44; 36:22, 32; etc.); (3) to receive discipline for the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus [as a result of the worldwide scattering in A.D. 70]⁸⁷ and for preventing the spread of His gospel [also resulting in the worldwide dispersion in A.D. 70] (Luke 21: 20-24; Eph. 2: 3; 1 Thess. 2: 13-16; etc); and (4) to surface the godly, believing remnant (Rom. 11:13-14, 25-29; cf. Jer. 30: 1 – 31: 37; etc.).

Israel still awaits her future Messianic glory. In the meantime, she moves ever so precariously toward her future Holocaust. However, it must be remembered that until that time, and including that time, Israel remains “the apple of God’s eye” (Deut. 32: 8-10; Zech. 2: 8), and to tamper with her is to invite the judgment of God, either in a national or individual way (cf. Gen. 12: 3). It is as the Talmud rightly says: “He who plans evil against Israel is as if he had planned evil against God” (Eliyahu Rabbah, 7); and “To smite an Israelite is as if one smote the Shekinah” (Sanhedrin, 58). When Israel suffers, God suffers. And He will one day truly prove to be her Savior. For “in all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them; He lifted them and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63: 9). God’s eternal covenant program cannot be broken, for the very character of God depends upon it. It is as the prophet Samuel declared so long ago: “For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you [Israel] a people for himself” (1 Sam. 12: 22; cf. Rom. 11: 25-36).

⁸⁷ While acknowledging that the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus brought some kind of judgment upon the Jewish people as a whole (i.e., the worldwide scattering in A.D. 70), this is not to imply that every generation of Jews is personally responsible for the death of Christ (i.e., the deicide charge), nor that only the Jews of the first century were solely responsible for that same death (cf. Acts 4:27-28; etc.). In one sense, every man is responsible for the death of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-21; 1 John 2: 2; etc.), and in another sense God Himself is responsible (cf. Isa. 53: 6; Acts 4:28; etc.).

{136} WE CAN LOVE ISRAEL TOO MUCH¹

By Byron Spradlin

Senior pastor of New Hope Community Church in Cucamonga, California, and Executive director of Artists in Christian Testimony (A.C.T.).

Midway through a tour of Israel sponsored by that country's government, my particular group was entertained by a mysterious South African Jew named Stanley Goldfoot. After a charming time in his home, he directed our conversation to the rebuilding of the temple. Though he did not state it directly, Goldfoot led me to believe he would be willing to use force, if necessary, to wrest the Temple site from Muslim control in Jerusalem. And he explained how Christians could provide encouragement and financial support for just such a project.

His appeal did not surprise me, for I know there are militant Jews who would love to lay siege to the Temple Mount. What *did* surprise me was the seeming credulity among some in my group. They appeared to support fully the notion that occupying the temple site is central to the full redemption of the Jews. But what they, along with many Christians, fail to see, is that such blind support of Israel undermines the overall evangelical witness of the Church.

Blinded by Love

I realize that in the broadest sense, all who take the Bible seriously love Israel. Like most Christians, I genuinely love this land where Jesus walked. But is it possible to love Israel so much we fail to see a nation primarily made up of unrepentant people - people who in any other land would be referred to as lost? Says James Reapsome, editor of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*,

It is dangerously possible to be so enamored with the land, and to be so taken up with Israel's cause, that one can forget the desperate spiritual blindness engulfing Israel today.

One of the major factors contributing to this love affair with Israel is Israel itself. The government there openly courts American evangelical sentiment, fully aware of our political clout. They know that Americans of a liberal theological {137} persuasion generally favor Arab causes, but that conservatives see Israel as playing an important role in solving the prophetic puzzle of the end times.

That Israelis exploit our predisposition to their nation does not offend me. They have a right to try to influence American public opinion. My concern is that our lack of critical thinking about Israel's ultimate purpose deflects us from our own Christian agenda and hinders the indigenous Christian church in Israel.

A major part of that agenda is telling the lost about Jesus, something the Israeli government does not want Christians to do. The Jewish community has assumed for

¹ This article was originally published in the July 10, 1987 issue of *Christianity Today* (to whom belongs the copyright) and is reprinted by kind permission of both *Christianity Today* and Mr. Spradlin.

nearly 2,000 years that believing in Jesus means assimilation. Therefore, a Jew who declares allegiance to Jesus is declared a traitor and a non-Jew. One way to neutralize our efforts to evangelize Jews is to focus our attention on other matters. And the Israeli government has effectively done this by recruiting conservative Christians to the political cause.

A Gospel of Politics

Apparently, we are willing to play along. In spite of their frequent trips to Israel, conservative American Christians do precious little missionary work there. Some organizations, such as the International Christian Embassy, even boast of their “non-evangelical witness.” That is, they do not present Christ to Jewish people until they are asked.

Jewish Christians in Israel are perplexed by this, as are their Arab counterparts. As both groups of believers risk family ridicule and government harassment for their witness, they see American Christians unwilling to present the claims of Christ boldly. Furthermore, they are unhappy when major Christian leaders visit Israel and seemingly avoid contact with the indigenous Christian church. In conversations with members of my own tour group, I was surprised at how many of them had no knowledge of the indigenous Israeli church.

And what of that church in Israel? It is small, but growing - today there may be as many as 25 Christian congregations throughout Israel. Some of those congregations, though, are mostly non-Israelis; yet from recent reports of Israeli Jewish Christians, there may be as many as 3,100 Jewish believers now residing in Israel (because of regular opposition, Israeli believers keep a low profile).²

The church in Israel is quietly building bridges with other persecuted believers in that region. Jewish and Arab Christians love one another in Christ, despite strong political differences. They ought to be enemies, yet Christ’s love unites them. Such love is part of the answer to peace in the Middle East. **{138}** If we, too, are to be part of that answer, we must balance our love of Israel with our knowledge of the Great Commission. Prophetic politics cannot be a substitute for proclamation. It is time we return to our Great Commission agenda of proclaiming the gospel in the land of Israel.

² Conservative estimates of the number of Jewish believers in Israel range from between 1 /₆ to 1/3 of the above amount.

{139} Faith and Fulfillment

Christians and the Return to the Promised Land

Michael J: Pragai, Vallentine, Mitchel and Company Ltd.
1985; 308 pp., softback

Reviewed by Baruch Maoz

Michael Pragai is a Jewish author well positioned to write this book, one which is grounded on the assumption that “the restoration of the Jewish people to their homeland is part of the Christian understanding of God’s purpose in the world” (*Introduction*, p. 4). The work is an historical review of organizations and individuals who acted on that assumption. As such, it is a refreshing change from the usual criticisms leveled by Jewish writers against Christian treatment of the Jews through the centuries.

Michael Pragai’s active involvement in Israel’s struggle for existence goes back to events prior to the foundation of the State. He served in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, was political secretary to Israel’s first Foreign Minister, head of the Foreign Ministry’s Department for Church Affairs and Adviser on Christian Relations for North America.

Pragai’s excellent research abilities, his uncovering of long-lost data, and his lucid evaluations, are particularly obvious in the first nine chapters. The detailed table of contents is especially helpful.

On the other hand, the 13 black and white photographs are of mediocre quality and of little practical interest. The three documents given in facsimile form are far more interesting, but seem to be the result of chance availability. Facsimiles of some of the lesser known documents would have added much to the interest and value of the book as would portraits of some of the persons mentioned.

Following a presentation of his main thesis in the introduction (seven pp.), Pragai treats his readers to 14 chapters of uneven information, most of which is unlikely to have been readily available before, certainly not to such encyclopedic extent. The writer makes no claim to exhaustive treatment, but the amount of material given is of immense value.

Chapter one (10 pp.) catalogues and describes early Christian interest in the Return, particularly from the Puritan period in England (ca. 1615) to 1876. Pragai rightly shows that most Christian interest in Israel’s national restoration to the land was millenarian, but does not state that there were exceptions.

Chapter two’s (eight pp.) subject matter slightly overlaps the previous chapter, and describes Christian Zionists in the 18th and 19th centuries. {140} Chapter three (16 pp.) centers on the dawning of American Christian interest, from early Colonial days to the middle of the 19th century. Brief mention is given to actual American Christian efforts to encourage and support the Restoration Movement. Efforts such as the American Colony in Jerusalem, the Dead Sea Works and the forces which promoted the development of a Jewish Quarter in Jaffa, are curiously omitted.

Chapter four (22 pp.) begins, briefly, with the 17th century, but quickly moves on to the 19th, describing the attitudes of Christians before the rise of Zionism. Lawrence Oliphant, Lords Palmerstone and Shaftesbury of Britain, Dr. Zimpel of Germany, President Adams and William Blackstone of the USA - all are mentioned here. William H. Hechler, Theodore Herzl's ardent supporter, receives particular attention.

Chapter five (12 pp.), titled *Seers, Explorers and Men of Action in the Holy Land*, provides us with a hodgepodge of individuals, variously motivated toward humanitarian and political goals in their support of the Jewish restoration to Palestine. Nothing is said of the Templar movement, but the solid contributions of the British Consul in Jerusalem (1825 - 1862), James Finn and his wife, are amply described, including their efforts and encouragement in the Jewish community.

Chapter six (23 pp.), discusses Jean Henry Dunant, the founder of the International Red Cross, and is referenced extensively as to his ardent support of a Jewish national restoration, as are the efforts of Dr. J. Lepsius of Germany and E. Cazelet of Britain. The successful efforts of Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Patterson, founder of the Zion Mule Corps, and the religious motivation of Lord Balfour, both of which led to the now famous Balfour Declaration of 1917, bring this chapter to its climax.

Chapter seven (31 pp.) affords its readers a personal touch. This chapter documents the highly important practical contributions made by individuals toward the establishment of the Jewish State during the Mandate period, at times in conflict with their own governments. After describing Britain's original and openly declared intent of assuming the Mandate over Palestine, and that of the League of Nations in granting that Mandate (namely, "to place the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home"), Pragai goes on to describe the shift in British policy and the reaction of some to that shift. Orde Wingate rightly enjoys pride of place among those who thought otherwise than did their government, but Sir Wyndham Deeds, Colonel R. Meinertzhagen and Baron J.C. Wedgewood also receive mention.

Chapter eight (26 pp.) documents the Christian motivation underlying much American political support for the creation of a Jewish State, from the rise of Hitler to the establishment of Israel and its recognition by President Truman.

{141} Chapter nine (25 pp), *Rome and Jerusalem*, describes the relatively happier side of relations between some Catholics and the Jewish people. Beginning with Herzl's unsuccessful attempts to enlist papal support in 1904, the development of papal ambivalence toward the Jewish State is charted. The latter part of the chapter describes the contrasting exuberance with which prominent Catholic clerics and lay persons have sought to support the Restoration.

Chapter ten (20 pp.) is a curious collection of details concerning the United Nations. In a book devoted to a description of the distinctly Christian motivation behind Gentile support of the State of Israel, it is surprising to find quotes from Andrei Gromyko, and all the more when the next quote comes from Mr. Quo Tai-Chi of China. This chapter seems to mark the beginning of a new phase in the book. The writer is less cautious, less discriminating and less exact. It was difficult to escape the feeling that, from this point on, Pragai's choice was more the result of haphazard acquaintance than of careful, evaluating inquiry.

Chapters eleven (34 pp.) and twelve (30 pp.) describe international pro-Zionist support just before the establishment of Israel to the present. Russia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Belgium, France, Germany, England, South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Canada and the USA are all mentioned. Though the primary focus in chapter twelve is on North America, chapter thirteen (17 pp) describes several individuals and organizations working in Israel today, particularly Kibbutz Nes Amim and the American Institute of Holy Land Studies.

Chapter fourteen (10 pp.) is a catalogue of sites, villages, streets and monuments in Israel, dedicated to the memory of Christian supporters of Israel.

The conclusion is a plea for continued Christian support for Israel, fortified with a quote from Jeremiah 25:14 (totally divorced, incidentally, from its original context). Instead of a curse against Babylon for its mistreatment of Judah, in Pragai's hands the quote becomes a promise of blessing to those who will favorably respond to his plea.

The bibliography includes 98 book titles and, by itself, is worth the price of the book. It is also a fine testimony to the breadth of research Pragai undertook for the writing of this book. The persons index (eight pp. double column) is also excellent and should serve the reader/ researcher well. Apparently, every person mentioned in the book is fully indexed. The subject index (slightly more than three pp. double column) is no less thorough.

The text is clear and readable and the softback binding of good quality. Unfortunately, the publisher detected nine misprints only after the book was printed, but the copy I reviewed was provided with a mimeographed list of the necessary corrections. I found only two mistakes in data: on page 276, Kibbutz Ramat Yochanan is erroneously described as Kibbutz Ramat Yochana and its translation as Jonathan and John's Heights.

{142} Yochanan can only mean John. On p. 280, the Baptist Village is described as being, at the time of writing (1985), "an agricultural training school," also having "vocational training facilities" and being "well known for its high educational standards." As a matter of fact, the Village ceased to operate as an agricultural school well over a decade ago, and was best known as an orphanage for Jewish and Arab children; its agricultural courses were only incidental to that main purpose.

Time and time again in the course of reading the book, I thought to myself "This should be available in Hebrew!" So many in Israel invest so much effort in trying to convince the public that Christians, particularly evangelical Christians (from whom the majority of supporters of Israel are drawn), are actually the nation's stubborn enemies. Such a book could go a long way toward dispelling that lie.

Unlike most Jewish writers, Pragai is usually able to identify the various nuances distinguishing Evangelical, Protestant and Catholic theological stances, although at times he fails. For example, on pp. 236-37 he describes the Christadelphians, for example, as Protestant, fundamentalist Christians!

At times the author accords individuals titles which, I am confident, they would disclaim for themselves. On p. 231 Prof. Franklin H. Littell is described as "one of the best known contemporary theologians." Page 246 describes Dr. Arnold Olson as "known nationally." I also find it strange to note that lesser known pro-Zionist Christians such as Abbott Rudolf receive notice, while more evangelical but far better known individuals such as Dr. Robert Lindsey and Dr. James Churcher are not even accorded a passing remark. Also, no

mention is made of the ardent support - past and present - given to the Zionist movement by Jewish Christians in Europe and the USA.

In all, the book is a mine of little known and rare information which will be of great interest to any who have a favorable interest in the State of Israel, particularly those whose interest is the product of a Christian faith. It is warmly recommended to the readership of MISHKAN.