



*“So That
They May
Be One”*

MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■

Content ————— **Issue 72/ 2014** —————

Rev. David M. Neuhaus:

“So That They May Be One”: Ecumenism in Israel-Palestine Today

Rolf Heitmann:

Carl Paul Caspari (1814–92): The 200th anniversary of an influential Hebrew Christian scholar and mission leader

Judith Mendelsohn Rood:

The Jews and the History of the World Christian Movement in the Work of Historian Lamin Sanneh

Rev. Alex Jacob:

The Case for Enlargement Theology

Paul Morris:

Creeds and Theology: Expressing the Jewish Context

Rudolph D. Gonzalez:

Recovering the Role of Jewish Outreach at the End Times

Rich Robinson:

Book Review: Hugh Schonfield: A Case Study of Complex Jewish Identities by Owen Power (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock)

Book Review: The Gospel and Israel: The Edersheim Lectures ed. Paul Morris (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock)

Sanna Erelä:

Arab Christians in the Israeli Army

MISHKAN

Published by
Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies
© 2014 by Caspari Center, Jerusalem

Editorial Board

Rich Robinson, PhD
Richard Harvey, PhD
Judith Mendelsohn Rood, PhD
Raymond Lillevik, PhD
Elisabeth E Levy
David Serner
Sanna Erelä

Linguistic editor and layout: C. Osborne
Cover design: Heidi Tohmola

ISSN 0792-0474

Subscriptions: \$10/year (2 issues)
Subscriptions, back issues, and other inquiries:
mishkan@caspari.com

www.caspari.com

MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

ISSUE 72 / 2014

www.caspari.com

Introduction to the New *Mishkan* Online Journal

Dear subscribers,

Welcome to our new *Mishkan* online journal. As you may already know, Caspari Center bought *Mishkan: A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People* back from Pasche Institute at the end of 2013. The Pasche Institute had published *Mishkan* since 2007. Prior to 2007, *Mishkan* was owned and published by Caspari Center. We are glad to have *Mishkan* back at Caspari, but are making some changes. *Mishkan* will be an online-only journal; we will no longer publish hard copies. In addition, we will now be publishing it biannually rather than quarterly.

We are glad and thankful that almost all *Mishkan* subscribers are staying with us and continuing their subscription online. We will do our best to provide you with interesting and challenging articles from the Jewish world and the world of the gospel and the Messianic movement.

We hope you will enjoy this new issue of *Mishkan*. We have a variety of articles; you can read about the challenge of a new ecumenism in Jerusalem and about Carl Paul Caspari, who gave his name to the Caspari Center. You can also read about enlargement theology and a new view of the Christian creeds.

In every issue you will also find one or two book reviews and an update from Israel. In this issue, the update is about Christian recruits in the IDF.

Happy reading!
The Caspari staff

“So That They May Be One”: Ecumenism in Israel-Palestine Today

Rev. David M. Neuhaus, SJ

As I write these lines, our country is again torn by war and violence. The Israeli army is bombing the Gaza Strip, and Palestinian militants in Gaza are bombarding Israeli territory with rockets. Hundreds have died, more are wounded, many more lives have been shattered, and even more oil poured on the fires of hatred. Both Israeli and Palestinian political leaders promise victory! This is yet another round in the seemingly unending cycle of violence.

Where are the disciples of Christ? In the war between Israelis and Palestinians, the disciples of Christ are on both sides—in Gaza and in the towns being bombarded from Gaza. God in his wisdom has sowed the seeds of faith on all sides of the multi-dimensional conflict that has engulfed the Holy Land for decades. However, the question “Where are the disciples of Christ?” is not only a geographical question. It is also a question about where the disciples of Christ take their stand as war and violence engulf the world in which they live. Why has God sowed the seeds of faith on all sides of the conflict? Can the disciples of Christ in Israel-Palestine today be one, and prophetically witness to an alternative to war and violence? For them, the victory has already been won in the resurrection of Christ from the dead; can their unity as one body be good news for Israel-Palestine today?

Christian Palestinians

Christians form an important minority in all parts of the Palestinian Arab world: in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 (East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip); among the Palestinian Arab citizens of the State of Israel; and in the various countries of the Palestinian Diaspora.

The Christian Palestinians are divided by their church affiliations: Catholic (Byzantine, Latin, Maronite, Syrian, and Armenian rites), Orthodox, Eastern, Anglican, Protestant, and evangelical. These divisions are the fruit of centuries of theological and political conflicts that have divided the wider Christian world since the 4th century. One of the important movements among Christian Palestinians is inter-Christian ecumenism, a movement that promotes dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation among the various Christian churches and denominations. This movement focuses not only on the theological and religious differences that divide Christians but also on the socio-cultural and political contexts in which Christians live.

For many Christian Palestinians today, what unites them is far more important than the historical, theological, and religious divisions. These points of unity include the following essential elements:

Palestinian identity: The development of Palestinian national consciousness since the 19th century has had a galvanizing effect on Christian Palestinians. Christian Palestinians have actively participated in the national movement and the struggle for independence, and have suffered all the consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Exile from the homeland, life under military

occupation, and discrimination suffered as non-Jews living in Israel have created a common national discourse that unites Christian Palestinians as well as Christians and Muslims.

Arab Muslim context: The Arabic language and the Muslim cultural context have created a Christian world that is culturally specific and is faced with its own challenges and aspirations whatever the particular denominational identity of the Christian. In this context, dialogue with Muslims, the majority in the society, is an essential part of ensuring a future for the church.

Minority status: Essential to the development of a common Christian identity is the acute awareness among Christian Palestinians that they are a small minority within a Muslim majority—no more than 10% of Palestinians worldwide (2% of Palestinians in the Palestinian Territories; under 20% of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel). A common perception among Christian Palestinians is that only unity of the Christians can guarantee their survival.

Christian Palestinians are aware today of the common challenges that face them. Pan-church organizations have sprung up, and among the most important are those that bring together the leaders of the traditional churches. The leaders of the twelve most important Christian churches in Jerusalem—Orthodox, Armenian, Catholic (Roman, Greek, Maronite, Syrian, Armenian), Oriental (Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian), Anglican, Lutheran—meet regularly in order to discuss the issues that face the Christians and have published jointly signed communiqués that enunciate the position of a united leadership.¹ Those who have led this joint *prise de conscience* have been church leaders who are themselves Christian Palestinians, like emeritus Roman Catholic patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah, Lutheran bishop Mounib Younan, emeritus Anglican bishop Riah Abu al-Assal, Greek Orthodox bishop Attalah Hanna, and emeritus Greek Catholic archbishop Elias Chacour. Two institutions, Al-Liqa² and Sabeel,³ both of them founded in the 1980s, promote ecumenism among Christian Palestinians.

Some leaders of the Palestinian evangelical churches have also integrated into this ecumenical effort to unite Christian Palestinians. One example is the collaboration among Palestinian theologians in the composition of the Kairos document, which formulated a Palestinian “cry of hope” in the face of the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestine.⁴ Among those who composed the document alongside Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran theologians is evangelical theologian Yohanna Katanacho. Bethlehem Bible College’s annual “Christ at the Checkpoint” conference is another arena where evangelical Christians participate in this sharpening of a general Christian Palestinian consciousness.⁵

For this part of the Christian community in the Holy Land, one of the biggest challenges is the ongoing survival of the Christian Palestinians in their historic homeland. 1948 saw the tragic exodus of tens of thousands of Christian Palestinians alongside their Muslim compatriots. Unable to return, they were joined in a far flung Palestinian Diaspora by many more Christian and Muslim Palestinians who left their homeland, fleeing occupation and discrimination, looking for a better future for their children. As the deadlock in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations continues, the temptation to emigrate continues to lure Palestinians, both Christian and Muslim. Some also leave because they are alienated by the rise of a Palestinian political discourse that is rooted in a monolithic and intolerant Islamic ideology that views Christians as marginal at best, and a foreign presence to be eliminated at worst. The oft repeated question of whether the Christians in the Holy

¹ An example would be the regular messages published for the important Christian feasts, see here the message for Easter 2014 www.en.lpj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Easter-Greeting-headed-2014.pdf [accessed August 18, 2014].

² For the Al Liqa Center see www.al-liqacenter.org.ps [accessed August 18, 2014].

³ For the Sabeel Center see www.sabeel.org [accessed August 18, 2014].

⁴ For the Kairos Document see www.kairopalestine.ps [accessed August 18, 2014].

⁵ For “Christ at the Checkpoint” see www.christatthecheckpoint.com [accessed August 18, 2014].

Land will survive is linked to the temptation to emigrate, but is also a result of the fact that Christians are having smaller families than Muslims or Jews in Israel/Palestine today and so their proportion in the population is indeed shrinking. This atmosphere of crisis reinforces the need for ecumenism.

Christian Israelis

1948, commemorated by Palestinians as the *nakbah* (catastrophe) in the life of the Palestinian people, was the moment of rebirth for myriads of Jews. The population of Jews tripled in the first decade after the establishment of the State of Israel, and the working assumption was that these Jews were "Jewish." However, it soon became clear that among the new immigrants who arrived, particularly among those who arrived from Europe, there were many non-Jews and no small number of Christians.⁶ Few of these Christians were Jews who had encountered Jesus Christ and converted; most were the Christian spouses or children of Jews who joined the Jewish members of their families in immigrating to Israel.

The question of the identity of some of these Christians—whether Jews who had become Christians or the non-Jewish offspring of Jews—became a matter of public interest and even legislation from the earliest days of the State. The 1950 Law of Return, which guaranteed citizenship for any Jew who sought to immigrate to the State of Israel, defined a Jew as a person "who was born of a Jewish mother or has converted to Judaism." In the light of cases like that of Father Daniel (Oswald) Rufeisen, a Carmelite monk and Catholic priest who insisted that after converting to Christianity he was no less Jewish, the law was amended in 1970 with a clarification that "a member of another religion" was not eligible to be considered a Jew for the purposes of the Law of Return. The same 1970 amendment also determined that "a child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his religion" are eligible for citizenship under the Law of Return. This opened the doors for further Christian immigration to Israel. The ongoing legal debate has included discussion about the status of Messianic Jews and their identification as Jews and/or as Christians.

There are about 160,000 Christian citizens of the State of Israel today. About three quarters of them are Palestinian Arabs, the majority of whom identify with the wider Palestinian community. One quarter of the Christian citizens of Israel however are not Arabs, but rather form a relatively unknown population of Christians who are integrated within Hebrew speaking, Jewish Israeli society. The non-Arab Christian citizens of Israel are predominantly Russian speakers from the former Soviet Union, who made their way to Israel among the hundreds of thousands of new immigrants who arrived after 1990. There are also smaller numbers of Christians who have emigrated from other places, like Ethiopia. Among these Christian immigrants, the majority is Orthodox (Russian or Ethiopian), but there are also smaller communities of Catholics, Protestants, and evangelicals. Many Russian and Ethiopian believers in Christ have found their spiritual home in Messianic Jewish congregations. These immigrants are connected in some way to Jews through family ties, descent, or social and cultural relations.⁷

⁶ A non-Jew in this context is a person considered not Jewish by rabbinic law, which stipulates that a Jew is someone who has a Jewish mother or has converted to Judaism. A Christian, on the other hand, is someone who has been baptized and thus belongs to the Christian community.

⁷ The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics explains this situation as follows: "Starting with the 1995 census, due to the arrival of many immigrants not listed as Jews in the Ministry of the Interior, the definitions of religion and population group were altered in the population estimate tables. The Christian group was divided in two, Arab Christians and Other Christians. . . . Another group presented separately since 1995 is the group unclassified by religion in the Ministry of

In addition to this population, numbering 30,000–40,000, there is a population of unknown dimensions (estimates are between 120,000 and 150,000) of Christian migrants in Israel. This population includes both migrant workers (mostly from Asia) and asylum seekers (almost entirely from Africa). Among the migrant workers, most of the Christians are Catholic (about 40,000 Filipinos, and thousands more from India, Sri Lanka, West Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe) or Protestant, but the Christian asylum seekers are predominantly Eastern Orthodox (mostly from Eritrea). These Christians also live within the Hebrew speaking, Jewish Israeli society, albeit on the margins. Their children are Hebrew speaking and integrated into the government school system.

Although these diverse populations remain largely unknown and isolated from one another, there are certain commonalities that can be identified:

Israeli identity: Many of these Christians, whether citizens or not, feel at home in Israel and identify fully with the State of Israel. Their children, integrated in the educational system alongside secular Jews, often go on to serve in the Israeli army. This is true today also for a very small portion of the Christian Palestinian population in the State of Israel that identifies more with Jewish Israelis than with the wider Palestinian community.

Jewish context: These Christians are exposed to and formed by the Jewish, Hebrew language context in which they live. They often discover the strong ties that bind Jesus Christ, the church, and Christian faith to the Jewish people. Dialogue with Jews is essential in building a society in which these Christians might be at home.

Minority status: These Christians are not only aware that they form a marginal and minority group within their milieu but some hide their Christian identity, particularly those who have immigrated to Israel as Jews. Some sense that hiding their Christian identity will ensure a better future for their children within the Jewish Israeli milieu in which they live.

Two formidable challenges define the future of these Christians. One is their integration into Israeli society as Christians. Many of those who strongly define as Christians often decide to leave Israel for a milieu in which it is simpler to live as Christians. Among the Russian speaking immigrants to Israel, Christians are more likely to move on to another Western country or return to their countries of origin. Another great challenge is the transmission of Christian faith to the generation born in Israel. Christianity is almost completely invisible in the Hebrew speaking, Jewish Israeli milieu. Since the 1950s some attempts have been made to establish Hebrew speaking Christian communities that are sensitive to the Jewish Israeli milieu. In 1955, the Catholic Church established the Work of Saint James, which caters to Hebrew speaking Catholics and has consistently continued pastoral, catechetical, and socio-cultural activities.⁸ Similar attempts were made in the Anglican, Protestant, and Russian Orthodox communities. Messianic Jewish communities have sprung up all over Israel, integrating faith in Jesus Christ, Hebrew language, Jewish culture and/or tradition, and Israeli identity. There are more than 100 Messianic congregations in Israel today, espousing a wide range of Christian and Jewish beliefs and practices.

The migrant worker and asylum seeker communities, although fragile, are bringing up children in Israel and facing these same challenges of integration (predominantly the struggle against exploitation and the guarantee of rights and transmission of faith). South Tel Aviv has become the hub of the migrant church and the Jewish secular schools in these neighborhoods have hundreds of Christian children among their students. About half the pupils in the Bialik Rogozin School, an oasis of tolerance and diversity in south Tel Aviv, are Christians. Tens of Protestant and

Interior. The persons in this group are usually family members of Jewish immigrants, as is usually the case with the Other Christians" (CBS, *Statistical Abstract* [2007], 79).

⁸ For the Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel see www.catholic.co.il [accessed August 18, 2014].

evangelical congregations as well as the Eritrean Orthodox Church rent shops, halls, and basements for prayer assemblies and social activities in the area around the central bus station in Tel Aviv. In March 2014, the Catholic Church established a pastoral center in the neighborhood, named Our Lady Woman of Valor.⁹

Will these Israeli Christian populations give rise to a viable and visible Christian Israeli church? It is important to point out that the traditional churches in the Holy Land have not always responded very quickly to the needs of these new populations. The traditional churches have regarded Christian Palestinians as their flock and almost all the Christian institutions—parishes, schools, hospitals, orphanages, special education and social work structures, youth movements, etc.—cater almost uniquely to this population. At the same time, Jewish Israeli institutions do not recognize the Christian identity of this population. The non-Arab “non-Jewish” citizens of Israel, including Christians, are the target of various strategies to assimilate them into the Jewish population. This is particularly the case for youth at school and in the army who are invited to associate themselves completely with the Jewish people through conversion to Judaism. The State of Israel established a national institute for conversion where prospective converts are prepared through the study of Judaism. The immigrants are, in general, more attracted to the prevalent secular Israeli lifestyle than to its Orthodox religious alternative. The parallel conversion process in the Israeli army has been more successful than the national institute.¹⁰

It is clear that the challenges in preserving a Christian presence within Hebrew speaking, Jewish Israeli society are myriad. The main temptation is assimilation into the secular majority rather than emigration. However, much work remains to be done to develop an ecumenical movement among Christian Israelis that will bring together Orthodox, Oriental, Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical Christians as well as Messianic Jews. Some institutions do exist to promote this ecumenism, including the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel and the Caspari Center.¹¹ United in faith and facing the same challenges in the Hebrew speaking, Jewish Israeli milieu, these disciples of Christ attempt to transmit the faith in a context in which secularism is strong and Christian faith and culture are almost completely absent. Ecumenism is much needed to reinforce their efforts.

Ecumenism in Palestine and Israel Today

Having described in broad outlines the two diverse groups of Christians that are rooted in Israel/Palestine today, the question can now be raised about a Christian unity that crosses the borders established by decades of conflict, remembering the words of the Christ: “And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17:11, NRS).

Throughout the Christian world, ecumenism—the attempt to build Christianity unity and heal the wounds of separation—is afoot. There are two kinds of widespread ecumenism in Palestine and Israel today:

Ecumenism of solidarity: A strong motor in ecumenical relations among Christian Palestinians is national unity. Whereas theological, religious, and historical causes for division often seem abstract and distant, the need for unity is underlined because of the shared struggle to survive. Ecumenical encounter often deals more with occupation, religious fundamentalism, and

⁹ For Our Lady Woman of Valor Pastoral Center in south Tel Aviv see www.catholic.co.il/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2288%3Aour-lady-woman-of-valor-pastoral-center-in-tel-aviv [accessed August 18, 2014].

¹⁰ For the “conversion institute,” the Institute for Jewish Studies, see www.nativhagiur.org.il [accessed August 18, 2014].

¹¹ For the Caspari Center see www.caspari.com [accessed August 18, 2014].

discrimination than it does with the causes of Christian division. This type of ecumenism has led to the weaving of closer relations among Christian Palestinians as awareness grows that what they have in common is much greater than what divides them. This kind of ecumenism is paralleled among Christian Israelis by the adoption in some circles of Christian Zionism or at least a strong support for the Jewish people and a fascination with the Jewish identity of Jesus and the Jewish roots of the church. Ecumenism thrives where political (or ideological) interests converge—pro-Palestinian or pro-Israeli.

Ecumenism of piety: A very different kind of ecumenism is inspired by the focus on specifically Christian themes. Some Christians see their faith as a refuge from the world outside. Christians come into the religious space to escape conflict and submerge themselves in religious language and practice in order to create distance from their surroundings. This is often the tendency within traditional Christian communities that see the world as a threatening kingdom of darkness and the Christian community as the kingdom of light. Within such a discourse, there is little to prevent Christian Palestinians and Christian Israelis from coming together because the world of conflict is left outside of the religious space.

Some disciples of Christ, however, are engaging in a new form of ecumenism that might be called "prophetic ecumenism."¹² "For (Christ) is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it" (Eph 2:14–16, NRS). They are beginning to reflect on the fact that God has planted the seed of faith in Christ deep in the soil of both Palestinian and Israeli societies. Does this have significance for the vocation of Christ's disciples who, though separated by walls of enmity because of the ongoing conflict, are united by their faith in the Christ who is peace?

"Prophetic ecumenism" is supremely aware of the political situation in Israel/Palestine and understands that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most serious barriers separating disciples of Christ today. This barrier cuts right through the various Christian churches and communities as Christian Palestinians and Christian Israelis might indeed belong to the same churches, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, or evangelical, but are radically divided because of their national identity or identification and their political and ideological convictions.

The challenges to promoting this kind of ecumenism are numerous and here I would like to briefly enumerate seven of them:

The first challenge is simply *meeting together*. Can Christian Palestinians and Christian Israelis come together despite the walls and listen to one another? Can they listen to each other's witness of faith and accommodate the narratives that include the national identity of the one bearing witness? The Christian Palestinian is Palestinian and carries the pain, anguish, and suffering of his/her people. The Christian Israeli is Israeli (or identifies with Israelis) and likewise carries the pain, anguish, and suffering of his/her people.

The second challenge is the challenge of *solidarity*. Listening to a brother or sister Christian must stimulate a sense of solidarity with his/her pain, anguish, and suffering. This introduces the tearing passion of the Cross. Solidarity opens the Christian to the pain of the other that he/she must assume alongside the pain that is his/her own in the situation of conflict.

The third challenge is *self-critique*. In a time of crisis, people seek to close ranks and unite and this is true on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide. Some aspects of solidarity ecumenism

¹² Notable in this context is the new book by Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden, *Through My Enemy's Eyes: Envisioning Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014).

promote the adoption of strong forms of Palestinian nationalism or Christian solidarity with Israel, perhaps in an attempt to show loyalty to the majority. However, in prophetic ecumenism the development of a critique of the dominant ideologies and a sensitivity to their exclusivist and discriminatory elements must develop.

The fourth challenge is promoting *communion with the local church* among immigrants and migrants. The newcomers must be formed to love the local church, in all its diversity of language, rite, theology, and spirituality. This is the mother church! The newcomers must come to know the local church, her history, and her present situation.

The fifth challenge *welcoming the immigrants and migrants* into the local church. The local church has an important mission in welcoming the newcomers into her midst, making a place for them, sharing resources with them, and getting to know their precariousness and fragility.

The sixth challenge is developing the *common witness* that disciples of Christ are called to give in the Holy Land today. This common witness certainly touches on the possibility of peace. Brought together despite the walls of enmity because "he is our peace," disciples of Christ are called to challenge the position that peace is impossible. Prophetic ecumenism reveals the alternatives to war and violence, conflict and contempt, engaging the other as brother and sister. Disciples of Christ constitute a bridge between the Palestinian (and Arab) and Israeli worlds, between Muslims and Jews.

Finally, the seventh challenge is *calling for justice and pardon*. Christians cannot assent to injustice and must be sensitive to injustice wherever it is present, especially in the societies in which they live. Disciples of Christ must also preach pardon, as they have an intimate personal experience of being pardoned though they are sinners.

Prophetic ecumenism has as its goal the bridging of the greatest divide among Christians in the Holy Land today: the divide provoked by the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The divide is a gaping wound on the face of the church and, like all divisions, renders her witness to Christ feeble and incoherent. In Christian unity, the church in the Holy Land can renew her prophetic spirit. Prophetic ecumenism must "nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us"¹³ so that the dawn of a new beginning can shine forth.

In conclusion, I would like to quote a man who has repeatedly reached out to all his brothers and sisters in Christ, calling them to contemplate the scandal of Christian division, Pope Francis. At his meeting with Greek Orthodox patriarch Bartholomew before the Tomb of Christ in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem on May 25, 2014, he declared: "Every time we ask forgiveness of one another for our sins against other Christians and every time we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the resurrection! Every time we put behind us our longstanding prejudices and find the courage to build new fraternal relationships, we confess that Christ is truly risen! Every time we reflect on the future of the church in the light of her vocation to unity, the dawn of Easter breaks forth!" It is this dawn that disciples of Christ are called to witness to in a beloved land, torn for too long by conflict.

Rev. David M. Neuhaus, SJ, is a Jewish Israeli, a Roman Catholic priest, and a member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). He serves as Latin Patriarchal Vicar, responsible for Hebrew speaking and migrant Catholics in Israel. He teaches Scripture and Jewish Studies at Bethlehem University, the Salesian Theological Institute and Yad Ben Zvi.

¹³ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (second edition, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 3.

Carl Paul Caspari (1814–92)

The 200th anniversary of an influential Hebrew Christian scholar and mission leader

Rolf Heitmann

CEO, Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel

Caspari Center in Jerusalem is well known and has a good reputation among Messianic Jews as well as church leaders. This year we commemorate the 200th birthday of the remarkable man and scholar for whom this study and research center is named. In this article we especially want to emphasize his vision and committed service in mission for the worldwide church and his own people, shaped by his spiritual journey through life.

Even though Carl Paul Caspari spent most of his life on the outskirts of Europe, namely in provincial Norway, he was quite cosmopolitan and travelled a lot in Europe, from Spain in the west to Russia in the east, from Norway in the north to Italy in the south. His research and studies in theology and Oriental/Semitic languages did not only make him known by name; he also had ties with several scholars in the academic world and with mission leaders in Europe.

One of the many anecdotes related to him may give us a picture of this fascinating Hebrew Christian scholar: On one of his travels in Europe, he entered his compartment in the train, and it happened that his seat was next to two Catholic priests. These two clerics were having a theological discussion in German. German was Caspari's mother tongue, and he could not avoid jumping in to the conversation with passion and temper. The two clerics did not like this stranger and his involvement in their discussion, so they switched to French. But this did not stop Caspari. Neither did English. They decided to continue in Latin and Greek (both dead languages), but the result was the same. Finally they thought they had found the key to excluding this stranger from further discussion. They spoke in biblical Hebrew, but Caspari spoke Hebrew more fluently than anyone. They even tried some Arabic, but were not aware that this troubling man had published a grammar in Arabic. At the end, one of the priests stood up and cried out, "Either you must be the devil himself, or you are Professor Caspari from Christiania (Oslo)!" Then Caspari also stood up and replied gently, "I have the pleasure of introducing myself as the latter of the two."¹

From Birth to Baptism

Carl Caspari was born in Dessau, Germany, on January 8, 1814. His parents, Rebekka (born Schwabe) and Joseph Caspari, were both Jewish and influenced by the Jewish Enlightenment movement (*Haskalah*). We do not know much more about his family. Caspari's eldest son, Theodor, says in his memoir that he has no knowledge about his grandparents, except that his grandfather was a poor merchant. There is no written material, and Caspari himself did not say anything about his ancestors.²

¹ Chr. Ihlen, *Den Norske Israelsmisjons historie i 100 år 1844–1944*, 80.

² Haldis Buer Stamnes, *Theodor Caspari – Naturverner, romantiker og polemiker* (Dreyer forlag/Oslo, 2012), 19.

This is quite remarkable considering how strong heritage and family traditions are among the Jewish people. The reason could be Caspari's "conversion" to Christianity. However, there is no evidence that Caspari at any point rejected his Jewish heritage. A social explanation seems to be more reasonable: Caspari married a girl from an aristocratic family, and his new circle of acquaintances was mostly from the "upper class" of society. After some years in Christiania, Caspari bought a house in the newly established residential district next to the royal palace. In that context, his poor family was probably not worth mentioning.

Carl Caspari went to a Jewish school as a child, where he was introduced to biblical Hebrew. Caspari made remarkable progress in his studies, and after two years at the Hebrew school—at the age of eight—he read through the whole Torah without any difficulty.³ His father wanted his son to be a merchant like himself, but his interest lay in another direction. After finishing the Jewish school, he started studies at the Latin school (gymnasium). In 1834, at the age of 20, Caspari moved to Leipzig, where he started his university studies of Arabic and Persian. Without much money or food, he tried as best he could to concentrate on his studies. On his desk he had the following quotation from Immanuel Kant: "Du kannst; weil du must"—"You can, because you must." This was his motivation and duty, and in 1844 he published the first ever Arabic grammar in Latin. From then on, Caspari was one of the most famous scholars of oriental languages.

Before we continue his story, we will briefly touch on its religious context, in which we can see a parallel between rabbinic Judaism and Protestant Christianity. In Judaism there were two main directions or traditions: the Talmudists, or traditionalists, with a strong focus on the Torah and rabbinical tradition; and the Hassidim, with a strong focus on the spiritual life and personal relationship with—or experience of—God. These two movements were both challenged by the Enlightenment and rationalistic thinking similar to that of present-day Reform Judaism. A parallel situation occurred within Protestant Christianity, especially within the Lutheran tradition: the orthodox tradition with its strong focus on Scripture and dogma; and the Pietistic revival with its focus on repentance, personal relationship with God, and Christian service. They were also challenged by the Enlightenment's philosophy and rationalism, similar to what is characterized today as liberal theology.

Caspari came from a Jewish background marked by Enlightenment influence, and studied at a university where the authority of the Bible and Christian dogma were devalued. Actually, it was not always easy to see the difference between Judaism and Christianity, as all kinds of traditional faith and thinking were questioned.

Some of Caspari's fellow students challenged his rational way of thinking. A strong conviction of duty (cfr. Kant) forced him to find answers to fundamental and existential questions raised, and also to achieve the highest moral standard possible. In his struggle for doing and being "what you can," he felt a total lack of love.

In this situation he met with some Christian students, among them Frantz Delitzsch. His new friend explained to Caspari that due to our sinful nature, we will never be able to do what we want, nor in ourselves become what we want to be. What we need is God's own re-creation of our lives through his Holy Spirit. This theology was completely in opposition to Caspari's philosophy, understood in light of Kant's "ethics of duty," which emphasize that a moral act is right as long as it corresponds with an ethical principle or law, and that we therefore could achieve moral righteousness. Caspari was upset by his new friend's absurd idea. He later explained the situation in this way: "So far, I was not matured by the Law."⁴

³ Th. G. B. Odland in *Det Norske Bibelskaps årbok 1892*, 81.

⁴ Odland, 85.

Frantz Delitzsch (1813–90) is most known for his translation of the New Testament into modern Hebrew (1877), even before the modern Hebrew language was composed. He was a professor in Old Testament theology and Hebrew language at the universities in Rostock and Erlangen, before he ended up where he started: in Leipzig. By inspiration of the universities in Halle and Berlin, he established a special institute for studies in Judaica (1880) with the purpose of training missionaries to work among the Jewish people. In the following years Institutum Iudaicum in Leipzig (Delitzschianum) became *the* training center, and Delitzsch even started a new society for mission among the Jews (Zentralverein für Mission unter den Juden), to which he invited Caspari as a board member. Delitzsch and Caspari cooperated closely in their academic research, and had a close friendship throughout their lives. Most probably Caspari, with his linguistic knowledge, contributed substantially to the translation of the New Testament.

Another fellow student, Karl Graul, who later became the leader of Leipzig Lutheran Mission and served as a missionary among Tamils, was the one who introduced Caspari to the New Testament. The first passage that made an impression on him was, surprisingly, Acts 8–9, the story of Saul—not primarily the conversion of the apostle, but rather the description of the Jewish people. With his historical-critical mindset, he found the description of the Jewish people historically correct, and this made an impression on him and confirmed the authenticity of the New Testament. Later, studying the Gospels, and especially the Gospel of John, he found Jesus to represent “the fullness of truth, the power of goodness and the fountain of love.” On the day of Pentecost, 1838, Caspari was baptized in a Lutheran church close to Leipzig, and added “Paul” to his name: Carl Paul Caspari.

Caspari himself explains that it was not the Old Testament which led him to the New Testament, but rather the New Testament which gave him the right understanding of the Old Testament and his Jewishness.

Three major consequences came from this:

- He dedicated his further studies and research to Old Testament theology.
- He became a confessional and convinced Lutheran, in opposition to the rationalists and their criticism of the Bible.
- He felt the church should be committed to proclaiming the gospel among the Jewish people, because Jesus is the only way of salvation.

The Scholar of Biblical Theology

Caspari was not very satisfied with the university in Leipzig. There was no “Christian theologian” there according to Caspari.⁵ The authority of the Word of God was not obeyed by the rationalists. He therefore moved to Berlin for a while and became a disciple of Professor Hengstenberg. Before his return to Leipzig, he wrote several articles and dissertations on theology and philosophy, among them a commentary on the book of Obadiah. He hoped to get a job at Leipzig University as an assistant professor, but this position was already occupied by his friend, Frantz Delitzsch.

So, how did Carl Paul Caspari end up in Christiania (hereafter Oslo)?

One day, in spring 1847, he came to his room and found a card with a strange and unknown name: Gisle Johnson. Caspari had never heard of this person who wanted to meet with him. Gisle Johnson, a Norwegian theologian, had finished his studies at the university in Oslo in 1845, and was offered a scholarship for further studies in Germany, but with a special commission: To look for someone who might be a candidate for the vacant position of teacher of Old Testament theology.

⁵ Odland, 88.

Based in Erlangen, he also visited Berlin and Leipzig. In Berlin he approached Hengstenberg, asking him for a candidate, and Hengstenberg recommended Caspari. Johnson knew Caspari through his works; their meeting made a great impression on Johnson, and he asked Caspari to apply for the vacant position. Caspari was reluctant. He did not know anything about Norway, and he thought it was impossible to learn the language.

Finally, after some consideration, there were two remaining questions: First, was it possible to find coffee in Oslo? Second, was there a chance that a bear would appear on the street? After receiving satisfactory answers, Caspari applied, was hired, and came to Oslo in October 1847 as a lecturer. Three months later, he presented his first lecture in Norwegian, and within a year he spoke fluently. Ten years later, he was appointed as professor of Old Testament theology⁶ at the same university. For 44 years he lectured at the university and in academic societies, and he received several distinctions and marks of respect in Norway, Germany, and France.

It is said that Caspari opened up the Old Testament for his students by explaining the history of the Bible as a holy history that develops from Creation through stages or steps of revelation in the midst of God's people, Israel, whom he preserves and educates for the purpose of yearning and faith.⁷ One of his students describes Caspari as a person with strong convictions about the Old Testament being the divine and eternal word of God. At the same time, Caspari could point out that the Old Testament does not completely reveal the message of God or the fulfillment of God's intentions.

As mentioned above, in 1860 Caspari bought a house for his family in the aristocratic area of Oslo. The house was close to the city and university, but was rural enough that Caspari could grow his own potatoes. The second floor of the house was only one room—but this was the most important room, at least from Caspari's perspective. This was his office and library. But it was also where Caspari gathered his students for fellowship and discussion one Saturday evening each month.⁸

He had a very structured life. He started his work day between 2 and 4 in the morning, when he drank his coffee and ate rusk (hard bread). He worked until 8 A.M., took a nap, and then worked again until 1 P.M. History tells us that when Caspari turned on his light between 2 and 4 A.M., his neighbor and colleague down the street, Christie, tuned his off. After finishing his daily studies, Caspari walked down through the royal park to the university for his lectures. In the afternoon he continued his studies, but he was not willing to talk about anything related to his profession after 8:30 P.M. At 9:30 he went to bed, except for the Saturdays when his students came.⁹

Gisle Johnson returned to Norway a year and a half after Caspari's arrival, and became his colleague at the university in dogmatics, systematic theology, and church history. Despite their eight-year age difference and different personalities, they became very good friends. Gisle Johnson was a man of few words. Rumor says that he very seldom smiled and never laughed. Carl Paul Caspari was different. He was an extrovert with a temper, rich in words and known for his upbeat, entertaining speeches. But theologically they were like twins.¹⁰ There is a story that Johnson and Caspari walked together one day in the park of the royal palace, close to Caspari's home, and had a theological conversation: Caspari talked, and Johnson listened. At least Caspari could not remember anything that Johnson had said.¹¹

⁶ Odland, 90; cfr. Stamnes, 20.

⁷ Odland, 94.

⁸ Stamnes, 35.

⁹ Odland, 113.

¹⁰ Stamnes p. 21

¹¹ Ihlen, 80.

The Lutheran Perspective: Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

Caspari is categorized as a scholar belonging to the orthodox wing of Lutheranism. That might be correct. At least we know that he was quite fundamentalist in his Lutheran views. This might explain an occasion in 1845, when Caspari was asked to become a professor at the university of Königsberg—quite an attractive position. However, when Caspari heard that he would have to become a member of the Evangelical Church of the Prussian Union (ECPU), which united the Lutheran and Reformed churches, he refused.¹²

Despite this, it is, in my opinion, unfair to attach such a one-sided label to Caspari. First of all, he was quite convinced that it is not enough to have the right teaching and dogma. You also need a personal relationship with God through a spiritual life. Caspari himself had the experience of being released from self-righteousness and went through a spiritual change in his life. Second, it was a question of not only orthodoxy, but also orthopraxy. Christianity is more than theory. It is practice. Faith through deeds. Yes, Luther emphasized “sola fide”—faith alone. That is correct when it comes to salvation. But faith is never alone. Through faith you serve your neighbor and share your testimony. This perspective on faith was maintained by the Lutheran Pietists and the Moravians (German Brethren).

Organized mission among Jews in Europe started in the 18th century, and was inspired by the fathers of the Pietist revival and movement. In 1728, Johann Heinrich Callenberg established Institutum Judaicum at the university in Halle, Germany, with the main purpose of printing and distributing evangelistic broadsides and literature. In order to distribute the material and reach out to Jews, he also recruited theological students to travel on missionary journeys. One among them, Stephan Schultz (1714–76), walked through most of the countries in Europe for 12 years, and after that ended up in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. He set out in 1740, and returned to Halle in 1760.¹³

I suppose Caspari’s marriage and his in-laws also had an impact on his theological orientation. Caroline Amalie Konstanze von Zezschwitz, mostly called Marie, was 14 years younger than her husband, but from a high-born family. Their son, Theodor, who lectured at a college in Oslo, says that his mother’s family name was good training for his students learning German pronunciation.¹⁴ But she was not only of noble blood; her family was also religious. Their estate was in Deutsch-Baselitz in Sachsen, which is quite close to the city of Herrnhut—the Moravians’ base. Marie’s uncle was a professor of theology at the University of Erlangen, and it was he who in some ways acted as a matchmaker.

Caspari and His Missiology

I suppose Caspari’s personal journey to faith and the influence of the Moravians and Pietists were key factors in his strong involvement in mission. When Caspari came to Norway in 1847, there was already a society called Friends of Israel that had been established in Stavanger three years earlier. They were very much influenced by the revivals and Moravians on the European continent, and most of them had a strong eschatological expectation that they were close to the millennium and the salvation of Israel.¹⁵

An occurrence outside Norway stimulated their theological conviction and the establishment of the society: In 1842, the ECPU and the Anglican Church decided to call and install a joint bishop in Jerusalem, and this bishop happened to be the Jewish convert Solomon Alexander,

¹² Odland, 89.

¹³ Oskar Skarsaune, *Israels Venner* (Oslo, 1994), 20.

¹⁴ Stamnes, 18.

¹⁵ Skarsaune, 28ff.

residing at Christ Church. “The New Temple in Zion,” as it was called, was for them a strong confirmation of their expectations.

Even if Caspari shared their vision for mission, he was not much in favor of their focus on eschatology and millennialism. He was probably not as excited about the new bishop in Jerusalem as were the Friends of Israel in Stavanger. Remember that three years later, he refused to accept a position at the University of Königsberg due to the requirement of church membership in the ECPU.

In 1861, the leader of Friends of Israel, Bailiff Daniel Schiötz, died. The same year, some academics in the capital of Norway established the Central Committee for Mission among the Jews. In some ways there was a conflict of interest between these two groups—one based in the revival movement and the other among academics—but they managed to find a joint vision for mission, which means that the successor of the committee, the national organization today known as the Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel, regards June 12, 1844, as its founding date.¹⁶ The name “central committee” shows that it aimed to be a national coordinating committee for mission, based in the Lutheran Church.

Following the example of a statement—or manifesto—by the Lutheran mission of Sachsen, the committee in Oslo published their own statement, expressing that the church has almost exclusively approached the Gentiles (in its mission), and therefore hardly followed the example of the apostles, who always approached the Jews first, then the Gentiles. The proclamation of grace in Christ is, for the church, a duty of gratitude to the Jewish people.

Caspari was the obvious leader for the new committee for Jewish mission, and he served faithfully as its chair for 30 years, until he died in 1892.

So what was Caspari’s strategy for Jewish mission? In a lecture for a students’ mission group, Caspari asks—and answers—four main questions:¹⁷

1. Is Jewish mission necessary? Obviously, Caspari answers. First of all, it is the will of God that the Jews hear the gospel. Even if the majority of the Jewish people are living “in the midst of the Christian world,” they do not hear the gospel. The Orthodox and Catholic churches worship icons, which according to Jewish understanding is idolatry, and the Protestant churches are influenced by rationalism. Second, not all clerics are competent to present the gospel to the Jews. There is a need, according to Caspari, for people with special qualifications and knowledge about the Jewish life and mindset.
2. Who should evangelize them: Jewish proselytes or Christian missionaries? Caspari’s answer is both and jointly, as they complement one other.
3. How should we do mission among Jews? This is a question about content as well as methods. Concerning content, Caspari admits that he is skeptical of those who try to convince Jews by referring only to the prophecies about Messiah in the Old Testament: “Even if you are able to receive their acceptance of your own interpretation, you have not achieved very much; they will only remain a baptized creature.” Caspari refers to his own story of conversion: It was not through messianic prophecies that he came to faith, as he already had heard several lectures at the university on that topic. But when he was confronted by the law, the right recognition of sin arose. Through this recognition, Caspari was drawn to Christ in the Old Testament. Therefore, there is no separate way for the Jews. The law has to be preached. Caspari’s own expression was, “The soil has to be cultivated before you can plant the seed of the gospel.”

¹⁶ Skarsaune, 90ff; Iheln, 84f.

¹⁷ *Missionsblad for Israel* 3/1891, 36ff.

Concerning methods, Caspari is not in favor of those missionaries who travel around and preach the gospel on the streets. He compares this with “casting pearls before swine,” as there is not much fruit from such evangelism. This does not mean that Caspari is questioning proclamation or approaching Jews with the gospel. However, influencing Jews through conversation seems to be more effective than proclamation. Jewish mission is not only about outreach, but even more about receiving Jews for conversation and counseling. Through such dialogue you will be able to share the message of sin and salvation.

Caspari was, however, in favor of distributing printed material, first of all the New Testament. We clearly see the identification in methods and close cooperation with Frantz Delitzsch in Caspari’s views. Three years before Caspari gave his speech to the students, Delitzsch had published the New Testament in Hebrew. Caspari names this publication “the most influential missionary among the Jews.”

Through all this, Caspari states that we have not yet come to “the real time for Jewish mission.” We are living in “the time of preparation,” in which the focus should be to question and shake Talmudic Judaism and make Christianity known to the Jewish people. This was his apologetic program.

4. So, how should we treat and relate to Jewish converts, or proselytes? The major accusation from the Jewish community was that Jewish souls were bought by missionaries or that Jewish converts received special benefits. Caspari’s answer is therefore a reluctance to give Jewish converts material assistance or benefits. He also advocates the principle that Jewish converts should remain within their Jewish community and so be “a leaven among their own people,” while being aware that there will always be exceptions to such a principle according to the context.

Caspari and His Theology of Israel

What was Caspari’s theology about Israel? Based on his exegesis of Ezekiel 37:1–14, we may discover his hermeneutic application of the prophecies as stages or steps of revelation, which means that the prophetic word may have several fulfillments:¹⁸

1. The situation of the Jewish people in the Babylonian exile: The Israelites are really dead as a people and as the people of God. They are scattered among the nations and no longer function as a people. God is no longer in their midst, and their previous fellowship with him is terminated. Their spiritual life is going out.
2. The mourning of the believing Israelites is true. But what is not true is that the present situation will endure for ever.
3. Israel received permission to return to their homeland. They rebuilt the capital, Jerusalem, erected a new temple, and re-established worship. They arose from the dead. This is the first fulfillment of the prophecy.
4. This fulfillment of the prophecy was, however, only a weak and intermediate fulfillment. Everything was only a first taste of the true fulfillment. Only a part of the people returned; most of them continued to be scattered. And what is worse, the spiritual rise from the dead was not enduring. It disappeared and gave room to a new spiritual death, which was greater than before among the people of the covenant.

¹⁸ Carl Paul Caspari, *Hovedverk av den kristne litteratur* (reprint Oslo, 1969), 53ff.

5. The message of Ezekiel is a rebirth of Israel in the sense that Israel will no longer die, but live before the face of the Lord eternally through the fulfillment of the prophecy by the second David, Messiah. Messiah did not, and could not, appear before the Babylonian captivity came to an end.
6. But he (Messiah) came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and through him was the glorious fulfillment of *our* prophecy in the midst of Israel. According to Scripture, Jesus died for Israel and the sins of the whole world, rose on the third day, and is the source of everything that is named Life on earth. First of all he is the fountain of life for the people of the old covenant. This is the second fulfillment of the prophecy—a prophecy that Caspari primarily relates to *his* people.
7. The first outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was repeated several times in the midst of Israel, sometimes with visible and supernatural signs, but mostly without: through the word of the crucified and resurrected. The Spirit flowed continuously over the people of the covenant. Thousands of dead Israelites were resurrected in the power of the Spirit, stood up on their feet and became a great army. As Jacob, the superintendent of the congregation in Jerusalem, said to Paul: You see how many thousands of Jews have come to faith in Jesus. This spiritual development within the people of Israel is a continuous, third fulfillment.
8. The Israel that in this way had been spiritually resurrected from death is still waiting for a resurrection at the end of their wandering, the resurrection of the body, in which the prophecy of Ezekiel will finally and fully be fulfilled. The whole Jewish nation *could* at that time rise from dead, if they desired, but it was only a remnant of grace who had that desire.
9. In the meantime, the trespass of Israel has become riches for the Gentiles. In that sense the Gentiles replace Israel: The original branches of the olive tree were cut off due to unbelief and thrown away to become dry bones. The wild branches replaced them and were grafted into the trunk of the old Israel. The dimension of the Gentiles being part of God's people is included in Ezekiel's vision, and therefore the next step of fulfillment. Even if Caspari uses the expression "replace," he does not in any sense represent what was later in history defined as "replacement theology."
10. Later, when death again had power, the wind of the Spirit once again blew into the dead bones and renewed their lives. This happened at the time of the Reformation, the renewal of the church, and the same thing is happening in our own century, according to Caspari. The spiritual revivals within the church are therefore a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophetic word.
11. When we, like Ezekiel, look at Israel's "valley of the dead," the same question arises in our hearts as was directed to the prophet: Can these bones ever become alive? And if we love Israel and grieve over their condition, we ask with Asaf:

Will the Lord cast off forever?
And will He be favorable no more?
Has His mercy ceased forever?
Has His promise failed forevermore?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?¹⁹

¹⁹ Psalm 77:7–9 (NKJV).

How should we answer these questions? Caspari answers by quoting Romans 11, which he literally applies to Israel, understood as the Jewish people: They might be revived and grafted in again if they do not continue in their unbelief. But will Israel really repent? The Lord asked the prophet: Son of man, can these bones become alive? And the prophet answered: Lord, you alone know. We need to answer the same way, according to Caspari. But answering like Ezekiel, we at the same time say that we will search for an answer through God's Word. If the Word of God does not give an answer, the question is unsettled. But if we ask the Word of God if the dry bones will become alive, there is a certain answer: Yes, they shall become alive! (Rom. 11:26). This is Caspari's understanding of the biblical hope and the final fulfillment.

Caspari quotes several passages in from the Old and New Testaments as support for his interpretation, and concludes in this way: "They (Israel) will one day, shortly before his (Messiah's) return, repent, and the time of his return will depend on their repentance."

So there is clear confirmation in Caspari's teaching that the prophecies are still valid for the people of Israel. Regarding the land, Caspari is more of a traditionalist:

1. He says that in the first fulfillment, the return from captivity in Babylon, the promises are fulfilled both spiritually and physically.
2. At the time of the apostles, the promises were only fulfilled spiritually, and those among the Jews who came to believe in the Lord were spiritually made alive and led into the heavenly Canaan.
3. But how will the last fulfillment regarding Israel, the one at the end of times, take place? Because it will happen in the time of the New Covenant and before the coming of the Lord, it will be purely spiritual: The Jewish people will, as a nation, be grafted in and led to the spiritual Canaan, the church of Christ.

Caspari even sees this passage in Ezekiel as a motivation for mission. He asks how the dry bones became alive, and answers: By addressing them; by his Word. This shows us by what means Israel will become alive. It is by the Word of Christ, the crucified and resurrected. Therefore the church is called to send out people to proclaim the gospel among the Jews.²⁰ When we say the Lord's Prayer—"thy kingdom come"—we should always keep the Jewish people in mind and include them in our prayer.

Mission Completed

Caspari had a great impact on biblical research in Europe, and on a whole generation of theological students and pastors in Norway. However, we should not underestimate his efforts to motivate and educate a broader circle of believers, primarily through his dedication to Bible translation and missionary life. Caspari was a key person in translating the Bible, especially the Old Testament, into Norwegian, but—as mentioned—he also served as chair of our mission committee and board for 30 years. Rev. Odland describes Caspari's involvement in mission to the Jews as "a holy duty" which the church of Christ could not avoid.²¹ The same expression is used in the manifesto of the Christiania Committee of 1861: The proclamation of grace in Christ for the people of the old

²⁰ Caspari, 65f.

²¹ Odland, 102.

covenant is a duty of gratitude for the church, because “salvation comes from the Jews” (John 4:22).²²

At the same time, the mission among the Jews should primarily be regarded as a work of preparation, to prepare the soil to produce fruit in times to come, i.e., when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

From the very beginning, the Norwegian mission to the Jews worked in partnership with German societies, first in Bremen, but later also with other organizations. These partnerships developed under Caspari’s leadership, especially through his close contact with his friend in Leipzig, Frantz Delitzsch. Caspari was also a board member of the German Zentralverein.

Through almost the whole period of Caspari’s leadership, donors in Norway collected money and supported mission, but did not have a Norwegian missionary. Not because they did not want one, but because they could not find a candidate. The board of the committee discussed the situation, and concluded that there was no one suitable. Then a person knocked at the door, presented himself to the board, and told them that he was called to witness to the Jewish people. Rev. Ragnvald Gjessing was the answer to their prayers, and in some ways we may say that Caspari’s mission was complete.

The last time Caspari spoke publically outside the university was at the installment of Rev. Gjessing on October 13, 1891.²³ Gjessing studied and trained for a while at Institutum Iudaicum in Leipzig, and was now called by the committee to go to Galatz in Bessarabia (Romania). In his speech, Caspari emphasizes the “ordo salutis”—the order of salvation: “First, we have to convince Jews that they are lost because they are not able to obey God’s true commandments. We have to convince them that Moses himself, in whom they have put their trust, will accuse and condemn them. Then they will feel the need of a Savior, and we can proclaim that Jesus alone is their Savior and confirm it by referring to the Scriptures and the promises.”

On Monday April 18, 1892, during the week of Passover, Carl Paul Caspari went to be with the Lord. His friend, Gisle Johnson, was the only one who was admitted to visit him on his deathbed, and every time he saw Johnson, his face beamed and he laid his hand on Johnson’s head. Then Johnson, with tears flowing, shared the Word of God.²⁴

A Norwegian Hebrew Believer—Jew or Christian?

Caspari should actually never have come to Norway, at least not before 1851. The same year Caspari was born, Norway became independent and formed its own constitution, the second oldest in Europe. In this constitution, regarding the religious foundation of the state, it is said that Jews and Jesuits are not allowed to enter the country (§2). The noblemen wanted to protect Norway from a “Jewish invasion.” The paragraph about the Jews was cancelled in 1851, four years after Caspari came to Norway. He should have been refused admission at the border! But he came, and he was welcomed. How could that happen? He was baptized, and therefore no longer regarded as a Jew according to Norwegian jurisdiction. Do you see the similarities with today’s Israel? Or the shared understanding of Jewish believers in Jesus by the church and the synagogue?

However, even if Caspari himself was convinced in his confessional faith as an expression of loyalty to the Bible, he kept his Jewish identity and especially his concern for his own people.

²² Skarsaune, 111.

²³ *Missionsblad for Israel* 10/1891, 145ff.

²⁴ Odland, 107f.

We are thankful for his coming, for his contribution to the church, and for his committed service for his people. It is therefore proper to honor this remarkable scholar and mission leader as we celebrate his 200th birthday.

The Jews and the History of the World Christian Movement in the Work of Historian Lamin Sanneh

Judith Mendelsohn Rood, PhD
Biola University

Earlier this year, I was invited to a conference at the Overseas Ministries Studies Center to respond to the first section of Lamin Sanneh's autobiography, *Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African*.¹ I admit that I was not familiar with Professor Sanneh's work before receiving this assignment; I was delighted to discover that the entire corpus of his work is essential reading for Jewish believers.

Sanneh's memoir is a beautifully written conversion narrative, written by a Muslim Background Believer, for whom all of the social and cultural issues that conversion involves for Jews also apply. Although apostasy from Islam for Sanneh was not life-threatening, he, like many of us, left his familial and familiar cultural world and entered into another culture in order to follow Yeshua. For centuries, Jews had to give up their culture and their identities to be accepted as Christians.² Sanneh's work gives us great insight into his view of the universalizing imperialism of the ecclesiastical tradition in Christendom. He helps us to understand that language was the way that many local churches fought for their autonomy. In a sense, rabbinical Judaism mirrors this tendency, all theology aside. This tension between the universal and the particular reveals itself in the competing ecclesiologies within the Messianic movement today.

The second reason that the book is important is because it is a portal into Sanneh's life work: to reframe the way that we understand church history. I was surprised to discover that although Jewish history is not his academic focus, he presents the Jewish contribution as integral to Christian history in an entirely fresh way. As the leading voice of the new school of historiography called "The History of the World Christian Movement," Sanneh presents an expansive story combining world history, missions history, and church history. This new school of thought reintegrates the role of the Jewish people into the Big Story in a way that I had not before encountered, even in the works of pioneers such as Scott Latourette and Walter Kaiser. By integrating missions history with ecclesiastical and world history, Sanneh has made an immense contribution to our understanding of the role of the Jewish people in the church in world history at the highest level of historical analysis. His work on the history of the African church in the 20th century also helps us to better understand today's Messianic movement among the Jewish people as part of a worldwide indigenization process. Sanneh's memoir is his reflection on his life at the

¹ Paper presented at the Mission Leadership Forum, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, April 26, 2014. Response to Lamin Sanneh, *Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). All page numbers in parentheses are from this book.

² Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

culmination of a distinguished, path-breaking academic career, a career that has helped to return the Jewish people to the history of the world Christian movement, where they justly belong.

The third reason that Sanneh's book is of incalculable value is the light that it shines upon the modern phenomenon of Muslim conversions to Christianity. His analysis of the issue of cultural diffusion vs. cultural translation is the bedrock upon which Sanneh has built an entire edifice for revealing the mandate for cultural diversity and pluralism within the church. In this essay, we'll examine each of these three themes as they relate to Jewish evangelism and Messianic Judaism.

Professor Sanneh the Historian

A professor of history and missions who has taught African and Christian history at both Harvard and Yale, Sanneh is a Muslim Background Believer. As a student at the University of Edinburgh, he worked with Andrew Walls, a professor teaching the history of the missionary movement in Christian history.³ Together, Walls and Sanneh pioneered a new paradigm for studying Christian history, a paradigm that takes us well beyond the usual telling of the institutional and doctrinal history of the church, a paradigm they have called "The History of the World Christian Movement."⁴ As an academically trained historian, Sanneh acknowledges his debt to the great Will Durant, whom he quotes in one of his most recent books.⁵ This narrative builds upon the other recent turn in church history: treating the biblical canon as a single metanarrative: the Big Story, which focuses on the single covenant running through the Tanakh and the Brit Hadasha and into these, the "Last Days."⁶

Sanneh's work focused on the rise of indigenous churches in Africa in comparison to the spread of Islam on that continent. Sanneh's analysis centers upon the transmission of the faith through the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the indigenous vernaculars, ennobling and sacralizing them, redeeming them. His is a postcolonial view of the church in Africa, a bifocal view of the history of Western and Muslim imperialism and their impact upon local populations. He

³ Professor Walls deserves an article specifically about his own work. To learn more, I recommend Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997).

⁴ Dale T. Irvine and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, 2 volumes (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2012–13).

⁵ Sanneh writes, "There are worse ways to try to account for the current global Christian resurgence than to echo the sentiments of Will Durant in his massive, 11-volume, panoramic, unfocused study, *The Story of Civilization*. He showed how Christianity's new cultural idiom of creative synthesis was the key to the civilizational shift involved in eventually superseding pagan Europe. Durant's penetrating verdict is pertinent to an understanding of the contemporary phase of Christianity, in which issues of cross-cultural origin have reasserted themselves under the pressures of cross-cultural expansion and adaptation. In the Medieval West, Christian and non-Christian ideas and values were intermixed in a process of mutual transformation, Durant argued. He would thus resonate with the notion that to understand the changing face of Christianity today, we must forget our modern rationalism, our proud confidence in reason and science, our restless search after wealth and power and after an earthly kingdom. We must enter sympathetically into the mood of populations disillusioned with old assurances, as well as with the new call of the pursuits of secular preeminence. The new Christians are standing, as it were, between the shipwreck of the old order and the tarnished fruits of self-rule of the new, finding all the dreams of worldly utopia shattered by betrayal, war, vanity, anarchy, poverty, epidemics, and endemic hostility. They are seeking refuge in the justification of the righteous kingdom, flocking to the churches because the old fences of what used to be home have crumbled. They are inspired and comforted by the narratives of ancient scripture, throwing themselves upon the mercy and goodness of God and upon one another's charity. They are living in the reality of a fellowship established, a cause vindicated, a judgment fulfilled, and a hope rekindled. The dramatic response of compressed, preindustrial societies of the non-Western world to Christianity has opened a new chapter in the annals of religion." Lamin Sanneh and Joel Carpenter, eds., *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 222–3.

⁶ Mark R. Saucy, "Canon as Tradition: The New Covenant and the Hermeneutical Question," *Themelios* 36.2 (2011): 216–37, and "The People, the Land, and the Future of Israel: A Necessary Theme in Biblical Theology," unpublished paper, 2013, Biola University.

shows us how this interaction empowered local cultures to find their own voice and identity in God's household.

During the course of his distinguished academic career, Sanneh documented the ways that the indigenous churches in Africa asserted their identities in response to the foreigners who transmitted the gospel to them in the twentieth century. He does this in order to explain the explosive growth of Christianity in Africa in recent decades.

Sanneh's analysis is helpful for understanding the growth of the Messianic Jewish movement as well during this same period. It was not until after the Six Day War that the bold, evangelistic Messianic movement began. The Israeli victory in 1967 emboldened the Jewish people, giving them new confidence. The conquest of Judea and Samaria, Gaza and the Golan stimulated religious Zionists to resume an eschatological faith, a faith in the promise of a Messianic age. This, in turn, led to the rise of a new form of Christian Zionism, a political movement in support of Israel signaling support for the Jewish state. An argument can be made that, like the African churches, the Messianic movement is a post-colonial phenomenon representing the emergence of a culturally authentic indigenous Jesus movement. At a political level, Israel and the Zionist movement are not unlike the modern secular states and ideologies that have transformed Africa. However, Israel and Zionism cannot be viewed merely as secular because of the emergence of the Messianic movements (both rabbinical and evangelical), the evangelical Arab Christian movement, and the underground Isawiya movement throughout the Muslim world that have come in its wake.

Sanneh's work helps us as believers to understand that the Messianic movement is the key to understanding the spiritual power of Zionism in today's world, and precisely why that power is contested. Rooted in the Tanakh, the contemporary Messianic movement represents the growing recognition of Yeshua as the Messiah, the anointed King of Israel and the Sovereign Lord of the entire world. Sanneh's work helps us to understand the world-historical significance of the emergence of a new, ecumenical movement, beyond politics, that is transforming the Middle East as a result of the ongoing Jihad against Israel and the West.

Sanneh's first book, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (1990), represents a revolutionary application of missions history to world history. In it, Sanneh argues for the importance of the particular in the church age. His deep historical insight into the post-colonial era allows him to stand for the Jewish Jesus and the Jewish church in ways that no other analyst of the gospel and culture has done to my knowledge. The story that Sanneh tells in his first book begins with the story of the Jewish Christian missionary movement of the first century. In that chapter, entitled "The Birth of Mission: The Jewish-Gentile Frontier," he vindicates the importance of Jesus' specific humanity in what he calls "the radical pluralist dispensation"—the church age! At a time when Jewish intellectuals like Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and Natan Sharansky have been forced to special pleading for the Jewish right to be different, Sanneh brings a christological defense for Jewish particularism. This chapter demands a close reading, particularly his penetrating analysis of Paul and pluralism, which is the key to his entire oeuvre, and which I will treat below.

Lamin the Muslim Seeker

We are beginning to see more and more evidence documenting an underground Muslim Messianic movement today. Sanneh's autobiography is an important source of wisdom about what the Jewish and Muslim Messianic movements share and what they represent to believers everywhere.

Like many Jewish converts throughout history, Muslim converts have often been expected to become like the others in their churches, sacrificing their cultural identity to be accepted into the majority culture. And like Jewish converts, as a distinct minority within the church, they could never quite find acceptance and, instead, experienced suspicion and isolation. The social death that both

Muslim and Jewish converts experience when they cross the invisible boundary between communal authorities often leaves them outside the camp.

As a young Muslim in Gambia, Lamin's faith in God was shaped by his Qur'anic education. Most Muslims don't know Arabic, and so their belief is shaped by the memorization of an incomprehensible text that demands absolute faith in an entirely unknowable God. Since the strictest literalism governs the hermeneutics of the text, there is no room for interpretation. The underlying doctrine that justifies this treatment of the text is known as the doctrine of the Uncreated Qur'an. This development in Muslim theology occurred in the eighth and ninth centuries, as the religious authorities shaped the Muslim religion against Jewish and Christian traditions. The absolute, unique otherness of God, the singularity—*tawhid*—from Creation, makes him unknowable; therefore the revelation given to Muhammad, the Qur'an, like God, is also uncreated, co-existent with him, eternally beyond this world, but given to mankind in Arabic for the Arab people, making them a holy people, the people which will include all mankind, all worshipping God in the same language. And like God, the Qur'an itself is beyond comprehension, beyond reason. For this reason, it must be obeyed, literally. And because only an elite claims to understand the text, the people are at their mercy, for there is no legitimacy beyond the Qur'an in this form of Islam, the form of Islam that has swept through the Muslim world since the abolition of the caliphate in 1924.

This modern Islamist movement is the strictest of the historical traditions of Islamic interpretation. However, the doctrine of the uncreated Qur'an became axiomatic in all four Sunni schools of law, all of which forbid the translation of the Qur'an into other languages. The theological result of the "closing of the doors of *ijtihad*" (independent reason/striving to understand) in the 9th century has been a strict literalism with no hermeneutic governing the interpretation of the Qur'an; this became starkly clear only with the abolition of the caliphate, leaving the Qur'an as the only source of authority and consensus in the Muslim world. Before this, from the 9th century to the 20th, the Qur'an was always mediated ultimately by the caliph, who had at his disposal other sources of law that could ameliorate and restrain literalism and who had the authority to determine what the religious authorities taught. This allowed for the development of many forms of popular Islam, some of which were quite heterodox, particularly the Sufi, mystical tradition that emerged in the 11th century as a way to counterbalance the literalism and legalism of orthodox Islam.

In modern times, students of the Qur'an, like Lamin, must learn Arabic as a second language. As a student of Arabic myself, I learned that like the shaping of the hermeneutic tradition governing how we read the Qur'an, Arabic has its own ineffable grammatical and syntactical laws, and those laws have shaped the meaning of the very language itself. These laws must be studied and learned, for Classical Arabic was intentionally designed as a hedge against mass education and to filter Jewish and Christian ideas out of the texts which compose the single work we know today as the Qur'an. The literalist reading of the Qur'an shaped the rules of grammar of Classical Arabic, breaking its connections with the other antecedent Aramaic languages, including the language spoken by the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era. Arab Christians, like Arabic-speaking Jews, do not share the same Arabic language used by Muslims: the very differences between them mark their identities. Modern Standard Arabic represents an attempt to secularize the language, but it is an artificial construct that has thus far failed in its mission to achieve universal literacy in the Arab and Muslim worlds and to erase sectarian differences.⁷

⁷ Franck Salameh, *Language, Memory, and Identity in the Middle East: The Case for Lebanon* (Lanham, NY: Lexington, 2011).

Sanneh's language studies as a boy raised many questions about God and revelation, questions that he would pursue to their logical end as an established academic. Yet it was at that young age that the seeds of his future work were planted. He writes, "The idea of language as God's gift is odd in respect of the mother tongue, because the God in question was Islam's God, who shut the door on it. To be religious required listening to God in the revealed language, and that demoted the mother tongue to the religious black market of juju and nocturnal rituals" (67). In his world, diviners, Qur'an teachers, the thoughts of his best friends, and his growing interest in Western literature led him to question his relationship to God.

As he was getting ready to graduate, he realized that "the world lay before me like an open book, but because I didn't know how to decipher the script I came upon it none the wiser" (80). The outside world beckoned; the gifts that literacy had bestowed brought him to the verge of discovery: the world lay before him, unopened. He was anxious to unwrap its mysteries, to see where other people lived, to find the truth. However, he simply couldn't find any Christians willing to share their faith with him. Most Christians he encountered were nominally Christian, born to the religion, but most seemed quite disinterested in faith. Friendly though they may have been, their worldview was secular, with religion sequestered away, out of trouble.⁸

He struggled with the nagging question: Whence all the suffering? Was it all due to disobedience? He began to meditate on Jesus. "The picture of the cross-bearing Jesus trusting in God," obedient even as he suffered, remaining faithful to God, struck him. "If God accepted Jesus' suffering and failure, it would require us to judge him and God by a different rule, thus giving hope to suffering humanity; it was proof that God would not abandon us in the desolate experience of pain and loss. If a God-anointed Jesus suffered, as scripture claims, it would trump all theory; it would give us new knowledge about God and about us: God is in suffering to transform us. It would be crucial to affirm that truth"(91).

Sanneh understood, but he did not yet "submit" to this logic. He realized that he'd have to believe that Jesus was God, which he could not do.⁹ Still, Islam itself had opened the door: In a beautiful passage, he explains: "Islamic critical thought helped me make a distinction between an argument for argument's sake and one of substance. The *silsilah*, the chain, supporting an argument is more than a matter of elegance, the *sahih*, of its links; it depends on the substance, the *matn*, of what the chain conveys" (93).¹⁰

Sanneh had encountered truth, but his first thought was to retrench himself, to embrace Islam more fully, and to experiment a little with the nihilism of his Muslim friends. He never encountered Christians or missionaries who might have been able to answer some of his questions. He explains that missionaries had to be "[c]areful not to offend Muslims," so they, like the nominal

⁸ He writes, "It is worth thinking about the fact that, even without much exposure to Christians or Christianity, Muslims' negative impression of the religion should abound. Proximity did not seem to improve the impression, while familiarity appeared only to deepen it. . . . [I]f Europeans are nonbelievers, perhaps it is because Christianity fails as a religion. If the religion does not avert wild behavior, can it save?" (89). He felt "roused to do battle by the belligerent view that someone else's religion was my business, nay, was my mission, forsaking any conciliatory African ideals. The idea of Christians as Catholics and Protestants I found offensive. It didn't matter the difference between them—just the fact of it provoked me." He had reached the point where it was clear that it was not enough to be religious, it had to be at the expense of someone else's religion. He was comparing the faith he'd been taught and Christianity and found the latter wanting because, as al-Ghazali had taught him, its beliefs demonstrate impudence in the face of God and Islam (89).

⁹ This resonated with the author of this essay—I remember thinking these same thoughts as I considered the idea for the first time. In my case, history stood in the way of my accepting Christ.

¹⁰ This brought to mind my closest encounter with a Muslim intellect. In a gesture of huge importance to me, the *qadi* who was guiding me through my research in the Islamic Court Archives in Jerusalem generously wrote a note to me that read: "*Al-'ilm silatun bayn ahlihi.*" ("Knowledge is a link between its people"—the *'ulema*, which, by implication, included me. If only my male colleagues could be so generous!)

Christians he'd met, placed themselves on the margins, too far away for people like Lamin to find acceptance, community, accountability, and discipleship (95).¹¹

Sanneh rounds out this chapter by sharing stories about his encounters with Christians as he sought the answers to his questions, ending with his testimony.¹² At this point in his spiritual struggle, he was desperate for "trained and solid Christian instruction" (101). Still, he came to realize on his own that "there was a sure road to fellowship with God and I should take it without hesitation and without deviation." He heard, without hearing, a "solicitous whisper, a simple, clear call borne on the wings of infinite forbearance to answer the summons of life: Do not be afraid. Jesus surrendered to God. Won't you?" (100). When one recalls that he'd written earlier that his people believed that Satan whispers in response to human emotions, this passage is striking because Lamin realized that God can whisper too. He chose the word *dankeneya* to describe the "providential process that brings one to encounter the unshakeable truth." He had to "follow Jesus as the crucified and risen One" (102). He felt compelled to fall on his knees, pleading with Jesus to forgive him, to accept him. He had been led to Christ through the canon, he says, not through subjective feelings. He was born again.

The final chapter of part one of the autobiography, entitled, simply, "Challenged," is a reflection of what happened as a result of his conversion. The 1950s were very different from today. There was no jihad, and converts weren't hunted down and murdered. We do not read that his life was endangered, only that his friends were puzzled and surprised, although some kids did try to rough him up.¹³ He was totally unprepared for the fact that the church was not drawn to him—Christians simply did not know what to do with him. They welcomed him even as they turned him away, closing the door countless times, partially for fear of what might happen to them if they accepted him, and partially because they simply did not believe in conversion. Their response was

¹¹ In one of the most important passages of the book, he writes: "Missions represented an enlightened Christianity, too sophisticated for Africans to take in one stride, and yet too well endowed with material gifts not to share with Africans, such being God's wish. For Muslims, however, missions were the shield against defections from their ranks. Thus conceived, missions were allies of the colonial government's policy of support for Muslim institutions. Government provided subsidies for Muslim children attending Christian schools on the condition that they did not convert. It was an ironic way to do mission at all, but there they were, these consecrated men and women, leaving home to give their lives to the cause of promoting Muslims. It would have taken a quake of seismic proportions to shake this settled policy, as I would come to understand later. This three-cornered alliance of state, Islam, and mission would prefer that someone on my sort of quest disappear in a hole. I had no idea what I was digging myself into" (95).

¹² He discusses the Qur'anic account of Jesus' ascension, by which God intervened to spare Jesus shame and humiliation at the hands of his enemies. He sees the Qur'anic explanation as symbolic, and ultimately finds that it fails to subvert the historic fact of the crucifixion. Rather, to him, it seemed to "concede the gravity" of the historical fact. He writes, "This is where the empty tomb juts in to solidify the idea that Jesus' embodiment of death and resurrection was a necessary and designated landmark of the God of history" (99). Sanneh grappled with the implications of his own need for mercy, and for assuming responsibility for the tragedy of Jesus' sacrifice, and found that he was struggling personally with God, his God. He found that "it would be better to be a forgiven enemy of Jesus . . . than to be his unforgiving defender" (100). Sanneh's testimony rings true. He writes, "My blindness instigated my enmity and placed my guilt before me as a barrier. I had to lay down my arms of resistance and give up any thought that I had a heart large enough to contain the anguish of Jesus. Instead I needed to put myself into the hands of God and ask forgiveness . . ." (100).

¹³ He explained to the leader of a group of young boys who were chasing and threatening him with sticks and stones that he was joining the church "not because I was abandoning Islam, but because I had learned as a Muslim to honor God, and now I wanted to love God. Islam had not repelled me; only the Gospel had attracted me. In surrendering and giving myself to this God, I was also acknowledging the goodness and kindness of others was so many material tokens of God's unfathomable and unstinting generosity. . . . My respect and appreciation of Muslim friends had never been more heartfelt, and I pledged to them my undying loyalty" (103). He writes, "I was not abandoning faith. Quite the contrary, I had embraced Jesus because I could not keep him down in my thoughts of honoring God" (104). God was the God of his youth, only now he had a new understanding of who God really is, in all his fullness.

both political and ecclesiastical. Sanneh writes, “Christianity has the status of a lower caste in Muslim lands” (105). This is the very meaning of *dhimmitude*. He astutely observes that the free mission education given to Muslim children served “the calculated purpose of granting Muslim demands, and Muslim appreciation for that in turn committed the churches to maintain their schools for the benefit of Muslims” (106).¹⁴ Despite these challenges, Lamin stalwartly chose to follow the way of the cross, fighting his “prejudice against caste Christianity” (107).

He trotted between Methodists and Catholics, trying to find a community that would take him in, but he found himself at the very margins of Christianity, in ecclesiastical limbo. Providentially a new friend invited him to Germany, where he would have his first experiences in Christendom. In anticipation of that trip, he asked his Methodist minister to baptize him. Reluctantly, he agreed, and “setting aside his scruples” he baptized the young African believer. Despite a mixture of feelings, Lamin recalls feeling “relief and a sense of unspeakable joy and inner peace. I knew without a shred of doubt that I had answered the call of the One who, with sovereign freedom, summons us for the march of life” (112). He felt renewed and challenged by his baptism, because it signified his new identity with “the family of God’s people transcending all barriers of space and time.” He found his idea of truth to be vindicated by his acceptance in this new community. His catechism surfaced hermeneutical differences between his views and those of liberal Christianity. He was refused a first Communion, so he improvised by singing a hymn by Charles Wesley. This helped him to prepare for his first overseas journey, a journey that validated both his quest and the uncomfortable recognition that something had gone seriously awry in Christendom.

He returned to West Africa determined to “do everything in [his] power to pursue the truth of [his] encounter with the Jesus of history and faith rather than allow the ground to be taken out from under [him].” Resolved to study what interested him most— religion— he decided to return to school. In quick order he took his qualifying exams, hoping at first to enroll in an elite British university. Instead, he was offered an opportunity to apply to a new American program, and he decided to go for it. His Methodist minister couldn’t be bothered to attend his going-away party.

Sanneh not only analyzes the reasons for this turning inward, but points out the spiritual deprivation that is its consequence. In other parts of the book, Sanneh shows us that it was not only Islam that forced the church to turn inward, but the dynamics of Western Christianity itself; this turning-inwardness happened not only in the margin of distant colonial Africa, but in Christendom’s very heart. This closing-inward effectively shut Sanneh out of the church for decades, a very common experience for converts from non-Christian backgrounds to Christianity. Sanneh writes, “The consternation that met me on my way to joining the church was a measure of the symbolic distance I had to travel from the Axis Mundi of my Muslim culture and history to the Christian faith—which turned out to have its own margins to offer” (19–20). This is the most important theme of the book, and the one that resonates most with my own experience, along with his joyous use of the term homecoming “as a metaphor for pilgrimage in the sense of ‘coming home’ to a faith in God in the way that has subsequently shaped my life and work, both personal and professional” (20).

¹⁴ “Freedom of religion was a euphemism for a prickly status quo, code for observing the rule of causing no offense to Muslims.” “[O]n the whole, the churches were required to collaborate with Muslims in maintaining the sealed borders with Islam, and even to turn a blind eye to Christians crossing over. The border crossing with Islam was a one-way street, with Christian guards on sentinel duty—guarding their entrance, not their exit” (106).

Lamin, Our Brother in Christ

Sanneh's pioneering work in world history has deepened our understanding of the unique contribution of Jewish missionaries to the global reach of Christianity. Normally, when one reads about Jewish-Christian relations, it is the Jews' resistance to the gospel that is the underlying theme. Instead, Sanneh's work emphasizes Jewish engagement with the cultures of the world. In contrast to Islam, he found the Jewish willingness to translate their scriptures into the languages of the peoples amongst whom they lived an embodiment of their service to the nations.

This realization was transformative. Rather than insisting on Hebrew as the only language suitable for the divine, the Jewish community had been translating from Hebrew to Aramaic and Greek for centuries before Christ, which is the word the Greek-speaking Hellenized Jews chose to translate the word *Mashiach* (Messiah). The Jewish apostles, who came from the multicultural Hellenistic Jewish world of the Roman Empire, embraced the idea that translation was itself an important work of faith (a mitzvah—a good deed!).

Rather than preach an esoteric faith, the Jews embraced a living faith based upon reason. The Torah was to be understood, read, studied, discussed, debated, owned by the Jewish people—all of them. Jews aimed at literacy, and translation was a means to ensure that this literacy would be kept alive even as the vernacular languages shifted.¹⁵

It's common to mark Pentecost as the beginning of the church age, but Sanneh does not do so only for the way that it tells of the bringing together of Jews from all the civilized regions of the world to receive the gospel. Sanneh reinterprets the miracle at Pentecost, emphasizing that it demonstrated divine authority to translate the Tanakh into the vernacular languages of the nations, allowing Jewish believers to share the gospel with everybody. What a wonderful insight into that miracle! Sanneh's lifelong engagement with the God of Israel led him to recognize the fact that God endowed the Jewish people with unique ability to assimilate into every culture in order to witness to their faith in the places God had scattered them.

In this context, it is Sanneh's treatment of Paul and his Jewish heritage that is so remarkable. He writes empathetically about Paul, the Jewish apostle to the nations:

The emergence of the Gentile church produced profound theological repercussions, which it fell to Paul to try to enunciate and systematize. He did so in relation to what lay at hand, namely, the Jewish religious heritage of which he was a part. He came to be in radical tension with his own cultural roots, not because those roots were unsound, but because the Gentile breakthrough had cast a shadow over any claims for cultural absolutism, Jewish or other. The anti-Semitic connotations that we have read into Paul are ideas thrust upon the text in disregard of the apostle's intentions.¹⁶

"Through the eyes of the Gentile church," Sanneh explains, "Paul encountered an unsettling reality about the seriousness of God's irrevocable design to draw all people to the divine."

The zealot discovered on the Damascus road that a new age had been inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus, a discovery that "shattered his confidence in the notion of cultural

¹⁵ The story of Jewish education of girls would be a digression; I think it's fair to say that the New Testament evidence supports the idea that Jewish women were expected to be able to read and write, and that that value was lost in both the Christian and Jewish worlds, much to the detriment of both. Perhaps it was pagan influence that led to the degradation of the status of women in both traditions, but that's another story.

¹⁶ Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 24.

exclusiveness” that had been embodied by the rules governing society in the world of Second Temple Judaism. Sanneh, writing from his own postcolonial vantage point, observes that

encountering the reality of God beyond the inherited terms of one’s own culture reduces reliance on that culture as a universal normative pattern. A fresh standard of discernment is introduced by which the gospel is unscrambled from one cultural yoke in order to take firm hold in a different culture. Contrary to much of the prevailing wisdom . . . mission implies not so much a judgment on the cultural heritage of the convert (although in time the gospel will bring that judgment) as on the missionary.¹⁷

Yet even here Lamin’s generosity glows. He writes,

Most of the great missionary pioneers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became uncompromising advocates of the cross-cultural acclimatization of Christianity, a step that required them to concede the centrality of indigenous sources and materials. Men and women who were never distinguished as explicit champions of their own culture found the attractions of another irresistible, and as a consequence became promoters of the lore and wisdom of other people. Examples abound in our own age of missionaries who by dint of sheer application acquired the necessary equipment for penetrating and exploring the veins of truth and beauty to be found in other cultures. Whatever their motive, such missionaries were laying the foundations of indigenous revitalization to which the Christian cause would be tied.¹⁸

Ironically, Messianic Jews are apostles to the Jewish community, to which they belong, while at the same time, to which they relate prophetically. And here’s the point Sanneh wants to make, bringing this very conundrum back to Paul.

The anti-Western strictures of modern missionaries would compare with Paul’s self-critical stance toward his own culture, for in both cases the culture of the message-bearer necessarily acquired a peripheral status once the step was taken to engage another culture seriously. It is, therefore, a profound misunderstanding of Paul’s words to construe them as a fixed, permanent repudiation of Judaism.¹⁹

Indeed, Paul understood the revolutionary breakthrough of the assurance to the Gentiles, for it

raised up a troubling fact, for trust in the channels through which the law was movingly enshrined must now be so massively drained of the element of exclusivity as to create a permanent breach. Through that breach Paul was confronted with the evidence of his eyes concerning God’s gracious dealings with the Gentiles. The pagans, too, had a place in the “plan of salvation.”²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 26.

Sanneh admits, “For all of us pluralism can be a rock of stumbling, but for God it is the cornerstone of the universal design.”²¹ Sanneh the historian points us to the fact of “the enormous diversity and pluralism of primitive Christianity, which a later age abandoned.”²² Sanneh concludes his meditation on Paul and pluralism by pointing out that the apostle’s

profound unease with a certain narrow interpretation of Israel’s covenant with God stems from an awakened mistrust of human achievement as a substitute for the truth, and that unease is not moderated when directed to his Gentile listeners. Thus he warns them about the grave consequences of reliance on their own merits, a warning that was painfully grounded in his own experience. “Note then the kindness and the severity of God,” he writes to the Gentile church . . . (Rom 11:22). . . . The challenge for the Gentile church, then as now, was to be centered in the “kindness of God,” not in the self-estimation that they constituted normative rule for other people. . . . It was the experience of the Gentile church that brought Paul to the radical edges of his own tradition. His religious sentiments were progressively molded by the exposure to the Gentile movement.²³

Professor Sanneh’s work helps us to see the Messianic movement in the context of world history, reminding us that not only was our people the instrument through which God worked in biblical times by providing the patriarchs, the law, and the scriptures, but that he has continued to use us for his purposes to preserve the Tanakh and Torah through translation and our abiding presence in his church. Only through a robust acceptance of Jewish particularity as individuals and as a nation will we all, Jews and Gentiles, bow to Christ, our King, the Messiah of the Jewish people and all nations.

Professor Judith Mendelsohn Rood has a PhD in modern Middle Eastern history from the University of Chicago (1993). Her specialization is the Muslim community in Jerusalem during the Ottoman period. She is especially interested in the problem of Islamic law and relations between Muslims, Christians, and Jews from a historical perspective. Rood was the first woman permitted to undertake research in the Islamic Archives in Jerusalem, and the first American since 1967 to do so. She teaches courses in world civilizations, the history of the Middle East and Islam, Jewish and Israeli history, the Arab-Israel conflict, and Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations. judith.rood@biola.edu

²¹ Ibid., 27.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 28.

The Case for Enlargement Theology¹

Rev. Alex Jacob

Introduction

Theology at its best should be about faith seeking understanding. Such understanding should then inspire and inform good ministry practice. Sadly, in the complex and highly charged world of contemporary Jewish-Christian relations, many activity and ministry endeavors seem to lack any clear theological underpinning and appropriate reflection. For some there seems to be an eager pragmatic desire to engage with a particular ministry objective, without rooting this in a coherent and biblically faithful theological model. My conviction is that without such a model any mission work—despite good intentions, personal integrity, enthusiasm, and prayerfulness—will be of limited value to the kingdom.

One area of significant encouragement for those of us involved in ministries such as CMJ is the increased importance given to Jewish-Christian studies in educational, academic, and ministerial contexts. The following quote from Edward Kessler gives a flavor of this new level of importance:

The serious study of Judaism as a living faith, and its relationship with Christianity today is an essential non-marginal part of Christian formation today.²

With regard to studying the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, I think there would be wide-ranging agreement that any serious study should include a proper engagement with the Holocaust (*Shoah*), Zionism, a shared textual tradition and related hermeneutical issues, the Jewish roots of Christianity, and the ongoing interface between rabbinical Judaism and Christianity. From a CMJ perspective, I would like to add to any syllabus an exploration of Messianic Judaism and the significance of pilgrimage within Jewish and Christian spirituality.

The traditional framework for such study tended to see Judaism as the “mother” (or “older brother”) religion and Christianity as the “daughter” (or “younger brother”), albeit a somewhat (from normative Jewish eyes) errant one. The “mother religion” is rooted in two key revelatory events, namely, the covenantal call of Abraham and the Exodus event with the giving of Torah. The mother and daughter differ in their evaluation of a third revelatory event, namely the person and work of Jesus Christ. Differences continue in regard to how this third event relates to the first two.

I think there is much value in this traditional framework, yet I find the more modern context which emphasizes the ongoing mutual reformulation and development of both Judaism and Christian as insightful. For example, it is understood that the Talmud was written (codified) much

¹ This paper is based on an edited recording of a lecture by the author to the Manchester Cathedral Theological Society. The lecture took place on January 22, 2013. It is strongly recommended that if the reader wants to explore further issues around “Enlargement Theology,” the reader should see Alex Jacob, *The Case for Enlargement Theology* (Walden, Great Britain: Glory to Glory Publications, 2010).

² Dr. Edward Kessler, the Hugo Gryn Memorial Lecture, 1999.

later than, and in some ways in response to, the New Testament writings. It is more helpful, therefore, not to speak of a mother/daughter or older/younger brother relationship, but of twin siblings who inhabit together the space given to the outworking of the promises and purposes rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Introducing and Defining Two Key Theological Terms

In attempting to place the work of CMJ in a coherent and biblically faithful theological model, I am aware of the need to define key terms. The first term is “replacement theology,” also known as supersessionism.³ Replacement theology is the outworking of the belief that the new covenant replaces or supersedes the old covenant given to the Jewish people. Within this theological model the church replaces Israel within God’s purposes. The promises God gave to Israel are now either dead or transferred to the church.

Replacement theology severs the church from her Jewish roots, and consequently greater emphasis is placed by supporters of this theology on issues within the ministry of Jesus that appear to show discontinuity rather than continuity with the Jewish biblical narrative. In exploring replacement theology it is worth noting that there is a range of nuanced positions which exist under this wide umbrella term. R. Kendall Soulen⁴ helpfully identifies three such positions: economic, punitive, and structural replacement theologies.

Replacement theology, especially in its more punitive forms, created an atmosphere in which Jewish people were often seen as the “curse bearers” or “Christ killers.” This polemic, which began initially in a mainly internal Jewish context, gradually became more defined as conflict increased between a largely Gentile church and a remaining/developing rabbinic Jewish community. The historian Jules Isaac sums up such polemic with the overarching and chilling phrase “the teaching of contempt.”⁵

The momentum for developing a replacement theology was fuelled by the largely Gentile church needing to define herself against continuing Jewish groups and some “Judaizing tendencies”⁶ within the church. This self-defining took the form of seeing the church as the “new Israel,” the “true Israel,” and the “only Israel” of God. In this emerging replacement mindset the Jewish “no” to Jesus is seen as having no purpose apart from inviting the judgment of God (despite the clear teaching in Romans 9–11). Events such as the destruction of the temple and the subsequent exile from Jerusalem are therefore easily interpreted as confirming signs that such appropriate judgment is taking place. Such a view was promoted by numerous church leaders; one such example is found in the writings of Origen, who states:

We may thus assert in utter confidence that the Jews will not return to their earlier situation, for they have committed the most abominable of crimes in forming this conspiracy against the Savior of the human race. Hence the city where Jesus suffered was necessarily destroyed. The Jewish nation was driven from its country, and another people were called to this blessed election. But not only was Jerusalem destroyed and Israel sent into exile for their crimes, but the divine election was revoked and they are destined to stand in perpetual opposition to God.⁷

³ From the Latin, to take the seat/place rightly belonging to another.

⁴ R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 181.

⁵ Jules Isaac, *Jesus and Israel* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

⁶ Such tendencies could be seen as the seeds of Ebionite theology.

⁷ The sermons of Origen, cited in many sources of ante-Nicene Christian literature.

The second term is “two-covenant theology,” also known as dual-covenant theology. Two-covenant theology is the outworking of the belief that God deals with Jews and Gentiles in differing ways. Jewish people are in a right relationship with God through their election and their faithfulness to the covenantal relationship displayed in God’s dealings with Abraham and Moses. Such a covenantal relationship has not, and never will be, revoked. However, a new way is opened up for Gentiles to enter into a right relationship with God through the person and work of Jesus Christ. This way of Jesus (the new covenant) works in harmony and alongside the Jewish covenants within God’s overall redemptive purposes.

The first essential building block of two-covenant theology can be traced back on the rabbinical Jewish side to the understanding that the covenant relationship between Jewish people and God is inherently pluralist. This means that there remains the possibility of other covenants and other religious paths. One must not, it is argued, confuse absoluteness with universality. Such an understanding was strongly advanced in the writings of Franz Rosenzweig⁸ and taken further in the writings of many Jewish and Christian theologians.⁹

Rosenzweig advocated the idea that each Jew has a unique “life hidden in God,” and God will sustain and bless this life eternally. In his own spiritual searching, which included a major engagement with the claims of Christianity, his conclusion reflects his two covenant convictions; as he states:

Shall I become converted, I who have been chosen? After prolonged and rigorous self examination I will remain a Jew.¹⁰

Rejecting and Reforming Theological Terms

From my engagement with replacement theology and two-covenant theology, I see major faults and core misunderstandings in both. In simple terms, such theologies do not stand in the light of biblical truth. Such theologies also undermine Jewish-Christian realities and especially the role of Jewish believers in Jesus/Messianic Jews. The consequence of such undermining is that an impasse exists within many areas of Jewish-Christian relations from the replacement side, which severs God’s ongoing purposes for Israel and potentially fuels anti-Semitic attitudes within the church. From the two covenant side, there is a strong (and often well-intentioned) dialogue agenda which neatly, but inappropriately, separates Israel and the church and negates any need for evangelism by the church toward Jewish people.

In light of the shortcomings of both replacement and two covenant theologies, there is a need for a theological model which is free from the presuppositions and inherent distortions of such theologies. Only then can the true inheritance and the God-given destiny of Jews and Gentiles be fully explored, applied, and celebrated.

How then does one move toward such a theology? For me, it must begin with a faithful engagement with the Bible. Secondly, it must also take seriously the role of Jewish believers in Jesus/Messianic Jews, a role which has been consistently ignored or considered at best irrelevant or at worst deliberately deceptive by many engaged in contemporary Jewish-Christian theological study.

⁸ See his book *The Star of Redemption* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

⁹ See the writings of Herberg, Schwartzchild, Dorff, Buber, Sacks, Berger, Parkes, Van Buren, Cracknell, Brearley, etc.

¹⁰ Franz Rosenzweig, quoted by N. Glatzer in *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1958), 163.

Enlargement Theology

My own research and reflection have led me to be an advocate for what I call “enlargement theology.”¹¹ This theology is rooted in the biblical text. I particularly focused on Romans 9–11, for this text is key to understanding so much of Christian theology within the area of Jewish-Christian relations today. This should not surprise us, as we recognize that Romans was written by a Jewish man to an emerging faith community of Jews and Gentiles, a diverse community placed in the very center of the Roman Empire and wrestling with issues of gospel truth, identity, mission, and unity.

At the heart of Romans are core questions from a Jewish perspective: How can I see the Holy One of God and be saved?¹² How can I experience the righteousness which is declared to Israel by the prophet Habakkuk?¹³ And how can Gentiles respond to God’s grace and share fully in the call and gifts of Israel? These core questions are addressed in a rhetorical and systematic way from the Jewish scriptures and from the experiences of a man transformed by the indwelling of the Spirit of the Messiah.

As I studied Romans 9–11¹⁴ and attempted to interpret and apply the text in the light of a largely sympathetic engagement with the Messianic Jewish movement, I became convinced that a faithful reading of the text leads to the following five convictions: Firstly, Romans 9–11 is an integral part of the proclamation of the “gospel of God” as outlined in Romans. Secondly, Paul shows an unswerving passion for and commitment to Israel. Thirdly, Paul shows a clear rejection of ideas which could lead to the development of two-covenant theology. Fourthly, Paul shows a clear rejection of ideas which could lead to the development of replacement theology. Fifthly, Paul shows that God’s purposes are being worked out through a threefold understanding of “God’s people,” which includes the continuing election of the ethnic Jewish community, Jewish believers in Jesus, and the church.

Enlargement theology develops out of my convictions from the text. It is not a complete theological system and it certainly does not promote one particular eschatological view. However, hopefully it will provide a way forward from the impasse in many areas of Jewish-Christian relations and takes seriously the contribution of the modern Messianic Jewish movement. At the heart of my promotion of enlargement theology are five tenets:

- God’s covenantal relationship with the Jewish people is eternal, yet it is not static.
- Gentiles are brought fully into God’s covenantal relationship through the enlargement of covenantal relationships and not by replacement or suspension. This enlargement is through the person and work of Jesus.
- This enlarged (new) covenant needs to be embraced by all people, both Jews and Gentiles. This is done by responding in faith/trust to the person and work of Jesus. Therefore it is vital that the message of the gospel is shared appropriately with both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 1:16).

¹¹ Enlargement theology is my own term. I am not aware of it having been used by others, but I think the terms “olive tree theology” (David Stern) and “promise theology” (Walter Kaiser) convey and explore similar core values. I am also aware of terms such as “fulfillment theology” and “completion theology,” yet while these terms may offer helpful insight, I suspect they imply a degree of closure which may be unhelpful.

¹² I think Paul clearly had in mind Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 64:5.

¹³ Habakkuk 2:4.

¹⁴ Within my studies I have been greatly helped by many skilled commentators and Bible teachers. I found the following commentators particularly helpful to my own thinking: Robert Badenas, C. E. B Cranfield, James Dunn, Anthony Guerra, Richard Harvey, Dan Juster, Earnst Kasemann, Walter Riggans, Samuel Sandmel, Joseph Shulam, David Stern, and John Ziesler.

- The ongoing purposes of God are being worked out through three different, yet mutually inter-connected, communities of God's people.
- God is faithfully expressed within Trinitarian models and this has a creative link to the three different, yet mutually inter-connected, communities of God's people.

Outworking of Enlargement Theology

As one seeks to apply these tenets in the ebb and flow of ministry among Jewish people there are a number of activities which need to be promoted and treasured. Firstly, a "yes" to Jewish-focused evangelism. A theology rooted in the New Testament demands a mission to the Jewish people. There are no theological or ethical objections which should undermine a mission outreach focused upon primarily (but not exclusively) Jewish people, as long as the mission is carried out in a way which is sensitive and is rooted in God's ongoing loving purposes for Jewish people.¹⁵ This mission ideally should include the witness of both Jewish and Gentile believers working together.

Secondly, a "yes" to recognizing, supporting, and celebrating the contribution of Messianic Jewish believers. It is here that we come face-to-face with the challenge of holding together unity within diversity. The question of how the emerging Messianic Jewish movement in Israel and beyond should relate to the wider ecclesia is indeed a complex one¹⁶ and beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, enlargement theology would argue strongly that in all areas of Jewish-Christian dialogue and study, the input of Messianic Jews should be welcomed, respected, and properly tested. Messianic Jewish contributions should not be regarded as ill-fitting pieces, not properly Jewish nor Christian, but rather as helpful pieces that can contribute significantly to helping all see the bigger picture of God's purposes for Israel, the church, and all of creation.

Thirdly, a "yes" to supporting the importance of the restoration of Jewish people to the land of Israel. This restoration is part of God's bigger redemptive purpose. I understand that the narrative about the land has within it six important elements:

- The promise/gift of the land to Abraham (and the subsequent times of exile and return) is an essential part of God's covenantal relationship with Israel/Jewish people.
- Jesus was born in the land of Israel to a Jewish family. This is part of the particularity of the incarnation.
- Faithful pilgrims have come to the land to honor and remember specific events at specific places.
- The ongoing witness of indigenous Christians in the land.
- The modern day restoration of Israel as a nation.
- Jesus will return to the land.

Fourthly, as the church welcomes, respects, learns from, and tests the input from the Messianic Jewish movement, there is placed upon the wider church a Spirit-inspired responsibility to be open to the necessary reforming and renewing which may well flow from such engagement with the

¹⁵ This would include affirming that God's character is verifiable in and through history. For example, the modern day ingathering of Jewish people to the land of Israel is a fulfillment of God's ongoing love for Israel and his wider redemptive purposes for all people. Within enlargement theology, the restoration of Israel as a nation has a distinctive role in the ongoing purposes of God. There should flow from the church strong support for Israel and an equal commitment to seek justice and *shalom* for Israel, the Palestinian people, and all groups.

¹⁶ I have briefly explored some of these issues in a recent CMJ study paper, "Root and Branch? Exploring relationship models between the Messianic Jewish Movement and the wider Church community." This and other papers are free to download from www.cmj.org.uk/home/oprp [accessed January 7, 2014].

Messianic Jewish movement. For the Messianic Jewish movement should not be reduced to an important work of simply grafting back some of the original branches, but should also be seen as having a key part to play in the ongoing work of helping restore the wider church to her Jewish biblical roots.

Conclusion

In briefly offering the case for enlargement theology, I am aware that I am opening up many questions. I am also aware that in my own thinking there is much which is speculative¹⁷ and that it is very much a work in progress. However, I hope the term enlargement theology may prove helpful, especially to mission practitioners. I hope it will encourage some readers and stimulate further study and reflection. I look forward to your comments, challenges, and insights.

Alex Jacob is a minister of the United Reformed Church and is the chief executive officer of the Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ).¹⁸ He holds an MA degree from Anglia Ruskin University and an MPhil degree from the University of Nottingham. He is currently writing an evangelism course to help church communities reach out to Jewish people. alexj@cmj.org.uk

¹⁷ For example, the fifth tenet of enlargement theology, namely how the threefold people of God relates to the threefold (Trinitarian) understanding of the personhood of God, is very much in an embryonic stage.

¹⁸ The Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ) was formed in 1809 as the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Jewish People. It is now a voluntary mission society within the Church of England with branches in many nations, including significant works in the UK, USA, and Israel.

Creeds and Theology: Expressing the Jewish Context

Paul Morris
Christian Witness to Israel, UK

Introduction

Can a Christian creed not be Jewish? By definition it is expressing truths contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, all written by Jews. It has to be Jewish, though to some ears it may not sound Jewish, because it lacks the religious terminology more familiar within Jewish culture. My aim is to examine how well a few familiar Christian creeds express the Jewish context, which means asking the question: Do they express the Jewish historical and covenantal context of revelation? This is not merely an academic exercise, for it has everything to do with Gentile Christian humility and provoking Israel to jealousy.

Why have creeds been written?¹ Some free spirits like to think it is a fleshly activity to write creeds and subscribe to them—the Scriptures are their creed—but creeds have biblical precedent. As Paul came to the end of his ministry, conscious of the dangers of error, he wrote a brief creedal statement in 1 Timothy 3:16: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” And 4:1 shows why he wrote it: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith . . .”

Here are some of the reasons why creedal statements have been written since then:

4. To enable churches to test a profession of faith for admission to membership
5. To define the primary doctrines, clearly taught in Scripture, which all believers should agree upon
6. To define what the Scriptures teach on all doctrines relevant to church life and order
7. To define truth so as to refute and exclude particular errors
8. To provide a non-church basis for fellowship, service, study, etc.
9. To provide a teaching tool
10. To draw attention to neglected truths
11. For an apologetic purpose

The shortest is “Messiah Jesus is Lord,” and the longest is, probably, the Westminster Confession of Faith (UK, 1647).

I hope the list above underlines that this is no theoretical exercise. If the Jewish context is omitted from creeds, or is inadequately expressed, then the formulae which guide the teaching of the churches, mostly made up of Gentile believers, will ensure an ongoing ignorance of, or insensitivity to, Jewish people. It will also make it more difficult to confront error and imbalance.

¹ I am using the term “creed” for the sake of brevity; it takes less space than terms like “statement of faith” or “doctrinal statement.”

Contextualization and Contextual Theology

From almost day one the gospel has been contextualized—Paul preaching to Gentiles in Athens is not the same as Paul preaching to Jews in Antioch. Christians have been working at it ever since, with varying degrees of success. And contextualizing the gospel is not only a matter of its presentation but also of its theological formulation. Hesselgrave has put it this way:

[C]ontextualization can be thought of as an attempt to communicate the message of the . . . will of God in a way . . . that is meaningful to respondents in their . . . contexts. It . . . has to do with theologizing; Bible translation; . . . evangelism; Christian instruction; church planting etc.²

Creeds try to be more or less timeless in their expression, and in many cases most of their content is timeless, but no statement can fully divest itself of the cultural context in which it was written; nor should it wish to, because the reason for writing it, the time, the place, and the circumstances will affect the choice of doctrines expressed and the terminology used. This can be seen in a simple way by comparing the statement of the World Evangelical Alliance with that of SIM (Sudan Interior Mission); you soon notice that their categories are very similar except for this extra one in SIM's:

The Spirit World

The holy angels are personal spirit beings who glorify God, serve Him, and minister to His people. Satan is a spiritual being who was created by God but fell through sin. He, along with other evil spirits, is the enemy of God and humanity, has been defeated by the work of Christ, is subject to God's authority and faces eternal condemnation.

Why is this addition present? It's all a matter of context; they have a greater awareness of the spirit world within their cultural context and feel the need to express it theologically.

The entire context of the gospel is God's dealing with Israel over an extended period and it ought to come through in creeds. To use the familiar theological terms, we might say that we want to see more biblical theology in creeds, which tend to be systematic theology.

A Look at the Apostles' Creed

Most people know this creed and some recite it every Sunday, but how does it fare at expressing the Jewish historical and covenantal context of revelation? Here is the familiar text:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son our Lord.
He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,

² Michael Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

and sits at the right hand of the Father.
From there he will come again
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

It is called the Apostles' Creed because, as the story goes, each of the 12 wrote a part of it on the Day of Pentecost. There is no external evidence for that, and it sounds highly unlikely, but what internal evidence tells us it could not be true, even though there is nothing in it which is contrary to apostolic doctrine?

The best way to answer this is to consider some apostolic formulations from the New Testament, which deliberately summarize essential doctrines, and note if any of those doctrines are missing from the Apostles' Creed. I have grouped them according to what has been omitted:

“. . . concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom 1:3).

"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel" (2 Tim 2:8).

What is missing? That Messiah is of the seed of David.

". . . which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Rom 1:2).

". . . but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God" (Rom 16:26).

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets" (Heb 1:1).

What is missing? The awareness that the persons and events described are part of a history, particularly: promises, prophecies, and people (fathers).

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant . . ." (Heb 13:20).

What is missing? God as a covenant God.

It is really unthinkable that any of the 12 apostles would have omitted such truths from any statement, however brief. On internal evidence alone we can conclude that the Apostles' Creed was not written by them, and that it seriously fails to express the Jewish historical and covenantal context of revelation. Its context was Gentile (probably written in the fifth century, in Italy) and it shows, to the point of missing out those Jewish aspects which the apostles put in their summary statements. This does not mean it contains erroneous statements, it simply means it is a piece of Gentile contextual theology which has gone too far in that it has omitted essential information which the apostles included.

How might it look if we tried to incorporate the missing truths (in italics) with minimal alteration? Here is a suggestion:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
Covenant God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
I believe in *Messiah* Jesus,
his only Son our Lord;
Mediator of the New Covenant,
who came according to promise.
He was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born *in the line of David* of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead,
and on the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
From there he will come again
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Words for All Creeds

The changes suggested for the Apostles' Creed are minimal but, depending on the scope and length of a church's creed, there may be room for more editing than the above to bring in the Jewish context. Below are some of the categories which might be considered:

- The OT context of the message of salvation in Messiah Jesus (God is one; the patriarchs; the covenant with Israel; promises of Scripture; the Mosaic sacrifices; Jew and Gentile)
- Jesus in Jewish context (seed of David; mediator of the new covenant; obeyed the law of Moses and bore its curse)
- Authority (Scripture, not men's traditions)
- The place of the law in the believer's life
- Israel and the church (the ongoing distinction)
- Israel (national hopes—material and spiritual; promised land; millennium)

Longer creeds often do deal with some of these areas of concern but they usually do not develop an Israelology (to borrow Arnold Fruchtenbaum's term). In such creeds Israel is more a fulfilled entity than one being fulfilled. Israel and fulfillment are described using the past tense, not the present continuous.

My concern in writing is to encourage readers of *Mishkan* to have their churches edit their creeds to bring in the Jewish context where it is neglected. Someone may be thinking, "Why bother? Who reads all these creeds anyway?" Well, I am sure some do. Creeds are usually used in connection with becoming a church member or affirming faith at the Lord's Supper or an annual general meeting, and many churches ask their ministers to reaffirm their adherence to their creed

annually. If the Jewish context is not expressed, then, by default, there is a tendency to overlook God's ongoing engagement with Israel; if it is expressed then the contrary is much more likely. Expressing the Jewish context in church creeds will be edifying for churches, encourage mission to Jews, and stimulate churches to aim at better relations with the wider Jewish community. To provoke some thought on the issue I will make some suggestions for two church creeds, that of the Southern Baptists in the USA and the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches in the UK. My suggestions are not a rewrite but stay as much as possible within the existing wording. Neither of these is extensive but might be described as creeds which summarize the essentials. For the sake of brevity I have only included the sections which I have edited. Full versions of these statements can be found at www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp and www.fiec.org.uk/about-us/beliefs.

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches in the UK

1. GOD

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator, the Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

3. THE HUMAN RACE

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women, ***Jew and Gentile***, are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

4. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin ***of the seed of David***, and lived a sinless life ***under the law of Moses*** in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. ***According to the Scriptures*** he died on the cross in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. ***According to the Scriptures*** he rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. ***He is the mediator of the new covenant and*** he intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

5. SALVATION

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. ***His salvation was promised in the covenant made with Abraham and was*** ~~it has been~~ accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

7. ~~THE CHURCH~~ GOD'S PEOPLE

The universal church ***of the new covenant is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel, and*** is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved ***from among Israel and the nations*** belong. ***Despite unbelief, Israel remains a unique covenant nation among the nations, beloved for the sake of the fathers.***

The universal church is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

The Southern Baptist Convention in the USA

I. THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It ***consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament*** and is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

II. GOD

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. ***He graciously enters into covenants with His creatures for their well-being and redemption.*** To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

B. GOD THE SON

Christ is the eternal Son of God. ***He came as Jesus Christ according to the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament.*** In His incarnation ~~as Jesus Christ~~ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary ***of the seed of David.*** Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross ***He bore its curse and*** ~~He~~ made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to

consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

III. MAN

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God, *which began to be realized through the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race, *Jew and Gentile*, possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

IV. SALVATION

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer *and who is the mediator of the new covenant*. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

VI. THE CHURCH

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The New Testament speaks also of the origins and universality of the church. The church is the fulfilling of God's covenant promises to Israel and enjoys the spiritual promises that God gave to Israel. It is the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, Jew and Gentile, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, who are one and equal before Him. Despite unbelief, Israel remains a unique covenant nation among the nations, beloved for the sake of the fathers.

XI. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations, **the apostle Paul setting the pattern to the Jew first and also to the Gentile**. It is the duty of every child of God to

seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Christians have produced much more comprehensive creedal statements than these, and in such circumstances it may be suitable not only to include the type of small additions shown above but also to have a separate section on Israel. I have suggested one below, which is my version of a clause submitted to the World Reformed Fellowship by Mike Moore for inclusion in their revised doctrinal statement. I have left the Scripture proofs in, although they would not normally be retained in the text of such statements, in case anyone can use this clause and would like to have the proof texts.

Israel

The Jewish people are God's people (Exod 7:4; Ps 50:7; Isa 1:3; Jer 7:12; 12:14; Ezek 14:9; Amos 7:8; Zeph 2:9) and remain so even though the majority of the nation is disobedient to their God and rejects the Messiah (Rom 11:1f); they are the only nation with whom God ever entered into covenant (Gen 15:18; Exod 6:4; 34:10; Deut 4:11ff; Jer 31:31ff). Israel is God's firstborn (Exod 4:22f; Jer 31:9) and the first fruits of his harvest among the nations (Jer 2:3).

Israel's irrevocable calling (Rom 11:28–29) is to be a light to the nations (Isa 51:4–5) and a blessing to the world (Gen 12:1ff; Ps 67:1ff; John 4:22). This role began to be fulfilled after Pentecost and led to the formation of the one new man, the church, Jew and Gentile in Christ (Eph 2:14f). The messianic promises were addressed, and still are addressed, to the Jewish people (Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; Deut 18:18; Jer 23:5f; Mic 5:2; Zech 9:9; Mal 4:5f; Luke 1:54f, 68f); the new covenant was established with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31ff) and the "Savior of the world" (John 4:42; 1 Tim 4:10; 1 John 4:14) is the "Redeemer of Israel" (Isa 43:14; 59:20; Luke 24:21).

Although the majority of Jewish people reject their Messiah and remain God's enemies, they are beloved for the sake of the patriarchs (Rom 11:28) and remain the natural branches of the olive tree (Rom 11:24). Though at this present time only a "remnant" of Israel believe the gospel, Scripture envisages a future fullness when the nation will be saved and be grafted back into their own olive tree (Rom 11:15–24). God has not cast away his people (Rom 11:1); Israel has a glorious future (Rom 11:26f).

It is incumbent upon Gentiles who have been grafted onto Israel's olive tree (Rom 11:18) to love and honor the Jewish people, to seek their salvation and to live holy lives that will provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom 11:11).

Recovering the Role of Jewish Outreach at the End Times

Rudolph D. Gonzalez, PhD
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Introduction

Have you ever gone into your neighborhood convenience store only to discover that the friendly attendant you have been dealing with is not behind the counter? Perhaps you inquire, “Where’s Henry?” and the new attendant, not knowing much about the previous employee, simply responds, “I guess he quit.” This scenario is not uncommon and we maintain that something analogous to this has happened with respect to the church’s mission.

This work focuses on the role the Jewish people are meant to play in the end-times.¹ Any study of this time-frame reveals that the Jews play a positive role in evangelism, yet, lamentably, one which is nonexistent today.² Replacement theologians have tried to argue away Israel’s continued relevance in the aftermath of the church’s development in history, spiritualizing much that is clearly addressed to the Jewish nation. And, had Israel faded into the past, the church might be justified in assuming those promises and responsibilities. But Israel’s persistence in the world is nothing short of miraculous, causing us to have great confidence that the Jews, though in rebellion for the time being, will yet step up to their end-times missionary responsibilities.³

Israel: AWOL from the Missionary Mandate

According to Scripture, God separated Israel from among the Gentile nations because he purposed to accomplish his redemptive aims through them.⁴ And this goes further than only providing the bloodline through which the Messiah would come (Matt 1:1–17). The Old Testament prophesies that Israel, as a nation, would be a blessing by being a kingdom of priests and a light to the world.⁵ Has this happened? For those who see Christ as the fulfillment of Israel’s messianic expectations, that prophecy can only come to pass through the proclamation of the Lord Jesus whose light can illumine all humanity (John 8:12; 9:5). However, in rejecting Christ (John 1:11; Matt 27:20–26), the

¹ It is beyond the scope of this work to specify whether the Old Testament projects an end-times role for the so-called “ten lost tribes” of Israel, or if that role is exclusively Jewish, limited to descendents of Judah and Benjamin. In this work, names and terms used should be understood generally, to speak of such descendents of Abraham through Isaac as God may deem worthy of fulfilling his end-times purposes.

² While this author acknowledges the legitimacy of the Messianic Jewish community, he does not see it playing a role in biblical theology, apart from its membership in the church universal with its many dimensions.

³ Note Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), who waxes on over the perpetuity of the Jews. B. Pascal, *Pensées*, pars. 617–35, *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1990), 283–89.

⁴ See P. R. Williamson, “Covenant,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 150.

⁵ See Gen 12:2–3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Isa 49:6. Isaiah 40–55 is broadly seen as conveying Israel’s role as a witness to Gentiles. However, scholars differ as to whether these present Israel as active or passive in this role. See Michael A. Grisanti, “Israel’s Mission to the Nations in Isaiah 40–55: An Update,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 9/1 (Spring 1998): 39–61.

hope for seeing Israel's mission realized would seem to have diminished, causing one to ponder how God's plan could continue. Belief in a sovereign God notwithstanding (1 Thess 5:24), Scripture does show a way forward; though it is not a way that, in my estimation, has been fully understood by the church.

In fact, one can't help but wonder if the church, unwittingly perhaps, has actually been complicit in Israel's slow return to her Savior and her appointed task. Ostensibly, Jesus' words in Matthew 21:43 would seem to eliminate Israel categorically from involvement in the life and ministry of the church. Yet, as it has been argued elsewhere, that is not a foregone conclusion.⁶ Israel, despite serious belligerence against God's plan, still has a unique role to play with respect to the mission. Yet, even knowing this, many presume that the church, made up largely of Gentiles, has been given the evangelistic task, relieving the Jews of their responsibility altogether, right? I ask this because so many of our evangelistic and missionary efforts, promoted with slogans such as the "Great Commission," tend to generalize the work.⁷ Much that we do rarely takes Israel's biblical role into consideration.

Here we maintain that the task of evangelism, first initiated by Jews, was never supposed to move forward without their involvement, at least not ideally so. That the church and Judaism parted company within the first century is a matter of record, but it ought not to have been. To the degree that Israel is still absent from the missionary mandate, Christian outreach is less than it could be. Yet Scripture holds out hope, for if Israel is at present AWOL, the church has an obligation to woo God's chosen people back. In Romans, Paul hopes that Israel may yet be "grafted in" to God's kingdom purposes (Rom 11:23), something which should be more than just some arcane point of theology.

The Hope for Jews as Evangelists

When we take in what the Old Testament says about Israel, some things are patently clear. The prophet Zechariah, for example, projects a time when the Jews will be at the vanguard of evangelism:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zech 8:23 NASB, used throughout)

Zechariah's vision presupposes the powerful appeal of the Jewish people leading Gentiles from every tongue to an encounter with the God of Israel.⁸ This, we maintain, has not yet been realized, not in its fullness. If one asks why, the answers are not hard to find. Already in the Old Testament, there were indications that Abraham's biological descendents through Isaac would not simply fold in with the divine plan. While Nehemiah understood that the Spirit had always operated to guide the nation in righteousness (Neh 9:20, 30), Israel had consistently resisted the Spirit's leading. Thus, Isaiah laments, "But they (Israel) rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit" (Isa 63:10; cf. 30:1; Ps 106:33). Scripture shows that there is a point when God will cease to strive with the rebellious (Gen

⁶ Matt 21:43 charges the religious leaders of Israel, and not the nation as a whole. For this perspective see David L. Turner, "Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (January-March, 2002): 46–61; see also, R. D. Gonzalez, "To the Jew First and also the Gentile: Capturing the Fullness of Matthew's Commission" Part 1, *Mishkan* 62 (2010).

⁷ On the "Great Commission" label see, R. D. Gonzalez, "To the Jew First and also the Gentile: Capturing the Fullness of Matthew's Commission" Parts 1, 2, *Mishkan* 62, 63 (2010).

⁸ The Hebrew literally reads, ". . . ten men from the nations of every tongue will come."

6:3; Heb 6:6; 12:15–17; Titus 1:15–16), and one could say that God had reached that point with Israel. Nevertheless, with his chosen people, God will go the extra mile because the integrity of his word hangs in the balance. The psalmist knows this when he dares to believe that God may extend his mercy beyond all comprehensible limits. Thus, he declares, “He will not always strive *with us*; nor will He keep *His anger* forever” (Ps 103:9).

The Old Testament Expectation that Israel Would Be “Spirit Filled” in the Last Days

Despite Israel’s sin, the Old Testament prophets foretold its dramatic spiritual renewal.

But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: . . . “Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants.” (Isa 44:1–3)

And I will give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. (Ezek 11:19–20)

In fact, there is throughout the prophetic corpus ample witness both to Israel’s divine chastisement (e.g., 2 Kgs 21:12–16; Isa 1:1–8; Jer 18:11; Amos 2:6; 5:1–4; Mic 3:8; et al) and eventual reconciliation (e.g., Isa 32:15–20; 59:21; Ezek 36:27–28; 37:14; et al). Moreover, in this reconciliation the Spirit of the Lord would play a key role, but it would happen with latter generations of Jews. This is something that has never been fulfilled. It remains in the realm of an unrealized promise. Enter the New Testament.

Preconditions to Pentecost

As our previous texts show, the Spirit of God would factor prominently in the revitalization of Israel. So the events in the Book of Acts, which recount the birth of the church in Jerusalem through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, go directly to the issue.

In the opening verses of Acts, Luke reminds the reader of the risen Christ’s work with his disciples over 40 days, instructing them before his ascension (Acts 1:3–5). Apart from convincing them he had truly been resurrected, Jesus also taught his disciples concerning the “the kingdom of God” (v.3b). While we have no transcript of Jesus’ kingdom teaching, most scholars believe its substance is reflected in the early apostolic speeches that address the Jewish people specifically.⁹ Here, Acts is invaluable for it records the earliest sermons, or sermon summaries, delivered by Peter and others specifically to Jews in Judea. These early chapters convey what some scholars have termed the *kerygma*, the proclamation of the very issues Jesus emphasized during his kingdom instruction.¹⁰

In all this, we can be certain that the kingdom and Israel’s role remained viable by the nature of the questioning that follows immediately before Jesus’ ascension. The disciples ask, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). The syntax of this

⁹ J. B. Polhill, “Kerygma and Didache,” *Dictionary of the Latter New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 626–629. For the *kerygma*, see Richard Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, F. E. Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 254.

¹⁰ For a forceful argument for the kingdom theme in Acts see Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1993), 309–320.

question shows that the disciples peppered him with questions concerning Israel's future. This line of questioning was apparently coming from all who were present, which may have included more than just the eleven.

Concerning the questioning, some have argued that these men were narrow-minded, revealing a lingering Jewish provincialism which needed to end.¹¹ However, it is more likely that if anything, they should be accused of over-anxiousness, erring in timing and nothing more.¹² Christ could have easily nixed any further talk about the kingdom, with its Old Testament ramifications for Israel, but he didn't. As Mark Saucy notes, Jesus only emphasized that it was not for them to know the "kingdom's 'when.'"¹³ As we hope to show, that "when" was not that far distant, for the last days would soon dawn.

We can be confident that Israel's role was still viable, for days after Pentecost the kingdom was prominent in Peter's preaching (Acts 3). Moreover, Paul made it a point to focus on kingdom instruction in his mission (Acts 19:8), continuing to emphasize it some 25 years later (Acts 28:31).¹⁴ The general evidence in the Book of Acts shows that Jesus' post-resurrection instruction landed on fertile soil. Not only did Jesus focus on the kingdom, but his apostles made it and its fulfillment in Christ the major topic of their proclamation and instruction.

The Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit and the Priority of Israel

Establishing the overall presence of the kingdom theme is necessary, particularly as we interpret the early chapters of Acts.¹⁵ That the kingdom is being worked out in the very events of Pentecost is beyond question, for Peter saw the giving of the Holy Spirit on that day as fulfilling prophecy. We should not forget that in the Old Testament the presence of God's Spirit is always congruent with God's work to establish his kingdom. Thus, Peter speaks out:

Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: "And it shall be in the last days," God says, "That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:14b–18)

This passage reveals a number of important elements, beginning with Peter's focus on Jews. The apostle addresses his audience as "men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem." That this is a

¹¹ John Calvin accused the disciples of remarkable blindness, having been "so fully and carefully instructed . . . they betrayed no less ignorance than if they had never heard a word." See Calvin's Commentaries, *The Acts of the Apostles, 1–13* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 29. See also John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Augsburg Press, 1953), 168, who sees the disciples' question as evidence of a "disease of faith." See also F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts Revised* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 35–36.

¹² Saucy, 341–342. In this respect the disciples are like the child who is told in the spring that they will be taking a summer vacation. Once assured of the trip, the child will ask incessantly if the trip is upon them, not realizing that it may still be some time away.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 341.

¹⁴ This assessment is based on Paul's Roman imprisonment mentioned in Acts 28, ca. AD 60–62. See R. N. Longenecker, *The Ministry and Message of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 82–83.

¹⁵ An analysis of Acts 1:9–26 is beyond the scope of this study. It is important to note, however, the continuation of prominent Jewish themes (e.g., the presence of angels, the casting of lots, and selection of Matthias, reconstituting the twelve apostles as representative redeemed Israel, etc).

sustained focus is further shown by other limiting statements such as calling them “men of Israel” (v. 22) and “brethren” (v. 29). Peter certainly assumes he is speaking solely to Jews when he says, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know . . .” (v. 36). This is important, for if Peter delivered his Pentecost sermon within the temple precinct, as most surmise, there could have been Gentile God-fearers within earshot of his preaching at the court of the Gentiles, forcing us to ask, why the limitation?¹⁶

To answer the question it is necessary to observe that Peter interprets the pouring forth of the Spirit as a sign of the last days. Yet by proclaiming that Joel 2:28a, which applies to “all mankind,” was coming to pass, he does something startling. The fact that he calls on Jews exclusively then to employ a prophecy that emphasizes the outpouring of the Spirit on all mankind clamors for resolution.¹⁷

In my opinion, the answer to this coupling of Jewish exclusivity with Joel’s more “universal” prophecy is to be found in the attending miracle of tongues. Apart from the nature of the phenomenon, the fundamental significance of the miracle is that the 120 stand as Spirit-filled Jews, speaking “the mighty deeds of God” in languages that circled Judea (Acts 2:11). It is this, I maintain, which reconciles the seeming conflict. If we keep in mind that Israel had been charged with blessing the nations by being a light to them, the sensational rushing forth of believing Jews, each “lit” with “tongues as of fire” hovering over them (Acts 2:3) and proclaiming the gospel in a variety of known languages, was a powerful visual and audible depiction of that very thing. Yet, there is more.

Peter’s quote of Joel’s prophecy continues:

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17–18)

If the first part of Joel’s prophecy looks forward to a day when people from all the nations will receive the Spirit, the continuation of that same oracle shows the instrumentality of the Jews in bringing that about. Thus, Peter quotes a passage that can only apply to Israel.¹⁸ Only Israel generated God appointed prophets and, in the end times, God would again call a new generation to prophesy. However, unlike in the past when prophets were few and numbered, in the last days Israel in general would fulfill that role. We can be certain of this because Peter, we will remember, addressed the Jews exclusively; he applied the prophecy exclusively to them. Joel’s repeated use of the possessive pronouns “your” (v. 28) and “my” (v. 29) with reference to those who would be prophets of God’s message settles the question. Redeemed Israel constitutes God’s sons, daughters, and servants. Joel envisions a day when God’s chosen people are empowered to prophesy, to proclaim the gospel in languages that mirrored the table of nations (Gen 10). The

¹⁶ This writer is not convinced that the “upper room” was necessarily the place from where the outpouring of the Spirit occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1 talks of a different day from the events associated with Acts 1:12–26. It is only through assumption that interpreters have suggested the disciples were still in the upper room. Surely, on the Day of Pentecost most Jews would have been gathered at the temple. Still, while Acts 2:2 uses the Greek term *oikos*, translated as “house” to refer to the place where the 120 were gathered just prior to the Spirit’s manifestation, it is also translated as “temple” elsewhere in Luke (e.g., Luke 11:51).

¹⁷ Ezek 37:1–14, for example, focuses the giving of the Spirit on Israel alone: “I will put My Spirit within you [Israel] and you [Israel] will come to life. . . . Then you [Israel] will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it.”

¹⁸ For a discussion of this prophecy referring specifically to “every Israelite” see E. C. Stanton, *Acts ICC* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 135–138. However, J. B. Polhill, *Acts NAC* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 109–110, disagrees, seeing it as a universal outpouring of prophecy.

tongues phenomenon at Pentecost was telescoping how Israel would fulfill their unique missionary mandate to the entire world.¹⁹

Lest doubt on this issue should linger, Luke makes this point clear as the narrative continues. Immediately after the dramatic healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3) a Jewish throng gathers, giving Peter the opportunity to speak yet again. Among all he says, Peter notes,

It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways. (Acts 3:25–26)

Peter’s reference to “these days” clues us to the eschatological nature of things that were happening from the day of Pentecost forward. It was in the nature of that specific window of time that Jews needed to hear about their role. Thus, Peter again limits his words exclusively to Jews.²⁰ And it wasn’t simply to seek their faith response to the gospel that he addresses them directly. Peter is careful to point out that God had promised Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed (v. 25). By doing so, Peter was reminding the Jews they had a God-ordained mission, which they needed to embrace. In Peter’s understanding, both faith in the Messiah and the Spirit’s empowerment to proclaim Christ’s gospel were integral elements of the end times for the Jewish people.

To summarize, Acts 1–3 gives a dramatic demonstration of redeemed Israel’s mission to the world through the tongues phenomenon associated with the giving of the Spirit. Luke also gives Peter’s positive statement that Israel had an evangelistic obligation to the nations. The message of Acts 1–3 is clear; among other reasons, the last days were a time when God would pour upon Israel the Holy Spirit to initiate the work of world evangelism. Since this was happening then and there, we must accept that the apostles were functioning in a catalytic fashion, sparking Israel’s embrace of Christ as their Messiah and getting them going about the business of extending the grace of God to the world.

Consequently, it is not surprising that only after Jews are portrayed as Spirit-filled evangelists is Cornelius filled with the Spirit through the agency of Peter (Acts 10). Cornelius, this first non-Jewish convert, is no mere Gentile. He is a Roman centurion, and as such, an exemplar of the Roman Empire’s finest as Theophilus, Luke’s patron for the publishing of Acts, would have readily concurred. Cornelius models all those noble Gentiles who in time would hear and respond to the claims of the gospel. Thus, we see the complete fulfillment of the Joel prophecy as a preliminary sketch; Gentiles are hearing and believing the gospel and being Spirit-filled, and all through the agency of Spirit-empowered Jews.²¹

¹⁹ Thus Acts is essentially missiological, showing how the mandate set in Acts 1:8 is fulfilled through the power of the Spirit. Note also Matt 12:18: “I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles,” affirming the missionary empowering of the Spirit in the life of Jesus for the benefit of the Gentiles. For this perspective see P. H. Davids, “Tongues,” *Dictionary of the Latter New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997); David Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Kitchener, Ontario: Harold Press, 1983), 108–109; James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 49.

²⁰ Note Peter’s appeal in v. 12, “men of Israel”; v. 13, “our fathers”; v. 17, “brethren”; v. 25, “you who are sons of the prophets.”

²¹ There is no intent to exclude the Spirit’s work in the conviction of sin (John 16:8), sealing the believer unto redemption (Eph 4:30), or its intercessory work in prayer (Rom 8:26–27; 1 Cor 14:14–15).

Pentecost Aftermath

The days surrounding events at Pentecost must have been heady and filled with tremendous promise and expectation, but the passage of time brought troubling developments. The Book of Acts makes a separation between the “last days” so powerfully depicted early on by the outpouring of the Spirit, along with all its marvelous occurrences,²² and later times. We see indications of this separation already forming at the Jerusalem Council. Note how Peter characterizes the events associated with the Day of Pentecost as “the early days” (Acts 15:7), seeing them as receding into history. This line of demarcation, which he assumes, effectively segregates the earlier times that showed what could have been from what actually happened. If the “earlier days” offered a real hope that Israel would receive her Messiah and fall in line with the mission, it becomes evident that this would not happen. Guided by their religious leadership, Judean Israel largely rejected Jesus as the Book of Acts demonstrates.²³ Later, Paul acknowledges a tragic pattern as Diaspora Jews were also generally rejecting the gospel message.²⁴

The tragedy in Israel’s rejection is that the hope for fulfilling the end times requirement of being Spirit-filled and subsequently blessing the Gentiles also faded. Thus, Ezekiel 37:4 depicts Israel as a nation of dry bones, devoid of Spirit (see also Zeph 1:12). Since Israel failed to take hold of the spiritual power, the third person of the Trinity departed. Yet, even in this, divine providence prevails, for God was preparing his chosen nation to receive a necessary ministry from a most unlikely people.

But what of the church that grew increasingly Gentile? Already, Paul is aware of the abuse of tongues (1 Cor 12–14), which were being manipulated to promote false hyper-spirituality (1 Cor 1:26–29; 3:18–23; 4:7–10). Thus, the missionary goal of the Spirit’s tongues phenomenon gave way to narcissistic interests, so prevalent today. Yet, if the church is ever to woo Israel to faith in Christ, she will have to rethink her theology and praxis to regain that evangelistic purpose of the Spirit-filled life.

Recovering the “End Times” Missionary Spirit

In my opinion, Joel 2:28–29 awaits total future fulfillment. The Old Testament conveys the expectation that a large segment of Israel will come to embrace the Messiah (Zech 12:10). As on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit will be prominent in bringing this to pass. Despite the laudable work of Messianic churches, fellowships, and para-church organizations, this has not happened, not in the way that Zechariah perceives it (see Zech 13:8–9), causing us to search for how it may happen.

Pricking Israel to Godly Jealousy

The biblical subject of “jealousy” is complex and deserves a more thorough treatment than this study allows.²⁵ Suffice it to note that this powerful emotion is a fundamental aspect of God’s nature (Exod 34:14; Deut 4:24). Moreover, it is an emotion that God expresses for Israel and expects from them as well (Exod 20:3–5; Deut 5:8–9; Zech 1:14). Notwithstanding God’s love, we know that Israel went the way of idolatry—all of which intensified God’s jealousy, as revealed in his willingness to

²²Here this writer refers to the powerful signs and wonders prolific in the life of the early church (Acts 2:43), including the unity of the early church body (Acts 2:42–47) and the rapid growth of the “the Way” among the Jews in Judea (Acts 2:41; 6:7).

²³Acts 4:1–3; 5:17–18; 6:9–15; 9:22–23; 12:1–3; et al.

²⁴Acts 14:2–19; 17:5–8; 21:27–28; 24:9; 28:19–29; 1 Cor 1:23; 1 Thess 2:14–15; et al.

²⁵See H. G. L. Peels, “זְעַף,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 1997); A. Stumpff, “Zeal,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 877–88.

punish them severely (Deut 29:20; 1 Kgs 14:22–23; Ps 78:58–62; 79:5; et al). However, even in the light of Israel’s self-destructive behavior, God’s jealousy turns ultimately redemptive. Scripture projects a future when Israel will reciprocate in loving jealousy, having cast off all idolatry (Ezek 20:39; 36:23–27). Scripture reveals the dark side of this powerful emotion (Prov 6:34), but there should be no mistake: Godly jealousy is ultimately redemptive in its effect (Num 25:11–13; 2 Cor 11:2).

The subject of jealousy is pertinent to our study, for it factors in Paul’s understanding of how God would bring Israel back to their covenantal relationship. God’s jealousy, described appropriately as an “energetic state of mind, urging towards action,”²⁶ ensured that God would not simply smolder in emotion; he would take active steps to reconcile Israel to himself. Paul understood this and turns to Moses to show how God was fulfilling an ancient prophecy.²⁷ Paul mounts this argument in Romans 10:19, citing God, who declares through his lawgiver Moses:

They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with *those who* are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (Deut 32:21)

In Paul’s mind, God would fight fire with fire! If Israel had made God jealous because of their idolatry, then God would make Israel jealous for him through those “who are not a people,” who were rather “a foolish nation.” This, we know, is Old Testament code for the Gentile nations (Hos 1:9–10; 2:23; Rom 9:25–26; cf. Rom 1:18–22; 1 Pet 2:10).

Paul believed God’s strategy, uttered centuries earlier, was unfolding through his ministry. God was provoking jealousy among the Jews, and Gentile converts were right in the thick of things. One can’t help but wonder whether Gentile Christians fully understood this strategic element in Paul’s ministry; indeed, it is doubtful whether the contemporary church is even remotely aware of this today.²⁸ The Gentiles, for Paul, could do nothing less than function as something akin to a force-multiplier.²⁹ Gentile faith, Paul believed, could provoke jealous zeal in lifeless Israel (Num 25:11–13; Ezek 39:25).

That Gentiles could provoke Jews to jealousy sounds unthinkable. Israel, after all, saw itself as morally superior, precisely because they had been made guardians of the oracles of God and instructors to the nations (Rom 2:17–21). Their monotheism set them above the polytheistic riffraff. Even the Athenian elite paid lip-service to the Greco-Roman pantheon (Acts 17:16–34), but not the Jews. They stood for the worship of the One True God. Did Paul really believe Gentiles could make Jews jealous?

To answer the question, Acts shows how Paul throws his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles in the face of the rebellious Jews, almost as if to goad them. He repeatedly reminds them that since they will not embrace Christ, then he as a faithful Benjamite will carry out the God-ordained

²⁶ Peels, 938.

²⁷ Though Paul notes that Israel had a “zeal for God” (Rom 10:2), he considered it misguided and a demonstration of self-righteousness (Rom 10:3–4). Despite their traditions, Israel had not progressed much. If the OT showed God’s jealousy moving to redeem, it also shows the relationship was far from healed. In Malachi’s time, there is a general apathy to the Lord (Mal 1:6–13; 3:6–7; 4:6).

²⁸ The New Testament never envisioned Gentile salvation in strict utilitarian terms, that is, simply as a means to harvest Jewish believers. It is clear that God loves the nations.

²⁹ A concept used in the military, referring to a “capability that, when added to and employed by a combat force, significantly increases the combat potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment,” www.thefreedictionary.com/force+multiplier [accessed January 9, 2014].

mission to bless the nations (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28).³⁰ In this, Paul understood what he was doing. The Jews knew God had called them to be a light in the world, but Paul's words indicted them as slackers, failing in their duty.

Perhaps the Jews could have argued that they were fulfilling that duty throughout their witness in the Diaspora, the popularity of the Hebrew Scriptures in Greek (the LXX), and the many Gentile proselytes who embraced Jewish monotheism and its ethical norms. Such an argument could have been further strengthened if Paul's ministry had fallen on deaf Gentile ears. Then, the Jews would have written him off as some delusional zealot. However, Paul was banking on at least two things when he dared to assert that his ministry was accomplishing what Israel was failing to do. First, Paul could show tangible results; many God-fearers along with sizable numbers of Gentiles were turning to faith in Christ (e.g., Acts 13:48; 14:27; 15:3; 17:17). This must have bewildered the orthodox Jewish community. Paul was not leading Gentiles to the worship of idols or some Hellenistic principle; they were "rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord" (Acts 13:48). Paul's Gentile believers, among them many God fearers who had initially been attracted to Jewish monotheism, were embracing Christ in a way that was not antithetical to the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul worked tirelessly to demonstrate from their Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:28; cf. 17:2; 19:8).

The second aspect that Paul banked on was the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. When Cornelius became the first Gentile to receive the Spirit, Peter and company were left in amazement (Acts 10:45), yet this was not a singular occasion. The work of the Spirit was also prominent in Paul's ministry (Acts 15:8; 19:10–11), but the reaction from orthodox Jews was diametrically different. Acts reveals that Gentile conversions provoked Jews to anger (Acts 14:5) and jealous rage (Acts 13:45; 17:5), the two emotions Moses had catalogued and which God had purposed to provoke in his people.³¹ While such negative reactions only alienated Paul all the more from his Jewish kinsmen, he considered these developments to be in keeping with God's intent to break Israel's stubborn resistance to the gospel. Here is ministry at its most stressful and painful on many levels. Yet Paul believed that Israel's belligerent reaction to the witness of Spirit-filled Gentiles could not be sustained. Ultimately, he held out the hope that they would succumb to God's redemptive love, abandoning their jealousy of the church's work among Gentiles and refocusing it in a healthy way for their Messiah and his mission.

Gentiles needed to know that through their faithful Spirit-filled witness Jews could be brought back to their Messiah. Through them, the Spirit ensured that Joel's prophecy would truly come to pass. If in the early days—at Pentecost—it was Jewish believers speaking the gospel in the tongues of the Gentiles, now God was Spirit-empowering Gentiles in their native tongues to effectively lead many to faith. Thus, the Spirit would close the circle. Since Israel had turned away, it fell to the Gentiles to prick unbelieving Jews by the manifestation of that same Spirit in their lives.³²

Conclusion

In one of his most popular parables, Jesus recounts the story of a squandering son returning to his father's home, only to be forgiven, welcomed and celebrated (Luke 15:11–32). This Parable of the Prodigal Son could just as appropriately be labeled the Parable of the Jealous Elder Son. Since Jesus

³⁰ See R. Gonzalez, "To the Jew First and also the Gentile: Capturing the Fullness of Matthew's Commission" Part 2, *Mishkan* 63 (2010), 7.

³¹ Paul notes his own rage against believers prior to his conversion (Acts 26:11). Acts 5:17 reveals a jealous spirit brewing among the religious leaders long before the church started reaching out to Gentiles.

³² The scenario is like that of a spoiled child that gets bored with a particular toy, setting it aside, only to become enraged with jealousy upon seeing another child enjoy the same toy to great delight.

was speaking collectively to sinners, tax gatherers, Pharisees, and Scribes (vv. 1–2), most would agree that he was creating a scenario for everyone there to identify with one of the two siblings in the story. Surely, if the prodigal represented the sinners gathered around, the religious leaders who were there would have known immediately who represented them. Clearly, Jesus wanted the Scribes and Pharisees to identify with the elder brother, but it wasn't to heap condemnation upon them. Amazingly, while the elder son challenges his father for extending forgiveness and giving gifts to his undeserving younger brother, the father never disowns his elder son, thereby revealing a tantalizing feature that relates to this study. In this parable it is evident that the elder son was driven to anger and jealousy over his father's embrace of his younger brother (vv. 28–30).³³ And yet, despite the elder son's outrage, his father responds with tenderness: "Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours" (v. 31). In all this, was Jesus anticipating the Jews' reaction to the Gentiles, who would eventually embrace Israel's Messiah? Even more, was Jesus telling the Jews, who reacted so belligerently, to reconsider, for they had not lost anything that was meant for them all along?

We noted at the start that Christ anticipated the latter work of the church when he predicted that the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to another people (Matt 21:43). Ostensibly, this would indicate the Gentile church appropriated all that was originally set aside for Israel,³⁴ but that would be misleading. Paul still held out hope for Israel's reconciliation when he proposed, "Now if their transgression is riches for the world . . . how much more will their fulfillment be!" (Rom 11:12). Indeed, it has been the aim of this work to show that such an expectation has not expired despite the great passage of time. If Paul's sentiment carries any apostolic weight, the world still awaits the impact of that Jewish Spirit-empowered fulfillment in God's perfect timing.

For her part, today's church has the duty to help bring Israel back to her Messiah, something Paul would encourage: "For if the Gentiles have shared in their [Israel's] spiritual things, they [the Gentiles] are indebted to minister to them also . . ." (Rom 15:27b). In this, some could reasonably wonder, *If Israel has pride of place in the missionary mandate, where does that leave the church?* Again, the church is no interloper, for the Christian way was birthed in the bosom of Israel. From its inception, the church took outreach seriously and we should expect nothing less today.

Today's church, however, is radically "Gentile" in so many ways; this creates legitimate problems, specifically where the Jews are concerned. One daunting issue is the church's propensity to incorporate cultural obstacles that Jews should not have to scale. Not surprisingly, the Book of Acts offers timely help. In the same way that believing Jews made accommodations to incorporate Gentiles (Acts 15), today's church may need to respond in kind. After all, if it was wrong then for Jewish believers to place an unbearable burden on Gentile believers (Acts 15:10), is it right for the Gentile church today to expect Jews to embrace our church culture(s) almost totally at their expense? The apostle Paul was a master at accommodating—not compromising—to reach as many as possible (1 Cor 9:19–23), and the church will have to do the same if Jewish outreach is ever to have its maximum effect. Reaching out to Jews with the gospel has its own apologetic challenges. But whatever those challenges are, they will pale in the face of welcoming a bountiful harvest from among the Jews, if God should so move.

Here, we maintain that such an eventuality can only happen when the Spirit of God takes hold of the church in such a way that she willingly relinquishes dependence on those conveniences that make the contemporary church so bourgeois and comfortable (echoing Rev 3:14–22?). It will

³³ Though "jealousy" is not mentioned explicitly in the parable, the elder son's reactions to his father's treatment of the younger son clearly reveal his jealous streak.

³⁴ See Rom 9:30; 15:12; Gal 3:13–14; Eph 2:11–22; 3:6–8; Col 1:27. Gal 2:15 shows Gentiles as "sinners."

take the witness of a Spirit-filled and Spirit-purified church to provoke the profound emotional crisis necessary to generate a spiritual reaction that may begin with powerful emotion, but will end ultimately with Israel's repentance and return to its God-ordained task.

There is a powerful scene in the 1957 movie *Twelve Angry Men*, where a jury steps out to deliberate the fate of a young defendant. In the course of the film, all except one juror come to the conclusion that the young man is probably innocent. Yet the holdout, Juror #8, played by Lee J. Cobb, rails furiously against the eleven for wanting to let this delinquent go free. In the most gripping scene of the movie it becomes evident that his passion and anger are really fueled by his failed relationship with his own son. When he comes to that bitter realization, he breaks down, and sobbingly votes with the others to acquit.

Ultimately, only when Israel accepts that the Father has the prerogative to bless the prodigal church (assuming their point of view), and that the church has the right to enjoy the Spirit and fold in with the mission, will Israel as the elder brother abandon its bitter emotions against Messiah and his church. Only then will Israel be led by the Father to acknowledge the One they have rejected all along (Zech 12:10) and recover the Spirit and the mission, which has always been theirs to embrace.³⁵

³⁵ This writer rejects the position, prominent among some segments of the Messianic community, that their ministry is to prick non-believing Israel to jealousy. As I have argued, that work, it seems to me, is the function of the church such as it is. I certainly affirm the vital work that Messianic Jews do in proclaiming the gospel. Further, I would urge Messianic Jews to hold the church, of which they are integral members, accountable to preach the gospel consistently to the Jew first and also to the Gentile (Rom 1:16).

Book Review: *Hugh Schonfield: A Case Study of Complex Jewish Identities*

by Owen Power (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock)

**Rich Robinson
Senior Researcher, Jews for Jesus**

This book is based on the author's M.Phil. thesis done at the University of Manchester. It offers a unique and unprecedented examination of its subject, who is perhaps best known for his controversial book from some decades ago, *The Passover Plot*. But, as Power shows, there is much more to Schonfield than that book alone would suggest.

Power attempts to steer a dual course: On the one hand, his book is an exploration of Schonfield's own unique views (rather than being a full-fledged biography, though there is a biographical chapter). On the other hand, it utilizes his ideas "as a means to explore the complicated nature of Messianic Jewish identity" (p. 1). Power will conclude that the Messianic Jewish movement is so diverse that we cannot rightly speak about Schonfield as being outside the pale of "orthodoxy," for there is no single Messianic Jewish viewpoint. He will further conclude that while Schonfield was always accepted as a Jew by other Jews, Messianic Jews today are not (based on criteria of social attitudes if not halakah).

The book interweaves these themes throughout. Chapter 1 is "Introducing the Book," which includes sections on "A Short, Theoretical Discussion on the Complexities of Jewish Identity," followed by "Introducing Schonfield," and "A Short Review of Schonfield's Key Works." Here, Power previews the idea he develops in Chapter 2: that Schonfield thought of himself as the Messiah. More about that below.

Schonfield was a prolific writer, and his most respected and enduring work is his *History of Jewish Christianity*, which is more influential and more highly regarded today than when it was first published in the 1930s. *The Jew of Tarsus* reveals Schonfield's unique idea that Paul "at one time believed he was the Messiah (p. 14). His *Passover Plot* achieved notoriety with its view that Jesus faked his death and resurrection, while *The Pentecost Revolution* according to Power understands the early movement of Jewish Christianity to be motivated by a desert wind rather than by the Holy Spirit—a quirky view, to say the least, on a par with James Allegro's contention that, as one reviewer had it, "Jesus was a mushroom" (that is, the Jesus movement was the result of hallucinogens). But perhaps the most significant book for getting into Schonfield's mind was his *The Politics of God*, an explanation of his own "call from God to bring about world peace" (pp. 15–16).

After this introduction of the key issues of identity and Schonfield's own thought, Chapter 2 is titled "Schonfield's Theology and Identity." It focuses on "Schonfield's belief that he was the Messiah." While singular, this is not quite as startling as it sounds if the term *Messiah* is understood in Christian terms. Rather, in Judaism anyone can potentially be the Messiah. It fell to Schonfield, however, to follow a vision he claimed to have received in 1938, thereafter believing that he was called to restore Israel to being a "Servant-Nation" and thus bring about world peace. In the

process of articulating his own thought, Schonfield argues that Gentile Christianity replaced the original Jewish Christianity with pagan thought, creeds, and doctrines such as the Trinity, the incarnation, and the resurrection. Nor does he believe the Bible to be inspired.

For Schonfield, Jesus' mission was to bring the Jewish nation back to God. "It does not seem too far-fetched," writes Power, "to think Schonfield believed Jesus was the Messiah who brought the Jews back to their Messianic responsibility, while he himself is the Messiah who God called to bring universal peace" (p. 27). It is hard to evaluate Power's view of Schonfield without reading through the latter's writings. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that Schonfield saw himself as a Messiah, or as someone entrusted with the (or a) messianic task. After all, Power has, in the quote just given, mentioned in effect two Messiahs. "For Schonfield the role of Messiah is the role of a facilitator or an enabler who brings about universal peace (which is what the Servant-Nation attempted to do), and it is a role that is available to any Jew" (p. 31). And in fact, Schonfield founded the "Mondcivitan Republic," a borderless nation intended as the embodiment of this Servant-Nation. It had its own parliament, Schonfield served as its first president, and it engaged in actions intended to promote the cause of world peace.

As to Paul, he models the universalist impulse that Schonfield displayed, but as a Torah-observant, rabbinic Jew. Paul, however, failed in his task because of his "dementia," leading him to proclaim "a faith of his own invention" (p. 34).

Schonfield's telling of Jesus, Paul, and Jewish Christian history was intended to show that "true followers of Jesus . . . put his teaching on social justice into action." In addition, he also sought legitimation for the International Hebrew Christian Alliance as a kind of renaissance of early Jewish Christianity, or at least as a significant movement on the way to such a revival.

Schonfield's views and motivations are complex and Power goes into more depth than this brief summary can do justice to. His presentation of Schonfield's self-understanding is stimulating and will benefit from the assessment of others by means of a study of Schonfield's own writings and the influences on his thought (such as Christadelphianism, mentioned on p. 48).

Chapter 3 ("The Place of Schonfield's Theology and Identity on the Modern Map of Jewish Identities") turns from Schonfield's thought world to his Jewish identity, and that of Jewish believers in Jesus today. This section is rather problematic, for it insists that "Messianic Judaism" is not a monolithic entity with "agreed beliefs and practices," and there can therefore be no "consensus as to who is a Messianic Jew" (p. 66). On the other hand, there is "universal agreement" in the Jewish community that "Messianic Jews are Christians masquerading as Jews for the purpose of mission" (*ibid.*).

In this section, Power marshals a large variety of quotes from and references to Messianic and mainstream Jews on the nature of (Messianic) Jewish identity. In quick succession we hear from Richard Harvey, Leon Levison, Jakob Jocz, Paul Levertoff, Elias Friedman, Daniel Rufeisen, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, David Rausch, Daniel Juster, Paul Liberman, Tsvi Sadan, the Hashivenu network, Ruth Fleischer, Shoshanah Feher, Carol Harris-Shapiro, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Steven Cohen, Arnold Eisen, Cecil Roth, B. Z. Sobel, Daniel Polish, Louis Jacobs, David Novak, Yaakov Ariel, David Berger (mistakenly called Peter Berger), and Michael Wyschogrod.

While it is important to hear from this variety of voices, there is a fundamental flaw in Power's approach. It is rather similar to a debate currently taking place concerning early church history: was there ever an original "orthodoxy" against which non-orthodox ideas could be measured, or was there simply diversity, with "orthodoxy" being whoever ultimately won in the power struggle of ideas? Power does not quite replicate this debate; he thinks not in terms of an ultimately victorious orthodoxy, but rather that Messianic Judaism/Messianic Jews are currently so diverse that there can be no proper assessment of who is "in" and who is "out" (my terms, not his).

This is a sociologist's take, not a theologian's. There is nothing wrong with a sociological approach, but it is limited. Messianic Judaism, should one prefer that term, is not in the first place a social grouping but a faith built on the norm of Scripture that *comes to expression* in a socially Jewish context. Of course, I do not expect an author who does not share the conviction that Scripture functions as a norm to utilize that sort of definition. But it indicates the problem with a merely sociological, descriptive approach, which at the end of the day allows anyone to self-identify as a Messianic Jew.

Moreover, Power vigorously argues that the Jewish community does not accept, certainly at the social level, the Jewishness of Messianic Jews. Thus self-identification runs into conflict with the identifications others wish to bestow. Are we to understand that in effect the larger Jewish community has won the contest of identity, even as Christian orthodoxy was, on some tellings, based on the beliefs of the "winners"? This remains unclear to me.

Nor is it quite clear what Power is trying to accomplish at the end of his book. Having explained Schonfield, and his continued acceptance as a Jew (of some stripe; we know that he joined a Liberal synagogue), Power then ends by showing how Messianic Jews (other than Schonfield) are not accepted as Jews by the Jewish community, and that "it is difficult not to understand the distress Messianic Judaism inflicts on the Jewish community" (p. 108). I am uncertain how this conclusion is meant to interface with the presentation of Schonfield's thinking.

There is one error I must correct: on page 108, Power writes that "Jewish scholars such as Daniel Polish and Yaakov Ariel maintain Messianic Judaism is an evangelical Christian missionary movement attempting to attract Jews to Christianity by underhand methods." I know Yaakov Ariel; his book *Evangelizing the Chosen People 1880–2000* evenhandedly and charitably dissents from the idea that missionaries are underhanded imposters.

By all means this is a valuable book. The sections on Schonfield's thought should be a must-read for Messianic Jews; the material on Jewish identity is somewhat less helpful, for the reasons outlined above. I am grateful to Owen Power for the work he has put into enlightening us about a figure who is historically important (in some circles notorious!) as well as individualistic and quirky. I suspect that sitting down with Hugh Schonfield at Starbucks, were that possible, would lead to some remarkable conversations!

Book Review: *The Gospel and Israel: The Edersheim Lectures* ed. Paul Morris (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock)

Rich Robinson
Senior Researcher, Jews for Jesus

This book compiles nine stimulating lectures given at the annual Edersheim Lecture established by Christian Witness to Israel, the UK-headquartered mission agency (CWI). The acknowledgements mention Robert J. Landberg as the editor of the first six lectures in the book. Several lectures also appeared in slightly different form in the *Reformed Theological Review*.

Not all the authors would agree on all matters surrounding the theological significance of the Jewish people and their future in God's plan (as one example, we have several views on Galatians 6:16, "the Israel of God"). But they all reflect a broadly Reformed theological outlook, one that is supportive of Jewish evangelism and that generally affirms a positive theological significance to the Jewish people (though not always in an identical way). The emphases in this book need to be heard among Reformed churches. In North America, for example, where I am writing, many Reformed churches have adopted a replacement theology that the present authors do not find in Scripture. A number of the names will be familiar as those of recognized scholars in theological and biblical studies, so their views are welcome and needed.

Because of the varied nature of a collection of essays, I will briefly summarize each contribution—but I cannot do justice to each author in such a small space. The unequal space I have given to each is indicative of thoughts that arose in the course of reading rather than reflecting the value of the essay!

Paul Barnett offers "Jews and Gentiles and the Gospel of Christ." Exploring Jewish history in the Roman period, he then moves on to the "firstness" of Israel in Jesus and Paul, and ends with a call to Jewish evangelism. It is a good summation of some basic foundations and lays the groundwork for many of the other contributions.

Ian Pennicook contributes "The Place of Israel in Systematic Theology." "Israel" as a theological topic belongs within salvation history; it is not a standalone subject; it is proper to treat of Israel in the OT and as fulfilled in the NT, not necessarily beyond. Israel today is of interest (Pennicook seems to indicate) because Jewish people still need redemption in Jesus. His position is to me not entirely clear. "Israel had a significant role in the history of salvation, but that role is both complete and, by many within Israel, rejected," he writes. But later: "And, by the abounding grace of Israel's Messiah, it is the place of a people who, having been provoked to jealousy for their inheritance through the preaching of the gospel, are now standing as heirs of God, fellow heirs of Christ and with all those who are in him. The bride of Christ is wonderfully, gloriously multi-ethnic."

"How Jewish Is Israel in the New Testament?" asks Stephen Voorwinde. Taking a linguistic tour of the term "Israel" within the New Testament texts, he concludes that it always refers to the ethnic nation, and is never a metaphor for the church. "These Christian Gentiles are not the new Israel. They have not replaced Israel. Rather they are now included in citizenship in Israel," he

writes. And colorfully: “Israel in the New Testament is somewhat like an ornamental snowman made of white stone. It never melts into metaphor.” Voorwinde opts for an “engrafting theology” rather than a “replacement theology.”

I found Mark Thompson’s lecture on “Luther and the Jews” one of the most helpful for its explication of the context of Luther’s well-known anti-Semitic remarks. Surveying his writings on Jews from earliest mentions to his later, bitter works, Thompson marks out the contours of Luther’s thinking. “But Luther began to hear how some Jewish apologists interpreted this [demonstrations of Christian love] as weakness. Reports began to reach him of evangelistic efforts in the opposite direction: Jews seeking to turn Christians from Christ and towards the Jewish law.” Thus he “began to re-evaluate his strategy for bringing them to repentance and faith.” The death of his daughter in 1542 perhaps also affected him temperamentally (*On the Jews and Their Lies* was published a year later). His proposals for burning synagogues and much more apparently were, in Luther’s mind, a way to show a “sharp mercy” and so bring some Jews to faith even if most remained opposed to the gospel! If we cannot excuse Luther, we can at least begin to understand him.

Peter Barnes’ essay is on “Calvin and the Jews.” “Being a faithful expositor of Scripture, Calvin saw the Jews as a privileged people whom God had chosen.” Barnes also takes issue with Jewish historian Salo Baron: “Salo Baron says, ‘But, as a rule, Calvin emphasised the anti-Jewish and toned down the pro-Jewish statements in the New Testament.’ That is demonstrably inaccurate.” At times harsh, at times warm, Calvin thus has a “double-sided” and complex view of the Jewish people. While generally held to *not* affirm an end-time turning of Jews to Jesus, there is room for doubt on that score.

“Christian Mission to the Jews, 1550–1850” is by Rowland S. Ward, who discusses the historical underpinnings of modern Jewish missions in terms of millennial positions and other factors. He argues against premillennialism and suggests that Messianic congregations (I presume this is what he means by “the organisation of Jewish believers into distinct churches,” even though many are not majority-Jewish) are only a “temporary expedient.”

Martin Pakula, a Jewish believer in Jesus, writes on “The Israel/Palestine Conflict.” After a historical overview, he argues that the New Testament teaches that “the theme of land has been transformed,” and chastises both Christian Zionists and those who oppose Christian Zionism for lacking good biblical theology. Thus he affirms the ongoing place of the Jewish *people* but not of the *land*. Finally, he concludes with balanced remarks on the “key” issues: the settlements, refugees (both Jewish and Palestinian), and justice.

David Starling’s article is “The Yes to All God’s Promises: Jesus, Israel, and the Promises of God in Paul’s Letters.” In this he seeks to do justice to Paul’s writings while arguing against dual-covenant and “post-missionary” theologies. Specifically, Starling investigates how the coming of Jesus impacts the theology of inheritance and fulfillment of God’s promises. Paul’s “yes” reflects a partial fulfillment of God’s promises in Christ now, and a guarantee of what is yet to come. Ranging through a variety of Pauline texts, Starling concludes that unbelieving Israel still has theological significance in the purposes of God. Furthermore, “a strong case can be made for the importance of a humble, persevering, gracious partnership of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ in making known the gospel of Jesus the Messiah to the people of Israel—in other words, for Christian witness to Israel.”

Mike Moore, general secretary of CWI, concludes with “Pentecost and the Plan of God.” In an engaging five-part sermon, Moore explicates how Pentecost fulfilled a promise [of the Spirit], a psalm [Ps 104], a pattern [for God’s people], a plan [to redeem the world], and Pentecost itself [that is, the NT fulfillment of the OT festival]. Pentecost thus encourages us to pursue missions.

This collection is warmly welcomed. It ought to be read especially by Reformed pastors and mission leaders. It is hoped that future Edersheim Lectures will also appear in book form.

Arab Christians in the Israeli Army

Sanna Erelä

Project Coordinator, Caspari Center, Jerusalem

The Christian minority within Arab society in Israel has been shaken by the Arab Spring and its Islamist undercurrents. Regardless of their religion, deciding to join the Israeli army is very much a taboo for Israeli Arabs, who are exempted by law from military service. Lately there have been signs that this reality is beginning to change. Ship captain Bishara Shlayan from Nazareth is the founder of the new Arab political party Bnei Habrit (Allies), which aims to have representatives in the Knesset in the next few years. The party would support Israel as a Jewish state as well as national or army service for Arabs. Shlayan, a Maronite Christian, wanted his son to join the army, and together they decided to create a forum for Christian enlistment. In December 2013, *The Jerusalem Post* reported that in the latter half of that year 84 new Christian recruits had joined the military, while the number during previous years has averaged 50. These numbers might seem small, but in the total population of 130,000 Arabic-speaking Christians in Israel the growth is remarkable.

One of the supporters of the idea is Greek Orthodox priest Father Gabriel Nadaf. He also believes that the best future for young Christians in Israel is to become totally integrated into Israeli Jewish society, having equal rights and responsibilities with other citizens. That means carrying their fair share of the burden of national military service. He wants Christians to connect with Jewish society and to contribute more to it. Jews and Christians have much in common concerning their spiritual roots. Christians have a very long history in the Middle-East, beginning in the pre-Islamic period, and many of them are actually of non-Arab origin. The State of Israel has provided security for the Christian minority and is able to do so in the future. However, this is a very crucial period. If the state responds positively to these young people, it will increase their engagement with the Jewish state. Some leading Jewish politicians already support this initiative and also promote legal differentiation between Christian and Muslim Arabs. In February 2014, the Knesset enacted a new law that recognizes Muslim and Christian Arab communities as separate entities. The law passed by a vote of 31 to 6.

Nadaf's activism has subjected him and his family to harassment, isolation, and even death threats. The persecution is not coming only from Muslims; other Christians have also pressured him. At a disciplinary hearing in Jerusalem, Patriarch Theophilus III asked Nadaf to tone down his public statements for the safety of fellow Christians in the Palestinian Authority and Arab states. Those opposing Nadaf see these new trends as part of a "divide and conquer" strategy, used by the Zionist movement and by all colonial powers in the world. According to some, this is just an attempt to divide Arab Christians. They believe Christians belong in the Arab nation because they have strong roots in Arab culture. The Catholic Church in Israel recently issued a statement condemning the initiative as an attempt to create a "unified national Zionist narrative" that would lead to a loss of Arab-Palestinian identity.

Despite the disagreement, this discussion has momentous meaning. From the early days of the Arab war against Zionism, and continuing today with the Palestinian rejection of a Jewish state,

the mainstream Christian community has been allied with the Muslims. Father Nadaf and Bishara Shlayan stand against the 1,300-year legacy of *dhimmitude*—the inferior position of Christians and Jews in Muslim society. The word *dhimmitude* comes from *dhimmi*, an Arabic word meaning “protected.” The relationships of *dhimmitude* were defined by the seventh-century Pact of Omar between Caliph Omar al-Khattib and Patriarch Saporius of Jerusalem. The pact contains a list of restrictive measures and prohibitions for non-Muslims (*dhimmi*s). If they abide by these rules, non-Muslims are granted protection, but they do not enjoy the same rights as Muslims. This lower status has many ramifications, for example the permanent prohibition on erecting new churches and the ban on Muslims converting to Christianity, even of their own free will. It is also prohibited for a *dhimmi* to bear arms against Muslims. Thirteen centuries of Muslim power accompanied by Christian anti-Semitism have caused *dhimmitude* to dominate the minds of Middle Eastern Christians and influenced some of them to collaborate with the Muslim jihad against the Jewish state.

The Jews of Israel have broken out of the discriminatory *dhimmi* position so thoroughly that they do not seem to remember it ever existed. Sixty-six years of Jewish sovereignty has convinced some Christians that the time of oppression is over. The fate of *dhimmi* Christians in surrounding countries tells them that *dhimmitude* is not protective, as Shari’ah advocates want to portray it. Despite the threats and pressure, Nadaf and his fellow Christians consider fighting *dhimmitude* a far better option than continuing under its mandatory oppression.