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A SYNOPTIC HISTORY OF JEWISH MISSION



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INTRODUCTION

The history of mission is at one level inseparable from the history of the Church,¹ for a core purpose of the Church is to participate in the mission of God and to make known the Gospel of Jesus. No one could possibly give a complete and coherent overview of the entire history of Jewish mission (let alone the wider mission history of the Church)² so as I considered this epic title and prepared my writing I took comfort in the concluding verse of John's Gospel: "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."³ However, in this context I want to offer a synoptic history of Jewish mission by outlining twelve historical and theological reflections alongside some of my own insights, plus referencing in the endnotes thirty-two helpful resources for further study. I have also decided to divide the history into five (somewhat uneven) periods, beginning with the early Church period.

THE EARLY CHURCH PERIOD (28–306)

Forever young, forever young, may you stay forever young...⁴

My first point is that Jewish mission should rightly be understood as the first area of mission. For the very earliest period of "Church"⁵ mission activity we see only Jewish People witnessing to other Jewish People about Jesus. This earliest form of mission, in many ways reflects the practice of Jesus as outlined in Matthew 10:5-7. Clearly this work of the embryonic Church was greatly blessed as both Acts 6:7 and Acts 21:20 record the significant positive responses to this earliest mission initiative. This young community of faith was far from perfect, yet there was a youthful vigour and a compelling openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. Later, Jewish People witnessed to non-Jews (Gentiles) following Peter's vision to go and minister to Cornelius

(Acts 10). This is then followed by non-Jews joining the Church and then by these non-Jewish members of the Church sharing in this on-going witness of the emerging Church community, witnessing both into Jewish communities and into the new, diverse and vast (to the ends of the earth) non-Jewish contexts. This mission truth of the emergence and growth of the Church from within Judaism and the missionary thrust of the young Church out into the wider non Jewish (largely Hellenistic) community, is absolutely formative in determining the features of Christian belief, practice and identity.

The speed and spread of this growth in the first three generations of the Church is amazing. As N.T Wright writes:

“The single most striking thing about early Christianity is its speed of growth. In AD 25 there is no such thing as Christianity; merely a young hermit in the Judean wilderness and his somewhat younger cousin who dreams dreams and sees visions. By AD 125 the Roman Empire has established an official policy in relation to the punishment of Christians, Polycarp has already been a Christian in Smyrna for half a century; Aristides (if we accept the earlier date) is confronting the Emperor Hadrian with the news that there are four races in the world, Barbarians, Greeks, Jews and Christians; and a young pagan called Justin is beginning the philosophical quest which will take him through the greatest of pagan thinkers and lead him, still unsatisfied to Christ.”⁶

In this early period the mission work of the Church can largely be seen as an internal Jewish mission. However this changes significantly as some forms of Rabbinical Judaism respond to the destruction of the Temple and the growth (especially in terms of the high numbers of non-Jews) of the early Church. This new emerging Rabbinical Judaism, with its resounding No to the person and work of Jesus, sets in motion a transition from Biblical Judaism to contemporary Rabbinical Judaism. This emphasises a shift away from Biblical texts, especially the prophetic promises and transforms into a movement which engages with Torah through an emerging focus on the Talmud and subsequent emerging rabbinical traditions and practices. This therefore creates a new dynamic in Jewish mission, a dynamic which seems to widen the gulf between Jesus believing Jews and non-Jesus believing Jews. Paul and other New Testament writers struggle to come to terms with this

significant Jewish No and part of this coming to terms appears to be the view that this shift within (Rabbinical) Judaism had contributed towards drawing a veil over the eyes of many Jewish People. This seems to be the main line of argument presented in texts such as Romans 11:8 (linked to Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4) and 2 Corinthians 3:13–18. Romans 11:8 states;

“as it is written: God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day.”

2 Corinthians 3:13–18 states:

“We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness, with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

I believe this sense of Jewish mission as being the first area of mission is not just an obvious comment based on early Church contextual history (as outlined in Acts), for this sense of being first is not just a pragmatic outworking of beginning in Jerusalem, but rather this sense of the primacy of Jewish mission reflects a theological priority, rather than a chronological sequence of events. For example, Romans 1:16 is written in the present tense and the Greek word *proton*, translated in most English texts as *first*,⁷ implies an on-going priority. From my understanding, this sense of priority is the same type of priority as that given in the call of Jesus to His disciples to seek first (and keep on seeking) the Kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

My second point is that Jewish mission has echoes and connections with the irrevocable calling of Israel as a light to the nations.⁸ This should not surprise us because Israel’s identity, history and destiny and the Church’s identity, history and destiny are inseparably connected with the redemptive promises

of Scripture and the outworking of God's Kingdom. I want to affirm that the outworking of the Kingdom intricately connects Israel and the Church in mutual co-dependency. From my understanding the continual election of the Jewish People/Israel is a core epistemic value of all mission activity, yet one which obviously has particular relevance to Jewish mission. This sadly has not been consistently recognised in the history and theology of the mission of the Church, often to the great detriment of all concerned.

In my own book, *The Case for Enlargement Theology*,⁹ I have attempted to outline and explore the link between Israel's irrevocable calling and the mission of the Church. I argue that God's covenantal relationship with Jewish People is eternal, yet it is not static. Alongside this is the conviction that the on-going redemptive purposes of God are being worked out through three different, yet mutually inter-connected communities. I name these communities as the Church (a community of Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Jesus), Israel (the historic and current ethnic community of Jewish People) and Messianic Jews (Jews who are both in the Church and in Israel). This argument is based largely on the metaphor of the olive tree and the related teaching in Romans 9–11.

My third point is (sadly in my view) that this significant momentum of Jewish People coming to faith in Jesus in this early mission period began to slow down significantly. This slowing down was for a number of complex reasons. As already stated the emergence of new post-Biblical strands of Rabbinical Judaism with their emphasis on Torah and Talmud codified and strengthened the Jewish "No" to Jesus. Alongside this was the growing non-Jewish identity of many Church communities, which tended to widen the cultural gap between segments of the Church and some Jewish communities,¹⁰ plus the horrific rise of anti-Semitic attitudes and actions in some sections of Church life and teaching. All of this and more, I believe contributed to less effective Jewish mission. So much so in fact, that in many subsequent periods of the Church mission activity, Jewish mission was, and is still often seen to be, the great omission from the great commission as given in Matthew 28:18.

David Stern probably sums up this growing theological and cultural gap as astutely as any other commentator, when he reflects on the first moves towards the full inclusion of non-Jews into the Church (or as Stern calls it, the early

Messianic Jewish community), as set out especially in Acts 10 through to Acts 15. Stern writes:

“It is one of the supreme ironies of life on this planet that the issue today has become precisely the opposite: can a Jew become a follower of Yeshua the Messiah without become a Goy?”¹¹

Much of the opposition within the Jewish community to Jews coming to trust in Yeshua takes it for granted that the answer is No. It is assumed that when a Jew accepts Yeshua he abandons his people, adopts a Gentile lifestyle and is lost to the Jewish community. While some Jews who have become Christians have done exactly that, the very existence of the early Messianic Jewish community, proclaimed from the beginning that it did not have to be so. These communities lasted, some at least until the fourth and fifth centuries of the Common era, when Epiphanius wrote about them.¹²

CONSTANTINE THROUGH TO THE LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD (307–1516)

Sometimes my burdens seem more than I can bear, it's not dark yet, but it's getting there...

My fourth point is this, as one moves on from the early period and enters the post-Constantine era and on into the medieval period, the Church becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire and in many areas becomes dominant in terms of shaping culture, acquiring status and exercising political as well as religious power. This powerful Church changes many relationships, including the relationship between the Church and Rabbinical Judaism, especially in Europe. The situation in regards to the relationship between the Church and Rabbinical Judaism and in terms of culture, status and power was largely different in the East, and in all areas touched by the rise and rapid spread of Islam (from the seventh century onwards). In some contexts within two generations of the conversion of Constantine, the persecuted Church had become a persecuting Church.

The history of Jewish mission in this long period from Constantine through to the later medieval period is complex and difficult to objectively analyse,

especially as it is extremely difficult to analyse motives and methods when looking in from a very different time, culture and missionary context. I think however, it is clear that in terms of long term mission institutions,¹³ methodology or missionary spirituality, the Church did not present any clear models in regards to Jewish mission. In any analysis one gets a glimpse of the light of the Gospel shining, yet also the darkness closing in, while the Church pursued Jewish mission in a very fragmented and diverse manner.

In terms of my brief snapshot I see the light shining in terms of understanding that in every generation there were those within the Church who responded to God's call to share the Gospel with Jewish People. However, there is much debate about if this was done in appropriate ways. Often these mission workers were Jewish Believers in Jesus: one such controversial missionary was the Sephardic Jew who became a Dominican monk, Pablo Christiani. Christiani during the thirteenth century seemed to be effective in Jewish ministry, yet he is also noted for his anti-Semitic actions in regards to both the destruction of Talmudic books and his lobbying of King Louis of France to enforce the rule that Jews self-identify themselves by wearing badges in public.

Another controversial figure was the Franciscan teacher Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1340), who was active in Jewish mission in Southern France and engaged fully in religious debate. He was a noted expert in rabbinical texts, commentaries and Biblical exegesis. Also worthy of note is the missionary scholar John of Valladolid (1335–1370), who wrote a major study on Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Ten Commandments.

There are also many and varied accounts of Jewish People "converting" to Christianity in significant numbers for example, in the later part of the fourth century in Constantinople and later in the seventh century; through the writings of the Jewish Bishop Julian of Toledo (642–690) and Archbishop Isidore of Seville (560–636), who stressed the importance of faith in Jesus from Old Testament Texts, with a particular emphasis on the Church becoming the New (true) Israel of God. This view of the Church becoming the New (true) Israel is one of the fundamental building blocks of Replacement Theology.

In Italy, the Jewish missionary work carried out by the Capuchin monk, Lorenzo da Brindisi (1559–1619), is often referred to in accounts of effective Jewish mission, as is the work in Spain of Cardinal Pedro de Luna¹⁴ (1328–1423), and the later work of the Dominican and Biblical theologian Vincent Ferrer (1350–1419). One Jewish person who responded to the preaching ministry of Ferrer was the Rabbi Solomon ha-Levi, who later became Archbishop of Burgos (Northern Spain). However, once again we must question the appropriateness of methods being used, especially where there seems to be elements of coercion and at times outright violence.

Clearly, in some cases individual Jews became Christians out of a genuine response to a clear and loving presentation of the Gospel, and at times individual Christians and Church leaders, such as Pope Gregory 1st (540–604), protected Jewish communities and spoke out clearly against any form of coercion in mission activity. This all adds to the light of the Gospel, which enriched Jewish mission. However, sadly the opposite is also true and one can see much which displayed the darkness of sin, in the misuse of mission practice, as one explores this lengthy period. There are countless examples of conversions being coerced by incentives or achieved by abusive force, such as those following the Alhambra decree (edict of expulsion) of 1492.

The growing tone of anti-Semitic theology also tended to demonise Jewish People and Jewish practice in many places throughout this period. Such anti-Semitic theology fuelled the fire for later anti-Jewish atrocities, such as in Rome,¹⁵ under Pope Paul 4th¹⁶ when the Jews were forced into a ghetto, forced only to speak Italian, forced to wear yellow hats in public, forbidden to trade (except in food and second-hand clothing) and permitted only a single synagogue (at least seven synagogues were destroyed in Rome). Such horrific actions helped to deepen anti-Semitic attitudes, which arguably led later to many other violent acts, including many pogroms and ultimately to the Holocaust.

In England for example, such attitudes led to numerous anti-Jewish riots, beginning in King's Lynn in 1190, which culminated in the massacre of all the Jewish population of York, later that same year. This was followed by the Lincoln blood libels in 1255 and the subsequent expulsion of Jews from the land. Elsewhere, there were many examples of horrific persecution and forced

conversions associated with such momentous events as the Crusades, the Black Death and the invasion of the Tatars. To quote from the Dylan song; *“It’s not dark yet, but it’s getting there.”*

FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE HOLOCAUST (1517–1939)

And the first one now will later be last, for the times they are a changing...

My fifth point, as one enters this third historical period one can witness a paradigm shift in Church life through the Reformation and the counter-Reformation. To quote from Dylan: *“The times they are a changing.”*

The Reformation awakened in the Church a love for and commitment to the teachings of the Bible. As Christians read (often in their own languages for the first time) and reflected upon the message of the Bible, minds and hearts were stirred in many ways. One clear way such hearts and minds were stirred, was a calling to engage with world mission in new and dynamic ways. Part of this renewal of mission endeavour included a focus upon the Jewish People, who were scattered among the nations. This renewed interest was not however something one should take as inevitable in light of the Reformers insights, when one considers Luther’s attacks against the Jewish People and Jewish practices and Calvin’s largely indifferent attitude towards the history of the Jewish People and wider issues of eschatology.

This desire to share in Jewish mission was often associated with a growing understanding of the promised restoration of the Jewish nation.¹⁷ The vision of restoration can be seen clearly stated in the writings of early Reformers such as the English clergyman Andrew Willett (1562–1621), Thomas Brightman (1562–1607)¹⁸ and the French theologian and Pastor Pierre Jurieu (1637–1713). This hope was often linked to numerous eschatological convictions which often were in turn linked to strong millennial views. Most of Puritan theology appears to hold to a post-millennial vision, namely that the conversion of the Jews would lead to a future blessing for the entire world prior to the LORD’s return. However, there were both well-developed a-millennial and pre-millennial understandings within mission practice and theological understanding. Such pre-millennial views were strongly promoted in many Brethren,¹⁹ Pentecostal and some evangelical Anglican and Reformed contexts.

Evangelism and restoration were for many Protestant Christians the two pillars which gave structure and purpose to new and emerging Jewish mission initiatives and institutions. My understanding is that evangelism and restoration are complementary parts of a true Biblical Jewish mission. However, some mission activity has tended to stress one or the other, probably in my view to the detriment of both. Sadly also some groups in stressing the restoration hope have lost sight of the evangelistic imperative in Jewish mission and have adopted various Two-Covenantal theological positions, which undermine the need and appropriateness of Jewish focused evangelistic mission work.

My sixth point, in this period we can trace the emergence and the flourishing of many institutions especially focused upon Jewish mission. Much of the early work was done in Germany drawing from both Pietistic Lutheran and Moravian streams. For example, in 1656 Esdras Edzardus opened in Hamburg an institute which provided Christian teaching, discipleship and practical assistance and training for Jewish People. This pioneering work inspired later German Lutherans, such as Phillipp Spencer (1663–1705) and August Francke (1663–1727).

In 1728, the Institute Judaicum was established in Halle. This institute had three main missionary aims, to establish a printing press, to provide pastoral and practical support to new Jewish believers in Jesus and to appoint travelling missionaries to the Jewish nation. This institute was dissolved in 1791, yet it inspired a number of later similar projects, including the Berlin seminary in which Joseph Levi (1771–1850)²⁰ was a missionary student.

One significant mission work was that led by the Moravian Johann Dober, who pioneered Jewish mission in the Netherlands in 1738–1740. A quote from the History of the Moravian Church²¹ gives us a glimpse into this missionary and his work: “...he was a master of the Hebrew tongue; he was expert in all customs of the Jews, he was offered a professorship at Konigsberg; and yet, instead of winning his laurels as an Oriental scholar, he preferred to settle down in humble style in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, and there to talk to his friends the Jews about the Christ he loved so deeply. His method of work was instructive. He never dazed his Jewish friends with dogmatic theology. He never tried to prove that Christ was the Messiah of the

prophecies. He simply told them, in a kindly way, how Jesus had risen from the dead, and how much this risen Jesus had done in the world, he shared their hope of a national gathering in Palestine; and, though he could never boast of making converts, he was so beloved by his Jewish friends that they called him, “Rabbi Schmuël”.

Beyond Germany, Britain took a lead in developing Jewish Mission. In the light of this many Christians looked upon Britain as a Cyrus nation, whom God had raised up in terms of geo-political influence in order to bring about His purposes. However, interestingly it was a German Jew Joseph Levi who had studied at the Berlin Seminary, who established the London Jews Society (today known as The Church’s Ministry among Jewish People) in 1809. Initially this society had a non-denominational structure, and the clear vision was that all denomination agendas and disputes would be put aside for the greater good of the work. Sadly due to financial²² and ecclesiastic pressures this society lost this initial ecumenical spirit and became Anglican in structure. Today this mission remains as one of the official mission agencies of the Anglican Church, although its support base and Church connections are much wider than solely that of the Anglican Communion.

The work of the London Jews Society grew rapidly with a vast and richly significant range of mission work taking place in Jewish communities throughout Europe, the Middle East, parts of Asia and Ethiopia. A great breakthrough was made in 1841, with the establishing of a Jewish bishopric in Jerusalem²³ and the building of the first Protestant Church in the Ottoman Empire. This Church was Christ Church, Jerusalem (situated on the edge of the Armenian quarter of the Old City, near to the Jaffa gate) and the ministry of Christ Church continues to flourish today.

Following on from the work of the London Jews Society, other significant mission agencies focusing on Jewish mission were established. These often drew support from specific Church networks and often reflected a particular theological, national or ecclesiastical position. For example, the Irish Presbyterian Mission to the Jews (1840), Christian Witness to Israel (1842) (which initiated key work in Budapest), the Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel ²⁴ (1844) the Mildmay mission to the Jews (1876) and the Christian Testimony to Israel²⁵ (1897). Most of these mission agencies began in Britain

or other parts of Europe; yet in the USA, Chosen People Ministries began in 1894 and in Palestine the order of Notre Dame de Sion flourished with missionary and education work amongst Jewish girls.

It is of interest to note in reviewing the work of these agencies the high percentage of Jewish Believers in Jesus, who took on major missionary and leadership roles. Space does not allow for any complete list, but the following fifteen names²⁶ give a flavour of the size, success and significance of many aspects of Jewish mission during this period of rapid social and political change; Michael Solomon Alexander, Joseph Wolff, Auguste Neander, Isaac Da Costa, Alfred Edersheim, Ferdinand Ewald, Aaron Stern, John Moses Eppstein, Paul Cassel, Samuel Isaac Schereschewsky, Isaac Hellmuth, Mirza Norollah, David Baron, Leon Levison and Arnold Frank. In reading a little about their character, life and work, those of us today privileged to continue in this field of Jewish Mission have a real sense of “standing on the shoulders of giants!”

My seventh point is in noting the prominence of Jewish Believers in Jesus in Jewish mission work. This is to be seen as one of the fruits of the Jewish mission work which was being carried out by so many groups in so many places. However, there was a degree of uncertainty in mission practice and discipleship training about how such Jewish Believers should relate to the Church and to their own Jewish constituencies. This was (and still is) often a struggle for Messianic Jews who are called to face two ways at the same time, namely towards and with the Jewish People and towards and with the Church.

For some Jewish missions and for some Jewish People coming to faith in Jesus meant a natural ending of Jewish identity. For others Jewish identity was to be celebrated, but as Jewish believers became largely absorbed in Churches with significant Gentile numbers and practices, Jewish identity often slipped away, if not in the first generation then often by the second. However, in some cases Jewish identity was not only celebrated but vigorously maintained and this sowed the seeds for modern day Messianic Jewish identity and Messianic Jewish practice. At the heart of this modern day movement which covers a range of views and practices, there is I believe two core epistemic priorities. Firstly, the continued election of the Jewish People and secondly, the faith declaration that Jesus is the risen Messiah and the eternal Son of God.

Built around these two core epistemic priorities are numerous definitions of contemporary Messianic Judaism and Messianic Jews. Definitions offered by scholars, opponents and by Messianic Jewish believers, supporters and missionary practitioners. My own preferred working definition of Messianic Judaism is; “the movement of Jewish believers in Jesus who affirm that their Jewish identity ‘comes alive’ in Jesus rather than is terminated by faith in Jesus. Such believers seek to live out their faith drawing upon traditional Christological categories, both in serving fully as part of the Church and seeking to uphold and to develop, wherever possible, committed links with the wider Jewish community.”

One of the pioneers of this contemporary Messianic movement was Joseph Rabinowitz²⁷ (1837–1899) who in developing a fully functioning Messianic community (known as The Israelites of the New Covenant) in Kishinev helped redefine relationships between Church and Synagogue through the person and work of Jesus and opened up new possibilities, the ramifications of which continue today.²⁸

The times were indeed a changing, but arguably the two biggest changes which effect Jewish missions today, namely the Holocaust and the establishing of the state of Israel, were still to come about, although the seeds of both had been planted deeply in the past.

In terms of the establishing of the state of Israel, one can trace a fruitful partnership between political (and religious) Jewish Zionism and Christian lovers of Zion. One such partnership was the support given by the Rev William Hechler to Theodore Hertz. This support, offered by Hechler, arguably helped Hertz to grow in confidence and to become the first leader of the fledgling Zionist movement in 1896 (in this year his key book, “The Jewish State” was published). His leadership role developed and resulted in his hosting of the first Zionist congress in Basel (1897). His leadership role continued to flourish prior to his untimely death in 1904.

HOLOCAUST TO PRESENT DAY (1940–2015)

In the fury of the moment I can see the Maker’s hand, in every leaf that trembles and in every grain of sand...

My eighth point is that the Holocaust reshapes much of Christian thinking and mission practice. As one reflects upon the Holocaust²⁷ one enters the deep mysteries of God's Sovereignty alongside the dual aching realities of human sin and demonic activity.

It is said by many practitioners that today Jewish–Christian relations are always “Holocaust shaped”. This sadly in my opinion has led some Churches and mission groups to turn away from evangelistic mission towards a servant-based mercy mission among Jewish People. This shift is often underpinned by a theological realignment, namely to a Two-Covenant position. Sometimes this Two-Covenant position is shaped by a wider pluralistic worldview and sometimes by an extreme form of Dispensational theology. Clearly, servant based mission and acts of mercy, advocacy and support are very important. We need to make genuine points of connection in all areas of mission work with those we are seeking to share the Gospel with. For this to happen we need a holistic both/and approach and not a single either/or approach as our mission plans are sown and later hopefully grow and flourish.

Any mission practitioner must communicate carefully in a post–Holocaust context.²⁹ This reality alongside the pre-existing corporate relationship between God and Jewish People demands great sensitivity and special care, yet this does not mean (and in my view must never mean) any undermining of clear and focused evangelistic proclamation of the Gospel.

My ninth point: alongside the Holocaust (and arguably closely connected with it) the establishing of the state of Israel has created a new dynamic in Jewish mission. With the risk of over-simplification, space only allows me to suggest that we see this new dynamic in six main ways:

- a) It deepens the hope of those who have always held together the two pillars of evangelism and restoration. For if the LORD has restored the people to the land in fulfilling the promises of Scripture, how much more can we trust that God will restore His people to Himself through the Messiah.
- b) It changes how we read and interpret some of the prophetic Scriptures. For example, Isaiah 19 has a renewed immediate and eschatological context for many, now that Israel is established as a nation and this reality gives

added impetus for those working both in a Jewish and for those working in a predominantly Muslim context along the Isaiah 19 highway. One of the hoped for missionary outcomes of the Isaiah 19 vision is that many Sons of Ishmael will become Christians and in turn will be effective in opening the eyes of many Sons of Isaac, as they also come to a saving faith in Jesus (Yeshua).

- c) It changes the practical focus of mission: today (probably for the first time in over 2000 years) more Jewish People live within Israel than outside of Israel. This is the result of Jewish immigration, partly out of choice and partly out of forced expulsion, mainly from post-Holocaust Europe, Arab nations (as a result of the conflicts which have arisen subsequently to Israel becoming a state in 1948) and more recently from the parts of the former Soviet Union and from Ethiopia.

For those historic missions who tended to have a primarily European focus or a North American focus, there has been a need for a radical restructuring and deployment of resources in order to respond faithfully to the opportunities and challenges of working in Israel. The challenge is two-dimensional, namely to resource bringing the Gospel back to Zion and to enable the Gospel to go forth out from Zion. This two-dimensional work has an important sense of spiritual completion and theological fulfilment.

- d) It changes the relationship between the sent mission worker (and his or her ecclesiastical stream) and the receiving community, especially as indigenous and in some cases independent messianic congregations are established and begin to explore their own identities within a well established Jewish setting. A greater value is therefore based on partnering with local congregations. It seems to me that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often when one reads mission history the key focus was upon the actions of the established heroic individual missionary, while today the focus is upon wider pioneering partnerships of mutual support with the local Church (Messianic community) and more self-sustaining short term mission projects.
- e) The establishing of the state of Israel creates a differing reality when compared with a focus on the Holocaust. For example, a focus on the

Holocaust as stated earlier, leads to Jewish-Christian relations becoming Holocaust shaped. Within this there is often a focus on Jewish People as weak victims and this is often linked to a call for a major reappraisal of anti-Semitic Christian theology and associated liturgical practices. While in contrast a focus on the state of Israel leads to Jewish-Christian relationships been focused on the land and subsequent discussions about religious and secular values within the land, alongside key political questions of justice, peace and human rights, especially in relation to the Palestinians and other related groups. Often in this context Jewish people are viewed not as victims, but as strong victors and by some commentators as oppressors.

- f) There has been a renewed openness to the Gospel as a result of Jewish people having a renewed confidence in their own identity. In this sense what was once anathema to a Jewish person in a European ghetto may become a possibility on a Tel Aviv beach. This personal openness has also been reflected in wider areas of scholarship and academic study. There has clearly been a Jewish reappraisal of Jesus and new areas of shared Jewish-Christian studies have seen remarkable growth. For example, there has been significant work done in areas exploring shared textual and historical heritage and in areas exploring the Jewish roots of Christianity alongside the Christian influence on Rabbinical Judaism. In addition new studies are taking place exploring issues such as pilgrimage, religious identity in a post-modern context and a shared reflection on the on-going engagement with Islam.

From this renewed scholarship the traditional building blocks for the story of Judaism and Christianity have undergone some significant changes. A new theological and historical road map is being set up. In this case Christianity is not seen simply as a daughter (an errant one in the eyes of Rabbinical Judaism) coming out of the mother faith of Judaism, but rather both Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism are seen in a much more nuanced sense, namely as being siblings, both emerging from the dividing of the ways following the ministry of Jesus and associated events, such as the destruction of the Temple. Sometimes these siblings grew together in an almost symbiotic way, while at other times there was strong polemic and much conflict. In whatever way one sees the precise relationship both

contemporary Rabbinical Judaism and Christianity are understood not as religions which fell from the sky fully formed, but as movements which have and continue to change and to be shaped through the centuries and through their shared contacts.

My tenth point is that in this period there has also been the ongoing rise in the number of evangelistic mission groups. Most notable from the USA; for example, in 1948 with the Christian Jew Foundation, in 1949 with the International board of Jewish Mission and in 1973, with Jews for Jesus.³⁰ As an outsider to the American context it appears to me that the Jewish communities in the USA often have more confidence in American cultural values, this is because the Jewish People have contributed significantly to shaping these values, as they are part of an emerging immigrant shaped and largely fluid culture. This is clearly the underlying meta-narrative for example in the writings of Saul Bellow³¹ and many other American Jewish writers. However, European Jews especially in the British culture have less confidence, partly because of smaller numbers, but also because they were part of an inherited and well established cultural setting. Such cultural experiences, to some extent shape elements of mission practice and the organisational values of these mission groups.

My eleventh point is that a number of other significant moves should be noted which have shaped and will continue to shape Jewish mission. For example, the Roman Catholic Church engaged more fully with the twentieth century, post-Vatican Two. Within this engagement there was a reaching out to other Christian Churches (decree on Ecumenism) and there was a deeper commitment to the search for Christian Unity. Alongside this was a reaching out to other religious groups (decree *Nostra Aetate*) and the section on Jewish People is redefining the Roman Catholic attitude towards the Jews. This redefining reflects a special affection which Pope John 23rd had for Jewish People. However, I am unclear from my reading of *Nostra Aetate*, if this means a reappraisal of the decision made by the Roman Catholic Church in 1948, which robustly opposed the foundation of the state of Israel?

It is of interest that Vatican Two linked Church unity with a re-connection with Jewish People and Judaism. I am not sure how this is understood in Roman Catholic theological and mission contexts, but I see that the scandal

of Christian disunity (which may be reflected in part with the numerous numbers of separate Jewish missions in our own gathering?) can only be fully addressed by firstly having an appreciation of and commitment to the role of Jewish Believers within the Church. It is clear today that the LORD is graciously re-grafting some of the original branches back into the Church and the Church is being invited back to be renewed and restored by her long neglected Jewish Biblical roots. This process of re-grafting in will lead to the true renewal and the on-going reforming of the Church, which will culminate in discovering and entering into the unity the LORD desires.

In addition to the movement within the Roman Catholic Church, movements such as Towards Jerusalem Council Two and as stated earlier the Isaiah 19 movement can witness to encouraging changes within areas of the Orthodox Church and new emerging partnerships between Messianic congregations and the wider Church family. Also we should rejoice (especially in our setting today) in the important work of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE), which was born out of the consultation on World Evangelism in 1980. This LCJE network has contributed significantly in terms of promoting good mission practice and in exploring key areas of theology and missiological studies. Hopefully all of this will bring about much fruitfulness in the future. It is to this future we now turn.

INTO THE FUTURE (2016-?)

Beyond the horizon, behind the sun, at the end of the rainbow, life has only begun...

Please note the question mark in the date above, as knowledge of the future is way beyond my pay grade. The future is fluid and it is impossible to predict how the mission landscape may change as a result of social, political and technological changes. Already much mission work is taking place today through social-media and other related formats which would be well beyond the conception of even our most forward-thinking colleagues of only a few decades ago.

Clearly there is much in Jewish mission and the wider work of the Church and the world which is deeply encouraging, yet there is so much which

is alarming, notably the rise of totalitarian regimes, repressive religious structures and the very groaning of the created order. In the light of this my final (twelfth) point is this: I believe throughout the history of the Church effective Jewish mission has been and always will be the litmus test for the uniqueness, all sufficiency and power of the Gospel. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ is rooted in the creation of all things (Hebrews 1). Yes Israel and the Jewish People have a rich and glorious identity based on God's covenantal blessings, yet their future depends not on their own identity, or election, but on response to the unique saving work of Jesus Christ.

The Church, in which I live and seek to serve, must continually strive for and pray for our on-going Jewish mission. There is a deep need for genuine points of contact; such points may be very different to those established by our pioneers in former centuries. Such mission work must strive to be authentic, coherent, contemporary and Biblically astute. In all of this there must be a profound commitment to valuing relationships and building communities. Communities are important as they root our faith in belonging and doing not simply believing. This sense of belonging and doing (obedience within active discipleship) is one of the many fruits of appreciating and exploring the Jewish (Biblical) roots of the Christian faith.

The Church, in which I live and serve, cannot be understood simply as the called out community. The Church is also the grafted in community. My love for the Church calls and equips my love for Israel and the Jewish People. How this love will be worked out is where I enter once again the mysteries of the LORD. Yet I know with confidence, based upon the promise of Scripture that the LORD will bring about the reconciliation of many sons of Ishmael and many sons of Isaac (Isaiah 19). The Lord will also bring about the saving of all Israel (Romans 11:26) and the full number from the nations (Romans 11:25). All of this will then culminate in the consummation of all things, in and through Christ (Ephesians 1:22). As someone once said: "Yes I am an optimist, I have no choice, for I believe in the Holy Spirit!" This belief is the fitting starting point as well as the concluding point for any true history of Jewish mission.

ENDNOTES

- 1 I use the term Church to mean the community of people who believe in and serve Jesus as the crucified and risen Son of God and Messiah of Israel. The term Church comes from the Greek word Ecclesia meaning the called out community. The term Ecclesia is found 23 times in Acts and 62 times in the letters of Paul.
- 2 A number of significant attempts have been made to offer partial Church and missionary histories. I have found the following books helpful;
 - *A History of Christianity*, Kenneth Latourette, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964)
 - *The Early Church*, Henry Chadwick, (Penguin, 1967)
 - *Christianity in the Making (Vol 2)*, James Dunn., (Eerdmans, 2009)
 - *The Vision of God*, Kenneth Kirk, (James Clarke, 1931)
 - *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede, (Penguin, 1955)
 - *The Glory and the Shame*, Peter Hocken (Eagle, 1994)
 - *Here I Stand-Martin Luther*, Roland Bainton (Lion, 1978)
 - Biographical Dictionary of Christian Mission, Gerald Anderson (ed) (Macmillan, 1998)
 - *A History of Christian Mission*, Stephen Neill, (Penguin, 1986)
- 3 John 21:25 – All Bible quotations in this paper are taken from the New International Version.
- 4 The quote Forever Young is a lyric from a Bob Dylan song. I have chosen a Bob Dylan song title and quote for each historical period in order to try and help explore some cultural connections and to promote spiritual reflections on each period. The songs are *Forever Young* (Dylan, 1973), *Not Dark Yet* (Dylan 1997), *The Times they are a changing* (Dylan 1963), *Every Grain of Sand* (Dylan 1981) and *Beyond the Horizon* (Dylan 2007). I hope those who know the songs well will find this a helpful tool for reflection, for those who do not, please don't worry!
- 5 I place the word Church in inverted commas at this point to flag up awareness that there is much discussion about the appropriate terminology for the community of those belonging to Jesus, especially in

the period prior to the destruction of the Temple (AD70). Clearly it is not straightforward to use a term which has evolved over two thousand years (from the earliest New Testament period, through the Post- Constantine period to our own post –modern context) and resonates in so many different ways in so many different contexts. For a helpful discussion on the appropriateness of the use of the term Church (and 16 alternative terms) in the New Testament period, see *Christianity in the Making* (Vol 2), James Dunn, (Eerdmans, 2009).

- 6 N.T Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 4th edition, (SPCK, 1992), page 359.
- 7 However, I prefer the word especially.
- 8 For a good introduction to the mission calling of Israel within God's Purposes see the following books:
 - *The Irrevocable Calling*, Daniel Juster, (Lederer books, 1996/2007)
 - *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, John Walvoord, (Zondervan, 1962)
 - *Israel, His People, His Land, His Story*, Fred Wright (Editor), (Thankful books/Love Never Fails, 2005)
- 9 *The Case for Enlargement Theology*, Alex Jacob, (Glory to Glory Publications) First published 2010, see especially pages 183-201(Second Edition, 2011).
- 10 For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the Church and Synagogue communities see the following books:
 - *Verus Israel*, Marcel Simon, (Littman Press, 1996)
 - *Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism*, Hershel Shanks,(Editor), (SPCK, 1993)
 - *Judaism and Christian Beginnings*, Samuel Sandmel, (Oxford University Press, 1978).
- 11 A Jewish term used to refer to non-Jews.

- 12 *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, David H. Stern (Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992) page 273–274.
- 13 There are some exceptions to this prevailing situation. For example in England during the twelve century the Dominicans set up hospitals and education institutions to support new Jewish converts, also in 1550, Pope Paul 3rd , set up a mission institute focusing upon the conversion of the Jews.
- 14 Later became Pope Benedict 13th (often regarded as an Anti-pope).
- 15 It seems an ironic and horrendous historical detail that such actions took place in Rome, for it was to the Church in Rome in the early years that Paul had written (probably from Corinth in the year 57) a letter which so strongly shows how the Church needs to honour, respect and love the Jewish people.
- 16 See the Papal bull – *Cum nimis absurdum*, issued in July 1555 for specific details. These regulations remained in force for the next three centuries.
- 17 For a helpful study of this issue and for helpful historical background, see two books by Kelvin Crombie:
 - *For the Love of Zion*, (Terra Nova, 2008- First published by Hodder and Stoughton)
 - *Three Sons of Abraham*, (Heritage Resources, 2013).
- 18 His book published in 1615 (after his death) was titled-“Shall they return to Jerusalem again?” This was a pioneering and strongly argued work advocating for the return of the Jews to the Holy Land in fulfilment of the Scriptures.
- 19 See the paper- John Nelson Darby and the Holocaust by Paul Wilkinson. This paper was first presented at the International Brethren Archivists and Historians Network conference in 2007.

- 20 Joseph Frey was born Joseph Levi. He used new surname in Christian ministry.
- 21 *History of the Moravian Church*, J Hutton (Book 2) – cited by Kelvin Crombie in *Three Sons of Abraham*, (Heritage Resources, 20113, p.45).
- 22 This financial crisis was addressed largely thanks to the generosity of Lewis Way. For more information on Lewis Way see *Lewis Way A biography* by Geoffrey Henderson 2014 published by HTS Media. Available from CMJ UK £7
- 23 For a full study of this Bishopric, see *A Jewish Bishop in Jerusalem- The life and story of Michael Solomon Alexander*, Kelvin Crombie, Nicolayson's Ltd, 2006).
- 24 From this Norwegian ministry there has developed a number of contemporary ministries in Israel, for example the work of the Caspari Centre (1982) the Beit Eliahu Community centre in Haifa and Immanuel Church in Jaffa.
- 25 These two missions combined in 1977 to form the Messianic Testimony.
- 26 These are the fifteen names of Jewish Believers in Jesus chosen by George Stevens for his biographical study in his book- *Jewish Christian Leaders*, (Oliphants, 1966).
- 27 See the book, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement*, Kai Kjur-Hansen (The Handsel Press, 1985)
- 28 For a study into Messianic Jewish identity and mission practice, I have found the following books helpful:
 - *Three Sons of Abraham*, Kelvin Crombie, (Heritage resources, 2013)
 - *Messianic Judaism*, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, (Cassell, 2000)
 - *Chosen to Follow*, K Hoyland and J Nielson (Editors) (Caspari Center, 2012)
 - *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*, Richard Harvey, (Paternoster, 2009)

- *Growing to Maturity*, Daniel Juster (Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, 1982)
 - *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*, Mark Kinzer (Brazos Press, 2005).
- 29 A good place to start reading about the Holocaust is the definitive work by Martin Gilbert. *The Holocaust-The Jewish Tragedy*, (Fontana, 1987).
- 30 See for example the three articles on Ethical Evangelism (one in a USA context, one in a British context and one in an Israeli context) published in the Mishkan Journal, (Issue 19-1993). It is also worth noting that the Mishkan Journal provides excellent resource material. The following issues have articles particularly helpful to the history of Jewish mission- Issue 4 (1986), Issue 33 (2000), Issue 36 (2002) Issue 47 (2006) and issue 50–51 (2007).
- 31 For a history of the growth of Jews for Jesus see, *Not Ashamed- the Story of Jews for Jesus*, Ruth Tucker, (Multnomah publishers, 1999).
- 32 See especially his book, *The Adventures of Augie March*, (Viking Press, 1953).

IMAGES IN FRONT COVER MOSAIC

LEFT

Joseph Fray

MIDDLE TOP

Statue of Saint Peter

MIDDLE BOTTOM

Western Wall, Jerusalem

RIGHT TOP

Palestine Place

RIGHT BOTTOM

Statue of Saint Paul

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