

# Theology Matters

## New Church Development in a Pluralistic World: Messianic Jewish Congregations

By H. Stanley Wood

Today, in the Presbyterian Church (USA) many of our North American traditional perceptions of the local church, how it functions, operates and celebrates “Holy Days,” when it worships and where, are bound by the dominant Western European culture which has shaped America. These perceptions of church have been formed by Euro-centric theological practices in a mostly Gentile Christian culture. The Church has forgotten how it looked and functioned as a relevant Gospel witness in a Jewish culture, as faithful Jewish-Christian believers within their Jewish cultural context. The task of forming new churches today requires a critical review of our theology and practice of new church development. It is in the critical review that we may find a deeper conversion to the trans-cultural Gospel, a Gospel not tied to any one culture and at once rooted in God who became a Palestinian Jew in order to “make peace through the blood of the cross” (Colossians 1:15-20).

The Gospel came clothed in a first century culture and yet the Gospel transcends the captivity of any culture by pointing to God’s kingdom. The Church’s commission involves hearing the Gospel and re-visioning itself to engage in trans-cultural ministry at the doorstep of all the major cultural contexts of the world. These groups have come to America, not for the Gospel, but for what promises

to be some version of a better life than back home, and in some cases, as a refuge from oppression.<sup>1</sup> Regrettably, some immigrants, particularly those of color, come only to find marginalization and modern forms of racism. God responds to the cries and needs of our diverse world by calling out from the nations a people to serve the world.

The people God calls to serve the world, the church (the Greek New Testament term means “called out ones”), are formed as disciples in a community of faith to serve as faithful witnesses of God’s reign in the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> Jesus incarnates what the task of the disciple involves and, in so doing, shows how to carry out that task. For example, Jesus was concerned for “*the lost*” (Luke 15), and for the welfare of the city, people’s health, just treatment of the oppressed, and the outcasts of the first century.<sup>3</sup> The formation of particular Spirit-sent communities is the apostolic pattern that the twenty-first century church needs to reclaim. Taking up the commission of the Messiah to go into the entire world, that is, the specific cultures in the world, God’s people are called to faithfully fulfill our Lord’s Great Commission of disciple-making.<sup>4</sup>

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The formation of the first new churches was also in response to the nature of God, which is missional, *missio Dei*.<sup>5</sup> God sent the prophets of the Old and New Testament. God sent God's Son, Jesus the Messiah. The Messiah sent the Twelve, the Seventy and the Church. God sent the Holy Spirit to empower the work of the church and to seal the presence of the indwelling Messiah in those who affirm faith and are called into community as disciples of the Messiah. Thus, an understanding of the divine calling to serve the nations arises from, and is modeled by, the activity of God, who has communicated with humanity, called a particular people, and sent them into God's world. Jesus himself was the preeminent example of an emissary sent from God, God's own self-disclosure, as is evident in John's Gospel which equates Jesus as the Word and therefore Jesus as God who came and lived among us.<sup>6</sup>

In response to the life and redemptive acts of Jesus, the Apostles started new congregations of people who were equipped to faithfully witness to God's reign in Jesus the Messiah in their ministry setting. Faithful witness meant that they were involved in the translation and transmission of the Gospel into these ministry contexts. This apostolic strategy was displayed as a congregational movement, held together through the Messiah's call, their common faith in the Messiah's Lordship, and their shared commitment to follow faithfully the new faith community norms instituted by the Messiah.

The Messiah's call and formation of disciples,<sup>7</sup> which resulted in the first new church developments, has seminal implications for today. I suggest that the Messiah's call for the Church today needs to follow in the apostolic pattern of witness for the formation of new congregations in specific cultural contexts. The formation of messianic communities is rooted in the Apostles' witness to the person and work of Jesus the Messiah, God's Son and our Savior. The first believing communities were formed from devout Jews who gathered at the Jewish Festival of Weeks in Jerusalem, which occurred 50 days after Passover.<sup>8</sup> This festival is celebrated in the Church as Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came 50 days after the death of Jesus of Nazareth and 10 days after the Resurrected Jesus the Messiah ascended.

The Festival of Weeks was a gathering of Jews from many nations in the first-century world. Hearing the Good News of Jesus the Messiah being preached in the language of these far away lands surprised them. Many believed and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. These first believers followed the Messiah using many Jewish forms of religious expression familiar to them, including holidays and ritual prayer practices of devout Jews, as they faithfully witnessed to the Good News of God's reign in Jesus the Messiah.

The articles of this issue of *Theology Matters* focus on one particular people and culture group, namely the Jewish people, to whom God in the flesh first chose to proclaim

Good News. These articles will pose questions about how our predominantly Gentile church needs to evaluate her neighborliness to those who are culturally different from us. I believe we need to question our assumptions about and practices of Christian devotion, such as our style and day of worship, when we contextualize mission to specific cultures. Indeed, many Christians who have experienced cross-cultural ministries nearby or abroad end up with a multi-cultural appreciation for how the Church expresses the Gospel in a different culture. With Christians everywhere "we are called to make a joyous witness to persons of other faiths in a spirit of respect and openness, and honesty".<sup>9</sup>

In giving this "joyous witness" the message of the Kingdom invites us who are Gentile Christians to envision new ways of witness that are culturally respectful and that spring from the imagination of how a person from Jewish culture today, could hear God's call to discover the Messiah's grace and forgiveness. In response to the first-century joyous witness of the Pentecost believers in the Jewish gathering at the Feast of Weeks, many Jews heard the Gospel in their native language, welcomed the message that Jesus was both Lord and Messiah, repented and were baptized. The journey of faith begins with repentance and grows in spiritual maturity as we continue to turn (literally, repent) and follow Jesus the Messiah.

Included in our repentance needs to be a humble recognition that no cultural form of worship is obligatory or superior. Our uniting loyalty with all Christians is worship centered in the underlying purpose of worship, namely the adoration of our triune God, preeminently made known to us in the Messiah. Our culturally conditioned responses to the Gospel, especially those worship forms most meaningful to us from our faith community of spiritual formation, must not become the benchmarks of acceptance for those whose expressions of worship are different in form and weekly gathering day. In humility rather than superiority, we dare not mix our cultural practices of response to the Gospel, with the Gospel call to culturally different outsiders to receive the Gospel and become like us in our practice of Christian devotion. The Gospel call is one of hospitality and neighborliness to those who are culturally different from us in the host church.<sup>10</sup> For example, the confusion of Peter about the hospitality of a Jew and Gentile meeting in his witness with Cornelius, aids us in seeing the distance between Gentile and Jewish cultures then, and I would submit, so also in many ways now.<sup>11</sup> As the articles that follow will demonstrate, even now, both Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians practice worship and other expressions of the faith in diverse culture forms.

Thanks be to God, that Jesus breaks down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. In our common desire to follow the Messiah the dividing wall crumbles, for the Messiah invites us all to journey with him in the adventure to become more like the One who came not to be served but to

serve and give his life a ransom for many.<sup>12</sup> Although we are one in the Messiah, as agreed upon in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, today we need to affirm respectful empowerment to practice culturally relevant devotion and forms of witness. In doing so we honor the gift of the Holy Spirit in one another and add nothing to the offer of costly grace whereby every tribe and nation is invited to faith in the Messiah, God's Son.

I further suggest that part of this repentance may lead us in a spirit of humility to reclaim our historic and apostolic Presbyterian witness with Jewish people recounted in this issue of *Theology Matters*.<sup>13</sup> In the Presbyterian emphasis of a "church reformed and always being reformed by the Word of God" we find abundant biblical support in the New Testament record for what I call "Messianic Jewish Congregations" or New Church formation with Jewish people. The New Testament records are the story of apostolic witness and formation of new communities of faith, many of which were started as extensions of synagogue worship, first in Jerusalem and then after persecution, throughout the Roman Empire among the dispersion of Jewish people.

I commend to you this issue of *Theology Matters*, which addresses messianic witness issues and new congregation formation. I conclude by suggesting a model of new church development, which is titled "Messianic Jewish Congregation." This issue of *Theology Matters* will trace some of the messianic witness of the Reformed tradition of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which sought to continue a long and continuing witness to Jesus as Messiah in a culturally relevant way to a specific culture, the Jewish people.

**"Messianic Jewish Congregation (New Church Development)** The Messianic Jewish Congregation (NCD) is used when a presbytery seeks to be a faithful witness to the roots of the Judeo-Christian tradition in a presbytery where there is a large Jewish population. All the first new church developments of the New Testament, including those in Jerusalem, Corinth, Colossae and Thessalonica grew out of a Messianic ministry within synagogues in these cities. Twentieth century Presbyterian Messianic Jewish ministry has grown out of a Presbyterian effort to share the love and claims of Jesus, the Messiah with a religiously and

culturally diverse Jewish population in major urban centers. Worship is held beginning on the Jewish Sabbath and with an affirmation of Jewish culture which is quite similar to other ethnic congregations that have a high degree of ethnocentricity such as African American Presbyterian outreach to unchurched African Americans. The focus of a Messianic Jewish Congregation (NCD) is to reach the unaffiliated Jewish population. (For example: Philadelphia Presbytery, The Messiah Now Ministries, and Congregation Beth Messiah)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For example, in Atlanta, Georgia, with a metro population of five and one half million, more than eighty languages of the world are spoken at the dinner table as the first language of those who gather. In 1999 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) adopted "A Vision for Church Growth in the PC(USA)" and declared the "United States is a mission field" in which the church "must change and do ministry in new ways". {To order call (800) 5242612 and ask for PDS 72-310-99-003 }

<sup>2</sup>The church is Messiah's "faithful witness." See the Presbyterian Church *Book of Order*, section G-3.000.

<sup>3</sup>See Luke 10:30-37; Matt 8:14-17; Mark 10:46-52; Matt 23:37-39.

<sup>4</sup>Matthew 28:16-20

<sup>5</sup>See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 389-393. The phrase *missio Dei* was coined by Karl Barth and it literally means "God=*Dei*, sent=*missio*"; that is, the Trinity sending the church into the world. See also Darrell L. Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A Theological Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

<sup>6</sup>See John 1:1, 3a, 14.

<sup>7</sup>For example, see Jesus' prayer for the first-century disciples and for us in John 17: 17-23.

<sup>8</sup>See Deuteronomy 16:16.

<sup>9</sup>*Turn to the Living God: A Call to Evangelism in Jesus Christ's Way*, A Resolution Adopted by the 203rd General Assembly (1991) for Study and Implementation, Published by The Presbyterian Church (USA), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202, p.18. {PDS OGA 91018} This study document addresses what this brief preface cannot do, namely the tensions, issues and theology associated with faithful witness to persons of other living faiths.

<sup>10</sup>For instance, see 1 Corinthians 1:10-31.

<sup>11</sup>See *Acts 10*. See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 94-45, 120-121 for how the Gentile mission is coordinated to the Jewish mission.

<sup>12</sup>*Mark 10:43-35; Philippians 2:1-11*

<sup>13</sup>See *Turn to the Living God*, which states "as Christians our faith demands that we seek to build loving relationships with persons of other faiths. Where possible we work in solidarity with them in struggles for justice, freedom, peace, and human dignity"(p. 19).

<sup>14</sup>See "Models of New Church Development" in *The New Church Development Guide*, by H. Stanley Wood, CTS Press Publication in late 2001 or early 2002. See also the Columbia Theological Seminary Web site [www.CTSnet.edu](http://www.CTSnet.edu) and click on "Outreach Programs" and select "Center for New Church Development" and then "Models of New Church Development" for an expanded list of models. Please note "models" is used here in a descriptive manner and not as a prescriptive or one size fits all model.

### ***Messiah Now Ministries***

was founded in 1936 through a national vision to minister among Jewish people. The Ministry publishes *Messiah Now* magazine, provides community programs, educational ministry during Sunday school and services, and engages in new congregational development. Rev. Andrew Sparks, Executive Director, speaks at churches on the Jewish heritage of Christianity, offers Jewish holiday presentations, and addresses presbyteries on the significance of Jewish ministry for the Church. The Ministry has a Board of Directors represented by three presbyteries and two synods, and is presently forming a National Board of Reference. If you are interested in discovering more about the Ministry or scheduling a speaker, please contact the ministry offices at (215) 568-1030 or [messiah@messianahnow.com](mailto:messiah@messianahnow.com). *Messiah Now Ministries* is solely supported by individuals and congregations.

# Jewish Ministry

By Andrew Sparks

## Jewish Ministry in Context: A Modern Messianic Identity and Practice

An exploration of the cultural context of the first century is essential for understanding ancient messianic Jews. Many of these messianic Jews were excommunicated from synagogues and had to find community identity elsewhere. This process of exclusion began during Jesus' ministry as the Apostle John records "that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22). For centuries after Jesus came to earth, God provided community for these ostracized and marginalized believers through messianic congregations.

In the twenty-first century, messianic Jews struggle with the same problems when coming to faith. They often lose connection with Jewish friends, relatives, and the larger Jewish community. This rejection of messianic Jews on a personal and corporate level raises to the surface pressing concerns. Questions emanate from the hearts of these beleaguered messianic believers. What does it mean to be a Jew? What does it mean to live like a Jew? Since their legitimacy as Jews has been questioned by the Church and the Synagogue, their Jewish identity and Jewish practice remain primary concerns.

In the first century, Jewish communal and individual identity functioned together. In time, these individual and communal aspects of Jewish identity became divided for messianic Jews. The Church eventually rejected the cultural dimensions of messianic Jewish life. Messianic Jews became an amorphous people as they were compelled to leave their cultural roots.

This displacement of Jewish religious culture has persisted in some sectors of the Church. Antinomian tendencies and supersessionist theologies<sup>1</sup> have left Jewish people with an unfortunate option: "Leave my cultural heritage and receive Jesus." The cause of this false dichotomy between believing in Jesus and being Jewish can be traced to creedal formulations in the Early Church. For example, the following confessional oath was forced upon Jewish people who laid claim to Jesus as their Messiah.

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I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads and sacrifices of lambs of the Hebrews, and all the other feasts of the Hebrew . . . . in one word, I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom . . . . (Profession of Faith, from the Church of Constantinople: From Assemani, Cod. Lit., I, p.105)

Anything Jewish and even table fellowship with Jewish people were forbidden by this oath. Thus, the Church, influenced by Roman aversion for the Jews, pronounced that Jews, in order to believe and follow Jesus, had to renounce all Jewish relations and practices.<sup>2</sup> These ancient messianic Jews became wandering Jews who had no place in the synagogue and were treated by the Church as second-class citizens and stripped of their Jewish identity.

Everyone who comes to Jesus should be willing to leave all for the Gospel, including culture and custom, if necessary. But why raise a cultural stumbling block that God has not put there? One of the lessons the Church has learned in modern times is to value the cultural heritage of all its membership and to encourage diversity. This is a lesson that the Church of the first century knew instinctively.

The Jerusalem Council ruled that Jewish customs were not to be forced on the Gentiles (Acts 21:25). These Jewish Apostles and elders maintained that Jewish culture should not stand in the way of the Gentiles receiving the Gospel. Likewise, in modern times, Gentile culture should not discourage Jewish people from receiving Jesus. The ruling of the Jerusalem Council remains in effect: culture must not hinder the gospel.

Surely, the first-century Jewish person did not reject Jewish religious practice in order to receive Jesus. Therefore, the twenty-first century Jewish person should not be required to cast off his or her heritage in order to follow Jesus. The choice between believing in Jesus and being Jewish is unnecessary since the New Testament provides a model for handling cultural diversity.

A biblical perspective of the relationship between culture and personal identity is revealing. In fact, God gives parameters in the form of divine principles that govern our cultural expression. One biblical principle that functions in this way is the principle of cultural embrace. The Apostle Paul teaches, "Was any person called as a Jew? Let them not become a Gentile. Has anyone been called as a Gentile? Let them not become a Jew" (1 Corinthians 7:18).

Paul's ultimate concern is that, "each man remain in that condition in which he was called" (1 Corinthians 7:20). He struggled to maintain that Gentiles did not need to become traditionally Jewish. At the same time, Paul calls for Jews to maintain their identity. For Paul, after a Jewish person believes in Jesus, he/she remains a 'Jew' and is not to 'become a Gentile.' This principle of cultural embrace was normative for all believers, both Jew and Gentile.

In the New Testament, Jewish individual identity also operated within the context of Jewish communal identity. Messianic Jews were called to embrace the culture of their community. Thus within this Jewish religious setting, the Jewish segment of the Early Church not only consisted of individual Jews, but became messianic Jewish communities.

A communal perspective of early messianic Jews manifests itself in descriptions of the Jerusalem Church. Acts records that the early messianic Jewish community gathered together as one people and distributed their wealth with the needy (Acts 4:32-35). Thus, as a united community, they reproduced a distinct version of the ancient synagogue system centering on care for the poor and messianic teaching and worship.<sup>3</sup>

### **Ancient Messianic Jews and Legal Identity**

Another aspect of Jewish identity is a positive view of God's commands. Just as every community has rules, i.e., a communal standard, the Jewish community has maintained a system of law, also known as Torah. In fact, Jewish communities from Moses to Maimonides have had an exalted view of law. The following account relayed in the Acts of the Apostles demonstrates that ancient messianic communities shared this perspective.

Acts records that when Paul reached Jerusalem after an extensive ministry trip, the Jerusalem Church warmly welcomed him. James and the other Apostles and elders had gathered to hear about what God had done through Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. Although the Apostles and elders praised God for Gentile ministry, a problem remained. They addressed Paul:

You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. (Acts 21:20-21)

The Apostles decided that this false rumor of Paul's rejection of Jewish custom and law needed to be extinguished. They direct Paul to quell the rumor by demonstrating the reality of his Jewish lifestyle of observance.

So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. Join these men, go through the rite of

purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law. (Acts 21:23-24)

In response to the apostolic counsel, Paul makes himself ritually pure and affirms his commitment to Jewish practice. At the same time, a distinction is made between the Jews and the Gentiles regarding Jewish custom. The Apostles and elders advise:

But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. (Acts 21:25)

Although the New Testament demonstrates that the first messianic Jews, including Paul, were observant of Jewish custom, Pauline passages that relate to Jewish practice are at times misconstrued. What may be overlooked is the primary reason for Paul raising the issue of law. Paul, almost exclusively, focuses on the relationship of law to salvation. He repeatedly demonstrates that the practice of the law is not essential for salvation for either the Jews or Gentiles. Law practice is a demonstration of the pre-existing saving work of God (Philippians 2:12-13). By such teaching, Paul promotes the ruling of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15.

The central concern of the Jerusalem Council was to counter the position held by some men from Judea: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). A similar position was taken by some of the messianic Pharisees of Jerusalem who said, "It is necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised and ordered to keep the Law of Moses" (Acts 15:5).<sup>4</sup> Yet the Jerusalem Council's ruling offers a contrary position: "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:11). Throughout his Epistles, Paul consistently advances the Jerusalem Council's ruling.<sup>5</sup> He accomplishes this task by refuting misuses of Jewish practice that were undermining the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. In particular, Paul's argumentation deals with the nature and fulfillment of Jewish practices.

One of Paul's main points concerning messianic fulfillment is that the figures, structures, and traditions found in the Old Testament foreshadow and anticipate the Messiah (Colossians 2:17). At the same time, this truth does not undermine the ongoing value of Jewish practice. Even though a Jewish practice has typological dimensions, the cessation of a practice is not dependent upon the arrival of its messianic anti-type. For Paul, a Jewish practice may continue to function as a pointing device once the Messiah has come. Messianic fulfillment does not obliterate a Jewish practice, but heightens its significance for the present community. One poignant example of this phenomenon is the Sabbath.

After Jesus' coming, the New Testament presents the Sabbath as a symbol of both *past* salvation in the Messiah (Hebrews 4:3) and *future* realities to come (Hebrews 4:9). The Sabbath also functions as a *present* practice for Israel and messianic Jews,<sup>6</sup> while symbolizing the greater reality of eternal rest at the consummation of all things. Furthermore, the Church continues to celebrate a corresponding day of rest and worship, even though the Sabbath is one of the "things which are a shadow of what is to come" (Colossians 2:16-17). The eschatological dimension of weekly worship reminds the Church that everlasting rest and worship await the people of God.

Circumcision is another case where Paul draws specific comparisons between a Jewish practice and its messianic fulfillment. He teaches that all believers are "circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of the Messiah" (Colossians 2:11). Believers in Jesus are further characterized as "the circumcision who . . . put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). By such comparisons, Paul stresses that the ultimate significance of the Jewish practice of circumcision rests in the Messiah. This symbolic reality remains the same even though the custom of circumcision continued to be practiced by the Jewish people including messianic Jews. Paul simply enhances the spiritual significance of Jewish practices by emphasizing their messianic dimensions. He does not promote their abrogation for messianic Jews as some have misunderstood Paul in his own time and ours.

After believing in Jesus, Paul did not become anti-traditional, but stood firmly against any *misuse* of the Law.<sup>7</sup> He does not denigrate his Jewish identity, but realizes that the Messiah is the center of his Jewish identity. On various occasions Paul proclaims his faithfulness to both the Messiah and his heritage: "I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14).

In the book of Romans, Paul further espouses the positive nature of Jewish identity. He states: "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2). Later in Romans, Paul offers seven advantages of being a Jew (Romans 9:4-5).

One benefit, which Paul repeats in these passages, is the gift of the Law. For Paul, this gift had abiding value. Like other Jewish believers of the first century, Paul continued to "observe and guard the law" (Acts 21:23-24). In fact, the Apostles and elders of the Jerusalem Church make sure that Paul's teaching was not misunderstood. The messianic Jews of the Diaspora<sup>8</sup> were not to be discouraged from walking "according to the customs" (Acts 21:21).

Paul tells his own people: "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors,

yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans" (Acts 28:17). In this instance, Paul describes himself as a faithful Jew to fellow Jews. Elsewhere, he affirms, "I have done nothing wrong against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar" (Acts 25:8). Paul's new-found messianic faith did not hinder the full expression of his Jewish identity.

Jewish practice took its rightful place in the life of this zealous Jew who belonged to an emerging messianic Jewish community. Thus, it is clear that the Jewish segment of the Early Church and Paul are in harmony over the observance of Jewish custom. In summary, the New Testament bears witness to the continuation of Jewish practice among early messianic Jews.<sup>9</sup>

### A Messianic Model of Ethics

The exploration of legal identity in ancient times also has implications for the present era. How believers structure their lives according to God's word has been a perennial concern of the Church. In fact, the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition has paid particular attention to this issue. In a past issue of *Theology Matters*, Randall Otto states, "Reformed theology has always maintained the interrelation of law and gospel, not the opposition of law and gospel."<sup>10</sup> The Second Helvetic Confession concurs, "The will of God is explained for us in the law of God, what he wills or does not will us to do, what is good and just, or what is evil and unjust. Therefore, we confess that the law is good and holy."<sup>11</sup>

While some Christian traditions value a practical use of the law, wide divergences of practice abound. Some of these practices reflect various approaches to law in the Church, while others demonstrate influence from modern and ancient forms of philosophical ethics. Even though assent may be given to a biblical ethic by the Church, an individual's ethic may be influenced more by philosophic, modern, or postmodern conceptions. A messianic model of ethics may help clarify the Church's orientation to an apostolic view of God's commandments. As a result, the Church may better understand the meaning of the apostolic admonition: "Keeping God's commands is what counts" (1 Corinthians 7:19).

The following brief analysis of the influence of ethical systems on the Church and the provision of an alternative messianic ethic contribute to the Church's increasing awareness of its Jewish foundations. As the modern messianic movement continues to grow, the Church may further appreciate its insights into various issues concerning praxis and theology. The Korean church has exemplified a prayer-centered Christian life and the Church of Asia provides insight into religious pluralism from living for centuries as a Christian minority community.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, messianic Jews are finding their own unique way to add to the corporate wisdom of the Body of the Messiah.

A comparison of ancient and modern philosophical ethics to biblical ethics is revealing. H.P. Owen contrasts the stages of ethical maturity derived from Hebrews 5:11-6:3 with a comparable development in Stoic philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Owen claims that the maturity espoused by the writer of Hebrews differs markedly from the Greek conception.

The writings of the philosopher Epictetus demonstrate the stoic conception of ethical maturity in the form of two progressive stages. In his essay, *the Beginning of Wisdom*, Epictetus discloses that one needs a decisive measure that is provided by philosophers. Then, learning must be followed by practice. The disciple must digest the principles he has learned and practice them in the sphere of moral choice.<sup>14</sup>

Biblical ethics, on the other hand, are built on divine absolutes that are to be compassionately applied. The Bible also emphasizes that a personal ethic rooted in God's commands is an essential part of maturity. One of the problems with modern conceptions of ethical maturity is that the ethical dimension of the individual is either diminished or warped. This ethical distortion occurs when a relative value system is derived solely from the individual. As a result, authoritative standards play a minor role in such constructions.<sup>15</sup> Even though modern forms of philosophy and psychology waver on value of divine standards, God calls for command-oriented living. Any philosophy or psychology that fails to recognize this divine dimension to ethics demonstrates ethical naïveté.

The divine revelation found in the New Testament reveals a relational model for ethical maturity that does not downplay the role of divine standards. In fact, a relationship with God through the Spirit enhances the ability to obey 'the teaching concerning righteousness'<sup>16</sup> and increases the overall effect and personal application of God's commands. In other words, the Messiah empowers and teaches people to live obediently and 'go on to maturity' (Hebrews 6:11). Ezekiel spoke of this messianic role in a prophecy concerning the New Covenant:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

The Messiah is the integration point between God's people and the Law. Jesus not only embodies the Law, but also softens the hearts of God's people and sends the Spirit to cause them to keep God's commands. In this way, the Messiah ensures and empowers covenant faithfulness to God's word.

This messianic perspective on the Law appears to be the same as that expressed from of old.<sup>17</sup> Love for God's commands is essential in both Moses' teaching in the Pentateuch and Jesus' teaching in the Gospels. In fact, Jesus' teaching challenges religious leaders who not only

broke the law with blatant disregard, yet also moved away from a relational approach to the law. They lacked the spirit of Psalm 119 that displays an inextricable link between honoring God's commands and an intimate relationship with God. Jesus captures this relational aspect in his messianic ethic: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

In conclusion, a sketch of a messianic ethic is offered. Although this approach is not fully developed, it provides a provisional starting point. A messianic ethic is derived from the entire canonical structure of the Old and New Testaments. It includes three distinct approaches to ethics that correspond to the tripartite canonical division of the Hebrew Bible. These approaches join with each other to form complementary models for structuring the spiritual and ethical life.

The law model is derived from the Torah, or first five books of Moses. Divine principles or laws form the backbone of the spiritual life. They provide absolutes that are to be applied compassionately and contextualized with modern cultural forms.

The second division of the Hebrew Bible, the Prophets, provides a renewal or revival model of spirituality. Acts of repentance, spiritual disciplines, and the sacraments all function as means of grace to continually restore God's people. These forms of renewal function as a constant prophetic call to return to God.

From the Writings or Wisdom literature, the third canonical section, comes forth a wisdom model. This model is expressed through the application of God's commands to the complexities of life. Divine principles and righteous standards are intricately woven into the fabric of life through a deeper understanding of human behavior and the world.

The law, renewal, and wisdom models of ethics and spirituality are all reflected in the New Testament. In fact, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount applies these three forms of ancient Jewish spirituality. The law model is reflected in Jesus' authoritative interpretation of the practice of various laws (Matthew 5:17-48). Jesus' teaching on money, giving, God's provision, and judgment demonstrates the wisdom model (Matthew 6:19-24; 7:1-5). The prophetic model is represented by Jesus' call for repentance and messianic restoration in light of looming divine judgment (Matthew 7:13-27).

If any one of these models is overestimated or devalued, the spiritual force of the whole counsel of God is diminished. The Apostle Paul unequivocally states, "All Scripture is inspired and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Thus, a messianic model uses the whole Bible including the Torah

as a resource for spiritual life. In contradistinction to revisionist models that either abrogate or diminish the value of God's commands, a messianic model recognizes the power and righteousness of the law. It does not engage in dichotomizing or bifurcating the Testaments, but seeks to apply biblical commands, wisdom, and spiritual renewal to modern and diverse settings in the twenty-first century.

Currently, one modern expression of the Jewish community consists of Jews faithful to Jesus as the Messiah and to the traditions that were handed down to them. As such, the ancient apostolic directives concerning legal identity have bearing on the practice of modern messianic Jews. This legal dimension of life continues to function as an integral part of personal and communal identity in a modern Jewish context. May the Church with one voice continue to say with Paul: "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12).

## **Jewish Ministry and Religious Dialogue: An Impasse or Pathway to the Future?**

Great injustices have been done to Jewish people by the Church that have resulted in fragile and estranged relationships between these communities. In addition, Jewish-Christian polemics of the past have too often produced more heat than light. As a result, the need is great for the contemporary Church to develop an authentic dialogue with Jewish people.

One of the ways to arrive at authentic dialogue is to better understand past and present developments in Jewish-Christian relations. Although this article is not intended to plot a detailed course of action for either of these communities, our prayer is that a critical examination of Jewish-Christian polemics will foster empathy and understanding. In the end, the Church and Synagogue will discover positive pathways to the future without repeating the mistakes of the past.

### **Messianic Faith in Tension**

The intra-Jewish polemic concerning Jesus is first recorded in the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> In essence, this conflict raged as an in-house debate between first-century Jews divided over a messianic figure.<sup>19</sup> According to Luke's Gospel, the synagogue attenders of Nazareth responded negatively to Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. Luke records, "all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things" (Luke 4:28). The Apostle Paul's words were also spurned by some Jews in his synagogue encounters. The Book of Acts describes religious opposition to Paul in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Thessalonica.<sup>20</sup>

Although these intra-Jewish debates occasionally took on a physical dimension, they failed to become racially oriented

in the first century.<sup>21</sup> Jewish people were on both sides of the issue. The New Testament record indicates that many Jews believed, in spite of those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah. According to Acts, "It came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks" (Acts 14:1).

After its apostolic foundation, the Church continued to develop and eventually became predominantly Gentile in membership and cultural orientation. The Council of Nicea marks a crucial turning point in the relationship between this dominant Gentile constituency and the Jewish membership of the Church. The Gentile bishops representing the majority party chose not to invite the twelve Jewish bishops of the Church to this Council. With the unique developments of the fourth century, this bias intensified in the Church and became directed toward adherents of Rabbinic Judaism.

Until the fourth century the physical aspects to the messianic debate appeared to be one-sided as both Jewish and Gentile Christians consistently held to Jesus' teaching and example of non-violence.<sup>22</sup> Even if resistance was considered, the Christians were a very small minority without political influence or popular support. In time, however, the debate degenerated beyond a conflict over religious ideology into a battle connected to the social structure of the Roman Empire. Social order and political stability were at stake.

In conjunction with Emperor Constantine's acceptance of Christianity, the Church obtained a monopoly of religious influence in the Empire. The debate became a conflict waged between Jews who followed a form of Rabbinic Judaism and Gentiles who were a part of the socio-religious community of Rome. Furthermore, in reaction to the challenges of Rabbinic Judaism, the Church tended to avoid any association with Jewish people and practices. Once the Church had lost its Jewish mooring, it began to drift in a sea of indifference and distrust toward Jewish people.

### **Judaism in Crisis**

The historical development of the Jewish community is another component of the messianic debates. After the turbulent first century and the destruction of the Second Temple, Rabbinic ideology needed to be reformulated and adapted to the exigencies of a new socio-political context. An event of the second century that raised serious doubts about the value of messianism in the Jewish community is the Bar Kokhba Revolt. During this revolt, Bar Kokhba, who was recognized by many to be the Messiah, was expected to provide liberation from Rome. In fact, this leader was the last significant figure of this period who was regarded to be the Messiah by leading Rabbinic authorities.

In the aftermath of Israel's devastating defeat by the Romans, an anti-messianic sentiment grew within Judaism.<sup>23</sup> The long-standing traditions of Jewish



messianism during the Second Temple period metamorphosed at the dawn of this new era. Thus, by the second century CE, the pluralism of Judaism known in previous centuries gave way to a pharasaic lay movement. Rabbinic Judaism became formative Judaism, and speculation about God's near deliverance subsided.

One result of the messianic debates of this period is the influence that the debates exerted on the interpretive trajectory of Jewish and Christian communities. Previously, the Judaisms of the first century, including the seminal development of Christianity, understood messianic texts in line with the exegetical tradition of the Second Temple period (520 BCE to 70 CE). In particular, one of the main springs of this messianic-eschatological vision is the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha.<sup>24</sup> As the Early Church appropriated these expressions of messianism in line with ancient Jewish interpretation, Rabbinic Judaism eventually offered a counter-response.

One Rabbinic response was to challenge the meta-narrative of the Gospel account. This task was difficult since the Gospel accounts possessed eyewitnesses and the Rabbis lacked a positive counter-story. More common responses included the expulsion of messianic Jews from synagogues, the provision of alternative interpretations of messianic texts, and the formation of a body of literature that reoriented Judaism. In fact, some scholars have argued that the Mishnah, which was written in 200 CE by Rabbinic authorities, was designed to respond to the dangers of rampant messianism. Both the Jewish revolts with their messianic connotations and the perceived threat of the New Testament with its distinct messianism may have influenced this shift from oral forms of tradition to the written form of the Mishnah.<sup>25</sup> Although this construction may be an oversimplification, Rabbinic Judaism with its Mishnah and Christianity with its New Testament emerged as two opposing heirs of first-century Judaism.

In the case of Rabbinic Judaism, it espoused a non-apocalyptic and non-messianic vision. Pseudepigraphal and apocryphal writings were rejected and further eschatological speculation ceased. Rabbinic authorities also formed an interpretive grid that stabilized and protected Judaism from outside forces. For example, unacceptable messianic beliefs were assuaged to avoid the potentially destructive results of aspiring to political independence. Motivated by the desire to perpetuate Jewish survival through social and religious stabilization, Jewish exegetes alleviated their communities of a messianic consciousness.

This orientation to the messianic debates has revealed how social and ideological forces have undergirded the development of Jewish-Christian polemics. One Jewish community (early Christianity) was pitted against another (early Rabbinic Judaism). Christianity became a messianic-oriented community while Rabbinic Judaism reasserted the place of law in the life of the individual and community.

## First-Century Jewish Polemics

In order to receive a fuller picture of Jewish-Christian polemics, concrete examples are now offered from the Early Church period, the Middle Ages, and the Modern period. The following synopsis of the messianic debates also highlights representative Jewish figures for each period. Although the apologetic strategies vary for each time period, many similarities will become apparent.

The representative figure of the first century is Philo Judaeus, a Jewish philosopher and exegete. Although he did not directly enter the messianic debates, he demonstrates how distinct forms of Judaism synthesize with a foreign culture. In this sense, Philo's apologetic to the Greeks is a Jewish forerunner to the apologetical and theological roots of Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

Philo held that Judaism, at its deepest level, has a correspondence with Greek philosophy. He engaged in an intermixing of Judaism and Greek philosophy by borrowing from Plato's theory of ideas, form-matter schema, and Logos concept.<sup>27</sup> Two of the specific ways by which Philo makes Judaism palatable to the Greek mindset are through his unique development of the Logos concept, and the relationship between natural law and divine law.

For Philo, God is unknowable, unnamable, and incomprehensible. His solution to this dilemma is the Logos. This Logos, who is both created and uncreated, is a mediator that brings God to humanity. In other words, the Logos functions as a 'messiah' to save humanity through the divinely-aided development of reason. Not surprisingly, Philo's final stage of human development is "an advanced form of intellectual vision approximating to union with the Godhead."<sup>28</sup>

Philo also makes Judaism a viable solution for the Greeks by aligning biblical law with natural law. Edwin Goodenough comments:

When one turns to Philo's notion of Jewish Law it is clear that Jewish apologetic fervor has been the inspiration of this intensified stress upon Law in general. By magnifying Law, and by orienting Jewish Law with Natural Law as the Law of God, the Jew could present his religion as the solution of the Greek problem, or of the mystic search of the Hellenistic Age.<sup>29</sup>

Along with the Rabbis who redefined community on the basis of Torah, Philo polemicizes law.<sup>30</sup> In fact, Philo's use of the law of nature parallels the rabbinic development of 'oral law' in that both operate on the same assumptions. Like Philo, a rabbinic authority "depends upon the autonomous moral consciousness as his ultimate standard of right and wrong."<sup>31</sup> This 'progressive ethical consciousness' underlies both approaches to law. R. Herford describes Judaism's effective use of oral law, i.e., Unwritten Torah:

The conception of the Unwritten Torah is the key to all the subsequent development of Judaism along the rabbinical line; indeed, without it there could hardly have been any development. What it did was to make possible an ethical advance in the teaching given, not merely by putting a higher construction on older teaching of less ethical worth, but by actually annulling an express command in the written Torah and replacing it by a halachah in accordance with a higher moral standard.<sup>32</sup>

### Jewish-Christian Polemic in the Middle Ages

By the Medieval Period, the Church and Judaism had clearly parted ways and traveled along separate trajectories. At the same time, the messianic debates of the Middle Ages show a continuous stream of apologetics that began in the first century CE. Just as the issues of messianism and law divided early Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, these primary differences were repeatedly debated in the late Middle Ages. A. Lukyn Williams states,

Everyone knows that Justin Martyr wrote in the middle of the second century a *Dialogue with Trypho* . . . . But most readers stop there, and many even suppose that Christians did little more by their writings to convince Jews of the truth until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The fact, of course, is that innumerable treatises were composed throughout the whole interval.<sup>33</sup>

From Justin Martyr to Origen<sup>34</sup> and throughout the Middle Ages, the Church responded to Judaism's rejection of Christian messianism. In fact, both sides rose up against the other in polemic. By the end of the Middle Ages, Judaism was put in a position of toleration and Jews experienced either forced conversions or expulsion in some countries. In the midst of increasing anti-Judaism, the messianic debates continued.<sup>35</sup>

One debate of the twelfth century involved Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, also known as Nachmanides or Ramban, and Fra Paulo, a messianic Jew of the Dominican Order. This debate provides a window into the apologetic typical of the late Middle Ages. Nachmanides' own account of the debate documents the proceedings. He responds to the command to debate with Fra Paulo:

So all of them gave their consent to my speaking freely . . . . And so we agreed to discuss first of all the subject of the Messiah—whether he had come already as the Christian belief affirms or whether he is yet to come as the Jews believe.<sup>36</sup>

Nachmanides records that the debate began with Fra Paulo “saying that he would prove from our Talmud that the Messiah of whom the prophets had witnessed had already come.”<sup>37</sup>

Fra Paulo's strategy was to prove his points through citations from the Talmud, a document that expressed

unparallel authority for Rabbinic Judaism. This ‘oral law,’ was supposedly delivered by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai and later written down during the second through sixth centuries CE. However, the actual purpose of the Talmud was to set a trajectory for reinterpreting and reapplying Old Testament law and tradition for developing Jewish communities. In addition, the Talmud legitimized and authorized rabbinic views on various theological, social and political issues.

One Talmudic precept is the explicit rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. In fact, Nachmanides correctly claims that the Talmud stands opposed to Jesus. He proclaims,

Why did they [Talmudic Rabbis] not apostatize and turn to the religion of Jesus as has done Fra Paulo who understands from their sayings that the Christian faith is the true faith? Far be it so! But he [Fra Paulo] has gone and apostatized on the ground of their [the Rabbis'] words, while they and their disciples who received the law from their lips lived and died Jews as we today are!<sup>38</sup>

Fra Paulo's approach marks a change of tactic in the Talmud's treatment by Christian apologists. Prior to this debate in 1263, Talmuds were burned in response to the verdict of the Trial of the Talmud in Paris. Instead, Fra Paulo appeals to the Talmud as a source to prove his points, and thereby concedes to it a certain degree of authority.

In answer to the question of who the Messiah is from the Talmud, one might refrain, ‘Which messiah?’ By seeking to ‘prove’ from the Talmud that Jesus is the Messiah, Fra Paulo fails to recognize that the Talmud is not a systematically organized tome, but a book full of various competing theologies and messianic views.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the Talmud had already responded to Christian messianism and functioned as a counter-authority to the New Testament. Although Fra Paulo did not give the Talmud the same weight as Nachmanides, Fra Paulo's appeal to ‘our Talmud’ presents a compromise that his able Jewish debater wields to his advantage. Nachmanides, a Talmudic master, understood his traditions in their historic context, while Fra Paulo, a novice in Talmudic study, took citations from the Talmud out of context which were never intended to refer to Jesus. In today's dialogue, Christian and Jewish communities would do well to first understand and value each other's traditions on their own terms before engaging in premature comparisons.

The esteem to which orthodox Jews attach to Nachmanides' success in this debate is not surprising. Berel Wein states:

To our very day, no other Jewish religious leader of the caliber of the Ramban [Nachmanides], represented our case. Those who presume to speak for Judaism in today's dialogues would do well to read the record of this dialogue seven centuries ago.<sup>40</sup>

## Jewish-Christian Polemics in the Modern Period

Even though the modern period of Jewish thought is complex and vast, a few representative figures will suffice. The following excerpt describes the profound influence which Martin Buber, a prominent Jewish philosopher, has exerted on the modern era.

It is generally agreed that Martin Buber must be reckoned one of the foremost religious thinkers of the twentieth century. Emil Brunner in Switzerland has said that Buber's discovery and analysis of the *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships constituted 'a "Copernican revolution" in the thinking not only of Europe but of the whole of mankind.' Reinhold Niebuhr in America has described him as 'the greatest Jewish philosopher of our time' and called the appearance of his little book *I and Thou* 'a great event in the religious life of the West.'<sup>41</sup>

According to Buber, Jesus is 'a great son of Israel'<sup>42</sup> and 'my great brother.'<sup>43</sup> He even claims that Jesus' identity is no mystery since the Jews know Jesus 'from within.' They know him "in the impulses and stirrings of his Jewish being, and in a way that remains inaccessible to the peoples submissive to him."<sup>44</sup> Buber also interprets Jesus in accordance with the dialogical principle of his philosophy:

How powerful, even overpowering, is Jesus' I-saying, and how legitimate to the point of being a matter of course! For it is the I of the unconditional relation in which man calls his You "Father" in such a way that he himself becomes nothing but a son . . .<sup>45</sup>

Buber's existential philosophy and religious presuppositions led him to reject the notion that Jesus is the Messiah. For Buber, Jesus existed solely on the level of humanity. The Apostle Thomas's belief in Jesus's divinity and resurrection is also rebuffed by Buber, not on historical or anti-supernaturalist grounds, but based on his rejection of 'non-Jewish' ideology.<sup>46</sup>

A contrasting modern approach is demonstrated by H.J. Schoeps, a Jewish scholar who views Jesus as an accurate image of prophetic fulfillment.<sup>47</sup> Schoeps, however, does not accept that Jesus is the Messiah. Even though the major events of Jesus' life reflect prophecy, Schoeps holds that these events were either fabricated by the Apostles or were the contrived actions of Jesus who made it appear that he fulfilled messianic prophecy.

## Jewish-Christian Polemics in Comparison

Martin Buber and Hans Joachim Schoeps are only two of the many twentieth-century Jewish figures who have creatively interacted with Christianity. In comparison to each other, Buber's approach is to reinterpret texts and traditions in a way that is consonant with philosophical thought and normative Jewish religious ideology. Yet, with Schoeps, he treats Christianity as a false claim to a

legitimate prophetic tradition. In other words, Buber reformulates Jewish tradition to appeal to a modern philosophical mindset, while Schoeps denies Christianity's claims and remains faithful to ancient Jewish beliefs.

Like other modern approaches, Buber and Schoeps reflect a correspondence to Jewish apologetics of earlier periods. Like Philo, Buber remodels Judaism to appeal to external cultural forces and ideology. In the case of Schoeps, his dependence on Jewish prophetic authority is reflected in how Rabbinic Judaism reacted to an internal social crisis by plundering indigenous Jewish legal traditions. In summary, some Jewish apologists change Judaism from the outside-in and others change it from the inside-out. Regardless, change results in new meaning and new perspectives on messianism, the biblical text, and Judaism.

This examination of Jewish apologists throughout the ages also reveals other features of their apologetic method. For Philo, the allegorical method of interpretation allowed him to change the meaning of the biblical text to accord with Greek thought forms. Yet, for ancient Rabbinic Judaism, its objective was to stabilize and reformulate Judaism in the wake of the destruction of the Temple in the first century, and expulsion from Israel in the second century. A re-emphasis on law through developing legal traditions and a diminished view of messianism provided a solution. In the case of Buber and Schoeps, they simply reapplied these Jewish apologetic impulses to their modern setting in their rejection of Jesus' claim to be the Messiah.

The ancient Church, in its own way, developed through apologetic means as evidenced by theological councils, the canonization of Scripture, and the Hellenization/de-Hebraizing of religious tradition. Both the calling of councils and canonization arose as apologetical responses to heresies and disputes. Even the de-Hebraizing of tradition was partially in reaction to Rabbinic Judaism's apologetics and counter claims.

In the modern period, the Church continues to develop in response to culture and philosophy and through interaction with other faiths. What was once called Jewish-Christian polemic began to be called Jewish-Christian dialogue.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the Church became more cognizant of its religious presuppositions and certain sectors of the Church began building relationships with the Synagogue.

This new-found respect between Judaism and Christianity in modern times should not obscure each religion's distinctive. Without bypassing or broadening each faith's approach to God, the spirit of religious tolerance has been a welcome sight to many in the Church and Synagogue. Religious pluralism and theological universalism has also affected the way some in the Church perceive other religious perspectives. This development has been met by concerned voices from theologians and missiologists of the Church.<sup>49</sup>

## A Call to Service

The response of the Church in the modern era must be one of compassion and service. The Church can come together in the area of ministry, even though different theological positions exist. Jesus calls the Church to become “fishers of men and women.” The Church should not remain on shore and simply compare the size and quality of its nets with fellow religionists. The Church should not simply act like religious professionals who enter into treaties over fishing rights by agreeing not to fish in each other’s waters. Jesus calls the Church to cast its nets overboard into the world and to every nation and people. God’s love is not limited to a select people group or nation, but should overflow from the Church to everyone. The call of the Church is to compassionately engage those of other faiths in a spirit of love and obedience to God. In the midst of a myriad of voices, the Church offers an authentic, moving and holistic experience of Jesus the Messiah.

Due to assimilation and the decline of Judaism, many Jewish people are exploring alternative forms of spirituality. In fact, most American and Israeli Jews no longer consider themselves under strict Talmudic authority and three-fourths of the Jewish population is unaffiliated with any synagogue. In addition, over half of all Jewish people are intermarrying and unprecedented numbers are turning to other faiths. In light of this new-found openness and interest among Jewish people, may the Church set a new standard and move beyond the perspectives and ways of the past. So that it might not hear again these words: “There is too much substance in the Jews’ complaint that Christendom has hidden the face of Christ from them.”<sup>50</sup>

## Jewish Ministry in the First and Twenty-First Centuries

The earliest witnesses to Jesus’ ministry on earth record that Jesus came to redeem the people of Israel. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus comes to his own people and spiritually restores Jewish communities throughout Israel with a messianic belief.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. God has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David. (Luke 1:68-69)

The Gospel of Matthew also bears witness to this reality. Jesus is portrayed as the builder of a messianic Jewish remnant as he leads a growing band of Jewish disciples. Although the Gospels only account for the seminal development of this new messianic community arising within Israel, the seeds for a lasting ministry to Jewish people are planted through Jesus’ teaching. Matthew records,

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ (Matthew 10:5-6)

## The Jewish Great Commission

The *Jewish Great Commission* is contained in these words, “Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” By this sending action Jesus becomes the founder of a messianic movement to restore the hearts of Israel to God. What begins with 12 disciples grows to 70 and multiplies to 120 and eventually to thousands of Jewish believers. By these means Jesus establishes a growing Jewish remnant that continues long after his earthly presence. In fact, the *Jewish Great Commission* was intended to remain in effect until the Second Coming.

Jesus highlights the perpetual nature of Jewish ministry:

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. (Matthew 10:23)

We are living in this divinely-established time frame between the First and Second Comings. Jesus’ message for our age is the same: *we must not stop sharing the Kingdom message with all people including Jewish people until he comes again.* Ministry to ‘the lost sheep of Israel of the house of Israel’ will not end until God’s people finish going through ‘all the towns of Israel.’

The Church as a whole can praise God that Jesus eventually expands his call to Israel with a call to reach all nations with the Gospel message. In time, the Jewish Apostles responded in obedience to Jesus’ teaching by sharing their new-found faith with Gentiles. Matthew records Jesus’ *Great Commission*:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ (Matthew 28:18-20)

The Gospels record that the *Jewish Great Commission* of Matthew 10 began with the sending out of the twelve to gather in a Jewish harvest. The significance of the *Great Commission* of Matthew 28 is simply the expansion of the horizons of outreach to include all nations. At the same time, it should be understood that the Gentile inclusion of the *Great Commission* in no way annuls the directives of the *Jewish Great Commission*. Israel is certainly one of those nations or people groups that Jesus speaks of in the

*Great Commission* of Matthew 28. Jesus commands, “Make disciples of all nations.” Jesus’ compassion encompasses all people including the race of people from which he was born and with whom he identified.

Jesus further explains the meaning of the *Great Commission* when he tells his disciples, “You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). As Jesus determined, the Church’s fulfillment of the *Great Commission* begins in Jerusalem as the Gospel spreads and disciples are raised up in Judea. The Church is born as the Holy Spirit falls upon the 120 disciples who had gathered for prayer in the upper room at Jerusalem. On that momentous day of Pentecost in approximately 33 CE, the first fruits of a Jewish harvest were initiated as 3,000 Jewish people came to faith. These Jewish believers in Jesus then gathered and grew into congregations. As a result, the earliest form of the Church consisted mainly of the Jewish Apostles and the early Jewish followers of Jesus.

The book of Acts stresses the continuity between Jesus’ ministry and the apostolic ministry of the Early Church. The Acts of the Apostles begins with these words: “All that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). The inference is that the following works of the Church recorded in Acts are the continuation of Jesus’ work on earth. These works include the spreading of the Gospel message and the formation of religious communities of messianic faith among Jewish and Gentile peoples.

Acts 20:20 functions as 20/20 corrective vision for any conception of ministry that strays from the Early Church’s ministry model. The Apostle Paul says,

I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus. (Acts 20:20-21)

In this passage, Paul, one of the first great itinerant preachers and congregational planters, shares his approach to ministry. Paul’s custom was to offer the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile with the goal of forming a congregation. Paul pressed on until he developed house churches in every city where he resided. He reached Jews and Gentiles and, as a result, congregations were formed.<sup>51</sup> The names of Paul’s many epistles canonized in the New Testament bear witness to this growing circle of congregations. The Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians reflect the extent of his ministry to Jews and Gentiles across the Roman Empire.

The Church has this same privilege and responsibility of sharing their faith with everyone irrespective of race, creed, or color, including Jewish people. For this reason, in 1908, a number of Presbyterian ministers decided to share their

faith with their Jewish friends. The Board of National Missions shared this concern and established Jewish ministry branches throughout the country in conjunction with local presbyteries.<sup>52</sup>

## **The First Messianic Congregations**

The New Testament records that the Jewish segment of the Early Church gathered to form Jewish-oriented worshipping communities both in Israel and in the Diaspora. As such, this early period of church history marks the beginning of messianic congregations that functioned as part of larger Jewish communities. Examples of this communal identity are recorded in Acts and include worship at the Temple in Jerusalem and the celebration of national Jewish feasts and holidays.<sup>53</sup> Apparently, these early believers ministered and worshipped in a Jewish setting and functioned within the context of the Jewish community.

Early messianic communities were also a part of Paul’s remnant theology in Romans 11. As messianic Jewish communities, they were branches of the larger tree of Israel and lived in connection with the larger Jewish community. The Apostles intended for their restored remnant of Israel to grow and fill the ranks of the larger community of Israel. In Pauline terms, the full expression of this expanding messianic Jewish remnant will be seen at the culmination of God’s salvation plan when “all Israel will be saved.”<sup>54</sup>

The history of the Early Church also demonstrates the existence of this distinct messianic Jewish community. For centuries after the foundation of the Church, these Jewish-oriented congregations spread geographically, became part of the larger Church hierarchy, and were represented by Jewish bishops. Progress has been made in tracing the history of the Early Church that gives full weight to its Semitic roots. Gilles Quispel, one of the leading authorities on Jewish Christianity, provides a much-needed corrective to historical treatments that have undervalued this Jewish heritage. Quispel summarizes the findings of ‘the new image of the history of the Early Church.’

In the first place it [the new image] shows them that the Christian religion is not to be identified with the western world. As a matter of fact Aramaic speaking Christianity [also known as Jewish Christianity] and the patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon ruled over a territory from Cairo to Peking and from Siberia to Ceylon. In the second place our students ought to know that Christianity has been interpreted in several ways . . . if Rome stressed the legal aspects of the new religion, and the Greeks developed an ontological interpretation of God and Christ, the Syrians were not very interested in dogmatic strife, at least until Ephrem Syrus in the fourth century, and conceived their faith rather as a Way, a way of life.<sup>55</sup>

Quispel further explains that in places where no Jewish Academies existed, “the Christian missionaries were very

well received by local Jews.” Quispel’s description of the activity of the Jewish segment of the Church from the first through the fourth century is illustrative:

It would seem that the Jewish Christians in these regions [Persian Empire] could develop and proselytize under more favorable conditions than their Gentile Christian co-religionists in the Roman Empire. They did not meet with the stubborn opposition among the Jew . . . . Moreover their relations with the authorities seem to have been rather satisfactory, especially under the Arsacides, but also under the Sassanide. All this was reversed about at the time when the Gentile Church was made free by Constantine. And in the following period the Christians in the Persian Empire as often as not seem to have been persecuted, because the Christians in the Roman Empire had become the special favorites of the emperor.<sup>56</sup>

### Modern Messianic Congregations

For centuries after the foundation of the Early Church, the planting of messianic congregations continued with success. Both the New Testament and the history of the Early Church demonstrate the expansive growth of these congregations. Thus, Apostolic practice and church history reveal that Jewish ministry mainly took place in the context of planting messianic Jewish congregations. The next step is to determine what this apostolic testimony to messianic congregations means for the Church today.

The existence of ethnic congregations is not a phenomenon relegated to the past. The current landscape of the Church includes African American, Spanish, Pakistani, American Indian, and Korean churches spread throughout America. Such churches recognize the significance of their ethnic heritage and contextualize their worship. The results of these growing ethnic churches are staggering! One example is the house church movement in China. Religious persecution from the Communist regime has failed to derail the Chinese church from a course of congregational planting. Chinese Christians have planted countless house churches and, in return, have multiplied to over 50 million believers in a short period of time.

In addition to the hundreds of independent messianic congregations, a broad spectrum of denominations has planted messianic congregations. These include the Assemblies of God, Lutherans, Baptists, and Presbyterians. In fact, some of the earliest and most substantial work in congregational planting was done by Presbyterians. By the mid-twentieth century, a network of Presbyterian messianic congregations could be found in Baltimore, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Los Angeles and Chicago Presbyteries engaged in these initiatives and chartered messianic congregations. In Philadelphia, the First Hebrew

Christian Congregation, presently known as Congregation Beth Messiah, was formed.

Currently, the Presbyterian Church provides a model for planting these congregations in a national publication called *The New Church Development Guide*. As Dr. H. Stanley Wood has stated in the foreword,

The Messianic Jewish Congregation (NCD) is used when a presbytery seeks to be a faithful witness to the roots of the Judeo-Christian tradition in a presbytery where there is a large Jewish population . . . . Twentieth century Presbyterian Messianic Jewish ministry has grown out of a Presbyterian effort to share the love and claims of Jesus, the Messiah with a religiously and culturally diverse Jewish population in a major urban center.

Presbyterian Jewish ministry is presently coming alongside the Presbyterian Church’s national vision for congregational planting by encouraging support for the planting of messianic congregations across the nation. The author of this article, a member of Philadelphia Presbytery and Executive Director of *Messiah Now Ministries*, is engaged in extending this vision for congregational planting. The work of planting ethnic churches, including messianic Jewish congregations, remains a vital task of the Presbyterian Church.

Former approaches to various ethnic groups by the Church have tended to abstract people from their cultural identity and have inhibited the expression of ethnic diversity. Needless to say, the necessity of a cultural dimension to religious expression should be given due attention in modern Jewish ministry. The Presbyterian Church today values the organic link that exists between religion and culture and, therefore, supports the national development of African American, Native American, and Korean congregations.

Messianic congregations also provide a religious center to a distinct people group interested in maintaining its cultural identity. Thus, one of the positive features of planting ethnic congregations is the holistic nature of such ministry. Holistic ministry incorporates the cultural and societal dimensions of individuals and communities. It also recognizes that particular cultural practices are naturally expressed in a religious setting.

The contextualization of the Gospel offers untold spiritual growth and blessing for the Church and the Jewish people. May God raise up a messianic movement in the twenty-first century that goes even beyond the messianic movement of the first century. As God’s people follow the New Testament model and historical precedent for planting messianic congregations, the potential is limitless.

The words of Hugh Schonfield, in *The History of Jewish Christianity*, are a clarion call to the Church to continue Jewish ministry and a call to Jewish believers in Jesus to unite for the sake of their people. Schonfield states that the revival of Jewish ministry in the Church in the nineteenth century was a remarkable event.

It . . . paved the way directly for the reconstitution of Jewish Christianity as an organic spiritual community, not only because their high-souled efforts won thousands of Jews for Christ and so provided the living material for such a reconstitution, but because some of them sponsored and assisted the first hesitant steps of Jewish Christianity to unite with one another in a corporate existence. The debt of Jewish Christianity to the modern Protestant missions is indeed an overwhelming one, and can only be repaid . . . by the utmost endeavor to realize in function the vision of so many saintly Gentile Christians of a national Jewish witness for Jesus the Messiah that in the dark hour of almost universal unbelief would hold aloft the torch of faith, and fulfill the historic mission of Israel to the world by showing forth the pattern of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterian Church (USA) has determined that supersessionism demonstrates a disregard for Jewish people even to the extent that they are viewed as ‘cursed by God.’ ‘We believe and testify that this theory of supersessionism or replacement is harmful and in need of reconsideration as the church seeks to proclaim God’s saving activity with humankind’ [Statement of the 1987 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA)]. For further exploration of the impact of supersessionism on the Church and alternative theological models, see R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). Soulen states his objective: ‘Taking the contemporary churches’ rejection of supersessionism as its starting point, the book asks two questions: how deeply is supersessionism implicated in the traditional fabric of Christian theology? And how can Christians read the Bible and articulate their most basic convictions in ways that are not supersessionist? In short, how can Christians be really Christian without being triumphalist toward Jews?’

<sup>2</sup> Due to the influence of Rome’s pre-existing prejudice against the Jews, anti-Jewish tendencies infected the Church. Rome’s contempt for the Jews surfaces in the first century with the expulsion of the Jews by Emperor Claudius (Acts 18:2).

<sup>3</sup> James, one of the elders of the Jerusalem Church, writes in the New Testament, ‘My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus the Messiah, don’t show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your synagogue . . .’ (James 2:1-2). James uses the term synagogue (Greek, *sunagoge*, James 2:2) interchangeable with church (Greek, *ecclesia*, James 5:14) to refer to these early assemblies of the Jerusalem Church.

<sup>4</sup> This sub-group of the Jerusalem church is repeatedly referred to as the circumcision party in the New Testament (Galatians 2:12; Titus 2:10). Some of this party continued to promote their unorthodox teaching even after the Jerusalem Council’s ruling. Much of Paul’s teaching on law in Romans and Galatians relates to this ongoing debate over circumcision and Gentile salvation.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the record of Acts: ‘As Paul and his companions traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey’ (Acts 16:4).

<sup>6</sup> The Acts of the Apostles records Paul’s Sabbath custom: ‘On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer’ (Acts 16:13).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jesus’ teaching concerning the proper interpretation and application of the Law in Matthew 5.

<sup>8</sup> The Diaspora refers to any place where the Jews lived outside the land of Israel.

<sup>9</sup> There are some that teach that aberrant theology dominated early forms of Jewish Christianity. This perception is rather the product of ancient church historians who viewed the ongoing messianic forms of Christianity as

competing forces and undesirable in post-Constantinian Christendom. Modern scholarship has begun to restore the image of ancient Jewish Christianity. Jean Daniélou, in his work, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, establishes that amongst the heterodox Jewish Christians, the mainstream expression was ‘orthodox Jewish Christianity.’

<sup>10</sup> Randall E. Otto, ‘The Problem with Marcion: A Second-Century Heresy Continues to Infect the Church,’ *Theology Matters* 4 No. 5 (Sep/Oct, 1998): 4.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 12 (*Book of Confessions*, 5.080).

<sup>12</sup> See Scott W. Sunquist, ‘Asian Perspectives on Theological Pluralism,’ *Theology Matters* 5 No. 5 (Sept/Oct, 1999): 1-7.

<sup>13</sup> H.P. Owen, ‘The Stages of Ascent in Hebrews V. 11-VI. 3,’ in *New Testament Studies: An International Journal*, Vol. 3, ed. Matthew Black (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1956-7), 250.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> One modern example is the development of situational ethics.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching concerning righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about the Messiah and go on to maturity . . .’ (Hebrews 5:13-6:1).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the perspective of Reformed theology concerning the law. In addition to the role of the law as a revealer of sin and model for just societies, Reformed theologians refer to a third use of the law. This use of the law promotes the practical value of the law. The Ten Commandments are essential directives and the rest of the law generally functions as divine guidance for life.

<sup>18</sup> For a full discussion of the messianic debates, see Andrew Sparks, ‘The Servant Songs of Isaiah: Contrasting Ideologies and Conflicting Texts,’ STM Thesis (Yale University: New Haven, CT), 1999. This work is available through *Messiah Now Ministries* (contact information is on p. 3 of *Theology Matters*).

<sup>19</sup> Many of the early non-Jewish Christians who were a part of this debate viewed themselves as Jews and connected to Judaism. These are Gentiles who accepted Judaism to some degree, attended synagogues, and anticipated a coming Messiah. On numerous occasions, Paul refers to them as ‘fearers of God’ (Acts 13:16, 26, 43, 50; 17:4). James A. Sanders, a Presbyterian scholar, states: ‘What has become quite clear is that Jesus and all early Christians were Jews, whether by birth or by conversion. The term, Christian Jews, simply designates all early, first century Christians, whether born Jewish or converted to this particular sect of Judaism in the early first century, who believed in “the Way” [“The Hermeneutics of Translation,” *Explorations* 12 (1998): 1].’

<sup>20</sup> Acts 13.4, 50; 14.2, 9; 17.5-10.

<sup>21</sup> The New Testament and other early sources record the persecution of first-century messianic Jews by non-messianic Jewish authorities.

<sup>22</sup> One study that describes the early developments of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is Claudia J. Setzer’s *Jewish Responses to Early Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> This negative response to messianism is not surprising in light of the repeated failure of messianic aspirations.

<sup>24</sup> The Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha form a theological and hermeneutical bridge from the Hebrew Scriptures to the New Testament and other early expressions of Jewish messianism. Along with the Qumran Scrolls, this body of writings expresses various forms of messianism and a high degree of apocalypticism. The Targumim (Aramaic translations of the Old Testament) also reflect the majority opinion concerning the Jewish interpretation of messianic texts for this period. These translations represented the popular version of Scripture for the Jews who by the first century mainly spoke Aramaic. The Targumim are noted for their heavy emphasis on messianism and even add the term, ‘Messiah,’ to many passages. For example, Targum Jonathan at Isaiah 52:13 identifies Isaiah 53 as messianic with the inclusion of *meshiacha* (Aramaic for Messiah).

<sup>25</sup> The Mishnah, a codification of Rabbinic Judaism’s core legal traditions, demonstrates almost complete disregard for messianism.

<sup>26</sup> Christianity eventually sought to mesh biblical beliefs originally set in a Hebraic context with the philosophical principles of the Hellenistic world. Examples from the Early Church include creedal and theological development which use philosophical terminology and concepts. The theological works of Thomas Aquinas reflect the influence of Aristotelian philosophy on the Church in the late Middle Ages.

<sup>27</sup> Harry Wolfson explains that the Logos is ‘used by Plato in the sense of Nous, both as the mind of God which is identical with His essence, and as a created mind which is distinct from His essence . . .’ [*Philo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), I: 253].

<sup>28</sup> H.P. Owen, ‘The Stages of Ascent in Hebrews V. 11-VI. 3,’ 250.

- <sup>29</sup>Edwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), 72.
- <sup>30</sup>Cf. Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, who also offers an apologetic for Jewish law (*Against Apion* 2.145-296).
- <sup>31</sup>Cornelius Van Til, *Christ and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), 16.
- <sup>32</sup>R. Travers Herford, *Talmud and Apocrypha* (London: The Soncino Press, 1933), 73.
- <sup>33</sup>A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's Eye View of Christian Apologiae Until the Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge, 1935), xv.
- <sup>34</sup>For how Jewish-Christian polemics motivated Origen's vast projects in biblical scholarship, see S.P. Brock, "Origen's Aim as a Text Critic of the Old Testament," *Texte und Untersuchungen* 107 (1970): 215-18.
- <sup>35</sup>Gerhart B. Ladner, "Aspects of Patristic Anti-Judaism," *Viator* 2 (1971): 355-64; Amos Funkelstein, "Basic Types of Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Later Middle Ages," *Viator* 2 (1971): 373-82.
- <sup>36</sup>Moses ben Nachman, "The Disputation of Rabbi Moses Ben Nachman (Ramban) with Fra Paulo Christiani," in Oliver Shaw Rankin, *Jewish Religious Polemic* (n.p.: KTAV Publishing House, 1970), 179.
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 180.
- <sup>39</sup>For a compilation of various Rabbinic descriptions and views of the Messiah, see Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (New York: Avon Books, 1979).
- <sup>40</sup>Berel Wein, "Ecumenicism and Dialogue 1263 C.E.," in *The Real Messiah?: A Jewish Response to Missionaries*, ed. Aryeh Kaplan (New York: National Conference of Synagogue Youth/Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 1985), 48.
- <sup>41</sup>Bernard Martin, ed., *Great Twentieth Century Jewish Philosophers: Shestov, Resenzweig, Buber* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1985), 238.
- <sup>42</sup>Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 9.
- <sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.
- <sup>44</sup>Martin Buber, *Between God and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), 5.
- <sup>45</sup>Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 116-17.
- <sup>46</sup>Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 128. For a positive view of resurrection of an individual in Jewish tradition, see the work of the orthodox rabbinic scholar, Pinchas Lapide. Surprisingly, this orthodox Jew believes that Jesus actually rose from the dead, yet rejects his messianic claims. Cf. the Lubavitchers, the modern orthodox movement, who expect the resurrection of their recently deceased Rabbi.
- <sup>47</sup>Hans Joachim Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument: A History of Theologies in Conflict*, trans. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1961), 22. See also Schoeps' work on Paul in *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961).
- <sup>48</sup>Leon Klenicki and Geoffrey Wigoder, *A Dictionary of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984).
- <sup>49</sup>Carl E. Braaten states, "It is not enough to broaden the way of Christian salvation by speaking with Tillich of a 'latent church' or with Rahner of 'anonymous christianity.' These are convenient modern loopholes . . . Hick goes deeper and lays the ax at the Christological roots of exclusivism" ("The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," *Missiology* (Jan. 1980): 70-89). See also the work of the Presbyterian missiologist, Charles Forman, "Religious Pluralism and the Mission of the Church," *FIDES PRO MUNDI VITA (Missiontheologie heute)*, 247-256.
- <sup>50</sup>F.F. Bruce, as quoted in Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1954), 10.
- <sup>51</sup>Paul's ministry to the Ephesian Jews is highlighted in Acts 18:19; 19:8, 10. The membership of the Ephesian congregation included the Ephesian elders that Paul addressed in Acts 20.
- <sup>52</sup>An article on the historical development of Presbyterians and Jewish Ministry by Jonathan Kaplan may be viewed at [www.theologymatters.com](http://www.theologymatters.com), [www.messiahnow.com](http://www.messiahnow.com) and is entitled, "A Brief History of Presbyterian Ministry among Jewish People: 1820-2001."
- <sup>53</sup>For references to the Temple, see Acts 2:46-3:10; 5:42; 22:17. Paul's connection to his Jewish community is reflected in his concern to make the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8).
- <sup>54</sup>See Romans 11:26. The 1560 Geneva Bible's comment on Romans 11:15, 26 is illustrative of a 'Reformation vision' concerning Jewish people: "The time shall come that the whole nation of the Jews, though not every one particularly, shall be joined to the church of Christ."
- <sup>55</sup>Gilles Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968). See also Gilles Quispel, "Qumran, John and Jewish Christianity," *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990).
- <sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup>Hugh Schonfield, *The History of Jewish Christianity* (London: Kemp Hall Press, 1936), 209.



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