

MISHIKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

CONTENTS

ETHICS IN JEWISH EVANGELISM

Baruch Maoz 1

AN ETHICAL WAR: THE STRUGGLE FOR INTEGRITY IN JEWISH EVANGELISM IN NORTH AMERICA

David Brickner 14

ETHICS IN JEWISH EVANGELISM IN BRITAIN

Paul Morris 21

ETHICAL EVANGELISM AND EVANGELISTIC ETHICS - AN ISRAELI VIEW

Lisa Loden 35

COMING CLEAN: JEWISH OR CHRISTIAN?

Susan Perlman 43

IMAGE AND REALITY: THE USE OF JEWISH SYMBOLISM BY MESSIANIC JEWS

Walter Riggans 54

IMPLICATIONS OF JSSR REGARDING JEWISH EVANGELISM

Avner Boskey 65

BOOK REVIEWS

Yehezkel Kaufmann: *Christianity and Judaism* 72

Norbert Lohfink: *The Covenant Never Revoked* 77



MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

“JEWISH EVANGELISM AND BIBLICAL ETHICS”

ISSUE 19 / 1993

General Editor: Ole Chr. M. Kvarme

United Christian Council in Israel · Jerusalem

All Rights Reserved.

For permissions please contact mishkan@pascheinstitute.org
For subscriptions and back issues visit www.mishkanstore.org

Editorial – Jewish Evangelism and Biblical Ethics

Ole Chr. M. Kvarme

{**Inside front cover**} Nine years ago, when MISHKAN was launched, we were accused of unethical behavior by some Jewish community leaders in Jerusalem. How dare we use such a treasured biblical concept as MISHKAN, the Tabernacle and the presence of God, for a journal on Jewish evangelism?

This accusation from the mid-80s was one of many signals of a shift in strategy in Jewish as well as Christian opposition to gospel ministries among Jewish people. Earlier the main accusation had been that evangelistic and missionary organizations in Israel used bribery to entice Jewish people to convert to Christianity. Now the focus shifted to the language and cultural aspects of the evangelistic ministries among Jewish people. We were accused of mental bribery and religious distortion. Public research in the mid-60s and the public debate following the so-called anti-missionary legislation at the end of 1977-1978 effectively refuted the accusations of material enticement and took the air out of this balloon. These refutations, however, do not mean that the discussion on a proper, ethical conduct of people and organizations involved in Jewish evangelism is superfluous.

We constantly need to be reminded that the ministry of sharing the gospel with Jewish people is only meaningful in a context where our lives are marked by a combined love of God and our neighbor. It should also be emphasized that this reminder is not part of a strategy which makes the ethical aspect secondary. It is an essential element of the gospel that we internally treat one another and interact with other people in truth marked by love. But what then about the accusation of mental bribery through the means of Jewish language and Jewish culture? It is sometimes helpful to look at a question like this from another angle, a different perspective. North-European culture is full of Jewish symbols: the Menorah and the Hebrew tetragrammaton (YHWH) can be seen in many churches, the classical literature and modern novels are full of biblical imagery and symbols, our languages are full of biblical expressions, and Christian friends of Israel often use the Star of David and contemporary Jewish symbols to express their political support for the Jewish State. These {80} cultural elements are usually appreciated also by Jewish people in Northern Europe. In this light it seems rather strange to encounter the demand that two areas must be exempt from this use of biblical and current Jewish culture: In Jewish-Christian/Messianic-Jewish congregations and in the ministry of sharing the gospel with Jewish people.

We are therefore happy in this issue of MISHKAN to present a number of important contributions on ethics and Jewish evangelism. Whereas Baruch Maoz deals with the fundamental biblical issues involved, Walter Riggans and Susan Perlman treat the particular questions of identity and culture, language and symbols. Others contribute to our discussion from their particular contexts: Lisa Loden, from an Israeli perspective; David Brickner, from the North-American scene; and Paul Morris, from the British context. In his paper on the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research regarding Jewish Evangelism (JSSR), Avner Boskey continues the debate from the last issue of MISHKAN which brought a broad presentation of the JSSR. He also touches upon the fundamental questions involved in the debate on Ethics and Jewish Evangelism.

This issue of MISHKAN also marks shifts in the editorial staff of the journal. Our colleague and brother Baruch Maoz, who was one of the founding fathers of this journal, has now stepped down from his editorial position. For a decade he has devoted much time and energy to the development of MISHKAN and served the journal on all levels: with

creative ideas on editorial development, with commitment to the editorial management, and as a skilled writer and contributor. As few others Baruch Maoz has also for more than twenty-five years contributed in practical ways to a growing ministry of Jewish evangelism and the development of indigenous congregations in Israel. From our hearts we say thank you, Baruch, and may God bless you, your family and your ministry in years to come!

As a new editor, we now welcome Ray Pritz who is already known to many MISHKAN readers as a distinguished scholar on Early Jewish Christianity and as Executive Director of the Bible Society in Israel for the last seven years. Ray Pritz has now left his position as leader of the Bible Society in Israel and works as a consultant on study bibles to the United Bible Societies as well as leader of the Hebrew programs at the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

Two years ago Leslie Newbigin wrote a book with the title, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*. In this book he describes the current development of agnostic pluralism and subjectivism in our post-modern societies, and he claims that the only possible biblical answer to current subjectivism and agnosticism is world mission: to give testimony in the public as truth that Jesus is the risen Messiah, to be willing to test this openly and show what obedience to him implies. It is also with this conviction that we continue to publish MISHKAN, and that we share with our readers this issue.

{1} Ethics in Jewish Evangelism

Baruch Maoz

Baruch Maoz is Pastor of Grace and Truth Christian Assembly, Rishon Letzion, and Field Director of Christian Witness to Israel.

I can't remember the name of the film, nor can I remember its plot. But I can remember one cowboy saying to another, "Well, fella, God uses the good people. The bad people use God."

Is evangelism a case of people (good or bad) using God to promote their own interests? Or is it the Christian Church's undeniable duty, imposed by a God who deigns to use the Church for his own ends? Is there anything unethical about the bare fact of evangelizing the Jews or of not doing so? Should evangelism be discovered to be a Christian duty? What methods may or must be used? These are the main questions with which this paper shall concern itself.

Such discussion is necessitated by the growing doubt on the part of many Christians with regard to addressing the Jewish people with the gospel. It is also necessary because opponents of the evangelization of the Jews have questioned both its moral grounds and the morality of its methods. This discussion will largely limit itself to the moral issues, although a discussion of the moral grounds of evangelism must of necessity deal with a crucial theological question: Is evangelization of the Jews incumbent upon the Church by the authority of its Lord?

The gospel is the Church's main business and the promotion of the gospel one of its main occupations. The main purpose which should motivate the Church in the execution of that duty should be the promotion of God's glory in the world.

True spiritual advances are not capable of being secured by gimmicks or by the devotion of Christianity's spokesmen. They are gifts granted - or withheld - by God's sovereign will. Unless men and women are born again from above by the hand of God, they can in no way belong to the people of God. Apart from such a divine intervention, they might be affected by the {2} gospel morally, emotionally, socially or even spiritually, but they can be no more than Christianized. Only God can turn a human heart to himself. Converts "won" by unethical methods will themselves be unethical and the source of unending dissimulation. In the spiritual realm "success" obtained by human means is a farce. It can be no credit to true religion and is more often than not the beginning of its demise. Numerical growth is not necessarily evidence of spiritual advances. It can be obtained by various means including deceit, social or psychological manipulation, promises of material gain, threats, even force. Such growth is to the Church what weeds are to a garden. It threatens the vitality of true spiritual life. It cannot truly honor God or be acceptable to him.

Deceit or manipulation should never be used by the Church. The Church's ultimate goal is not to come out on top of other religions or to achieve numerical, social, financial or political strength. Its goal is to serve the Lord faithfully. Power is something that belongs to God, not to his servants (Ps 62:11). The meek, not the mighty, will inherit the earth and theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Those among the Jews who oppose preaching the gospel to the Jewish people usually enlist a variety of reasons for their opposition. One of these is the insistence that Christian evangelistic outreach among Jews is in itself immoral. Another grants (at least in theory) the Christian duty to evangelize the Jews, but resorts to the charge that such endeavors are consistently plagued by

unethical practices. Finally, friends of Jewish evangelism have sometimes been embarrassed by assumptions and practices embraced by those whose ultimate hopes they share.

On the other hand, Jewish anti-missionary organizations have been repeatedly accused by evangelists of consciously and consistently employing unethical, illegal practices. It is time to engage in serious self-examination.

Evangelism and the God Whom We Serve

Evangelism is only right if it has to do with obeying God. It ought never to be a means of self-promotion; the evangelist's true calling is to promote the glory of his divine master by declaring his worthiness to be loved, adored and obeyed by all. Ultimately, evangelism is nothing less than calling people back {3} to God. For that reason, it has to do with the nature of God. Evangelists must promote, by their lives and by the message they declare, a true understanding of who God is and what he is like.

A holy God can be served by none but a holy people. For that reason, ethics are not essentially incidental to our mission. Ethics are an aspect of holiness without which God can neither be served acceptably (Matt 7:21-24) nor glorified. Honesty in all spheres is part of our service to God, an essential part of our representation of him.

This is no trifling matter. When the House of Israel, who bore God's name before the nations, defiled that name by their behavior, he handed them over to a terrible enemy (2 Kgs 17). Judah suffered a similar fate for the same reason (Isa 9:8-21; Jer 17:1-4; et al.) If indeed commanded by God, evangelism is merely one part of our obedience. It ought not to be divorced from the whole. Unholy, deceitful, manipulative or belligerent evangelism is a contradiction in terms. All true evangelism is characterized by holiness.

Holiness has to do with respect for the image of God, in himself or as reflected in man. Any method that disregards the divine image in man by manipulating him is to be firmly rejected. Man's freedom to weigh the facts and come to an intelligent moral and spiritual decision must at all times be protected.

Is Preaching the Gospel to the Jews Ethical?

Needless to say, the answer to our above question wholly depends on the ethical standards we consider binding. Two such standards are to be taken into account in our present discussion: Christian standards and traditional Jewish ones.

Christian Standards

Christian standards are taken from the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament makes no bones about the fact that there is only one God, who both made the world and rules over it. All men owe him their allegiance, and all are destined to unite in his worship (Ps 22:27; 86:9; et al.). The day will come when men from various nations will tug at the hem of Jewish people's garments saying, "We will go with you because God is with you" (Zech 8:23).

This envisaged universal domain of the faith of Israel was not born out of national arrogance; Israel's sacred book admits that the people themselves were unfaithful to God. The vision is an inevitable consequence of what God declared himself to be and the fruit of direct revelation: "By myself I have {4} sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked, before me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear" (Isa 45:23).

God's glory and the lasting good of mankind require that all men worship him. He is man's only salvation (Ps 3:8; Isa 45:8; et al.). For that reason, Israel is duty-bound to declare and exemplify God's glory in the world. Israel must do so in a manner that will attract the nations, so that they exchange their devotion to false gods for worship of the God of Israel.

The New Testament takes all that for granted. It further affirms that, in fulfillment of the Old Testament promise (Isa 65:1), the Lord has addressed himself directly to the welfare of the nations without ceasing to be Israel's God. "Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of gentiles too? Yes, of gentiles too" (Rom 3:29; cf. also 10:11-13). The New Testament does not perceive itself an offshoot from Old Testament Judaism but as its fulfillment. Jesus and his apostles were unanimous in assuming that the gospel is first and foremost the spiritual heritage of the Jewish people (Matt 1:1; 2:2; Lk 1:46-56; Acts 3:13-26). Paul believed himself to be persecuted "for the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20).

On what grounds, then, ought the Jews to be excluded from the privileges of hearing and responding to the call of the gospel? Are they to be singled out and excluded from the circle of mankind? Are they to be denied the right and privilege of their own faith? If Christianity is false, it should be demonstrated to be such and no longer be proclaimed to any. So long as its claim to be the necessary consequence of Old Testament faith remains intact, any effort on the part of Christians to exclude the Jews from their evangelism is - however well-intentioned - a form of spiritual anti-Semitism.

Of course, there are many who call themselves Christians and who relativize the biblical gospel. In their view, the gospel is true for gentiles, not for Jews. Such a view runs contrary to the New Testament, which describes the gospel as meant "first for the Jew, then for the gentile" (Rom 1:16-18). The apostles were taken back by the very thought that gentiles could be included within the number of those redeemed by the gospel (Acts 11:1-18). It took a vision and a voice from heaven to convince Peter to take part in an initial outreach to the gentile population (Acts 10:9-23, 28-29). None of this raised doubt that the gospel was for the Jews.

{5} Jewish Standards

The main Jewish objections to preaching the gospel to their people are of two kinds: real ones and good ones. The real ones are (1) the kind of objections any religion would raise when its authority is challenged and its truth put to the test. They are also (2) the self-protective impulses of religious establishments whose hold upon a people is questioned. Such objections can only be met by a defense of God's prerogative. Our religion or religious establishment may be threatened by the appeals of a competing religion. But religious claims are to be established or rejected on the basis of truth, not through unethical practices such as deceit, manipulation, force or abuse of authority.

The good objections are those which Jews judge to be most likely to sway Christian opinion. Some such objections focus on the methodology which Christian evangelists to the Jews reportedly adopt. As we shall see, many of the charges are false. All of them are false when described as the normal practice of evangelists to the Jews. Many of them are equally applicable to the promoters and defenders of Rabbinical Judaism in Israel and abroad. But Christians will do well not to hide behind the fig leaf of other people's failings, nor behind the claim that unethical practices characterize only some evangelists to the Jews. They must do all in their power to purge themselves of the very taint of unethical practice in order to ensure that they are truly serving God, not their own interests.

Arrogance

One of the "good" objections is that insisting that Jews must believe in Jesus in order to be acceptable to God is religious arrogance. Who dares to say in these modern libertine days that men will go to hell unless they have forgiveness, and that forgiveness may be had only through a means prescribed by one religion? How dare Christians claim that their religion is better or truer than Judaism?

Such charges do not so much constitute an attack on Christians as upon Christianity itself. It is amply clear from both Old and New Testament that the description given above is what Christianity itself teaches - whatever Christians might say. Christians do not believe themselves to be the inventors of their faith. They believe it to be delivered to them by God and, until that claim can be convincingly disproven, Christians should not be intimidated by the charge of arrogance.

Jews are no less liable to consider their faith superior to that of others. Are they necessarily arrogant because of this? The answer is to be found by testing the faith, not by attributing such a vice to its followers.

{6} Most religions are far better than their adherents, so we are best advised not to draw a complete equation between the measure of truth a faith may have and the humble truthfulness of its defenders. This holds true for Judaism as well as Christianity.

Two Ways?

A second "good" objection is that Christian evangelists to the Jews are unfaithful to their own religion, which recognizes that there are at least two ways to God: the Jewish and the gentile one. This is a misreading of the New Testament, which claims that Judaism is not Jewish in that it is unfaithful to its biblical roots (Matt 15:3). Christianity (apart from its cultural and historical accumulation) is the true faith of Israel. In other words, the New Testament insists that there is only one way to God - the Jewish way - and that Judaism has drifted from that way to forge its own. Evangelization of the Jews is perceived by the New Testament as a recalling of the Jewish people to the way of God.

Once again, the truth of Christianity's perception may be challenged, but Christians ought not to be castigated for believing what their holy book declares.

Spiritual Genocide

A third "good" objection often raised against the evangelization of the Jews is the claim that such evangelism is a form of spiritual genocide, a sublimation of the Nazi plan to destroy the Jews, probably best described by "The Protocols of the Elders of Christianity", if such could ever be found. (Some Jewish antagonists of Christian missionary outreach among the Jews have claimed to find such sinister protocols among the papers published following the 1980 Congress on World Evangelization held in Pattaya, Thailand under the auspices of the Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelization.)

It is difficult to respond to emotive language dispassionately. Its whole purpose is to cloud the mind and eliminate any possibility of rational discussion. It is manipulation in the highest degree. It is also a cynical use of the memory of victims of the Holocaust, who died at the hands of one of the most anti-Christian forces the world has ever seen, hands which did not decline to murder Jewish Christians among their fellow Jews.

At root, when divorced from its emotive trappings, the objection seems to centre upon a defense of the right to cultural and national integrity. Similar objections are made against Christianity's efforts to evangelize the Amazonian Indians or the aborigines of Taiwan.

Christianity makes no objection to the cultural and historical integrity of any nation, let alone that of the Jews. The gospel, though not unanimously accepted, {7} has done much to transform the culture of Europe and shape that of the United States. And yet, however much Europe has been affected by the gospel, no one can say that cultural, national and historical distinctions have been obliterated.

The changes which took place were precisely the kind of changes Israel's prophets called for in the period between the two temples. When culture is in disobedient defiance of God, it must be challenged and corrected. We have no right to leave men in dire error just in order to protect the false security of their national cultural integrity. God has a prior claim to our obedience - and to theirs. If it can be shown that Christianity is not of God, such claims to priority fall by the wayside. Until that happens, it is unethical to expect Christians to behave contrary to what they believe God has commanded.

Jews are not called by evangelists to cease being Jewish when they convert to Christ. They are called to reject those parts of their traditional culture which are contrary to God. It simply will not do to castigate Jewish Christians for retaining their Jewish identity and, at the same breath, insist that evangelization of the Jews spells their cultural and national demise. The vibrant Jewish Christian/Messianic-Jewish movement spread all over the world is a resounding denial of that charge. Prove that to be untrue and Judaism has won a major stroke in its battle against Christianity. But the battle needs to be fought by a proper use of the facts rather than by the manipulation of those facts.

The now receding number of gentile Christians who converted to Judaism in order to be part of the Jewish people is a further rebuttal to that charge. However misguided such persons were, they were sincere in the love for the Jewish people and in their desire to belong to it. They actually constitute a compliment to Israel in that so many non-Jews want to be Jewish. They also constitute concrete evidence to the fact that Christianity is not antipathetic to Jewish national integrity.

Ethics in Methodology

We have already established that ethics is an aspect of holiness and, as such, of the essence of a truly Christian witness. It is also the natural product of a heartfelt commitment to a holy God. Legalism is an imposition from without. Christian honesty is the product of devotion. It is, therefore, willing to pay the cost of truthfulness when such is exacted.

Christians recognize the fact that the ends - any ends - cannot justify the means. For that reason, Christian evangelists ought not to engage in any form of manipulation or deception. This implies a host of practical choices.

{8} Honesty in matters of theology

For example, any forms of Jewish Christianity or of Messianic Judaism which obscure the fundamentals of the Christian faith are to be avoided. The trinity, the deity of Christ, the absolute necessity of atonement by Christ for salvation and the unity of the body of Christ must be affirmed.

Our devotion to God forces us to admit these truths are not as consistently affirmed as they ought to be. Our protagonists are right: some among us seldom speak of the trinity (in Israel there is at least one Jewish-Christian congregation in which the trinity is never mentioned, except by way of derision). There is a tendency to play down the deity of Christ until our contacts "have been converted." This is most commonly done by reducing the distinctions between Rabbinical Judaism and the gospel to the sole belief or denial that Jesus is the Messiah. Repentance from sin is replaced by a naked agreement that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Spiritual regeneration by the power of God is substituted by intellectual and emotional assent. There are those who are sometimes heard to speak as if they believed - contrary to all their protestations - that faith in Jesus and his atoning work are not essential for salvation (at least for Jews). Still others play down their oneness with the larger body of Christ, except when they are on a deputation tour in search of support. These things ought not to be.

Our antagonists are wrong in describing such unethical procedures as typical of the Jewish-Christian/Messianic-Jewish movement as a whole, or of all evangelists to the Jews. They are not typical of even a large minority among us. A survey of most of the material used by evangelistic agencies and of sermons preached in Jewish Christian congregations will easily confirm this to be the case. True, in the early days of the modern Jewish Christian movement there was a lack of balance which still lingers in a receding number of congregations. But these were reactionary overstatements made in all sincerity rather than attempts to deceive.

Honesty in the Use of Jewish Symbols

The many Jewish trappings which Jewish-Christian congregations and evangelists to the Jews often adopt are not meant to deceive. They are sincere expressions of a conviction that the gospel of Jesus Christ is intensely Jewish and that Jewish national identity is of immense importance to the gospel.

Without doubt, honesty requires a more serious approach to Jewish symbols than some of us have demonstrated. Lighting Sabbath candles in church on Friday evening, after Sabbath is in, is hardly to be considered Jewish. But ignorance and goodwill ought not to be misrepresented as deceit. After all, some Jewish symbols are particular to various Jewish communities. It will {9} simply not do to describe efforts to emphasize the Jewishness of the Christian gospel as premeditated deceptions and all Christians as anti-Semites - and then to gloat over the support Israel receives from Christian pro-Zionists, which is given precisely because the contributors are Christians.

Jewish Christians who register with the Israeli immigration authorities as "Jewish" are not lying. They are expressing one of the most deeply-felt convictions of their heart. Jewish Christians believe that, by believing in Jesus, they have embraced true Jewishness. This is not to say that they deny that, through the centuries, Judaism was most clearly defined by its rejection of Jesus' messianic claims. But they believe that man has no right to set aside the counsel of God, and that the rabbinic insistence upon that denial is just such an attempt. Jewish Christians believe that God's word has a priority over the traditions of the elders. If they are wrong, their error should be exposed so that they have opportunity to correct themselves. Name calling and accusations will hardly carry the day.

Gentile "converts" to Judaism who continue to believe in Jesus are quite another matter. We ought to agree with the rabbis when they say that, so far as they are concerned, conversion to Judaism is tantamount to a rejection of Jesus. After all, they are the ones who determine the terms of conversion to their own religion! Such so-called conversions are unethical by every standard possible. They are contrary to New Testament morality, and they constitute a denial of the gospel of grace as defined in the New Testament (e.g. Galatians, Hebrews).

Honest Missionizing

Because of the firm rejection with which the gospel is greeted in many Jewish circles which welcome Christian financial aid, there is a dangerous tendency to play down our evangelical commitments so it is beyond recognition. This can happen to conservative and evangelical Christian organizations that restrict their efforts to social, political and economic aid. The danger is that, while we begin by believing the Jews are as much objects of God's love in Christ as are gentiles, the truth slowly fades from our consciousness until it is almost denied. How can we believe that Jesus is for Jews and not speak of him to the Jewish people? The human heart is incapable of such a contradiction for very long. Finally, it convinces itself that Jews somehow have Christ without knowing it, or that they can be acceptable to God apart from the sacrifice of his son.

Such an equivocation involves an ultimate denial of our faith. It also gets us nowhere. Jews know that Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah. Although they certainly do not welcome it, they expect Christians to commend him and his gospel to them. When they encounter Christians who abstain from such {10} activity they wonder if their support and sympathy are not meant to serve a hidden agenda.

The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem is a case in point. In spite of repeated public disavowals of any form of involvement in evangelism indeed, a public statement to the effect that they know of not one Jew converted through their ministry - the Embassy is consistently accused of surreptitiously laboring for the conversion of the Jews.

Some bodies and individuals have chosen to devote themselves to providing Israel with political support, economic aid and the like. All such help is welcome, but it constitutes a denial of the gospel when it is offered with an acquiescence to the Israeli demand that the donors distance themselves from gospel witness or from the growing Jewish Christian church in Israel and abroad. Jewish Christians look upon such aid as a betrayal: Synagogues and religious schools are built, while Jewish Christians in Israel meet in the woods and in crowded houses for lack of suitable facilities. Prominent American, Dutch and German Christians are photographed visiting the Prime Minister, but they refuse to use that access in order to stand up for Jewish Christian civil liberties within the Jewish community. Nor can such a presentation afford a true representation of the love of God, who loves none so much as he loves them in Christ.

We must have the courage of our convictions. We are unwisely untrue to our Lord, to ourselves and to the best interests of Israel if we restrict our support of Israel to the things of this world and build religious schools and synagogues in which people are taught that Jesus, however sincere, was a sacrilegious imposter whose bones have long turned to dust.

In a non-pluralistic Jewish society, evangelicals face a real problem. Where liberty of conscience and religious profession is a privilege secured to all but to consistent evangelicals, it is difficult not to succumb to the temptation to equivocate. But succumb we must not, regardless of how the opposition will use our honesty.

Christian witness to the Jewish people should, as should Christian witness to any people, be conducted openly. But what to do in societies which forbid or restrict Christian witness? Let it be clearly said: Christians should witness, whatever the cost, but they should never lie.

{11} This does not mean that Bible-believing Christians, Jewish or gentile, should declare themselves to be religious scalp-hunters. It does mean that they should reconsider giving any form of social, economic and political support unless they are allowed to be true to their Lord while so doing. They should not withhold aid in order to wring out of an unwilling people opportunities for presenting the gospel; they ought not try to buy goodwill with material support. Aid should be given where and when needed for God's sake and for love of our fellow-man. But where the gentile and Jewish Christians are not allowed to speak up for Jesus, aid should perhaps be withheld.

If we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, honesty demands that we say so. It will not do to hide behind the Holocaust as an excuse for us to try and win popularity with the Jews. We certainly should not attempt to find acceptance by providing them with all they want from us. Nor should we do so by refusing to face the Jewish people with what we believe to be the claims of Christ upon their allegiance.

Honesty in Running Our Churches and Societies

Administration is not neutral. It can be either ethical or unethical. It can promote an atmosphere of integrity or of consistent moral compromise. Administration in matters of religion should be as absolute as the God administrators seek to serve, and as uncompromisingly holy.

Missions, evangelists, churches and church workers should be characterized by integrity in every aspect of their lives and ministry. There is a danger that we will appoint individuals whose primary motivation is a need to assert themselves. Many seek to resolve their sense of personal or religious insecurity by imposing their religion upon others. Such individuals are necessarily incapable of cooperating with others. They impose their wills and foibles on every occasion and, if ever successful in establishing congregations, they are likely to ensure a kind of dependency which should only exist between man and his Maker. Let us who are in leadership scrutinize ourselves so that we endeavor to make the disciples dependent upon their Master and not upon ourselves or our opinions.

Our standards for choosing staff should be such that suitably competent people will be appointed and the unsuited encouraged but not accepted. Evangelistic staff should demonstrate by their lives what they proclaim with their lips. Individuals who are selfish, easily insulted and arrogant, are poor specimens of the gospel and should not be accepted into service however articulate they may be and however conversant with scriptural truth. Evangelists are appointed to a work which requires exemplary sacrifice in all areas of life. We should {12} do our utmost to ensure that those appointed to such a task are capable of executing it.

This also holds true for retaining staff. It is very easy to spend the day writing glowing reports of individuals to whom we (among five or six other evangelists) have spoken. The book of Proverbs frequently contrasts laziness with righteousness - for good reason. We should administer the work of our staff with responsible care. Frequent contact, visits, comparative reporting and strict accounting procedure should all be insisted upon. Staff who do not carry out an honest day's work - and more - should be encouraged to improve. If they fail to do so, they should be removed. I am personally acquainted with a number of cases in which missionaries were guilty of serious neglect of duty, even of clear misdemeanor, and yet remained employed because no one was willing to call them to task. Our critics are right: too many among us are lazy, unrighteous and self-seeking. Happily, we are also gifted with a large number of dedicated, humble individuals who work sacrificially for the glory of God. But we will do well here to heed our opposition and correct ourselves.

Missions, churches and evangelists must also avoid every semblance of competition. Jewish missions are plagued by petty, childish conflicts and by divisions which do little to commend the gospel. Organizational interests are allowed to take precedence over opportunities to promote the gospel. Missions and congregations protect their various areas of influence with a jealousy which

sometimes translates itself into viciousness. These things ought not to be. I sincerely wonder how much of our present practices would continue if we took Matthew 7:2-5,12 seriously to heart.

We cannot all be of the same mind as to how the work is best to be conducted. It is (unfortunately) unlikely that we shall ever agree in all matters of doctrine. But so long as we are united in the fundamental tenets of the faith, we are duty-bound to respect each other and to work together whenever possible in order to promote the glory of our common Lord. Selfishness - be it individual or corporate - can never be accepted in place of ethical behavior. We must all agree to "decrease" so that our Lord and saviour will "increase" (John 3:30).

We would do well to establish self-inspection procedures that will aid us in the process of continual moral improvement. A cooperative mutual inspection body among Jewish missions and congregations would be a welcome development.

Honesty in Relation to Judaism

Being human, however religious we may be, all of us are liable to be tempted to caricature those whom we oppose. Evangelism ought not to be allowed to engage in such. Those whom we address with the gospel are created in the **{13}** image of God. Their religion is as sincerely held as our own. They have insights from which we can learn. They often excel us in morality and spiritual devotion. Dialogue is as integral to evangelism as proclamation. We must have the courage to listen to others, learn from them and present to them the truths of God as we have come to understand them with an openness and dignity that command respect.

However much we believe it has veered from its biblical moorings, Judaism is the religion of a people still loved by God in a particular sense. It has deep roots in the biblical heritage to which both Jews and Christians lay claim. It has been the means by which the Jewish people have expressed themselves as a people for almost two millennia. Jews have been ridiculed through the centuries because they insisted on wearing earlocks, refused to eat pork and rested on the seventh day of the week. Their tradition has thereby become all the more dear to them. Evangelism can never be properly conducted by denigrating that.

This does not mean that we are never free to criticize aspects of Judaism or express our fundamental rejection of some of its distinctives. It means that we will do so within the limits of our knowledge and with a respectful propriety that does not shirk from anger, yet never degenerates into spite or calumny. Throughout history, the church has often resorted to such means, as have Jewish opponents of Christian evangelism. Such behavior is not to the credit of our respective religions.

Christian evangelists must take care not to misrepresent themselves or their opponents. Ethical evangelism will provide its hearers with opportunities for responsible consideration of the issue at hand. It will avoid all forms of brainwashing or manipulation.

May it please God to glorify himself by transforming us. May our light so shine that people would see our good works - and praise our Father who is in heaven.

{14} An Ethical War: The Struggle for Integrity in Jewish Evangelism in North America

David Brickner

David Brickner is a fifth generation Jewish believer in Jesus. He is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute with a diploma in Jewish and Modern Israel Studies. Presently he works at Jews for Jesus International Headquarters as Minister-At-Large and Music Director.

Every war is fought on at least two fronts. There is the war fought in the trenches and there is the propaganda war. Sometimes the propaganda war can be as determinative to the outcome as the war waged in the trenches.

During the Second World War, an obscure Japanese American named Ikuko Toguri became an important part of the Japanese War against the United States. As "Tokyo Rose", she broadcast daily messages to U.S. troops with the purpose of providing disinformation and demoralizing American soldiers. Despite the eventual outcome of that war, the effectiveness of propaganda for combat will never be forgotten.

In Jewish evangelism we, too, fight a war on two fronts. In the trenches, we fight for the souls of men and women in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. There we struggle with our own weariness and tendency to do less than we ought. In the trenches we also labor in prayer, wrestling with powers and principalities who seek to keep the unsaved in a state of resistance to the gospel. We may seem to lose a few skirmishes here and there, but as long as we persevere in prayer and faithfulness, our opposition cannot prevent individuals who hear the gospel from responding.

Because anti-missionaries have had little success fighting us in the trenches, they have also waged a propaganda war. They spread disinformation and make emotionally laden statements seeking to undermine the validity of our efforts. They try to prevent Jewish people from considering the gospel and their primary strategy is to depict us as unethical.

When we think about our opposition from the anti-missionaries it is easy to regard them as enemies, since that is how they choose to regard us. But we must remember the balance which Paul gave us in Romans 11:28: "From the {15} standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers."

We do have opposition that actively spreads disinformation and falsehood. They do not act according to our rules nor are they bound as we are by certain ethical restraints. They have purposefully misrepresented who we are and what we do and they frequently misrepresent their own activities as well. Let's look at some examples of this misrepresentation.

They Misrepresent Who We Are

"Make the label nasty enough and others will not examine the contents of our message." That seems to be the anti-missionary strategy. For years they have insisted that we are not Jews, but this has not proved very effective. A label which has proven more useful to them is that of "cult", in part because of the well-publicized tragedies involving cults in North America. Some anti-missionaries have blatantly labeled us as cults, but the general strategy has been a more subtle linking of the terms "missionary" and "cults". In January 1983, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) created a national resource network under the heading *Task Force on Missionaries and Cults*. In the 1986-1987 yearbook of *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Marcia R Rudin wrote an article entitled, "Cults and Missionaries".¹

JCRC "cult experts" know and, when pressed, admit that we are not a cult. By using both terms (cults and missionaries), anti-missionaries can claim that they are making a distinction, and therefore are not

¹ Cults and Missionaries, *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook*, 1986/7, pp. 80-90.

lying about us. Yet in reality, the linking of the two terms ascribes guilt by association. These anti-missionary groups would never think of describing Wycliffe Bible Translators or Overseas Missionary Fellowship as cults or "cult-like". They reserve those terms for those whom they fear might be successful among the Jewish people. There is an obvious double standard in the way they seek to label us.

In addition to the JCRC and their Task Force on Missionaries and Cults, there is another group of anti-missionaries calling themselves "Jews for Judaism". With six offices in North America, Jews for Judaism describes itself as "the only full-time counter-missionary resource and outreach organization in North America which is dedicated to countering the efforts of fundamentalist Christian groups and cults who specifically target Jews for conversion".²

Once again, the terms "cult" and "missionary" are emotionally linked in the same sentence. However, there is no preciseness to the label. "Fundamentalist Christian groups" and "cults" are also linked, and both terms are left vague as to their meaning, except for the fact that they are both depicted as hunting down Jews. As long as we are defined as a threat to the Jewish people, our opposition can posture themselves as the protectors of the Jewish people.

{16} They Misrepresent Who They Are

Former East Coast director, Larry Levey, and current Canadian director, Julius Ciss, have consistently represented themselves as former Jews for Jesus staff members. Neither were ever on staff with Jews for Jesus nor were they volunteers with the Jews for Jesus organization, though Levey sought to apply (and was quickly rejected) for a Jews for Jesus witnessing campaign.

Jews for Judaism also misrepresent themselves by claiming endorsements from leading figures in North America, many of whom have no direct knowledge of the groups' methods and goals. They approach the offices of celebrities (e.g. humorist Irma Bombeck and United States Senator Paul Simon) asking them to donate a personal item to be used in an auction to raise money for the organization. These items are easily secured from publicists or secretaries who are accustomed to obliging any number of charitable organizations with an autographic photograph or some other bit of memorabilia. Jews for Judaism then uses the celebrity's name claiming his or her support for their anti-missionary activities. Seeking to gain credibility through association with celebrities is questionable enough, but when an association with those celebrities is itself misrepresented, there can be no doubt about the lack of integrity.

Jews for Judaism's most recent stunt was to confer an honorary title on the Los Angeles County sheriff, Sherman Block. As soon as Block accepted the title, Jews for Judaism began using the Los Angeles County Sheriff's logo on the front of their envelopes implying that the Sheriff's office had endorsed their anti-missionary activities. Tuvya Zaretsky, Southern California director for Jews for Jesus, has made a formal protest to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's office, but the matter has yet to be resolved.

They Misrepresent How Many We Are

One might think that it would be in the anti-missionaries' interest to underestimate our numbers and minimize our significance. In fact, the opposite is true. In *The Baltimore Jewish Times*, Mark Powers, National Co-director of Jews for Judaism was quoted as saying:

*Some 160,000 Jews have become Messianic Jews, also known as Hebrew Christians. That figure is up from about 10,000 in 1978, he said. If the trend continues, by the year 2000 that number could be well over 1.5 million.*³

Why would Jews for Judaism predict a possible 1.5 million Jewish believers by the year 2000? The answer is that this article and others like it are appeals for funds. The inflated numbers of Jewish

² Jews for Judaism promotional flyer.

³ *Baltimore Jewish Times*, 28 August 1992.

believers - and much of the other disinformation that is communicated by these groups - are scare tactics to coerce money from the Jewish community.

{17} They Misrepresent What We Do

Regarding ethics for missionary methodology, a working group from the Lausanne Consultation of Jewish Evangelism in Easneye, England in 1986 wrote:

The gospel should be presented with forthrightness and honesty, giving due weight to both the price and the privileges of being a child of God. We respect the God-given right of all individuals in every culture to consider freely the claims of Christ. Our message should reflect the highest standard of Scripture, the character of Christ, and the finest efforts of which we are capable (Colossians 3:17).⁴

Such a statement sets a standard to be followed by Jewish mission agencies. Yet "fraudulent" and "deceptive" are the terms our opposition uses to describe Jewish individuals or groups' efforts attempting to do Jewish evangelism. A manual published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations *Keeping Posted*, gave the following description of missionary activity:

Dressed in clown suits, missionaries hand lollipops and religious tracts to children leaving elementary school. A nine-year-old Jewish child is invited into a neighbor's house for story telling, milk and cookies ... a 17 year-old Jewish boy is advised by evangelists to lie to his parents about his attendance at church. As conversion draws near, he is driven home by the evangelist, told to sneak into his house, pack a bag, and come live with church members.... All too often deceptive methods are used to gain access to the public schools, where missionaries find a captive audience.⁵

Who are these clowns? Who are these home wrecking evangelists who encourage teenagers to lie? I know of no such mission agencies or individuals. Nor do anti-missionaries provide names or any other documentation by which these charges could be verified.

How Should We Respond?

One advantage to having active opposition is that it forces us to be particularly careful both in the statements we make and in the actions we take. It is up to us to make certain that the charges of our opposition remain, in fact, misrepresentations.

Who do we say we are? If we say we are Jews who believe in Jesus, it should concern us when growing number of believers lay claim to Jewish identity without much foundation for doing so. For example, many people are discovering that one of their grandparents was Jewish. If that grandparent did not care to make his or her Jewishness known, and their offspring never knew or claimed any Jewish identity, are the grandchildren Jewish? In order to maintain the integrity of our witness to the Jewish community, those of us **{18}** who claim to be Jewish believers must have a solid basis for such a claim. A loose definition of the term "Messianic Jew" only lends support and ammunition to those who would deny the Jewishness of the entire movement. If we do not set standards for ourselves, we lose credibility.

Another label which should be carefully examined is that of "Messianic rabbi". Promotional material for the conference Messiah '93 features thirty Messianic rabbis, three associate rabbis and one rabbi emeritus in the program. Just as we need a basis for calling ourselves Jews, we need some basis to declare someone a rabbi. It is not my intention to argue for or against the use of the term rabbi. However, we are obligated to ask what educational standards authenticate the title of rabbi for leaders of Messianic congregations.

⁴ Working Paper, Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (Third International Consultation, 19-27 August 1986, Easneye, England), p. 9.

⁵ *Keeping Posted*, vol. 32:4, February 1987, published by The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, p. 5.

The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations Yeshiva Institute spells out thirteen core courses that are required in order for someone to become ordained as a Messianic rabbi. Those courses are taught in one week modules of two courses a week. Technically someone could be ordained with little more than six weeks of classroom training. Likewise the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America has the Institute for Messianic Rabbinic Training (IMRT). But neither of these is an educationally accredited institution.

We should be thankful that some standardization is being put into place, but at the same time we must question current standards. It is true that the word "rabbi" means teacher, but as a title it is generally understood to carry a certain amount of authority which is based on a certain amount of education. Much more must be done in order for us to use the term with real integrity.

How many do we say we are? Those of us who are in the field of Jewish evangelism recognize that anti-missionary figures have been inflated. Yet there seems to be a temptation on the part of some of us to promote such misunderstandings ourselves. Many within the Messianic community have been talking in terms of a 150,000-300,000 Jewish believers, though there seems to be no credible evidence for these figures. Conservative estimates place the number of Jewish believers somewhere between 30,000-50,000 in the United States.

We must resist the temptation to inflate numbers, whether for our own morale or for the purpose of fund-raising. Numbers tend to mean very little to people outside of the field because they have no context from which to understand them. Some professional mission leaders may feel the need to puff up the {19} figures in order to impress supporters. We need to communicate with our supporters in a meaningful and realistic way how God is working among the Jewish people, and trust that they will understand and support us based on a realistic assessment.

What kind of tactics do we use? Scurrilous accusations about missionaries luring children and snatching souls probably will not diminish, because enough people believe them without feeling a need to investigate. Nevertheless, these charges remind us that we must be above reproach in our methodologies.

Jews for Jesus has compiled a document entitled "Principles of Ethical Ministry", which clearly states its policies on a variety of issues, including a section on evangelism to minors:

We direct our evangelism to minors only when we have the consent of their parents or guardians. Though the gospel often causes cleavage, we never knowingly cause disruption of the relationship of those to whom we minister.⁶

Most mission agencies and individuals maintain high standards, but there are some who could work a bit harder at it. Some agencies sponsor "Israel Appreciation Nights" or encourage churches to hold such celebrations, which in itself certainly is not unethical. However, if such an evening is going to include an evangelistic message, that should be stated in materials promoting these celebrations, and there have been instances where people have failed to do this. Jewish people who attend these events expect a religiously neutral presentation in honor of the State of Israel. They may be justified in feeling deceived if, instead, they find themselves at an evangelistic event.

A corollary to this is the care we should exercise in the evangelizing of Russian immigrants to North America. We need to learn from mission societies that extended help to Jewish immigrants and refugees in the 18th and 19th centuries. Job programs, English language classes and financial aid were offered freely and seen by some as inducements for Jewish people to consider Christ. These practices help create the myth - which is still prevalent in the Jewish community - that Jews are being bribed into faith in Christ. Various Northern American mission agencies rushing to meet the opportunities for evangelism among Russian Jews in North America as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States need to think through these issues and set up standards to prevent mistakes of the previous century from occurring in our own generation.

⁶ *Jews for Jesus Principles of Ethical Ministry*, "Addendum E: Council Instructional Notes", 31 August 1992.

Truth and integrity are our weapons in the propaganda war that is waged against us. But that is their ancillary function. Truth and integrity are the means by which we attain our end. What our opposition cannot understand or undermine is the fact that our goal is not simply to see people saved, but our aim is to obey and glorify the Lord. We cannot separate our end from our {20} means, for to glorify the Lord requires that we take the high road of ethical standards in any and all our endeavors. According to Moishe Rosen:

Once we face the fact that no matter how ethically we behave, our fellow Jews will continue to complain about our ethics, we must then also realize that our obligation as Christians requires us to carry on our work in an ethical manner. In short, our reason for an ethical practice is not to placate the opposition, but to position us within the will of God.⁷

As we maintain our godly standard of integrity, the truth of the message will shine forth like light in a dark place. Not only will the message be seen as light and truth, but for those who are willing to open their eyes, the efforts of anti-missionaries will be contrasted and their unethical tactics exposed.

We need to remember also to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. After all, Saul of Tarsus was not the only Jewish believer to persecute God's people before he "saw the light". Many of us were hostile before coming to faith. Let us continue praying for those who oppose us as our Lord set an example for us.

⁷ Moishe Rosen, *An Ethical Basis of Witness to the Jewish Community: A Compendium of Thought*, presented to North American Jewish Mission leaders of the Lausanne Consultation of Jewish Evangelism, 10-11 April 1985, Dallas, TX, p.14.

{21} Ethics in Jewish Evangelism in Britain

Paul Morris

Paul Morris is an evangelist to the Jews working with Christian Witness to Israel in London, England. He leads their London team, Shalom Ministries.

This article will discuss the ethics of those active in the realm of Jewish evangelism. The particular groups to be considered are missionaries to the Jews, Messianic believers and congregations, churches and anti-missionaries.

I want to examine the ethical standards professed by, and also the ethical influences surrounding the groups mentioned above in Britain today, and then to consider the extent to which they live up to them in their activities.

Missionaries, Messianic believers, and evangelical churches take the Bible as their guide. Other churches are under a variety of influences usually dictated by those mentioned in the next section. In Britain the anti-missionaries are generally orthodox Jews who profess traditional Jewish ethics from the Scriptures and Talmud.

The Ethical Climate in Britain

The notion that there are absolute standards of right and wrong is not forgotten, and the long and deep influence which the Bible has wielded within British national life still significantly affects society, molding the standards by which many seek to live. However, rationalism has heightened the importance given to individual convictions, so that they increasingly provide a basis for morals. As a result, moral rightness may be attributed to almost any opinion which is sincerely held.

There is a subconscious sense of guilt at the exploitations of the British Empire and the failures of Christendom. Because of the former the ethnic minorities in Britain are respected out of all proportion to their numbers, and their religious and ethical views are given a degree of recognition once unimaginable. The fact that the Church influenced this nation so much during the days of the Empire increases the tendency to give disproportionate weight to the views of such minorities. Similarly, the failure of Christendom towards the Jews ensures that they get a hearing out of proportion to their numbers or abilities.

{22} The decline in vital Christianity has left a void which every other faith community is seeking to fill. That includes some on the cutting edge of the Jewish community. For instance Rabbi Arye Forta of Lubavitch has written: "Today all religious voices have a chance to be heard. In a sense secularism has set the stage for Jews to take up once more their historic role of being a 'light to the nations'."¹

To respect the right to hold an opinion is now confused with respecting the opinion itself. Dogmatism of any sort is seen as intolerable (!). The dogmatism of rabbinic Jews and Muslims, however, is largely overlooked, partly because the English always cheer the underdog, partly because people do not know what Judaism and Islam teach and partly because the dogmatism to be opposed is the one which has dominated for so long - Christianity.

All religions are now seen as valid. It is accepted that morals are needed, and insofar as religious belief provides them, religion has a value. For any religion to claim sole authority from God is seen as a sign of intellectual and emotional immaturity.

¹ Arye Forta, *L'EYLAH*, no. 34, p. 29.

Attempts to get another person to change his or her religious convictions are increasingly viewed with disapproval. Or, put another way, you have the right to believe what you believe, you have the right to persuade others, but you do not have the right to succeed. In politics it is acceptable, but not in religion.

The Ethics of the Anti-Missionaries

Before 1986 no specific anti-mission organization existed. In that year Operation Judaism was formed. The stimulus came from a Lubavitch Rabbi, Shmuel Arkush, who discovered missionary activity on college campuses near him. But Operation Judaism is not a Lubavitch organization. Its main committee is composed of representatives from the Office of the Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and Lubavitch. Consequently those sizeable and influential organizations are actively involved in opposing missionaries even though Operation Judaism is itself a small set-up.

Naturally there are many other organizations in the Jewish community which see opposition to missionaries as part of their responsibility, either in the form of some permanent effort or just an occasional effort in reaction to a current threat. Jewish newspapers, synagogue groupings, individual synagogues, study centres, Zionist organizations, etc. are all intelligently involved from time to time. But it is to Operation Judaism that they turn when they need help.

{23} Anti-missionaries in Britain's current ethical climate

In their public relations they generally try to ensure that their statements, aims and activities strike a sympathetic chord with both past and modern influences. They can then gain a measure of support from both Jewish and Christian camps. They believe in absolute moral values, and also that all religions have a certain validity. They appear reasonable and winsome.

However, in less public and more confrontational situations their behavior is less reasonable. They know they should act according to certain standards in the Torah, they should be fair and honest; indeed they should not do to others what they would not want done to them, but in all my experiences I sense they find these standards irksome to live with. When their deepest feelings bubble over, their behavior is not only wrong in the absolute, but also unethical by their own mores. They operate a double standard. Of course, there is nothing especially Jewish about this phenomenon; it is the power of sin in human nature.

Anti-missionary operations are governed by four aims:

- 1) To influence public opinion and official bodies against attempts to convert Jewish people.
- 2) To defend the Jewish community against missionary activity.
- 3) To oppose and frustrate particular missionary efforts.
- 4) To confront missionaries personally in witness situations.

Influencing official bodies and public opinion

This has been very successful of late. Numerous articles have appeared in the better national and regional newspapers, and in magazines, such as the New Statesman. These are either submitted by Jewish authors, or produced by reporters after influence has been exerted. Opportunities have been gained to put the Jewish point of view in radio and television interviews.

Their approach contains a glaring double standard. On the one hand Jews and others are not to be insulted by being told they need something more than their own religious beliefs. Yet the educated Jews involved see themselves as light for the world. The Noachide laws are

frequently referred to: "In Jewish teaching ... these seven principles constitute the ethical substructure on which an individual (gentile) can build a spiritual life."² The claim is clear that what the Talmud says is authoritative for mankind, and men should listen to what today's rabbis tell them from it. However, Christianity is portrayed as offensive in seeking to tell others what is right.

{24} Such newspaper articles project a stereotype of a missionary. Missions, for example, are "fabulously wealthy."³ This stereotyping is itself unethical, especially in light of Jewish sensitivities over stereotyping. In a recent television interview⁴ the Chief Rabbi, being aware of our challenge on this point, actually said "some missionaries" for the first time. However, I am not sure if there are any missionaries who are fabulously wealthy!

I cannot believe that our accusers are completely candid in this. The speaker or writer may be able to point to some isolated incident where a missionary was less than honest, but he knows full well they are not all like this. An article in *The Times* by Arye Forta was entitled "Dishonest Conversion of Jews", referring to the claim to be Jewish and Christian.⁵ We are said to be dishonest because a Jewish Christian is not a Jew according to his definition, yet he knows full well what we mean, and that our argument is valid by his own Talmudic standard of "once a Jew always a Jew". Honest or not, the mud sticks.

It has been stated that we have caused people to commit suicide. This is often repeated because impetus was given to Operation Judaism by the sad case of a young student who professed faith but later committed suicide. In all the publicity given to this it was never once mentioned that he was already being treated for manic depression and that the coroner was of the opinion that his conversion was not a factor in his suicide. This was plain dishonesty on the part of those who were close to the case and have used it as a stick with which to beat missionaries. In fact the majority of the Christians involved with the student were not missionaries to the Jews.

We are often accused of playing on people's emotions, but articles against missionaries frequently do this in their use of Christendom's anti-Semitism. Typical of this is "Conversion throughout European history has gone hand in hand with persecution".⁶ Such a generalization is usually followed by pleas of "leave us alone". There is no attempt to examine all the facts of history, nor to face the totally different situation today. All this is not to ignore the terrible legacy of Christendom's anti-Semitism, nor to dismiss the fears of Jewish people when they connect such awful experiences with present-day evangelism. But it cannot be a justification for giving up our God-given commission to preach the good news to the Jew first.

The terminology used to describe our activities is frequently dishonest. The title *Christians and targeted proselytism*⁷ is a typical example. The impression {25} created is that we must be bad people because our activities can be described with such negative terms. But that is the author's view. It does not reflect our motivation nor the effects of our work. And what is more, he knows it. It is dishonest. To their credit some authors (e.g. Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok) note that they believe we are sincere and relatively harmless, and they acknowledge that the argument is not about personalities or methods but about theology. Such reasonable writers are, unfortunately, the exception.

² Arye Forta, "Dishonest Conversion of the Jews", *The Times*, 16 January 1989.

³ Interview with Shmuel Arkush in *Hamaor* (Journal of Federation Synagogues), vol. 26, no. 1, p.13.

⁴ BBC 1 Newsroom Southeast, 9 April 1992.

⁵ Forta, "Dishonest Conversion".

⁶ Andrew Brown, *The Independent*, 10 August 1992.

⁷ Michael Latham (Director of the CCJ), *The Times*, 20 July 1992.

On several occasions public halls have been hired or advertisements placed for an evangelistic event only to be withdrawn after pressure by Jewish leaders, the main argument being that it is offensive. The latest example of this was when Jews for Jesus placed an advertisement on the London Underground in the summer of 1992. What would be the reaction of the Jewish community if a similar protest was launched against a particular Jewish activity on the grounds that it was "offensive"? Cries of "anti-Semitism!" would be heard. Here is another double standard: Christian activities can be offensive, but Jewish ones cannot.

Producing defences for the Jewish community

This aim is achieved by the usual means of articles in the Jewish press, videos and lectures. The types of ethical failure and double standard are similar to the above, but the mode of expression tends to be stronger. People express their true feelings more. Examples of this abound in an interview with Shmuel Arkush:⁸ "I have never yet met anybody who has converted out of intellectual conviction. There is always some emotional problem.... The missionaries are in every (hospital) ward:" Or in the Lubavitch leaflet *Jews Under Attack* "They will lie, cajole and even use psychological techniques, which have in the past led to suicide." Accusations of targeting the weak and vulnerable are numerous. A particularly blatant deception is in an Operation Judaism video which reports that Oswald Moseley was once the Chairman of the Church's Ministry among the Jews. Most Jews in Britain will recognize this name as that of the man who led the British fascists in the 1930s. But the Oswald Moseley who was on the Church's Ministry among the Jews Council held office in 1824! If Shmuel Arkush was ignorant of this, basic common sense would have suggested checking. However, the evidence is that he is not ignorant, because when challenged about it by William Campbell, a freelance journalist, he refused to give a direct answer.

An accusation now used increasingly is that of splitting families. Undoubtedly faith in Jesus does lead to family tensions, but this charge can equally be leveled at Lubavitch as they promote their brand of Judaism, particularly among young Jews. And they know it. Here we have another double standard.

{26} Opposing Particular Missionary Efforts

In certain areas in Britain the anti-missionaries are able to dispatch a group of workers to the point of street evangelism. I have experienced many occasions when such people have physically blocked me from my aims. Not only is this illegal, but it involves the infringement of basic rights and freedoms. Clearly, the fact that the British Jewish community has benefited greatly from those freedoms is not something that some of them feel others merit.

When they have been confronted with the lies they have used in argument or their attempts to steal literature, and it has been pointed out that these actions are contrary to the Torah, they frequently reply "It doesn't matter in your case!" Situational ethics in extremis!

Ethics of Missionaries, Messianic Groups and Churches

What then of those of us who work to bring Jewish people to faith in Jesus? How consistent are our aims and activities with the ethics we profess? What ethical criticisms are made of us, and how valid are they? What criticisms should we make of ourselves? I will attempt to examine our ethics and the criticisms made of them in terms of (1) our main aims, (2) the relation between the Testaments and (3) detailed comments.

⁸ *Hamaor*, vol. 26, no. 1.

There are two main aims to be considered: that of saving Jewish people and that of influencing public opinion regarding this work.

Saving Jewish people through faith in Messiah Jesus

In Britain today it is not just our methods which are attacked as unethical, but the whole enterprise itself. This is because the evangelistic approach asserts that the covenant relationship that Israel has with God is insufficient for individual salvation. Both non-evangelical Christian leaders and Jewish leaders oppose this assertion. A reading of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 10:1-18 should be enough to convince anyone who accepts the authority of either of those passages that anything that Israel has which falls short of participation in the New Covenant does not save from sin. Our evangelism is consistent with Scripture and is therefore ethical.

It is worth commenting here how difficult it is in Britain to be heard on the above point. There are many long-established Protestant denominations in Britain and most of them are led by men who are opposed to evangelism. This presents to the Jewish people a Christian establishment which agrees with them. Hence those engaged in Jewish evangelism are seen as marginal, and unbelieving Jews are confirmed in their view that our work is mistaken and unethical. If we want the rightness of our activities to be clear, other issues {27} obviously come into play. Disassociation by evangelicals from such churches, coupled with some expression of united testimony, would make the rightness of our position clearer and less vulnerable to arrogant dismissal.

A more bullish accusation, frequently heard from men such as Rabbi Shochet, is that our evangelism infers Jews are subhuman because if they need saving then they must be incapable of moral achievement. This is meant to stir up guilt feelings by alluding to a medieval view of the Jews which often led to persecution. But such an accusation equates sinful man's ability to understand truth on an intellectual level with the ability to love it or do it. Jews are as capable as anyone of making a response to the Law of God which involves moral awareness. But they are as incapable as anyone else of the holiness of heart and life which that Law requires. Such truths are clearly stated in passages such as Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 2:1; 8:7; and evangelism is consistent with them.

The aim of influencing public opinion

Some may question whether this aim is justifiable. Paul's insistence that the Philippian magistrates should escort him to freedom (Acts 16:35-37) is sufficient support. Events may lead to our activities appearing unethical or illegal, and it is legitimate to try to put the record straight. This may be a one-off response to a particular occurrence, or a wider campaign to influence public opinion.

Typical activities are: Inviting the media to film evangelistic efforts and Messianic activities, or to hold interviews; influencing church leaders by personal approach or sitting on church committees; letters and articles to the press; producing booklets which make clear our own internal standards.⁹

Most of the ethical considerations in all this, such as honesty and fairness, are fairly obvious, but it is important that we keep a check on ourselves. Our case must not be one-sided, nor must it be expressed dismissively. In the heat of controversy we must beware that such carnal attitudes as pride and arrogance do not develop. It is easy to condemn the failures of some of

⁹ Examples in Britain are: *Principles of Ethical Ministry* by Jews for Jesus, and *A Code of Practice for CMJ Workers* by Church's Ministry among the Jews.

the church fathers in their confrontations with Jewish opponents; it is also easy to make the same mistakes they made. In particular there is a need to avoid stereotyping, as if all Jews are like anti-missionaries.

In one sense we fight with one hand tied behind our back. It is easy for anti-missionaries in the current climate to rail against the dogmatism of evangelism; it is in vogue. But we should be aware of the danger to the Jewish people of a high profile exposure of the failures and inconsistencies of our {28} opponents. It is part of the ethics of our love to restrain ourselves. Paul's defense before Felix in Acts 24 is our example here: There were other things that he could have said about his arrest which would have strengthened his case, but they would also have discredited his people, and so he refrained.

At the end of the day we evangelize because of Christ's command, regardless of man's enlightened tolerance, and we need to make that clear at all times.

The Relationship between the Old and the New Testaments

The point at which anti-missionaries feel most vulnerable is the assertion that Jews who believe in Jesus remain Jewish. In Rabbi Shochet's anti-missionary presentation,¹⁰ he describes this as *the* new emphasis in evangelism of Jews. Rabbi Arye Forta writes in a major British daily newspaper:

Spawned in America, Jewish Christianity is an attempt to persuade Jews that they can accept Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, and still remain totally within the Jewish fold.... Their methods are dishonest, and must be publicly shown to be so.¹¹

Martin Stern writes:

The main aim of their approach is to establish contact with the potential convert and, by subtly reading their doctrines into his cultural heritage, make him feel that their message is not alien to his previous value system and therefore no threat to his identity.¹²

The implication is that this approach is unethical. We must ask ourselves whether every means used in Jewish evangelism to assert the Jewishness of the gospel is consistent with the New Testament. If not, then these charges may be justified. There are two areas to be examined: New Testament/Old Testament fulfillment and Jewish Christianity.

Relating New Testament to Jewish cultural heritage

It is surprising to be charged with being unethical because we relate belief in Jesus to Jewish heritage, since the claim of the New Testament has always been that it is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament points to. However, this charge has to be approached in different ways, depending on how "Jewish heritage" is being defined.

First, when it is said that the Tanakh does not teach the death and resurrection of the Messiah, and that we are only reading this in, then Jewish cultural heritage is being defined as the Scriptures, and it is a matter of straightforward debate to show that the New Testament exposition of such Old Testament passages is a valid one. The charge of proof-texting may be made in such a {29} debate,¹³ and so it will be important to show the validity

¹⁰ "Square Circles" lecture, delivered at Hillel House, London, on 9 February 1989 (taped but unpublished).

¹¹ Forta, "Dishonest Conversion".

¹² Martin Stern, "A Response to the Missionary Menace", *L'EYLAH*, no. 33, p. 25.

¹³ Martin Stern.

of the New Testament use of the Old Testament, especially in cases where it is not immediately obvious. For instance, the use of Messiah in Psalm 22 where the Messiah is not mentioned in the passage. Special care is needed when dealing with passages in the Old Testament which are not quoted in the New Testament, but appear very useful to prove a point. Some Old Testament texts used to prove the second coming of Messiah fall into this category, such as Psalm 102:16: "For the Lord shall build up Zion; he shall appear in his glory." This could refer to a number of things, particularly the first coming. Exegetically it need not refer to Messiah's second coming, and the New Testament never cites it as proof of his return.

Secondly, when Jewish cultural heritage is approached in terms of rituals and traditions, great care is needed in relating them to New Testament teaching so as to make an evangelistic point. We need to distinguish between those rituals and traditions which Scripture endorses as foreshadowing Messianic truth and those of which Scripture makes no mention. In the former category are many rituals, such as animal sacrifice, which cannot be practiced today. By bringing out their original import and showing the consistency with New Testament teaching, we are acting ethically. Similarly, when we do this with rituals and traditions within present-day Jewish culture, such as the Matzah (1 Cor 5:7-8), we are ethically justified, even if it is felt to be offensive and unacceptable.

There are many Old Testament rituals or traditions which cannot be practiced today, and any discussion of these must be conducted in light of what Scripture says. There are rituals and traditions within present-day Jewish culture which are Old Testament foreshadowings of Messianic truth, such as the Matzah (1 Cor 5:7-8). To point to these as illustrating New Testament truth is ethically justifiable, even if it is found offensive and unacceptable.

Where we become unethical is in using present-day Jewish traditions to illustrate gospel truth when they were never intended to do so. This may not only be offensive, but it also weakens the force of our argument. For instance: parallels between the dates of Christmas and Channukah, the stripes and holes of modern matzah, the shamash candle, dogmatic assertions about the Tri-unity significance of the three matzot at the Seder, drawings which make Jesus look chassidic. Some might like to argue that it is possible for Jewish tradition to say more than was intended by its authors, quoting the example of Caiaphas in John 11:49-52, but that is only valid when the author is in a God-ordained office, as Caiaphas was. No rabbi carries such authority.

{30} The ethics in evangelism of Jewish Christianity

Jewish Christianity is not quite as new as Rabbi Forta has suggested when portraying it as recent American import! However, its modern forms of expression have forced both Christians and Jews to do some refocusing and rethinking.

There is nothing new about a Jewish believer in Jesus feeling "more Jewish" or "fulfilled" or "completed", and so asserting the Jewishness of his new faith. What is new (since the early centuries in the land of Israel anyway) is the expression of this by significant numbers of Jewish believers through the practice of Jewish customs, or the formation of Messianic congregations. This obviously defuses the charge of having become a gentile, betrayed their people etc., and it removes some serious stumbling blocks to Jews considering the claims of Jesus. But is it ethical? The answer depends on the circumstances.

There can be no honest arguing against the assertion that a Jewish believer in Jesus remains Jewish. He may not be a talmudic Jew but he is still a member of the Jewish people, and he is right to assert this to his fellow Jews in his witness. Going further, if in his evangelism he wants to accommodate himself to the concerns and sensitivities of unsaved Jews, whether

in expressing his Jewish cultural links (say through Zionism, food, music, etc.), or expressing his Jewish religious links (say through a Seder) he is free to do so according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. In this context of Old Testament/New Testament relations it is the expression of religious links that concerns us. It should also be noted that my comments here are in the context of evangelism; I am not addressing the issue of Jewish lifestyle for its own sake.

Rabbi Shochet says evangelicals believe "The end justifies the means". Is this accommodation unethical? It can look like it. However, there can be no doubt that it is ethical, in certain conditions. First, there is never any harm in accommodating others in order to avoid raising unnecessary barriers, as long as expressing Jewishness is not used as a means to hide the belief of the one evangelizing that Jewishness and Judaism cannot save. When Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:31) there was no chance of confusion because it was then clearly established, both to believers and unbelievers,¹⁴ that circumcision had no saving value.

{31} On a practical level, the choice of which customs to use to express Jewishness in an evangelistic context needs serious thought. Many things are not consistent with the New Covenant, and the practice of them will convey a false impression and be misleading. For example, to invite relatives for Shabbat as a social custom is good, but to close the time with the *Havdalah* ceremony is to undermine all that Hebrews 4 says about how Shabbat is fulfilled in all we possess in Messiah Jesus.

Secondly, no impression should be given that the Jewish believer *always* lives the life of an orthodox Jew. Again this creates the impression that such things have saving value. Paul only said he lived *as* under the Law, not under it per se. Furthermore, any attempt to live an orthodox lifestyle can only lead to the confusing position in which Peter found himself at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). He was unable to express his unity with gentile believers, and was therefore betraying a cardinal principle of Messianic truth. Such behavior is unethical.

We must make it clear that the goal of our evangelism is to lead the inquirer into the New Covenant, with all that it implies. It may not be appropriate to spell this out initially, but the way in which we evangelize must be consistent with it. The New Covenant community is not under the Law of Moses or Rabbinic tradition; it expresses the reality of being one new man in Messiah Jesus (Eph 2:15). Anything which undermines this is misleading, and therefore unethical, and it is my opinion that Messianic congregations are guilty here. Their attempt to stay, as a congregation, within the Jewish fold, when Messiah's people are supra-national is misleading. The attempt to make things feel more Jewish by bringing Mosaic or rabbinic customs into New Covenant worship is likewise misleading. It encourages those feelings of exclusiveness which many Jews have - feelings which have no place under the New Covenant and therefore hinders a true understanding of the gospel. As the whole evangelistic approach of such congregations is linked to this general philosophy, it is inevitably misleading, and open to the charge of being unethical.

We must make a distinction between the communal life of God's New Covenant people and their private lives. The New Testament allows certain liberties in private expressions of service to Messiah (Rom 14:1-8) which it does not allow in the life together of the New Covenant community because of their oneness and their newness (Eph 2:14; Col 2:16--3:2; Tit 1:14; Heb 13:9-13). This we must also follow in our evangelism or we will be rightly accused of misleading people.

¹⁴ Cf. Acts 13:39;15:1,10,11.

Conclusion

We may be accused of many things, but no one can question the fact that in Britain today we make clear what our standards are and invite anyone to compare our behavior with those standards. This is not difficult since all {32} Jewish evangelism, by whatever agency, is by necessity open and public in style. Furthermore, Britain is a very open society with an effective press that is addicted to negative comment. We invite those who oppose us to produce similar written codes of ethical behavior for their own activities, and lay themselves open to the same public scrutiny.

Our declared ethical standards include: Insistence on a forthright and clear presentation of the message as well as its consequences; honesty and integrity in the method of presentation; no invitation to an evangelistic event under false pretences; no dressing up or posing to be something we are not; no use of the high pressure techniques so familiar in the persuasion professions; and financial accountability. These are standards derived from Scripture, but we should also remember that as we seek to live by them we are also to avoid "every appearance of evil" (1 Thes 5:22). This is a high standard, and demands that we take into account how others will see what we do. In this way we will not be misunderstood, and will be free from any reasonable charge of deception. In conclusion I will deal with some concrete accusations used against us.

Dividing families

Yes, this does happen, and it is very sad. Jesus said this would occur (Matt 10:34-37), quoting the prophet Micah to show that it takes place when some take a stand for truth. When people like Lubavitch make such a charge against us there is a need for them to take the beam out of their own eye first. Division of families also occurs when secular Jews convert to an orthodox lifestyle.

Because we are aware that such division may take place, we should consider at the very beginning of our contact with one member how the whole family might be won. However, where we can see that a clash is inevitable, then we must give guidance and close support to the one recently saved so that the tensions are minimized.

Emotional pressure

Accusations against us include charges of love-bombing, high-pressure argumentation, working on guilt feelings, preying on the weak and sick, the lonely and the failures. Those who can believe nothing good of us refuse to consider that we might love people genuinely, argue reasonably, expose guilt wisely, or help the weak disinterestedly. But, by God's grace we do all these things, and inevitably in all situations we try to communicate the best thing we know - God's mercy in Messiah Jesus.

However, we have to check our methods and our motives. Have we never acted unwisely or insensitively? Two theological comments may be of value.

{33} Conversion involves understanding certain doctrines with the mind, accepting them in the mind and heart, and obeying them by a submission of the will (Rom 6:17). Mind, heart and will must all be involved, and the mind must be first. It is all too easy to get a purely emotional response from someone under emotional strain. There certainly are examples of unwise but well-intentioned believers failing to appreciate this, and casualties have resulted. The parable of the sower shows that there will always be false responses to the gospel, however wise we are, but we must do all we can to avoid them.

That which finally determines whether a person receives salvation is not an act of man. According to Romans 11:5, it is the election of God. If someone believes it is an act of man, and most in Britain today hold to such a theological position, then there is a strong temptation to pressure a person listening to the gospel, because their receiving salvation depends on our persuasiveness and their response. Believing what Scripture teaches, that God chooses who will be saved, and that our part in his certain purpose is to lead people to him, removes this temptation. We know that as we present the gospel, he will regenerate those he has chosen to save, and they will believe. We are still urgent and persuasive, but do not pressure.

Cults

The recent events in Waco, Texas, have led to a renewed barrage of accusations that we operate like a cult. This is strange coming from chassidic Jews! Rabbi Shochet rightly asserts that cults put all their stress on the emotions, but we are aware of that danger, and I have dealt with that above. Cults also have dominant leaders and utterly depend on operating like a closed society. Generally the former is not true of us today, but it certainly needs to be guarded against. Leaders must lead, but our structures must contain all the checks that prevent dictators arising. The "closed society" charge is certainly not true; all we do is open to the usual social and legal checks which are widely available and used in Britain today. However, the world of Messianic congregations and of Jewish evangelism is a small one, and we need to beware of becoming isolated.

In all these things our great safeguard is to follow David's example and set the Lord always before us, to have an eye to his glory in all things. May we know his power to do that, always.

{35} Ethical Evangelism and Evangelistic Ethics - an Israeli View

Lisa Loden

Lisa Loden has lived in Israel since 1974. She and her husband are pioneers in the area of Messianic music in Israel. She is a member of the Caspari Center Local Board.

The overwhelming majority of Israeli believers are committed to evangelism if it is defined as an obligation in love to share the good news about the Messiah of Israel: That he has come to the Jewish people, that there is salvation in him alone and forgiveness of sins through his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection. However, the average Israeli believer would find it strange to think about ethics in the context of evangelism. He knows he must honestly present the gospel clearly in an effective witness. He prays for sufficient courage to endure the misunderstanding and possible rejection he might face. He is also concerned that the person to whom he is witnessing feel comfortable in the particular local congregation.

It is unfortunate that ethical questions are not of greater concern to the average Israeli believer in Yeshua. In the current western mode of libertine secular humanism which is prevalent in Israel, when one speaks about ethics one quickly enters a subjective area. Nonetheless the whole domain of ethical behavior should be of intense importance to believers living and evangelizing in Israel.

Whether we realize it or not, the surrounding Jewish/Israeli world is very aware of ethical questions as they relate to Messianic /Christian evangelism. Our motivation and conduct are constantly being evaluated, judged on ethical grounds and found to be wanting. Moreover, as those who seek to be obedient to God and walk in integrity, ethical concerns should be relevant for us if only because God Himself is concerned with the integrity of our lives and relationships: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). Our ethical standards need to be grounded in an understanding of God and the demands of His service.

{36} Regarding the act of evangelism itself, we must consider both the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man. God is a holy God of love deeply concerned for the salvation of the entire human race. Man is created in the image of God and is therefore responsible as a moral being and accountable for his choices. We must respect man's freedom to make choices, and never should we resort to coercion, manipulation or deception in matters of faith. The biblical principle here is that of persuasion and argument: "Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord" (Isa 1:18).

John 3:16 clearly states God's motivation for evangelism. Love must be the governing factor for all our efforts in this and every other sphere of our lives as believers in the risen Messiah.

Distinctiveness of Evangelism in Israel

Although evangelism in Israel cannot be severed from Jewish evangelism in general, the question of Jewish survival affects us in Israel differently than it affects Jews in other parts of the world. The ancient homeland acquires a significance as a factor in the Jewish response to evangelism. A corollary question arises regarding the matter of gentiles witnessing to Jews in their own land. Some would question this on ethical grounds.

Are the Jews a Special Case?

"Why," we are constantly asked, "is Jewish evangelism important? Why can't the Jews just be left alone? After all they have the Old Testament; they worship the same God as the Christians. Isn't it a bit patronizing to insist that Jews need to become Christians? Don't the Jews already belong to God and don't they already have their own way of salvation?" At times the right even to witness in Israel is challenged since Israel is supposed to be the safe haven for Jews from every threat (real or perceived) of annihilation, be it physical or spiritual. The right to evangelize is frequently challenged on account of the history of anti-Semitism in the Church.

By and large these objections are raised by uninvolved observers, often liberal Christian scholars or Christian Zionists who are embarrassed by the simplistic understanding or zealotry of those witnessing among the Jewish people. More often than not these same people have been influenced by the Jewish community who state unequivocally that the Jews already know God and that to evangelize them is immoral and unethical. Usually these same opponents of Jewish evangelism are found to be liberal in other areas of the faith. We are not without their representatives in Israel.

Our answer to the question "Are the Jews a special case?" is yes. The unified testimony of the first disciples was that the Jewish people are "beloved for the sake of the fathers". To them the gospel was first given, and they have not been abandoned by the God of their fathers. No other people enjoy such a relationship (Rom 9-11).

Nevertheless, even though their heritage and the promises given to them by God complicate the issue, the Jews too are a people who are in need of evangelistic proclamation and salvation. Because of their pre-existing corporate relationship with God as a people, special care and sensitivity must be taken in the witness to the people of Israel. It is significant that the following words were written by a Messianic Jewish leader.

We cannot compound Christian historical unfaithfulness (with regard to anti-Semitism) with the added unfaithfulness of withholding our gospel witness to the Jewish people. Though this witness must be ethical, gracious, and non-coercive, no circumstances of history can invalidate the Scriptural command to share the Gospel.¹

Many of us Jews who know personally the love and the salvation available only in Yeshua can and do say with Paul, "the delight of my own heart and my supplication which I address to God for Israel is for their salvation" (Rom 10:1).

What do the Jewish Critics Say?

Witness to the Jewish people is called into question by Jewish critics of evangelism on both theological and ethical grounds, with one argument deriving from the other. Their line of reasoning begins with the declaration that Jews have no need of evangelism which has as its aim the conversion of the individual to a belief in Yeshua. The Jewish people already are in relationship with God and they are saved by virtue of that relationship. If this were true then at best evangelism is rendered unnecessary and at worst it is a gross form of spiritual genocide. In this view it is completely immoral and unethical to evangelize the Jewish people.

Yehezkel Landau passionately expresses some of the concerns of the Jewish community as regards Jewish evangelism in these words:

¹ Daniel C. Juster, "Discrediting Jewish Evangelism," *MISHKAN* 6&7, 1987, p.114.

Most Jews the world over will see in your "Jewish evangelism" a threat to Jewish identity and survival as serious as the threat from those who take up arms against us. In many ways, the threat which you pose is even more dangerous, since it is not a military one that mobilizes an instinctive defensive response. Our Arab enemies have tried to invade our physical terrain in order to "de-Zionize" it. You celebrate the Jewish homecoming to the Holy Land, but you come here with no less aggressive intentions. Christian missionaries, or evangelists, operating in the state of Israel today are trying to invade the intimate spiritual terrain on which a Jew meets God.²

{38} Landau further accuses the evangelist of unethical behavior and motivations in his remarks regarding the use of Jewish practices in what he considers to be a Christian setting i.e. a Messianic congregation.

If you rip these elements out of their sacred, revealed context, you are committing two grave sins. First of all, you are committing a transgression that is tantamount to "spiritual plagiarism". Even worse, you are propagating a colossal fraud on the potential 'customers' who may be shopping for some religious meaning and may be tempted to buy this hybrid product called "Christian Judaism". In Jewish terms, it is theological sha'atnez, a "garment" woven of irreconcilable materials (like wool and linen, cf. Lev 19:19, Deut 22:11).³

Other Jewish writers on the subject question the ethical motivations of the authors of the New Testament and see a historical continuity between these writers and current proponents of the New Testament faith.

There is a general lack of respect for the integrity of the Scriptures in the Pauline method. In his overriding desire to convert the masses to his beliefs, Paul is guided by the dubious assumption that the end justifies the means (1 Cor 9:20-22). The use of deception, by himself or others, in order to bring about belief in Jesus did not disturb Paul: "... whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice yes, and I will rejoice" (Phil 1:18).⁴

This writer goes on to state,

The modern missionary movement still follows the traditional Pauline method of deceit and pretense.... The Jewish convert to Christianity has been deceived by subtle mental manipulation into accepting Jesus as God, into thinking evil is righteousness, and into accepting the preposterous view that the observance of God's Law is against the will of God.⁵

In these quotations the focus of the claims of unethical motivations and behavior is upon both the theological content and the methodology of Jewish evangelism. Again we see that the question of Jewish survival is uppermost in the minds of the critics. Survival is intimately bound up with questions of identity. Both issues are of critical concern to the Jewish people today and our evangelism threatens them in areas of their own self doubt

² Yehezkel Landau, "Responses - Christian Ministry to the Jewish People," *MISHKAN* 5, 1986, p. 29.

³ Landau, p. 30.

⁴ Gerald Sigal, *The Jew and the Christian Missionary: A Jewish Response to Missionary Christianity* (New York, 1981) p. 272.

⁵ Sigal, p. 290.

and insecurity. We would do well to recognize the extreme sensitivity of the survival question and work toward an understanding of the real issues at stake.

As believers living and working in Israel, we should take seriously the claims of our critics in the area of methodology. Happily there is a conscious effort by the local believer to be forthright and honest in his proclamation of the gospel. There are no hidden agendas. When, however, it comes to the criticism leveled along the lines of unethical theology, the Israeli believer is uncompromising in his rejection of such criticism. The truth of the gospel {39} proclamation of every man's need for salvation cannot be compromised. We recognize that our respective faith positions are irrevocably at odds. The Bible, however, gives us as believers in Jesus a mandate to proclaim and live out the gospel even if it is an offense to our Jewish people.

Ethics and Lifestyle Evangelism

There are a number of scriptures which relate to the question of motivation and ethics in evangelism. One of the most typical is 1 Thessalonians 2:2-8. It is from this passage that Moishe Rosen extracted eight principles of ethical evangelism:

1. The gospel should not be preached in such a way as to only please men, but in such a way as to please God.
2. Proclamation must not involve flattery.
3. The gospel should not be presented in such a way as to satisfy the greed of the proclaimer.
4. Nor should it bring glory to the proclaimer.
5. Godly proclamation does not always insist on its rights.
6. It is gentle.
7. It springs from holy affection.
8. Its basis is love.⁶

To these eight points, I would add a ninth which in my view is also inherent in the text:

9. Proclamation is accompanied by care and an impartation of the lives of those who proclaim.

The addition of this point brings us to a consideration of the lifestyle of the evangelist, and the importance of the ethical foundation upon which he conducts his daily affairs.

In recent years in Israel there has been increasing discontent with the results of typical evangelism. Although there have been evangelistic campaigns by a growing number of local participants, an increasing measure of evangelism on the local congregational level and an ongoing emphasis on "friendship evangelism", a ground swell of dissatisfaction has been rising. In all honesty, the number of people who have been reached by these methods has been very small, especially if one considers the time, prayer, energy and funds that have been poured into such efforts. It is not enough to content ourselves with the statement that we are "engaged in pre-evangelism and so what more can we expect".

In light of this dissatisfaction with traditional methods of evangelism, there has been a move by some individuals and bodies of believers to become more {40} involved in social issues and to examine seriously the current structures of the local congregations. They all sense that the gospel needs to be taken out of the confines of the congregation with its traditional approach to evangelism and must be moved into the workplace and marketplace.

⁶ Moishe Rosen, "An Ethical Basis of Witness to the Jewish Community," (Unpublished paper, LCJE-North America Conference, Chicago, 1985) p. 5.

In other words, our evangelism must not be detached from our everyday lives. Evangelism is not just some extracurricular activity that we occasionally do, nor is it the exclusive province of the "called" evangelist. It is the concern of every believer and an integral part of his lifestyle.

When evangelism is in this way redefined or reassigned to the larger context of lifestyle, we find ourselves facing questions of practical ethics. Suddenly the ethics of, for example, banking and commerce become relevant to evangelism. If our lives are inseparable from our evangelism, then ethical questions become of utmost importance in every area of life. This view is not without biblical precedent. "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord" (1 Thes 1:5-6).

Evangelism as lifestyle implies a more holistic and integrated approach to living. All of one's life and concerns are seen in the framework of outreach, and the mandate to be light and salt in the world gains new relevance. How one conducts one's daily affairs takes on new importance because the world is watching and judging our message by our lives. Ethical concerns reach into every pocket of life and activity.

It is then good and right in the context of evangelism as lifestyle to be concerned with the abortion issue, drug rehabilitation, reconciliation between Jews and Arabs and other social concerns such as ministry to the disabled and those in prison. Those who are involved in these areas are cognizant of the responsibility to order their lives uprightly and not to compromise the message by a lack of personal holiness. "That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15). Indeed, not to be involved in society and its concerns is in itself unethical.

When Jewish and Arab believers meet together in a public place and are seen by the nonbelieving society, their harmonious fellowship is in itself a witness to the power of the gospel to break down barriers between people who are {41} normally at enmity. Questions are inevitably asked and clear answers are given as to the reason for being together. It is right and good to live out our faith by sharing fellowship with our "enemies". It would be unethical to refuse to be in active relationship with other believers because of ethnic origins or political concerns.

The main concern of the pro-life pregnancy counseling centre in Israel is to rescue unborn children from abortion. The motivation of the believers involved is the conviction that human life is created by God and needs to be protected at all stages. When a woman comes into the centre she is often struck with the love and care with which she is treated and frequently desires to know more about the people who work in the centre. Why are they doing what they are doing? It is right and good to express one's faith by saving human lives as well as human souls. It would be unethical to absent oneself from this issue because it is seen as a social concern.

Those who are involved in ministries to the disabled, drug addicts and prison inmates do so because their hearts have been moved by the human need and lostness which is so apparent in these sectors of society. These are the very people to whom the Lord Yeshua reached out in compassion. It would be unethical and contrary to Scripture (Matt 25:34-46) to deny these people the warmth of human relationship because they are on the fringes of society.

The primary concern of the believer who chooses to become actively involved in the social issues of the day is to do whatever he does with all his heart so as to please the Lord. His

life is his witness; therefore "evangelism" is integrated into the living out of his faith. The message is seen in the life of the messenger. The proclamation of gospel truth then takes on flesh before the eyes of the watching world.

Conclusion

Throughout this article I have tried to draw attention to the necessity at this time in Israel to be concerned with the ethics of our evangelism, particularly in the area of lifestyle. Sensitivity to context is important as is recognition of the unique place of the Jewish people in salvation history.

The local body of Jewish believers in Israel is growing and maturing (however slowly) and is beginning to take upon itself greater responsibility both toward God and toward their fellow man. The body's self awareness is increasing and the sense of identity and belonging within Israeli society is strengthening even against efforts aimed at the rejection of the believer by the Jewish people. These are healthy signs for the future of evangelism in the land.

{42} Frank Gaebelien addresses these very issues in his essay "The Debasement of Taste":

In The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon gives as one of the main causes of the growth of the early church in the decadent empire the pure morality of the Christians, who, by their steadfast nonconformity to the world around them, shone as lights in the darkness and worked as salt in a pagan society. The principle has not changed. Purity for conscience' sake, goodness out of conviction, self-restraint motivated by love for God and man, have not lost their winsomeness. In this secular society, as in imperial Rome, Christ-like living still has its ancient power.⁷

As ethical questions become important to those of us living and working in Israel, our impact will grow and our witness will become whole.

⁷ In D. Bruce Lockerbie (ed.), *The Christian, The Arts and Truth. Regaining the Vision of Greatness* (Portland, Oregon, 1985) p.114.

{43} Coming Clean: Jewish or Christian?

Messianic Judaism and the Language of Disaffiliation

Susan Perlman

Susan Perlman is Assistant Executive Director for Jews for Jesus and Editor of the journal *Issues*. She is a member of the International Coordinating Committee of Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.

A Messianic language lesson

The following is an excerpt from a letter that Rabbi Arthur C. Blecher of Beth Tikvah Congregation in Rockville, Maryland, wrote to Messianic leader Daniel Juster on 12 December 1979:

As I have emphasized to you in person and on the phone, I object to your allowing individuals to believe that you are a Rabbi. I object to your deceptive use of language to mask the Christian nature of your Congregation.¹

Juster responded:

As I have previously stated, the word "Christian" would certainly be deceptive if not qualified.... Our members do not accept the traditional boundaries between Judaism and Christianity as correct.... Rather than being deceptive, the use of "Messianic Jew" instead of "Christian" as a term of identification is truly for the purpose of removing misconception as to just where we stand.

That exchange is typical between Jewish believers and traditional Jews. What is behind the use of Messianic language? Do we have to "come clean"? Are we trying to convince people we are a part of a community that wants no part of our faith in Yeshua? Are we disaffiliating from those with whom we ought to identify? Or are we simply trying to describe ourselves and relate to others in a way that reflects both our faith in Jesus and our Jewish heritage? Does Messianic terminology mislead the Jewish community? How does ethics enter these matters?

I'd like to begin with a brief personal observation and then explore some of the above issues. If there are people in the Messianic movement who intentionally mislead the Jewish community with their terminology, I haven't {44} met them. Messianic Jewish believers are very willing to explain what they mean by the terms they use.

On the other hand, I *have* met some people who, in their desire to see Yeshua accepted by mainstream Judaism, mislead themselves by using words to define what they would like reality to be (i.e. "Messianic Judaism is the fourth branch of Judaism").

In order to address the issue of language and ethics we need to broaden our perspective to take in communication and theology.

David J. Hesselgrave, professor of mission and director of the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has written extensively on the subject of

¹ David A. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: It's History, Theology, and Polity* (New York and Toronto, 1982) pp. 236-238.

communicating Christ cross-culturally. He had this to say to Jewish mission leaders in a 1985 interview:

Theology is God-oriented and communication theory is respondent-oriented.

One says, "What does God say about this and where do I get my legitimization for what I am doing?" The other says, "What does my respondent understand by what I am doing and what I'm saying."

Then I can ask the ethical question, "What am I to do in the light of what God has required of me, and what my respondents understand of me?"

Where we're having trouble is in the vortex between communication theory and theology. What is happening is that culture is coming in. Is culture the arbiter of what we have in the Scripture and the arbiter of what we will do as we missionize...? If culture becomes too determinative, then the very nature of biblical revelation itself is vitally affected.²

Jewish believers need to avoid allowing our own Jewish culture (where it runs contrary to Scripture) to become that arbiter.

Those of us who study this problem also must guard against ascribing motivation. It is not for us to judge the reasons people choose the language they employ. What we can evaluate is whether the terminology indeed promotes understanding.

As we focus on promoting understanding, remember that Messianic language is not directed exclusively to the unsaved. Jewish believers are developing a body of language and other symbols to communicate with one another and express our own understanding of our identity as Jewish followers of Jesus. We do not want to appear duplicitous, and that would be a problem were we to use two utterly distinct languages - one among ourselves and another to the traditional Jewish community.

{45} Are We Precise In Our Terminology?

In developing and using Messianic language, the crucial question which Jewish believers need to ask ourselves is: "*Are we precise?*"

A good example of imprecise language is in the difference between the terms "Messianic Jewish" and "Messianic Judaism". The latter is an imprecise term but it is neither unethical nor deceptive. Those who use it do not intend to miscommunicate.

Different people attribute various meanings to the word "Judaism". As I see it Judaism, like other "isms" is regarded as a man-made structure. Scripture does not indicate that God created Judaism. God created Jews. Jews created Judaism. Some of Judaism is based upon what God required of the Jewish people, but much of Judaism has evolved away from that.

It is imprecise for Jewish believers to say that we want to get back to biblical Judaism, since it is questionable there was ever any Judaism in the Bible. Some people choose to use the word "Judaism" as the religion of the rabbis; others see it as encompassing the Jewish beliefs and/or identity of the past, present or future. Moreover, those who are leaders of today's Judaism - a religion which continues to branch out, to change and evolve - have the right to include or exclude whatever or whomever they wish.

² Moische Rosen, *An Ethical Basis of Witness to the Jewish Community*, LCJE North America conference, Chicago, Illinois, 25-26 March 1987, p. 25.

It is therefore understandable that the caretakers of the religion of Judaism would take exception to the term "Messianic Judaism". To them, it is unethical because it implies the consent of the Jewish community to tolerate something which the Jewish community leadership opposes. I believe that the rabbinic community does have authority to say what is meant by the religion of modern Judaism, since it is a structure which they have appropriated and modified to the point of ownership.

At the same time, the term "Judaism" is *not* synonymous with the term "Jewish". Being Jewish might include, but is not limited to, the structure or religion of Judaism. One cannot speak precisely of "*the Jewish faith*" or of what "Judaism teaches" as though there is some monolithic belief system to which all Jews subscribe. There is no religious litmus test of a Jew. Many non-observant Jews would object to such a test of authenticity. Few rabbis would point to the New Age Jew or the agnostic Jew and say they are not Jewish.

Therefore it is understandable that Jews who believe in Jesus do not accept the pronouncement by the larger Jewish community which says that on the basis of our religious beliefs, we should no longer identify ourselves as Jews. We would not wish to attribute unethical motives to those who try to define us out of our Jewishness in that way, but we would wish them to be as precise as they would like us to be.

{46} Perhaps our biggest hindrance to precision is that some terms have more than one meaning. If the person who speaks has a different orientation than the one who hears, misunderstanding arises when one or both view the term only within their own frame of reference.

Functional Equivalents

Marvin Mayers, dean of the School of Intercultural Studies at Biola University, uses the phrase "*functional equivalent*" to describe that which can be acceptable - or carry an accurate meaning - for both the person who uses it and the person who hears it used.

Mayers offers the Bible as an example.

*The Bible has such a constrained, carefully delineated meaning that to call the Koran the Bible or to call Mary Baker Eddy's material [the Bible], would be to violate this concept of functional equivalent. They are not functional equivalents, they're different.*³

Mayers also commented on the use of the term "rabbi" by Messianic Jews and maintained that it was not a functional equivalent of pastor. He reasoned that the term "rabbi" presumes a certain religious training and accords a certain status to its user that is unearned by those in the Messianic Jewish movement who use it.

Edmund Clowney, former president of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania commented: "If a rabbi comes to faith in Jesus, it seems perfectly proper to me that he still be addressed as 'rabbi'."

Dealing With Negative Connotative Terms

Not only do some people choose terms that are not functionally equivalent, but some people choose terms that are ambiguous, because the most precise word has been accorded a secondary connotative meaning which they wish to avoid. Though the connotative

³ Rosen, 33.

meaning may not be correct according to the dictionary, it is regarded as being true by enough people to make the word seem undesirable.

Misunderstanding arises when, in trying to disaffiliate from a connotation, Messianic Jews are perceived as disaffiliating from the primary meaning of words such as "Christian". The term "Christian" is understood by many mainstream Jews as one who is a non-Jew. The Jewish believer who avoids the term Christian is not denying the primary definition which speaks of his Christian allegiance, but the connotation of non-Jew.

{47} How careful do we need to be about perceived meanings? We should be as sensitive as possible to those who need to hear the gospel. On the other hand, if we base our terminology solely on the perceptions and biases of unbelievers, then on some level we will incorporate that bias into our language. We cannot allow our love and concern for our unsaved Jewish family and friends to eclipse our love and concern for our Christian brothers and sisters, or vice versa. Sometimes this tension feels a bit like walking a tightrope! Perhaps our real duty is to communicate the real meaning of the word "Christian" in order to clear up the understanding.

It is sometimes possible to be both precise and avoid negative connotations. In other words, we can find functional equivalents. We can take advantage of terms which neither confuse our meaning nor are laden with negative images. For example, a Messianic Jew who has clearly identified his or her belief in Jesus to an unbelieving Jew might talk about "my congregation" or "my assembly". These are neutral words which do not have the negative connotation that "church" can sometimes have. Many Jews hear the word church and immediately think of "agency of persecution" or "graven images". Congregation has a precise meaning, but it is general. A church is a congregation. A church is an assembly. So is a synagogue. Such neutral terms might be preferable.

If a Messianic Jew speaks about his or her "synagogue", he or she is not being unethical, yet can be thought to be imprecise. The term "synagogue" has a culture-specific meaning that is recognized as pertaining to the traditional religious Jewish community of which Messianic Jewish believers are not a part. While the book of James talks about synagogues, in light of the fact that the Jewish community has successfully redefined synagogue, a Messianic congregation does not fit within the framework of that community. Jews who do not believe in Jesus view the attempted linkage not as imprecise, but unethical. One can argue that we should take back the term. Yet some unbelievers view it as bait to lure unsuspecting Jews while others might view the linkage as either wishful or fuzzy thinking. Once again, we need to keep a fine balance between preferred language and clarity of communication.

{48} When Communication Becomes Manipulation

This issue could become one of ethics if we find ourselves "handling" others. There is an ethical obligation for the sender to use language with reasonable precision according to the understanding of the receptor. "Handling a person" is what occurs when the sender only conveys the positive or affirmative meaning that he or she wants the receptor to accept. As believers, we have the obligation to be precise even to the point of saying or writing what we know the receptor might well respond to in a negative way. We must risk that rejection in order to keep from manipulating acceptance from the receptor who might choose to withhold approval or acceptance if the fuller meaning of the term were known. One can't call bad-tasting cough medicine candy and expect children to be happy when they receive a dose.

At the same time, it is up to the sender to build positive images of what he positively accepts and this must always be held in tension. We need to communicate as clearly and as

positively as we can, and respect the rights of individuals to decide how they choose to feel about our message.

Charles Kraft, Professor of Anthropology at the School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, is one of the most prolific writers on the topic of Christian communications. He underscores that point: "Communicators should do their utmost to protect the receptors' right to choose for or against what they are recommending. This is the only loving thing to do."⁴

It is nearly always difficult for a Jewish person to hear the gospel. When we are ready to explain it in precise and thoughtful language, we show our confidence that the Holy Spirit can work in the hearers' hearts to stir them to feel what God would have them feel.

The desire for Messianic Jews to avoid negative connotations of language is one hindrance to using precise language. The ambiguity of who has the right to define *which* terms is another which can pose even more of a dilemma.

Who Has the Right to Define Terms?

We need to know when it is not our place to redefine someone else's terms, as well as when we should not allow others to redefine our terms. We need to recognize which terms we hold in common which should not be bent to fit what one group or another might think.

{49} Of the latter, the term "unethical" should be explored. Some Jewish leaders insist that it is unethical to try to persuade a person that they need Jesus, no matter how honest and open and gentle the attempt at persuasion. Such people attempt to redefine the meaning of "ethical" in order to dismiss and discredit the messenger, thereby discarding the message. The fact that evangelism is done without coercion and above board doesn't matter to the detractors. In the minds of those detractors, evangelism is unethical, particularly if it is successful.

Those who charge unethical conduct for the use of Jewish symbols or terms do so according to their understanding. They believe that:

- a. They have an exclusive claim on the use of terms.
- b. The rationale for their exclusive claim is the assertion that Judaism and Christianity are mutually exclusive of one another.
- c. The object of identifying with these terms and symbols is to deceive.

Language in Context

Jewish believers might have the right to use certain terms which are culture specific. But, if we use those words differently than the culture to which they are specific uses them, we are not communicating to that culture. Kraft in dealing with language in context says, "As with all other symbols, the interpretations are those agreed on by the community of interpreters."

On the other hand, certain rabbis and Jewish leaders have been known to overstep the boundaries of fair language usage through redefining terms by inference which are not specific to their rabbinical frame of reference. Between people of opposing viewpoints there is often a power struggle to define terms. Unfortunately, the terms are not always defined so as to present the clearest meaning, but rather to make the strongest case for one point of view or another.

⁴ Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, New York, 1991) p.145.

We need not involve ourselves in that kind of a power struggle. At times we might feel constrained to stand up for a certain definition for the sake of truth. Other times it is better just to be precise and let the connotations fall where they may. We will promote understanding through mere language when the rabbis see it as their duty to exclude Jesus and to exclude us from the community.

We have the right, and the responsibility to use terms which show *that we are and will remain Jews*. Most of us who are Jewish and believe in Jesus would be comfortable with Messianic language and appellations as long as they are not used to the exclusion of other terms. Our concern is not so much whether or not the use of the language is ethical. It is: "What do people mean when they {50} insist on using certain language?" Most of us would not find it acceptable to use certain terms as code words to create a division in the body of Christ.

We should not affirm our Jewishness by calling attention to real or imagined differences between ourselves and our non-Jewish brothers and sisters in Jesus. It is Jesus who grafted us together. And it is important that we call more attention to our Jesusness than our Jewishness.

Where language is used to make unreal distinctions and separations and to sow strife among family members, we have the right to ask the users of the language to examine their hearts.

On the other hand, we must recognize and affirm that there are sincere people who generally use what they consider to be Messianic language, people who understand that by using it they are affirming the unity of the body of Christ and enriching that body by expressing their Jewish identity.

Therefore, it would be helpful and loving on the part of our gentile brothers and sisters if they could be sensitive to issues of identity and legitimate cultural expression, as well as the desire that most Jewish believers have to minimize negative connotations when possible.

Ironically, but not surprisingly, terminology causes more division between different flavors of Jewish believers than it does between Jewish believers and gentile believers. In this, we show ourselves to be very much like the rest of the body of Christ!

Implications of Messianic Terminology

We need to examine our motivation for using culture specific language. I would like to offer three motivation factors:

A desire for acceptance from our fellow Jews

If we are motivated by acceptance from someone or something other than God, then a problem, not so much of ethics, but of love and faithfulness arises. Some Jews who believe in Jesus seek personal acceptance from the larger Jewish community. They try to define themselves into that community with language that says "We are one of you." And, certainly we are -- in some ways.

{51} But out of faithfulness to Jesus, we should not seek that kind of approval from those who are committed to rejecting the Messiah. And when we receive disapproval on account of our faith, we should wear that disapproval as a badge of identification with Jesus. As long as we are like him, those who reject him will reject us. So, "If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Pet 4:16).

A desire for credibility

Seeking to gain credibility may sound like a good way to get the gospel message heard - and sometimes it is. But we must bear in mind that "credibility" is a decision by the hearer rather than the speaker. We should also understand that credibility in and of itself is not enough. Kraft points out that, "Credibility is only as valuable as the use to which it is put."⁵

It does not matter how particular a believer is about terminology if he or she is not willing to spend or risk credibility to make a clear presentation of the gospel.

If people are not willing to make a clear presentation of faith in Jesus, then any acceptance or credibility they gain is for themselves, not the gospel. That would indicate a problem of unfaithfulness to the Lord, which may or may not result in unethical language usage.

Love as a motivator

The third and highest motivator for the communicator is love (I Cor 13:1-2; Phil 1:18). Irwin Kolb wrote, "Love is the highest motivation, love for Christ and love for the people for whom he died."⁶

In looking at the implications of Messianic terminology on evangelism we need to remind ourselves of what language can and cannot do.

- a. It can help us report the truth accurately and lovingly.
- b. It cannot help the people to whom we are speaking accept our message as being either truthful or loving since we have no control over how they receive our words.

What Is the Future of Messianic language?

Since the flush of enthusiasm of the Messianic movement in the seventies and early eighties, few if any new definitions have come forth. In part, this can be attributed to a degree of maturation in the movement. Sectarian attitudes are fading in some Messianic circles and few people insist that this or that is the only right word to use. There was a time when it was "Messianically correct" {52} to always refer to "Jewish style churches" as "synagogue". That has changed. The UMJC and the MJA do encourage the use of the term "Messianic Rabbi" to describe congregational leaders, but not all are buying into it. Instead of the exclusive use of Yeshua, Jesus is interspersed in verbal and written communications.

Where the Messianic language has not changed is in terms that are biblically derived and functionally equivalent such as *mashiach* for Christ or *Ruah ha Kodesh* for Holy Spirit.

It is interesting to note that in the early days of the modern Messianic movement, when leaders such as Jacob Peltz, Moses Gitlin, Jakob Jocz, Arthur Kac talked among themselves or to Jewish unbelievers, it was common for them to converse in Yiddish. Even the gentile Christians in the field of Jewish evangelism like Emil Elbe spoke in Yiddish. And, before the Holocaust, it was just as common for them to speak in German.

When they spoke in Yiddish, they wouldn't use terms such as "church". Instead, they would refer to "cheder" or "shul". The Yiddish words that they used to describe their works were relative to the synagogue. And when they spoke to the church they related cross-culturally.

⁵ Kraft, 148.

⁶ Erwin J. Kolb, *Ethics for Missionaries*, LCJE North America Conference, Chicago, Illinois, March 25-26, 1987.

They were not unethical in speaking two different languages but rather they were sensitive to their listeners.

We can learn much from our history as we look to the future of the Messianic movement. And the operative word here is movement. For regardless of the words we employ we need to experience the moving of the Holy Spirit in order for us to fulfill our destiny.

Paragraph 10 of the Lausanne Covenant calls for "imaginative pioneering methods" in our evangelism efforts. It inspires us to "humbly seek to empty ourselves of all but our personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others...".⁷

The only way to accomplish that is with a measure of God's love. In conclusion, the key to ethical witnessing is love. If we witness in love, putting first our love of God and then our love of those whom God loves, our witness will have integrity even though we might make errors.

Many people lack the social and intellectual skills to be politically correct in their witness. Yet they do so with good intentions and love, and God can choose to bless their witness. Conversely, sometimes doing what is theologically quite justifiable may not be quite the right course of action. The apostle Paul makes that distinction too in his letter to the Corinthians: "*Everything is permissible'- but not everything is constructive*" (1 Cor 10:23).

{53} Our reason for ethical communication practice is not to placate our detractors but to position us within God's will. And the way we can stay on track is by continually asking ourselves, "Does this honestly and honorably represent my position in Yeshua?"

However, this is not a question you or I can or should answer for another person, much less an entire group of people. We cannot judge other people's hearts but we can believe God when he says that, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). In this, God is not just referring to the other person's heart, he is referring to your heart, my heart.

Let us challenge one another, whatever end of the Messianic language spectrum we find ourselves on, to a friendly contest. Let us see who can put aside the most self interest for the purpose of loving Yeshua more and serving God better.

⁷ LCWE, *The Lausanne Covenant*, International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland, July 1974.

{54} Image and Reality: The Use of Jewish Symbolism by Messianic Jews

Walter Riggans

Rev. Dr. Walter Riggans is Lecturer in Biblical and Jewish Studies at All Nations Christian College, England. His Ph.D. thesis was on the Christology of the modern Messianic Jewish movement.

The issue of whether it is legitimate for Messianic Jewish communities to employ the common images of Judaism is both complex and emotive. The question of the legitimacy for non-Jewish Christians to claim the same right to use Jewish symbolism is a distinct issue. Discussion of this matter will necessarily involve debate about both communities and their commitments to a Jewish expression of their faith and lifestyle. In this article I intend to focus on the issue of the integrity of Jewish believers, both those who are members of distinct congregations and those who are affiliated solely with local Christian congregations.

As followers of Yeshua we are inevitably going to find ourselves in confrontation with those Jewish people who follow the various strands of Judaism which reject Yeshua as Israel's Messiah. No matter how much this saddens us, we must be prepared for it, and must be ready to meet confrontation not only with love but also robust testimony. But it is altogether another thing to be accused of unethical behavior in our lifestyle and witness. This is a serious charge, and it must be met head on. This in turn means that we must be 100 percent sure of our ground when we attempt to justify our use of Jewish symbolism. It is important to live in accordance with the lesson of 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4, where Paul writes: "For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel." Human nature is such that people, Jews and Christians among them, do assume that there is no smoke without fire, and therefore we all suffer from the very charge of deceptive and manipulative use of the symbols and traditions of Judaism.

{55} Such abusive name-calling has served to make some Jews wary of the message of the Messiah, undercut Christian support of Jewish evangelism, and generally discourage those who are involved in the field of Jewish evangelism.¹

Which kinds of expressions are particularly offensive to the Jewish community? Some of the most familiar objections are leveled against the use of the term "Rabbi" by leaders of Messianic Jewish congregations; against the use of the Hebrew form "Yeshua" for Jesus' name; against the use of the menorah or the Magen David in meeting places or as symbols on sweatshirts, etc. Particular offence is taken at the use of a Magen David with a cross superimposed upon it. We shall look at the reason given for the charge of deception in the following.

First of all, however, it should be emphasized that many Christians, some of whom are themselves involved in Jewish evangelism, also object to the use of certain Jewish traditions. Apart from the ones mentioned above (Rabbi, Yeshua, Magen David), it might be of interest to note that a strong challenge was made by leading churchmen to John Fischer's practice of

¹ Moishe Rosen, *An Ethical Basis of Witness to the Jewish Community* (Unpublished paper, LCJE North America Conference 1985).

writing the word "God" in the traditional Jewish manner, "G_d"?² This custom is a Jewish sign of reverence for the holiness of God, but the objection was made that Christian focus is upon the fact that Jesus has come to make God fully known, and in one sense at least, more accessible. Therefore the linguistic convention of writing "G_d" was challenged as compromising the truth of the incarnation. Let me suggest that we listen carefully to the words of an Israeli rabbi who is active in the field of inter-faith relations, Yehezkel Landau. In 1982 I was privileged to be part of a group of Jewish and Christian clergy and scholars whom he addressed on the subject of the misappropriation of symbols from one faith community to another. He gave an example of the reverse situation from the one facing us today - namely whether or not a Jewish person can legitimately use the Christian prayer known as the Lord's Prayer. After analyzing the various clauses of this prayer he concluded with these words:

The prayer which Jesus recited to his disciples and listeners, as an exemplary mode of speaking to God, is in every way a "Jewish" prayer. To hear it said or sung in Hebrew is a lovely experience. But I would not think of praying this prayer myself.... For this particular prayer also has its own history, a history that took it outside the Jewish community and into the Church. It ... is a central part of the Christian communal experience. Since I stand outside that community and its traditions, I do not feel that I can rightfully appropriate that prayer - even if its contents are fully in accord with my own beliefs.

As I said at the beginning, my focus is going to be on the right of *Jewish* believers to use Jewish symbolism, and there is therefore an immediate difference between such a person and a Jewish person like Landau who has no connection whatsoever with the Christian church. If a Jewish believer wishes {56} to recite the Kaddish, for instance, then he is coming to that prayer as a Jewish person as well as a follower of Yeshua. But on the other hand Landau's sentiments highlight the issue nicely for us. What is more, they perhaps say something significant to non-Jewish Christians who wish to use Jewish prayers or symbols.

Contexts of deception

There are indeed five of these contexts within which the charge of deception is made:

- a) Judaism and Christianity are held to be incompatible, so any attempt to combine or crossover elements from both is by definition seen to be illegitimate. The Jewish community's leaders define themselves as the only "custodians and arbiters" of the legitimate use of symbols.
- b) Jews who become believers are stereotyped as cynical self-seekers, since there is no conception that Jewish people could be attracted to Yeshua out of pure conviction. And so they are by definition either people who wished to be deceived into seeing their betrayal in acceptable terms, or people who were so marginalized that they were easily taken in by the manipulation of their traditions by others who knew better.
- c) As a corollary to this last point, those involved in Jewish evangelism and Messianic Jewish congregations are stereotyped as coercive bullies or subtle manipulators. Generally speaking, they are regarded as falling into two camps: those who are well aware of the unethical nature of what they are doing, and those whose enthusiasm for Jewish symbolism is largely fed by plain ignorance. It was because of this charge of unscrupulous behavior

² He does this, for instance, in his Florida congregational leaflet entitled, *A Messianic Synagogue*, from 1986.

that Church's Ministry among the Jews issued its Code of Practice in which it made clear that such charges were unfounded.

d) The Jewish community regards Jewish believers as having betrayed the Jewish faith and abandoned the Jewish community. Therefore there is no legitimate way in which they can use Jewish symbolism as if it were still their own.

e) The Church has seen no value, and still largely sees no value, in the Jewishness of Jewish believers. Generally speaking a Jewish person's "baptism" is presented as a liberation from Jewish ways and symbols. Therefore the desire to continue the use of Jewish traditions or symbols has been seen as a compromising of the gospel, or even worse, as the dread sin of "Judaizing".

All specific challenges which are made by the Jewish community to Jewish believers, and to non-Jewish Christians involved in Jewish evangelism, must be seen within the overall perspective of these five contexts. Without in any {57} way agreeing with them, it is only fair to acknowledge that given these fundamental attitudes, it is hardly surprising that the Jewish community, and those segments of the church community which support them in this matter, reject as illegitimate any use of Jewish symbolism.

It is now time to turn to two specific challenges which are often made.

Don't lure Jews to think they can be both Jewish and Christian.

The use of Jewish symbolism is seen simply as part of the campaign to manipulate Jewish people into believing that one can be Jewish and Christian at the same time. In other words, it is a deceptive ploy to disguise the true reality. This is such a serious charge that I will give four examples of it, to show that it comes from various quarters:

*Jews take issue with ... Hebrew-Christian synagogues ... on the grounds that they employ deception ... they do not initially make clear that their proselytizers are interested in transforming Jews into Christians. Their use of Jewish symbols is for the purpose of making a Jewish audience feel more comfortable.*³

*Jewish rituals are employed as a ruse or a device to trick other Jews into believing that they can remain both authentically Jews as well as authentic believing Christians.... That is nothing less than deception.*⁴

*There are ... groups who actively seek to convert Jews and who use methods which appear to be insensitive or even deceptive.... CCJ deplores any form of deception in evangelization and targeting of Jews for special missionary activity.*⁵

*There are those who ... will wear a yarmulka or a Jewish star when it is convenient to do so.... But when a person will come to the Lord they'll say, "Well, now you have to join the First Baptist Church. You are a Christian." Woah! I thought I was still a Jew.*⁶

Each of these remarks begs a number of serious questions. We need to ensure that our use of Jewish images is not serving to disguise the true challenge of the Gospel. We dare

³ Mark Cohen, "Missionaries in our Midst. The Appeal of Alternatives," *Analysis*, no. 64, 1978, pp. 2ff.

⁴ Editorial in *The Evangelical Baptist*, summer 1981.

⁵ Official Statement issued in 1986 by the British Council of Christians and Jews.

⁶ Debbie Finkelstein, *Jewish Holy Days in a Messianic Style* (Unpublished paper, MJAA conference, 1982).

not hide the fundamental truth of God's pivotal work in and through the death and resurrection of Yeshua, and we dare not compromise the radical nature of God's grace by in any way sending a signal that keeping the Jewish traditions is a necessary part of the process of salvation. It is vital that Jewish people are helped to appreciate that Messianic Judaism is more than traditional Judaism plus a belief that Yeshua is the Messiah. One's whole heart and life have to be reoriented, and one's faith and practice have to be completely reconstituted around Yeshua.

On the other hand, we must be careful not to compromise either our own integrity or the integrity of Judaism by using Judaism's traditional and cherished {58} symbols in ways that go completely against their original intentions or perspectives. It surely can not be right to impose on a symbol a meaning it never had, or which would alienate the founders of that tradition. Some believers are hopelessly naive in that they equate the situation today with that in the first few generations of the Messianic movement. But in those early years Jewish believers were still seen as being within the Jewish community (albeit perhaps on the periphery). Therefore there was no public outcry at the use of Jewish symbols and nomenclature. However, from the mid-second century, and particularly in the third and fourth centuries, the process of self-definition was the major concern of both the Jewish community and the Church, and both processes involved the exclusion of the other. After sixteen centuries of mutual conflict and further definition, Jewish believers are no longer regarded as belonging to the Jewish community, and public outcry is commonplace.

Not only that, certain of the Jewish traditions, prayers and hymns actually have anti-Christian origins and goals, and from that point of view are inappropriate for believers. Often I heard believers wholeheartedly singing the Yigdal at the close of the Erev Shabbat service, blissfully ignorant of the intent and content of the verses about the incarnation and life of Yeshua!

Here is an important challenge from Robert Blumstock relevant to our discussion:

Success in making converts has therefore been limited to a group which might be termed "quasi-orthodox." These are individuals who are primarily unlearned in Jewish exegesis, but who have retained an image of themselves as Jewish.⁷

Messianic Jews often say that Jewish symbols are merely ethnic or cultural, but in fact this is not true. A dualism of sacred and secular is alien to Jewish tradition, and Jewish culture is irretrievably bound up with religious underpinning. In other words, one cannot compare wearing a kippah with wearing a kilt! Or to choose another example, the birth of the State of Israel is a concern of another level than that of the birth of the State of Zambia.

This is not to say that the use of religio-cultural symbols will never be acceptable, but we must ensure that we know the full implications of the use of each symbol before we employ it. A case study is provided by the debate between Phillip Goble and Maurice Bowler over the use of an extremely powerful Jewish symbol - the lighting of the Shabbat candles. In one of his books Goble sets out what he sees as a good model for an Erev shabbat service for Messianic Jews. As part of this he includes the traditional prayer:

⁷Robert Blumstock, *The Evangelization of Jews. A Study in Interfaith Relations* (Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Oregon, 1964).

*Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments, and hast commanded us to kindle the Sabbath-light.*⁸

{59} Bowler, in a paper given to a conference of missionaries who were concerned with the growing strength of the Messianic Jewish movement, specifically attacked this issue. He said:

*It is difficult to see how he can claim to be using the classic Christian criterion for a divine commandment, which is a direct Biblical injunction. The rabbinic Jew has at least the argument that for him the Oral Law has divine authority?*⁹

Messianic Jews legitimate their betrayal of Jewish tradition

The use of Jewish symbolism is seen simply as an attempt by the Messianic Jewish community, working at both the conscious and subconscious levels, to legitimate the unpalatable fact that they have indeed betrayed and abandoned the real Jewish community. Here, for instance, is the comment of a leading Reform rabbi in Britain from his 1991 book on Reform Judaism today:

*Their maintenance of Jewish customs is a way of assuaging their guilt at adopting Christianity, and is designed to reassure themselves that they have not betrayed their Jewish roots and family.*¹⁰

This echoes the trenchant words of the most insistent of critics of Messianic Judaism, B .Z. Sobel. In 1961 he wrote that:

*It is felt that Jewish symbols, Jewish festivals, and an overall Jewish "flavor" are essential ingredients for a successful missionary approach to the few All of this must be seen as part of a legitimating process, whereby the attempt is made to impart authenticity to both the efforts of the missionary, as well as to the act of conversion itself.*¹¹

Arnold Fruchtenbaum is also on record as suspecting the motives of at least some Messianic Jews.

*Jewish believers brought up in liberal and/or Reform homes will sometimes adopt a very Orthodox lifestyle, perhaps to overcompensate for their lack of Jewish training, and/or insecurity about their Jewishness.*¹²

William Currie is an example of a non-Jewish Christian who also shares this unease at the motivation of some Messianic Jews. He has questioned "the ethics of striving to attract those who are Jewish and have accepted the Savior to a form of religion that they often did not practice before accepting the Savior."¹³

⁸ Philip E. Goble, *Everything You Need to Grow A Messianic Synagogue* (South Pasadena, 1974) p. 98.

⁹ Maurice Bowler, *The Menace of Judaizing Messianism* (Unpublished paper, 1977) p. 4.

¹⁰ Jonathan A. Romain, *Faith and Practice. A Guide To Reform Judaism Today* (London, 1991) pp. 170f.

¹¹ B.Z. Sobel, "Legitimation and Antisemitism as Factors in the Functioning of a Hebrew -Christian Mission," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1961, pp. 179f.

¹² Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Jewish Believers are Obligated To Keep The Sabbath: no 1.* (Unpublished paper, LCJE North America conference, 1986).

¹³ William Currie, *A Jewish Missions Response to Messianic Judaism* (Unpublished paper, LCJE North America Conference, 1985).

This, then, is the claim made by opponents of Messianic Judaism's use of Jewish symbols: It is completely unacceptable because it is cynically self-serving. On the one hand it is a piece of psychological self-deception aimed at self-justification, and on the other hand it is a subtle strategy aimed at duping marginal Jews.

{60} The Messianic Jewish Response

It has been suggested by Messianic Jews that the best response is to present the following five questions to those who challenge their integrity:

1. Who is a Jew?
2. What defines who is a Jew?
3. Who decides what defines who is a Jew?
4. Why ask who decides what defines who is a Jew?
5. And who wants to know anyway?

As part of a strategy to remind Jewish people that the very issue of Jewish definition is still an open one, this is a fine piece of rhetoric, but of course there is a serious case to answer. Can it be right for Jewish believers to continue to employ Jewish images? Even within the world of Jewish believers there are differences of opinion on this matter. "Hebrew Christianity" which has stressed the fact of one's incorporation into the fellowship of Christians within the Church, has been less interested in the gamut of Jewish symbols and in their ongoing significance than the resurgent Messianic Jewish movement. It is too easy to fall into the trap of overemphasizing the difference between these two wings of the movement, but nonetheless there has been a noticeable lack of consensus on this issue. Daniel Juster sums it up in this way:

Hebrew Christianity, at times, saw Jewishness as merely an ethnic identity, whereas Messianic Judaism saw its Jewish life and identity as a continued call of God.¹⁴

Here we come to the nub of the whole matter. Baruch Maoz presents the matter another way when he asks:

How are [Hebrew Christians] to express themselves as Jews in comprehensible terms except those be to a very large extent the very same terms used by non-Christian Jews for the same purpose? Who can imagine a Jew without Passover; to whom Sukkot conveys no meaning; who has no interest in Hebrew?¹⁵

In other words, Jewish believers are not socio-cultural vacuums. Nevertheless, the fundamental response to the charge of a lack of integrity must go further than this if it is to gain ground. What must be shown is that a Jewish lifestyle, involving among other things the use of Jewish symbolism, is in fact the everyday, low-key lifestyle of the Jewish believers concerned. Already in 1980 the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism added its voice to those others who were stressing this very point. Speaking about contextualized ways of worship and lifestyle, it was expressed that:

Such worship and retention of Jewish customs must be an authentic expression of the life of the members of the group.¹⁶

¹⁴ Daniel Juster, *Growing to Maturity. A Messianic Jewish Guide* (Rockville, Maryland, 1985) p.153.

¹⁵ Baruch Maoz, "Jewish-Christians, Israel's Dilemma", *The Gospel Scene in Israel* (CWI Publications, 1987).

¹⁶ Lausanne Occasional Paper, no. 7, 1980, p.18.

{61} Messianic Jews insist that playing at being Jewish, and naively paddling in the ocean of Judaism, are not only forms of immature behavior, but also of hypocritical and unethical behavior. Daniel Juster puts it well:

Sometimes we are accused of deception - of pretending to be Jews only to win unsuspecting Jews to Christianity. To this we can only reply that we too think this would be despicable. We call ourselves Messianic Jews because we are Jews, we treasure our Jewishness, and we wish to remain Jews.¹⁷

Debbie Finkelstein draws a heavy line between Hebrew Christian and Messianic Jewish perceptions of this issue, and summarizes:

Unlike Hebrew Christianity's selective use of Jewish holy days and festivals to convey the gospel to "unbelieving Jews," Messianic Judaism views its observance of holy days and festivals not primarily as missionary devices but as opportunities for Jewish "believers" to be joyful in their Jewishness, and to transmit this joy to their children.¹⁸

This, then, is the response of Messianic Judaism: "We are Jewish people who are part of the Jewish people, and our use of Jewish symbols is an authentic expression of our personal and communal identity." Other Jewish people will find a Jewish milieu for worship and for home life far less threatening and far more conducive to real conversation about the faith of Messianic Jews than a typical church or Christian environment. But this does not mean that the Jewishness of Jewish believers is just missionary strategy. It simply means that if Jewish believers live as Jewish people for their own sakes, this will be perceived as natural by other Jewish people who are not biased against them.

If, on the other hand, Jewish believers or other non-Jewish Christians were to use Jewish symbols merely as a ploy to deceive Jewish people, then this would be a clearly inauthentic, and thus unethical, use of these symbols.

One other point needs to be made for the sake of completeness. An increasing number of non-Jewish Christians are encouraging Messianic Jews to help the Church recover its Jewish roots. This will include the celebration of the biblical feasts, the keeping of the Sabbath, etc. More and more non-Jewish Christians are wearing a Magen David and demanding songs in Hebrew, for instance. The Statement of the third LCJE international conference deals with this question:

Jewish believers are ... developing Jewish expressions of their faith in Jesus and of their life in him. This includes the use of music and the arts, and creative patterns of worship and celebration.... We therefore call upon the churches to affirm the Jewish identity of the Jewish believers in their midst.

Indeed the Zeist Statement of 1991 becomes even more explicit in this sentence:

{62} We rejoice that the response of Jewish people to the Gospel is ... gaining momentum in our time and that Messianic Jews are making a creative contribution to the life, worship and witness of the worldwide Church.

¹⁷ Daniel C. Juster (with Daniel W. Pauley), "A Messianic Jew Pleads His Case," *Christianity Today*, April 24, 1981, p. 24.

¹⁸ Debbie Finkelstein. At the same conference, the MJAA President, David Chernoff, gave an address entitled, "Messianic Synagogues," during which he referred to Hebrew Christianity as merely "Jewish flavored Christianity".

All of this is acceptable as long as it is clear that this creative contribution is a natural outflow of the life of Jewish believers, and not a campaign specifically organized to teach the Church a lesson or two. It is also the case that if such a return to Jewish roots results in non-Jewish Christians calling themselves Jewish, then something has gone far wrong. At another level, if such a return to Jewish roots leads to a despising of the cultural heritage of other nations and peoples, then once again there is a deep flaw in the process somewhere. Authenticity is always going to be the key issue.

Conclusion

I would like to encourage MISHKAN readers to make as a focus for their prayers two broad areas which especially concern Messianic Jewish communities:

- a) The need to prevent cultural and personal assimilation to gentilized forms of worship and lifestyle. Because of the history of Jewish-Christian relations, and more particularly because of the way that Jewish believers have been treated by the churches, special efforts have to be made by Messianic Jews to present simple modes of Jewish self-expression for new believers. The pendulum will sometimes swing too much, but that is to be expected for some time to come. It is in fact a function of the Church's tradition of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.
- b) The need to support, nurture and teach Jewish believers, encouraging them in their new-found faith and identity. The consistent complaint by Jewish believers is that there is no welcome for them in local churches. It is certainly the case that there is no opportunity for any sustained nurture of their Jewish identity. As John Bell writes:

*The culture of the church is neither inferior nor superior, it is just different ... they simply do not know how to deal with the problems and issues a Messianic Jews faces.*¹⁹

What it comes down to then, is the call to both the synagogues and the churches to let Jewish believers be who they are - Jewish people who acknowledge that Yeshua is indeed Israel's Messiah and Lord. If they are given that freedom, the authenticity debate will work itself out in due course. If that is not to be allowed, however, then no amount of argument will convince people of the integrity of using Jewish symbolism. And that matter of identity is the *real* issue of image and reality!

¹⁹ John Bell, *How To Be Like The Messiah* (Orangeburg, NJ., Chosen People Publications, 1987) p. 80.

{65} Implications of the Jerusalem School Regarding Jewish Evangelism

Avner Boskey

Avner Boskey (B.A, McGill University; Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary) is associate editor of MISHKAN.

Several thousand years of Diaspora existence have caused the Jewish people to weigh historical events with the wry adage, "Is it good or bad for the Jews?" This question is asked when a new president is elected in America, when civil unrest occurs in the C.L.S., etc. In the present case, some Messianic Jews are asking, "Is the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (JSSR) good or bad for Messianic Jews? Does it bode well for the cause of Jewish evangelism?"

Such questions are not easily answered. First, while the JSSR is funded by evangelical groups, gears its popular literature to the evangelical market and is staffed by a majority of evangelical gentile Christians, it also includes such luminaries of Second temple Jewish history as Shmuel Safrai and David Flusser, who are decidedly not evangelical in their religious convictions! It would not be fair to weigh these Orthodox Jews in the same theological balance as their evangelical co-workers, or to hold the former responsible for religious convictions they clearly disavow.

Second, the JSSR is not singing in monotone. Lindsey and his disciples tend to put forward their own views regarding possible Hebrew *urtexts*, Lukan priority, and "pericope re-alignment," while the non-Christian scholars' interests are far less centered in the above mentioned New Testament form-critical studies and hypotheses, and more on broader Second Temple religious and historical studies.

Ideas influence behavior. How will the suggestions propagated by the Christian majority of the JSSR mold evangelical understanding of the Jewish roots of the Gospels, the accuracy and reliability of the gospel accounts and the relationship between New Testament faith and Pharisaic/ Rabbinic Judaism?

{66} Historical Considerations

Second Temple era Judea was host to many different strands of Judaism. Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots and Messianic Jews of first century AD. Palestine all considered themselves faithful sons of the covenant, while none could claim a monopoly on Judaism. Within thirty years of the crucifixion of Jesus, however, the Pharisaic party (later called rabbinic Judaism) closed ranks against the Messianic Jews. The beginning of this process is recorded in the Book of Acts and it became formalized between the days of Samuel the Lesser and Rabbi Akiva. Eventually, this strong opposition to the Messianic faith found its way into rabbinic literature.

Beginning with the destruction of the second temple in 70AD, Pharisaic Judaism was forced to grapple with traumatic events. This through the rise of the Messianic Jewish faith, the false Messianic movement of Bar-Kokhba and Rabbi Akiva, and finally the resulting Hadrianic persecutions. As a result:

Rabbinic Judaism after 70AD is not identical to the Judaism of Jesus and the first disciples.... Only two groups survived the catastrophe [of 70AD] - 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.*¹

Believers who approach rabbinic material find themselves studying one expression of Jewish tradition which is strongly opposed to Jesus' Messiahship and deity. Messianic believers then and now belong to a competing Jewish tradition which disagrees with rabbinic Judaism on many basic issues. Therefore, one of the preliminary steps for a Christian wishing to make use of rabbinic literature is to clarify where the rabbinic perspective agrees and where it disagrees with the Messianic faith.

It is precisely in this regard that JSSR's Christian contributors disappoint. The reader finds that Second Temple religious pluralism is barely noted, and instead the unhelpful and inaccurate presupposition reigns - that a monolithic *Pharisaism/Rabbinism* (most of it culled from second to fifth centuries AD. Talmudic pericopes) is *the background for Jesus' life and words*. The fundamental theological disagreements between the Messianic and rabbinic movements (which ultimately led to a decisive parting of ways) are not delineated. There seems to be a deliberate downplaying of the discontinuity between Messianic and rabbinic perspectives, a studied absence of discussion concerning how rabbinic rejection of the gospel influenced the subsequent development of rabbinic theology. The goal seems to be to present a Jesus who followed post-70AD rabbinic custom and etiquette. This borders on historical revisionism. {67} By misrepresenting first century AD religious pluralism and by glossing over the real differences between rabbinic and Messianic theologies, the Christian writers of JSSR mislead their constituency into an uncritical use of rabbinics.²

This in turn leads to another more serious result - the subtle championing of the primacy of rabbinic literature as over against the gospels regarding an accurate first century AD picture of Jesus. JSSR's Christian writers keep giving the impression that *only the rabbinic perspective* holds the key to properly understanding Jesus' Jewishness. The Greek language of the Gospel used by the Messianic Jewish contemporaries of Jesus can't fully convey a Jewish Jesus, they say: To be understood the gospels must be read through talmudic eyes. Scholarly consensus would agree that some aspects of rabbinic literature, when properly and carefully weighed, can aid in broadening one's understanding of Second Temple cultural, social and religious realities and, as a by-product, of the New Testament Scriptures. But the JSSR's claims are neither moderate nor careful in this regard. Like overzealous salesmen, they claim too much for their method, contributing to an inaccurate oversimplification of the state of religious pluralism at the time of Jesus.

It should be noted that when the JSSR describes Jesus' Jewish heritage as synonymous with early rabbinic heritage,³ then our first century Messianic Jesus has undergone radical plastic surgery, coming out of the operation looking like a pale third century AD rabbinic imitation of his former self. This *modus operandi* unwittingly grants rabbinic theology and custom a determinative, hermeneutical authority over gospel research and thought. That predicament would be every bit as imbalanced as the previous predicament which JSSR's writers lament - when Hellenistic thought and philosophy in New Testament studies were in the ascendant.

¹ "To the Jew First", *MISHKAN*, no. 4, 1986, pp. 59-60.

² Avner Boskey, "The Messianic Use of Rabbinic Literature", *MISHKAN*, no. 8/9, 1988, pp. 25-64.

³ It is generally agreed that the term "rabbinic" and "rabbi" are not used in Mishnaic literature to describe the period prior to 70AD. "Pharisaism" and "sages" are more accurate historical terms.

Methodological Considerations

Though the researchers of the JSSR make bold claims for the value of rabbinic literature as an accurate and contemporaneous elucidator of Jesus' daily culture, religious worldview and linguistic background, their position is far from reflective of scholarly consensus. The following three quotations will illustrate this point.

Samuel Sandmel explains:

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.... Even when rabbinic literature is used in a non-partisan manner, it does not furnish a full and exact understanding of the {68} time of Jesus ... in their own peculiar way, the rabbinic collections reflect the interest of the editors.... 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 time of the recording of rabbinic literature, the tremendous upheavals of 70 swept the Pharisees into the ascendancy.... 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.⁴

E. P. Sanders notes that considerable controversy exists regarding the 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 ... ambitious monographs such as Neusner's could be productive [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.⁵

Stuart Miller deals with dating problems as well:

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.... Several attempts, however, have been made to investigate historical topics using the rabbinic sources critically ... with regard to the usage of rabbinic sources, Lieberman has stated, "Every single passage of Talmudic literature must be

⁴ Samuel Sandmel, *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* (Cincinnati) 1957, pp. 199-201.

⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia) 1977, p. 65.

investigated both in the light of the whole context and as a separate unit in regard to its correct reading, meaning, time and place."... In The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70 ... Neusner proposes a method for dating traditions attributed to a given rabbi.... Other methods of verifying traditions can, of course, be suggested.... 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.⁶

The above comments clearly emphasize that dogmatic assertions regarding dating of rabbinic pericopes should be handled with caution. Third and fourth century AD rabbinic sources do not as a rule accurately reflect first century AD {69} religious and social realities.

Unfortunately the JSSR bases the lion's share of its articles in its *Jerusalem Perspective* newsletter on such a flawed methodology. Its writers say that they have found a reliable research methodology - that the Jewish world of Jesus, his Hebraic heritage and the background to his life and words, are all recoverable from rabbinic literature. Yet a cursory analysis of some of their claims reveals that the evidence marshalled comes from sources which describe events 200 or more years subsequent to Golgotha.⁷

This is not careful scholarship; JSSR's claims are not sufficiently detailed. It would be more helpful and far closer to the truth were they to stress that their methodology is "helpful" rather than "essential"; were they to fairly explain what other scholarly voices around the world think; were they to tone down the dogmatism and zealotry that occasionally characterizes some of their statements. At this juncture, the JSSR can be faulted for fostering an uncritical fascination among its evangelical readership for things rabbinic. Historical misperceptions can lead to theological misconceptions, and fuzzy thinking can lead to fuzzy behavior. It is not a giant step between "Jesus followed Oral Torah" and "Do thou likewise!"

Theological Considerations

One would not expect Flusser and Safrai to be concerned regarding the theological ramifications of their research for New Testament studies - unless, of course, those ramifications ended up supporting the truth claims of Jesus' message! But Christians have a right to hold the JSSR's Christian writers to a totally different standard of accountability. This is especially true when they appeal to the American evangelical public for support.

JSSR's hypotheses argue that our present synoptic Gospels must be "excavated" to discover the earliest (and therefore most accurate) written traditions. They state that from time to time they will publish suggested readings that "may not seem to line up with the text of the

⁶ Stuart S. Miller, *Studies in the History and Traditions of Sepphoris*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 37, Leiden, 1984, pp. 708,10-11.

⁷ Two examples are: *Jerusalem Perspective's* Jan. 1988 "Did Jesus observe Oral Torah" where reference is made to Shmuel Safrai's discussion of *Pikuah nefesh*. *JP* states that Jesus' Sabbath healings were permitted by rabbinic ruling, yet this ruling is first given by 2nd century AD tannaim, nearly 100 years after 33AD (MRI to Exod. 31:14; Mishnah. *Yoma* 8:6; Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 85b). A second example is found in *JP* June 88 "Was Jesus a rabbi?... This is the very image of a Jewish rabbi in the land of Israel at that time." The anonymous author then mentions certain descriptions in rabbinic literature of 2nd to 5th centuries practice (compare M. Aberbach's "The relations between master and disciple in the Talmudic Age" in *Essays in Honor of Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie*).

canonical books."⁸ Randall Buth suggests that the synoptic Gospels are inerrant, but that this inerrancy refers to their religious and ethical message, rather than to the consistency or accuracy of the Gospels' statements.⁹ Lindsey makes no apologies for what he considers the "seeming shakiness of the basic Gospel account;" and declares that he and his school must obviously "apococate" (i.e. cut off or remove) portions of Scripture, and re-align pericopes (i.e. move portions of gospel texts from their present locations to other supposedly more original locations).

It is fair to note that there are some theological ramifications of this methodology. Many form critical scholars, hold to a non-traditional, radical bibliology, saying that concepts such as the "accuracy" of the Scriptures are outdated. The majority {70} of evangelical American Christians, however, still believe in the infallibility or inerrancy of the Scriptures. The methodology of the JSSR does not accept these latter bibliological presuppositions.

There are some potentially very serious ramifications here for Jewish evangelism. Evangelistic efforts are predicated on the trustworthiness of the evangel - the Gospel. Lindsey's and Buth's methodologies and theological presuppositions vis-a-vis bibliology can and do effect the integrity of the synoptic Gospels. It makes little practical difference for David Bivin to insist JSSR's Christian members "certainly do believe (that) the canon of Scripture is complete"¹⁰ if they simultaneously believe that the scriptures within that canon are in need of reworking and rearrangement. It will be no surprise if the questionable and unorthodox methodology described by Buth and Lindsey is some day applied to other central New Testament concepts. For example, their methodology could be used shore up the postulate that Jesus' self-perception as Deity was a Hellenistic intrusion which ran across the grain of contemporary rabbinic thought, and that this Christological concept should be somewhat apococated.

Spiritual Considerations

Ole Chr. Kvarme sadly notes:

In the last decades evangelical theologians have been much concerned to develop a new and positive understanding of the Jewish People.... 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.¹¹

The study of rabbinics is a praiseworthy and helpful endeavor; it should never be used, however, to conceal a cooling spiritual ardour or to excuse a lack of evangelical courage. Constant reference in *Jerusalem Perspective* is made to the fact that Orthodox Jews are members of the JSSR; therefore, it is inferred, it would be insensitive to promote evangelical and evangelistic convictions. Yet the reader should remember that the majority of JSSR's writers are *evangelical* Christians, as are the majority of their funders and their readership. As well, JP is promoted in evangelical publications as a tool to bring other evangelicals closer in appreciation and devotion to Jesus the Jewish Messiah. With that in mind, the absence of

⁸ JP, Jan/Feb. 1992, p. 7.

⁹ JP, Jan/Feb. 1992, p. 6.

¹⁰ JP, Jan/Feb. 1992, p. 2.

¹¹ 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, p.15.

helpful comments which are pastorally motivated, evangelically representative, devotional or evangelistically informed is striking.¹²

In a previous article, I once commented that, for one's study of rabbinic literature to be properly considered Christian or Messianic,

*it must be guided by three concerns: that these activities be glorifying to God and in accordance with His Word; that they should be done in the name of Messiah {מָשִׁיחַ} 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.*¹³

When JSSR's Christian writers are found somehow having suppressed the open and unashamed expression of their own evangelical faith, and this in a magazine directed to evangelical Christians, a sad precedent indeed is being set.

¹² What is even more surprising is that, occasionally unkind and deprecating comments are made by JP's evangelical writers about their own constituency! *JP*, Nov/Dec 1991, pp. 60.

¹³ Boskey, p. 60.

{72} Christianity and Judaism: Two Covenants

Yehezkel Kaufmann

The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1988, 230 pp.

Reviewed by Louis Goldberg

Dr. Louis Goldberg is Professor of Theology and Jewish Studies at the Moody Bible Institute.

This particular book by Kaufmann is a translation of chapters 7, 8, and 9, Volume I of his *Golah ve-Nekhar (Exile and Estrangement)*, published in 1929-1930, which is a sociological-historical study of Jewry's two-millennial existence as a dispersed people. Kaufmann's work represents the efforts of a number of modern Jewish thinkers to reclaim Yeshua, and whose teaching largely reflects the Judaism of his day. Jewish scholars make a distinction between the Yeshua of the Jewish community and the Christ of Paul's teaching on Christianity after Paul.

Comments will be made on each of Kaufmann's three chapters.

The Religion of Israel Among the Gentiles

According to Kaufmann, during the Period of Israel's exile paganism was defeated among the nations, not because of efforts by Jewish people but by its two daughter faiths, Christianity and Islam. But the "detachment of the religion of Israel from the nation Israel was a precondition of its acceptance beyond Israel. The new revelations, however, conforming as they did to the spirit of the Gentiles, could not supplant the earlier revelation of Sinai in Jewish hearts; Jewry could not accept them" (pp. 1-2). Christianity confronted the gentiles, declaring that idolatry was sin. Muhammad taught the Arabs that Allah is one and he alone is to be worshipped.

Kaufmann is not interested in the rivalry that existed between the three religions. Kaufmann declares the views of each other's religions as mere concerns over "sacramental symbols" (p. 26). The important fact was that the daughter religions championed Israel's monotheism.

The Jewish philosophers made it crystal clear that in so far as Israel is concerned, "no divine revelation, no sacred inspiration other than that which is rooted in {73} Israel's Torah" (p. 26) can be possible for Israel: Torah is validated by the miracles and wonders and great visions performed in sight of all Israel at Sinai (Jehuda Halevi) (p. 28). Without this Sinaitic revelation, Israel would not have believed forever (Maimonides) (p. 30).

What can we say about Kaufmann's notion of Israel's religion among the gentiles? In one aspect he is right. The monotheism which Israel received at Mount Sinai, and which was ultimately embraced by the people following the exile to Babylon, became the fundamental truck in the subsequent developments of Christianity and Islam. Maimonides held that Jesus and Muhammad fulfilled a mission by paving the way for the Messiah, who is to come, inasmuch as through them large parts of humanity have been brought near to the knowledge of God and of moral perfection.

Kaufmann asserts that non-Jewish peoples, by accepting monotheism, could not at the same time "become Jews", because Israel was an exiled nation. No one wanted to take on the status of being an exiled downtrodden people.

Origins of the Christian Church

In this chapter, the very heart of Kaufmann's work (134 pages), he struggles with the identity and lifestyle of Yeshua and the record of the New Testament. "Jesus was indeed, in beliefs and opinions, a Pharisaic Jew, and did not intend to break with Jewish practice" (p. 51). But, according to Kaufmann, Jesus in many ways opposed Judaism. This is "implicit in his teachings even though he was unconscious of that". Kaufmann tries to prove that Jesus was not so much interested in the Pharisaic concept of the ceremonial laws. Jesus focused on morality, although, Kaufmann quickly adds, "Jesus had no intention of abrogating Jewish doctrine or practice" (p. 52). He "came" to "enforce" the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17-18).

In many ways Jesus could be considered a moderate Pharisee. Many Pharisaic pronouncements are echoed in his teaching. But Kaufmann seems to overlook the many instances where Jesus insisted "But I say unto you" to convey a new authority. The people recognized that his authority and his style were different from those of the scribes. He did not provide halachic compendia on a particular subject. Rather, he laid down central principles.

Kaufmann discusses Jesus' title "Son of God". He states that Jesus "presented himself as a 'Messiah', the 'son of Man' and roused a public movement" (p. 74). The disciples applied the "current term 'Messiah' to him, thinking it proper to do so, since he was the long awaited 'Son of David'; Jesus himself believed that he was the heir to David's throne and kingdom" (p. 74). But Kaufmann is careful to suggest, "Jesus did not consider himself a divine being; {74} he was a Jew, and he himself felt that God was a unity and completely unique in a very special aspect. The thought that God would descend to earth and become incarnate was completely alien to his thinking" (p. 85). The titles "son of man" and "Son of God" belonged to the Apocalyptic literature with which Kaufmann believes that Jesus was familiar. According to him, the influence of the book of Enoch suggests that the "son of man" is a preexistent heavenly Messiah, but a very careful distinction is made between him and the great king "who will arise in Israel and rule justly and with wisdom..."

Kaufmann suggests that the thought of Jesus being both "son of man" and "Son of God" of necessity had to develop later, in the gentile Church. Such a combination could not arise in Israel. In response, we ask what took place at the trial when the High Priest asked Jesus two questions: "Tell us if you are the Messiah, and (Tell us if you are) the "Son of God" (Matt 26:63). The High Priest asked this question in a way which leaves the reader with no doubt that he understood exactly the implications of Jesus' claims. The intent of Jesus reply was that He is indeed the One who can, as the Son of Man, ascend into the realm of God and sit at His right hand! Small wonder that Caiaphas and the majority of the Sanhedrin tore their clothes and shouted, "Blasphemy!" Kaufmann does not consider this passage and, whenever convenient, is not above dating sections of Matthew long after 70CE to make it seem as if non-Jews made a God out of Jesus.

Even more disconcerting is Kaufmann's suggestion that both John the Baptizer and Jesus derived their teaching from the Essenes. John's message is one of "reproof and warning, not a gospel of consolation. Jesus was a sectarian, a pietist and ascetic, not a 'popular prophet'" (p. 94). His ministry could not attract great numbers of people because he "condemns concern with the affairs of this world and spurns labor," he founded an itinerant fraternity based in principle on non-employment" (p. 95).

Kaufmann insists that Jesus has a keen interest in the "world to come", and that in reality, the "nationalistic tone of his message is obscured" (p. 106). But who among the Gentiles responded to the message of Jesus? His proclamation of the "Kingdom of Heaven" was actually "the

kingdom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (p.105). Those from among the nations had no part in it.

Kaufmann states that "there is no place for the death of the 'son of man'" (p. 109). Jesus did not believe that He was to die for mankind as Christian scholarship insists because he had already proclaimed that the masses will enter into the Kingdom. There is no atonement of death in any of Jesus' messages. Kaufmann completely discounts the testimony of the writers of the Gospels: "The predictions of torture and death of the evangelists are a somewhat naive embellishment, obviously and awkwardly inserted and easily detached" {75} (p. 110). Is Kaufmann so taken up that there is nothing in Jewish tradition that a Messiah was to die but rather to redeem the nation?

Paul, however, was to create something which eventually would be picked up by non-Jewish elements to create in a series of steps, a different religion: 1) "The Redeemer in the person of a Messiah who had not yet affected 'their redemption'", 2) Its requirement of belief in him were concepts wholly foreign to Judaism," (p. 136); and finally, 3) "The rejection of the Law was the consequence of the heightened mythological-magic appreciation of the person of Jesus" (p. 136). Those who followed Paul advocated that "with the coming of Jesus," Jewish law was "no longer incumbent." Instead, Christianity developed its own rites "based on the mystic of the life and death of Jesus" (p. 138). The death and resurrection of Jesus were essential to Paul's faith. Further, although Paul could relate to the temple in Jerusalem, the Christianity which followed Paul "could not build shrines to Jesus outside Jerusalem and was driven to substitute the symbolic sacrifice of the Messiah 'in its rituals'" (p. 143).

There is no doubt that a change took place in gentile Christianity in contrast to the early days and to what the early Jewish believers proclaimed. This change was primarily a contextualization of lifestyle, holidays and terminology, while Jewish believers were not permitted to retain their own lifestyle and witness.

Israel's Religious-Racial Identity

In chapter 3, Kaufmann here affirms that "Jewry clung to its religion, not insofar as it represented a national heritage; rather, indeed, because of the conviction that it was the true faith, the supreme religious belief" (p. 183). He suggests that this was the religion which kept Jewry "as a separate people after their depression and in spite of their incipient natural desire to be absorbed in their alien environments" (p.185). True, Judaism suffered much in its history. Christianity fought the Jewish people never by "the spirit, but by sword and fire." Despite this pressure, even when Jewish people prospered in alien cultures, they remained a distinct people.

Some final observations are in order. Kaufmann, like many others in the period following the Emancipation, has sought to reclaim Jesus for the Jewish community: Jesus was a good Jew who lived among his own people at the end of the Second Temple period. What he taught was in his own unique way part of the beliefs of Jewish people in that period. What became of Christianity after Paul was a religion for gentiles.

We agree with Kaufmann's point that Israel had a unique message. Its emphasis on the evils of idolatry was picked up by Christian emissaries, who detached {76} it from Israel proper, and therefore preached with fervor among the nations that there is only one God. Israel's faith triumphed through the efforts of Christian missionaries. We also agree with Kaufmann's assessment that "Christianity ... rose to the universalism of Judaism and ... began to preach its gospel to the ... world" (p.175). The eschatology of the church fathers

was essentially the same as that of Jewish thought. There are other areas with which we agree.

However, a number of other assessments are troubling: 1) Jesus is considered a "mendicant and migrant" who "spurns labor", and founded a society based on unemployment. He proclaimed the Kingdom, but gentiles would have no part in it; they are accounted as nothing. Kaufmann selectively chooses from the data whatever he wishes to assign to Jesus and to his ministry. Jesus called disciples together to train them. He sent them first to the people of Israel to alert them to the fact that the Messiah had come and that they should prepare for the institution of God's universal kingdom promised by the prophets. After the midpoint of Jesus' ministry, the disciples were sent forth with purses of money, clothing, food and means to protect themselves, to announce the Kingdom (Luke 22:35-36).

2) Kaufmann (with others) has great difficulty with Jesus' ethics, which are considered more narrow than what the religious leaders would require for that day. Schoeps, in his "Jesus," in *Gottheit und Menschheit* (Stuttgart, p. 62), displays an unusual understanding of the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount which comes closer to what Jesus had in mind: "to announce ... how ... the true realization of the law must appear and how it will appear when the kingdom comes."

3) Another difficulty is Kaufmann's critical approach to the Gospels. He considers these accounts to be historically unreliable. Jesus never anticipated his death, and the signs and miracles of Jesus do not attest his claims of authority. On the other hand, he readily accepts materials that are authentically Jewish, such as the Pharisaic interpretation of history.

Kaufmann's effort is a contribution that helps us see how a Jewish person assesses the ministry of Jesus and Paul, and the eventual development of Christianity in the gentile world. We are the better for considering what Kaufmann has to say, and can only wonder what he would have added, had he written the book today.

{77} The Covenant Never Revoked:

Biblical reflections on Christian-Jewish dialogue

Norbert Lohfink

Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1991, 96 pp.

Reviewed by Menahem Benhayim

Menahem Benhayim lives in Jerusalem and was until May 1993 Secretary for the International Hebrew Christian Alliance in Israel.

The title and the point of reference of this small and provocative work is a statement made by Pope John Paul II in 1980 in the presence of official Jewish representatives in Germany. Speaking of Christian-Jewish dialogue, the pope referred to "the first aspect of this dialogue" as "the meeting between the people of God of the old covenant which has never been revoked by God (cp. Rom 11:29) and the people of God of the new covenant."

The reference to Romans 11:29 ("the gifts and call of God are irrevocable") is seen by the author, a Jesuit biblical scholar, as "a daring breakthrough" within the field of traditional Christian thought, and is the subject of the author's inquiry.

In each of twelve compact chapters, Lohfink summarizes a thesis and proceeds to expound it with admirable economy, mainly using biblical source material. A sampling: "The popular Christian concept of the 'new covenant' encourages anti-Judaism", "A fresh look at Romans 9-11 today", "One ought not to speak of two 'covenants' but only of the one 'covenant'", and so forth.

The author admonishes Christians not to "renounce their Christian identity" by surrendering New Testament understanding of prophecy fulfillment (for example, Jer. 31:31-34 as a prophecy relating to Jesus and the New Testament). He nevertheless concedes that the Hebrew concept of "brit" (usually translated "covenant") carries a range of meanings which allow more than one interpretation of the new covenant.

In relation to traditional Christian interpretation of the new covenant, Lohfink seeks to resolve the conflict between two interpretations of the new covenant {78} based on two often-cited New Testament texts. On the one hand, there has been the focus on 2 Cor. 3:14 ("the veil" over Israel in the reading of the Old Testament), and on Hebrews 8:13 (the concept of a new covenant by which "the first one has grown old (and) is vanishing"). Against the traditional Christian view of these texts as abrogating the old covenant stand modern liberal theologies, often affirming traditional Jewish exegesis of the Jeremiah prophecy, as speaking of a Renewed Covenant rather than of something entirely new.

The author takes a novel intermediate approach, insisting that the removal of the "veil" by no means signifies abrogation of the first covenant. He writes: "It is not the 'old covenant' but the veil over the 'old covenant' that comes to an end (in Christ) ... so the 'old covenant' unveiled gleams in the 'new covenant' in God's splendor which shines from it.

In dealing with the text of Hebrew 8:13, however, he claims that "we have to reckon with a contradiction within the New Testament", and asks: "Why should there not be different ways of thinking side by side in the biblical canon whose opposition can only be resolved when one stands back from the formulation?" He concludes, on the basis of a broader biblical exegesis, that the relationship between the old and new covenants is "based on

the idea of image and reality, and this means not only opposition, but foremost positive correspondence."

An important element in his argument, especially for Messianic Jews and evangelical Christians, is his insistence on the need to avoid confusion between the individual aspect of salvation and the salvation of the community, as these relate to covenant. "Modern Christians are victims of a reading of the Scriptures which is individualistic, spiritualistic and directed to the beyond," he contends.

He also appeals for a fresh look at Romans 9-11 after almost 2000 years of gentile predominance in the Church. He notes in this connection that the immediate aspect of the Jeremiah prophecy was fulfilled through a partial restoration of Israel with the return from Babylon. In Paul's day the gentiles were beginning to be "ingrafted" on the Jewish olive tree while most of the Jewish branches were cut off, but with a promise of ultimate "regrafting."

The apostle warned the gentiles not to boast against the Jewish branches, for they also could be cut off (Rom 11:18-23). In the light of the ghastly failures of {79} historical gentile Christendom, are they now facing the danger of being cut off? And an even more daring question is raised: "Is it to be the Jews who must make the Christians jealous?" (Gentile Christians were once called to make the Jews jealous.)

Lohfink unequivocally rejects the notion of the two covenants which forever run parallel: Judaism and Torah for the Jews, Jesus and Christianity for the gentiles. There may be at present a two-fold way to salvation, he argues, but it exists within one covenant. "God has only one plan of salvation, and at the end he will be one," he writes.

He urges Christians to recognize the Jewish elements of their faith. "Torah is salvation in concrete form," he writes, and "The Sermon on the Mount the ultimate interpretation and radicalization of the Torah:" Jews who do not yet see in Jesus of Nazareth the fulfillment of the new covenant promise "in its definitive eschatological fullness," are asked to respect Christian belief. Both parties must not despair of the ultimate salvation of the world within the contest of the one covenant. A permanent two-covenant belief would end up "in unbelief before God's biblical word," he asserts.

This is a book which merits the attention of those who are concerned about the relationships between Christians and Jews in the light of Scripture and history. It may not satisfy evangelicals and Messianic Jews who see the present need to underscore the reality of the new covenant for contemporary Israel, even before there is an ultimate resolution of its meaning for the "all Israel" which is to be saved (Rom 11:26).

The author provides a challenging argument, which can be relevant to refuting not only upholders of two-covenant theology and replacement theology, but also those who may be incorrectly handling the concept of a single covenant. The book is also refreshingly free of Roman Catholic or any other form of Christian triumphalism.