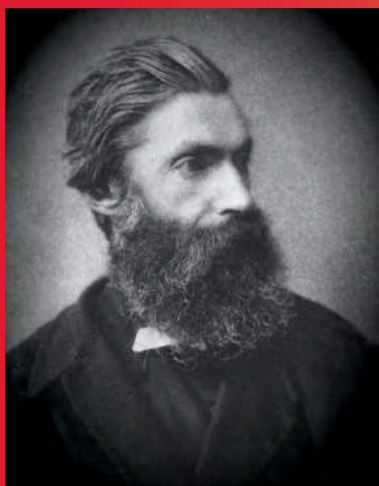


LCJE Bulletin

Issue 122, November-December 2015



*Adolph Saphir and the
Unique Role of Jewish Missions*

The Vatican vs. Jewish Evangelism

Networking Jewish Evangelism



Lausanne Consultation
on Jewish Evangelism



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From the Coordinator

"O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel..."

As we close out 2015 and welcome in a new year, Richard Harvey helps start us out right with his devotional on the well-known story (at least well-known within the Jewish missions world!) of Hudson Taylor and John Wilkinson and how believers should respond to the Scriptural directive in Romans 1:16 of "To the Jew first...And also to the Gentile."

'Dialogue'

Much of this issue of the Bulletin is about recent developments concerning 'dialogue'. I believe that dialogue is important and has a place. Dialogue builds relationships and friendships so that eventually the Gospel can be shared, but we must never allow ourselves to be fooled into thinking that dialogue is a substitute for the Gospel. This is what the spirit of the age, the spirit of compromise, would have us believe. This spirit of compromise seeks to replace the Gospel with 'dialogue'.

When it comes to the Gospel and the Jewish people, this spirit of compromise is especially powerful. There are strong forces at work in our world (and we know their ultimate source) that would seek to shut down, minimize or otherwise discredit evangelism to the Jewish people - and they often do so in the name of 'dialogue'. Preaching the Gospel to Jewish people can upset dialogue or put it at risk. This comes as no surprise to most members of LCJE! Many have been the occasions where Jewish believers in Jesus were deliberately excluded from forums where Jewish-Christian 'dialogue' was taking place. Why? Because whenever any group embarks on placing 'dialogue' as its highest priority instead of truth, the truth is no longer a welcome participant. We who are Messianic believers in the King of Kings do not have our own monopoly on Truth - we are all fallen men and women redeemed by grace - but we are witnesses to the Truth, and we testify to it. That is something that the spirit of compromise cannot bear.

It is with this understanding that we examine two recently released documents - the first being the Vatican commission document on the Jewish people titled, "The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable" (released on December 10, 2015). This document turns Romans 11 on its head, which is why I titled our response: "The Vatican versus the Apostle Paul." The second document, released a week earlier by a group of rabbis from Europe, Israel and the U.S., was titled, "To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians." In analyzing this statement, I look beyond the present day implications of what it means to also consider how Judaism has understood the role of Gentiles historically in light of God's revelation.

Ultimately, however, although both documents have a few very positive points and provide steps forward in 'dialogue', they still represent grievous error and falsehood with respect to the Scriptures. In contrast to this, our final major article about nineteenth century Jewish believer Adolph Saphir returns us to the right track - not only do missions to the Jewish people have a place - they have a *priority!*

In our sure hope for the coming salvation of Israel. *Jim Melnick*

Isaiah 45:17: "Israel shall be saved by an everlasting salvation..."

Front cover photo: Adolph Saphir (1831-1891) came to faith in 1843 along with his family through the Church of Scotland's Jewish Mission and the preaching of Karl (Solomon) Schwartz.

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'To the Jew first...And also to the Gentile': Starting the New Year Right: The Story of Hudson Taylor and John Wilkinson

By Dr Richard Harvey, Senior Researcher, Jews for Jesus

Editor's Note: *Many of us have heard this story (but perhaps not everyone?), and for some in Jewish missions who have wondered about its authenticity, here is the best source material available. As far as I can tell, this story has never appeared before in the Bulletin nor in our online archives. My special thanks to Richard Harvey for providing this devotional and for all of the documentation behind this wonderful story and example. See also Richard's blog, "On This Day in Messianic Jewish History."*

'To the Jew first!'

As we begin a New Year, we reflect on the principle and practice illustrated in the life of Hudson Taylor, the pioneer missionary to China, and John Wilkinson, founder of the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, that began on 1st January 1897. On the first day of every year during his time as head of the China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship - OMF), Hudson Taylor sent a check with a donation to the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, London, on which was written, "To the Jew first." And, at the same time, John Wilkinson sent his personal check to the China Inland Mission with the notation, "And also to the Gentile." (*Ed.:* This story was recorded in the extensive memoir about the history of the China Inland Mission and the ministry of Hudson Taylor - see References).

The work among God's ancient



Hudson Taylor

people occupied a special place in the prayerful sympathy of both Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. The two of them had a long friendship with John Wilkinson.

How the story began

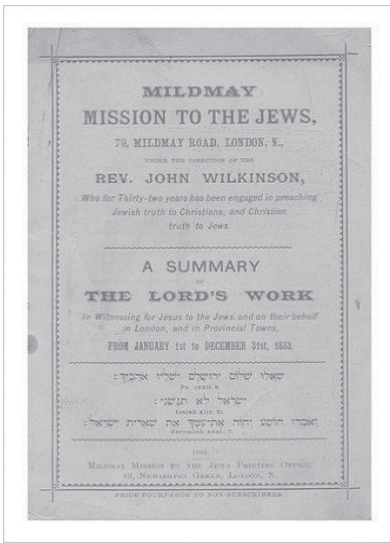
The way the story began was as follows: 'Taking advantage

of a New Year's Day spent at home (in 1897), Mr. Taylor went round to Mr. Wilkinson's house with a brotherly note enclosing a gift for the Mission. "To the Jew first," were the words with which the cheque was accompanied. Mr. Wilkinson's warm heart was touched, and he immediately wrote a brotherly reply, enclosing his own cheque for the same amount, with the words, "And also to the Gentile." This helpful interchange of sympathy was kept up ever after, the only change being that each doubled the amount of their contribution.'

Romans 1:16

The exegesis of Romans 1:16 to argue for a 'missional priority' for Jewish evangelism - that the Jewish people remain today the starting point - has not always been accepted. But today, as much as ever, believers in Yeshua have a responsibility towards the

¹ Work among God's ancient people occupied a special place in the prayerful sympathy of both Mr. and Mrs. Taylor; and Mr. John Wilkinson, founder of the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, recalled an interesting phase of their long friendship. Taking advantage of a New Year's Day spent at home (1897), Mr. Taylor went round to Mr. Wilkinson's house with a brotherly note enclosing a gift for the Mission. "To the Jew first," were the words with which the cheque was accompanied. Mr. Wilkinson's warm heart was touched, and he immediately wrote a brotherly reply, enclosing his own cheque for the same amount, with the words: "And also to the Gentile." This helpful interchange of sympathy was kept up ever after, the only change being that each doubled the amount of their contribution.



Mrs Hudson Taylor

Jewish people which includes not only repentance and reconciliation, but sharing of the Good News of the Messiah of Israel as a priority.

Prayer: *Thank you, Lord, for the example of Hudson Taylor. Help us in our lives to live out his principles of faith and put them into practice. May we, too, have a right understanding of your love and concern for your Jewish people, and how best to show this. May this coming year be crowned with good things, and may Yeshua be made known as the glory of his people Israel. In our Messiah's name we pray. Amen*

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Richard Harvey's blog "On this day in Messianic Jewish History."

Dr and Mrs Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God*, Volume 2. London: Religious Tracts Society, 1918; reprinted, OMF International, 1997, p. 400.

Online textual source: <http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/hudsonstaylor/hudsonstaylorv2/hudsonstaylorv240.htm> (Chapter 40, "Waters of Rest - 1900-1904. A.E.T. 68-72.")

From Richard Harvey -

"On This Day in Messianic Jewish History"

"On This Day in Messianic Jewish History" brings you significant events in the life of Jewish believers in Yeshua, or events in the history of the Church and the Jewish people that have shaped Jewish expressions of faith in Yeshua, and impacted Jewish Christianity in the past and its contemporary expression in Messianic Judaism today.

Go to:

<https://messianicjewishhistory.wordpress.com>

The Vatican versus the Apostle Paul: Responding to the Vatican Commission Document "The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable"

By Jim Melnick, LCJE International Coordinator

This article responds to the Vatican commission document, "The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable," which was released on December 10, 2015, receiving widespread news coverage around the world.



The Vatican and Saint Peter's Square

Overview

On December 10, 2015, the Vatican Commission of Religious Relations with the Jews released a document titled, "The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable," citing the well-known passage from Romans 11. But, instead of affirming what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 11 - his heart's desire that the Jewish people might be saved by coming to faith in Jesus as Messiah - the Vatican commission document asserted just the opposite. It claimed that Jews do not need to believe in Jesus to be saved - a complete repudiation of everything the New Testament teaches.

The Authoritative Roman Catholic Position

The authors of the document claim that it is not "magisterial" in nature and is only a "reflection" of the views of the Commission. They also assert that the document is not "a doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church." Nevertheless, one must assume that it still represents the authoritative Catholic position on this question at the present time: it is hard to imagine that this document could have been released without the acquiescence of the

current pope, Pope Francis, and the rest of the Vatican leadership. It clearly must represent their general thinking, or else there would have been no reason to release it. This certainly was the sense of most news accounts of the document's release, which received wide coverage. *The New York Times*, for example, characterized the document as "far-reaching." If the Commission's position did *not* represent the Pope's views as well, one can hardly have expected it to have received such extensive worldwide dissemination without at least some form of clarifying language from the Pope himself or from his Vatican staff.

As LCJE noted in our response, at one level there is really nothing new here - Catholic-Jewish dialogue for many years has been moving in this direction. This document merely summarizes and accentuates a point of view that many Catholic leaders have held for some time. The document was released now to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration known as "Nostra Aetate" (In Our Time), promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which dealt with Catholic-Jewish relations as well

as with other religions.

Some Positive Points

I should state that there are certainly some positive aspects to the document. I shall outline them here:

(1) The document expresses love and honor to the Jewish people and renounces anti-Semitism. This is vitally important, especially in our day of growing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, and I don't want to in any way minimize the document's importance on this very key point. This is very welcome and very much needed, and Jewish leaders have also expressed their appreciation for this.

(2) The document recognizes "a rich complementarity which allows us [the Catholic Church and other Christians] to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God's word. We can also share many ethical convictions and a common concern for justice and the development of peoples." That sounds noble and is a positive statement. Who could disagree?

(3) The document asserts that

there "cannot be two ways of salvation...since Christ is also the Redeemer of the Jews in addition to the Gentiles." - this, at least, would seem to be a positive step over pure dual-covenant theology. The document takes the position that Jesus is the *only* means of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles; however, it then goes further to claim that Jews do not need to believe in Him at all in order to be saved through Him (this, of course, would eliminate the need for *any* Jewish evangelism!).

Thus, one must quickly conclude that this is not really much of a positive step, since it is nearly the same thing as dual-covenant theology. To quote the document:

From the Christian confession that there can be only one path to salvation, however, it does not in any way follow that the Jews are excluded from God's salvation because they do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God...

(4) The document views the Jewish people as still being special in God's sight. It affirms that "the covenant of God with Israel has never been revoked."

This assertion repudiates replacement theology and supersessionism, which is certainly an improvement over the past. How many untold numbers of Jews died at the hands of Catholics over the centuries either because: (a) either they were deemed guilty of deicide in the death of Jesus; (b) or they refused to convert to Catholicism, or (c) those who persecuted the Jews proclaimed that God's covenant with the Jewish people *had indeed been revoked*. If God's covenant with the House of Israel was viewed as having been revoked or 'superseded' (as by definition it would be under supersessionism), then any misfor-

tune or punishment that befell Jewish people was traditionally viewed by Catholic leaders and lay people in prior centuries as being justified by God. In fact, as Joel Richardson, author of *When a Jew Rules the World* (WND Books, 2015) notes: "Once the Jews are viewed as being both rejected by God and justly punished, then virtually any form of abuse becomes acceptable." Worse than that, many so-called Christians participated in the abuse over the centuries, believing that they were "simply reinforcing the very will of God." (J. Richardson, p. 117)

Obviously, this view produced great sins, and the Catholic Church today feels immense guilt over what its teachings did to the Jewish people over the centuries by those who followed and promoted such views (I am not letting past Protestant persecutors of the Jews off the hook, either, by just focusing on Catholics, but this article is about Catholic history, doctrine and attitudes toward the Jewish people). Besides the Inquisition, innumerable examples abound; however, we shall just choose one to make the point - in this case, I will cite the almost complete annihilation of the Jewish community of Belgium in a series of massacres during the years 1350-1370.

According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the Jews of Belgium were persecuted and eventually massacred "on charges of having desecrated the host, of having killed infants, and of having poisoned wells." Centuries before the Holocaust, the Catholic mass murderers of the Jews of Belgium were so thorough in their annihilation "that scarcely a trace of [Jewish] existence has remained" from that time. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906 edition, www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2803-belgium; see also J. Richardson, *When a Jew Rules the World*, p. 140)

Catholic guilt and pandering to the Jewish community

In one sense, then, the entire Vatican document can be viewed as an attempt to acknowledge past sins against the Jewish people as part of an effort to assuage some of the enormous institutional guilt associated with former Catholic teachings and practices. This guilt forms the core of the motivation behind this latest manifestation of "Nostra Aetate" with respect to the Jewish people.

But attempting to assuage guilt through pandering is not the same thing as crying out for repentance before God. David Brickner, executive director of Jews for Jesus, asked rhetorically in the Jews for Jesus press release denouncing the Vatican document, "Are they merely pandering to some leaders in the Jewish community...?" The answer, I believe, is an unqualified *yes*. This Vatican document represents little more than pandering and self-congratulation.

In reading through it, I didn't get any sense that the Vatican was using this occasion to express *Biblical* repentance toward the Jewish people. The document is self-congratulatory and factual in tone, noting that the current Pope "continues, at the international level, to intensify dialogue with Judaism through many friendly encounters," such as visiting the Western Wall and praying "for the victims of the Shoah in Yad Vashem." So today we have 'dialogue' instead of the Inquisition - an improvement, to be sure, over the past, but not one that brings the Jewish people any closer to the Gospel and eternal life with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through the Messiah.

True repentance before God moves beyond simply feeling guilty for past sins and taking steps to try to 'feel better'. Repentance must be based on

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LCJE Responds to Vatican Document “The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable”

According to a Vatican commission document released Thursday and characterized as “far-reaching” by the New York Times, Jewish people do not have to believe in Jesus to be saved.

Titled , “The Gifts and Calling of God are Irrevocable,” the document’s release received broad global news coverage this week, even though the document itself states that it is only a “reflection” of the views of the Vatican’s Commission of Religious Relations with Jews and is not “a doctrinal teaching of the CatholicChurch.”

“There is nothing substantively new in the document that we haven’t seen in past years in Jewish-Catholic dialogues,” said Jim Melnick, international coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (or “LCJE”), part of the broader worldwide Lausanne Movement, which seeks to bring the Gospel to all people around the world. That movement asserted in its 1989 manifesto in Manila: “It is sometimes held that in virtue of God’s covenant with Abraham, Jewish people do not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. We affirm that they need him as much as anyone else, that it would be a form of anti-Semitism....to depart from the New Testament pattern of taking the gospel ‘to the Jew first’...” (A.3)

That same year the Willowbank Declaration on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People declared that “it is unchristian, unloving and discriminatory to propose a moratorium on the evangelizing of any part of the human race, and that failure to preach the Gospel to the Jewish people would be a form of anti-Semitism, depriving this particular community of its right to hear the gospel.” (IV.23) More recently, in 2010 the Lausanne Cape Town Commitment proclaimed: “We affirm that, whereas the Jewish people were not strangers to the covenants and promises of God, ... they still stand in need of reconciliation to God through the Messiah Jesus.” (II. B)

“While we applaud the Vatican’s efforts to combat anti-Semitism and to show love and honor to the Jewish people – one area where the document succeeds,” Melnick continued, “we strongly reject how it has turned the Scripture of Romans 11 on its head in order to end up with the exact opposite meaning of what the Apostle Paul intended regarding the salvation of the Jewish people. When Paul wrote that ‘the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable,’ he was saying that the Jewish people remain beloved in His sight - not that they can find salvation without faith in Yeshua (Jesus).”

The LCJE is a global network of evangelical Messianic Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus from nearly thirty countries and six continents, representing a variety of denominations, missions and ministries. The group held its 10th international conference in Jerusalem in August. Its official conference statement affirmed “the special importance of taking the gospel to the Jewish people as an ever-present obligation on the Church, in accordance with Romans 1:16.” That statement also proclaimed “the Jewishness of Jesus, who, as Israel’s Messiah, is the Savior of the world.”

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Scripture and a heartfelt desire to please God, not men, and to come to Him on His terms, not ours. When we come to faith, we must turn from our wicked ways, ask God's forgiveness and cleansing, and seek to serve Him by obeying His Word. Repentance leading to regeneration, justification by faith, and the priesthood of the believer - these are concepts that reflect the Reformation and not the views of the Catholic Church, so I would not expect to see *true* Biblical repentance by the Catholic Church toward the Jewish people. That would require far more than high-sounding words and 'dialogue'.

Rabbinical assent

Various rabbinical representatives were present to give their nod to the Vatican document. These included Rabbi David Rosen of the American Jewish Committee, who serves as its international director of inter-religious affairs. It is clear that this was a well-coordinated effort overall between the Vatican and those Jewish representatives who have been working for years to encourage the Catholic Church to move precisely in this direction.

LCJE's Response

On December 12, 2015, after discussion within the ICC, LCJE released a response to the Vatican document. That statement can be found online at: www.lcje.net/LCJE_Response_to_Vatican_commission_document.pdf and is also reproduced on page 7 of this issue). Additionally,

the LCJE statement was republished by Kehila News in Israel at the following link:

<http://kehilaneews.com/2015/12/14/lcje-response-to-vaticans-the-gifts-and-calling-of-god-are-irrevocable/>

Global Impact

The Jews for Jesus statement termed the Vatican document "egregious." David Brickner stated: "We believe that the Apostle Paul.... would be horrified at this repudiation of the words with which he started his letter in Romans," referring to Romans 1:16. This response was wholly justified and wholly true. If anything, there is no question but that the Apostle Paul himself would have renounced the Vatican document with even stronger words of condemnation than any of us have used.

The salvation of the Jewish people was first on Jesus's missional priority list as the Messiah. What do we think He would say to those people today who would contend that His people, the Jewish people, are not in need of His atoning blood, that somehow they 'mysteriously' merit salvation simply because of their bloodline or ethnic heritage? This is a complete denial of the Gospel.

The Reformation

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, let us be thankful for what the Reformers accomplished in breaking away from the false doctrines of the Catholic Church. The Reformers were,

of course, fallen men: as Protestants, we have the greatness of a Martin Luther the Reformer combined with the same Luther who penned despicable attacks against the Jewish people - attacks that caused so much grief in generations that followed. Yet we can still be thankful that Luther and others laid the foundation for viewing the Scripture as the final authority for faith and practice, *Sola Scriptura*.

Conclusions

The Roman Catholic Church molds, re-shapes and re-interprets Scripture to fit the needs and interests of the moment. This was true before and during the Reformation, and it is true today. No other explanation can justify the literary violence of what the Vatican has done to the plain words of what the Apostle Paul taught about salvation and the Jewish people.

As already noted, it is not as if this false teaching of Catholicism is new - it is not, but in this age of social media and instant news coverage, what is perhaps new is the extent to which this distortion of Scripture is reaching more people around the world than ever before - people whom we must assume are thinking about it and have been impacted by it. This is a terrible thing, but it is also a golden opportunity, in the sovereignty of God, for us to contrast the falsehood of the Catholic position - as well as of dual-covenant theology itself - with the clear teaching of Scripture.

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**Visit the Lausanne Movement website:
www.lausanne.org**

What Place for the Gentiles?: The Recent Rabbinical Statement on Christianity and the Implications for Jewish Evangelism

By Jim Melnick, LCJE International Coordinator

Editor's Note: A rabbinical statement titled, "To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians," signed by more than thirty Orthodox rabbis in Israel, Europe and the United States, was released on December 3, 2015. It appeared timed to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the "Nostra Aetate" process within the Catholic Church and the later release of the Vatican commission document, "The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable."

The Rabbis' Statement

On December 3rd, 2015, a group of prominent rabbis released an important worldwide statement regarding the alleged place of Christianity in God's spiritual plan for the world. Titled, "To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians," it has been characterized as "the most notable [such statement] since Dabru Emet, signed by 170 Jewish scholars in 2000..." (Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "Orthodox Rabbis Say Christianity is God's Plan, Vatican Says Stop Evangelizing Jews," Christianity Today, December 18, 2015. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/december-web-only/orthodox-rabbis-and-vatican-exchange-olive-branches.html?start=3>).

Coincided with the Vatican commission document

The release of the statement was obviously timed to coincide with the Vatican commission document, "The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable," commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of "Nostra Aetate," which it references (see previous article). For example, Rabbi David Rosen, who is the international director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, "signed the first document and spoke at the Vatican presentation of the second." (Zylstra, Christianity Today, op. cit.)

We should view the statement

in light of what the Scripture says but also in light of how Orthodox Judaism has sought to deal with Gentiles throughout history, even before the advent of Christianity.

Rabbinic Judaism's search for an answer: where do Gentiles fit in?

Judaism has traditionally had a difficult time knowing what to do with the Gentiles. From Judaism's standpoint, where do the non-Jewish nations of the world fit into God's plan? How will God's plan for the Gentiles be revealed? How should Jews relate to Gentiles in the meantime? Orthodox Judaism has always struggled with these questions. Scripture abounds with references to a glorious future that includes the Gentiles, but how this future is to come about has remained almost a complete mystery within Judaism - other than saying, for example, 'We will understand God's purpose for the Gentiles when Moshiach [Messiah] comes.' A compilation of rabbinical halachic and aggadic views has the nations of the world either converting to Judaism at the end of days or good enveloping the world in the Days of Messiah and/or the Gentile nations being judged according to whether they oppressed the Jewish people. (see Yehudah Chayoun, *When Moshiach Comes: Halachic and Aggadic Perspectives* (Southfield, Michigan: Targum/Feldheim, 1994). While the disciples and other Jews of Jesus's day who accepted Him

as Messiah eventually began to have a fuller picture of God's plan for the Gentiles, even they at first were confused and unsure concerning what that meant - how were Gentiles supposed to be grafted into a Messianic Jewish faith? But after Peter testified to them what he had seen and what God had revealed to him, things began to become more clear: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to Gentiles repentance to life!'" (Acts 11: 18)

If the Jewish believers who almost exclusively made up the early Church were initially confused about the role and place of Gentiles, how much more so for those Jews who rejected Yeshua! Their rejection brought added blindness and hardness of heart about God's plan for the nations of the world.

Historically, there had been a Court of the Gentiles on the Temple Mount, a place for Gentiles to worship the living God. We read in the Gospels how our Lord was filled with righteous anger when He saw the moneychangers and others desecrating this part of the Temple courtyard instead of using it for its God-given purpose of worship: "My House shall be a house of prayer for all peoples..." (Mark 11:17; Isaiah 56:7)

The "God-Fearers"

During the New Testament period there were God-fearing Gentiles who identified themselves

at one level or another with the House of Israel, even if they themselves did not keep the Law according to rabbinic standards or formally convert to Judaism. These were known as the *"sebomenoi"*. Although scholars have disputed their numbers, the 1971 edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* noted that there may have been "millions by the first century, of *sebomenoi* (... God-fearers), gentiles who had not gone the whole route toward conversion." (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 10:55, s.v. "Jewish Identity," 1971 edition). Scholar Michael Avi-Yonah believes that the God-fearers made up a "numerous class" of Gentiles. While the God-fearers "sympathized with Judaism," most "did not feel able to shoulder the whole burden of the Law." (M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine*, Oxford, 1976, p. 37).

Regardless of their actual numbers, the "God-fearers" were definitely a presence during the first century that interacted with Judaism. We see that in many places in the New Testament. Sometimes Gentiles understood Yeshua even better than His own Jewish disciples. Jesus said of the Roman centurion who came to Him asking Him to heal his servant: "Most certainly I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." (Matthew 8: 5-10). At the same time, Jesus made clear that His primary mission while on the earth was to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel." (Matthew 15:24)

Nevertheless, the Hebrew prophets are full of allusions to God's light also shining upon the Gentiles. Simeon prophesied this when he held the baby Jesus in the Temple - the Messiah was to be a "light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people, Israel." (Luke 2:32). Isaiah 49 says: "...It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved

ones of Israel; I will also give you for a light to nations, that you may be my salvation to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6) I believe that Isaiah 49 is one of the most significant passages in all of Scripture - it lays out God's spiritual 'game plan' for both Jews and Gentiles - Israel and the nations - in a beautiful way. It shows how everything is interwoven in the work and ministry of Messiah.

This vision of both Jews and Gentiles coming together through faith in Yeshua became the next step in God's spiritual 'game plan.' While at one level there is "neither Jew nor Gentile" in Messiah (Galatians 3:28), how this occurs is a mystery. Meanwhile, Israel must still retain its uniqueness in order to be a light to the nations of the truth of God and of His Word.

Rabbinic Judaism at a loss

Rabbinic Judaism, meanwhile, has failed to develop an adequate Scripturally-based 'theology of the Gentiles.' Since most of Israel rejected Messiah when He came, they certainly were not equipped (except for those Jewish believers who did come to faith) to even understand, let alone fulfill this part of their calling.

Orthodox rabbis who search the Scriptures know deep down that Judaism should have a 'theology of the nations,' since the Hebrew prophets wrote about this a great deal.

Key Scriptures

Just looking at the book of Isaiah, besides Isaiah 49, some important Scriptures about the spiritual future of Gentile nations being tied to the Jewish people include the following verses:

"And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory." (Isaiah 62:2)

"...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse,

which shall stand for an ensign of the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek..." (Isaiah 11:10)

What God does with the Jewish people is intended to be a witness to the nations of His fulfillment of His covenant with Israel. At the same time, the Gentiles (those whom He has called out from among the nations) are drawn to Messiah. They, in turn, are to be a witness back to the Jewish people of God's faithfulness to His promises.

Orthodox Judaism and the 'Noahide' concept

Nevertheless, Orthodox Jewish theology has barely moved beyond the concept of the 'Noahide,' the idea that Gentiles should merely keep the so-called 'seven commandments of Noah'. Interestingly, this concept formed a key part of the rabbinical statement with respect to Jesus. The rabbis wrote about Jesus admirably, but without referring to His claim to be the Messiah. Citing Rabbi Emden, the statement said: "Jesus brought a double goodness to the world. On the one hand he strengthened the Torah of Moses majestically and not one of our Sages spoke out more emphatically concerning the immutability of the Torah. On the other hand, he removed idols from the nations and obligated them in the seven commandments of Noah so that they would not behave like animals in the field, and instilled them firmly with moral traits..." (Section 3 of the statement, citing Seder Olam Rabbah 35-37 and Sefer ha-Shimush 15-17). This, of course, completely ignores the fact that Jesus came first to the House of Israel!

Concern for Gentiles' souls expressed in the Talmud

The Lord God commanded the Children of Israel to sacrifice 70 bullocks each year during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles

on behalf of the nations of the world. Each day over this seven day period, a given number of bulls were to be sacrificed, ending with seven bulls on the seventh day (Numbers 29: 12-32) According to tradition, these seventy bullocks corresponded to the 70 nations of the world as described in Noah's day (Genesis 10).

So, this understanding from the Scriptures was already incorporated into Temple worship in Jesus' day. This would have been a very dramatic series of sacrifices, and the practice would have been well known to any observant Jewish or Gentile worshippers at the Temple.

But then the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., and these sacrifices ceased. There is a fascinating and crucial passage in the Talmud related to concern over atonement for the Gentiles as a result of this. In Sukkah 55b of the Babylonian Talmud (Gemara), we find this passage: "Rabbi Johanan observed, 'Woe to the idolaters, for they had a loss and do not know what they have lost. When the Temple was in existence the altar atoned for them, but now who shall atone for them?'" This statement was tied to the 70 bullocks for the nations sacrificed on the altar of the Temple. In speaking of "the idolaters," Rabbi Johanan was meaning the nations of the world. So, at least there was some concern for the souls of Gentiles expressed in the Talmud (as a very important aside, in answer to Rabbi Johanan's plaintive question of 'now who shall atone for them?'; we know the One Who has atoned for us - Jesus of Nazareth!).

A visit to the main Lubavitcher Synagogue

I think I have shared previously about an experience I had a number of years ago in Brooklyn at the main shul of the

Lubavitcher sect at the 'famous' (at least in Hasidic circles) address known as "770 Eastern Parkway." The circumstances that brought me and a small group there are part of a much longer story that I will not go into here, but what happened that day is quite instructive for our purposes.

While standing in the doorway to 770 (this was when Rebbe Menachem Schneerson was still living, the last rebbe of the Lubavitcher movement), I and a few others were invited to come in and have a tour of the facility.

It was fascinating to see Lubavitch plans for reaching world Jewry with their messages from Rebbe Schneerson and to see their own headquarters. Toward the end of the tour, we were taken to the main synagogue. Up to this point, everyone had been very friendly and talkative. But when we came down to the synagogue, I was approached by another Lubavitcher and asked to wrap tefillin on my arms. I answered that, no, I would not be doing so, explaining that I wasn't Jewish. "You're not Jewish!?" the tour leader exclaimed, clearly shocked. "Then what are you doing here?"

"You're famous!" I replied, referring to how active and well-known the Lubavitchers were in the Jewish community. This answer took them aback for a moment, but by now it was clear that the tour – and any residual friendliness – were now over, once it was finally determined that I was not Jewish. Though this saddened me, the situation also gave me the wonderful opportunity and the right setting to ask a question I had always wanted to ask – "Well, what about us Gentiles?" What place was there for the Gentiles in his view? As he looked down, no longer willing to face me directly, he said, "Well, if you ful-

fill the laws of Noah, there will be a place in the afterlife." As I understood it at the time, sad but true, this was the best that Orthodox Judaism had to offer Gentiles - the concept of the 'Noahide' mentioned earlier.

A "Light to the Nations"

The Jewish people were to be a "light to the nations," bringing God's Word and His the message of salvation to a pagan world.

They were to be a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6) to the nations, and, I believe, still will be – but not by working toward some vague idea of 'world redemption,' rather, because they will come to faith in Jesus as Messiah (Zechariah 14, Romans 11). As Avi Snyder has stated: "The Scriptures clearly show, from Genesis to Revelation, that Israel as a people have only received one call, and that call is to be a nation of missionaries to the rest of the world. God chose the Jews because of His love for the nations. He chose us to take the Gospel to the nations." (Interview with Avi Snyder, "Life from the Dead." Interview with Julia Fisher. 2008. The Olive Tree Reconciliation Fund. <http://www.olivetreefund.org/life-from-the-dead/>).

In the same way, Jewish believer Adolph Saphir declared in 1864 that the Jewish people, from Genesis to the Book of Revelation, were "chosen for the glory of God and the manifestation of His salvation to all nations." (Adolph Saphir, *Christ and Israel*, Jerusalem: Yanetz Ltd. edition, pp. 138-139).

Judaism in defensive mode

But most of this is yet to come, since it has not yet been fulfilled. For the past two thousand years, since the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans, rabbinic Judaism has been mostly in defensive mode, trying to re-define itself in light

of the new reality of a Temple-less Judaism. The survival of the Jewish people itself took priority - a priority that continues to the present day. There has not been much time or opportunity to be worried about the fate of the nations - the Gentiles - in God's plan from the Orthodox Jewish perspective.

Analyzing the rabbinical statement

All of this is important as background in better understanding some of the reasoning behind the statement. One thing its authors did do is reaffirm the position of Maimonides and Yehudah Halevi that "Christianity is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations." Maimonides, also known as "the Rambam," is considered the voice of Jewish orthodoxy. His views are considered authoritative. It is 'safe' to use Maimonides as cover for this type of statement.

More "dialogue" might have spurred greater resistance to Nazism?

The rabbis' statement opens with a recognition of the overwhelming evil of the Holocaust: "The Shoah ended 70 years ago. It was the warped climax to centuries of disrespect, oppression and rejection of Jews and the consequent enmity that developed between Jews and Christians."

That may all be true. But what follows next in the statement is an historical non sequitur: They state: "In retrospect it is clear that the failure to break through this contempt and engage in constructive dialogue for the good of humankind weakened resistance to evil forces of anti-Semitism that engulfed the world in murder and genocide."

This comment implies that if Jewish-Christian relations had only been better in Europe and in

Germany in particular during or before the rise of Hitler - if there just had been more "constructive dialogue" between the two 'camps', so to speak, there would have been greater resistance to the Nazi forces of evil.

This, I think, is a pipe dream. Of course it makes sense to say that greater dialogue might have led to less misunderstanding, which might in turn have led to less anti-Semitism. But this glosses over a very important point - German Jews were already very well assimilated into German society prior to the rise of the Nazis. The Jewish and Christian communities were already in contact with each other. It is not as if there was a deep gulf between them that would have been bridged just by having more 'dialogue'. No, the demonic fury unleashed by the Nazis against the Jews would never have been stopped by greater dialogue - it would only have been stopped if more Germans had had courage to stand up in the face of evil and call it what it was. There were those in Germany who spoke out, such as Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his *Pfarrerrotbund* Christian movement and later underground activity. Very early on, Bonhoeffer "began publicly raising his voice for active Christian resistance to Hitler's persecution of the Jews" (J. Richardson, *When a Jew Rules the World*, pp. 243-245)

But his voice and the voices of his compatriots were mostly ignored or dismissed by the rest of the German Church. Those who had already compromised themselves and sold themselves out to the Nazis would not have been swayed by having more 'dialogue' with Jewish leaders or the Jewish community.

Instead, it was believers like the Corrie Ten Boom family in Holland who already loved the Jewish people and were willing to put their own lives on the line

who defied the Nazis and resisted them. This did not occur as a result of any "constructive dialogue." This is why I refer to such an attitude (as expressed in the rabbis' statement) as a "pipe dream."

By saying this, I am not rejecting all such "dialogues." They have their place in increasing understanding and building relationships. But they can never replace 'the real thing' - true love. And 'dialogue' must never be allowed to supplant our witness to the Jewish people in sharing the Gospel with them.

"Redeeming the world"?

The latter sections of the statement acknowledge that "Jews and Christians must offer models of service, unconditional love and holiness." This is certainly true - we should all do these things. The statement proclaims that we share "the values of life, family, compassionate righteousness, justice, inalienable freedom, universal love and ultimate world peace." We might add that we also share commitments to kindness, graciousness, honesty, integrity and numerous other character traits.

However, the statement in Section 4 asserts that "Jews and Christians have a common covenantal mission to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty..." The final portion (Section 7.) then refers to the two communities "playing an active role together in redeeming the world." This is quite problematic. What does "redeeming the world" or "perfecting the world" really mean? In Jewish understanding, this would seem to reflect the desire for *tikkun olam* - "fixing" or "repairing" the world. This sense or this desire is very deep within the Jewish soul, and we see it manifested across all Jewish denominations. Even very secular Jews and outright Jewish atheists often commit themselves

to wanting to 'make the world a better place' - to fix a least a little bit of what is broken in this world. This is oftentimes noble and noteworthy, but doing things to try to improve or fix the world is no substitute for *redemption*. This is another fallacy in the statement. How do we "redeem the world" by working together?

We cannot redeem the world at all! Redemption can only come through the Messiah Himself. As redeemed people, He can use us as His instruments according to His will.

Thus, although 'redeeming the world' is a nice-sounding phrase, it means nothing outside of its true Biblical sense.

A step forward

Despite these criticisms, the statement itself had some positive features. It acknowledged what it called "significant theological differences" that still exist between Judaism and Christianity. But, as Jewish believer David Lazarus noted in response, these differences "are really about Jesus. He is the stumbling block." For the Gentiles, He "may be the Messiah, Son of the living God...., but my Jewish people are still not quite sure just who he is for them. So, while these rabbis are making major and unprecedented strides in bringing my people closer to Jesus," Lazarus concluded, "they are still far from the truth. For if Jesus is the Messiah for the Gentiles, how much more must he be for the Jews?" Amen! - exactly right. But, I think Lazarus is perhaps too effusive when he also states that: "What we are now witnessing is the undoing of 2,000 years of Jewish rejection and animosity toward Jesus, a miracle by any estimation." The "refusal by Jews to accept Jesus is slowly, but surely, coming to an end, as growing numbers of prestigious Orthodox rabbis welcome Jesus back." (David Lazarus, "Orthodox Rabbis Bring

Jesus Home for Christmas," Israel Today, December 24, 2015; <http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabld/178/nid/28027/Default.aspx>)

Orthodox rabbi Yehiel Poupko sounded a cautionary tone about the statement in comments to Christianity Today: "No major Jewish Halachic (Jewish legal) authority has signed the statement," he is quoted as saying, adding that it is nevertheless "a very real indication that the Orthodox rabbinate is grappling with how to understand Christianity in an era when Christianity is reaching out to Judaism and has repented of its sins against us." He also said that the statement "should not be viewed as a consensus, let alone a final statement." (Comments by Yehiel Poupko, cited in Zylstra, Christianity Today, op. cit.).

It will be fascinating and important to watch how various Jewish insitutions - legal entities, seminaries, federations and other institutions, as well as noted Jewish scholars - respond to the statement in the coming months and years.

Implications for Jewish evangelism

Was there a 'quid pro quo' against missions to the Jews in the rabbinical statement?

While acknowledging that Christianity has a "divine" place, the signatories hope that it will signal an end to institutionalized missions to the Jews. They state: "Now that the Catholic Church has acknowledged the eternal Covenant between G-d and Israel" (Ed.: a good thing, by the way, as opposed to supersessionism!), "we Jews can acknowledge the ongoing constructive validity of Christianity as our partner in world redemption, without any fear that this will be exploited for missionary purposes."

It seems that the intent from the signatories' standpoint would

probably be to use the Catholic declaration against institutionalized missions to the Jews to try to marginalize or discredit such missions that do exist within the Protestant world. That would strike at the heart of everything that the LCJE stands for! Of course, this is nothing new. It just needs to be stated once again that, as much as we might rejoice that more Orthodox rabbis are responding to Christianity somewhat more positively, they are likely to seek even greater denunciations of missions to the Jews as part of the 'price tag' for ongoing 'dialogues' in the future.

As a result, the Catholic Church itself, as well as mainstream liberal Protestant denominations, can be expected to become even more hostile to 'organized' Jewish evangelism.

The full statement

The full rabbinical statement can be found at:

<http://cjcuc.com/site/2015/12/03/orthodox-rabbinic-statement-on-christianity/>

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Adolph Saphir: The Unique Place of Jewish Missions

By Jim Melnick, LCJE International Coordinator

"We cannot regard the Jewish Mission as one among many missions. The nation has a position, central and unique, according to the divine purpose. We cannot measure the importance of the Jewish Mission by the numerical greatness either of the nation or of converts; we measure it by the value assigned to them in the Scripture, by the decisive love with which God regards them, and by the special influence which they are to exert on the whole world."

Adolph Saphir, *Christ and Israel* (May 18, 1868)

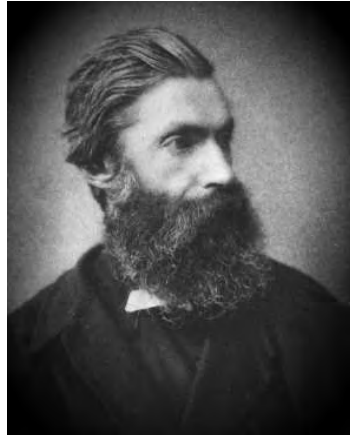
A visit to the Christ Church bookstore in Jerusalem

A number of years ago during one of my visits to Jerusalem, I came across a paperback book in the Christ Church bookstore that caught my eye. It was titled, *Christ and Israel*, by Adolph Saphir. Before this, I had been vaguely familiar with the name 'Saphir' because of his two-volume commentary on the Book of Hebrews, but I had only begun to read that. *Christ and Israel* looked interesting as well, but little did I know then what treasures it contains! I was about to partake of a very rich 'feast' when it came to the subject of Saphir's evaluation of Jewish evangelism and its place in God's plan for the world.

Background and influence

Adolph Saphir (1831-1891) was born in Budapest (Pest), Hungary, into a Jewish family. The Saphir family, including Adolph, came to faith in 1843 through the Church of Scotland's Mission to the Jews in Budapest and the preaching of Jewish believer Karl (Solomon) Schwartz. He was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry, served at various times as a pastor and missionary, and received an honorary Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) degree from Edinburgh University in 1878. Adolph was also a good friend of well-known Jewish believer, Dr. Alfred Edersheim.

According to the Dictionary of National Biography (p. 299): "In later life Saphir took much interest in the endeavors of Rabbis



Aaron Adolph Saphir

Lichtenstein and Rabinowich to convert to Christianity the Jews of Hungary and southern Russia." In 1887 he was selected to head an organization known as the "Rabinowich Council," based in London. Saphir was also involved with the circular letter dated April 25, 1866, issued to Jewish Christians in England, urging that "it would be desirable and profitable that as many Israelites who believe in Jesus as can be brought together should meet in London on the 23rd of May [1866]." This eventually resulted in the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Great Britain.

According to Michael R. Darby, author of *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Brill Academic; Numen Book Series 128: 2010), "Saphir's concern and love for Israel did not emanate merely from natural or patriotic sentiments... They were the outcome of his deep insight into the plan and purpose of God

in relation to the whole world, of which Israel was the centre, and of his deep conviction that the churches, by neglecting Israel, were in danger of drifting further and further from scriptural views and eventually from faith in the bible itself as the record of the self-revelation of the God of Israel." (Darby, p. 215)

A memoir on his life was published in 1894 (2nd ed.) by the Rev. Gavin Carlyle titled, *Mighty in the Scriptures: A Memoir of the Rev. Adolph Saphir, D.D.*

Saphir was involved in many ways in raising the standard of bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people. We shall now, however, focus on what he specifically wrote in *Christ and Israel*. The paperback edition of the book that I have was published in Israel by Yanetz Ltd. and is simply titled, "Christ and Israel." Another edition, edited by D. Baron, was titled, *Christ and Israel; Lectures and Addresses on the Jews*, published in London by Morgan and Scott in 1911.

"Israel Beloved"

In complete contrast to the Vatican and rabbinical statements assessed earlier in this issue - both of which seek an end to organized evangelism to the Jewish people - we have the example of the life and ministry of Adolph Saphir.

Not only did Saphir believe that the 'Jewish Mission' had a place; he believed with all his heart that it was "pre-eminent" and had a "central and unique" role in God's plan for changing the world.

In a chapter in *Christ and Israel* titled, "Israel Beloved: Or the Gifts and the Calling of God Which Are Without Repentance" (taken from a sermon delivered on May 18, 1868), Saphir declared that God's "purpose and wish is that we should commence with Jerusalem, and His promise teaches us that through the restoration of Israel the golden era of the world will be ushered in." (p. 111) Saphir thus saw Jewish evangelism as key to the redemption of the world.

Commencing in Jerusalem

"We" in the sentence above refers to the worldwide Body of Messiah - that *we* should commence Gospel witness in Jerusalem (and I believe that Saphir was not just speaking historically but was addressing each current generation, that this is the purpose of God, to begin in Jerusalem. If so, one should note that these words were spoken eighty years nearly to the day prior to the modern-day establishment of the State of Israel! But regardless, Gospel witness "should commence with Jerusalem").

A promise of special blessing in this vineyard

Those who work in this special spiritual vineyard of ministry to the Jewish people are also subject to special blessing, according to Saphir. He proclaimed: "And as the mission to Israel stands out pre-eminent, so we have a promise of special blessing for all who bless Abraham." He pleads for more workers to come into this great Harvest: "Oh, become partakers of this blessing, and be in this also a follower of your great Apostle Paul." He then calls upon all believers to be tender-hearted towards the Jewish people, remembering all that God has done

through them: "And let all the remembrances by which God brings Israel before you to recall to you Israel's claim, and deepen your love to God's people. When you think of the grace that has brought salvation to you, remember Israel, the nation of grace." (p. 112)

Saphir then goes further and says that "he who stands highest on the mount of God, and sees most of the glory of God, has the deepest compassion, the most burning love, the tenderest sympathy towards his brethren. Moses in his anguish said, 'Blot me out of Thy book'. Paul in the intensity of his affection and sorrow could offer the same petition... Love to Israel, such as Moses and Paul felt, is a ray from that ineffable ocean of light which is in God." (p. 99)

The 'Jewish Mission' as Saphir understood it is very close to the heart of God. As he wrote in *Christ and Israel*, "the importance of the Jewish Mission" cannot be measured "by the numerical greatness either of the nation or of converts; we measure it by the value assigned to them [the Jewish people] in the Scripture, by the decisive love with which God regards them, and by the special influence which they are to exert on the whole world." (p. 111)

A closing prayer and a plea

Adolph Saphir ends this amazing section in *Christ and Israel* with a prayer: "May there be given unto us also, out of that wonderful and infinite ocean of divine love to Israel, a little love to God's ancient people. Amen."

Thus, he is praying that the Lord will give the Church at least *some* measure of the love that God Himself has toward His chosen people.

The end of all things

But there is more. In Saphir's view, not only does God have a special love for Israel (the Jewish people) because of His covenant with the fathers, as exemplified by Moses and Paul and Yeshua Himself, but that love serves a purpose far beyond

our understanding. In a chapter titled, "The Restoration of the Jews," he proclaims: "This is the end and purpose of all things; all the history of the world and all the manifestations of God's love and power are to the praise of the glory of His grace, that His Name be exalted, and that His supremacy be acknowledged and adored. When the Jewish nation is restored, then shall it be made manifest before all angels and principalities, and all the ends of the earth, that salvation is of the Lord; that He has mercy on whom He will have mercy; that man's unfaithfulness cannot change the purpose of His love and the counsel of His compassion, and that He gives deliverance, pardon, renewal, strength and glory to His chosen people." (p. 189)

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus, King of the Jews, Messiah of Israel, Redeemer of the world. May Israel be restored even in our day!

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LCJE - North America Annual Conference
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February 22-24, 2016

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What's Working and What Isn't?"***

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registration and conference updates

Academic Corner

Editor's Note: A number of LCJE members continue to build a relationship with the U.S.-based Evangelical Theological Society (E.T.S.) in presenting academic papers on themes related to Messianic Jewish Studies. Below are examples of the papers presented at the November 2015 annual conference of the Society, held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. For more information about individual papers, please contact the authors directly. If other LCJE members around the world have information on papers published or presentations at similar conferences related to the themes of Jewish evangelism or the Messianic movement - and would like to see that information published in the Bulletin, please contact the Editor).

Evangelical Theological Society: "Marriage and the Family" Conference

17-19 NOVEMBER 2015, ATLANTA, GEORGIA, U.S.A.

67th Annual Meeting

"Messianic Jewish Studies: History, Theology and Praxis"

LCJE member presentations:

"Messianic Jewish History: From the Early Centuries to Today"
(*Helene Dallaire* - Denver Seminary, Moderator)

"Wall Builders: How the Theological Constructs of Tertullian, Augustine and Jerome Created a Long-standing Division Between Judaism and Its Sect Known as Christianity"
(*Amy Downey* - Liberty University/Tzedakah Ministries)

"Secret Jewish Christians and the Spanish Inquisition"
(*Zhava Glaser* - Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies)

"Textual Evidence of Jewish Christianity from the 13th to 20th Centuries"
(*Helene Dallaire* - Denver Seminary)

"The Warsaw Ghetto: Understanding the Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish Missions"
(*Mitch Glaser* - Chosen People Ministries)

"Coming of Age or Coming Apart? Growing Pains in the Modern Messianic Movement"
(*Steven Ger* - Sojourner Ministries & Beth Sar Shalom Congregation)

Next LCJE CEO Meeting: 8-12 May 2017
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UPCOMING LCJE MEETINGS

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12 February 2016
Tel Aviv

CEO Meeting
8-12 May 2017
Location to be determined



Caspari Center - *Media Review*

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Networking Jewish Evangelism



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