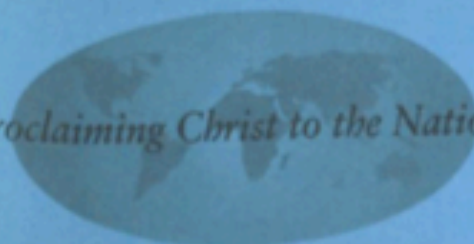


Journal Extract

Proclaiming Christ to the Nations



MISSIO APOSTOLICA

Journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology, Inc.

Volume XII, No. 2 (Issue No. 24)

November 2004

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE.....	69
EDITORIAL	70
ARTICLES	
Lost in America: Mission Opportunities Among Refugees Jeanne Burger	72
A Multi-Ethnic Lutheran Theology for the Next Generation Alberto Garcia	80
The Validity and Methodology of Jewish Evangelism Kevin Parviz	87
The Future of Christianity Douglas L. Rutt.....	102
MISSION HISTORY	
The LCMS Among Muslims: A Brief Historical Survey Roland Miller	114
Hong Kong International School...History and Reflection Bob Christian.....	120
PERSPECTIVES	
The Economy of Brazil and the Brazilian Lutheran University Allen D. Hanson	126
BOOK REVIEWS	129

semiannually

www.lsfmissiology.org



THE APPLE OF HIS EYE--MISSOURI CONGREGATION CHAI V'SHALOM

Congregation Chai v'Shalom began in 1997 as a store-front office in Dogtown, St. Louis, MO. Rev. Kevin Parviz, a Jewish believer in Y'shua (Jesus), envisioned a congregation of Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Jesus, worshipping together in much the same fashion as the Church in the 1st century, the worship style patterned after a "second-temple model" of worship.

A congregation of the LCMS, we partner with Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism to bring the gospel to Jewish people in St. Louis, the United States and internationally.

We celebrate Divine Worship on Sunday mornings, also in the pattern of the 1st century Church, as we celebrate the resurrection of Messiah, Y'shua. Our services are at 10:00 a.m. with Bible study beginning at 9:00 a.m. Oneg Shabbat follows the service. We hope you will join us. Shalom!

CONGREGATION CHAI V'SHALOM
REV. KEVIN PARVIZ, PASTOR
6327 CLAYTON AVE., ST. LOUIS, MO 63139
WWW.CHAIVSHALOM.COM
REVKEYVE@AOL.COM

Foreword

Much has changed in our ministry since this article was published. So I thought I would take this opportunity to update the reader on what is going on in the LC-MS within Jewish missions.

In 1973, at the encouragement of Rev. Bruce Lieske, their pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia submitted a memorial to the 1973 convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, titled "To Facilitate Gospel Proclamation among Jews." The synod ultimately referred this issue to an ad hoc committee, headed by Dr. Erwin J. Kolb then the Executive Director for Evangelism of the LC-MS. You can find these and related documents in Witnessing to Jewish People by Bruce J. Lieske on our website.

This beginning grew into what is now Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism (LIJE), founded in 1981. Rev. Lieske became its Founder and first Executive Director, and LIJE became the first mission society outreach of the LC-MS since World War II. There are 6,000,000 Jewish people in the United States, accounting for 45% of world Jewry.

To minister to this community, we help prepare congregations for ministry to Jewish people through preaching, teaching, writing and workshops while developing branches that are active and intentional in evangelism to the communities where God has placed them. We affirm and seek to be faithful to St. Paul's proclamation, ***"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile"*** (***Romans 1:16***).

This article was first published in the theological journal "Missio Apostolica" in 2004. At that time, the ministry here in St. Louis was growing. I became involved in 1996, having begun my ministry with a Jewish outreach organization in Denver, CO, called Menorah Ministries where I was serving as a volunteer missionary on the campus at the University of Colorado. By 1996 I was

attending Concordia Seminary and had not heard much about the existing Lutheran mission to the Jews when I met Steve Cohen. He was then the field counselor and advisor to LIJE. In 1996 he left Jews for Jesus and came full-time with LIJE and moved to St. Louis. We worked together to found The Apple of His Eye Mission Society, which was ostensibly intended to be a missionary training center, working with LIJE. But it ended up effectively operating as a competing mission to the Jews, causing a lot of confusion within our church body. So Steve and Bruce decided to separate their work. Steve left the ministry of LIJE but continued to operate under LIJE's street name of "The Apple of His Eye."

Because of all this confusion, LIJE determined to open new mission branches under the name of "Burning Bush Ministries" to distinguish itself from Steve's new ministry, and in 1999, opened a new branch of mission in Detroit, MI, the first of "Burning Bush Ministries."

However, two branches of ministry were still open, St. Louis and New York, operating under the "Apple of His Eye" name. Both branches were attached to messianic-Lutheran congregations, Congregation Beth El in Queens, New York, and Congregation Chai v'Shalom in St. Louis, where I have the privilege of pastoring.

Congregation Chai v'Shalom was founded in 1998, celebrating its first worship service on April 18, 1998, about a year-and-a-half since beginning mission work in St. Louis. Then, in 2005, Bruce retired and LIJE called me to serve as its second Executive Director, and has moved its offices to St. Louis, MO, where it continues a variety of ministries under the structure of LIJE, such as The Apple of His Eye, Burning Bush Ministries, and Aish HaEmeth, our Center for Jewish-Christian studies.

Unfortunately, in 2008 our ministry and congregation in Queens, New York closed as the missionary there took a call to serve a traditional Lutheran congregation. But, we have opened new mission stations in Atlanta, Minnesota, Mid-Michigan, Los Angeles and S. Florida, and continue to minister in Detroit, St. Louis and Orlando, and work with partner ministries to serve in the Ukraine and in Israel. We are actively working with congregations in the New York metro area to reopen our New York branch. **LIJE continues as a faith-ministry of the LC--MS, and as such relies on the regular support of those to whom God has called to sustain it with their gifts and prayers.**

“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.” (Romans 10:1).

--Rev. Kevin Parviz, Executive Director

The Validity and Methodology Of Jewish Evangelism

Kevin Parviz

The Validity of Jewish Evangelism

In any evangelistic effort to an unreached community, one must study that community and determine the issues which will either hinder or foster the proclamation of God's Word. However, in the area of Jewish Evangelism all of these issues must be filtered through the lens of validity. Is proclaiming the Gospel to the Jewish people a valid ministry and one that is pleasing to our Lord?

With this question in mind, the issues which we will examine are prayer, the identity of the Messiah, the church's history of anti-Semitism, organized Jewish resistance to the Christian mission, objections to Jewish evangelism from within the Christian community, universalism in Christianity, and conflict among the different Jewish missions.

Once the validity of this mission is established, methodological issues in the actual mission task must be considered. These include assimilation and identity questions, identifying the mission field, and developing points of contact within the Jewish community. Such matters as children, intermarriage, Jewish immigration to the United States, theology and worship, plus recruitment and training of missionaries must also be considered.

Prayer

In interviewing sixteen Messianic missions in the U.S., the most important piece of advice I was given was to be in constant prayer. Pray for the people to whom God sends us, pray for our own spirit of courage and commitment as we face rejection, and pray for the certainty of our calling. Through prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit, we can develop a love for Jewish people, life, culture, history, religion, and thought. Our greatest challenge is to earn the right to share our message with them. This entails relationship building and understanding. The Holy Spirit in answer to our prayers will drive these goals.

Kevin Parviz graduated from Concordia Seminary St. Louis in 1998 and serves as missionary at large with The Apple of His Eye mission society and pastor of Chai v'Shalom congregation.

How Can Jesus Be The Messiah?

A question that is often asked in the area of Jewish evangelism is: "Why did a majority of the first-century Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah?" and its corollary, "Why is Jesus such a hindrance for modern Jews today?"

There is really no way to answer this first question with certainty. The answer that is most often proffered is that Jesus did not fulfill the requirements that Judaism expected of their Messiah. This answer in itself seems obvious, but we need to explore just what those expectations were.

To do this, a study must be made of Old Testament apocalyptic literature, as well as of the interpretation of that literature and the Torah by Judaism's pre-eminent scholar, Moses Maimonides. But, even such study will not answer our questions unless we look at whom the Jewish community considers the "modern Messiah."

Just what were the first-century Jewish people's expectations of the Messiah? The apocalyptic literature—consisting of three groups called the Isaiah, Zechariah, and Daniel groups—promises that the Messiah would be Yahweh's anointed one, that one who would be the spearhead against evil and reign in the new era. It is not so much the character of the Messiah that would define who he is, but the events of the world and the condition of God's people at the time of his advent.

This has been the stumbling block for Judaism, both first-century and modern. The question is asked, "Has the Messianic Age come?" For the Jew, who understands apocalyptic literature to describe a condition under which God's covenant people will flourish and be free from oppression, history is an obstacle. "If Jesus was the Messiah, why have suffering and evil continued and even increased in the many centuries since his death?"¹

There is no question that history has shown that the Jewish people have undergone much suffering and evil and that if apocalyptic literature is to be accepted as the vision of physical reality, then it would be difficult to accept the claim that the Messianic Age has come. But in the face of their history, how has their understanding of the Messiah changed?

Moses Maimonides has been considered "almost universally as the greatest of Jews since Bible times."² He was born in Cordova, Spain, at one-o'clock in the afternoon on March 30, 1135. "This is the only instance of a Jewish scholar, whose exact day and hour of birth was faithfully recorded, signifying the importance history attached to the event."³ His father, a prominent rabbi, took his family and fled to North Africa in the face of persecution; and while in exile there, Maimonides grew in his study of the Torah. Coming to understand his people as a dispersed people with no home, he was driven to build up his people's inner spirituality as opposed to their sense of culture and community. To this

¹ David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, *Jews and 'Jewish Christianity'* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1978), 19.

² Jacob S. Minkin, *The World of Moses Maimonides* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1957), 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

end, he undertook the study of the Talmud, as well as the Torah, and wrote commentaries on both. His *Guide for the Perplexed* was read throughout the non-Jewish European world, and his great rabbinic code, *Mishneh Torah*, has been included in more than 220 Hebrew commentaries. Maimonides developed "The Thirteen Principles" at the end of the introduction to his commentary on chapter 10/11 of the Mishnah's tractate Sanhedrin in 1168. These have been shortened into creedal and liturgical forms which are in use in synagogues throughout the world today.

Let us consider Maimonides' twelfth principle of faith.

I believe with full faith in the coming of the Messiah,
and, though he tarry, I anticipate him, nonetheless,
on every day, when he may come.

This statement confirms the belief and faith in the coming of the Messiah and that, even though the wait may seem long, he is not to be considered slow in coming. Maimonides taught the assurance of the coming of the Messiah, but he abhorred the practice of setting dates for his coming.

The Jewish people had, had many "messiahs" in the course of history. Some thought Judas Maccabee to be the Messiah, and of course Jesus of Nazareth, who had a large following of Jews until His crucifixion. Others followed Bar Kokhba in the second-century, Ibn Aryeh in Spain during the twelfth-century, as well as David Alroy in Kurdistan during the same century. It would seem that the twelfth-century was prolific with "messiahs" as one also arose in Yemen, prompting Maimonides to write his *Epistle to Yemen* to discourage the people from listening to astrologers who were calculating the date of the Messiah's coming, as well as to expose the Yemen "messiah" as an impostor. In this letter, Maimonides described the person whom the Jewish people could expect.

"The Messiah will be a very great Prophet, greater than all the Prophets with the exception of Moses our teacher."⁴ He then ascribes the Biblical qualities to the Messiah, those of the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, and the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He gives him the names which Isaiah gives him: "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." He then is careful to explain that "His being called 'God' is hyperbolic, and intimates that his greatness will be superior to that of all men."⁵

Maimonides teaches that to consider the Messiah to have come, the Messianic age must arise. The Messianic age is a kingdom on earth. It will be marked by the Messiah reestablishing the throne of David in Israel, with his capital at Zion. His kingdom will be greater than King Solomon's, and all the nations of the world will make peace with him. Any nation that rises up against Israel will be destroyed by God. But not all Jewish scholars agree on this.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁵ *Ibid.*

With respect to the modern teaching of the Messiah, it is clearly taught that the Messiah has not yet come. In fact, a teaching has been forwarded that:

the Messiah will always not yet have come, into all historical eternity. It is his coming, or rather the expectation of his coming, not his arrival, his "advent," that is obligatory to Jewish faith.⁶

With this teaching of the Messiah, it is the anticipation of the advent of the Messiah that is central to Jewish religious belief, not the advent itself. Every day is a day in the pre-messianic "interim," and modern Jewish scholars teach this for two reasons. The first is to avoid what they see as the pitfall of Christianity, the mythologization of any man deifying himself. Secondly, "it makes man's ethical tasks not an interim obligation but his perpetual destiny."⁷

Messianism then in this regard is a fundamental operator in the development of ethics. It operates as a direct cause for moral values and, as such, mediates the proper action in every situation.

Christian/Jewish Relations

An argument is often made that Christian/Jewish relations have suffered from the beginning, as Christ's person was rejected: In considering the person of Christ, the battle between Jesus and the Jewish establishment was not centered in Christ's person, but "the real battle was observing the Law."⁸ While Jesus insisted that "He came not to destroy but to fulfill [the Law], He goes on to interpret it."⁹ The method He chose was the normal method of rabbinic teaching, but whereas the rabbis interpreted the Law impersonally, Jesus made it clear that the interpretations that He gave were His own. This was a different approach and went further than any Pharisaic teacher would permit himself to go; it shifted the focus from the accepted practice of interpreting the Law, to the interpreter himself. In the traditional practice, the interpretation was scrutinized, but with Jesus, He became scrutinized.

A bleak picture of Christian/ Jewish relations is painted following this scrutiny, and, with a few exceptions, the responsibility for these poor relations rests upon the Christian Church. "The main responsibility must rest upon the theological picture created in patristic literature of the Jew as being perpetually betraying God and ultimately abandoned by Him. The hardening of Judaism is a result, not a cause of the separation."¹⁰

An especially painful period of history for the Jewish people is (and will continue to be) the holocaust and the Nazi regime, which the Jewish community views as being

⁶ Cf. Frederick E. Greenspahn, ed., *The Human Condition in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, 172.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 373.

supported by the Christian Church in Germany. It is critical in witnessing Christ to the Jewish people that we do not minimize the Church's role in persecution, but that we affirm the Church's role in opposing such persecution. It needs to be established that there is a difference between the evil that men do in the name of the Church, and the teachings of Jesus Christ. This needs to be established in any dialogue between Christian and Jew. Once this is established, it then may be possible to get past the history to actually consider the person of Jesus Christ.

Organized Jewish Resistance

Any missionary to the Jewish people must be aware that there is organized Jewish resistance to Christian missionary work. These "anti-missionaries" operate in many ways. One tactic which they utilize is propaganda.

For many years, there have been groups such as the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), which have formed a Task Force on Missionaries and Cults, and in recent years a group of anti-missionaries has arisen as a response to Jews for Jesus. Calling themselves Jews for Judaism, they describe themselves as "the only full-time counter-missionary resource and outreach organization in North America which is dedicated to countering the efforts of fundamentalist Christian groups and cults who specifically target Jews for conversion."¹¹

Whereas in the past the tactic has been to label Jewish Christians as non-Jews with limited effectiveness, these groups have switched their focus to calling Jewish missionary agencies "cults," taking advantage of the current fear of cults in North America.

Another scare tactic used by such groups is to over-estimate the number of Jewish Christians in America, in an effort to appeal for funds. One claim was that by the year 2000 there would be 1.5 million Messianic Jews. Conservative estimates place the number of Messianic Jews between 30,000 and 50,000, while the largest credible estimate cited is 200,000 in the United States. With such propaganda, the anxiety within the Jewish community is increased, heightening its awareness and prompting it to be more active in anti-missionary activities.

Furthermore, these groups also actively misrepresent missionary activity, accusing missionaries of fraudulent and deceptive practices. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations published a manual for use among congregations, which described the dangers of Christian missionary activity to the Jewish people.

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

¹¹ Jews for Judaism promotional flyer.

deceptive methods are used to gain access to the public schools, where missionaries find a captive audience.¹²

In attempting to respond to these reports, David Brickner of Jews for Jesus asks, "Who are these clowns? Who are these home wrecking evangelists who encourage teenagers to lie? I know of no such mission agencies or individuals. Nor do anti-missionaries provide names or any other documentation by which these charges could be verified."¹³

In addition to propaganda techniques by such anti-missionary groups, as well as the establishment of North American Judaism in general, the scholarly resistance to missionary activity has yet another approach. The modern trend in scholarly Judaism is to reclaim what is Jewish about Jesus, as recorded in the synoptic Gospels, seeing them as a record of the teaching of Jesus without the subversion of the apostle Paul, who is viewed as Hellenizing Jesus' teaching and creating a new religion. The advantage of this approach to the Jewish community is to defuse what becomes a tension within the Jewish person relative to the claims that Christianity makes about Jesus. Being "educated" about the "true Jesus," enables the Jewish person to more effectively refute Christian claims.

Thus, taking advantage of radical, critical scholarship among Christian theologians, Jewish scholars have embraced Christian skepticism about the historicity of what is recorded in the Gospels. And yet, while maintaining skepticism, the Jewish approach displays a "remarkable confidence about the reliability of the Gospel when anything 'truly Jewish' is concerned."¹⁴ Apologetically, this contradiction leads to the frustrating circumstance wherein "Jewish scholars allow from the Gospels only that which agrees with their views."¹⁵

The last tool of organized resistance that we should look at is as ancient as the Jewish people themselves, that of the application of Law, or to put it in more common parlance, *guilt!* In another publication from the JCRC, the writers appeal to the Jewish person's sense of responsibility to his persecuted ancestors as he considers his decision to believe in Jesus.

You were born a Jew because your ancestors clung to their faith. Often, they had to give their very lives when misguided Christians forced the choice of baptism or death on them. You were born a Jew because your ancestors had the supreme courage to choose death. Had they chosen baptism, you would not have been born a Jew. Their readiness to make the ultimate sacrifice creates a special obligation for their descendants not to render that sacrifice meaningless. Before abandoning the Judaism of your ancestors, you must make an all-out effort to study it, to know it, to live it. The people of Israel were chosen by God to be 'a

¹² *Keeping Posted*, vol. 32:4, February 1987, published by The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 5.

¹³ David Brickner, "An Ethical War: The Struggle for Integrity in Jewish Evangelism in North America" *Mishkan: A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People*, Issue No. 19, 17.

¹⁴ Donald A. Hagner *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 223.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

nation of priests and a holy people' (Ex. 19:6). By remaining loyal to your people, you can help it live up to its divine calling. By considering the devotion of its martyrs throughout the ages, and by remembering the fate of the six million who were murdered in our own time because they were Jews, you can come to live a life worthy of their sacrifice.¹⁶

If all of my ancestors chose death, how could I have been born a Jew? But, while I ponder this, I realize how susceptible I am to guilt, and the decision to "abandon Judaism" is a burden indeed!

How should we in Jewish mission respond to this resistance to our activity? With regard to the propaganda leveled against us, some missions have simply chosen to be silent and to continue the work. Others have written editorials to Jewish publications responding to the charges, usually failing to be printed. Jews for Jesus has compiled a document entitled "Principles of Ethical Ministry" which calls missionary work to high standards, both in its work among Jewish people, as well as in training, recruiting and administration. Brickner simply concludes, "It is up to us to make certain that the charges of our opposition remain misrepresentations."¹⁷

Regarding the Jewish scholars, we see it as hopeful that they can read and accept any of the New Testament and recognize that, at least among them, the common ground for the Christian and the Jew has expanded. Their work gives the Christian new material with which to challenge the Jew to consider Christ as the Messiah.

To guilt, the only response can be love. To the Law, the only response can be the Gospel. It is here that relationship building is most crucial as Jewish people consider the hard questions which are in their heart.

Objections to Jewish Evangelism from Within the Christian Community

Due to the success of Jewish militancy to Gospel proclamation, some within the Christian community have been looking for "either a dilution of the traditional imperative to share the Gospel with the Jews, or for a new Biblical perspective that does away with this obligation altogether."¹⁸

As an example of the schism within the Christian community over this issue, in June of 1996 the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution which included the following:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we commit ourselves to prayer, especially for the salvation of the Jewish people as well as for the salvation of "every kindred and tongue and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9); and

¹⁶ Berger, 67-68.

¹⁷ Brickner, 18.

¹⁸ Arthur F. Glasser. "Evangelical Objections to Jewish Evangelism" *Mishkan: A Form on the Gospel and the Jewish People* (issue No. 16, 1992), 38.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That we direct our energies and resources toward the proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people.¹⁹

While drawing the expected reaction from the Jewish community, some within the Christian community also reacted unfavorably.

The leader of one large (non-Southern) Baptist group termed the resolution “wrongheaded.” Another leader who heads a coalition of Lutheran, Episcopalian and Catholic churches in New York remarked that the resolution “leaves a bad taste all around.” On the other hand, a United Methodist minister and member of the World Council of Churches observed, “The Southern Baptist resolution may not be popular, but it is biblical.”²⁰

This schism and the increasing militancy by the Jewish community has accomplished at least three goals: (1) Christians have developed an increasingly painful unease over Church history; (2) some within Christianity have lost confidence in the application of New Testament scriptures with reference to Jewish people; and (3) leaders within Christianity have been given reasons to desist from evangelization of the Jewish people.

As discussed above, Christianity’s conscience has been pricked with regard to the holocaust and the precarious nature of Christian/Jew relations. The result is that some have begun to question the “propriety of focusing evangelism on ‘any one people.’ In their eyes it disrupts social harmony.”²¹ As an example of this response, Rev. Allan R. Brockway, Secretary of the World Council of Churches Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People, has commented that “Jews should be the last people to whom Christians should direct their evangelistic mission.”²² He has come to this conclusion by the premise that “It is debatable whether Jesus actually thought of himself as the Messiah,”²³ and affirming that “we have dared to worship the God whom we have come to know and love through the Jewish people. How can we have the audacity to declare that those same Jewish people can only worship their own God if they do it in our way?”²⁴

The second point is illustrated by an increasing tendency by Reformed Christianity to handle Scripture with a “new hermeneutic.” Often Scripture is made to support, rather than define beliefs. “If one believes that God is through with the Jewish people, then Scripture can be made to support this view.”²⁵ There is also an increasing tendency to allegorize parables in ways that “negate their intended meaning...to ignore the plain teaching of Scripture because of the desire to compensate for the anti-Semitism of the

¹⁹ Stephen Katz. “Will the Circle Be Unbroken” *Mishpochah Message* (Winter, 1996), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Walter Barker. “Responses” *Mishkan: A Theological Forum on Jewish Evangelism* (issue 5, 1986), 21.

²³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵ Glasser, 38-39.

past,...and the tendency to handle Scripture in a subjective fashion by extracting texts from their context, ignoring key passages bearing on the subject in question."²⁶

Finally, the Jewish community has been successful in convincing some Christians that there are legitimate theological reasons to desist from witnessing Christ to the Jewish people. One popular theory is called the "Two Covenant Theory," in which it is argued that the Sinaitic Covenant is for the Jewish people and the "New" Covenant instituted by Jesus is for the gentiles. Therefore, there are two equally valid ways to attain salvation, refocusing the mission impetus of Evangelical Christianity away from the Jew and toward unbelieving gentiles.

One Jewish scholar who has effectively argued this theory is Hans Joachim Schoeps, who teaches that for the Jew, the absolute is God's word, "heard solely and exclusively in the *Tanakh*."²⁷ And this word tells of the covenant of God with one nation, a physical reality completely distinct from all other nations. This revelation needs no "supplement, increase or fulfillment."²⁸

For the Christian Church, Schoeps teaches that this same word also holds a sacred meaning, for it displays events within the history of Israel through which God has concluded a new covenant for all other nations outside of Israel. And this covenant is also communicated through the word of God in the Gospel. For both communities, the absolute is the same one *unchangeable* God, "who has revealed his truth in diverse ways."²⁹ But, though the absolute for both stems from the same God, "the Church can no more possess Israel's fundamental knowledge of itself and its salvation than a Jew can understand from within the essence of Christianity and share in it."³⁰ Accepting this "Two Covenant Theory," some church leaders have been able to reason that Jewish evangelism is unnecessary—and sometimes "immoral—because Jews don't need Jesus."³¹

Universalism in the Church

One of the worst effects in accepting these alternate routes to salvation is what is considered to be a growing universalism in the Church. Since Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church has grown more universalistic,³² and many main stream Christian denominations have followed suit. So another challenge to Messianic ministry is "How can we face the Jewish community with a particularistic message, stressing unique

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁷ Hans Joachim Schoeps. *The Jewish Christian Argument: A history of theologies in conflict* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 158.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 170.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 187

³¹ Katz, 2.

³² Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 1979 encyclical—"man-every man without any exception whatever—has been redeemed by Christ, and...every man—with each man without any exception whatever—Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it"(paragraph 14).

salvation in the Messiah, when even in the evangelical churches universalism is growing?"³³

Conflict Among the Various Jewish Missions

Another question that is often asked as a challenge to Jewish mission work is "How can we stop the internecine squabbles among the different Jewish mission agencies and congregational bodies, which discredit us and cause grief to our Lord?"³⁴ There may be as many (different) divisions within Jewish mission work as there are within denominational Christianity. Conflict between various mission agencies revolves around many areas. Some of the mission agencies are committed to evangelizing the Jewish people, without the hindrance of having to maintain a congregational body. These entities believe that resources should be used to reach Jewish people and connect them with established denominational congregations. Other groups feel it a necessity to establish a worshiping body of Messianic believers who can help each other in the struggle against assimilation.

Within groups who plant congregations, there are differences in worship styles to the extent that some congregations view such things as Easter morning sunrise service as "too Gentile." There are also theological differences relating to eschatology and the primacy of the Law. Many congregations still place a great emphasis on the Law, and in some cases lose sight of the Gospel. Most Jewish mission agencies are premillennial dispensationalists; some teach Covenant theology; and some are charismatic. Needless to say, there is much for them to argue over. Most of the conflict ensues because each of the mission founders has come from a different Christian background, and even without this difference, as the saying goes, wherever there are two Jews, there are at least three opinions!

In response and in an effort to provide spiritual and academic standards for the training, certifying, and ordaining of spiritual leaders, several congregational leaders saw a need for deeper mutual cooperation. In 1979, the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations was formed with 19 congregations. Today they number more than 50. "The Union is an organization with an amazingly sweet spirit. Difficult issues are discussed in a spirit of love and understanding."³⁵

The challenge for the LCMS as we pursue Jewish missions is to stay connected with this union and with groups like "Jews for Jesus" for resources and guidance without compromising our theology.

³³ Alan L. Bond and Lyn Rosen Bond, "Present Trends in Jewish Evangelism in North America" *Mishkan: A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People* (Issue 23, 1995), 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Daniel C. Juster "The History of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations" *Miskhan: A Theological Forum on Jewish Evangelism* (Issue 2, Winter, 1985), 63-68.

The Methodology of Jewish Evangelism

Assimilation and Identity

Though Jewish believers in the Messiah are Christians, they do not cease to be Jews. Much of the discussion surrounding worship forms revolve around this premise. Jewish people fear what is called "assimilation" into the Christian community because, traditionally, ceasing to be Jewish is what needed to occur to become a Christian. And certainly, that is what the Jewish community believes.

William Galnick, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, recently proclaimed that "Messianic Jews are stealth Christians masquerading as Jews. You can hate God. You can deny God. That will not alienate you from Judaism. But confessing Jesus as the Messiah knocks you out of the Jewish box."³⁶

The Jewish believer in Jesus finds himself at the intersection of two circles, the middle area of which encompasses both the Jewish people and the Church. When the Jewish community and the Church are in conflict, Jewish Christians also are in conflict. So the Jewish believer holds on to his identity more firmly.

It is important to know that as the Jewish person comes to faith in Y'shua, all of his/her ties to the community in which they grew may be severed. Often, parents literally "rend their garments" in grief at the death of their child. The community ostracizes them, and all of their childhood friends may cease to recognize them.

Additionally, many Jewish people cherish the land of Israel and hope and pray that at some time they might come to be there. When the Israeli government was formed, it proclaimed that all Jews worldwide had citizenship in Israel and were welcome to come home. But the same parliament that opened its doors to the Jews of the Diaspora slammed them shut on Jewish people who believe in Jesus.

Identity is central to Jewish people. Hence, the distinction made between conversion and completion is important. Conversion is an anathema to Jewish people. Conversion implies leaving behind one identity to assume another. Rather, the Jewish person who comes to faith in Jesus completes his journey that begun 2000 years ago in Israel. This distinction has come under scrutiny and has become offensive to the Jewish community. I have found it more helpful to distinguish between Rabbinic Jews and Biblical Jews. This difference is harder to argue with on the part of the anti-missionary.

Where do Jewish People Live?

The "core Jewish population," (about 6,000,000) consists of the Jewish people by religion, secular Jews, and converts to Judaism. Of these Jews, 11.3 percent live in the Midwest, 21.6 percent in the South, 23.5 percent in the West, and 43.6 percent in the Northeast. Another study shows that, of the 210,000 Jew that believe in Jesus Christ, 25.2

³⁶ Katz, 2.

percent are living in the Northeast, 22.6 percent in the Midwest, 31 percent in the South and 21.2 percent in the West. So, while the Midwest may have the lowest population of Jewish people, it may be the most fertile field for Jewish evangelism.³⁷

Points of Contact

As should be evident, contact within the Jewish community are tenuous at best. The question is often asked, "How can we communicate our message to the Jewish people, many of whom have not only become Gospel resistant but whose leaders have also developed the apparatus to greatly influence the public spheres of communication in their attempt to silence our message?"³⁸ The best answer is through our relationships.

In our daily work among the Jewish people, we need to develop a relationship with them which gives us the opportunity to talk to them. This can be a slow process, but one-on-one sharing of Scripture and other study materials, fellowships, socials and special evangelistic outreaches lead to home Bible studies, Saturday morning Bible studies, and Friday night services.

But growing that relationship requires contact, and our best source for contacts is others within the Christian community who are willing to introduce their Jewish friends to us. Unfortunately, many Christians value their friendships over their friends' spiritual welfare and are therefore unwilling to "rock the boat" by sharing their faith. Education in the Christian community is therefore essential.

Children

Children are often seen as willing and excited to explore their faith. But, in light of the propaganda war being waged, children must be dealt with very carefully in mission to the Jews. The Jewish community has leveled accusations against missionaries that we are luring children and snatching souls. With this in mind, one of the policies in the "Principles of Ethical Ministry" by the Jews for Jesus is "We direct our evangelism to minors only when we have the consent of their parents or guardians. Though the Gospel often causes cleavage, we never knowingly cause disruption of the relationship of those to whom we minister."³⁹

Intermarriage

"According to recent statistics, more than half of American Jews who marry are marrying non-Jews, and many of these couples are showing up in our lives...needing answers to life's most important questions."⁴⁰

³⁷ The statistics cited are reported in the Bond article above, p.7. The conclusion is mine.

³⁸ Bond, 11.

³⁹ Jews for Jesus Principles of Ethical Ministry, "Addendum E: Council Instructional Notes", 31 August 1992.

⁴⁰ Scott Brown. "Mixed Blessings" *The Chosen People Newsletter* (Vol. III, Issue 2, February, 1997), 4.

The marriage described above usually begins with a rather carefree attitude toward faith; then invitations from friends and relatives come in. The non-Jewish spouse is going to Pesach seder meals and the Jewish spouse is going to Easter services. Once children are a part of the picture, the situation is even more confused. Naturally, many questions then arise.

In Jewish evangelism, this situation is a reality which must be considered and lovingly addressed. It is important to develop trust with the couple. Avoid driving wedges between them, as they have enough division already. "Remember: God has made them one. Deal with them accordingly."⁴¹ By addressing felt needs, our prayer is to inspire hope within the couple, so that they will discover the bridge between both cultures which they previously thought was non-existent.

Jewish Immigration to the U.S.

The influx of Jewish people immigrating to the United States from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States provides yet another opportunity to spread the Gospel to Jewish people. There are points of contact within these communities which are not usually available to the indigenous American Jewish population. Job programs, English as a second language, and financial aid are areas where contact can be made. However, it is important to know that the propaganda machine rolls on.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, these types of programs were often "offered freely and seen by some as inducements for Jewish people to consider Christ. These practices help create the myth—which is still prevalent in the Jewish community—that Jews are being bribed into faith in Christ."⁴² We need to be aware of this as we approach this community, and be ready to "take the flak."

Theology and Worship Issues

Among Messianic mission agencies, there is a desire to discover a Messianic theology. "Messianic theology is an attempt to maintain Jewishness in the face of a Gentile majority."⁴³ The challenge for the LCMS is to develop a Messianic theology which is consistent with Lutheran faith and practice.

This is not to say that a Lutheran Messianic congregation cannot be Jewish in its worship expression. As with any mission, our expressions of faith must be contextualized to the specific people to whom we seek to witness. In the Jewish mission, and in light of all that we have discussed above with regard to the challenges for the individual believer as he/she comes to faith in Y'shua, "reinforcing Messianic Jewish identity requires that

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Brickner, 19.

⁴³ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. "The Quest for a Messianic Theology" *Mishkan: A Theological Forum on Jewish Evangelism* (Issue No. 2, Winter, 1985), 2.

we not only disciple Jewish believers in the Messianic faith; in most cases we must also provide for them a renewed encounter with their own Jewish roots."⁴⁴

One approach is through music. Messianic music is by definition "different from other music in that it should be identifiably Jewish. If the song is not identifiably Jewish in sound, then it is not Messianic Jewish music."⁴⁵ And, though the sound is "identifiably Jewish," the content of the music can be as theologically solid as any established Lutheran hymn. In fact, Jews for Jesus has put out a hymnal called *Avodat Y'shua* which includes rearrangements of many of the hymns found in *Lutheran Worship*.

However, there are many practices within Messianic congregations which, while done to contextualize the worship for the Jewish believer, may have a negative impact in the spiritual growth of the believer. One example is the practice of calling the worship leader of the congregation "rabbi." The word "rabbi" means teacher, or, more specifically, "Master—used as a Jewish title; also, a Jewish teacher or doctor of the law." Contrast that to the meaning of the word "pastor": "A shepherd, a spiritual overseer." The two words describe very different functions within the congregation, and the Jewish person comes to worship with the concept that a rabbi is the interpreter of the law first and foremost. While this understanding can be changed through instruction and experience, initially it may hinder spiritual growth.

Also, the structure of worship often emphasizes the Torah and the Old Testament. In one congregation, "worship is carefully built on the Second Temple historical, biblical models."⁴⁶ However, it must be clearly understood that the second temple was destroyed as prophesied by Y'shua, and in Y'shua it was rebuilt.

Contextualization is crucial to the success of Messianic Judaism. However, it should also be taught that we have a new freedom gained for us by Christ and are free to exercise that freedom in worship. Certainly, our freedom may extend to using Jewish forms of worship, but education in worship theology needs to be ongoing and consistent. Also, many Jewish forms of worship can be used to help the Christian community to learn about and appreciate the cultural roots of their faith.

Recruitment and Training

There are many ways in which personnel are recruited: advertisements in the "Messianic Times," congregations, Bible schools and seminaries, churches, missionary conferences (or any place where believers can be challenged with the vision of reaching Jewish people with the Gospel). Training is often done from within, though the Bible schools and seminaries provide the training ground for most missionary staff. Some training can be done in internships with groups like Jews for Jesus, or Ariel Ministries'

⁴⁴ Fana Spielberg and Stuart Dauermann. "Contextualization: Witness and Reflection Messianic Jews as a Case" *Missiology: An International Review* (Vol. XXV No. 1, January 1997), 19.

⁴⁵ Stuart Dauermann. "Jewish Music and Worship: A Biblical Application-Oriented Survey" *Mishkan: A Theological Forum on Jewish Evangelism* (Issue 3, Autumn 1985), 79.

⁴⁶ Congregation Ohr Chadash worship bulletin for Nov. 15, 1996.

New York discipleship camp program. Once brought on staff, the cell group structure of some ministries provide for on-going training and growth.

For LCMS missionaries, this is an area where a wealth of materials has been produced. Furthermore, the Apple of His Eye Missionary Training Center in St Louis has been established to train Christians for "full-time, part-time, or even short-term, volunteer missionary service."⁴⁷ Concordia Seminary in St Louis has developed a cross-cultural missionary track which seeks to recruit and train missionaries for a variety of cross-cultural experiences, including Jewish missions.

However, by far the most effective workers come from within congregations and missions themselves. These are the people on-site, who have already expressed a desire to work within the context of Jewish evangelism. As you get to know people and understand their gifts for ministry, they can be trained in the mechanics of the mission. Training materials, available and recommended, include "Factors in Growth—A Church Growth Manual for Lutherans" by Robert J. Scudieri, "Dialog Evangelism 2" and "A Manual for Church Planters" through the Board for Mission Services, "Marketing the Church" by Dr. George Barna, and "Mentoring: Sharing the Journey" by Rev. Jerry M. Kosberg. The districts of the LCMS can also assist in acquiring materials for training. The best follow-up is on-the-job. The goal is to duplicate leaders, much like a "multi-level marketing plan." Raising up, training, and empowering leaders may be the most important work done in getting the Gospel proclaimed to the Jewish community. One missionary can interact with 80 people, but multiply that by new leaders and growth is accelerated. Finally, pray for help. God is the best recruiter and he will place needs upon people's hearts. Those who call "out of the blue" and say "I want to help" are those who best serve God's mission.

Obviously there are many issues and principles of missiology to consider as we continue to work in the Jewish mission field. By no means has our discussion been exhaustive. But as with any issue that arises, if our message is sincere, and we are willing to listen and learn—ready to respond in love, God's message of salvation will be heard and His promises will be realized. It is only through His grace and the work of the Holy Spirit that faith can be witnessed, but as we allow ourselves to be God's tools in the mission, He will give us the wisdom to respond to any circumstance.

⁴⁷ MTC Broadside

BURNING BUSH MINISTRIES



**BRINGING Y'SHUA TO JEWISH PEOPLE,
BRINGING Y'SHUA TO THE CHURCH!**

The vision of LIJE is two-fold.

- First, LIJE seeks to engage in intentional evangelism within every significant Jewish community in the United States, sharing Y'shua (Jesus) with all people and especially the Jewish people.
- Secondly, LIJE seeks to connect congregations for training in evangelism and to help our churches understand the Jewish roots of their faith.

LUTHERANS IN JEWISH EVANGELISM
BURNING BUSH MINISTRIES
REV. KEVIN PARVIZ, EXEC. DIRECTOR
6327 CLAYTON AVE., ST. LOUIS, MO 63139
WWW.LIJE.ORG
REVKEYE@AOL.COM

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Rom 1:16, ESV)