

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 34, NO. 1

JANUARY-MARCH 2014

EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

A Root Cause of Division and Confusion Cautions and Corrections of the Hebrew Roots Movement

by G. Richard Fisher

The evangelical Church is being besieged by militant Islam, contemplative mysticism, personal revelations, ecumenism, false prophets, pseudo apostles, deluded teachers, outright charlatans, political correctness, and a decline of doctrine with an absence of the knowledge of sound biblical hermeneutics. It seems that many in the Church neither know nor can explain what they believe. The Church universal has lost not only its will but its ability to discern.

Thanks to many of the legitimate counter-cult and apologetic ministries, there is a voice to address error and offer biblical corrections to these junk food doctrines, outright aberrations, and obvious heresies. These are men and women who, like the sons of Issachar, have understanding of the times to know what to do (1 Chronicles 12:32).

The Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) is being accepted like a long-

lost stepchild who needs our full attention and embrace. It thrives on ignorance of the complexities of Judaism, both ancient and modern. It fosters elitism and division, and has been flying under the radar for years. It is bringing confusion, dissension, and strife into the body of Christ. Although seen as new, this movement is just the latest distraction promoting old errors.

WHAT HRM IS NOT

HRM is not an organized church, although churches may be involved with it in varying degrees. It is not a cohesive movement, but consists of men, "schools," and organiza-

(continues on page 11)



Inside this Issue:

- JESUS IS: THE FEEL-GOOD MESSAGE OF JUDAH SMITHPAGE 2
- MEASLES OUTBREAK IN TEXAS LINKED TO COPELAND CHURCH ..PAGE 3
- DUAL COVENANT: ONE WAY OF SALVATION OR TWO?PAGE 4

Editorials

JESUS IS: THE FEEL-GOOD MESSAGE OF JUDAH SMITH

Who — or what — is Jesus? Judah Smith, a Seattle-based pastor, has written a book whose title invites readers to answer that question for themselves and then goes on to describe the Savior in terms that border on the preposterous.

Smith and his wife, Chelsea, are lead pastors of The City Church in Seattle, Wash., and rising stars in the evangelical community. The City Church, with more than 6,000 regular attenders, is the fourth-fastest-growing congregation in America, according to *Charisma* magazine.

The church was founded in 1992 by Smith's parents, Wendell and Gini Smith. The Smiths and The City Church have deep roots in the charismatic/prosperity gospel movement. Judah has said, "The charismatic movement and all that is charismatic is beautiful and wonderful."

The City Church places great emphasis on the charismatic gifts. Smith is affiliated with Hillsong Church, which regularly features Word-Faith preachers such as Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer. Smith has friends in other circles, too. Emergent church leader Mark Driscoll considers him a friend and had him speak at the 2013

Resurgence Conference along with Rick Warren, Matt Chandler, Greg Laurie, and others.

Smith has gained considerable notoriety because of the publication of his book, *Jesus Is _____*. The reader is asked, "How would you finish that sentence?" The publication has been on *The New York Times* Best Seller list and is endorsed by Steven Furtick; pastors from Hillsong Church in New York City such as Carl Lentz and Brian Houston; Tommy and Matthew Barnett, founders of the Los Angeles Dream Center; Pastor Ed Young; and golfer Bubba Watson.

Singer Justin Bieber calls Smith his pastor. Smith was a featured speaker at Louie Giglio's Passion 2013 conference, along with Beth Moore and John Piper, where he spoke to 60,000 people under the age of 25.

Jesus Is _____ is part of a large campaign of billboards, bus signs, Facebook apps, bumper magnets, and social outreach events in the Seattle area. The goal of the project was to get people thinking about who Jesus is.

Smith follows in the vein of other "postmodern" Christian authors such as Rob Bell who are long on hype, short on content, and too complacent with contradictions and frustrations to be consistently understood. Smith admits that he does not think in a linear fashion. It shows when one tries to comprehend his message.

Not everything Smith writes in *Jesus Is _____* is flawed. Smith articulates correct biblical teachings such
(continues on page 19)

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

P.O. Box 26062 • Saint Louis, Missouri 63136-0062 • (314) 921-9800

Visit PFO's Website at: <http://www.pfo.org>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

G. Richard Fisher Dillsburg, PA Gary E. Gilley Springfield, IL
M. Kurt Goedelman Saint Louis, MO Keith A. Morse Denver, CO
David M. Tyler Granite City, IL

BOARD OF REFERENCE:

Dr. Jay E. Adams Enoree, SC Dr. Norman L. Geisler Charlotte, NC
Dr. Ron Rhodes Frisco, TX

© 2014 – PFO. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1083-6853. These articles may not be stored on web pages or Internet sites without permission. *The Quarterly Journal* is the newsletter publication of PFO. Published by Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, MO 63136. PFO's *Journal* may also be obtained on CD-ROM in Portable Document Format (.PDF) for use with Adobe® Reader® software.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version, ©1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Because of the fluid nature of the Internet, web addresses or links contained in *Journal* articles may have changed and/or may no longer be accessible.

News Updates

KNOCK, KNOCK. WHO'S THERE? NOT JWS

Members of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society are still taking to the streets in their aggressive proselytizing efforts, but perhaps not so much in the familiar and traditional way for which they are known. As one Canadian news reporter explained, "They are Jehovah's Witnesses, and they are no longer just coming to a door near you."

Active members of the religious group are now establishing an increased presence on city street corners — allowing people to come to them rather than vice versa. According to Mark Ruge, director of public information for Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada, "People are not at home more than ever before. We still do door-to-door, but downtown is where the people are."

In the United States, Jehovah's Witnesses have begun to set up displays with their various publications and staff booths at large weekend flea markets, giving them access to tens of thousands of patrons in just a few hours.

According to the *2013 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, membership in the organization grew in 2012 by 1.9 percent, 1.7 billion hours were invested worldwide in field ministry work, and 268,777 new members were baptized. Jehovah's Witnesses are proud of those facts, saying that 30 people per hour were baptized throughout the year. However, those numbers reflect a stark contrast when one divides the number of baptisms into the number of hours spent in field ministry. That figure reveals that it takes over 6,500 hours of field ministry to gain one convert. And that 6,500-hour figure increases significantly when one subtracts from the 268,777 baptisms the ones resulting from internal growth (children and other family of current members being baptized).

The Watchtower claims a worldwide membership of 7.7 million.

—MKG

MEASLES OUTBREAK IN TEXAS LINKED TO COPELAND CHURCH

By mid-summer last year, U.S. health officials were on high alert as 2013 was "shaping up to be one of the worst years for measles in more than a decade." According to a report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, the country has 60 cases of measles annually, but by August 24, a total of 159 cases had been reported in 16 states.

The state with the second most reported cases of measles was Texas. According to a news article in *The Christian Post*, "Texas has been identified as ground zero for the latest measles outbreak after 25 cases were recently reported and at least 15 of those cases are tied to Eagle Mountain International Church in the city of Newark. The church is led by Terri Pearsons, the oldest daughter of televangelist Kenneth Copeland who has linked child vaccinations to autism."

Kenneth Copeland is a leader in the Word-Faith movement, which advances the health and wealth gospel: the belief that physical well-being and financial prosperity are the will of God for all Christians.

The Post also revealed, "The measles outbreak was started by a visitor to Eagle Mountain International Church who had recently visited a country where the disease is common, according to a statement from the church and the Tarrant County Public Health in Fort Worth, Texas." An *NBC News* report identified that country as Indonesia.

USA Today reported, "Those sickened by measles include nine children and six adults, ranging in age from 4 months old to 44 years old. At least 12 of those infected were not fully immunized against measles," according to Tarrant County Public Health spokesman Al Roy. The newspaper also noted that, "The other patients have no record of being vaccinated" and "All of the school-age children infected in the Eagle Mountain outbreak were home-schooled, health officials say. Texas requires children be vaccinated before attending school."

As the news reports of the church's connection to the measles outbreak gained national attention, Kenneth Copeland Ministries and Eagle Mountain International Church went on the offensive. The church's website issued a statement saying, "Kenneth Copeland Ministries' position regarding dealing with any medical condition involving yourself or someone in your family is to first seek the wisdom of God, His Word, and appropriate medical attention from a professional that you know and trust. Apply wisdom and discernment in carrying out their recommendations for treatment. This would include: vaccinations, immunizations, surgeries, prescriptions, or any other medical procedures."

The website post also stated that the church is "working with the Tarrant County Public Health Department to stand against a recent attack of measles. Eagle Mountain

(continues on page 22)



DUAL COVENANT: One Way of Salvation or Two?

“One door and only one, and yet its sides are two. Inside and outside, on which side are you?” So goes Elsie Leslie’s hymn. To those who take the Bible seriously, the title of the hymn above, “One Door and Only One,” may seem redundant.

Universalism — sometimes called the “wider mercy doctrine” — teaches that all roads lead to salvation. Another more insidious teaching claims there are two ways of salvation. To the Christian that notion should be ludicrous. However, some who call themselves Bible-believing Christians accept it.

Within the Hebrew Roots Movement there is a strain of teaching that might be referred to as racial universalism. It is the worst form of anti-Semitism because it refuses to preach the Gospel to the Jewish people under the pretext that there are really two ways of salvation.

According to this Dual Covenant theory, Gentiles are saved through Jesus. Jews are saved without Jesus, presumably under another covenant. It is the belief that there is more than one way to get to heaven. Jesus is not the *only* door because in the Dual Covenant view there are two doors. All that Israel needs, according to a number of Dual Covenant advocates,

by **G. Richard Fisher**

is more programs, including Gentile ecumenicalism with interfaith dialogue for better understanding.

It would understand Jesus’ affirmation of Himself in John 14:6 as, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life for Gentiles. No Gentile comes to the Father but through Me because the Jews are already with the Father.”

This has great appeal to the ecumenically minded. Many within the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) disavow this position, but not openly because those in Dual Covenant strongly support Israel. To speak against Dual Covenant might seem like being against Israel, or less than a friend to Israel. Support of Israel trumps any theological or doctrinal position. Realize, though, that the support for Israel in Dual Covenant thinking is doing so for reasons other than evangelism. Even if Jews do recognize and accept Jesus, it is simply more icing on their cake of salvation.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED

Dual Covenant is not to be confused with another teaching called the Two House Theory. The Two House Theory is related in many ways with

British Israelism, which was popularized by the late Herbert Armstrong (1892-1986), founder of the Worldwide Church of God. British Israelism is based on the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes. In Armstrong’s telling, these so-called “Lost Tribes” of Israel somehow became the British and ultimately Americans in the United States.

The theory in British Israelism that the terms *Jews* and *Israelites* are not interchangeable falls flat under serious biblical examination. They say that “Jews” refers to only the two southern tribes and that Israel refers only to the so-called lost ten tribes from the north. However, according to Scripture the northern tribes never were lost. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, God’s Old Testament people are referred to as Jews on 19 occasions and as Israel on 62 occasions, showing that the terms are synonymous and interchangeable after the exile. Jewish tribes may have been scattered both in and out of Israel, but they were never truly lost.

Archaeologists have shown that there were large migrations and re-settlements from the Northern Kingdom into Judah and Benjamin before the Assyrian captivity occurred. The burgeoning population of Jerusalem

spread to its large western hill under Hezekiah. There continued to be coexistence of the Jewish tribes in the South of Israel (1 Chronicles 9:2-3; 2 Chronicles 11:14, 16; 15:9; 30; 34:9; 35:17-18; Ezra 6:17; Luke 2:36; Acts 26:7; James 1:1). Professor William Varner states:

“To summarize, it can be said, on the basis of Scripture, history and archaeology, that there is no such thing as the *ten lost tribes*. What was lost was the separate existence of the *kingdom* of Israel in the north. The tribes, however, continued to exist in the body of the southern kingdom with the terms ‘Jews’ and ‘Israel’ applied to all the covenant people after the captivity.”¹

All of the twelve tribes continued to exist as distinct Jewish tribes both in Israel and the Diaspora (or dispersion) of Jews worldwide. There is definitely a genetic component to Jewishness along with its religious, linguistic, and cultural uniqueness.

When Jesus sent the Apostles into parts of Israel to preach, He told them to go to “the lost sheep of the *house of Israel*” (Matthew 10:6; 15:24, emphasis added). This clearly shows us that Jesus Himself did not think the tribes of Israel were no longer around.

NOAH WHO?

One lesser-known Dual Covenant group calls itself B’nai Noach or the Noahides. These titles are translated as “the children of Noah.” Noahides believe there are seven distinct laws for Gentiles that can be gleaned from Noah’s era and are found in the book of Genesis. These purported seven laws are all that Gentiles need for salvation. That is their covenant. Thus the New Testament appears to be useless appendage. Jews have the Old Covenant, including the Decalogue or Ten Commandments.

Noahides collaborate with small segments of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. In 2005, this unlikely alliance formed an ad hoc body called the New Sanhedrin of Israel. Because of the title Sanhedrin, some prophecy

buffs got very excited over this grouping of a small Noahide cult with some extremist rabbis. However, the New Sanhedrin has no recognition or standing with the main religious community and the government of Israel. It would be like the Watchtower Society declaring itself rulers of America. Only those who pay close attention to minor news events in Israel would even know of this bogus Sanhedrin. Yet some within the Hebrew Roots Movement express excitement over this questionable Sanhedrin and lend support to the cult of the Noahides. The Noahides main slogan is “One people, one world.” They often use the rainbow as their symbol.²

While those in the HRM claim great insight, they lack discernment and have no doctrinal quality control. It appears as if the HRM approves of any group that affirms it. In Dual Covenant it is the idea, not the details, which count.

There appears to be two major strains of the Dual Covenant. One teaches that Jews are fine under the Mosaic Covenant as they try to keep various parts of the Law of Moses. However, the more common theme seems to be that Jews by birth are automatically shielded and are under the “unconditional,” everlasting covenant of Abraham (Genesis 17:2-9). The Abrahamic Covenant is distinct from the New Testament Covenant of grace. However, both of these views lack a scriptural foundation.

TOO MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Dual Covenant leaves much to the imagination. Questions about details and contradictions for the most part go unanswered. For example: Who specifically are the favored Jews? Is it all Jews everywhere who come under the Abrahamic Covenant just because they are Jews? Is it those born of both a Jewish father and mother, or does one born of Jewish father and non-Jewish mother count? Is it only a remnant of Jews as was so often true in the Old Testament? Is it only for Orthodox Jews and, if so, which

Orthodox sects? When Gentile converts come into Judaism are they covered only if they become Orthodox, or does Reformed and Liberal count as well? Does conversion to pseudo-Judaism (Kabbalist) as in the case of pop singer Madonna count? Is it the Jews of and in Israel? Are those Jewish groups who fight and oppose Christian missionaries included in the select group? What about purely secular Jews in Israel? (Israel is about 80 percent secular.)

So, just which Jews are covered? Do we leave the question of who is covered up to God and just treat all Jews as if they are in? Are only the Jews who consciously desire to be under the Abraham Covenant the ones who are in? Is this a case of race and not grace? Why did Jesus castigate Jews when they rejected Him, but we now assume that it is permissible for Jews to reject Him? If Arabs are Semitic and the offspring of Abraham by blood, should they be covered as well? And if not, why not? If Jews are already saved under the Abrahamic Covenant, but then accept Christ, are they saved twice or just more favored? Why do those in the Dual Covenant camp hide the fact of what they really believe? Why do they support Israel, but would not think for a moment of Jewish evangelism?

IT’S NOT ALL ROSES IN A ROSE GARDEN

Even a cursory reading of news reports from local Israel media reveals prostitution busts, sex trafficking, drug rings, drunkenness, domestic violence, murders, divorces, clashes, and fist fights between Jewish religious groups. There is sniping between rabbis from various communities. There are places one can buy rabbinical ordination certificates. Israel has its share of political corruption and immoral crooked politicians. One former Israeli President, Moshe Katsav, is doing seven years in prison for rape.³ Last June, Israeli newspapers reported that Israel’s chief Ashkenazi rabbi was under investigation for money laundering, theft, and bribery.⁴ Former Prime Minister and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert has

been called one of the most crooked leaders in modern Israel.⁵

It may shock some to know that Tel Aviv sponsors an annual lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered international film festival. Tel Aviv is known as a very gay-friendly city. Some guidebooks contain recommendations for gay and lesbian bars and gay-friendly beaches.⁶ Ashdod held its first gay pride festival the third week in June 2013. After all, Israel is a democracy and its secular government embraces all. Most of Israel's leaders long to be politically correct, no matter what.

Pastor and author John Hagee led the chorus urging people to give funds for Jewish immigration from Russia to Israel. Some believed it to be the Church's mandate. Those ministries that gave massive amounts of money over a decade and a half to bring Russian Jews to Israel ignorantly aided and abetted the influx of Russian crime and Russian mafia as well. An Internet search of "Russian Mafia in Israel" will yield an abundance of articles. Beginning in 1989, Jews in the Soviet Union were eligible for Israeli citizenship with no questions asked. They were given an open door to the Jewish state and with the help of money from Evangelicals, one million Russian Jews streamed in. For the most part, they were totally unbelieving and secular. Then the horrible truth began to emerge:

"... we started getting reports from my colleagues in Haifa and the north of Israel of a dramatic rise in the amount of criminality among young people. These were kids who were thirteen and fourteen, maybe fifteen years old, but they seemed to be outside the education system. And they were almost all Russian. ... The crime wave centered on Tel Aviv — or Sin City, as the tabloids refer to it — but almost always contained within the Russian-speaking community. ... the single largest business these street-level Russian syndicates were running was prostitution, and the clients were by no means

exclusively Russian. ... Brothels catering for every male pocket also began to flourish in tourists centers such as Netanya and Eilat. ... organized crime bosses began colonizing Israel. ... Laundering money derived from criminal activities anywhere else in the world was an entirely legitimate business."⁷

Because many non-Jewish Russians slipped in, the Israeli government is now considering passing a law that Russian immigrants must prove themselves Jewish before getting a free pass to resettle in the Holy Land.

Israelis are just as sinful as anyone else.

Mormons, Baha'is, and Scientologists all have a well-established presence in Israel. Mormons have a prime location on the Mount of Olives. The Baha'i sect has a multimillion-dollar location on the heights of Haifa with beautifully manicured gardens adorning the face of that city. The Scientologists have taken up a very visible presence in Jaffa with a newly renovated headquarters in a historic building (the Alhambra Theatre on Jerusalem Boulevard). Facts in everyday Israel seem to militate against some kind of wholesale, national, and special relationship with God. Ezekiel stated that when people truly have a new heart and a new spirit they will "walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27). Only the orthodox minority make an attempt.

NO DIFFERENCE, NO DISTINCTION

The Apostle Paul affirmed in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He also stated that the Gospel was for "Jew and Greek" (Romans 1:16) because all alike are sinners in need of salvation (Romans 1-3). There is absolutely no reason to think that Romans 1:16 has been rescinded. The late Bible teacher Harry Ironside wrote:

"This gospel had been demonstratively proven to be the divine dynamic bringing deliverance to all who put faith in it, whether

the religious Jew or the cultured Greek. It was the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. It met every need of the mind, the conscience, and the heart of man, for in it the righteousness of God was revealed faith-wise."⁸

When Paul said that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for the Jew as well as the Greek (Gentile), he was saying that the priority of the Jew vanishes with the coming of the Gospel. Anders Nygren wrote:

"When Paul thus mentions the two groups into which mankind can be divided, from the religious point of view, Jews and Gentiles, he does so also to show that there is no difference between them. How completely unlike they were! The Jews had God's revelation and had received His promise. God had entered into covenant with them; and they had shared a holy history with Him. The Gentiles had none of these. The Jews had the law of God and were zealous for righteousness. The Gentiles were given over to unrighteousness. There is no denying that such differences were real and deep. But they all vanish and are nothing before the gospel."⁹

In regard to salvation and the need of the Gospel for salvation, Paul under the inspiration of God emphatically stated that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek" (Romans 10:12).

Paul further emphasized, "whatever the law says, it says to those under the law, that *every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*" (Romans 3:19, emphasis added). "Every mouth" and "the whole world" means absolutely everyone, everywhere — no exceptions. All people everywhere are sinful and therefore all need the provision of the Gospel. Paul was not open to a Dual Covenant in the least. After all, he had been under the Abrahamic/Mosaic rule before his conversion to Jesus. He counted that past as loss (Philippians 3:5-7).

HEADS IN THE CLOUDS

There seems to be an unspoken idea within the Dual Covenant theory that Jews are somehow religiously pristine and spiritually superior. Even their language is better, their dress is better, their music is better, their customs and rituals are better, and they are to be envied and emulated. This is especially true with regard to Israeli Jews.

The glamorized, shielded, and sanitized routes that a tourist in Israel travels are misleading as to the day-to-day realities of real life in Israel. For the most part, tourism in Israel occurs in a bubble, ensconced in Americanized luxury hotels and shuttled from site to site. With the biblical geography, the ancient history, and the archaeological digs all in the forefront, concealed are all the negatives. Tourism is big business and the Israeli government wants tourists to keep coming back.

Everyday life in Israel is radically different from being on a tourist trip. An evening in downtown Jerusalem on Purim is a cross between Mardi Gras and Halloween with drunken, drugged up, out-of-control teenagers. There is a heavy police presence. Those in the Dual Covenant way of thinking are imposing their fantasies onto the everyday hard realities of Israel and her people.

A VERY GRAVE CONCERN

Judaism today is not the Judaism of the Old Testament or even the Judaism of the first century. Judaism today is based on extrabiblical traditions developed over centuries and is ruled by the Talmud and human tradition. Some traditions are quaint, but others are spiritually toxic.

Talmudic Judaism is the traditionally developed Judaism of the present. Some aspects of Judaism in Israel are steeped in superstition. These practices are largely unknown or conveniently ignored by those who believe in the Dual Covenant. For instance, Safed is an Israeli city in upper Galilee given over to praying in cemeteries among the dead. To avoid

ceremonial uncleanness, raised walkways are built over some of the graves so one can use those and stay "clean." Some of these practices can only be classified as occultic or spiritistic by biblical standards. There is no extra potency in praying at tombs and grave sites of those believed to be holy sages, no matter how many Jews firmly believe it. One Israeli publication describes a hillside cemetery in Safed:

"Over one million people visit the cemetery every year. Since new burials were halted here in the 1960s a new cemetery was established at the bottom of the hill, the visitors are almost all supplicants and pilgrims coming to pray at the grave of a holy sage. Praying at the tomb of a zaddik is an ancient tradition that is mentioned in the Talmud. The day when the sage died is considered a better time than others 'to prostrate oneself on the grave of the zaddik.' In the sixteenth century, the Ari and his followers strengthened the practice of this tradition in Safed and gave it additional kabbalistic and Hasidic meaning. Since the 1950s, following the foundation of a society dedicated to preserving holy sites, many additional holy graves have been identified. Jewish immigrants from North Africa in the 1960s and especially in the 1970s enhanced the tradition even more. Following the creation of the Shas political party, which is rooted in the traditional culture of the North African Jewish communities, visiting the graves of zaddikim has mushroomed."¹⁰

Sitting among graves and even sleeping in them is a pagan practice that Isaiah called rebellion and the provoking of God (Isaiah 65:1-4). This was a convoluted heathen practice that was an addiction of the Jews before the Babylonian captivity. History repeats itself.

Another commitment made by many Orthodox Jews is to sixteenth-century rabbi and mystic Isaac Luria.

Two synagogues in Safed bear his name. Among the beliefs about Luria is this:

"It is said that Luria used to sit in a little alcove, on the western side of the synagogue, engrossed in trying to unravel the secrets of kabbalah. Elijah revealed himself to Luria in his alcove and became his maggid, his personal angel that unraveled the secrets of the universe for him."¹¹

Scripture speaks against such means of obtaining information, guidance, or revelation (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-12). Old Testament prophets would not endorse the mysticism and occultism of the Kabbalah. This event ascribed to Luria can only be wild legend or a familiar spirit.

This author has visited the old graves of a few of the more well known rabbis located in Tiberius, and while there witnessed men in the typical black garb, bobbing and weaving (called "davening"), muttering, praying, and crying at those tombs. Putting a lighted candle on the tombstone is considered even more effective. Making pilgrimage to the graves of those who are considered saints and imbibing the spirit of mysticism is becoming more common in Israel. All in all, it was a sad experience.

A "holy" site in Jerusalem is the tomb of Simon the Just who was High Priest during Second Temple times in the B.C. period. This is not just a memorial like the Lincoln Memorial. This is a highly revered and sacred site that supposedly contains power and gives those who pray there some kind of special access to God. It serves to create an actual sacred space and is a magic charm, an occultic enchantment, and a gross obsession. Believers, however, are to look to a living Savior, not dead "saints."

In Israel there seems to be a grave for every perceived need. The grave of Pinhas Ben Yair is especially powerful for those considering a divorce:

"Need a divorce? Walking seven times, clockwise, around this innocuous grave is a mystical remedy that will take care of the

details. Nobody admits it, but watch carefully and you will see someone circling the grave and ancient tree next to it."¹²

And, for the one who wants a wife, the grave of Yonatan Ben Uziel near Safed is the location for those seeking a spouse. One must attach a scarf to the grave with a pleading note affirming Ben Uziel's supernatural ability.¹³

Considering all the above, to endow a concept of national salvation on to Israel today is foolish, bizarre, and unbiblical.

IT'S ENTIRELY OUR FAULT!

For many years, missions and ministries to Jewish people existed with one purpose: to win people to Christ and make them part of the Church, as taught in the third chapter of Ephesians. Changes began to take place in the thrust and purpose of those ministries when individuals in those organizations decided that their major role was simply to extend friendship and support to Jewish people and especially to Israel. Friendship cannot take the place of biblical discipleship. Somehow in all the friendship chatter, the wings of evangelism have gotten clipped. This became even easy for those who subscribe to the Dual Covenant teaching.

It became our obligation to make up for the Roman Catholic Crusades and the slaughter of Jews by the Crusaders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Christians today — not Pope Urban II — were at fault. Somehow the Christian collective had to repent and seek forgiveness from both Jews and Arabs. We also had to somehow get forgiveness for the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust. However, such thinking trivializes both the Inquisition and the Holocaust and removes responsibility from the real perpetrators. The leap was then made that because of all this suffering, Jewish people were automatically related to God in a way that precluded them from needing to be in Christ.

It is important to note that it would take time to build some kind of rationale and base the above on tenuous links to the Bible. We will trace

how that occurred. The result is that there are supposedly two covenants now in force. First, there is possibly the Mosaic covenant, but for sure the Abrahamic covenant for Jews; and secondly, the New Covenant for Gentiles.

"TRYING TO CONVERT JEWS IS A WASTE OF TIME"

John Hagee, a Dual Covenant advocate,¹⁴ told the *Houston Chronicle*:

"I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption."¹⁵

The *Chronicle* article also noted:

"In fact, trying to convert Jews is a 'waste of time,' he said. 'The Jewish person who has his roots in Judaism is not going to convert to Christianity. There is no form of Christian evangelism that has failed so miserably as evangelizing the Jewish people. They (already) have a faith structure.' Everyone else, whether Buddhist or Baha'i, needs to believe in Jesus, he says. But not Jews. Jews already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced by Christianity, he says."¹⁶

Another promoter of Dual Covenant wrote to the *Jerusalem Post* and stated:

"While we are true Christian believers and spread the word, we strongly reject any missionary work in Israel itself, since it is our belief that Israel is God's chosen people, and therefore, in the hands of God. Our rejection of missionary work in Israel stems also from our belief that Israel is a nation which has had to endure so much, and should be shown love and understanding."¹⁷

SAME OLD ERRORS

Most of those advocating Dual Covenant set forth the view that Jews are especially favored and covered by God's covenant with Abraham. Claims of being spiritually shielded

under and because of the Abrahamic covenant are not new. John the Baptist faced such claims. Matthew wrote:

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones'" (Matthew 3:7-9).

Moreover, Jesus rejected the claim of special privileges just because of Abraham: the Pharisees "answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham'" (John 8:39).

Acts 13:26 further undermines the Dual Covenant. In the city of Antioch in Pisidia, Paul enters the synagogue and preaches to those who are Abraham's offspring and he does not say that they are saved, but rather, "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent." These Jewish people needed the salvation found only in Jesus. Later, in verses 50 and 51, the descendants of Abraham reject Paul and Barnabas, stir up persecution against them, and expel them. Demonstrating their strong rejection leads Paul and Barnabas to shake "the dust from their feet," which is a reciprocal rejection. Paul later says of Jewish rejecters, "But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ" (2 Corinthians 3:14).

JUST WHAT IS ZIONISM?

We often hear the word Zionism or Christian Zionism. These terms are no longer helpful because they mean whatever anyone wishes them to mean. When Nathan Birnbaum coined the term "Zionism" in 1890, it simply

carried the idea of Jews returning to the land of Israel. It was later nuanced to accommodate those who wanted the State to be committed to farming and tilling the land, or others who saw only political or religious answers as to establishing Israel. Today it covers a whole range of ideas and beliefs. Amazingly, under the rubric of Christian Zionism, Franklin H. Littell in the 1970s wrote that Jewish evangelism was sin. In his book titled *The Crucifixion of the Jews*, he set forth the idea that Israel was the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and that Jews were redeemed under the Old Covenant. Their suffering, along with the Law, gave them a pass.

However, the man most responsible for formulating the Dual Covenant idea for today was a Jew named Franz Rosenzweig. His reasoning is presented in his book, *The Star of Redemption*. In the 1920s and 1930s, Rosenzweig argued that Jews had all that they needed inside of Judaism. He argued that all Jews were under the Old Covenant and further asserted that the New Testament sheltered all Gentiles. Both covenants were absolutely right and could and should coexist. It was a stroke of ecumenical genius and offered shelter to those who rejected the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. In Rosenzweig's view, Jewish lineage alone — in any fashion — covered the Jew and linked him or her to God's family. The Jewish people probably always believed this in some form or fashion, but now it was being systematically articulated. The Apostle John, himself a Jew, taught just the opposite when he said, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: *who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (John 1:12-13, emphasis added).

The Bible is certain in John 1:13 that salvation is first "not of blood." No matter our parentage, there is no speedway to heaven if we bypass the Savior. Secondly, it is "not of the will of the flesh." One cannot make himself a true Christian by some act of will. One cannot accumulate enough

goodness or merit to earn heaven. Thirdly, it is not of the "will of man." No minister, priest, rabbi, or Dual Covenant advocate can declare a person saved apart from the new birth which is given only as one receives Jesus as Savior. So salvation does not come by birth, by personal effort, or by imposition of another.

OLD ERROR RETURNS

The early Church in the first few centuries strongly refuted any notions of equal and coexisting covenants. Historian Philip Schaff presents the argument against Judaism by Justin Martyr and others from the second century:

"... it was held, that the Mosaic law, as far as it relates to outward rites and ceremonies was only a temporary institution for the Jewish nation foreshadowing the substance of Christianity, while its moral precepts as contained in the Decalogue were kept in their deepest spiritual sense only by Christians."¹⁸

The Old Covenant was totally fulfilled in and by Jesus. No one in the Church has ever recognized a double way of salvation — until recently.

There is an important distinction between the Old and New Covenants that should be pointed out: the Old Covenant was *national* and even within the *nation* that was elected by God not all were saved, as evidenced by the wilderness experience and the fact of a remnant, for instance in the time of Elijah (1 Kings 19:18) or the time of Isaiah. The remnant idea runs all through the Old Testament. Jeremiah recognized so many of the nation's leaders were evil and apostate (chapter 23). The huge difference with the New Covenant is that it is not national, but rather *individual*. In the age of grace, individual Jews and individual Gentiles must accept the offer of salvation in Christ. There is no national salvation.

FUTURE BLESSINGS

Romans 11:25-26 ("all Israel will be saved") clearly predicts a *future* national restoration for the majority of

then-believing Jews. That has not yet occurred. F. F. Bruce wrote:

"'All Israel' is a recurring expression in Jewish literature, where it need not mean 'every Jew without a single exception' but 'Israel as a whole'. Thus 'all Israel has a portion in the age to come', says the Mishnah."¹⁹

This is not occurring now. Individual Jews are being saved, but not the nation as a whole. All we need do is recall the information on everyday life in Israel referred to earlier in this article. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus prophesied that Israel's house would be left desolate (Luke 13:35). This corresponds to that long period of interruption — during this age of grace — when Israel, according to Hosea 3:4, shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod (meaning without priesthood) or teraphim. Though Israel would give up its idol worship, it would also lose its priesthood, its sacrificial system, and reject its only Messiah.

The Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled completely in Christ and in the Gospel. Paul explained it this way:

"Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. ... But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' ... that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:7-9, 11, 14, emphasis added).

So the Abrahamic Covenant was not a stand-alone covenant imposed forever on a special few, but rather a covenant to be fulfilled in the Messiah and universal blessings for all through Him. Kenneth S. Wuest wrote:

“The good news announced to Abraham was that someday the Saviour would arise out of his nation Israel, and that the Gentiles would be saved through Him as Abraham was saved. Thus, Abraham rejoiced to see the coming of that day (John 8:56). Abraham was therefore to become the pattern to all who would follow, of how a sinner, Jew or Gentile, must appropriate salvation. ... Christ became a curse for us in order that the blessing of Abraham, justification by faith, and also the Holy Spirit, might be given to both Jew and Gentile (Joel 2:28). The law which was the barrier that separated Jew and Gentile, is done away in Christ. By its removal, the Gentiles are put on a common level with the Jew, and thus united, both Jew and Gentile are recipients of the Holy Spirit through faith.”²⁰

The Abrahamic Covenant is enfolded in the New Covenant. Jewish or Gentile Christians both are its recipients.

Though many speak of the covenant with Abraham as being unconditional, there were some very obvious conditional aspects to it. First, Abraham had to leave Haran (Genesis 12:5) and, as well, he and his family had to obey God with the rite of circumcision (Genesis 17:10). Abraham also had to obey God in his willingness to offer Isaac (Genesis 22). What if Abraham stayed in Haran and ignored circumcision? What if he refused to offer Isaac? So there were some conditions along with Abraham’s faith and obedience. Abraham would father a great nation, be given a land, and through him all the people of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). The blessing of the whole earth, we have seen, would occur through the blessing of Messiah to all people everywhere as established in the New Testament, specifically in Galatians 3.

REALLY STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

There are some strange and interesting cult connections to Dual Covenant

which have circulated for nearly two centuries. London-born John Thomas (1805-1871) formed the anti-Trinitarian group called the Christadelphians or Brothers of Christ. In 1849, Thomas presented his views in a large book that he titled *Elpis Israel*. A major theme was the return of Jews to Israel and this was long before Zionism, Theodor Herzl, and even the first Diaspora to the land of Israel. Thomas believed that supporting Jews simply as Jews was essential to bring the last days to fulfillment. He and his followers encouraged every possible Jewish group that they could in every way they could.²¹ Thomas never questioned what they believed; his only concern was that they were Jewish.

In 1878, Charles Taze Russell, whose name is associated with the Watchtower Society, taught that he was in a period of automatic mercy and grace for orthodox Jews. He taught that the Abrahamic Covenant provided redemption for all Jews. He often addressed Jewish groups and supported Jewish immigration to the Holy Land.²² Joseph F. Rutherford, Russell’s successor, rejected his teaching on this matter.

We know that the Apostle Paul was not Dual Covenant. He left Judaism and renounced his Jewish pedigree (Philippians 3:1-11). He stated, “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (v. 3). Paul knew that salvation was by grace, not race. Salvation was not by family heritage, but by belief. Salvation was not by the fortune of birth, but by faith in the only Redeemer. Paul knew that the Gospel was for the entire world and for every creature just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19. That commission was until “*the end of the age*” (v. 20, emphasis added). Paul’s whole ministry was bringing the Gospel to the Jew first which served a geographical purpose stated in Acts 1:8.

ONE CRUCIAL MISSING ELEMENT

Contrary to the Bible, there is no preaching or expectation of repentance in Dual Covenant teaching.

David Baron was a strict Jew before becoming a Christian. He points out the centrality and importance of repentance in both Testaments:

“For the sake of showing that the preaching of repentance is still the distinguishing mark of God’s true messengers, let us note how this old cry is carried over, also, into the pages of New Testament history. ... The proud Pharisees and scribes, like so many of their fathers before, did not think they needed to repent. ... Did they not cry, ‘We are the Temple of the Lord’? Were there not the many voices of the *false* prophets who cried, ‘Peace, peace’? ‘Have we not Abraham to our father?’ ‘We are God’s favoured nation; no evil will befall us.’ ... Christ died and rose again, according to the Scriptures; but before His ascension He entrusted His disciples with a message for the world, and in that last commission (Luke xxiv. 46-49) ‘repentance’ still finds a prominent place. And the keynote in the Apostolic preaching — whether in Jerusalem or in Athens, whether to Jew or to Greek — was, ‘God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.’”²³

ONLY ONE CONCLUSION

Paul’s burning desire was expressed in Romans 10:1:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is *that they may be saved*” (emphasis added).

Note it was not that they were already saved under some other covenant, but that they “might be saved.” Paul preached the one present covenant of grace; the New Covenant in Christ’s blood. Paul then goes on to say that salvation would only come through union with Christ (vv. 2-4). There was no illusion that all Jews were already saved or that they had some other way to God. That is totally foreign to the New Testament. Dual Covenant is unbiblical and a strong delusion. It is a system devoid of repentance and the preaching of the cross. We affirm with Paul, “there is

one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith" (Romans 3:30). All must come the same way and put their faith in the only Savior. Whether Jew or Gentile, all are saved on the same basis (Romans 10:12-14). Whoever calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, be they Jew or Gentile, will be saved (Romans 10:13).

Endnotes:

1. William Varner, *Jacob's Dozen*. Bellmawr, N.J.: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1987, pp. 98-99, italics in original.
2. See the website for this group. Accessed at: www.noahide.org.
3. Uriel Sinai, "Former Israeli President Moshe Katsav gets 7 years for rape," Associated Press report, Nov. 10, 2011. Document accessed at: usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2011-11-10/israel-moshe-katsav-rape/51154652/1.
4. Yair Ettinger, "Corruption allegations in the Israeli rabbinate - Ashkenazi chief rabbi suspends himself amid fraud investigation," *Haaretz*, June 23, 2013. Document accessed at: www.haaretz.com/news/national/.premium-1.531467.
5. See "Corruption and bribery criminal

- investigations" and "Indictment and trial" sections of "Ehud Olmert" from Wikipedia. Document accessed at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ehud_Olmert.
6. Robert Ullian, *Frommer's Israel*. New York: Wiley Publishing, 2010 (sixth edition), pp. 67-68, 281, 290.
7. Misha Glenny, *McMafia: A Journey Through The Global Criminal Underworld*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 2008, pp. 103, 104, 111.
8. Harry Ironside, *Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1962, pp. 25-26.
9. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949, pg. 72.
10. Eretz staff, "Hidden Charms," *Eretz - The Magazine of Israel*, May 2013, pg. 52.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.
12. Yadin Roman and Heidi J. Gleit, *Eretz Guide: Hidden Gems of Israel*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Eretz Press, 2012, pg. 69.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 70.
14. Hagee alleges that he is not "dual covenant" and that statements by him which evidence a "dual covenant" theology have been "distorted." For more information on Hagee and his nuanced responses, see G. Richard Fisher, "The Other Gospel of John Hagee - Christian Zionism and Ethnic Salvation," *The Quar-*

- terly Journal*, January-March 1999, esp. pp. 6-8.
15. Julia Duin, "San Antonio fundamentalist battle anti-Semitism," *Houston Chronicle*, April 30, 1988, Section 6, pg. 1.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Dr. Wim Malgo letter, *The Jerusalem Post*, "Readers' Letters," International Edition, Aug. 21-27, 1983.
18. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992, Volume II, pp. 107-108.
19. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle Of Paul To The Romans*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963, pg. 222.
20. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971, Volume I, Galatians, pp. 93, 98-99.
21. See further, Michael Pragai, *Faith and Fulfillment*. London: Valentine Mitchell, 1985, pp. 21-22.
22. David Horowitz, *Pastor Charles Taze Russell: An Early American Christian Zionist*. New York: Shengold Publishers, 1970.
23. David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1972, pg. 14, italic in original.



DIVISION AND CONFUSION

(continued from page 1)

tions that are somewhat sympathetic to one another's ideas, philosophies, and certain degrees of practice, which include elements of the Old Testament Law and Talmudic Judaism. It is a hydra.¹ In the HRM some heads of the hydra are at odds with one another, both in belief and practice. In certain instances some within HRM are embracing mystical Jewish sources and medieval texts such as the Kabbalah, with its cultic numerology. There are also mavericks cluttering it with medieval Jewish practice. Most in the HRM are neither fish nor fowl. Jews reject them as do Christians who are more into grace than race, more into the sacred texts than suspect traditions.

The HRM is non-denominational. It is not a traditional Jewish outreach ministry like many of the evangelical Jewish mission organizations of the past century or so. It is also not

historical Zionism. It is, for the most part, a grassroots movement with all kinds of wild grass and weeds. We might describe it as a forest containing helpful plants and poisonous ones.

One must try to define the HRM by looking at its philosophy and approach. For the most part, the HRM sees itself as a restoration movement that is returning to first-century Hebrew customs, beliefs, and practices. In truth, it gets us back, but not back far enough. It uses the Hebrew language — correctly and incorrectly — to create an aura of knowledge, insight, and superiority.

In the view held by the majority of the HRM, the Christian Church has lost its true first-century teachings and its Jewish mind-set. They further believe that the Church functions under Greek and Roman philosophies and is to some degree pagan. Even the Greek New Testament is considered by some in the HRM to be inferior. True understanding of the

Bible can only come by knowing Hebrew and Jewish terms or learning under those who do. In their view, the people of the churches today need to observe Torah (Old Testament Law) and look and act like Jews even if they are Gentiles. So, in some instances within the HRM, churches are called "synagogues," pastors are called "rabbis," and believers need yarmulkes, prayer shawls, a mezuzah,² a ram's horn, and other Jewish paraphernalia to please God and be authentic in worship. In one of these "synagogues," the maintenance men are called "Levites."

DEFINITION, PLEASE

As stated, the Hebrew Roots Movement is a post-1980s religious movement made up of individuals and groups who insist on adhering to Jewish practices to one degree or another. They reproduce and practice these peculiarities, observances, and modes of dress as best they understand them. They often insist on keeping annual Jewish festivals. Some

keep the dietary laws, including kosher. Sabbath-keeping is mandatory — minus the Old Testament condemnations and penalties meted out for breaking the Sabbath. However, there is little clarity in the HRM regarding Sabbath-keeping: what is to be kept or not kept, done or not done. In Jesus' day, there were 39 kinds of "work" prohibited on the Sabbath. There were discourses on what kind of knots could be tied or untied.³

The HRM view seems to rule out or seriously question the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God (in Greek and English) in the life of each believer and bases, if not salvation, then sanctification on insider knowledge, special insights, ancient practices, and Jewish rules. This produces a real danger as can be seen by the Apostle Paul's warning:

"... nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:4-10).

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

For nearly 2000 years there have been Jewish believers — Hebrew Christians. Church history shows that if Jews became Christians, they joined the Christian Church. Though some in the HRM claim they go back to the

early Nazarene sect of the first century (Acts 24:5), this is revisionism and wishful thinking. The Nazarenes or Hebrew Christians of the first few centuries were not involved in Rabbinical Judaism.⁴ The Nazarenes were early Jewish believers. There is no direct historical trace of them after the fourth century A.D. and no direct ties with any modern movement like the HRM. The last time they are referred to as being in existence is by Jerome in the late fourth century A.D.

The HRM is really less than 30 years old. We do know that Christian Jewish evangelism was taking place in England with the formation in 1809 of The London Jews Society, also called The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. Charles Simeon, the founder, simply brought Jewish converts into the Anglican Church and there was not a hint of them being other than part of the Church. This mind-set prevailed into the twentieth century.

In the early twentieth century, Jews who converted to Christ called themselves Messianic Jews. If they formed fellowships they were called Messianic congregations. No one had even thought of anything called HRM. What is now called Friends of Israel, Jews for Jesus, and Chosen People Ministries were among the earliest groups in the United States involved in Jewish evangelism. The book, *Facts & Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel 1998-1999*, published in 1999, which is a survey conducted by Kai Kjaer-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjøtt, still referred to Messianic Jews in Messianic congregations.

ROOT SYSTEMS

There is no debate that the Messianic Movement grew rapidly in the early twentieth century. It is believed by some that in the 1930s cult leader Herbert Armstrong unwittingly created some of the impetus for the nascent Messianic Movement and the yet unborn HRM by his insistence on law keeping and the observance of Jewish holy days for Christians. Another factor might have been the Seventh-day Adventists as they flourished and practiced many extrabibli-

cal and legalistic practices from the Old Testament.

The HRM is indebted to what is so-called the Third Quest which traces its beginnings to the 1970s. The First and Second quests consisted of pseudo-scholarly liberal attacks on the authority of the Bible and tried to reframe Jesus as a mistaken man and a quasi-magician.⁵

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947) and the conquest of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967, scholars had new riches of information on the Intertestamental period and first-century Judaism. Men devoted their academic careers to researching and writing on what is called Second Temple Judaism. The perspective of these academics runs the gamut from Evangelicals to ultra-Liberals and so must be read discerningly. The Third Quest is sometimes referred to as "the quest for the historical Jesus," but it is in fact a search for the Jewish world of Jesus.

This body of work is what is often used by proponents of HRM to give them the appearance of validity. These books and articles are available to any reader of English and are not the domain of any group. It should be understood that most in the Third Quest are in no way accepting of the majority of HRM thought, methodology, or practice.

Some of the names associated with the Third Quest on the liberal side are John Dominic Crossan, Bart Ehrman, E.P. Sanders, James Dunn, Raymond Brown, David Flusser, John P. Meier, and Géza Vermes. On the conservative side there is Kenneth E. Bailey, Richard Bauckham, Darrell L. Bock, Ben Witherington III, Randall Price, Marvin Wilson, Brad H. Young, and with some serious qualification N.T. Wright. On a popular level and writing for the average Christian layman, we would name Ray Vander Laan, Ann Spangler, Lois Tverberg, and Bruce Okkema among others.

The major impetus for the Hebrew Roots Movement is what is called The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research and its founders, Robert Lindsey and David Bivin.⁶

THE LAW? BUT WHICH PARTS?

Debate over how much of the Law carries over from the Old Testament into the New Covenant has lasted for centuries. There are no easy answers, but the one that seems to be the most balanced, prevalent, and accepted is that moral and purity issues which demonstrate the character and unchangeableness of God carry over into all dispensations and covenants while external laws, ceremonies, and rituals given specifically to Israel do not carry over into the New Testament as practices for the Church (2 Corinthians 3:1-11).

Over a century ago, Fenton John Hort warned about the dangers of misusing the Law:

“Of this character is the eclectic appropriation of Levitical laws for the regulation of the customs of Christians, and eventually for the positive legislation of churches.”⁷

In its development and over time, Roman Catholicism can be seen as a perpetuator and regulator of legalistic traditions, some of which surely reflect Judaism.

INTERPRETATION IS THE KEY

The interpretation of Matthew 5:17 is central to the debate over the question of the continuity of Jewish law. In that verse Jesus says, “Do not think that I came to destroy the law and the prophets. I did not come to destroy but *to fulfill*” (emphasis added). When the Jews used the term “the law and the prophets,” it meant the entire Old Testament. Otherwise, law could mean the Ten Commandments, the five books of Moses, or the oral law with its traditions. So we know exactly what Jesus is referring to when He says, “the law and the prophets.” Notice Jesus does not say “to fulfill it by keeping it in force.” Those who want to go back under the Law or to pull elements of the Old Testament Law into today, translate the word “fulfill” to mean fill up with meaning *for today*. That, in effect, adds words that Jesus did not speak. The Greek root for “fulfill” is the word

pleroo, which can be translated as *complete*. Because Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Law, it can easily be understood that He came to complete the Law in Himself. In fulfilling the Law in Himself, He brings that fulfillment to every believer whom He indwells. He has accomplished all the requirements and demands of the Law in and by His obedient life. He has fulfilled all that the Law requires. So the Apostle Paul can say:

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law *might be fulfilled in us* who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4, emphasis added).

Paul further asserts, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). Paul tells the Colossians that Jesus “wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us” (Colossians 2:14). Believers are now motivated and empowered by grace, not legalism (Titus 2:11-14).

Who was really destroying the Law? Was it not the Pharisees? Warren Wiersbe points out that, “By their traditions, they robbed the people of the Word of God.”⁸ Wiersbe also wrote that Jesus fulfilled the Law in His birth having been made under the Law, in His teaching, and in His death and resurrection in bearing the curse of the Law. He then set aside the Old Covenant and brought in the New Covenant.

SEND IN THE CLONES?

We need no reminder that Jesus and the Apostles were Jews committed to the Law. Paul reminds us of the contribution of the Jews, telling us, “to them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2). Without the Jews and our Jewish roots, we would have no Old Testament and no Savior. We are partakers of the roots of Judaism (Romans 11:16-19). However, nowhere in the Bible or in nature does

it say that the tree must look like its roots. A tree can extract the nutrients and the life from the roots and yet not be an exact likeness of the roots. Somehow the HRM confuses external ritual with spiritual blessings.

Take Paul’s words to the church in 1 Corinthians 3. Paul contrasts the foundation, which is Jesus and the Gospel — and by extension His roots in Judaism — (vv. 10-14) with the building, which is the believers (v. 9). One could never think or expect that the foundation and the building are the same thing. Neither would we insist that the foundation and the building look exactly alike. Foundations, though necessary, are more often than not obscured by the building. The New Testament and New Covenant are built on the foundation of the Old Testament, but they are in no way the same.

Suppose a pastor admires the Puritans and reads a history of their times as well as their primary writings. He may even study their culture and practices. He would certainly appreciate and realize how much we owe to them and how much of a foundation they laid for our spiritual enrichment in their writings and their history. This, however, does not mean he has to now speak seventeenth-century English and dress like a Puritan. Moreover, he does not have to design his church like a Puritan church or try to build a church structure exactly the way they did. We can appreciate something without insisting on replicating it. The blessings of God are spiritual and internal and are not based on external rituals. Matthew records Jesus condemning certain Pharisees for their emphasis on external religion, calling it cleansing the outside of the cup (23:25) and then calling them whitewashed tombs appearing “beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (23:27).

MODERN JUDAIZERS

Much of the HRM could be classified as New Galatianism or New Phariseeism and its practitioners New Judaizers. Many in the HRM take Paul’s comment of being grafted into

the olive tree Israel (Romans 11:17, 19) as meaning much more than being grafted into God, life, salvation, and spiritual privilege. They push it into the idea of being grafted into all of Judaism's practices and externals. Charles Ryrie wrote:

"The olive tree is the place of privilege which was first occupied by the natural branches (the Jews). The wild branches are Gentiles who, because of the unbelief of Israel, *now occupy the place of privilege*. The root of the tree is the Abrahamic covenant which promised blessing to both Jew and Gentile through Christ."⁹

Paul is calling for our gratitude for blessing and privilege, not suggesting imitation as an outcome. Looking like Jesus has to do with character, not clothing.

Adam Clarke wrote this about Gentiles being grafted into Israel's blessings:

"Gentiles ... are now inserted in the original stock, having been made partakers of the faith of Abraham, and consequently of his blessings; and enjoy, as the people did who sprang from him, *the fatness of the olive tree* — the promises made to the patriarchs, and spiritual privileges of the Jewish Church ... you were made partakers of these blessings by faith."¹⁰

So we enjoy privileges and blessings, which are spiritual and internal.

THE REAL ROOTS OF HEBREW ROOTS

Once the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, the central components of Judaism, the Jewish priesthood, blood offerings, and the sacrificial system became obsolete. Hebrews 10:1 teaches that these were temporary and only a shadow of the reality in Jesus and would pass away.

Judaism then had to be reinvented without Jerusalem, a temple, sacrifices, or the priesthood. New rules, laws, traditions, and directives had to be

established. Jewish scholars took the Old Testament, laws and oral traditions of the Pharisees, unwritten interpretations, and newly developing traditions and systematized and compiled all of it into what is now called the Talmud.

The Talmud is the governing book of Jewish life. The Palestinian Talmud was completed in Tiberius around A.D. 400 and the Babylonian Talmud was completed around A.D. 500. There is disagreement as to which is the most authoritative, but the majority favors the Babylonian one.¹¹

The Talmud contains some 6200 pages in more than 20 volumes. Its 63 sections contain the opinions of hundreds of rabbis who lived during the centuries it was being compiled. It covers the lives of Jews from the cradle to the grave.

There is disagreement over how much of the Talmud and Talmudic practice existed in New Testament times. Therefore, it is difficult to know how appropriate it is to read later rabbinic literature back into Second Temple times. One of the complaints against someone like Alfred Edersheim, who wrote *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, is that he was overly anachronistic in places and read the Talmud and its practices back into the New Testament when he shouldn't have. Scholars agree that to establish whether a custom was practiced in New Testament times, there must be historical and documented proof from New Testament times and corroborating evidence archaeologically, historically, or from other written documents. In other words, two or three witnesses for proof other than the Talmud itself, unless the Talmud clearly agrees with the New Testament. Many in the HRM claim to be Torah observant when what they are is Talmud observant. Many who are followers of the HRM believe that they are following biblical customs when they are recreating later practices and even medieval traditions.

FOR INSTANCE

Take, for instance, the yarmulke — or *kippa* in Hebrew. Jewish men are

noted for wearing these round fabric "beanies" on top of their heads. Many in the HRM wear them, too.

Nothing is said of yarmulkes in New Testament times. Yarmulkes are of obscure and late origin; they developed sometime during the compiling of the Talmud or later. The yarmulke is a human tradition with no basis in the Law of Moses. The occasional covering of one's head with a garment as in some Bible passages does not qualify. There are only two places in the Talmud where we find very weak "proof" for yarmulkes. The first is in Tractate Kiddushin where there is mention only of a head covering, but no specifics and no explanation or clarification. There is vigorous debate as to when and where this head covering should be worn. The Tractate of Shabbat suggests that the wearing of a "head covering" will help one overcome evil tendencies. However, there is no clear description of said covering.¹²

Justification for the yarmulke emanates from these obscure ideas. This justification of a "head covering," whatever it was, occurred hundreds of years after the compilation of the Talmud and from the elastic interpretations of various rabbis.

A modern, humorous side to the yarmulke can be found in a small shop on Ben Yehudah Street in Jerusalem. It is the Kippa Man shop where tourists can buy kippas with every conceivable logo. There are sports team kippas, cartoon character kippas, superhero kippas, military (camouflage) kippas, Coca-Cola kippas, and other kippas with brand names of well-known drinks — alcoholic and otherwise. There is even a "Beavis and Butthead" kippa. You name it and you will probably find it at the Kippa Man.

THE MYTH OF THE PRAYER SHAWL

Another necessity in the HRM is the wearing of what are called "prayer shawls." These are white and blue pieces of fabric worn over the shoulders and often over the head as well. The major claim for these is that they were worn by ancient Israelites as far

back as Moses' day and that even Jesus wore one. Such is not the case, and there is no evidence for such a practice.

William Varner is Professor of Bible and Director of the Israel Bible Extension (IBEX) program at The Master's College in Southern California. Varner teaches courses in Israel on Jewish customs and culture. In his "Statement on the Prayer Shawl" he concludes that using any kind of external garment for prayer only developed after A.D. 70. He points out that the Hebrew word for prayer shawl is *tallit*, which is a word found nowhere in the Hebrew Bible. It only shows up in the fifth century in the Talmud. Varner writes:

"There is no basis for assuming that the tallit was used as a religious prayer garment in Biblical times. The idea is based on an unproved assumption that is contradicted by Jewish sources. ... Jewish people certainly wore 'garments', 'mantles', and 'cloaks' throughout the Biblical period, but none of these was a 'prayer shawl' or 'tallit.' Three Hebrew words for 'garment' are (1) *begeg*, a general term for 'clothes' that appears over 200 times in the OT. It is the *begeg* to which the 'fringes' were to be attached in Num. 15:38 ff. - not a special 'prayer shawl.' (2) *simlah*, another general term for 'mantle' or 'raiment'. It could also be used by women (Ruth 3:3 and see Deut. 22:17). (3) *aderet* appears about ten times, usually translated as 'mantle'. It was Elijah's *aderet* that was used in 1 Kings 19:13, 19 and 2 Kings 2:8, 13, and 14. This was not, however, his 'prayer shawl.' *Aderet* was used for a 'heavy garment' in Gen. 25:25; a 'Babylonian garment' in Josh. 7:21, 24; and the garment of the King of Nineveh in Jonah 3:6!! Zech. 13:4 uses it as a 'rough garment', probably similar to Elijah's 'mantle.' It is totally illegitimate to use the above Hebrew words for the much later 'tallit', which does not even appear in the OT."¹³

Varner then moves on to the New Testament:

"The words 'prayer shawl' do not appear in the New Testament. The 'garment' of Jesus that the woman touched in Mark 5:27, 28 was his 'himation' - a general word for 'clothes' or used sometimes as an 'outer garment'. It is true that the 'hem' of His garment (Matt. 9:20) was probably the 'fringe' (the 'tzitzit') of Numbers 15:38 ff., but those were worn on one's regular clothes, not on some non-existent 'prayer shawl.' ... The recent teaching on the 'prayer shawl' has no biblical, linguistic, or historical basis. It cannot be proved from Jewish sources which actually disprove it by revealing that the 'tallit' was a post 70 AD invention. It cannot be proved from either the Hebrew or Greek words, since the word 'tallit' is not even in the Bible and the words 'garment' or 'mantle' are general terms used for regular 'clothes.' This effort to point out amazing ways in which the 'prayer shawl' is used in the Bible is based on ill-informed ideas without any supporting evidence. It is a classic example of an 'anachronism' - 'representing someone or something existing or happening in other than the chronological or proper order.' (American Heritage Dictionary). Simply put, the 'Mystery of the Prayer Shawl' turns out to be the 'Myth of the Prayer Shawl.'"¹⁴

No born-again believer should ever feel the need to put on a prayer shawl. In our salvation we have put on Christ and salvation (Galatians 3:27) as our righteous covering. We should only feel the need in sanctification to put on the armor of God to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6) and to put on the character qualities of the fruit of the Spirit as laid out in Scripture (Galatians 5). The New Testament is clear as to what we are to put on.

So we keep coming back to the fact that the HRM is a modern attempt to

Christianize Talmudic practice. It is a mongrel religion that is neither Christianity nor biblical Judaism.

MUST CHRIST DIE AGAIN?

The Jewish Passover practiced today is not the same Passover observed in the first century. There are no priests to examine our lamb. The Jewish Passover today has no lamb, only the bone of a lamb or chicken to represent a lamb. In the first century, Jews streamed into Jerusalem and camped around the Temple at Passover time. They kept Passover just as Moses commanded.

There is no Jewish Temple today. The modern Seder is an attempt to re-create something that cannot be re-created. So some of the elements used today are made up. In some cases, we don't know exactly how the Seder was conducted. It is empty role play.

The Apostle Paul, in referencing Passover, said it was already brought to completion and fulfilled in every way when he wrote, "For indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Additionally, the writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that no ongoing sacrifice is necessary, pointing to the death of Jesus and that "He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27).

Observing the Passover today speaks of re-crucifying the Savior. The original Passover celebrated Jewish liberation from Egypt, which does not apply to people who were not delivered from Egypt, but from sin. Jesus gave to the Church the Lord's Supper, not the Passover. Jesus' death is the fulfillment of the Old Testament practice of Passover.

There is a severe warning in the Old Testament about ignoring God's specific instructions and inventing or making up our own ways of approaching God. This caution is found in Leviticus 10:1-3 and it concerns the sons of Aaron:

"Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put

incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified."'"

The two sons of Aaron took it on themselves to offer profane or strange fire, ignoring God's specific commands and crafting an incense offering made in their own way. So these priests abused the offering and abused their office and were struck down. As to the details:

"By the fire which they offered before Jehovah, we are no doubt to understand the firing of the incense-offering. This might be called 'strange fire' if it was not offered in the manner prescribed in the law, just as in Ex. xxx.9 incense not prepared according to the direction of God is called 'strange incense.' The supposition that they presented an incense-offering that was not commanded in the law, and apart from the time of the morning and evening sacrifice, and that this constituted their sin, is supported by the time at which their illegal act took place. ... The fire of the holy God (Ex. xix.18), which had just sanctified the service of Aaron as well-pleasing to God, brought destruction upon the two eldest sons, because they had not sanctified Jehovah in their hearts, but had taken upon themselves self-willed service."¹⁵

The seriousness of this ought to at least give pause to those in the HRM, but it does not. Many in the HRM appear to be conducting self-willed worship.

WHEN IS "FOREVER" REALLY FOREVER?

One of the "proofs" often used to try to justify the continued practice of Old Testament rituals is the appeal to

the English word "forever." There is no denying that various parts of the Old Testament refer to Jewish practices as being carried on "forever." The Jewish priesthood was to be "forever" (Exodus 29:9). So was the Bible proved wrong when the Romans terminated the Jewish priesthood and the priesthood ceased? Likewise, offerings, annual feast days, and celebrating the Sabbath in just the way the Law prescribed were said to be "forever" (Leviticus 23:21, 41). But here, too, that is no longer possible. The Passover was to be celebrated "forever" (Exodus 12:24) and not in an abbreviated or altered manner without a lamb.

To say that Jews still try to celebrate some of these rituals in a limited fashion does not qualify. Some have ceased historically and others have carried on in a different fashion. No Jew keeps Sabbath exactly as prescribed in the Old Testament and no penalties are assessed for violating it. The HRM is at best involved in a subjective pick-and-choose game.

The difficulty stems from basing things on an English translation and understanding of the word "forever." The Hebrew word translated "forever" is the word *olam*. It has a wide range of meanings. The correct meaning can only be determined by the immediate and wider context of the whole Bible. *Olam* when used of God always means eternal, everlasting, ever-existing, no limited time, always, forever and ever, running on but never running out.

There is no question that God is *olam*: eternal, never-ending. However, when speaking of people, things, rituals, and institutions (that is, anything created or worldly), *olam* picks up another part of its range. *Olam* (speaking of earthly institutions) then means of unknown duration or a time in which the exact limits are unknown.¹⁶

The Old Testament tabernacle is another case in point. It is said to be "forever" in Exodus 27:21. The priests were to minister in the tabernacle "forever" (Exodus 28:43). In this particular case the *olam* was approximately 350 years and the tabernacle's

obsolescence when replaced by the Temple caused no problem to the Jews because they understood *olam*.

Jews were told in Jeremiah 31:31-34 that the Old Covenant would be replaced by the New Covenant. The Mosaic dispensation and its practices was *olam* in the sense that the time of annulment was not known. Certain aspects and features of Old Testament practices were fulfilled in Christ and in some sense go on forever in Him.

PARDON MY PaRDeS

Another issue that must be addressed is the issue of hermeneutics. What is often accepted these days without investigation is what may be called Hebrew Roots hermeneutics. Some in the HRM reject and even malign the historical Protestant hermeneutical process. This interpretive method is the literal, historical, and grammatical approach to understanding Scripture.

HRM calls any hermeneutic but its own Greek hermeneutics. Just as today, there were many interpretive approaches to Scripture in the first century. The Jews of the first century did not reject Greek, but used it along with Hebrew. The scroll discoveries at Qumran, Masada, and Murabba'at show us that Greek was a second language to Jews in Palestine. Carsten Thiede wrote:

"Even the Bible in Greek, the Septuagint, belonged to the supply of scripture used by orthodox Jews in the Holy Land. ... Astounding as it may sound, the first half or middle of the first century ... was already a time of active Greek scholarship in the Jewish homeland. ... orthodox Jews in Judea consciously opted for this 'revised' version of the Greek text and remained satisfied users for some eighty years."¹⁷

Not everything Greek then could be all bad because some Orthodox Jews in Jesus' time opted for a Greek text and the Jewish writers of the New Testament often selected the Greek text of the Septuagint (LXX) for their citations of the Old Testament.¹⁸ In

those instances they preferred the Greek text over the Hebrew.

In regard to interpretation, many Jews in Israel leaned toward the plain, simple, and direct meaning of Bible verses. Today this method is called *P'shat*. The Jews of Jesus' day often insisted on the literal meaning of verses in context. Jews in Alexandria, however, were strongly influenced by Greek thought and were more into explicit allegory and/or spiritualized allegorical meanings. These Jews had a Greek hermeneutic as did a number of their Hellenized counterparts in Israel.

Many in the HRM teach what they call a Hebrew hermeneutic with the acronym designation of *PaRDeS*. This system and terminology was developed fully after the time of Jesus and cannot be superimposed on the first century.¹⁹ This method posits that there are four levels of interpretation working simultaneously. *PaRDeS* stands for: 1. *P'shat*, meaning the direct or plain sense. 2. *Remez*, meaning hinting, symbol, or allegory. 3. *Drash*, meaning comparison or metaphor. 4. *Sod*, meaning deep, hidden, secret, mystical, or esoteric.

Just because very small and primitive elements of these four approaches may have been practiced by *some* Jews in ancient times does not make them valid today.

In reading Scripture we are to look for direct, literal meaning, not a meaning that is hinted at or mysterious. Symbols and metaphors in the sacred text are clear and we are to find the literal meaning behind them. The same holds true with the few obvious allegories in the Bible. We must emphasize again that the biggest stumbling block for the HRM is the fact that so-called Hebrew hermeneutics were not fully developed into the *PaRDeS* system until after A.D. 70 and that system became filled with post-A.D. 70 rabbinical Talmudic and Kabbalistic ideas. Many of the meanings, hints, comparisons, and hidden truths are extracted from the Talmud Kabbalistic thought and imposed on Scripture by interpretations and comments of numerous medieval rabbis.

Some of these so-called "hidden medieval truths" are now being "discovered" by today's HRM "rabbis." The use of *Sod* and the finding of secret meanings clearly shows strong Greek influence, not Christian.

Historical research proves the very opposite of the claim by the HRM that there was some special ancient Hebrew hermeneutic uniformly agreed on and accepted by Jews in Palestine before A.D. 70.²⁰ In fact, we do know that some first-century Jews had an accepted hermeneutic and an interpretive system much like Protestant biblical interpretation today:

"The Palestinian Jews did develop some sound principles of exegesis which reflected a token approach to the literal understanding of the Scriptures. Hillel formulated seven rules, Isamel thirteen, and Eliezar thirty-two. Some of these principles are still part of a valid hermeneutics. (i). They insisted that a word must be understood in terms of its sentence, and a sentence in terms of its context. (ii). They taught that Scriptures dealing with similar topics should be compared, and that in some instances a third Scripture would relieve the apparent contradiction between two Scriptures. (iii). A clear passage is to be given preference over an obscure one if they deal with the same subject matter. (iv). Very close attention is to be paid to spelling, grammar, and figures of speech. (v). By the use of logic we can determine the application of Scripture to those problems in life Scripture has not specifically treated. In this connection some of the valid forms of the logic of deduction or implication were used by the rabbis. This is still standard procedure in theological hermeneutics. (vi). Their insistence that the God of Israel spoke in the tongues of men was their way of asserting that the God of Israel had adapted His revelation to the recipients of it. This implies a measure of accommodation and cultural conditioning of the di-

vine revelation. It would not be unfair to rabbinic exegesis to assert that it did not develop a profound self-conscious and critical theory of hermeneutics. Nor would it be unfair to state that they wandered far off from the good rules they did construct."²¹

MAKING GENTILES INTO JEWS

This brings us to the issue of whether Gentile Christians need to have Jewish ways and rituals imposed on them. Jewish believers have huge complicated issues of ingrained traditions; family, social, and religious events; and a culture that is infused with religious overtones. Often the boundaries are less clear for them.

Gentiles taking Jewish practice is another issue altogether. Some within the HRM are so insistent, it is as if the already converted Gentiles had to become Jews before they could become Christians.

In Acts 15, the situation is clear that the imposition of Jewish ways, demands of the Mosaic Law, and Jewish practice were not to be forced upon Gentile converts. Verse 19 says, "we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles." In other words leave them alone, stop bothering them, get off their backs. In no way were converted Jews to unsettle Gentile believers (v. 28). This correlates with Paul's instruction in Colossians 2:14-17, although it is clear that the Church had to address the issue repeatedly. For example, Paul also fought the issue in the Galatian church when Peter crossed the line (Galatians 2:11-12).

Approximately 100 years after Jesus, the Church Father and apologist Justin Martyr addressed the issue of Gentile believers and their relationship to the Old Testament Law. He makes a strong distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. In his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, he gives the following directives as Trypho inquires about Jewish believers who still relate to the Law:

""But if some, even now, wish to live in the observance of the

institutions given by Moses, and yet believe in this Jesus who was crucified, recognising him to be the Christ of God, and that it is given to him to be absolute judge of all, and that his is the everlasting kingdom, can they also be saved?" he [Trypho] inquired of me.' 'And Trypho inquired again, "But if someone, knowing that this is so, after he recognises that this man is Christ, and has believed in and obeys him, wishes, however, to observe these institutions, will he be saved?" I said, "In my opinion, Trypho, such a one will be saved, if he does not strive in every way to persuade other men — *I mean those Gentiles.*"'"²²

Justin Martyr was not overly concerned that Jewish Christians kept some parts of the Law as long as they did not divide from Gentile believers who were firmly and truly committed to Christ and had all their hope in Him. His "red line" was that Jewish believers should not at all impose Jewish practices on Gentiles. It seems clear then that some Jewish believers were trying to persuade Gentiles to come under the Law. The HRM has stumbled into an ancient error.

WHO REALLY MADE THE BREAK?

We find in some HRM writings the assertion that the Christian Church separated from the Jews and Jewish practices and that is the reason for the departure from Jewish roots. It is true that some separation of Jews from Christians began to take place because Jesus was proclaimed as Messiah and deity by the Church. Most Jews could not accept this. Also, as the apostolic writings and their authority emerged, the New Testament became supreme for believers.

On the Jewish side, it is important to look back into the Talmud's history to an event that transpired in Jamnia, Israel, around A.D. 90. Jamnia — present day Yavne — is about 15 miles south of Tel Aviv. Following the destruction of the Temple, Jewish leaders and notables gathered at

Jamnia to formulate a different kind of Judaism without a Temple, priesthood, or sacrifices. It was a beginning of the work of codifying what would become the Mishnah and Talmud. A lengthy weekday prayer was developed under Gamaliel II called the *Amidah*, and in it there are eighteen benedictions. Inserted into the *Amidah's* "twelfth benediction" was a condemnation of enemies. It is called the *Birkat ha-Minim* or the "benediction concerning heretics," with some obvious wordplay. New Testament professor Donald Hagner tells us that David Flusser argued that this liturgical prayer was aimed at "ridding the synagogues of Jews who had become Christians."²³ This singular event became of prime importance to the relationship of Jews and Christians. It created an almost unbridgeable chasm. It was clearly of Jewish doing.

The commonly used version of the *Birkat ha-Minim* is translated as follows:

"For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the *nozerim* and the *minim* be destroyed in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant."²⁴

It is debated as to whether this "blessing" was directed to all Christians, that is, Gentile as well as Jewish believers or to just Jewish believers. The curse is on the Nozerim or Nazarenes. However, most scholars believe that over time it came to mean all who believe in Christ. This event shows us that Jewish leaders were a big part of the break and ultimate separation between Jews and Christians. It is not all one-sided.

CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The question that must be wrestled with is how much Jewish practice can there be — or should there be — in Christian life and worship? There is

no agreement within the HRM. It seems to be up to the "rabbi." Many of them appear to be improvising it all, but as long as they are wearing a yarmulke and a prayer shawl it's okay.

One example of an impromptu, do-it-yourself Judaism is the spectacle enacted by "Rabbi" Ralph Messer when he encircled "Bishop" Eddie Long with a Torah scroll and Messer crowned Long a "King."²⁵ To handle a Torah scroll in the manner in which Messer did is shocking and unacceptable to Orthodox Jews. Messer put on a wild show, but he was not practicing Judaism in any sense.

Because there are no specific commands or clear directives in the Bible for the HRM, we must go to clear-cut biblical principles:

1. If anything in belief or practice is seen as meritorious for salvation, it is wrong and a clear violation of Ephesians 2:8-9.
2. These practices must be kept voluntarily as an individual and personal aid to spirituality and not be made a test of fellowship. Messianic Jews should practice them without making them mandatory, per Romans 14.
3. These practices must not encourage elitism or classes of believers. Those who are children of God all have a common salvation, according to 2 Peter 1:1.
4. These practices must not be imposed on Gentiles. Acts 15:24 and Colossians 2:16-23 both show that Gentiles are not bound by Jewish practices.
5. These practices must be clearly demonstrated in Scripture and not be a pretense or Talmudic tradition.

The early Messianic believers of the twentieth century, for the most part, excelled in keeping a balance and remaining in joint fellowship with Gentile believers in the Church. There was a oneness and an appreciation for each other in the body. Such does not seem to be the case today. The HRM is supplying both the roots of division and also the roots of confusion.

Endnotes:

1. Hydra was the mythological nine-headed serpent finally killed by Hercules. When one head was cut off, it was replaced by two others.
2. Mezuzah means door post and is descriptive of a small case containing small portions of Deuteronomy which is attached to the door frame.
3. See further, Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009, Vol. II, pp. 97-98.
4. See further, Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1988, esp. "Summary and Conclusion," pp. 108-110.
5. See further, Ben Witherington, *The Third Quest*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
6. We have dealt with this as a separate issue. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Hebrews Roots Movement: Deeper Insights or Elitist Distraction?," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2011, pp. 1, 14-21.
7. Fenton John Anthony Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980, pg. 2.
8. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Meet Your King*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1978, pg. 35.
9. Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, pg. 1718,

- study note on Romans 11:17-24, emphasis added.
10. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. New York: Abingdon Press, n.d., Vol. II, study notes on Romans 11:17; 11:20, pg. 130, italics in the original.
 11. See further, R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, Editors, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Religion*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965, "Talmud," pp. 373-375.
 12. See further, Larry Fine, "Why Men cover their Heads: the Kippa," *The Jewish Magazine*, April 1999. Article accessed online at The Jewish Magazine website: www.jewishmag.com/91mag/kippa/kippa.htm.
 13. William C. Varner, "Statement on the Prayer Shawl," copy on file.
 14. Ibid.
 15. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, Vol. I, pg. 351.
 16. See further, Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York: Abingdon Press, n.d., Vol. I, study note on Genesis 21:33, pp. 136-137.
 17. Carsten Peter Thiede, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Jewish Origins of Christianity*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2001,

- pg. 85.
18. For example the writer of the book of Hebrews repeatedly uses the Septuagint (LXX).
 19. See further, Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009, pp. 237-238, note 10.
 20. See further, Isidore Singer, Editor, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906, "Allegorical Interpretation," Vol. 1, pp. 403-411. This material is also available online at JewishEncyclopedia.com website. Document accessed at: www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1256-allegorical-interpretation.
 21. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1956, pp. 46-47.
 22. Justin Martyr cited in *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 19-20, brackets in original, emphasis added.
 23. David Flusser cited in Donald A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1984, pg. 44.
 24. "BIRKAT HA-MINIM," Jewish Virtual Library, italics in original. Article accessed at: www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_02999.html.
 25. "New Birth Crowns Eddie Long as King." Video accessed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVkoQHCXSK8.

EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

as one's inability to rely on good deeds for salvation (pp. 15, 94); the wrongness of judgmentalism (pg. 19); Jesus' love for us despite our sins (pg. 26); spiritual birth being by grace through faith (pg. 43); the impotence of rules to save us (pg. 56); Christ having dealt with our sins on the cross (pp. 68-72); the three components of sin: guilt, power, and effect (pp. 68-69); Jesus as the point of life (pp. 96, 110, 112); God seeing Christians as righteous (pp. 101, 195); the mercy of God toward mankind (pp. 174-175); the good news of Jesus' resurrection (pg. 181); and fearfulness being an indictment (pg. 185).

ISSUES WITH SMITH'S TEACHINGS ...

But, sadly, not all is well. There is plenty of chaff among the wheat. The book is filled with statements that contradict much of its solid teaching as well as exaggerated comments and harmful theology. Below is a sampling accompanied by brief rebuttals:

- "Jesus is not your accuser. He's not your prosecutor. He's not your judge. He's your friend and your rescuer" (pg. 12).

Smith is speaking to both believers and unbelievers

throughout the book. Such statements directed at unbelievers are untrue. Romans 5:10 tells us that before salvation, we are the enemies of God. Jesus is the unbeliever's rescuer, but only once he receives Him as Savior. For those who reject Him, Christ is, in fact, their judge. Jesus was not the friend of the Pharisees, but rather their accuser. Jesus' friendship for believers is true, but it must be recalled that Jesus said, "You are my friend if you do what I command" (John 15:14).

- "He [Jesus] wasn't out to prove how good he was or how bad they were. He just wanted to offer them hope" (pg. 22).

Jesus needed to demonstrate the perfect sinless life as He came to reveal the Father (John 1:18; see Mark 10:18). As for the people, hope could be found in Christ only as they recognized their hopelessness because of their wickedness. It is the sick who need a physician (Mark 2:5, 17), and Jesus exposed their sin-sickness. He, in fact, showed them how bad they were so that they would see a need for a Savior.

- "You don't have to be good to be Jesus's friend. You just have to be honest" (pg. 22).

It is true that our good deeds cannot win the favor of God, which comes as His gift to the redeemed. However,

there is no justification in Scripture to say that we become Jesus' friend by being honest. In this case honesty is just another empty good deed.

- To see oneself as a "*filthy sinner who deserves to go to hell*" is an extreme which comes from "focusing on rules rather than on a relationship with Jesus" (pg. 25).

In ourselves we are filthy sinners who deserve hell (see Ephesians 2:1-3) and the Law of God was given to demonstrate this. It is only the mercy of God that makes us righteous.

- We are to be friends of sinners, but not to rebuke or evangelize them (pg. 28).

Friendship with the lost is an honorable thing, but Smith goes too far. Being my friend will do no one any eternal good *per se*, neither was it Jesus' mission (John 1:36) nor our commission (Matthew 28:19-20). We are called to make disciples.

- "He [Jesus] showed unconditional love and acceptance" (pg. 31).

Hardly! Only those who meet the condition of receiving Christ become His children (John 1:11-12).

- People would fall in love with Jesus if we would only act more like Him (pg. 31).

When Jesus walked the earth, the world despised Him and crucified Him. Such a statement reveals Smith's misunderstanding of the depravity of mankind, as well as their aversion of Christ. By nature people reject Christ.

- "People are closer to God than we realize" (pg. 31).

On the contrary, people are alienated from God and without hope (Ephesians 2:12). Romans 3:11-12 tells us that none seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless.

- "He's [Jesus] not mad at us or even disappointed in us" (pg. 61).

Jesus was clearly disappointed with His disciples at times, even as He loved them (Mark 8:14-21). Paul was clearly disappointed with those who abandoned the work of God (see 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:10). Jesus pronounced scathing "woes" on the Pharisees. He was, in fact, deeply disappointed with them (Matthew 23:13-36).

- People can be accepted and belong to Jesus long before they believe (pp. 126, 135).

We do not belong to Jesus before we believe. Prior to faith we are His enemies (Romans 5:10), alienated from God, hostile to Him, and engaged in evil deeds (Colossians 1:21-22). Jude warns of those who do not know Christ trying to be part of the Church (Jude 12-13). Smith cites homosexuals as an example of those who belong before they believe. Romans 1:26-29 shows clearly that those living in homosexual sin have been "let go" by

God to live in their sin. They in no sense should experience belonging to Him prior to salvation. Instead they will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9). By God's grace and power, however, homosexuals, like other sinners, can be justified and then belong to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:11).

- "All sixty-six books of the Bible ... point to the same thing: God's love for humanity" (pg. 151).

Perhaps God's love could be read into every book, but a number of books — Obadiah, Amos, and Joel, for example — are written to warn of or announce God's judgment for sin.

... AND MORE ISSUES

Smith writes that "Jesus is the point of life" (pg. 96) and then adds, "God is not in a hurry to fix us" (pg. 101) and "We are his first priority" (pg. 102). The glory of God is His first priority and the Lord earnestly desires to mold us into the image of Christ for His glory (Romans 8:28-30). While our Lord is never anxious, He in fact is constantly drawing us to maturity (Colossians 1:28).

Smith never totally denies God's wrath and judgment, but he does brush it aside because it does not fit his message. For example, he writes, "Well, they say, sometimes he comes in his wrath, and he comes with judgment, and he comes — *Hold on*. You mean to tell me that you don't think God is for you, even though he gave his Son for you? He's so for you that he died for you. What other proof do you need?" (pg. 157). Smith is taking Romans 8:31-32 out of context and misapplying it. It is true for the Christian that God is for us and His love will never be taken away from us. But that does not mean that God's wrath is not being poured out even now on unbelievers (Romans 1:18) nor that He has, and will, come in judgment upon the unrepentant (Revelation 14:9-20).

Smith, while admitting bad things happen to good people (pg. 159), seems to misunderstand both how God uses suffering (pg. 158) and implies through the misuse of Jeremiah 29:11 that God plans only good things for us (pg. 158). For the believer, the Lord works all things together for good (Romans 8:28), but no such promise is given the unbeliever (see Psalm 73:18-20). Even for the Christian, God's sovereign plan leading toward good often includes pain, suffering, and hardship (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10). Jeremiah 29:11 is not a promise to all people at all times that God plans only good for them. In the context it is a promise to Israel about a definite time in the future. Other Scriptures speak of God's plans to bring suffering at times, but these are seldom quoted by most people (e.g. Jeremiah 39:16).

While Smith is correct in writing that God is far greater than Satan and that ultimate victory is ours in Christ, he greatly minimizes the power of Satan when he writes, "... we are opposed by a little bitty devil.' ... The devil is nothing but a dog on a leash. He is a toothless lion. He is

a magician hiding behind a curtain, trying to manipulate us through smoke and mirrors” (pp. 187-188). Scripture presents a far more potent foe who is seeking to devour and destroy us (1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:10-18). Satan is not omnipotent, but we must always be on guard for his schemes and temptations (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Smith is the consummate cheerleader. He wants his readers to be happy, to feel good about themselves, and to be optimistic. He is willing to distort Scripture through exaggeration, unbalanced arguments, and fabrication. The result is a mix of half-truths, erroneous views of Jesus and the Christian life, all packaged in an unrealistic wrapper. Here are some examples:

- God is so proud of us that He is constantly posting photos of us on a celestial version of Instagram (pg. 46). Of course, nothing like this is found in the Bible.
- “Grace is a person. And his name is Jesus” (pg. 51). No, Jesus is a person who is characterized by grace, as well as many other attributes, including justice and wrath.
- Although Scripture abounds in commands to teach, exhort, instruct, and admonish one another (2 Timothy 4:2-5; Romans 15:14), Smith says that the longer he is a pastor “the less prone I am to tell people what to do and the quicker I am to just hug them and pray with them” (pg. 59). Hugs are often appropriate and may make people feel better, but it is the Word of God that equips us for every good thing (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- Smith assures us that we would be “blown away” if we knew what Jesus thought of us. “Jesus is crazy about you. He is obsessed with you. He is proud of you” (pp. 77-78). This is a pure man-centered view of how the Lord sees His people. His love is real and deep, but He is not a doting grandfather who just can’t get enough of us.
- The author mocks Christians struggling with sin and misrepresents the purpose of the Law. To such people he apparently recommends, “A little sin might do you good” (pg. 95). While emphasizing love and grace, Smith shows little of either toward those battling sin. He is overly tolerant toward those who live in open sexual sin, but has no tolerance for those who are judgmental or legalistic. This plays well in our society, which will tolerate anything but intolerance.
- Smith totally misunderstands the book of Ecclesiastes when he says that the high point of the book is that everything is meaningless (pg. 107). On the contrary the high point is showing that the meaninglessness of life should drive us to consider God (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).
- We are assured by Smith that “Jesus was the happiest guy around. He told jokes. He poked fun at

people. He laughed” (pg. 123). None of this is found in Scripture. We are told that Jesus was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3), but never that He laughed, poked fun, or told jokes. Perhaps He did, but if so neither we nor Smith know it. When we start adding characteristics to Jesus not supported by Scripture, we border on blasphemy.

- Speaking of blasphemy, Smith uses the popular blasphemous slang phrases, “Oh, my God” (pg. 128) and “My God” (pp. 145, 187). This is apparently part of his vocabulary as his speech at the Passion Conference is peppered with the phrase. Such terms may connect with his audience, but profane the name of God.
- Smith’s view of inspiration is weak. When addressing John’s comment that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, Smith claims John is flaunting that he is Jesus’ favorite. Smith adds, “Was he Jesus’s favorite? We don’t know. It doesn’t really matter, because he believed he was” (pg. 148). The Holy Spirit is not recording John’s opinion, but rather that which is true.

And it gets worse because it doesn’t matter, Smith believes, if John thought he was Jesus’ favorite because the truth is “We are all God’s favorites” (pg. 149). In addition to being a line directly out of the heretical novel *The Shack*, there is no biblical support for such a statement. It fits well with the world’s current philosophy in which we are all winners and all equal. But we know that the Lord chose some to be His (Ephesians 1:4) and He handpicked only twelve to be His apostles. How all this works out in the mind of God is a mystery to us, but to put into the Lord’s mouth that we are all His favorites is both meaningless and beyond Smith’s knowledge.

- Smith writes that God “is head-over-heels in love with you ... and your biggest fan” (pg. 156). In attempting to elevate the love of God, such language cheapens it.
- Zombies are all the rage these days, so Jesus is described as the “ultimate zombie” (pg. 179). But zombies are supposedly the living-dead. There is nothing dead about Jesus. He died, but He has been resurrected and is fully alive. This zombie metaphor again belittles the person of Christ.

Smith is popular today because he is entertaining, but his attraction can be plain silliness. He gives the main Bible characters accents when he preaches — of course, accents that they did not have (pg. 5). His imagination borders on the absurd. He envisions Zacchaeus as a gangster of the hip-hop variety. They rolled out the red carpet and cameras showed up when he made an appearance with a lady on each arm, wearing sunglasses and greeting people with “Hey y’all” (pp. 5-7). When Jesus ate with sinners they enjoyed being with Him

because He was “just chilling” with them (pg. 29). He speculates if, in heaven, Jesus is “Lounging with his feet kicked up and a cold drink in his hand” (pg. 193). While entertaining, these pictures are neither accurate nor respectful of biblical persons — especially of Christ. Our Lord is not an eternal teenager lounging around and chilling.

The message of *Jesus Is _____* could be summed up toward the end of the book. “He [Jesus] is telling me that he is proud of me, that he is pleased with me, that I am amazing” (pg. 195). There is much talk in the book about how amazing Jesus is, but when the dust has settled it is this man-centered, feel-good message that has made *Jesus Is _____* a *New York Times* bestseller. While we can appreciate the accurate teaching within the book, it is distorted by the deep inaccuracies documented above. Truth mixed with this much error is truly a dangerous thing.

—GEG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

International Church had a visitor attend a service that had been overseas and exposed to measles. Therefore the congregation, staff at Kenneth Copeland Ministries, and the daycare center on property were exposed through that contact. KCM/EMIC is in close contact with Tarrant County Public Health Department and we continue to follow their instructions on how to best deal with this outbreak. The ministry has held free immunization clinics for employees and church members to assist them in obtaining the best medical care for their families. We continue to follow up on pending and confirmed cases to help in any way we can to keep the outbreak contained.”

George Pearsons, who is co-senior pastor of the church along with his wife, wrote on the church’s website, “Let’s clear the air about all these ‘anti-vaccination’ accusations,” and listed the following points: “Our church is not and has never been ‘anti-vaccination.’ We do not have an ‘anti-vaccination’ policy. In all our years of pastoring, we have never preached against vaccinations. We have never advised anyone against a vaccination.” He added, “We invited the Health Department to conduct a total of five vaccination clinics at our church. Vaccinations were made available at no cost to our daycare children, KCM employees and congregation members.”

The CDC reports that “an estimated 20 million cases of measles occur each year worldwide.” The *Post* article says, “About 200,000 fatal cases of the measles are reported worldwide every year.” An “outbreak” of measles is said to occur when there is a “chain of transmission with three or more confirmed cases.”

—MKG

PAPAL STATEMENTS CAUSE STIR

From the start of his reign last March, Pope Francis, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, has said and done some things that have been hard to explain. Among the head-scratchers was claiming that atheists who do good are redeemed — a statement the Vatican quickly asserted was misunderstood.

More recently, the pope again captured headlines with remarks he made concerning homosexuals. According to a CNN report, “Pope Francis said... that he will not ‘judge’ gays and lesbians, including gay priests, signaling a shift from his predecessor and offering another sign that the new pope is committed to changing the church’s approach to historically marginalized groups.”

During a news conference aboard his papal plane on a flight back to Rome from Rio de Janeiro in late July, Pope Francis told journalists, “If a person is gay and seeks the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge that person? ... The problem is not that one has this [homosexual] tendency; no, we must be brothers. This is the first matter.”

Following the remarks, a Religion News Service report disclosed, “Blogs and social media immediately exploded with commentary that either hailed — or lamented — the pope’s words as a shift in Catholic teaching on the role of gays and lesbians in the church.” The article further noted that, “Observers have already detected an effort by Vatican officials to soft-pedal the pope’s comments, while some Catholics on the right were trying to explain them away.”

In 2005, under the papacy of Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis’ predecessor, the Vatican issued a directive that prohibited men “who are actively homosexual, have deep-seated homosexual tendencies, or support the so-called ‘gay culture’” from the church’s priesthood.

In September, the pope amplified his comments in a lengthy interview with *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the Italian Jesuit magazine. In the discourse, Francis said, “The church’s pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently. We have to find a new balance; otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel.” Francis added, “The church sometimes has locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules. The most important thing is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you.”

A CBS/Associated Press article stated in regard to the pope’s comments that, “The admonition is likely to have sharp reverberations in the United States, where some bishops have already publicly voiced dismay that Francis hasn’t hammered home church teaching on abortion, contraception and homosexuality — areas of the culture

wars where U.S. bishops often put themselves on the front lines.”

Adding more confusion or perhaps even a bit of hypocrisy to the pope’s comments were details that were made public that the pontiff “ordered the excommunication” of Australian priest Greg Reynolds who was advocating for women’s rights and gay marriage. In mid-September, at the same time the *La Civiltà Cattolica* interview was being published, Reynolds received a letter from Pope Francis telling him he had been excommunicated. The letter did not offer grounds for the excommunication. The papal action, however, may be classified as “too little, too late” as Reynolds had already resigned as a priest in 2011. In 2012, he started an “informal church” known as Inclusive Catholics, which is said to accept homosexuals and permit women to help lead worship services.

In October, Francis took aim at the Vatican itself, scourging it for its self-grandeur and bureaucracy. In an interview published in the Italian left-wing daily *La Repubblica*, Francis stated, “Leaders of the Church have often been Narcissuses, gratified and sickeningly excited by their courtiers. The court is the leprosy of the papacy.” He further remarked that the Holy See, which is the ecclesiastical area of authority of the Catholic Church, is “too Vatican-centric. It sees and looks after the interest of the Vatican, which are still, for the most part, temporal interests. This Vatican-centric view neglects the world around us. I do not share this view and I’ll do everything I can to change it.”

—MKG

CHARISMA REBUTS “INSPIRED” O’REILLY

Charisma magazine reported in an online article by Gina Meeks that popular conservative news commentator Bill O’Reilly says the Holy Spirit “inspired” him to write his book, *Killing Jesus*. The magazine based its conclusion on a *60 Minutes* interview with O’Reilly who said, “I believe because I’m a Catholic that comes from the Holy Spirit. My inspiration comes from that. And so I wrote *Killing Jesus* because I think I was directed to write that.”

A CBS news report posted the headline, “O’Reilly: The Holy Spirit inspired ‘Killing Jesus.’” That article stated, “The inspiration doesn’t make him special or a chosen one insists O’Reilly, it’s part of God’s plan for him, he says. ‘I’m just one of many who have been given gifts.’”

Meeks said that, “*Killing Jesus* is not a religious book,” and that O’Reilly “doesn’t refer to Jesus as the Son of God or the Messiah, and some of his points are in direct contradiction to what the Bible teaches.” She draws from the CBS report where, in O’Reilly’s judgment, Jesus did not say, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,” from the cross because it would have been impossible for a person being crucified to speak.

The book was co-authored by Martin Dugard and the pair is said to have been paid “an almost unheard of \$10 million advance.” Immediately upon its release, the book topped *The New York Times* Best Seller list.

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.



Books in Review

FOUR VIEWS OF THE END TIMES & FREE WILL VS. PREDESTINATION

Rose Publishing, 14-page pamphlets, \$3.99 each

In the past two decades, Rose Publishing has created some of the most helpful informational resources available today for the Christian. Beginning with Bible maps, charts, and timelines, Rose developed additional “graphics-rich products” targeting cults and the occult, world religions, apologetics, Church history, and other topics.

Two separate titles from their laminated fanfold pamphlet line — *Four Views of the End Times* and *Free Will vs. Predestination* — can help the reader understand these complex — and even divisive — theological issues. Arguments over these issues can overwhelm the untrained Christian. These pamphlets help clear up the issues with easy-to-understand information.

These pamphlets are neutral in their presentation and allow the reader to decide which position has the preponderance of biblical support. Sergeant Joe Friday of *Dragnet* would have loved them as he often told his witnesses, “All we want are the facts, ma’am.”

Four Views of the End Times surveys the four primary eschatological beliefs that have been the most widely accepted in the Church: historical premillennialism, amillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, and postmillennialism. The pamphlet was written by Timothy Paul Jones, a professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

The pamphlet first outlines what both Jesus and Paul “Taught about the End,” as well as provides “Important Words to Know” and their definitions. It also emphasizes that, “There are four different views of end-times events, but all share some key points.”

The pamphlet then uses two panels each to present an overview of each position, its emphasis, what Scriptures appear to support the view, when in Church history it was most popular, and which prominent Christian leaders have adopted the view.

Two more panels examine key terms found in the book of Revelation providing their definitions and various interpretations. For example, “Babylon” is noted as a symbolic name with interpretations that range from Jerusalem to Rome to simply a one-world government and church.

The remaining panel is a practical chart that gives succinct answers for each end-time view to a variety of key questions.

The *Free Will vs. Predestination* pamphlet explains the particulars of both the Calvinistic (predestination) and the Arminian (free will) theological beliefs. As the pamphlet notes, “Christians do not agree on how God’s sovereignty and human freedom (free will) relate to each other in connection to salvation. Two views answer these questions quite differently... Although the answers available are not simple, they are important for our understanding of God’s mission in the world and our responsibility as believers.”

The pamphlet’s authors are Benjamin Galán, Adjunct Professor of Old Testament Hebrew and Literature at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, and William Brent Ashby.

The opening panels of the pamphlet provide a historical summation of each view by presenting key adherents to the respective position. Nearly all of the following panels examine five issues: free will and total inability, election, atonement, grace, and security of the believer.

The pamphlet presents a side-by-side comparison of the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism. Each section contains a brief sidebar with additional details or definitions. For example, “Issue 2: Election,” says, “Two extreme views, on opposite sides, cause comparable problems.” The pamphlet explains, “The first extreme is often called ‘hyper-Calvinism.’ People holding this view may deny the importance of sharing the gospel because, they reason, the elect will come to God in any case. ... On the Arminian extreme is a view often connected to ‘Open theism’ in which the over-emphasis on human responsibility diminishes who God is and what he does in his creation.”

Perhaps Christians have too often lacked a desire to investigate and understand these important doctrines of the Christian faith because other publications have been challenging and esoteric in arguing their case. The Rose pamphlets remove that apprehension.

—MKG

Editor’s Note: The publications featured in PFO’s *Books in Review* section are available from **Personal Freedom Outreach** (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$2.50 to the price listed for shipping and handling. Due to occasional price changes by the publishers, the retail amounts listed are subject to change without notice. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.