

*A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People*

# MISHKAN

*Issue 83, 2020*

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# MISHKAN

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# MISHKAN

A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

**ISSUE 83/2020**

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Dear *Mishkan* readers,

This issue of *Mishkan* will give you a glimpse into different topics, such as Messianic identity, the Messianic Movement and the Church in Germany, how to read the Bible, and new methods for identifying false Dead Sea Scrolls. And, as always, book reviews, “Thoughts from the Sidelines,” and “From the Israeli Scene.”

From Jerusalem, we want to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2021!

Happy reading!

The Caspari Center Staff, Winter 2020

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# **Jewish Christians, Messianic Jews, and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in Christian-Jewish Encounters since 1945: An Overview.<sup>1</sup>**

**Ulrich Laepple**

## **I. Key Points of the Subject**

### **1. Correcting an Erroneous Path**

One does not exaggerate when one realizes that the process of revision of the Christian-Jewish relationship in the Evangelical Church in Germany after the war marks a deep break in the history of theology and the Church. The process of correcting the old view of Judaism and Jewishness had a special dynamic. After hundreds of years of arrogance, devaluation, and persecution, mainly by the Church, this process was begun only hesitantly in Germany after the end of the war — in the face of the Shoah. Only with the Kirchentag in Berlin, 1961, and in a second far-reaching step with the declaration of the Rhenish Church in 1980, was the necessary dynamic achieved that has been irreversible until today.

This process was about insights that reached to the foundations of faith. Christianity, with its anti-Jewish attitude, had cut itself off from its roots in Israel. Above all, the Church had to become aware that she had loaded on herself heavy guilt vis-a-vis the Jewish people, almost throughout her entire history. She had been misled by the delusion that with this attitude she had the Bible and the Gospel on her side. And when the anti-Semitism of the Church had been intensified with a racially motivated anti-Semitism, the result was the Shoah. How did the German Church deal with this situation, especially after the Shoah? The astonishing answer is that the revision of the old view became possible only with the help of Jewish interlocutors, and thus has inaugurated a painful process of repentance and renewal.

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<sup>1</sup> The following article was first published in “Theologische Beiträge,” 50 (2019,5.6), 431–454. This English version has been slightly revised. All translations of German quotations have been delivered by the author.

The German member churches and their leading body, the German Evangelical Church (EKD), have put all their effort into it. In countless committees, at conferences and church synods, in studies and memoranda, the consequences were, often controversially, spelled out, be it about the attitude to the Old Testament, about the “chosenness of Israel,” “the untermminated covenant,” or about the theological significance of the State of Israel. Finally, a redefinition of the Christian–Jewish relationship has been largely achieved — up to the reformulation of basic paragraphs in the constitutions of the member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Jewish Christians and Messianic Jews — Disturbance of The Consensus?**

While the so-called “Jewish Christians” had been members of the main churches for decades, the modern self-designation “Messianic Jews” indicates that Jews of today who believe in Jesus, the Messiah, feel more part of Judaism and Israel than part of a traditional church. Although they share their belief in the Jew Jesus as the Messiah with all Christians, they usually are not members of traditional churches today, but build their own congregations. Nevertheless, they express the wish to live in ecumenical communion with the Churches.<sup>3</sup>

Irritations arose when the phenomenon of Messianic Judaism became more visible in the last 30 years. The challenge was (and still is) to clarify how this movement can be related to the process of the renewal of the newly achieved relationship between Christians and Jews. There are many voices in the Church that consider Messianic Jews incompatible and disturbing. And indeed, it has taken the German Church resp. her

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<sup>2</sup> The statement of the Rhenish Church: “Sie [sc. die Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland] bezeugt die Treue Gottes, der an der Erwählung seines Volkes Israel festhält. Mit Israel hofft sie auf einen neuen Himmel und eine neue Erde.” ([www.ekir.de/www/downloads/ekir2008arbeitshilfe\\_christen\\_juden.pdf](http://www.ekir.de/www/downloads/ekir2008arbeitshilfe_christen_juden.pdf), p.5) [The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland testifies to the faithfulness of God who holds fast to the election of his people Israel. Together with Israel she hopes for a new heaven and a new earth.] The Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau states: “Aus Blindheit und Schuld zur Umkehr gerufen, bezeugt sie (die Kirche) neu die bleibende Erwählung der Juden und Gottes Bund mit ihnen. Das Bekenntnis zu Jesus Christus schließt dieses Zeugnis ein.” [Being called to conversion out of blindness and guilt, she (the Church) testifies anew to the permanent election of the Jews and to God's covenant with them. The confession of Jesus Christ includes this testimony.]

<sup>3</sup> As to messianic Jews in Germany, see Stefanie Pfister, *Messianische Juden in Deutschland. Eine historische und religionssoziologische Untersuchung*, Berlin 2008; Hanna Rucks, *Messianische Juden. Geschichte und Theologie der Bewegung in Israel*, Neukirchen 2014; Richard Harvey, *Messianisch-jüdische Theologie verstehen. Erkundung und Darstellung einer Bewegung* (Edition Israelologie, Bd.7), Frankfurt 2016; Ulrich Laeppler, *Messianische Juden. Eine Provokation*, Neukirchen 2016.

member churches a very long time to find an official statement to this group of fellow believers. It has been, on the whole, negative and critical.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. Jewish Christianity — an Existential Place “in between”**

Little attention has been paid to the fact that Jewish Christians in Germany have been among the initiators and co-creators of the redefinition and renewal of the Christian–Jewish relationship after the war. As Jews who believe in Jesus, they were jointly affected with other Jews by the exclusion from society and the subsequent crimes in the so-called Third Reich. In addition, they have, in Germany, experienced the painful exclusion from the Church, which had been their spiritual home and often their employer, too. They have often experienced and seen their Jewish Christianity as a very special place, a place between Israel and the Church of the Nations. They were the ones who have reflected theologically on this special relationship long before the Jewish–Christian relationship had been put on a new foundation. They understood their existence “in between” as a vocation and a task to connect the Church of the Nations with Israel in such a way that she may come into contact again with her “root,” that is, with Israel and the God of Israel, the Hebrew Bible, and the Jewish Messiah. Thus, they became pioneers of a new Christian view of Judaism and Israel in solidarity with the Jewish people. In this sense, they were ready to serve the Church before and after 1945 in an impressive way and became co-creators of a new Christian–Jewish encounter.<sup>5</sup>

### **4. Just Past History?**

In almost two millennia we have become accustomed to a purely gentile Christian Church. One can easily forget that this fact goes back to a “defect” in the history of the Church when Jewish Christians were excluded from the Church as early as the 2nd century, along with “Christian” polemics against the Jews.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See below, V.3.

<sup>5</sup> In his collection of essays “Miterben der Verheißung. Beiträge zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog,” *Neukirchen* 2000, Bertold Klappert rightly considers K. Barth (390ff), D. Bonhoeffer (58ff), and H.J. Iwand (241ff) important precursors and preparers of the new relation between Judaism and the Church. All of them were known members of the “Confessing Church” during the Nazi period. The lesser known but also effective Jewish Christians on their side should not be forgotten, although their influence was often limited due to “racial” persecution, cf. below III,2.

<sup>6</sup> Polemics and exclusion were, however, mutual. See Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple. Jewish Influences on Early Christianity*, InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Along with the prevailing scholars, Werner Georg Kümmel does not see a “defect” in this separation that has accompanied the history of the Church. Instead, he considers this a normative fact: Judeo-Christianity has been possible “only as an indispensable, but to its unique historical task limited phenomenon.”<sup>7</sup> That is to say, the function of the antique Judeo-Christianity wears itself out in passing on the first Christian tradition. There is no expectation of a future Judeo-Christianity anymore.

“But we are there!” In his lectures the Messianic Jew Richard Harvey used this phrase for an often-unsuspecting gentile Church.<sup>8</sup> The fact that they are there urges the Church to deal with this fact in the same way as Church and theology had to learn that Judaism is not in the past but is a living and vital belief.<sup>9</sup> But the churches are struggling with the factual existence of Messianic Judaism, although they share central theological and practical positions concerning Israel. Since Messianic Jews are even more conscious of their Jewishness than the aforementioned Jewish Christians, it is not easy to understand why they are considered a disturbance to the renewal process. For it is precisely they who, according to Paul’s famous picture in the Epistle to the Romans (11:17ff), strengthen the connection with the Jewish “root” in the gentile Church.

So, what is irritating for the churches? That Messianic Jews were the result of “Jewish mission” or that they themselves are involved in it? But such information would be too general, superficial, and inaccurate. Many Messianic Jews are extremely critical of the classical “Jewish mission,” as Hanna Rucks has shown.<sup>10</sup> More serious is the fact that representatives of Judaism in general regard Messianic Jews no longer as Jews and therefore as apostates who *are* lost for Judaism. The fact that the Church sometimes seems to accept this view is a core problem in the current debate. But there are other voices. Prof. Michael Wyschogrod (1928–2015), formerly the leading spokesman for Orthodox Judaism in the USA, held the opinion: “I have nothing against Jews believing in Jesus as the

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<sup>7</sup> W.G. Kümmel, Art. *Judenchristentum* I, in: RGG III (1959), 971

<sup>8</sup> Cf. his lecture of the Evangelical “Kirchetag,” see below V.2

<sup>9</sup> The German notion “Spätjudentum,” which was used in theological language in order to mark the period of ancient Judaism, implicitly indicated that there is no Judaism after it. Today the word is rightly replaced by “Frühjudentum.”

<sup>10</sup> “As far as the practice of mission (‘Missionspraxis’) is concerned the messianic-Jewish domain is all but uniform.” And: “If we see ‘Jewish mission’ as an effort to make Jews Christians, i.e., to not only lead them to faith in Jesus Christ but to a non-Jewish way of life, we have to come to the conclusion that Messianic Jews are not the fruit of ‘Jewish mission.’” Hanna Rucks, *Reizwort Judenmission*, in: Ulrich Laepple (ed.), s. n. 3, 114 and 112.

Messiah if they live in Jewish life!”<sup>11</sup> Something similar can be read in writings by Pinchas Lapide.<sup>12</sup>

This leads to the question: What can Messianic Jews bring into the Church of the Nations today and in future that the Jews of the Synagogue cannot bring into her in the same way — despite the good relationship that has been achieved between the Synagogue and the Church?

## **II. “Jewish Christians are Representatives of Israel in The Church of Jesus Christ” (P. von der Osten-Sacken)**

In an essay published in 1982 with the title “Israel's Presence in the Church: the Jewish Christians,” Peter von der Osten-Sacken, one of the leading scholars in Christian-Jewish dialogue, makes a moving and astute plea for Jewish Christianity.<sup>13</sup> The title implies the programmatic thesis: Jewish disciples of Jesus are “the presence of Israel in the Church.” Von der Osten-Sacken considers it a “priority task of the Churches of the Nations . . . to help the representatives of Israel in the Church of Jesus Christ to shape their identity.” Their Jewishness should not disappear in the international Christian Church. Von der Osten-Sacken gives reasons for his thesis as follows:<sup>14</sup>

1. Jewish Christians are “seen by the gospel as Jews and as part of the Church of Jesus Christ.”
2. They are important and necessary for the gentile Church. Without the Jewish Christian part she is “cut off from the nourishing root in the ecclesiological sense.”
3. But Jewish Christians are also important for the People of Israel:
4. because Jewish Christians, if they are faithful to the Gospel as friends of Israel and of the nations, are first and foremost witnesses to what the Gospel proclaims as an initial reality in Jesus Christ, which, of course, the Church has all too often made a utopia: the foundation of peace between the People of God and the nations.

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<sup>11</sup> See Klaus Haacker, Umkehr zu Israel und “Heimholung ins Judentum,” in: *Versöhnung mit Israel. Exegetische Beiträge*, Neukirchen, 2002, 205, n. 29. As regards the classification of Messianic Jews from the Jewish side see Hanna Rucks, *Messianische Juden*, ibid., 477ff

<sup>12</sup> See Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Israels Gegenwart in der Kirche: Die Judenchristen*. In: “Grundzüge einer Theologie im christlich-jüdischen Gespräch”, München 1982, 154, n. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Von der Osten-Sacken, ibid., 144–167.

<sup>14</sup> The following quotations ibid., 155.

The growing awareness of the Jewish Christians, as described by von der Osten-Sacken as a bridge between Church and Israel, is not a truth without history, but grew in the period of National Socialism, in which Jewish Christians and Jews had been merged in a distressful way. This experience was so strong and the consequences were so clear to some prominent persons that they wanted to make sure the Church would not miss her responsibility to answer the “question about Israel” after 1945.

### **1. In the Shadow of the “Aryan Paragraph”**

When Peter von der Osten-Sacken calls Jewish Christians the “lonely representatives of Israel,” this reality is nowhere as clear a fact as in the National Socialist era. They were abandoned by the state and thus united in one fate with all Jews. But in addition, they often were left alone by the Church.

The struggle of the Confessing Church began as an inner-church struggle, sparked by the demand of the party of “the Deutsche Christen” that the Aryan paragraph of the state should also be applied to ministers (pastors) of the Church. The so-called “Braune Synode” (Brown Synod) of the Old Prussian Union of September 1933 (“brown” stands for “Nazism”) decided to apply this state law also to the Church. It mainly concerned pastors, but also church lawyers and church musicians of Jewish descent. In addition, according to their ideas, all Christians of Jewish descent should be excluded from the Evangelical Church and organized in Jewish Christian congregations of their own.<sup>15</sup> The Evangelical Church should be “racially pure.” Despite fierce arguments about the Aryan paragraph, the church leaders often showed half-hearted solidarity with their Jewish brothers. With the Barmen Theological Confession of 1934, the newly emerging Confessing Church did not have in mind the concrete protection of Jewish Christian church members, let alone of the other Jews. In the confession, they were not mentioned explicitly. In any case, the lack of opposition to the Aryan paragraph in the Church weakened the solidarity with the persecuted. Within the Church they found their advocates only in some outstanding people, who protested publicly.<sup>16</sup> But we should not

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<sup>15</sup> see Wolfgang Gerlach, *Als die Zeugen schwiegen. Bekennende Kirche und die Juden (Studien zu Kirche und Israel, Bd. 10)*, Berlin 1987, 60ff.

<sup>16</sup> Among them were Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Heinrich Vogel, Hans Ehrenberg, Karl Barth, and Marga Meusel with her memorandum in which she calls upon the Confessing Church “to draw the consequences (of the right dogmatic insight) and speak the redeeming word to their ‘non-Aryan’ brothers. Then she has to cope with their needs no matter what the consequences.” Gerlach, *ibid.*, 139.

forget the many hidden helpers within the congregations who showed practical solidarity in many ways.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Baptised to be a Christian — Persecuted as a Jew

In 2014, a commemorative book was published with the title *Evangelisch getauft – als Juden verfolgt. Theologen jüdischer Herkunft in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*.<sup>18</sup> Nikolaus Schneider, then chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, writes in its preface:

This commemorative book makes clear that the Protestant Churches have inflicted great damage on themselves by permitting the persecution of theologians of Jewish origin or by practicing it themselves. The Church lost people who, with their theological thinking, writing, and preaching, have given our churches valuable impulses and could still have given them... How, after 1945, some of the theologians were treated is irritating. And it is annoying that even after the end of the war the efforts of theologians of Jewish origin to get a pastorate repeatedly failed. Anti-Semitism had an ongoing effect in congregations.<sup>19</sup>

The book, with its 180 short biographies of Jewish Christian theologians, includes only a fraction of the Jewish Christians who had been affected and who suffered under the Aryan paragraph and the later Nuremberg Laws. Many were even killed.<sup>20</sup> At the time of the adoption of the Nuremberg Laws (1935), the number of Jewish Christians was estimated at around 300,000 in Germany.

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<sup>17</sup> See Heinz David Leuner, *When Compassion Was a Crime*, 1966.

<sup>18</sup> *Evangelisch getauft — als 'Juden' verfolgt. Theologen jüdischer Herkunft in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*. Ein Gedenkbuch herausgegeben von Hartmut Ludwig und Eberhard Böhm in Verbindung mit Jörg Thierfelder, Stuttgart, 2014. The expression “Theologen jüdischer Herkunft” (Theologians of Jewish descent) is problematic. It suggests that Jewish Christians consider their Jewishness something of the past and a matter that is (or should be) no longer important for them.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 7f. There are other publications commemorating Jewish Christians of the Nazi period, such as *Evangelisch getauft, als Juden verfolgt. Spurensuche Berliner Kirchengemeinden*, Berlin 2008, published by the former Berlin-Brandenburg Church.

<sup>20</sup> It does not seem that the “Aryan paragraph” (more exactly “Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtenstums” [Law on the Reinstatement of the Professional Civil Service] in itself was considered a greater problem for the Church as long as it affected “only” persons in the realm of the state. But when this paragraph was to apply to the Church, the moment had come when the “Pfarrernotbund” had to be founded (a network to help dismissed pastors). The members of this network signed a declaration that the application of the Aryan paragraph for and in the Church was not a marginal matter but hurt the integrity of the Christian faith, and therefore could not be accepted.

### **3. Germans, Jews, or Jewish Christians?**

Since Moses Mendelssohn had established the type “Germans of Jewish religion,” the hope arose that the old antagonism between Church and Synagogue could be overcome in an overarching national unity. Nevertheless, many had taken the seemingly safer path of being incorporated into the Christian Church through baptism.<sup>21</sup> As paradoxical as it may sound, it was only through the “racial” allocation from the outside as a “Jew” that numerous “Germans of Jewish origin” began to reflect about themselves. Even Jewish Christians became aware that they still belonged to the Jewish people. Together they found themselves defined “racially,” on the run, in concentration camps or in exile. Numerous Jewish Christians did not want to consider this fact simply an error but took it as an opportunity to theologically reflect on their existence “between Israel and the nations.”

Three Jewish Christians are presented here. Their contribution to the later Jewish-Christian dialogue was particularly outstanding.

#### *Hans Ehrenberg – “Why is The Church Silent?”<sup>22</sup>*

Hans Ehrenberg, a cousin of Franz Rosenzweig, was born in 1883 in an assimilated liberal Jewish family. He was baptized in 1909 and decided to become a pastor. From 1925 he began his service in the parish of the old town district of Bochum, a working-class community, in which he tirelessly followed his social-ethical vocation, which was rooted in the Jewish-Christian heritage. His philosophical and theological thinking was far-reaching. His house had been a meeting place for resisting Westphalian pastors. Soon the anti-Semitic scene shot at the “leftist” and “Jewish” pastor. Theologically central for Ehrenberg was the attitude of the church toward her members of Jewish origin, in which he, like Bonhoeffer, saw the “status confesssionis” already in 1933. As a “full Jew” in the sense of the Nazi racial laws, Ehrenberg was in a life-threatening situation. The NSDAP (the Nazi party) also demanded that the church release him as a pastor. The Church of Westphalia felt powerless and recommended that he be put into early retirement, which happened.

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<sup>21</sup> See Deborah Hertz, *How Jews became Germans. The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin*, New Haven 2007

<sup>22</sup> As regards Hans Ehrenberg see Jens Murken, Hartmut Ludwig, “Hans Ehrenberg,” in: *Evangelisch getauft*, ibid., 86f; Günter Brakelmann, *Hans Ehrenberg. Ein jüdenchristliches Schicksal in Deutschland*, Waltrop, vol.1, 1997, vol. 2, 1999.

Immediately before the racial legislation (1933) Ehrenberg wrote the famous 72 theses associated with his name, which at that time anticipated untimely, but later irrefutable findings in the Church. In addition, they are a kind of theology of Jewish Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Let us take just a few examples:

Thesis 7: Ehrenberg sees Israel and its election by God as an “annoying fact” in the sense that both “philosemitism and the enthusiasm of anti-Semitism” are trying to eliminate it: philosemitism tries to eliminate Israel by a liberalistic levelling of all religious differences, anti-Semitism by isolation and extermination. Ehrenberg uses the German term “Querlagerung” (literally “lying across”), with which he wants to express the disturbing fact that Israel, by its very existence, constantly reminds the nations of the living God.

Thesis 12: In the times of assimilation, the Church of Christ should have stood up against exaggerated, blatant claims of equality by Israel, whereas in times of segregation it should have protected Israel against exaggerated, dishonest enmity from the side of the nations. Why was she and is she silent?

Thesis 17: The Jewish Christian does not turn away from Israel, but has a part in the mystery of Israel: He is called to witness that God exuberantly praises his faithfulness by not only allowing his Son to be born as the son of Abraham in spite of all Israel's unfaithfulness, but also by . . . letting the promise of the coming fulfilment be wholly bound to “Israel according to the flesh.”

Thesis 29: “The Jewish Christian corrects by his mere existence within the Christian community the falsification of Christian faith as bound to a national religion in national churches.”

Thesis 59: The Church of the Reformation in Germany in 1933 will stand or fall with the temptation to isolate the Jewish Christians — in whole or in

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<sup>23</sup> The most important 72 theses can be found in: Der ungekündigte Bund, ibid., 199ff (commented by R.M. Heydenreich), likewise in G. Brakelmann's publication (see n.22).

part. The Jewish–Christian question in the present struggle of the Churches (Kirchenkampf) is its symbol and core....<sup>24</sup>

As a member of the Confessing Church, Ehrenberg continued to work for the Church until the “Gestapo” (secret police) imposed on him a “total ban of public speaking.”<sup>25</sup> Even now he was left alone as he was not put on the list of intercession by the Confessing Church. During the Reichspogrom Night (November 9, 1938), his apartment was destroyed and he himself was deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. From there he was released in 1939 due to Bishop Bell’s (England) intervention and invitation to live in England.<sup>26</sup> It was not until 1947 that Ehrenberg returned to Germany. There he did not regain his former pastorate in Bochum, but was commissioned to work in the department of the mission of his Church. Disillusioned by the Church’s lack of solidarity and yet loyal to her, Ehrenberg moved to Heidelberg after his final retirement in 1954, where he died in 1958.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Adolf and Elsa Freudenberg – “Israel is a Question about God”*

Freudenberg was not a Jewish Christian himself, but he shared the fate of the Jewish Christians, as his wife Elsa was considered a person of mixed parentage (“Mischling” according to the racial laws of the time). Both got caught up in the machinery of persecution that endangered every Jew’s life, and into a loneliness that was also caused by the Church. Freudenberg, whose career as a lawyer ended in 1933 due to his wife’s Jewish descent, began studying theology. When it became clear that the Confessing Church would be unable to employ him as a theologian who was married to a non-Aryan, he, in 1939, established the Ecumenical Refugee Ministry in London and then in Geneva. He was a key figure in this social diaconal task before and after the war.<sup>28</sup> But Freudenberg did not tire of reminding the representatives of the German Evangelical Church (EKD) to become active in the renewal of the Christian–Jewish relationship. He had given the

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<sup>24</sup> In his preface to the commemorative publication in honor of Ehrenberg, Präses Wilm had to confess that “the Church has failed to fulfil her task.” Ehrenberg, *ibid.*, 9f

<sup>25</sup> Evangelisch getauft, *ibid.*, 87

<sup>26</sup> Ehrenberg’s colleague Albert Schmidt was taken into custody by the Gestapo because he showed solidarity with Ehrenberg. In the end Albert Schmidt died in detention. See Günter Brakelmann, *Evangelische Kirche in Bochum. Zustimmung und Widerstand*, Evang. Perspektiven, 5, 122ff

<sup>27</sup> Evangelisch getauft, *ibid.*, 87

<sup>28</sup> Hartmut Ludwig: Adolf und Elsa Freudenberg, in: Evangelisch getauft, *ibid.*, 112f; Siegfried Hermle, *Evangelische Kirche und Judentum, Stationen nach 1945*, Göttingen 1990, 48ff. See also S. Hermle, “Wo ist dein Bruder Israel?” *Die Impulse Adolf Freudenbergs zur Neubestimmung des christlich-jüdischen Verhältnisses nach 1945*, Kirche und Israel 4 (1989), 42–59.

impetus to the “Wort zur Judenfrage” (a Word about the Jews), of which the EKD did only dare to speak in 1950. Since 1952 he tried to make “the question about Israel” a topic of the German Evangelical Kirchentag (the nationwide Church congress which takes place every two years with tens of thousands of Christians). Due to his commitment, the working group “Jews and Christians” was finally established in 1961. The work of this group was to mark a turning point in the attitude of the Church towards the Jews.<sup>29</sup>

*Heinz David Leuner – “Explaining the Church to the Jews and the Jews to the Church”<sup>30</sup>*

Heinz David Leuner, born in Breslau in 1906, came from a conservative Jewish background. In retrospect, this meant for him that:

All Jewish thinking, including the completely secularized Jewish thinking, is messianic.... It is the Jewish messianism that is resonating here, an eternal protest against the status quo.... The Messiah is coming from the front. Therefore, we should remain vigilant, we should be waiting — but not waiting idly.<sup>31</sup>

Leuner initially worked as a journalist. He would have had a brilliant career had he not, at the age of 27, been forced to flee from Wroclaw to Prague. The SA had first devastated his editorial offices and then his apartment. In Prague, he became involved in refugee work and met the congregation of the Bohemian Brethren, whose appreciation of the Old Testament had made a great impression on him. He came to read the Bible anew and was baptized together with his wife. Since Prague was no longer a safe place after the Nazis began occupying Czechoslovakia, he fled to Scotland. There he prepared for the pastorate by studying theology. In 1946 he began to serve in the Jewish Christian Alliance of Great Britain. Beginning in 1950 he was the European Secretary of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA). In these years he worked out more and more, like Ehrenberg,

<sup>29</sup> See below, III,2. “Without Adolf Freudenberg a new beginning of the relation to Jews and to Israels as it developed in the years to come, would not have been achieved.” Hermle, *ibid.*, 113. See below V.

<sup>30</sup> See Ulrich Laapple, “The Life and Work of Heinz David Leuner (1906–1977),” *Mishkan* 37/2002, 79–95. After Leuner’s death Peter von der Osten-Sacken published some of Leuner’s lectures and essays: Heinz David Leuner, *Zwischen Israel und den Völkern. Vorträge eines Judenchristen* (Institut Kirche und Judentum, vol. 6,) Berlin, 1978. Von der Osten-Sacken contributed a knowledgeable and appreciative foreword to this book.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

what he considered the specific task and vocation of a Jewish Christian. He hoped that the Jewish Christian movement could become an instrument for the renewal of the Church and for the struggle against anti-Semitism, which had already flared up again in the 1950s.

In numerous lectures in congregations, at universities, in church conferences, and committees, Leuner wanted to train the Church's consciousness in such a way that the Israel-forgetting Church could regain her Jewish heritage. His influence on the Kirchentag in 1961 and 1963 can hardly be overestimated.<sup>32</sup> His connection to the "Institut für Kirche und Judentum" in Berlin and his collaboration with its director Professor Peter von der Osten-Sacken became fruitful for the Church and for theological education in Germany.

To summarize, the common fate of Christian and non-Christian Jews had led "Christians of Jewish origin" to become more aware of their Jewishness. As Jewish disciples of Jesus, they sought an understanding of the "mystery of Israel" to which they belonged to in a special way. The aforementioned theologians became important preparers for a redefinition of the relationship of the Church to Israel: Ehrenberg already in the time of the National Socialist rule; Freudenberg during and immediately after the war; Leuner as a member of the working group "Church and Judaism" of the "Deutsche Kirchentag," and then for many years as a tireless teacher of the Church in Germany and beyond. Moreover, these Jewish Christians were not using their special role for mission among the Jews. Their primary aim was to open the eyes of a Church that was blind to Israel's ongoing vocation and guilty of the consequences of this blindness. As Christians and Jews they felt a double obligation: to stand in solidarity with both Israel and the Jews within the Church. Under their influence the questions that were raised about the reality of Israel broke out in a totally new way — in the struggle against anti-Semitism, in how to read and understand the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and in a new solidarity with Israel.

### **III. After 1945: A New Beginning?**

**"The church is not right with God as long as she is not right with Israel."**<sup>33</sup>

In December 1946, Adolf Freudenberg in his function as Secretary General of the Ecumenical Refugee Commission, turned to the German Church Administration and

<sup>32</sup> See below III,2.

<sup>33</sup> In these words, the director of the "International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews," Conrad Hoffmann, expressed the shock of American Christians about the physical and spiritual situation in Europe in 1946, but also about the silence of the German Churches concerning the

pointed out the lack of a concrete confession of guilt.<sup>34</sup> He repeatedly presented the German Church with the crucial point which a new beginning of the Church after the war had to contain: "...the development of the Christian understanding of the question about Israel which is imposed to us by God himself." In this regard, Christians in Germany have been "taken by God to a particularly hard school." In order to do this, it is necessary "that the question of Israel be thoroughly studied in centers of theological education."<sup>35</sup> Only repeated pressure from the outside opened new doors.

### **1. Outsourcing of the "Jewish Question"**

The EKD initiated the establishment of a special committee in 1946 called "Der deutsche evangelische Ausschuss für Dienst an Israel" (German Evangelical Committee for the Ministry to Israel).<sup>36</sup> The church administration had chosen persons who, for them, seemed to be the only experts in this realm at this time: the representatives of Societies for Mission to the Jews and their "spiritus rector," the Munster professor Karl-Heinrich Rengstorff.<sup>37</sup> Thus, from the starting point, they an alternative position such as Karl Barth's (Church Dogmatics II, 2) was excluded, who had developed a non-missionary doctrine of Israel. The church administration had seen the Jews still and primarily under the perspective of "mission." It is, from today's perspective, quite disturbing that the question of guilt did not play a central role. And it is also remarkable that the committee should not have any institutional link with the official German Church, so that she could keep herself free from any responsibility as to the results of the work of this committee.<sup>38</sup> Conversely, however, this gave Rengstorff a free hand.

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persecution of the Jews. See Siegfried Hermle, *Evangelische Kirche und Judentum –Stationen nach 1945*, Göttingen 1990, 216.

<sup>34</sup> Freudenberg in a letter to Hans Asmussen in 1946 (then the director of the "Kirchekanzlei," which was the leading body of the Church prior to the establishment of the EKD in 1948): "It is and it remains a misery that in the decisive sentence of the Stuttgart declaration of guilt [1945] the word 'Jews' does not occur. And this defect has not been corrected later, too." Hermle, *ibid.*, 267, n. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Hermle, *ibid.*, 196. Hermle summarizes the remarkable deafness of the administration of the German Church towards the suffering of Jewish and Jewish Christian refugees as follows: "The impression is inevitable that the administration did not want to cope with the subject deliberately — or it wanted to avoid it unconsciously." *Ibid.*, 198

<sup>36</sup> It was only after some quarrels that in the name of the committee the word "mission" was finally avoided; see Hermle, *ibid.*, 207. How could a Church that has loaded upon her shoulders such a guilt of distancing from the Jew be authorized to do mission to the Jews?

<sup>37</sup> Rengstorff helped right away to found anew the "Lutherischen Zentralverein für Mission unter Israel" in 1945, which had been prohibited during the Nazi period. He has been its chairman from 1956 until 1971. This organization also operated the Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum.

<sup>38</sup> Hermle, *ibid.*, 211.

It was left to this “German Evangelical Committee for the Ministry to Israel” and its conferences to become the only platform for dealing with Judaism in the years after the Shoah in Germany. Despite the problematic baseline conditions, the study conferences of the committee have contributed significantly to the renewal of the relationship between Christians and Jews because they grew beyond the minor importance that the EKD had assigned to them. Rengstorf decided to give every topic a Christian and a Jewish speaker. Sooner or later, such a twin format had to lead to a dynamic that shook the traditional position of Jewish mission.<sup>39</sup>

But serious questions remained unanswered. The Church’s guilt for her role in the Holocaust had apparently never played an explicit part at these meetings. The question of “Jewish Mission,” which was associated with the name Rengstorf, had not been addressed openly. (An outspoken sympathetic attitude would surely have hindered the Jews to come and contribute to the meetings.) To touch these wounds required courageous theologians who felt strongly that an opening up of a new era could not be achieved otherwise.

## **2. A First Breakthrough: The Berlin Kirchentag in 1961**

In 1961, with the motto “I am with you,” 80,000 Christians met for the Kirchentag in Berlin, including hundreds who had come from abroad. The most impactful event of this huge Church congress was that for the first time in its history the program dedicated in one of its sections three days to the relationship between Christians and Jews. From the outset it was clear to the preparatory group that “the voice of Judaism itself . . . must be heard and that we need the Jewish partner already during the preparatory phase.”<sup>40</sup> The response to these events surpassed the greatest expectations.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The first conference in 1946 had an outstanding guest, the most well-known rabbi in Germany, Leo Baeck, who one year before had been freed from the concentration camp Theresienstadt. That he came at all to this conference and spoke without any accusation but focused on what binds Judaism and Christianity together — the God of Israel, the common task, the same eschatological goal — this must have had a great impression to those listening (and still does to the reader today).

<sup>40</sup> Der ungekündigte Bund (the documentary volume), ibid., 10. The participants from the Jewish side were Schalom Ben Chorin, Rabbi Robert Raphael Geis, Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, and Heinz David Leuner (Jewish Christian). On the side of the German group we see top-flight names of theologians like Eberhard Bethge, Helmut Gollwitzer, Günther Harder, Hans-Joachim Kraus, Karl Kupisch, Otto Michel, Claus Westermann, Walter Zimmerli, et al.

<sup>41</sup> “From the beginning thousands flocked into the hall of the working group. In the course of the three days the event had to be broadcasted to another hall. Every lecture was listened to in breathless silence.” These are the words to describe the event in the documentary, ed. by Dietrich Goldschmidt and Hans-Joachim Kraus, ibid., 10.

It was probably the first time that in a Church congress of such size, and not only in the protected space of a conference, a Rabbi and other Jews were explaining to thousands of Christians what it means to be a Jew and out of which spiritual sources Judaism is living. Painful topics for either side were addressed without taboos: the meaning of the Old Testament, the uniqueness of Jesus, the question of the “guilt of the Jews” for having crucified Jesus, the long history of the guilt the Church has to confess for the persecution of the Jews, the understanding of the Torah and the Synagogue. Beyond the factual questions, it was the spirit in which everything was discussed — the will for a truthful encounter, thinking and discussing — that made the event so special. This was obviously a “*kairos*,” which may have been favored by circumstances of the time: a new and positive perception of the State of Israel, the fact that Adolf Eichmann was put on trial, and anti-Semitic attacks on Jews in the weeks preceding the Kirchentag.

*Heinz-David Leuner’s Contribution to the Kirchentag in Berlin*<sup>42</sup>

Heinz David Leuner had a considerable share in the fact that these three days were a breakthrough for the Christian–Jewish relationship. As a Jewish Christian, he was sort of a “natural” mediator who could represent Israel in the Church with credibility. He did not conceal his confession to Christ, nor did he perform “Jewish mission.” In a public discussion he said:

The Jew who came to Jesus as his Messiah is already today a guarantor and proof of what is promised to us in the Holy Scriptures for the Last Days. With this small remnant, it should already be made clear that God stands by his promise. Even after their conversion and baptism, Jewish Christians want to confess their belonging to the ancient People of God, from whom the Messiah and Saviour of the world emerged.<sup>43</sup>

The impressive friendship between the Jewish Christian Leuner and the main speaker of the event, Rabbi Robert Raphael Geis, that developed during the joint work, must be highlighted. It was a sign of hope beyond that Kirchentag.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See above, I.2.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 66

<sup>44</sup> See Leuner’s “Nachruf auf Aba Geis,” (Leuner’s obituary for Aba Geis) in: Robert Raphael Geis, *Von der Unerlöstheit der Welt, 1906–1972*, München, 1984, 370.

#### **IV. Finally, the German Church (EKD) Takes up the Ball: From Jewish Mission to Authentic Encounter**

It took six years for a study commission called “Church and Judaism” to be appointed by the EKD (1967). And it took another six years, until 1973, for the commission to decide to compile a memorandum. It was published finally in 1975 (called “Christen und Juden I”). The sluggish process shows how much faster a church congress of laypeople, the Kirchentag, could get down to business than a church commission. Yet, as important as it was that the subject reached the width of the congregations in 1961, it was as important that the process that had begun with the Kirchentag now led into the official roads of the Church. It’s nevertheless shameful that it took 25 years until the Church was able to say a compelling and authoritative word about her relation to Judaism since the confession of guilt that was spoken by the synod of the EKD in Berlin-Weissensee in 1950.

Apart from the confession of guilt, the synod of Weissensee had expressly mentioned the subject of Jewish Christians: “The New Testament testifies to one church consisting of Jewish Christians and gentile Christians. We see in our Christian brothers and sisters of Jewish origin witnesses of our insoluble attachment with Israel, the permanently chosen people of God.”<sup>45</sup>

How was this heritage of Weissensee dealt with within the German Church (EKD) in the future?

##### **1. Jewish Christians and The EKD Study “Christen und Juden I” (1975)<sup>46</sup>**

The commission consisted of well-known theologians of the older and younger generation, and church leaders. Among them were two Jewish Christians, Fritz Majer-Leonhard and Alfred Burcharz. Both saw themselves in the tradition of Jewish mission that was associated with the name Franz Delitzsch.

##### *Fritz Majer-Leonhard*

Fritz Majer-Leonhard (1919–1995) was the son of a Jewish mother. He wanted to become a protestant pastor, which in view of the Aryan paragraph came true only after the war. He was a co-founder of the working group “Ways to the understanding of the Judaism,” which was founded in 1975. “Till his last days he was untiringly active in the investigation

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<sup>45</sup> *Christen und Juden III*, ibid., 222. (see n. 46)

<sup>46</sup> *Christen und Juden I-III. Die Studien der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland 1975–2000*, Gütersloh, 2002.

of the history of people of Jewish origin.”<sup>47</sup> During the postwar years he was the publisher of the only Jewish Christian magazine in Germany, *Der Zeuge* (“The Witness”), an organ of the German Jewish Christian Alliance.

#### *Alfred Burcharz*

Alfred Burcharz (1923–2009) was a child of Jewish parents. At the age of 15 he experienced the “Reichspogrom Night” in 1938. Under a false name he escaped the deportation, was drawn, and then taken captive in France where, in despair and physically close to death, he had a vision: He saw the crucified Jesus. The experience brought him to faith in Christ. This, later, led him to found an organisation called “Evangeliumsdienst für Israel (EDI)” in 1971. His missionary work among the Jews expressed love for the Jewish People. Burcharz’ efforts to transmit knowledge of the life and faith of Judaism to the Church has been eminent.<sup>48</sup>

It is, however, astonishing that in spite of the collaboration of two Jewish Christian members in this committee we don’t find any direct mention whatsoever about Jewish Christians in the memorandum.

## **2. From a Study (Memorandum) to a Confession: The Resolution of The Synod of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (1980): “Towards a Renewal of The Relationship of Christians and Jews”**

The EKD study “Christians and Jews I” (1975) was often considered an important step on the way to a reconciliation between Christians and Jews. Nevertheless, in his contribution “The way of the Rhenish Church from 1945 up to the Synod in 1980,” Heinz Kremers, the main initiator of the Rhenisch declaration of 1980, felt that “numerous Rhinelanders were not satisfied with the results of the study.”<sup>49</sup> This not only concerned individual formulations of the study. What he saw as necessary was a different kind of document – not a study, but “a binding theological and confessional declaration, worked out and issued by the Rhenish Church.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ludwig, Evangelisch getauft, *ibid.*, 228

<sup>48</sup> Alfred Burcharz, Israels Feste. Was Christen davon wissen sollten, Neukirchen 2013, and: Jesus lehrt beten. Das “jüdische” Vaterunser, Neukirchen 2002

<sup>49</sup> Heinz Kremers: Der Weg der rheinischen Kirche von 1945 bis zur Landessynode 1980, in: Bertold Klappert, Helmut Starck, *Umkehr und Erneuerung. Erläuterungen zum Synodalbeschluss der Rheinischen Landessynode 1980*, Neukirchen 1980, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Helmut Starck, Der Weg des Ausschusses, *ibid.*, 12

In contrast to the commission of the first EKD study, Jewish representatives were part of the working process from the beginning. Rabbi Yehuda Aschkenasy, one of them, describes his experience in a later review with impressive words:

In the first committee meetings I experienced a human openness and the honest readiness of the committee members to co-operate and work on a radical change of the relationship of their church with my people ... I recognised that I could take part in a decision for the future relations of the churches (not only the Rhenish Church!) to my people that will be of the greatest significance?<sup>51</sup>

Under the condition that this committee did not intend Jewish mission, neither theologically nor practically, it was also noted

that without any doubt there is a relation of witnessing between Christians and Jews and between Jews and Christians in word and action. But this relation must enclose the uniqueness of the togetherness which does not exist likewise between the Church and other religions.<sup>52</sup>

The novelty of the Rhenish resolution lies, apart from new substantial theological formulations concerning the Christian–Jewish relation, in the openness and intensity of the encounter of Christians with Jews in face of the Holocaust. This was considered “a turning point” in which the Church formulates and acknowledges her own guilt. The resolution “opens itself to the Jewish despair (*Verzweiflungsschrei*) without further comments” and asks the Jews to renew “the brotherhood with them.”<sup>53</sup> Hereby the Christian–Jewish encounter in the Rhenish declaration had reached a new depth.

The second novelty consists in the fact that the resolution is no study or memorandum but has the character of a confessional declaration of the Church.

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<sup>51</sup> Yehuda Aschkenasy: “Mein Weg nach Bad Neuenahr” (name of the town the synod took place), in: Klappert /Starck, *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Starck, *ibid.*, 14. In the final thesis the decisive wording is: “The ongoing vocation and mission of Israel prohibits the Church to understand her testimony (to Israel) in the same way as her mission to all other nations.” *Ibid.*, 281. This has been a delicate point in the talks. Reportedly the synod would not have achieved a unanimous decision without the clear mentioning of the right and obligation to bear witness for Christ also to Jews.

<sup>53</sup> Eberhard Bethge: Der Holocaust als Wendepunkt, in: Klappert / Starck, *ibid.*, 93

It is ... a word of a responsible decisive church committee. It was a word of a basic decision spoken in view of our Christian faith that becomes purer again only if it goes out from trying to win the Jews for a new partnership.<sup>54</sup>

### **3. And the Messianic Jews?**

Jewish Christians or Messianic Jews were not represented in this committee, nor is there any reference in the text. This caused a critical statement by Peter von der Osten-Sacken: "That they (scil. the Jewish Christians) are not mentioned in the declaration of the Synod is ... a weak point in this document that, however, undoubtedly is pointing to the future."<sup>55</sup> His important article (1982) where he calls the Jewish Christians "representatives of Israel in the community of Jesus Christ" (see above, II) remains — perhaps up to this day — a unique statement on the part of German theology regarding this subject.<sup>56</sup>

The question posits itself: Would not the right time have been now — at least in the phase after the adoption of the epoch-making Rhenish declaration — to address also the Jewish Christian subject? As a member of the committee in the eighties I sensed a nervous avoidance of any referral to the theme of Messianic Judaism. Already the proposal to address the issue seemed, for some Christian as well as for some Jewish committee members, threatening. The fear that this subject could endanger what has been achieved hitherto prevented a detailed reference to it.<sup>57</sup>

However, the time had to come that the Church took up the matter. While the so-called second EKD study ("Christians and Jews II," 1991) touched it in dissatisfactory shortness,<sup>58</sup> the study "Christians and Jews III," in 2000, could not avoid dealing with it in a more detailed manner. We look at it in the following paragraph.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 97f.

<sup>55</sup> Von der Osten-Sacken, ibid., 165, see n. 46.

<sup>56</sup> Without referring to this article or without correcting it, von der Osten-Sacken 28 years later published a very critical statement about the Messianic-Jewish movement of today, in: Ein Empfehlungsbrief Christi? in: *Quaestiones Disputatae* (2010). See the analysis of this article (and her critical comments) by Hanna Rucks, *Messianische Juden*, ibid., 487ff.

<sup>57</sup> It was somehow typical for that fear when an important member of the committee put the question reproachfully: "How do you, after Auschwitz, dare to bring into the work of the committee the issue of 'Jewish Christians'?" This question reveals a regrettable historical amnesia concerning the suffering of Messianic Jews under the rule of the Nazis, and a theological naivety.

<sup>58</sup> "Christians of Jewish origin should be perceived by the Church and her congregations as a living reminder of the roots of the Church and their character that Jews and gentiles belong together." In: *Christen und Juden I-III*, ibid., 104.

#### **4. “Messianic Jews”: A Subject of the Christian-Jewish Encounter? The EKD Study “Christians and Jews III” (2000).**

With her third study, the EKD for the first time turns to the subject of Jewish Christians in detail, or, to put it in a contemporary expression, the subject of “Messianic Judaism.” It was stated rightly: “Often one associates this subject with the question of ‘Jewish Mission.’ Although there are relations between both, it is in fact a phenomenon of its own.”<sup>59</sup>

With this clarifying statement the study set a sign of a careful handling of the subject. In a historically adequate way it explains that Judeo-Christianity in the New Testament times has kept the Torah so that their belief as rooted in the core of Judaism remained recognizable for the Jews. Soon, however, Jewish Christians became a “marginal phenomenon,” and “only by giving up their identity were they allowed to join the church that meanwhile had become a gentile church.”<sup>60</sup> The study then describes the Messianic Jewish movement beginning from its historical roots in the 19th century up to the present.

Summing up the study declares:

The religious status of Messianic Jews and their community so far is unsettled. They are hardly perceived by classical Churches and denominations. They find their strongest support in charismatic and pentecostal circles. They are not recognized by the Jewish authorities as Jews but are rather considered apostate Jews. Therefore, the messianic Jews have not been included in the Christian–Jewish dialogue as a rule. Nevertheless, the messianic Jews themselves emphasize, even if in different accentuation and intensity, that they see themselves as a part of the Jewish people and at the same time as a part of the community of believers in Christ.<sup>61</sup>

The statement that the religious status of the Messianic Jews “so far is unsettled” had some justification at the time when it was written because of the lack of research upon which one could have relied. But this has changed dramatically today. As to the German-speaking area we have a thorough investigation of Messianic Judaism in Germany by Stefanie Pfister (2007), for Israel by Hanna Rucks (2014), and for the international

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 171f.

perspective there is a broad survey by Richard Harvey (2009).<sup>62</sup> There is also the publication “Facts and Myths – About the Messianic Congregations in Israel” published by the Caspari Center.<sup>63</sup>

## V. The *Disputed Representative of Israel*

### *1. Announcement before the Stuttgart Kirchentag in 2015: “Currently Messianic Jews are not admitted to active co-operation.”*

Meanwhile, groups of Messianic Jews had become a part of the religious scenery in Germany and have applied over and over again for active participation and co-operation in the “Deutsche Kirchentag.”

After having been denied more than once, there was an exception in 2015 when the Kirchentag took place in Stuttgart, the capital of Wurttemberg. This regional Church with her more pietistic background holds a more sympathetic attitude towards messianic Jews. The Bishop of the Wurttemberg Church, Dr. Frank Otfried July, wanted to open a door for the discussion of the Messianic Jewish question.

So the executive committee of the Kirchentag organized a day of study on “Jewish mission and Messianic Jews.” Since 1999 the Kirchentag had held the strict position to reject groups with the intention of missionizing Jews. But can Messianic Jews be simply subsumed under “Jewish Mission”? The study “Christians and Jews III” has already stated that the one does not draw the other. Most Messianic Jews are not followers of the “old” Jewish Mission which aimed at a change of religion to Christianity. Indeed, how could they saw off the branch on which they sit as Jews?

The committee, however, could not bring to a correction the present practise and affirmed the decision: “As their relationship to Christian groups involved in the mission to the Jews is unsettled, messianic groups currently are not admitted to an active co-operation.”<sup>64</sup> The committee, however, did not close the door completely, but decided that “representatives of the Messianic-Jewish community should be invited and allowed to take part in a controversial discussion with others’ opinions. This event lies in the responsibility of the committee.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See above, n. 3.

<sup>63</sup> A survey conducted by Kai Kjaer-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjoett, Mishkan 30-31/1999.

<sup>64</sup> “Der Herr last sein Heil kundwerden,” 2016 (EKD-Reader), 97. One can rightly ask if all other groups were scrutinized in the same way before they got licensed.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

## 2. At the Stuttgart Kirchentag in 2015

The event finally agreed upon by the committee had as its main speaker an internationally renowned Messianic Jew from London, Dr. Richard Harvey. He was nominated by a group of protestant pastors who had worked for some years on Messianic Jews, messianic congregations, and their thinking. Richard Harvey's theological education, his teaching, and his Jewish origin made him the suitable representative of the Messianic Jewish case.<sup>66</sup> On the platform were also Micha Brumlik, a known representative of German Judaism, and Ralf Meister, the bishop of the Hanoverian Church. Richard Harvey read the main paper on Messianic Judaism, the others framed him and put their critical questions before the talk was opened for the audience. Dr. Harvey gave an impressive picture of Messianic Judaism and surprised his audience with his critical position to the role of "Jewish Mission" in the history of the Church ("Judenmission" is a bad word). He also spoke of his long family story that is rooted in Jewish forefathers, and of his family life in the context of Judaism (his cousin is a female rabbi in London). But, what especially picked up the ears of the listeners was the evident knowledge of theologians who, with their work, rather belong to the side of a dialogical (and not missionary) theology.<sup>67</sup> Dr. Harvey did not only show that he was familiar with their thinking but also that he could rightly use them, to the surprise of the audience, as his allies, quoting some with whom he had correspondence.

Representatives from both the Jewish and the Church's side showed little openness and curiosity about the phenomenon unfolded here by a Messianic Jew. Basic opposition was predominant, though the Messianic Jewish friend did a good job. In the end, it was no surprise that he remained an alien element both to the Jewish and (even more) to the Christian side. His thesis that Messianic Jews could be a bridge between the Church of the nations (the gentiles) and Judaism was considered by some to be "arrogant."

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology. A Constructive Approach*, 2009; R.H.: "But I am Jewish." *A Jew for Jesus tells his story*, London 1996; R.H.: Towards a Messianic Jewish Theology of Reconciliation. *The Strategic Engagement of Messianic Jewish Discourse in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, UK, 2012. R. Harvey was a member of the German working group of theologians who endeavored to improve the relationship between the Evangelical Church and the Messianic Jewish movement. In a conversation of the group with representatives of the Kirchentag Harvey has been proposed as speaker. (Members of this group also included Dr. Peter Hirschberg, Ulrich Laepple, Dr. Hanna Rucks, Swen Schönheit, and Hans-Joachim Scholz. They published, together with Rita Scholz, the book *Messianische Juden – eine Provokation*, Göttingen, 2016, s. n. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Karl Barth, Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, Bertold Klappert, Eberhard Busch, Peter von der Osten-Sacken et al.

The committee of the Kirchentag on this preparatory study conference had made still a third decision: "After the Stuttgart Kirchentag the committee evaluates the event on Messianic Judaism and puts the subject on the agenda again."<sup>68</sup>

### **3. The "Position Paper" ("Positionsbestimmung") of the EKD (2017)**

In 2017, the EKD asked the general committee "Church and Judaism" to compile a statement "about the phenomenon of 'Messianic Jews.'" The result was a "position paper," the first document which the EKD dedicated exclusively to the subject of Messianic Judaism.<sup>69</sup> It has come about not without a hearing of Messianic Jews,<sup>70</sup> and shows some research into the history and teaching of Messianic Judaism. In its introduction the paper says that critical voices towards the EKD had piled up, asking why the Kirchentag repudiated the wish for cooperation of Messianic Jews. And there was also the question of which role Messianic Jews and their congregations could play in the renewed Christian–Jewish encounter.<sup>71</sup>

The "position paper" endeavours to classify the history of Messianic Judaism and tries to describe today's phenomenon in detail. In their theological assessment the authors are cautious, and they want to speak only about the phenomenon in Germany, not in the USA or in Israel. They don't take sides in the quarrel of who is a Jew: they don't deny, as the Jewish orthodox side often does, the Jewishness of Messianic Jews, but they don't support it either.

Whether the Messianic Jews can rightly claim to be a part of the Church is a central question in the paper, and the answer is yes. The criterion was the Lutheran Confessio Augustana (CA 7), which, in the understanding of the Churches of the reformation, is constitutive for defining the essence of the Church. As to the question of whether the keeping of the Halacha (food regulations, sabbatical laws, etc.) is in harmony with the evangelical faith, the study states: "If Jewish Christians maintain their Jewish inheritance,

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<sup>68</sup> EKD-Reader, *ibid.*, 97. Whether this has been done is beyond my knowledge.

<sup>69</sup> "Christen - Judenchristen - Messianische Juden. Eine Positionsbestimmung des Gemeinsamen Ausschusses 'Kirche und Judentum' im Auftrag des Rates der EKD" (2017) ([www.ekd.de/positionsbestimmung-kirche-und-judentum-messianische-juden-30414.htm](http://www.ekd.de/positionsbestimmung-kirche-und-judentum-messianische-juden-30414.htm))

<sup>70</sup> Reportedly Wladimir Pikman, director of the Gospel Ministry Beit Sar Shalom, and Dr. Richard Harvey, London, had been invited for the hearing.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

this is ... an expression of their Christian freedom.”<sup>72</sup> With regard to these questions the committee sees no reason for a dissociation from Messianic Jews.<sup>73</sup>

The committee nevertheless sees red lines crossed: A missionary “demand for a change of religion” would be in contrast to the Church’s testimony to “the faithfulness of God and to the election of the People of Israel.” “The ‘No’ to Jewish mission must not be questioned.”<sup>74</sup> As the committee accuses Messianic Jews of “missionary activity” and, allegedly, of intending “a change of religion,” the paper justifies their exclusion from the Kirchentag.<sup>75</sup>

But these statements need some critical questioning. Is an internal-Jewish witness really “mission,” even a demand of a “change of religion”? The answer has to be “no.” We agree with R. Brandau who states: “This inner Jewish sending and proclaiming is not a ‘missionary’ proclaiming with the intention of a change of Religion.” It draws its mandate not from the great commandment (Mt. 28), but has rather to be seen in analogy to the sending of the Twelve to the People of Israel “as a concrete realisation and confirmation of the chosenness of Israel out of free mercy and as the demonstration of the faithfulness of God to his people.”<sup>76</sup>

It is a distortion of reality and indicates a lack of information when the paper sees Messianic Jews mainly through the glasses of Jewish mission. Another point of uneasiness with this paper is the complete ignorance of the fact that Messianic Jews did share the prize of persecution and extermination in the “Third Reich” along with all other Jews. And they share this still today. It is unfortunate that this paper (and the committee) does not show a deep enough knowledge of the matter. Therefore, it must be called superficial.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>73</sup> The text states: “Where Jesus Christ is acknowledged with confidence for ‘life and death,’ then the substance of the statements in the Nicene Creed and the Creed of Chalcedon is acknowledged.” Ibid., 18.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Brandau, Innerbiblischer Dialog und dialogische Mission. *Die Judenmission als theologisches Problem*, Neukirchen, 2006, 463. This statement is remarkable as it meets with most Messianic Jewish beliefs. Here we see a clear linkage between the tradition of the Rhenish declaration (to which Brandau belongs to) and the mainstream Messianic Jewish thinking — in contrast to the “position paper.”

<sup>77</sup> This is the more incomprehensible as the literature of the various branches of messianic Judaism and their theology is available. (See above n. 3.)

*EKD: "Extreme Reserve of The Churches Towards any claims of Messianic Jews ..."*

By ignoring the missiological difference between a sending “within the chosen” according to Mt. 10 and a mission beyond the chosen people according to Mt. 28, the committee recommends an “extreme reserve towards Messianic Jews”<sup>78</sup> and finally gives recommendations to the churches and congregations as follows:

Therefore, the supporters and most Messianic Jewish congregations are considering the non-Christ-believing Judaism deficient. They accuse it for not having accepted the Messiah Jesus. This is a basic difference to the declarations of most regional churches (in Germany) which underline the faithfulness of God to his people Israel. They do not attach God’s faithfulness to the condition of confessing to Christ.<sup>79</sup>

These assertions are strange in light of what the apostle Paul is teaching. First, he himself uses the idea of deficit (for Jews and gentiles) when he writes: “Then there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace...” (Rom 3: 22f).

Mercy is always a reaction to a shortcoming or a deficit. Therefore, secondly, it is hard not to see that the faithfulness and loyalty of God to his people shine bright on the dark foil of the “deficits” that Paul in Rom 9:30ff is listing. He even reproachfully speaks of a deficit when he calls the people of Israel “disobedient” and even “enemies of God as regards the gospel” and at the same time “as regards election beloved for the sake of their forefathers” (11: 28.30). But these reproaches, though they are there, do not hinder God to be faithful to his people. So, “faithfulness of the God to Israel” and “ongoing election” are in no way conditional to the Jews’ consent to Jesus Christ. This is what most Messianic Jews believe. What they confess, however, is that the fulfilling of the covenant with Israel lies in Jesus, Messiah of Israel.

*EKD: "The Jewish Community Expects a Clear Dissociation if..."*

The second reservation of the “position” of the EKD refers to the sensitivity of the Jewish community. The text says that the bond of trust that has grown between Synagogue and Church during the last decades could suffer if “Messianic Jewish congregations and groups

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

were taken up as Jewish colocutors." Therefore "they (the Jewish congregations) expect from the churches a clear dissociation from Messianic Jewish groups and their Christian evangelical supporters, provided that these are casting doubt on the legitimacy of the Jewish existence."<sup>80</sup>

Again, are there really Messianic Jewish congregations or messianic statements that cast into doubt "the legitimacy of the Jewish existence if it is not accompanied by a confession to Christ"? The chosenness of Israel, the "legitimacy of Israel" is certainly — for almost all Messianic Jews — part of the center of their very existence and faith no matter what they are thinking about "mission" independent of any confession.

This text still provokes one other question: Where and when are Messianic Jewish congregations and groups taken up "as Jewish colocutors"? By Christian congregations? Then, indeed, not as "colocutors" in the first place, but as sisters and brothers, as representatives of Israel in the one body of Christ, who remind the gentile congregations of their roots in Israel.

It is disappointing that the paper of the EKD in the end does not take side with her Christian brothers and sisters, although it had clearly stated clearly that Messianic Jews rightly belong to the Church. Instead, it is confirming "the expectations" of the Jewish congregations. In face of various official and unofficial statements from the Jewish side concerning messianic Jews the consequences are clear: The Church must dissociate with them, even though — what a contradiction — they belong to the church.<sup>81</sup>

The Church is stuck in a tragedy, in a dilemma, because a remarkable, even miracluous grade of fellowship has been achieved by God's grace between the Church and the Synagogue during the last decades. It has led to a high quality of mutual confidence. Messianic Jews should acknowledge this and not try to disturb it by putting themselves into the place of the Synagogue or see themselves as the only "true" representatives of Jewishness, nor must they disqualify the Jewish side in any way as "unbelievers."

But the Church, on her side, should try to build bridges to the two different legitimate (!) Jewish partners even if these are on odds with each other. Therefore, we ask of the Synagogue to respect the Church's loyalty to Messianic Jews as a "natural" matter of fact, as imperative for an ecumenical understanding of Christianity, and in the face of

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>81</sup> Recently, a well-known representative of Judaism in Germany said in a phone call: "If the Messianic Jews are invited to the Kirchentag, we will be out." And he hastened to add that this is not only his private position, but the position of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, too.

the New Testament's teachings. These presuppose an understanding of the Church as consisting of Jews and Gentiles — in solidarity with all Jews as the people of God.

## **VI. Encounter Instead of Dissociation. A Pleading.**

Hans Joachim Kraus, one of the great German pioneers in the Christian–Jewish encounter, once wrote about “true encounter” (Begegnung):

The condition for a successful encounter would be that the one side quietly, with inner collection and modesty tries to listen to the other and to look at him. This can always be only an attempt because our possibilities to honour the secrets of the other and not to injure him are relatively low.<sup>82</sup>

These modest and touching words should be likewise referred to the encounter with Messianic Jews. Their congregations in Germany are mostly Russian in language and culture. The more “orthodox” they tend to live out their Jewish roots and celebrate their services, the more they are strange to us. Also, their way of doing theology is not what we are used to with our discursive theological language and method. Messianic Jews (e.g. from the Ukraine) have often experienced the grievous aspect of Jewish life be it with their forefathers lives who often were murdered by the dreadful commands of the SS, or even in their own lives. Furthermore, they are concerned by the everyday anti-Semitism which they share today again with every Jew in the German society and worldwide. In this light, words of distance spoken by the Church are hurtful and remind us of bad times when Jewish Christians had already in the past not found solidarity in the Church.

Messianic Jews rejoice in their faith in Jesus, whom they confess as the Messiah of Israel and Lord. They transmit this belief and joy to the Jews and non-Jews. Though the red line against organized Jewish mission by the gentile Church, in my view, is justified, it should be acknowledged that a talk in which a Messianic Jew is giving a testimony about Jesus to another Jew should not be called “Jewish Mission.”<sup>83</sup> The rejection of the official Judaism to Jewish mission of the Church is an understandable echo of her old practice to

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<sup>82</sup> Hans Joachim Kraus, Rückkehr zu Israel. *Beiträge zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog*, Neukirchen 1991, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Vgl. Steffen Kern, “Weg zum Vater. Das Christuszeugnis gegenüber Juden ist keine Judenmission,” *Zeitzeichen* 3, (2016), in: EKD-Reader, ibid., 162ff. Steffen Kern is a member of the Synod of the EKD. With all the high esteem for the former President of the Council of the EKD, the Bishop Dr. Wolfgang Huber, I am frightened by his sentence: “Initiatives also in form of ‘messianic congregations’ cannot rely on our Church. Right up to the allocation of rooms it is important to me that there is clarity at this point.” In: Albrecht Haefner, *Das Heil kommt von den Juden (Joh.4,22). Die messianischen Juden und ihre Bedeutung in der Kirche*, Walsrode, 2016, 27.

force converted Jews to give up their Jewishness. But the question may be permitted: Is there a possibility that a new freedom could grow towards Messianic Jews from the side of the Synagogue — in light of what once was called “Heimholung Jesu ins Judentum” (bringing Jesus back home to Judaism)? Is it conceivable that also Messianic Jews, in the eyes of the Synagogue, could be seen under the perspective that they bring Jesus back to Judaism?<sup>84</sup>

But such a perspective is also a challenge to Messianic Jews that they may not live their Jewishness exclusively but inclusively in deliberate unity with the whole Jewish people and not in using their faith in Jesus primarily as a demarcation line to other Jews and, God forbid, in an attitude of superiority.<sup>85</sup>

It seems to me, that the gentile churches should not show “restraint” and “distance” from Messianic Jews, but rather venture ecumenical, brotherly curiosity for them. They should dare an encounter with these representatives of Israel in the Church. God wants to speak to us (meanwhile an exclusively gentile Church) through them — and to them through us — in ecumenical brotherhood.

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<sup>84</sup> This thought I owe to Klaus Haacker: “The Jews must be asked if the process of ‘Heimholung ins Judentum’ (the process of bringing back to Judaism) that has begun with Jesus and Paul should remain only academic. Should it not refer to and include also the Jewish disciples of Jesus of today provided they live a faithful life of sanctifying the Name according to the Torah?” Klaus Haacker, Umkehr, ibid., 204.

<sup>85</sup> As to the solidarity with Judaism, the works of the messianic Jew Mark S. Kinzer are especially instructive. See M.S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism. Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People*, Grand Rapids, 2005.

# Your Word is Truth: The Identity of the Bible as Two Natures

Raymond Lillevik

## The Distance of the Past

Today's skepticism toward the Bible in Western societies is often referred back to the Enlightenment thinkers, particularly Gotthold Efraim Lessing (1729–1781). He in turn was inspired by the writings of Hermann Reimarus (1694–1768). Lessing's idea was that the distance between the modern day and the past of the text of the Bible established an abyss between the text and the reader. This made the claims and narratives of the Bible invalid and irrelevant. However, the relevance of the Bible could be saved if, and only if, one separated the eternal and universal truths one can find in the Bible from the historically contingent elements there. One could say that the text of the Bible was the clothes, while the universal ideas of the Bible were the body.

These ideas about the abyss of history and the distinction between the historical and universal dimension of the Bible had profound impact on later approaches to the Bible. Not least it became a part of the mentality of the development of Bible research. Here, the reconstruction of how the texts were created in the first place became important, but also it inspired many to find out what was contingent (limited to that specific historical situation) and what was the eternal and divine message. Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791) investigated the intentions and religious ideas of the biblical authors and would explain mythological elements in the texts by claiming this was how they accommodated the message according to the contemporary worldview. Around 1900, Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) summarized the principles of modern historical Bible research in that they should be interpreted only from a closed (immanent) perspective.<sup>1</sup>

This development was not just an academic experience, as Charles Taylor has pointed out how the new modern worldview created an overall secular environment for

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Olav Henriksen, "Utviklingstrekk i den historisk-kritiske hermenutikken," in Jan-Olav Henriksen (ed.), *Tegn, tekst og tolk: Teologisk hermeneutikk i fortid og nåtid*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993, 135–158; 158.

religion, not only changing society but also the religious beliefs.<sup>2</sup> It is the fruits of this Habermas describes as the irrelevance of the traditionalists as well as the secular theologians, in a time when modern society needs renewed contact with its spiritual and cultural roots.<sup>3</sup>

Gradually, the attempt to reconstruct the development of the biblical texts was characterized by a debunking of the theory of verbal inspiration. Generally, this idea meant that the Bible was inspired by God and without fault or error, a concept taken for granted in the church from Antiquity to the Reformation. In order to defend the doctrine about Scriptures primacy toward the Roman Catholic accusations against the Protestant "Scripture alone" slogan, in the following century the idea about verbal inspiration was developed in detail in the Protestant theological communities, often according to Aristotelian terminology. However, before 1800 the reputation of this theory had dwindled in university circles, including with the leading Bible researcher Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791), who arranged the first scientific expedition from Göttingen to the Middle East in 1761. Although textual criticism (the attempt to reconstruct the original text among different versions) had been known for centuries, now this discipline became regarded as a problem for the idea of verbal inspiration. At the same time, the research of canon history now was evaluated by new criteria, like the new worldview and morale. In addition, the new focus on the difference between the biblical texts led to the separation between the Old and the New Testaments in academic circles on the Continent before 1800.<sup>4</sup> From the 1830s, one began to use source criticism to explain the origin of both testaments, such as regarding the Gospel of Mark as one of the sources for Matthew and Luke. Later came methods like histories of tradition and form, introduced by H. Gunkel (1862–1932), where metaphysical ideas (like Christology) were explained in light of contemporary religions.

Christian belief and theology were increasingly felt to be necessary to find validation in this new worldview. For example, neoprottestantism replaced belief in

<sup>2</sup> James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular; reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 12; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 559–561.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Adams, *Habermas and Theology*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 2006), 154, 13, 191, 195; Michael Reder and Josef Schmidt, S.J., "Habermas and Religion," in Jürgen Habermas (et al.), *An Awareness of What is Missing. Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 5–6.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Baasland, *Ordet fanger: Bibelen og vår tid*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991, 17.

traditional doctrines of faith with concentration on the emotions and ideas of the believers.<sup>5</sup> In addition the variety of methods has increased to a great extent, particularly since the 1970s.<sup>6</sup> Today, academic as well as popular theology still will meet modernity and bible critics by going behind the biblical texts to extract something from them that corresponds with our own religious consciousness. However, this consciousness is not only questioned, but clearly influenced by the cultural mentality of our own time. A famous example is from the research on the historical Jesus. While Adolf von Harnack argued that the gospel about Jesus was a certain “gospel of Jesus” that matched liberal ideas, this was replaced by picturing Jesus more or less as an irrelevant Jewish apocalyptic estranged from modern society.<sup>7</sup> Lessing’s abyss of the history is still the challenge one tries to overcome.

## The Contemporary Situation for Bible Research

### Text Criticism

The Dead Sea scrolls are important, but why? The findings consist of approximately 950 scrolls found around the Dead Sea between 1947–1956, and were produced between 250 BCE and 68 CE. Two hundred and thirty of them are Bible scrolls. These show that during the last three centuries before Christ, Judea was characterized by the variety of Bible manuscripts, in regard to the text as well as the content.<sup>8</sup> Not that this in itself was something new. It has always been known that before Christ the Jewish Bible had already existed in slightly different versions: The Hebrew Tanak, which was the prototype of the Masoretic text identical with Codex Leningradensis (1012 e.Kr.), and the Greek Septuagint (LXX), which is the version usually cited in the New Testament. However, the Dead Sea scrolls illustrate a significant stability in the Old Testament text since the days of the second temple to our current Bible. This means that those who read an English or Norwegian Old Testament today, basically read the same text as Jesus did. In other words, there is little room for claiming that someone has messed up the text or its message after him. Still, the variations with regard to orthography, literary content, and copy errors

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 26–27, and Jan Olav Henriksen, “Eksistensfilosofi, hermenutikk, og teologi,” in Jan-Olav Henriksen (ed.), *Tegn, tekst og tolk: Teologisk hermeneutikk i fortid og nåtid* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993), 184–204; 199–200.

<sup>6</sup> Baasland, *Ordet fanger*, 32–34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 119–120.

<sup>8</sup> Torleif Elgvin, “Dødehavsrullene,” <https://snl.no/D%C3%B8dehavsrullene>. Accessed 03.05.2019.

before year 70 are so widespread that it is difficult for the researchers to operate with a first manuscript of the biblical books.<sup>9</sup> It is not known if these variations were intentional or not.<sup>10</sup> It also seems that some manuscripts were copied or translated to Greek before the Hebrew version had been finished, which for example may explain why the Book of Jeremiah is longer in the Septuagint, and with a different order of the chapters.

Instead, it seems like the findings suggest that from the year 70 to about 130 (the two Jewish wars against the Romans) was the time when the texts were standardized into what became the Masoretic text. Key researchers, like the Israeli Emmanuel Tov, explain this by suggesting the use of a “master scroll” in the temple in Jerusalem, at least from 50 BC. The existence of something like this is witnessed in the rabbinic tradition, where the new manuscripts were cleaned, or “kosher” as Tov puts it. This system was perhaps inspired by Greek practice, particularly at the library in Alexandria.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding research on the New Testament text (text criticism), this is based upon a much larger amount of manuscripts. In addition to more than 5400 manuscripts in Greek, the body of citations from the Church Fathers and different translations consists of about 300 000 variations(!).<sup>12</sup> However, the Greek papyri manuscripts in the Chester Beatty collections and the Bodmer manuscripts are particularly important, together with some 43 very early manuscripts dating before 300.<sup>13</sup> What is striking with the New Testament material is not only the amount, but also the quality in form of being historically close to the time of the events they describe. Usually manuscripts from Antiquity are several centuries younger than the time when they were first produced,

<sup>9</sup> Armin Lange, “The textual plurality of Jewish scriptures in the Second Temple Period in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Nóra David and Armin Lange (eds.), *Qumran and the Bible; Studying the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Leuven: Peeters, 2010, 43–96; 46, 53, 82. In some versions 1. Sam. 1.24 og Sal. 145.13 are left out. See Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, “Introduction and Overview,” in Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (eds.), *A History of Biblical Interpretation (Volume 1): The Ancient Period* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 1–54; 23–25.

<sup>10</sup> Marianne Gullhaugen, “Jeremia i forandring? En sammenligning av den greske og den hebraiske teksten til Jeremiaboken kap. 10 og 11.” Unpublished master thesis, Oslo: Det Teologiske Menighetsfakultetet, 2010, 121.

<sup>11</sup> Torleif Elgvin, “Sixty Years of Qumran Research: Implications for Biblical Studies,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årbok* 73 (Uppsala, 2008), 7–28; 11; Armin Lange, “Nobody Dared to Add to them, to Take from Them, or to Make Changes’ (Josephus, Ag. Ap. 1:42): The Textual Standardization of Jewish Scriptures in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Anthony Hilhorst, Emilie Peuch, Eibert Tigchelaar (eds.) *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino Garcia Martinez* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 105–126; 118–122.

<sup>12</sup> Eldon Jay Epp, “Textual Criticism (NT),” in David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 412–435; 416.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 420.

while many of the New Testament texts are not more than a century younger.<sup>14</sup> While some, like Bart Ehrman, find this material as undermining the credibility of the Bible, I think this instead illustrates an outstanding stability in the text that also gives us access to the intentions of the authors.<sup>15</sup> This does not clear out all the problems though, and theologians with a traditional relationship to church doctrine will evaluate the variations differently. Daniel Wallace thinks that, e.g. John 8.1-11 is a pious fraud, and explains this by suggesting that usually the forces of nature and history will follow after God has made a miracle.<sup>16</sup> Anyway, in spite of this relative text stability, it is difficult to maintain the ideas about God dictating a first manuscript the way the 1600 century theories about verbal inspiration described it.<sup>17</sup>

### **Construction of the Books**

Generally, one believes that the New Testament books came into being between about 50 and 100 (120 regarding 2 Peter), while the discussion about the time for the creation of the books in the Old Testament/the Jewish Bible operates between approximately 950 BCE and the time of Jesus. According to John Barton, the previous source theories, like how the so-called sources J, E, D, and P were woven together, is now replaced by a “snowball principle.” Here one believes that the scribes gradually added new texts to the old without destroying them, but nevertheless the new and extended version gave the text a slightly new direction.<sup>18</sup> The existence of texts in Hebrew for both versions of Jeremiah, the long Masoretic text and the longer Septuagint, suggest that such a snowball was in process in Qumran.

Despite a somewhat chaotic variety of theories (Jean Louis Ska lists eleven controversial topics under discussion within Old Testament research only) one generally believes the core narrative of the Old Testament was established and finished about 500

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Johan Sagrusten, *Det store puslespillet: Jakten på de tidligste manuskriptene til Bibelen*. Oslo: Verbum, 2014 (2. opplag 2015), 209.

<sup>16</sup> Bart D. Ehrman and Daniel Wallace, “The Textual Reliability of the New Testament: A Dialogue,” in Robert B. Stewart (ed.), *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart D. Ehrman & Daniel Wallace in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 13–60; 53.

<sup>17</sup> Tomas Bokdal, *The Formation and Significance of the Christian Canon: A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014, 165.

<sup>18</sup> John Barton, “Biblical Scholarship on the European Continent and in the United Kingdom and Ireland,” in Magne Sæbø (ed.) *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation, volume 3: From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015), 300–335; 302 and 311.

or 400 BCE. Except for the Pentateuch, this includes the rest of the Deuteronomistic works.<sup>19</sup> The Psalms one believes were created between from about 900 to close to the time of Jesus, meaning that most headlines were late additions, like most of those referring to David. The books of the prophets one considers to be combinations of material from the actual prophet and additions and new prophets by his disciples. Therefore, books associated with Isaiah and other prophets before the exile are not regarded as finished until centuries later, as suggested by the differences regarding Jeremiah.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding how the gospels were created, the discussion has been between those arguing they are the result of the theology of the early churches, and those regarding them as being based upon reliable oral traditions, considering for example the short time span.<sup>21</sup> The research on the historical Jesus has been criticized for being too influenced by the worldview of the researchers, and the results have varied widely. Considering the letters of Paul there is a general agreement that he wrote at least seven of the biblical letters, while six are more or less disputed. Particularly, the pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus are regarded as works by Paul's disciples, due to differences in language, style, and theology.

## Canon Debates

At the same time, the debate about how the biblical books became regarded as one scripture been reinvigorated. Here the weight of the human sides of this canonization has

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<sup>19</sup> John Barton, "The Legacy of the Literary-critical School and the Growing Opposition to Historical-critical Bible Studies. The Concept of 'History' Revisited Wirkungsgeschichte and Reception History", in Magne Sæbø (ed.) *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation, volume 3: From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015), 96–124; 99; John Barton, "Biblical Scholarship on the European Continent and in the United Kingdom and Ireland," in Magne Sæbø (ed.) *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation, volume 3: From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015), 300–335; 302; and Jean Louis Ska, "Questions of the 'History of Israel' in Recent Research," in Magne Sæbø (ed.) *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation, volume 3: From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015), 391–432; 428–432.

<sup>20</sup> Reidar Hvalvik and Terje Stordalen, *Den store fortellingen: Om Bibelens tilblivelse, innhold, bruk og betydning*. (Oslo: Det Norske Bibelselskap, 1999), 140, 172; Michael Stone, "Introduction," in Michael Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), xvii–xxiii; xx.

<sup>21</sup> Hvalvik and Stordalen, *Den store fortellingen*, 184.

had the tendency to eliminate any divine dimension from the process.<sup>22</sup> As with the creation of the separate books, here too the time is an important conflict. The intensity of this discussion is due to what is felt to be at stake, the feeling of whether the Bible has always been a stable body or not.<sup>23</sup> This has consequences beyond purely academic interest. If the canonization is only the result of more or less accidental church politics after Constantine, it will undermine the position of the Bible in favor of political or popular opinions.<sup>24</sup>

The question about the content of the New Testament canon has always followed the church. A core of twenty or more of the NT books was recognized early, as can be seen by the very early use of the so-called Rule of faith (*Regula fidei*), which resembled the core narrative of the salvation history, in the hermeneutics of the Apologists and others. Still, church fathers like Augustin expended much of their energy on settling the border of the canon, in the sense of deciding which scriptures were allowed to be read in the services.<sup>25</sup>

The contemporary situation for Bible research raises several questions, like to what extent can one trust the results of this research, or how legitimate is it to state that there are several things we do not know? Or what did the first readers of the biblical texts think about, for example, that they existed and were used in different versions, compared to the current mentality of modernity? In the following I trace two other questions:

How to deal with the embarrassments of the Bible, and how to deal with its two natures?

### **The Bible as a Human Product and Christology**

These research theories are important for those who question the authority of the Bible, and would likewise be regarded as an embarrassment for traditional believers — if they actually cared about them. According to Plantinga, the situation described here proves modern Bible research to be useless, and the fact that most believers ignore it is well grounded.<sup>26</sup> To some extent, he has a point. Many theologians or researchers, like Ehrmann, have unreasonably high expectations for modern Bible research. Due to the lack

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<sup>22</sup> Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, "Introduction," in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (ed.), *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 3–20; 4–6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Tomas Bokedal, "Canon Formation and Interpretation – Problems and Possibilities," in *CTTS Journal* 4 (2013), 10–75; 25.

<sup>25</sup> Oskar Skarsaune, *Troens ord: De tre oldkirkelige bekjennelsene* (Oslo: Luther forlag, 1997), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 375, 418.

of consensus, the perspective of changing mentalities, and not least the more general ideas about the relativity of science by Popper and Kuhn, learned ignorance should be a part of the theological work. Nevertheless, much indicates that there is a core in the biblical narrative, as well as of consensus in research, that it is necessary to relate to. At the same time, the sources listed above say what they do. The pressing problems with the biblical texts have existed since the early days of the church, although the mentality on how to address them has changed over the course of history. This testifies that the Bible is a human product, despite the unclear circumstances. Instead of ignoring the situation altogether, it is more fruitful to look at the tension between the human and the divine dimensions of the creation of the Bible. I suggest we think about this tension as the revelation's interplay between what is said loud and clear (cataphatic) and what stands in front of us difficult to understand, alien or silent (apophatic). In this way, both the biblical text itself, as well as the background, become important. In other words, we combine learned ignorance, the biblical core narrative, and the tension (or the more philosophical "difference") of the divine revelation itself.

In Bible hermeneutics, a Christological approach is well known, in the sense that the Christian canon's significance and intention is related to Jesus. When it comes to the relation between Bible research and the Bible, the Christological dimension is also important. First of all, Robert Jenson reminds about the significance of the resurrection: Jesus still protects the communication between himself and his disciples.<sup>27</sup> Another aspect is that God still reveals himself according to his own pattern as divine and human. And like Jesus, according to the gospels, combined his public ministry with speaking in parables or hiding himself and his identity.

That Jesus lives is important both because of the protection of the revelation as well as its interpretation. Two things are to be held together; the "snowball" theories operate with a core of the Jewish history that is reflected in the Old Testament, and even non-believing scientists maintain that the text of the New Testament is so stable that Jesus cannot be a fiction. As well, these New Testament texts are all characterized by their conviction that Jesus is still alive. If he is the Word of God, in the meaning of God's revelation, he is the key to the Scripture not only with regard to the question of the Messiah, but also in front of the variety of text variations. These variations can be seen as

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol 1: The Triune God* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 172–174.

a consequence of the command to make all peoples disciples (Math 28:18–20), where his power and promised presence are some of the premises for this work.<sup>28</sup>

So, the authority of the Bible is based upon the authority of Jesus, not a canon within the canon or a distinct doctrine of its inspiration.<sup>29</sup> But, it is from his authority that the idea of inspiration and divine power is connected to the biblical word. This word has the ability to hold up all life (Heb 1:1–3). That Jesus has risen from the dead and continues to communicate by this word relativizes the difficulties with the Bible without removing them. The question is whether Paul's "But what does it matter?" concerning people who preached the gospel with wrong motives in Phil 1:18 is relevant here. Although it is unclear for the researchers whether Paul managed to avoid his letters being mixed up with frauds, the texts nevertheless expect integrity concerning the message and how it is communicated, as well as the people involved. If we think the Bible in a reasonable, reliable way to document what God has done within history, like the gospels about Jesus, this directs our way of looking upon the Bible generally. It means that the Bible is the authority in matters of faith and lifestyle, and thereby trustworthy in all its teachings.<sup>30</sup>

For several reasons it is important to avoid a view on the biblical coherency that becomes ahistorical. A Bible that is not referring to historical facts becomes some sort of modern Docetism: the view that Jesus was not really human. To relate to history is also important for avoiding a postfactual society. This questions the efforts of rescuing the biblical message from history. One key theological protagonist for this is Paul Ricoeur's attack on what he calls the first naiveté of the reader of the Bible. After being exposed for bible criticism and the following dry land of the dessert, we can reach the promised land of the second naiveté. Here one focuses on the existential encounter with the texts instead of their facticity, liberating the reader and the text from subjectivity, fundamentalism as well as the cultural limitations.<sup>31</sup>

The motive for this reading of ahistorical truths in the Bible is to let God and the message be held infallible, and let human messengers be responsible for the mistakes. But

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<sup>28</sup> Michael P. Knowles, "Scripture, History, Messiah: Scriptural Fulfillment and the Fullness of Time in Matthew's Gospel," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley Porter, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006, 59–82; 81.

<sup>29</sup> Peter H. Nafzger, "*These Are Written*": Towards a Cruciform Theology of Scripture (Eugene, OR.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 144.

<sup>30</sup> Bart D. Ehrman and Daniel Wallace, "The Textual Reliability of the New Testament: A Dialogue," in Robert B. Stewart (ed.), *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart D. Ehrman & Daniel Wallace in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 13–60; 55.

<sup>31</sup> Barton, "The Legacy," 116–120.

what becomes the consequences of picturing events and persons like Ruth and Jonah as fiction and literary short stories? Researchers and theologians that maintain the stories as fiction will often regard this question as irrelevant or outdated, like Hindy Najman.<sup>32</sup> However, Pannenberg described these questions concerning the Bible's reliability and relevance as the most important theological questions of all.<sup>33</sup> There is a considerable need theologically to confront the mixture of fiction and theology, as understanding the history of the Bible as narratives and literature is not adequate;<sup>34</sup> even Ricoeur makes a point of this.<sup>35</sup> In addition, it has turned out to be difficult to define what in the biblical texts is accommodated by God, and to distinguish the divine message from the texts. It is an open question: whether the mentality of Spinoza or Locke is the best framework to deal with the biblical message, particularly when compared with the ability of the church fathers to combine the consciousness of the complexity of the biblical texts with a strong belief on the inspiration that left little room for regarding the biblical relevance or validity as open for discussion.<sup>36</sup>

It is more adequate to the biblical message itself holding together the tension I have described. For Immanuel Kant's friend and fierce opponent, Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), the embarrassment of the Bible was the typical way of God to reveal himself. The character of the Bible humiliated God himself as well as the readers. Hamann found the prototype of this behavior in the way as Jesus acted, as described in Phil 2: 2–7. In traditional Christology, this pattern is related to how Jesus holds both his divine and humane natures within his one identity.

I admit the problem of explaining one mystery with another. Nevertheless, the Incarnation has been used as an analogy to the Bible since the early Church fathers to N.T. Wright.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 115–116.

<sup>33</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie. Band 1* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1988), 36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 254.

<sup>35</sup> Dagfinn Føllesdal, "Basic Questions of Hermeneutics as Part of the Cultural and Philosophical Framework of Recent Bible Studies," in Magne Sæbø (ed.) *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation, volume 3: From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015), 29–44; 38, 39–44.

<sup>36</sup> Kenton L. Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Academic, 2008), 258.

<sup>37</sup> J.N.B. Carleton Paget, "Christian Exegesis in the Alexandrian Tradition," in Magne Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation, vol. 1* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 478–542; 489, 499; N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2005), 93–95.

For Peter Enns, this perspective makes it possible to turn a problem on its head, seeing the creation of the Bible as a window into how God acts.<sup>38</sup> However, while Enns sees this as a way to harmonize the Bible with modern perspectives, to Hamann the embarrassment was an important part of the character of the Bible, particularly when facing a modern worldview.<sup>39</sup> Here he was inspired by Luther's understanding of *communicatio idiomatum*. This term (Greek "perichoresis") means the "exchange of characteristics" between the two natures of Jesus as described in the creed from Chalcedon in 453, referring to texts like 1 Cor 2:8.<sup>40</sup> For Hamann, the divine would be seen in light of God's willingness to humiliate himself in order to communicate with us. One could therefore feel sympathy for those who were provoked or frustrated by the Bible, but his experience could also be overcome by the experience of God's glory as well. This was particularly the case with regard to Jesus.

For Hamann, the Bible was a union of God's Word and human traditions, according to Graf Rewentlov combining elements of rationalistic Bible criticism and some idea of verbal inspiration of the same Bible.<sup>41</sup> This one can see by his negative view of the bible criticism of Michaelis, Reimarus, and Lessing. Reading the Bible without letting oneself be addressed by its message and identifying with the narratives in favor of a pure historical approach would lead the reader into an existential dessert. This was his major accusation towards the works of Michaelis.<sup>42</sup> The essential for Hamann was the Bible's ability to form his identity. If God could forgive Israel's sins in the Old Testament, there was hope for him too.<sup>43</sup> He felt his own life interpreted by biblical narratives and characters, like the magis in Luke 2 (he nicknamed himself "the Magus of the North"), Amos, John the Baptist, and Matthew the tax collector, which happened to be his own profession. Philosophically,

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<sup>38</sup> Friedemann Fritsch, *Communicatio Idiomatum: Zur Bedeutung einer christologischen Bestimmung für das Denken Johann Georg Hamanns* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 18.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 56.

<sup>40</sup> Paul R. Hinlicky, "Luther's Anti-Docetism in the Disputati de divinitate et humanitate" (1540), in Oswald Bayer and Benjamin Gleede (ed.), *Creator est Creatura: Luthers Christologie als Lehre von der Idiomenkommunikation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 139–185; 151, note 25.

<sup>41</sup> Henning Graf Reventlow, "Scriptural Authority in the Wake of the Enlightenment," in David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1035–1049; 1044.

<sup>42</sup> Fritsch, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 289, note 68, and Haynes (ed.), "Introduction," xxii.

<sup>43</sup> Johann Georg Hamann, "Tanker om mitt liv og levnet," in *Opplysnings og kors: utvalgte tekster oversatt og med innledning av Øystein Skar*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2003, 72.

Socrates had the same significance.<sup>44</sup> His defense of the Bible was to welcome its frustrating parts, for particularly these could carry the divine presence. Michaelis' problem was therefore not his results, but that he had a wrong worldview.<sup>45</sup> Historical research was not useless, but was more like vegetables to the main dish, faith in Jesus.<sup>46</sup> The union of divine and human in the texts make Hamann use the texts as the starting point, and then let the Christological reading have the upper hand, like when reading about Jephthah's daughter in Judges 19.<sup>47</sup> The outcome is the paradox of letting the words of the Bible being more valuable and relativized at the same time, although not regarding the Spirit and the letters as identical.<sup>48</sup>

The inspiration of the Bible is just as humiliating for God as the incarnation, as the words of the Holy Spirit are teased in the same way as the Creator is denied and the Savior crucified. One of the most famous analogies to this by Hamann is how Jeremiah was rescued from the cellar by the pieces of old rags and clothes (Jer 38). We are all in the same situation as Jeremiah, and the Bible is the rags. Stories like this are characteristic of how God's way of saving people, meaning that 1 Cor 1:25 has been fulfilled particularly in the secular climate of the Enlightenment.<sup>49</sup> As Pharaoh scorned the staff in Moses' hand, God's authorship of the Bible is under attack by the philosophers. As God himself knows best how a revelation should be done and protected, to expect it to explain and describe nature and history according to the ideas of Aristotle, Voltaire, and Newton would be ridiculous; people do not think they need any savior. Since the revelation is adapted to humane terms and weaknesses, contemporary nonbelievers will be disappointed, just like Herod rejected Jesus when he did not fulfill his curiosity.<sup>50</sup> When God has let some written memories be lost while others have our attention, it is due to his care.<sup>51</sup> Contradictions and paradoxes in the revelation are therefore fruitful, and it is silly to reject them, as

<sup>44</sup> Oswald Bayer, *A Contemporary in Dissent; Johann Georg Hamann as a Radical Enlightener*, Grand Rapids, MI: William Beerdmans Publishing Company, 2012, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Haynes (ed.), "Introduction," in *Hamann: Writings on Philosophy and Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, xxii; John R. Betz, *After Enlightenment: The Post-Secular Vision of J. G. Hamann*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, 136.

<sup>46</sup> Betz, *After Enlightenment*, 138.

<sup>47</sup> Fritsch, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 31–33.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>49</sup> Johann Georg Hamann, "Om utlegningen av den hellige skrift," in *Opplysning og kors: utvalgte tekster oversatt og med innledning av Øystein Skar*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2003, 79–84.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 79–84.

<sup>51</sup> Johann Georg Hamann, "Verdt å huske om Sokrates," in *Opplysning og kors: utvalgte tekster oversatt og med innledning av Øystein Skar*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2003, 103.

happened when the Jewish leaders rejected that the Messiah could be humiliated.<sup>52</sup> In addition, what is mainstream today will be fairytales tomorrow. Only Jesus will survive everything.<sup>53</sup>

This is also illustrated during Hamann's fight with Lessing about the relationship between the Spirit and human words, the separation between truths based on historical contexts and eternal and universal truths. Hamann claims that the incarnation opposes both this separation as well as the abyss. Although texts and human nature are related to history, they can nevertheless carry salvation. To reject this possibility is parallel to rejecting the divine presence of the sacraments.<sup>54</sup> Every time God sends his Spirit it is done with a created medium, while Kant and others have secularized the Spirit to pure rationality separated from history and nature.<sup>55</sup> The incarnation shows that the truth is universal and connected to history at the same time, and the inspiration means that all the texts of the Bible carries the presence of God without being dictated. It is therefore just as meaningless to separate the divine from the human in the texts as with the Holy Communion.<sup>56</sup>

At the center of this was his ambition to embrace what Reimarus mocked, and not to avoid it.<sup>57</sup> Faith is not to cross the abyss, but to discover the divine love that is already there, hidden for human arrogance.<sup>58</sup> In other words, God reveals himself through his contradiction. This, as well as the concept of learned ignorance, is traditionally reflected upon in much apophatic theology. Philosophically, the same is connected to the Henology ("teaching of the one") of Nicholai Cusanus (1401–1464) and Egil A. Wyller (1925–), which in European context refers to concepts related to Plato. Does this open or close the door for using modern Bible research?

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<sup>52</sup> Johann Georg Hamann, "Smuler," in *Opplysning og kors: utvalgte tekster oversatt og med innledning av Øystein Skar*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2003, 107.

<sup>53</sup> Johann Georg Hamann, "Vismennene fra Østerland, in Betlehem," in *Opplysning og kors: utvalgte tekster oversatt og med innledning av Øystein Skar*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2003, 126; Johann Georg Hamann, "To anmeldelser av Herders prisskrift," in *Opplysning og kors: utvalgte tekster oversatt og med innledning av Øystein Skar*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 2003, 149.

<sup>54</sup> Fritsch, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 201–203, 205, 207.

<sup>55</sup> Bayer, *A Contemporary*, 152.

<sup>56</sup> Knut Alfsvåg, *Christology as Critique: On the relation between Christ, Creation and Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 85–86.

<sup>57</sup> Fritsch, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 201–203, 205, 207.

<sup>58</sup> John R. Betz, "Hamann Before Kierkegaard: A Systematic Theological Oversight", in *Pro ecclesia* vol xvi, 3, 299–333; 333.

The biggest contradiction is that the abstract truth in God becomes concrete in a human, without becoming untrue.<sup>59</sup> During the time of the Second Temple the scribes identified what became the biblical texts with God's word, and at the same time operated with different variations of these. By the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus he is worshipped as both God and man, and this Christological paradox becomes relevant when applied on the Bible as revelation too. In other words, the Bible can be seen in light of God's glory as well as his humiliation, but also by learned knowledge. One can say something about how the Bible came into being, but this needs to be combined with an acceptance of things we cannot know, not least when it involves the distinguishing of what is divine or not.

A number of scholars have tried to express parts of these things before in more practical terms. The Norwegian professor in theology Sigurd Odland (1857–1937) was inspired by the text critic of Richard Bentley, who around 1720 expressed that the true text is not to be found in one manuscript, but in them all.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the Scottish professor Peter Taylor Forsyth (1848–1921) combined Bible critics and research with an orthodox teaching of Christian doctrine, labelling the results as "stepping stones" for the gospel. This made him state that for anyone who accepted Jesus it would be difficult to reject the idea of verbal inspiration, although not in the way it was expressed by the Lutheran and Reformed theologians the century following the Reformation.<sup>61</sup>

Dealing with the Bible as a paradox is not easy, and it is not strange that Forsyth's ideas became somewhat isolated. Nevertheless, I believe that the perspectives by Hamann and, e.g., Wyller make it more possible to reflect on this more systematically. The most challenging part of this approach, however, is that it places the reader in some sort of tension or limbo, which Hamann called our humiliation and Wyller described as the henological difference. It is because of this Vanhoozer argues that this tension in the relationship between Bible research and the Bible's worldview is part of the Christian suffering.<sup>62</sup> This is not unlike how Christians traditionally have to deal with mind-blowing

<sup>59</sup> Fritsch, *Communicatio Idiomatum*, 138.

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.bible-researcher.com/tisch02.html>, and Sigurd Odland, *Det nye testamente tekst* (Kristiania; Lutherstiftelsens boghandel, 1917), 82–83.

<sup>61</sup> Samuel J. Mikolaski, "P. T. Forsyth," in Philip E. Hughes (ed.), *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1966), 307–340; 311, 314–315, 333. See also <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Peter-Taylor-Forsyth>, and Angus Paddison, *Scripture: A Very Theological Proposal* (London: T&T Clark International, 2009), 11–20.

<sup>62</sup> Vanhoozer, "Augustinian," 235.

concepts like the Trinity, the incarnation, and resurrection of Jesus, not to mention the problem of evil. It is worth remembering then, that the purpose of all theology of the cross is to make way for God's glory.<sup>63</sup> In the same way, the Bible shows itself to be the manger where we find Jesus.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Leif Andersen, *Gud, hvorfor sover du?* (Oslo: Lunde forlag, 1989), 146.

<sup>64</sup> Luther's preface to the Old Testament.

# Negotiating a Messianic Identity Through the Use of Space and Art

**Christine Eidsheim**

At the intersection of contemporary Christianity and Judaism, Messianic Jews are challenging the established religious boundaries and are negotiating an identity that tries to balance a Jewish heritage with faith in Yeshua. Messianic Judaism is often seen as “a hybrid blend of Judaism and Christianity,”<sup>1</sup> and has fascinated and infuriated Jews, Christians, and scholars, whether Jews or Christian. Jewish followers of Yeshua, today more commonly referred to as Messianic Jews, are not a new phenomenon. Most of Yeshua’s first followers were Jews. Throughout history, they have taken various forms, like the Ephraimites, the Nazarenes, Jewish Christianity, and Hebrew Christianity. The group of Jewish Yeshua-followers challenges the boundaries of contemporary Judaism and Christianity by mixing elements from both traditions. This raises questions about the development of group identity and who or what is shaping identity, as well as about what role out-groups and society play in the development of group identity.

It is easy to assume that Jewish believers today belong to a single group, but by looking at various Messianic congregations in Jerusalem, and maybe more importantly, in conversations with Jewish believers, it becomes clear there are various Messianic identities being negotiated simultaneously.

When entering into a congregation, the internal architecture is the first thing people interact with, but what can one learn from studying the use of space and art in connection to identity? In this article I will look at how Messianic identity is being negotiated through the use of space and art in modern Israel.

This article is based on research conducted on two Hebrew-speaking Messianic congregations in Jerusalem in connection to my master thesis “Negotiating a Messianic

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia A. Power, “Blurring the Boundaries,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2011), 70.

Identity — The Formation of Messianic Identity through Space, Art, and Language in Modern Israel.” To be able to discuss the diversity within the movement, I choose two congregations that are very different in style and form. The first congregation leans towards evangelical congregations in form and style, and will for the purpose of this article be referred to as the Messianic congregation. The other congregation in many ways resembles a synagogue both in its form and style, and will be referred to as the Messianic synagogue. Both congregations own the space they use. The selection of congregations was made not to reflect the Messianic movement as a whole, but to be able to discuss the diversity within the movement in Israel.

There are many aspects that could be reflected on in connection to space and art, but for the purpose of this article I will focus on the congregational hall and its internal architecture, the use of symbols, and the idea of safe space.

### **What Can the Use of Space and Art Tell Us?**

Entering into a congregation, a church, or a synagogue, the internal architecture is one of the first things people experience and interact with. Gail Ramshaw argues that “the theology of a church ought to be apparent by the layout of its ritual space and altering the interior of a church building may have a considerable effect on the community.”<sup>2</sup> The relation between theology and layout of ritual space may be argued to be present at both contemporary Christian congregations and synagogues. Ritual space, in this case, the congregational hall, is an integrated part of the community. The layout of the room is created for the service and may, therefore, reflect how the group views themselves in connection to one another and God. It may also indicate how people relate to other groups; in this case, the broader Jewish and Christian community.

The congregation hall at the Messianic congregation is, overall, simplistic. There are no imagery or symbols. At the end of the room there is a stage with two note stands and some musical instruments. There are rows of removable chairs facing the stage. The structure of the room and its simplicity resemble some evangelical congregations, which are more like conference halls than a traditional church. The pastor expressed his vision that “no one will enter into the church and find something more interesting than listening

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<sup>2</sup> Gail Ramshaw, *Christian Worship – 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 47.

to the person." Members noted that simplicity was valuable because it created no interference or distraction when listening to the preacher.

Entering into the Messianic synagogue is quite different and feels like entering a Jewish synagogue. The room is centered around the bimah. The seating area faces toward a raised semicircle platform, the bimah, which creates a focal point in the room. On the bimah, there is a desk used for reading the Torah. Next to the desk is a stand for the siddur. On the back of the bimah is an integrated wooden cabinet. Inside the cabinet is the aron kodesh, the ark, which is covered with a *parochet*<sup>3</sup>.

The presence of Jewish elements and features make the Messianic synagogue quite different from many other Messianic congregations in Jerusalem. When asked if the Jewish elements were a big part of the identity of the congregation, one member said:

It is a big part of the identity [of the congregation]. It is part of what separates it [from others] and makes it special because it keeps and preserves the traditional aspects of Judaism and that is something that has been important to me.

The Jewish aspects of the congregation were essential to most of the members and were one of the main reasons why they chose to be part of the congregation. The focus on Jewish elements such as the aron kodesh indicate that the Jewish aspect of their identity is important and something they want to highlight. While the pastor at the Messianic congregation said that the simplicity of the congregational hall was to help people focus on the teaching, the internal architecture of the Messianic synagogue focuses on the aroh kadosh, in which the Torah scrolls are stored. Both congregations use their internal architecture to highlight scripture or the use of scripture, but in different ways.

Looking at the internal architecture at both congregations, they demonstrate how Jewish believers continuously balance their Jewish identity and their faith in Yeshua and that there are various ways of interpreting a Messianic identity. The physical space of the two congregations shows how differently a Messianic congregational space can be created. Members of the two congregations have different ways of looking at the space they use. While the Messianic congregation focuses on taking away distractions and trying to help people focus on what's being said in the front, the member from the Messianic synagogue focused on Jewish elements and how it is a big part of the

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<sup>3</sup> *Parochet* is the name of the curtain that covers the ark.

congregation's identity. While these elements can be argued by both congregations as being important parts of the congregation's identity even if they are not present in the physical space, the internal architecture may indicate some aspects that are more important to them.

### **The Use of Religious Symbolism**

In both Christianity and Judaism, religious symbols have been used throughout history to express one's identity. While *the Magen David* is a commonly used Jewish symbol today, the *menorah*, a seven-branched candelabrum, is a symbol with longer roots in Judaism. In Christianity, the cross has become one of the most commonly used symbols but it is often challenging to Jewish believers, due to the historical relations between Jews and Christians.

One of the challenges with the use of symbols is that they are often layered with meaning that is continually negotiated and even redefined through interaction between people and societies. Symbols are therefore not stable entities, but can change through time and have different meanings in various contexts. Symbols are also in many cases soaked in historical connotations, and one's background and worldview may influence how one interprets them. Gail Ramshaw wrote that "a symbol not only is something, it does something."<sup>4</sup> It is an active category and needs to be addressed as such.

When asked about the absence of religious symbols at the congregation hall, the pastor at the Messianic congregation said:

The reason is that we wanted people to focus on Christ and it does not matter what I put on the wall. It will never make everyone happy. I decided to reduce the level of arguments and keep it as empty as possible. The presence of God in this place will be seen in the born-again believers and not in any symbols.

The modern state of Israel is a multicultural state. Jews made aliyah from various parts of the world. Not only that, in many Messianic congregations there are also a significant number of non-Jewish believers and Christian tourists. This is reflected in the statement from the pastor. Due to the various backgrounds people at the congregation have, and the

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<sup>4</sup> Gail Ramshaw, *Christian Worship – 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 16.

fact that the congregation often have Christian tourists who visit, symbols can be an obstacle since symbols can be interpreted very differently. One of the members noted that he did not feel comfortable with images of Jesus or the cross. While he said it was acceptable in other settings, he would not like to have it at his congregation. Another one said that she had no problem with the cross, but rather images of Jesus on the cross. Most of the members explained that while they do not mind other Christian denominations having religious symbols in their space, they prefer not having any themselves. Some went so far as to say that they understood why some congregations outside Israel use symbols, like the cross, but argued that it was problematic in an Israeli/Jewish context.

Looking at the Messianic synagogue, it is difficult for an outsider to interpret the space as anything other than a Jewish space. At the center of the bimah cover is a lighted menorah, which is a commonly used Jewish symbol and the symbol is also found on the parochet. When asked if there were any connection to Yeshua in the physical space, one member referred to the lighted menorah and said:

We would say 'yes' because the curtain on the Ark and the bimah, we have lighted menorahs, and we understand him [Yeshua] to be the light of the world and living Torah incarnate. In that sense, yes, but the menorah obviously is a widely used Jewish symbol, and many non-believing Jews would not automatically make that connection as they would with a cross or something like that, but that [the cross] is seen as an offensive symbol with baggage connected to it.

At the Messianic synagogue, the Jewish symbols become an integrated part of the congregation's space. What the member says points out some of the challenges with symbols. Firstly, that the congregation have incorporated Yeshua in a common Jewish symbol which makes it difficult for people outside the group to interpret. Secondly, there are challenges with the use of Christian symbols such as the cross because of the historical connotations it has, which was also expressed at the Messianic congregation.

Most Messianic congregations in Israel today have none or limited Jewish or Christian symbols present at their congregation hall. When religious symbols are used, they are more likely to be Jewish symbols than traditional Christian symbols. More often

than not, the congregational hall is built around simplicity and practicality.<sup>5</sup> Then how can we learn something about how identity is being negotiated through space and art?

It is not only the use of symbols that is important when reflecting on how space and art shapes and creates identity. The lack or absence of religious symbolism can tell us something about the group. John Harvey refers to two attitudes as to why people do not use religious symbols or imagery. (1) Anti-iconicism, which is a “manifestation of former attitude.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, no symbols may tell us something about how the group relates to other groups or former groups. (2) Non-iconicism reflects an “uninterested response to religious representation or the absence of a strong visual sensibility in the social and cultural context in which religion (or one of its subsets) is situated.”<sup>7</sup> Harvey argues that “some religious movements, while repudiating the accessories and elaborations of worship, have developed a simple dignity and dignified simplicity, manifested in, for instance, the design and fitting of their places of worship.”<sup>8</sup>

Looking at the congregational halls at the two congregations, and in conversations with their leaders and members, it becomes clear that it is not only the insiders that are shaping the space. Based on Harvey’s statements, both attitudes can be argued to be useful in relation to Messianic congregations. One can argue that both congregations try to separate themselves from former attitudes, especially due to the lack of use of Christian symbols and elements, which are common in traditional Christian churches. The absence of Jewish elements at the Messianic congregation may also be interpreted as an attempt to separate itself from certain Jewish groups. On the other hand, both congregations have a simplistic style and are shaped by the social and cultural context, which is the multicultural State of Israel, and both congregations pointed out that Scripture and the teaching were important parts of the identity of the congregation, which is highlighted in the focus area at the congregational halls.

### **Identity Formation or Evangelism?**

When reflecting on the use of symbols in the congregation, several of the members talked about how certain religious symbols could be obstacles when inviting new people to the

<sup>5</sup> Another factor is the fact that many congregations do not own the building they use.

<sup>6</sup> John Harvey, “Visual Culture,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2014), 504.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

congregation, or they themselves had problems with the use of some symbols. The fact that several of the members talked about it being a space in which they could invite non-believers raised the question: is the space created to reflect identity or is it a way of evangelizing?

During the interviews with leaders and members about the congregational hall, many talked about the idea of creating a safe space both for its members but also for non-believers. The difference in opinion was, a safe space for whom? While some highlighted that they wanted it to be a safe space for everyone, others wanted it to be a safe space for Jews.<sup>9</sup> Some argued that the space should be a more or less Jewish space, while others wanted a space that did not have any association to a specific group and that the people and their service should stand on its own.

In his article, “Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel,” Akiva Cohen argues that Israeli Messianic Jews are to some degree different from American Messianic Jews. Israelis often have a strong national identity, but rather few embrace a more traditional Jewish identity.<sup>10</sup> This can be seen in the Messianic congregation. The fact that the congregation is located in a Jewish state may be one of the reasons why Jewish elements are not there. Many Messianic Jews relate more to the secular Jews rather than the religious Jews. Taking away certain Jewish elements can therefore be a reaction to the society in which the congregation interacts. The Messianic synagogues, on the other hand, have embraced the traditional Jewish identity. The internal architecture of the Messianic synagogue could be seen as an attempt to create a space that religious Jews would recognize and relate to and as a way of saying: ‘we are also Jewish.’

While one can argue that to some degree the congregational space is created as a space suited for evangelism by creating a space it is easy to invite new people to, it is only one part of the picture. The congregational space in many ways balances between negotiating the identity of the insider and being shaped by the context in which it lives and interacts.

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<sup>9</sup> This does not mean they did not want others to feel welcome, but that I focused on creating a Jewish space with Jewish elements.

<sup>10</sup> Akiva Cohen, “Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, ed. David Rudolph and Joel Willitts (Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 109.

## Conclusion

When looking at how space and art is used to negotiate a Messianic identity in Israel, two main aspects arise: (1) how Messianic Jews relate to the society in which they live and interact, (2) and how they relate to each other within the framework of Jewish believers in Yeshua.

The congregational hall and how it has been created for the purpose of both congregations in some ways reflects the out-group rather than the identity of the congregation. While the Messianic congregation indicates that it is shaped by the multicultural aspects of the State of Israel, and the fact that several members of the congregations are non-Jewish, along with the continuous flow of Christian tourists, the Messianic synagogue tries to negotiate an identity that belongs within the religious Jewish community.

The fact that the two congregations are very different in style and form show that there is more than one Messianic identity being negotiated simultaneously. It may also be seen as a debate or conversation between Jewish believers on what a Messianic congregation should look like. The two congregations in many ways belong to different ends of the spectrum within the Messianic movement, but they live and interact in the same society and to some degree may give an indication of how they relate to each other.

This article only reflects the surface of the topic of the use of space and art in connection to Messianic Jews in Israel. While space and art can be misleading to study on their own, there is a lot to be learned and discovered in conversation with people that use the space.

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# New Technology on the Dead Sea Scrolls

**Torleif Elgvin**

The texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been intensely studied for decades. Two hundred and ten biblical texts from Qumran and 20 from the caves of Bar Kokhba zealots have changed our understanding of the biblical texts before the fall of the temple. The text of many biblical books was much more pluriiform until the first century BCE than most scholars had imagined. Other texts shed new light on early Jewish history and the background of New Testament texts.

During the last decade there have been more interdisciplinary studies. Advanced physical scanning can show the composition of ancient skin, as well as the sediments that got attached to the skin during the 2000-year sojourn of the scrolls in the caves. These methods yield information on the methods of preparing parchment in antiquity.

A team of scholars I was heading from 2012 onwards could demonstrate that the parchment of the great Isaiah scroll and its “neighbor” in the jar and the cave, the Qumran community’s Manual of Discipline, were made of parchment of remarkably high quality in the early first century BCE. Qumran scribes knew where they could acquire the best parchment in the land, and they had resources to pay for it. In this parchment-processing workshop, ancient experts gave the skins a long bath in mineral water with chlorine, alum, and sulfur. Subsequently the skins were tightly stretched out and lubricated with “mineral juice”: the flesh side with silicium and calcium, the hair side with magnesium — this would be the side for writing. Our Berlin physicist, Ira Rabin, doubts that there would be parchment of higher quality available anywhere in the world.

A side effect of the mineral scanning of the fragments was the recognition of modern-time forgeries of asserted Dead Sea Scroll fragments. Suspicions from textual scholars from our team — “this text is too good to be true, it has so many interesting textual variants” — were confirmed when I asked the physicist to check if she could discern ink on top of the sediments that were attached to the ancient skins. If yes, the ink strokes would be modern and not ancient. Or, could one confirm that ink was present on the skin where deterioration had reduced the thickness of the skin to its half in certain parts of a fragment. When our team went public with our results in 2017, we punctured a

multi-million-dollar business with fragments forged after 2002, where “ancient biblical fragments” had been sold to private collectors in Europe and the US.

Only a small percentage of the Qumran scrolls was found by archaeologists. Most were illegally dug up by the Bedouin between 1946 and 1956. Thus, we are deprived of essential information we would have had from an organized archaeological dig. And the information we have from the Bedouin cannot always be trusted; e.g., in which caves were the different scrolls found? In some cases, we know their information is faulty. Some documentary texts the Bedouin said came from Qumran, have now by textual experts been reassigned to Bar Kokhba caves in Nahal Seiyal. Ira Rabin and other physicists hope to develop a database of the mineral characteristics of each and every scroll-cave, from Qumran and other find sites in the Judean Desert, so that we will know from which caves the various scrolls really derive.

In the 1990s, scholars tested the DNA of 30+ scrolls. Their results suggested that most scrolls were made of goat skin, a few of sheep skin, one of calf, and a couple of wild ibexes. They even asserted that the ancient goat skin would have come from “relatives” of today’s Bedouin goats in the region.

DNA technology has improved since then, and the scholars today only need to cut off a minute part of a scroll or fragment — in the 1990s they needed a square centimeter, so scrolls tested then were subject to real damage.

In June 2020, a team of scholars from Israel and Europe published a new study, based on DNA from 26 scrolls. Twenty-four of them were made from sheep skin, two on cow skin: [https://www.cell.com/cell/pdf/S0092-8674\(20\)30552-3.pdf](https://www.cell.com/cell/pdf/S0092-8674(20)30552-3.pdf)

Four out of six Jeremiah scrolls were tested. The oldest, 4QJer<sup>a</sup> from the late third century, was written on cow skin, as was 4QJer<sup>e</sup> from c.100 BCE — these two have a text relatively close to the later Masoretic edition. In contrast, 4QJer<sup>b</sup> and 4QJer<sup>d</sup>, copied around 50 BCE and considered “cousins” of the earlier and shorter Jeremiah recension of the Septuagint, were written on sheep skin. The best paleographer around, my friend Michael Langlois from Strasbourg, has suggested that these two fragments were written by the same scribe and probably belong to the same scroll. However, the recent DNA study shows that the genetic relatedness of the skins in these two scrolls is relatively low, so we still have not one, but two Qumran witnesses to the shorter Jeremiah recension in Hebrew.

The Essene-related community settled at Qumran either around 90 BCE or in the early years of Herod the Great (I tend to go for the latter). Thus, scrolls from the third and

second century BCE would necessarily have been imported to the scribal community there from elsewhere (or brought there by the first settlers) — and scrolls made of cow skin would, anyway, not have been made in the desert.

Scholars have also discerned between scrolls reflecting the narrow, puritanic community at Qumran, calling themselves the *Yahad* (the Union), and those that reflected wider Judean traditions. Thus, it is no surprise that many scrolls were brought to Qumran from other locations in Judea.

The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice is an intriguing text, found in eight copies in Qumran and one at Masada. Does this mean that Qumranites joined the zealots at Masada when the Romans destroyed their center in June 68 CE? In these liturgies, the choir below sings in unison with the angels of the heavenly sanctuary. Some of us have argued that these songs preserve Levite songs from the pre-Maccabean temple and does not represent typical Qumran theology. The recent genetic tests showed that the sheep skin in the Masada copy belongs to a different DNA subgroup than the scrolls of the same text found at Qumran. This would confirm that this ‘angelic liturgy’ reflects a wider, non-Qumranic, background, and may well have roots in the pre-Maccabean temple.

Other scholars are developing digital tools for recognizing specific handwriting and the physical shape of fragments. Such methods have potential for identifying specific scribes that could have penned a number of scrolls, and for connecting smaller, ‘unidentified’ fragments with larger reconstructed scrolls.

The scrolls database of Israel Antiquities Authority (<https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il>) has given scholars and lay people access to old and new photos of the scrolls that are archived in Jerusalem. However, when a large photograph includes fragments from different texts, the database does not identify the text represented by each piece; neither does it link the pieces to editions of the texts and subsequent corrections to these. A research project initiated by scholars at the University of Haifa hopes to resolve this within a year (<https://www.qumranica.org/>).

The same team of scholars use digital tools to develop methods for reconstructing fragmented scrolls — i.e., locate the whereabouts of separate fragments, larger and smaller, in the sequence of columns in a long scroll. For such a process, digital recognition of similar-shaped fragments can help scholars “roll through” subsequent circumventions of the original scroll, even though only a small part of the original scroll may be preserved. If Qumran has yielded more than one fragmentary copy of a specific textual composition,

there could be overlap between these texts that, again, can give clues for the reconstruction of each of these scrolls.

Interdisciplinary work in a digital age has given us new insights, and promises to yield more, in our study of ancient texts that illuminate the roots of our Judeo-Christian culture.



The Hebrew letter “Shin.”

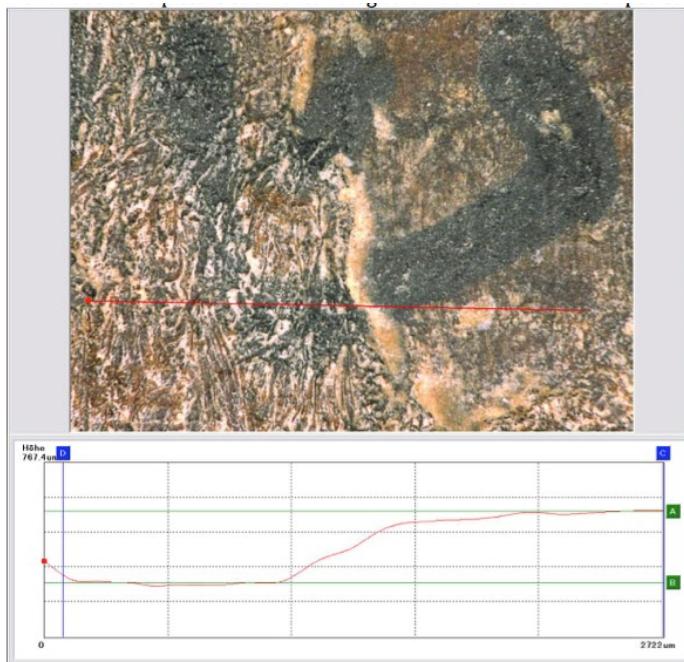


Fig. 2.2. Micrograph and the height measurements performed with a digital microscope.

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# Hesslein's *Dual Citizenship*: A Review

Richard Harvey

Kayko D. Hesslein, *Dual Citizenship: Two-Natures Christologies and the Jewish Jesus*. T and T Clark Academic. London: Bloomsbury. 2015 Hardback; 2018 Paperback.

Hesslein's aim is to produce a non-supersessionist Christology that fully and satisfactorily integrates the Jewishness of the first-century Jewish man Yeshua with the deity of the transcendent universal Christ. To do this, she constructs a matrix for negotiating the differences between the particularity of his Jewishness in relation to the universality of the humanity he shares with all. She then uses this to negotiate the differences between and integration of his human and divine natures coexisting and mutually influencing each other within his one person. This "negotiated difference" in his divine/human person then provides a model for how the particular Jewish Jesus and universal risen Christ relate to the church.

Hesslein's argument is unpacked carefully and methodically, and her PhD thesis from the Graduate Theological Union, USA, is well-constructed to take the reader through a series of steps that she hopes will lead to her agreed conclusion: an orthodox Christology in non-supersessionist mode that neither privileges Jesus' Jewish particular humanity or universal transcendent deity, but combines the two in a mutually constructive model based on the notion and metaphor of "dual citizenship" adopted from political theory on multicultural and cosmopolitan identity as a helpful way of negotiating and reconciling "difference."

That "Jesus was a Jew" is a truth universally acknowledged, but according to Hesslein, there are significant theological implications and discussion involved in making the connection between his historical Jewishness as a human being and his divine status today, if we claim that "Jesus was, is and is to come as a Jew" today. Following John Paul II, the Jewishness of Jesus cannot be treated as "mere cultural accidents" without ignoring the meaning of salvation history and radically challenging the "very truth of the Incarnation" (Hesslein 2018:3).

Whilst Jesus' human nature is "qualitatively different" from his divine nature, and the historical Jesus is "qualitatively different" from the resurrected one whom Christians follow, Hesslein asks, "how can these simultaneously present differences serve as the theological underpinnings for an Incarnational Christology that proposes two natures in unity?" (2018:3)

Hesslein argues that previous attempts to produce a non-supersessionist Christology that affirms both Jesus' particular Jewish identity and the universal implications of his deity have foundered because they were based primarily on covenant theology, where the relationships of continuity and discontinuity between the "Old" and "New" covenants overshadowed consideration of the relationship between the divine — heavenly — and human — earthly — natures of Christ. The "theological necessity" of the Jewishness of Jesus has been marginalised at the expense of developing a covenant theology that either employs an "interpretive imperialism" (Boesel), which reduces the need for Jesus's Jewishness as in any way formative of a Christian hermeneutic of Jews and Judaism, and which fails to allow for Jewish self-definition and imposes a supersessionist grid that makes Jesus' Jewishness no longer relevant.

It remains to be seen how Hesslein allows the Jewishness to be defined in her own proposals. Addressing questions of supersessionism, antisemitism, and anti-Judaism, Hesslein sees many attempts at Christology as "soft supersessionism," in that they still proclaim a kind of two-covenant theology: "for now, Christ appears to fulfil the covenant *but* they nevertheless stand *with* 'the Jewish neighbour' in awaiting the return of the Messiah" (p. 7). The other consequence of such an approach is to diminish the significance of Jesus's deity at the expense of his Jewish humanity, resulting in van Buren's reframing of Christology.

Similarly, R. Kendal Soulen's reframing of the canonical biblical narrative, according to Hesslein, is also deficient in not affirming the significance of Jesus as divine Redeemer, but rather as a "guarantor" of God's purposes in Creation and Consummation of all things. Soulen does not say "why a guarantee of God's faithfulness is necessary, or whether Christ is essential or additional to God's work as Consummator, and so risks making the participation of the divine nature of Jesus Christ 'largely indecisive' for the narrative unity of God's work" (p. 8). For those who look for a non-supersessionist Christology, such claims carry an important and long overdue challenge. How can the

Jewishness of Jesus, the Jesus of history, relate to the Christ of faith, in an orthodox Christology that fully affirms both?

Hesslein's proposal is to use the methods of political science and cultural theory to study the relationship between the human and divine natures of Christ, his particular Jewish identity as it relates to his universal, cosmic deity, and his specificity as a first-century Jew in relation to the multinational universality of humanity in general. She employs the notions of assimilation, pluralism, cosmopolitanism, and "rooted cosmopolitanism" to locate the construction of hyphenated or polycentric identities in political processes, especially where the agency and the power of the state denies the individual a broad palette from which to paint the picture of their own identity. Identity itself is insufficient as a concept because it does not reveal the location of power and the agency responsible for such construction, and prevents the individual from forming their own composition of identity:

The degree to which difference is theologically negotiated in the person of Jesus Christ is the presupposition that influences the degree to which Jesus' Jewishness is integrated into one's theology of the Incarnation. Because the matrix of differences in Jesus lies along the divine/human and universal/particular (Jewish) poles, focusing on the placement of difference along one binary exposes placement along the other. In this book, I uncover these privileged and penalized relations of difference, in order to demonstrate that doctrines of the Incarnation contain a critical matrix of binaries: human/divine, Jewish/Christian, immanent/transcendent, and historical-contextual/universal. (p. 9)

Hesslein proposes three matrices to describe the differences:

the negotiation of difference between Jesus' existence as a human in general (i.e., a member of *homo sapiens sapiens*) and his existence as an individual Jewish human living in Israel during the Second Temple period; ...that of Jesus' human nature and his divine nature; ...and the difference between his existence in the past as a Jewish human and his status as the living Christ who is in an ongoing relationship today with Christian believers from temporally and spatially diverse contexts. (p. 9)

This book is a fascinating primer on and critique of two nature Christologies, spanning the gamut of theologians from Cyril of Alexandria to Robert Jenson, drawing from a range of scholarship and cross-disciplinary studies in political theory, social identity studies, and feminist and post-colonial theology, and bringing us up to date with the latest explorations in theology. Hesslein's own views as ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and theological educator at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, are fully orthodox and Chaledonian, but she recognises the "ambivalent appropriations of the Jewish body of Jesus" that have beset Christological discourse. As a model for theological educators, she brings clarity and depth to one of the most fundamental and complex aspects of our faith. Yet its interdisciplinary approach, and non-traditional theological methods, have brought searching questions and critical responses from others. We are still a long way from a post- or non-supersessionist systematic theology, and this is not Hesslein's main concern, although readers of *Mishkan* will find much useful material here for its construction. Only when we see Yeshua face to face will we perhaps have the temerity to pose the question, "Rabbi, are you still Jewish?"

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## **Fellow Travellers: A Review**

**Richard Harvey**

*Fellow Travellers: A Comparative Study on the Identity Formation of Jesus Followers from Jewish, Christian and Muslim Backgrounds in The Holy Land.* World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission: World of Theology, Series 15. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2020.

Jesus Followers in the Holy Land face unique challenges when they walk in the footsteps of their Messiah in the places where he set foot on this earth. Questions related to their identity seems to be most pressing and, at the same, deeply puzzling. Who am I? Where do I belong? How do I practice my faith?

To answer these questions, Peter Lawrence's Master's Thesis from the Evangelical Theological Faculty (supervised by Professor Evert Van de Poll) offers extensive field research based on day-to-day life in Israel/Palestine. His on-the-ground experience of the three groups he encounters — Arab Christians (AC), Muslim-background believers (MBB), and Messianic Jews (MJ) — provides him with sufficient data and a multiplicity of issues to examine. These set the agenda for this first, in-depth, comparative study of the identities, experiences, and articulation of faith that both unite and divide the Body of the Messiah in his land.

How does Lawrence go about this task, and to what extent does he succeed in drawing the lessons from such a project? First, he has to articulate the question he has set himself and find an appropriate set of methodological tools to answer it. This in itself is an ambitious exercise. Should the project be set within the disciplines of anthropology, comparative and contextual theology, social psychology, or something else? How will the data be assembled, and who will provide the primary source materials?

The central question Lawrence selects for his inquiry is "How can the identity formation of Messianic Jews, Arab Evangelicals and Muslim-background believers in Israel be described and in what way are their personal and collective experiences similar

and/or dissimilar in this domain?" From this question emerges a thorough review of the relevant literature on these three groups and previous attempts to assess their experience. The main part of the book is a field study based on semi-structured interviews with three representatives from each group.

Lawrence's concerns are not primarily quantitative and statistical information, although this is briefly covered, but a qualitative evaluation using both anthropological and theological tools to discern and describe the experiences and the identity construction of the members of the three groups. For those interested in Messianic Judaism, Insider movements, Muslim-background believers, and the nature of a Church riven by political and social conflict, such a research project is of value well beyond the geographical area in which it takes place. It not only provides an accurate and high-definition snapshot of the state of Church members in this particular context but is a valuable missiological resource and tool for anyone embarking on a similar project, or simply wishing to understand what it is like to be a member of one or more of the faith communities investigated.

From the semi-structured interviews, Lawrence appropriately codes and evaluates the data collected. What does he discover? All his subjects are "on a journey"—a guiding motif used to explore the various challenges, issues, and dilemmas they face as disciples of Jesus in their particular communities, in the minority and on the margins of the larger Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities. MJs describe the spiritual encounters they receive on their journey to faith, and how this reinforces their sense of Jewish, Messianic, and Israeli identity. AEs note "coming back to Church," often from nominal Christian identity, through their encounters with outsiders. MBBs in their faith journeys are critical of both Islam and the nominal Christianity they see in the Arab Church, and long for full expression of their evangelical faith.

There are home truths to be recognized, such as how MJs can be more assertive of their Jewish/Israeli identity than concerned to work for unity and reconciliation with their Arab brothers and sisters in Christ. MBBs are often regarded with suspicion and distrust and may not feel welcome amongst the other groups. ACs are conflicted by the loyalties they share with both the Evangelical and ancient churches (Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Maronite). All are both riven asunder and driven towards a marginalized identity by the contexts of the local Israeli–Palestinian conflagration and the wider Middle East conflict.

Yet there are grounds for hope, as Lawrence draws out the significance and lessons of members of communities of evangelical faith who exhibit such diversity with such a small geographical area.

Using a variety of methodological tools such as Tim Green's model of identity formation of MBBs and Harvey's typology of types of Messianic Judaism, the study builds a convincing argument and eye-opening portrayal of the realities facing each group. Lawrence proposes his own criteria for assessing the continuity/discontinuity of each members pre- and post-faith identities, the degree to which they feel "new" or "renewed," and his grid for assessing the similarities and dissimilarities between the groups. A coherent but complex picture emerges from the differently sized and shaped jigsaw pieces Lawrence assembles. Each group needs the other, its spiritual resources, its social identity, and its theological perspectives, to reach the destination of its faith journey. As Lawrence states, "they might have the same destination in mind ... [and] take different routes but when they meet each other on their faith journey – as fellow travellers – there is a strong sense of connection and belonging between these believers of evangelical faith."

This ground-breaking comparative study of Arab Christians, Muslim background believers, and Messianic Jews in Israel/Palestine not only compares and contrasts the experiences of faith and identity formation amongst these groups, but also provides a wealth of materials, resources, and insights for anyone wishing to understand and engage in ministry in this challenging context. Peter Lawrence's work brings cutting-edge research of the highest standard to the field and is strongly recommended.

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## THOUGHTS FROM THE SIDELINES

# Why Didn't Jesus Bring Messianic Redemption to the People Of Israel?

**Torleif Elgvin**

*How should we understand messianic texts in the Bible? This is a question many have struggled with also in Judaism.*

In 1992, my oldest son was attending seventh grade at a Jewish school in Jerusalem. When his teacher learned that Olav's father was a Christian theologian, I was invited to visit the class as guest teacher. The fourth time I was invited, the request was as follows: "In our Jewish history class, we will be learning about Jesus of Nazareth and the people who followed him. Can you ask your father to come and teach about Jesus and his Jewish disciples?" So I came to the class with a set of New Testaments in Hebrew. The teaching session was fascinating. We read some New Testament passages together, starting with Mark 2:1–12, Jesus healing the paralytic. I asked them: "How does Yeshua act here?" They responded eagerly: "As messiah," "as God," "as a prophet." Also, the following two readings led to several raised hands and engaged comments. Subsequently questions rolled in, such as: "Do you believe in three gods?" and "How can the New Testament be the continuation of the Jewish Bible?"

### **The Man from Nazareth**

After 45 intense minutes, two girls remained during the break to ask more questions. One of them asked: "You believe that this man from Nazareth was the messiah—if he was the messiah, why didn't he bring the people of Israel into the messianic era?"

"Sara," I replied, "I don't think I have an answer you will be satisfied with, but I can share with you some of the answers that Christians have given your people throughout history."

Following our talk, Sara and her friend asked if they could keep the New Testament. I responded: "I am not allowed to give the New Testament to a minor. However, if your parents agree, there is no problem. I can deposit these two New Testaments with your teacher until they respond." The schoolteacher, standing alongside, received the books — and I do not know what happened next. The teacher bade farewell with the following words: "This has been my top experience as a teacher. The students experienced a real dialogue with a representative of our sister faith, from the family of a classmate. And I have promised to deliver a full report in the teachers' room, and to my husband at home as well."

Sara was not the first to ask why Jesus did not bring messianic redemption to Israel. Jewish scholars are not satisfied when Christians answer: "Jesus will fulfill these promises when he returns." I was subsequently reminded of a saying from the Talmud, dating from the fifth or sixth century, which is like an echo of Sara's question.

In the Talmud, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi once juxtaposed two verses from the Scriptures: "... there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven" (Dan 7:13); "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; Righteous is he and bringing deliverance, yet humble, riding on an ass, on a donkey foaled by a she-ass" (Zech 9:9). How could both these verses apply to the messiah? The answer is as follows: "If the Jewish people merits redemption, the messiah will come in a miraculous manner with the clouds of heaven. If they do not merit redemption, the messiah will come lowly and riding upon a donkey" (Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a).

Rabbi Yehoshua was quoting two very different words of prophecy about the end-time redeemer. In the New Testament, both prophecies point to Jesus. First, relating to his life and his entry to Jerusalem, and then to his second coming in the end times. Perhaps the rabbi reveals some of the dynamics of the biblical image of God to us? That the manner in which God acts throughout history is not predetermined and set in stone? It will depend upon how the people of Israel react to God's words and deeds. Throughout history, God's relationship with humanity has always been a dynamic dialogue.

## No Singular Formula

The Hebrew Bible includes many promises about a future with redemption for Israel. Some of the prophecies include other nations as well. If we place the promises side by side, they would seem to contradict one another and cannot be part of a singular trajectory. God is the main actor, but the way he puts everything in order is described with many different colors. Is God playing the cards and keeping them close to his chest, in a manner that keeps his people in suspense about how he will act? So that God is free to act however he sees fit, and his actions are not fixed ahead of time. As C.S. Lewis writes in his series about Narnia: “Aslan is not a tame lion. He is a wild lion who acts according to his own will.”

## Other Lions from Judea

After centuries where the Israelites were a subjugated minority, around 150 BCE a new Jewish state came into being. The leaders were from a priestly family called the Maccabees. The state expanded quickly, and the new Judean state became the largest ever. Many asked whether the messianic era had broken in. The last of the Maccabean brothers, Simon, ruled from 142–135 BCE. His story is recorded in 1 Maccabees, written in the 120s; a book that would ultimately be included in the canon of Catholic and Greek Orthodox Bibles.

In two laudatory hymns in 1 Maccabees, tribute is paid to the leader of the revolt, Judah the Maccabee, who died in battle 160 BCE, and his brother Simon. They are described as “small messiahs” while they rest in their tombs. 1 Macc 14:4–15 praises Simon, and echoes messianic texts like Psalm 2 and 72, Micah 4:4 and 5:4:

“His fame shall continue as long as the sun … and he shall be the one of peace”; “Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will frighten them”; “The kings of the earth conspired, and the rulers take counsel together.”

Simon proclaimed himself as prince and “as priest forever” (according to the order of Melchizedek, Ps 110:4), and is described as such in 1 Macc 14:41. In 1 Macc 3:3–9, his brother, the freedom fighter Judah the Maccabee, is praised as the “Lion of Judah” (Gen 49:9–10). With words from Psalm 72, the people of Israel

would forever bless the memory of Judah whose fame would reach to the ends of the earth.

Are we here encountering a two-step messianism that could throw light on how the New Testament understands Old Testament promises? The Maccabees did not bring complete redemption to the people of Israel. But they did demonstrate that God had visited his people. That God had not forgotten them. There were small messianic signs which pointed to a greater fulfillment — just as the New Testament gives witness to the life and deeds of Jesus.

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**FROM THE ISRAELI SCENE**

## **Cross-Cultural Encounters with Shame**

**Sanna Erelä**

In the Finnish Church, one Sunday every summer we are given a topic for self-examination. The Bible passages appointed for that day speak about humility, honesty before God, and repentance. We are called to do some soul-searching. This year, I lingered on this theme and started to think, how difficult for us humans it is to evaluate our hearts. We would rather prioritize what looks good outside — the complete opposite of what Jesus did! We filter the gnat and let the camel go through, as the Lord rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew 23:24.

But there are also other dimensions to this difficulty. After living for years in Israel, I've been surprised by one notion: the sense of shame that is rooted in my own Finnish culture. It is something that you could describe as almost penetrating the nation, or at least the older generations. (The youngsters grow up in a global world, where the distances are short and many cultural differences have nearly faded away.) In Finland, shame has damaged the self-esteem of many, many people.

Shame is quite a complicated issue. Theologically, we have all been suffering from shame and nakedness since the Fall and will only be completely released from it in the new creation. Also, living intentionally in sin without repentance causes shame to accumulate in an individual's life. But then there is a type of shame that is not directly related to our own deeds or to us being sinners. That shame is a feeling or emotion which can be very intangible. It is difficult to grasp because it tends to hide itself. Guilt says: "You did wrong." Shame says: "You are wrong. You are not loveable. You are shameful." Repenting from your sins does not bring relief, because the fog of shame has fallen on everything. It is impossible to separate your deeds from your personality.

On the individual level, the background of this psychological problem lies usually in difficult childhood experiences, which crumble the sense of security and dignity in a child's soul. On the other hand, emotionally reserved, distant attachment and communication styles in a family can create a fertile ground for shame to grow, even when great tragedies are not hidden behind the facade. Culturally, on the national level,

you could track the roots into a traumatic history: wars, centuries of oppression, submission, and poverty. The story of Finland is a story of being squeezed in the middle of dominating powers for centuries; a situation that repeatedly led to armed conflicts on our soil. The last huge national disaster was World War II, with many casualties. Young men returned from the battlefield traumatized and emotionally crippled, and they transferred their quiet anxiety to the next generation. The experiences that cannot be dealt with openly will usually be covered by shame. This emotional heritage still affects the lives of many Finns.

I have become very aware of the propensity for shame of my nation only as I have been surrounded by members of another culture: Israelis. The mirror they offer me as a foreigner is completely different to the one I grew up with. By watching and listening to their communication you could conclude that Israelis are not ashamed of anything! They seem to have lots of self-confidence, they speak straight and raise their voice. It looks like they are not embarrassed by their mistakes. The shared sense of shame when someone next to you screws something up is also — according to my experience — mostly missing from the Israeli atmosphere. Generally, the very multicultural Israeli setting is accepting and tolerant towards all kind of individuals, at least compared to the Finnish society. For me as a newcomer, that has been a liberating experience! Well, obviously there are also moments when I feel that a slightly smaller amount of this freedom and volume could make life smoother for all of us. Still, the straitjacket of shame and discipline in the Finnish mental scenery is definitely something I don't miss in Israel!

However, under the visible surface the situation in Israel may be a bit more complicated than my perceptions. When I discussed this topic with my Finnish friend who has been living in Israel for many years, she commented that — according to her experience and some psychological research — there is shame in Israeli society, too. People just manifest it very differently than Finns, generally speaking. The Finns tend to withdraw and turn invisible when their shame is somehow triggered. Israelis, on the other hand, will attack and speak aggressively if they feel internally threatened. Why the reaction is so different, I don't know, but I have a wild guess: It could have something to do with the national temperament and the history of the nation. Being quiet and invisible may have worked for the benefit of an individual in Finland. The Jewish people, on the other hand, carry memories of repeated attempts of total extermination in their collective DNA. You need to fight for yourself, otherwise you will be completely annihilated.

There is some research about this very moving issue: in addition to the memories of their horrific experiences, many Holocaust survivors suffered from haunting shame. That is very difficult for us to grasp — how on earth would anyone feel ashamed after being an innocent victim of such cruelty? There are at least three reasons. Shame sprouts from the unexplainable, mindless destiny of surviving a catastrophe while millions of others perished. Why did I live when others didn't? Secondly, during the imprisonment some survivors had to compromise their values to be able to survive — this also generated shame afterwards when life again normalized. Additionally, in the newborn state of Israel, everyone was struggling for their survival and the reaction towards Holocaust survivors was not always compassion and admiration, but more often a question: "Why didn't you resist? Why did you let Nazis do what they did?" During the following decades, the national image of a strong Israeli, a domineering fighter, was created. In 1993, John Lemberger, director-general of Amcha, the National Israeli Center for Psychosocial Support of Survivors of the Holocaust and the Second Generation, said in an interview: "Our own society had a conspiracy of silence." No one wanted to hear about "weak" Jews.

The inconceivable suffering of the Jewish people (especially the European Jewry), over the centuries is in many respects without comparison. However, the reactions to traumas are not unique to them; they are shared with all of humankind. There are many parallel phenomena with the destiny of my own nation and obviously with several others, too. The silence that surrounded the painful experience sounds very familiar. Emily Dutton writes in her article about the afterlife of the Holocaust: False pride, strength, and self-protection generated from the hurt human souls and created unhealthy emotional and behaviour models. They were harmfully transferred to the next generations. Israelis, like Finns, learned to be strong and cope.

Many things have changed after the immediate post-war decades in Israel, as well as in Finland. In present-day societies there is much more discussion, sensitivity, and awareness of factors that affect child development. But the cunning nature of shame is its tendency to disguise itself and hide in our hearts, being transmitted quietly to our children. One powerful way to tackle this vicious circle is to break up the silence around pain and weakness. We have aimed to do this at the Caspari Center through our Taboo Forums, where we intentionally voice difficult topics. The Messianic Body is young, and it has relatively limited resources to answer the needs of counselling among believers in

Israel. Besides, some change in the atmosphere is still needed, so that it is easier for believers to search for help in emotional problems. Hopefully, Taboo Forums may serve as one impulse towards more open discussion.

We all have to deal with the sin in our hearts, otherwise we cannot mature as human beings and believers. However, shame is not always something that can be wiped out by the confession of sins, because the source is in many cases originally psychological. Yet the shame radiates to the spiritual life of an individual in a painful way. God's unconditional love is such an impossible idea to grasp for those who have always felt accepted only on the grounds of their performance. Often, we would do almost anything to escape the difficult feelings. But thank God, He hasn't left us alone in our deluded conclusions. He gave His Son Jesus to carry all our shame and suffering. The only hope for us is letting God break our hardened, scary hearts with His love. He sees every one of us and continuously reaches out, desiring to have an intimate, trustful relationship with us because He is a trustworthy and safe Father. That is a place where all shame-prone hearts can heal.

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