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Entire Issue

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Mitch Glaser, Gregory Hagg, Brian Crawford, Richard Averbeck, Zhava Glaser, Brian Rosner, Richard Flashman, and Jeff Millenson



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**MESSIANIC
JEWISH STUDIES**

CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER

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JEWISH STUDIES**

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The Journal of
Messianic Jewish Studies
~
Core Values

Theology:

We believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the Triune nature of God and full deity and sinless humanity of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, salvation through faith in Yeshua alone. We also believe that God is faithful to His covenants and promises to the Jewish people and in the importance of Jewish evangelism.

Editorial:

Our goal is to reflect the best of Evangelical and Jewish scholarship in our articles and to demonstrate how Christianity and Judaism intersect and inform one another on a variety of scholarly and practical areas of study. Therefore, submissions to JMJS are to be supported by a thoughtful, biblical, and theological analysis and relevant to Messianic Jewish thought, Jewish evangelism and the interplay between Judaism and Christianity.

Contributions:

The editors welcome contributions from all who respect the role of the Jewish people in the plan of God and who wish to explore the inter-relatedness between faith in Yeshua the Messiah and Judaism. Submissions are welcomed that are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal.

Editorial Limitations:

Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors but are intended to promote a better understanding of the Messianic Jewish movement and the ways in which Evangelical Christianity relates to Jewish history, tradition, biblical scholarship and practice.

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Contributors

Articles

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MITCH GLASER

Dr. Mitch Glaser has served as president of Chosen People Ministries since 1997. He is an alumnus of Northeastern Bible College, the Talbot School of Theology, and he earned a PhD in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Intercultural Studies. His dissertation explored the history of the Messianic Jewish movement in Continental Europe during first half of the twentieth century. Dr. Glaser is recognized as an expert on the role of Messianic ministries during the Holocaust period. He is the co-author of *The Fall Feasts of Israel* with his wife, and co-editor of *To the Jew First, The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, and *The People, The Land, and The Future of Israel*, published by Kregel Publications. Dr. Glaser's book *Isaiah 53 Explained*, is now in fourteen languages with over 200,000 copies in print. He has written many articles for a variety of periodicals and has taught at leading schools such as Talbot School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Moody Bible Institute. Dr. Glaser lives in Brooklyn which he whimsically describes as the true Holy Land.

ZHAVA GLASER

Dr. Zhava Glaser serves with Chosen People Ministries and is a professor at the Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies—a partnership between Biola University's Talbot School of Theology and Chosen People Ministries. Dr. Glaser teaches entry level Biblical Hebrew as a living, spoken language, as well as advanced Hebrew exegesis courses in Old Testament (Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim). She also teaches Jewish History and Jewish Ethics and is an editor and the coauthor of *The Fall Feasts of Israel* published by Moody Press. Born in Argentina to Jewish parents, Zhava has traveled widely throughout the world. She speaks fluent Spanish, English, Portuguese, and Hebrew, and has a reading knowledge of French, Catalan, and Ladino. She



earned an MA from the Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission, an MA and a MPhil from Hunter College and completed a PhD from the City University of New York. Dr. Glaser is a member in good standing of the Association of Jewish Studies, the National Association of Professors of Hebrew, and the Evangelical Theological Society. Zhava and her husband, Mitch, have two daughters and one grandchild.

BRIAN ROSNER

Dr. Rosner is principal of Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia having previously taught at the University of Aberdeen and Moore Theological College. Brian's father was an Austrian Jew who became a Christian while living with his parents as a refugee in Shanghai. He was raised in a Christian family, but in his university years the Lord took hold of his life, and his faith and trust in Christ crucified and risen took root. Brian has three degrees from three different countries, including a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary and culminating in a prize-winning Cambridge University PhD. Author or editor of dozens of academic books and articles, Dr. Rosner is a New Testament scholar of international reputation. In particular, he is the author of *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, which is reviewed in this volume. He married to Natalie and has four children and one grandchild.

Book Reviewers

BRIAN CRAWFORD

Dr. Brian Crawford holds a DMin in Engaging Mind and Culture from Talbot School of Theology and an MDiv from the Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies where he serves as the Associate Program Director and assistant professor of



Apologetics. He is the Project Director for *Chosen People Answers*, a Messianic apologetics ministry. Brian is currently writing a major defense of Jesus' incarnation while considering objections from Maimonidean and Kabbalistic theological systems. Brian, his wife Liz, and his three children live in Murrieta, CA.

RICHARD FLASHMAN

Dr. Rich Flashman is currently serving as the Director of Field Education and professor of Bible at the Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies. Rich was raised in a Jewish family in Newton, Massachusetts and came to faith soon after college. He was searching for answers, and one of his peers shared the Gospel with him and challenged him to read the Hebrew prophets. After reading Isaiah 53, Rich could not deny that Jesus was the Messiah and accepted Him as his Lord and Savior. Soon after, God called him to full time ministry. After earning an MDiv and ThM from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Rich, with his wife, Michelle, and their three boys, went on to pastor two EFCA churches in Connecticut for twenty-seven years. During that time Rich earned a DMin degree in Christian Leadership at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Rich currently leads the only English-speaking Messianic congregation in Brooklyn along with another Chosen People Ministries worker. Additionally, Rich leads the southern Connecticut branch of Chosen People Ministries.

GREGORY HAGG

Dr. Gregory Hagg is a professor of Bible Exposition at Talbot School of Theology and serves as Program Director and a professor in the Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies. He currently teaches courses in Greek exegesis, hermeneutics,



and historical theology. Gregg earned a BA at William Jewell College, a ThM at Dallas Theological Seminary, and the MA and PhD at New York University in Hebrew and Judaic Studies. Gregg has been a local church pastor for nearly thirty years. He served on the Board of Directors of Chosen People Ministries for over twenty years, and since 2004 he has served as Vice President directing the Feinberg MDiv program in Messianic Jewish Studies. He and his wife Linda have two married sons, six grandchildren, and reside in New Jersey.

JEFF MILLENSON

Jeff Millenson holds a BA in Linguistics from the California State University, Fullerton, and an MDiv from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). He grew up in a Jewish home in Southern California and received Jesus as his Messiah at the age of eighteen. After receiving his MDiv, he served for eleven years as the Director of Records (Registrar) at TEDS. Subsequently, he served as Director of Music and Human Resources Administrator at Jews for Jesus. He is currently the Administrative Director of the Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies, a partnership between Biola University's Talbot School of Theology and Chosen People Ministries. Jeff and his wife, Amy, live in Northern California.



Introduction

Gregory Hagg

**The Feinberg Lecture Series
and the *Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies*
The Christian and the Hebrew Scriptures**

Volume 1 of the *Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies* was published in the fall of 2015 following a conference sponsored by Chosen People Ministries in the United Kingdom. The theme was eschatology, and the conference was called “Thy Kingdom Come.” Volume 2 of the journal was published in the fall of 2017 and was devoted to the theme of Passover, with articles provided by faculty members associated with the Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies.

From the inception of the Feinberg Center the leadership of the academic program considered hosting a series of lectures by prominent members of the academy who could address issues relating to the Messianic Jewish movement. This was first



realized in December of 2019 when several Jewish believers and non-Christian Jewish scholars gathered to consider the history of Jewish ministry in general and Chosen People Ministries in particular.

Volume 3, published in the summer of 2020, followed that special Feinberg Lecture Series entitled “The Life and Times of Leopold Cohn.” This rabbi was the founder of Chosen People Ministries (then the American Board of Missions to the Jews). The lectures celebrated the 125th anniversary of the founding of the mission. It featured articles by non-Messianic Jewish writers who have had a collegial relationship with many involved in Jewish missions, especially Dr. Mitch Glaser, current president of Chosen People Ministries. The result was an exceptionally interesting collaboration of scholars writing on the history of Jewish evangelism and missions to the Jewish people. These volumes are available at www.feinbergcenter.com.

Volume 4 is now here presented with the particular focus on the Christian and the Hebrew Scriptures, and it also follows the Feinberg Lecture Series that took place in the spring of 2022. That series provided most of the content of this volume of the journal, especially the excellent articles on the interpretation of Paul’s use of the Mosaic Law in his writings.

First, however, Dr. Zhava Glaser has provided a selective list of Christian Hebraists along with a description of their unique contributions to the field of Hebraica. It includes her insight into their positive and/or negative relationships with the Jewish people, and especially helpful is her analysis of the possible motivations these pivotal scholars may have had for their work in the field. Clearly, the Hebrew Scriptures made a crucial impact on Christian academia.

Dr. Richard Averbeck, who presented two of the lectures in March of 2022, provided two articles from those lectures, one



called “The Unity and the Goodness of the Law” and another called “The Limitations of the Law.” Each of these unusually thought-provoking articles should be required reading for all who seek clarification on this subject. His book, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, which covers these topics and many more, is reviewed below.

Dr. Brian Rosner, another Lecture Series speaker last spring, contributed the brilliant article, “The Puzzle of Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of the Law.” His insight is indispensable in determining how believers of today should understand the Law of Moses. His approach is a bit different from Averbeck’s, and readers will benefit from both volumes. Dr. Rosner’s book, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* is also reviewed below.

Dr. Mitch Glaser traces the history of one of the most famous missionaries in Christian history, S.I.J. Schereschewsky, a Jewish believer who took the gospel to the Chinese people. The role of the Hebrew scriptures in this account makes the article an invaluable contribution to this volume.

In the article called “The Jewish Bishop: S.I.J. Schereschewsky” Glaser focuses on the scholarship of this brilliant man of God in accomplishing the task of providing the Bible in the heart language of the Chinese of his day.

Also included in Volume 4 are helpful book reviews by faculty and staff members of the Feinberg Center. The books include those by Averbeck and Rosner on the topic at hand, but there are also three other works that deserve attention. A very perceptive book by David Ruderman, *Missionaries, Converts, and Rabbis*, discusses the role of Jewish missions in the 18th Century from a non-Christian Jewish perspective. Ruderman focuses on the life of Alexander McCaul, an outspoken and controversial missionary to the Jewish people. Brian Crawford



reviews the book noting that there are many things to learn from Ruderman's appraisal of Jewish mission.

One of the speakers at the Feinberg Lecture Series was Dr. Tim Laniak. While he was not able to provide an article for this volume of the *JMJS*, his book, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, shows how the shepherd motif throughout the Hebrew Scriptures informs the Christian understanding of the Good Shepherd, Messiah Yeshua. One of Dr. Laniak's former students, Rich Flashman, reviews this excellent book.

This volume of the journal would be incomplete without consulting the views of the eminent scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures, Dr. Walter Kaiser. His book called *The Old Testament Really Matters*, as one would expect, defends the value of the Old Testament to Christians today. The new Administrative Director of the Feinberg Center, Jeff Millenson, reviews Kaiser's book. Jeff served as the registrar for Trinity Evangelical Divinity School where Walt Kaiser was Academic Dean for many years. So here is another nice connection.

Finally, Brian Crawford, as Assistant Editor, has assembled an excellent bibliography, which will help the readers do further research on this topic of the Christian and the Hebrew Scriptures.

Special thanks to Rachel Larsen for her contribution as Assistant Editor for this volume, and none of the volumes of the *Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies* would be completed without the generous and superb typesetting by Dr. Paul Brazier, a true friend of Israel.

Dr. Gregory Hagg
General Editor



Articles

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies



JMJS/CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER



An Overview of Christian Hebraists through the Centuries

Zhava Glaser

Throughout the history of the Church, Christians in every era have recognized the value of studying the Hebrew Scriptures in their original languages. We refer to these individuals as “Christian Hebraists.” The command of these languages was initially solely the domain of the Jewish people. The earliest Christians were themselves Jewish, but as the numbers of Gentiles in the Church increased, some began to seek instruction in Hebrew from Jewish rabbis and what were referred to as “converts” – or Jewish believers in Jesus.

In the early Middle Ages, Jewish converts became a source of information about Talmudic teachings, which resulted in the censorship and burning of Jewish literary works. These newly understood Jewish writings were then used in proselytizing efforts by emerging monastic orders such as the Dominicans.



Meanwhile, with the rise of scholasticism in the 12th century, schools and universities began to include Hebrew in their curricula, with Roger Bacon in the 13th century and Cambridge University in the 14th advocating the study of Hebrew for other than missionary purposes. The Enlightenment brought about a new interest in the humanities, including the study of oriental languages. Hebrew was then considered, along with Latin and Greek, as one of the classical languages that deserved a place in academia. In subsequent centuries, Christian scholars spent lifetimes producing Hebrew lexicons and concordances for the benefit of students of Hebrew.

What follows is a quick chronological survey as an introduction to some of the better-known non-Jewish Christian Hebraists from the first to the nineteenth centuries. In our modern day, it is common for non-Jews to take an interest in Jewish culture and literature, including the Hebrew language, but the term “Christian Hebraists” is no longer used.



100-165 – Justin Martyr was an early Christian apologist whose *Dialogue with Trypho*, in which he argues with Trypho the Jew about the validity of Christianity, demonstrates his familiarity with Jewish thought and beliefs. In the *Dialogue*, as Trypho expresses his arguments, Justin brings forth proof that Jesus is the Messiah and disparages the Jews for their unbelief. In the course of the dialogue, Justin provides an insight into the varied beliefs of Jewish believers in the second century CE.¹

185-253 – Origen of Alexandria was a scholar who wrote on

1 Ronald E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought, Evangelical Ressourcement* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 48–52, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip078/2007000485.html>.

Biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, textual criticism, and various branches of theology. Wanting to establish a reliable biblical text and having contact with rabbinic scholars, he produced the *Hexapla*, the first critical edition of the Hebrew Bible. The six columns of the *Hexapla* contained the original Hebrew, a Greek transliteration (the *Secunda*), as well as four Greek translations (Aquila of Sinope, Symmachus the Ebionite, a recension of the Septuagint, and Theodotion). The work itself has been lost, but survives in fragmentary quotes, and was the basis for Jerome's later translation of the Hebrew Bible into Latin, which eventually became the Vulgate. Origen was tortured for his faith in 253 and died three years later from his injuries.²

260-339 – Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea and Greek historian of the early church, was a contemporary of Constantine and a participant in the Council of Nicaea. In addition to his many historical and theological writings, Eusebius wrote treatises (now lost) on the Greek equivalents of Hebrew nouns, the geography of Jerusalem, a plan of the Temple of Solomon, and a description of ancient Judea and the ten northern tribes.³

306-373 – Ephrem the Syrian was a composer of hymns who modeled his works after early rabbinic Judaism, as well as Greek and Mesopotamian traditions. Raised as a pagan, he became a Christian after his father evicted him from his home. He left a large number of commentaries and sermons which became influential in the Syrian churches, among which are a series of homilies on Jewish topics, including circumcision, the Passover, the Sabbath the Call of the Gentiles, Jesus the Messiah, and the Dispersion of Israel.⁴

2 See Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen, The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 2002)

3 See Timothy David Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Harvard University Press, 1981).

4 See John Gwynn, ed., *The Life and Essential Writings of Ephraim the Syrian*, vol. 5, Desert Fathers Series (Revelation Insight Publishing Co., 2011),



c. 345-420 – Jerome is best known for creating a Latin translation of the Old Testament based on the Hebrew Bible rather than on the Septuagint. Arguing for the importance of *Hebraica Veritas*, the original Hebrew and Aramaic texts, he viewed the Septuagint as a translation, and not a revelation as some thought. Jerome learned Hebrew from Jewish teachers, moved to Jerusalem to improve his knowledge, and completed his translation in a monastery in Bethlehem. Jerome’s translation became the basis for the Vulgate, which was declared in 1546 by the Council of Trent to be the authoritative version to be used by the Catholic church.⁵

1079-1142 – Peter Abelard was a French scholastic philosopher and theologian who wrote “*Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*,” an apology for Christianity. There, he advocates for tolerance toward the Jews, arguing that their oppression was responsible for their limitation to money-lending activities. Although he claims to know Hebrew and complains his contemporaries did not have sufficient knowledge of the Hebrew language, there is no evidence that he himself knew the language. His wife, Héloïse d’Argenteuil, however, was renowned for her command of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.⁶

c. 1100-1175 – Andrew of St. Victor, part of the School of Hugh of St. Victor, was a scholastic innovator who consulted Jewish sources to determine the *pshat*, or literal interpretation

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Life_and_Essential_Writings_of_Ephraim/OjY5CwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=ephrem+the+syrian&printsec=frontcover; See also “Philip Schaff: NPNF-213. Gregory the Great (II), Ephraim Syrus, Aphrahat - Christian Classics Ethereal Library,” accessed December 13, 2022, <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf213/npnf213.iii.iii.iii.html>.

5 Paul B. Decock, “Jerome’s Turn to the Hebraica Veritas and His Rejection of the Traditional View of the Septuagint,” *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 2 (2008): 205–22.

6 Aryeh Grabois, “The Hebraica Veritas and Jewish-Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century,” *Speculum* 50, no. 4 (October 1975): 618, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2855470>.

of Old Testament passages. By turning to the Jewish exegetical tradition in Rashi, Kimchi, and others, his aim was to critically rework and supplement Jerome's Bible translation.⁷

1219-1292 – Roger Bacon was the first English philosopher and scholar who advocated the study of Hebrew fully two centuries before it gained acceptance in Europe. He was preceded in his interest in the language by the Venerable Bede (673-735) and Alcuin (735-804), but these merely referred to Hebrew in passing, and did not show an extensive knowledge of the language. The authoritative Bible at the time was the Latin version. Bacon believed it was full of errors, and his declared goal was to translate accurately the Old Testament from the original language, without the many errors which he believed plagued the current translation. Unusual for his time, Bacon was not in favor of “converting the Jews.” He turned to contemporary Jews to learn the Hebrew language and did not look disparagingly at Jewish contemporaries, nor at the Jews who lived at the time of Christ.⁸

c. 1220-1284 – Ramón Martí was a Dominican friar selected by his order to study Jewish writings to the end that any anti-Christian passages might be censored. After fifteen years of immersing himself and his team of Dominican scholars in rabbinic writings, he concluded that passages in the Talmud could be used to demonstrate that the Jewish Messiah had already come. He

7 See Frans van Liere, “Andrew of St. Victor, Jerome, and the Jews: Biblical Scholarship in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance,” in Thomas J. Heffernan and Thomas E. Burman, Eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 59-75,” in *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan and Thomas E. Burman (Leiden: Brill, 2005); See also Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1995), <http://0-www.netLibrary.com.library.scad.edu/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=70813>.

8 S. A. Hirsch, “Early English Hebraists. Roger Bacon and His Predecessors,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 12, no. 1 (1899): 34–88, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1450570>.



compiled his observations into the Latin work, *Pugio Fidei*, a comprehensive missionizing manual which became the chief source for Dominican polemics. Martí quoted rabbinic sources in Hebrew and Aramaic, demonstrating familiarity with the Talmud and Midrash, and buttressing his arguments with quotes from rabbinic authorities such as Rashi, Maimonides, ibn Ezra and Kimchi. Martí's efforts reflect the new Dominican missionizing strategy, proving to the Jews from their own literature that the Messiah had already come, and anticipating that they would recognize that it was Jesus.⁹

1455-1522 – Johannes Reuchlin was a German Catholic Greek and Hebrew scholar, whose life's focus was to advance the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. As he was preparing for a career as a Greek lecturer in a university, he met Pico della Mirandola in Italy and became intrigued with his kabbalistic teachings. While seeking a teaching position, he learned Hebrew from a Jewish physician and continued to seek out Jewish instructors in the language. Though he was never employed in a university,¹⁰ he taught Hebrew to private students through materials of his own making. His interest in Hebrew was for the purpose of reforming preaching in the church. For this, he looked to the grammatical and exegetical tradition of David Kimchi and other medieval rabbis.

This was a radical departure from his contemporaries, such as Johannes Pfefferkorn, who argued that to achieve the conversion of the Jews, it was necessary to take away their books.¹¹ To

9 See Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft0w1003jg>; See also Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

10 In 1518, Reuchlin was appointed professor of Hebrew and Greek at Wittenberg, but sent Melancthon, his nephew, in his place.

11 See Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Hess, eds., *Revealing the Secrets of the Jews: Johannes Pfefferkorn and Christian Writings about Jewish Life and*

counter this argument, Reuchlin attempted to show that very few Jewish books maligned Christianity, while the majority were necessary for Jewish worship, which was legal according to papal and imperial law.¹² Some scholars have proposed that Luther's statement in his commentary on Galatians that justification by faith was the "true Kabbalah" may reflect Reuchlin's influence.¹³

1483-1549 – Daniel Bomberg was one of the earliest printers of Hebrew books and the first non-Jew to print them. His interest in Hebrew printing began when he met Augustinian friar Felix Pratensis, a Jewish convert. In 1517, his first Hebrew project was the *Mikraot Gedolot*, which was printed with the approval of Pope Leo X on the condition that the printing would be supervised by Pratensis. Although he was opposed to censorship, he was very cautious of printing anything that would be offensive to Christianity. In this and other Hebrew publishing projects, Bomberg consulted heavily with Jewish scholars and rabbis, as well as converts.

Bomberg was the first to publish a complete Babylonian Talmud, also with the approval of Pope Leo X. Bomberg's layout of the Talmud was modeled on that created by Joshua Solomon Soncino and is still the format used in Talmud publishing today. Bomberg was also the first to print chapters and verses in a printed Hebrew Bible, including Hebrew numbers in every fifth verse. In addition to the above publications, he also printed about 200 other Jewish works, including siddurim, codes of law,

Literature in Early Modern Europe (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), <https://www.worldcat.org/title/987936637>; See also Frank L. Herz, "Johannes Reuchlin's 'Opinion on Jewish Literature', a Landmark on the Road to Toleration." (Southbury, CT: publisher not identified., 1978), <http://digital.cjh.org:1801/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=429030>.

12 David H. Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books*, Reprint edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

13 See *Philosophia Symbolica: Johann Reuchlin and the Kabbalah* (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 2005).



commentaries, books on philosophy and ethics, and responsa.¹⁴

1509-1564 – John Calvin is not often counted among Christian Hebraists, but the Hebrew language had considerable influence on his life. His cousin, Robert Olivetan, who influenced Calvin during his stay in Paris from 1530-1533, was the first reformer to publish a French translation of the Hebrew Bible. While in Basel in 1533, Calvin studied with Simon Grynaeus, a noted Christian Hebraist. And in Geneva, from 1538-1541, he continued his Hebrew studies with Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer. When Calvin began an academy in Geneva, he established a Chair of Hebrew and appointed as principal Theodor Beza, a promoter of Hebrew studies and admirer of Johannes Reuchlin. We know that Calvin had contact with contemporary Jews as well, particularly Jewish convert Immanuel Tremellius, whom he supported in obtaining a teaching position. All of these no doubt influenced Calvin's attitude toward Biblical Jews, which was significantly more positive than that of his contemporaries.¹⁵

1564-1629 – Johannes Buxtorf, known by the title “Master of the Rabbis,” was a professor of Hebrew for thirty-nine years at the University of Basel. His interest in Hebraica went beyond understanding the Bible, reaching into rabbinics and early modern German Jewish culture and society. His volume, *De Synagoga Judaica*, first published in 1603, relates in detail the customs and traditions of German Jewish society. His correspondence, archived at the University of Basel, shows that he had cordial

14 See David Werner Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy; Being Chapters in the History of the Hebrew Printing Press* (Philadelphia: J. H. Greenstone, 1909), <http://archive.org/details/cu31924029498213>; See also Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: U Penn, 2007), 139; and George Foot Moore, “The Vulgate Chapters and Numbered Verses in the Hebrew Bible,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, January 1, 1893.

15 Pablo Kirtchuk, “Hebrew in the Universities,” 2011, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00639142>.

relationships with Jewish contemporaries, consulting them on matters of Jewish customs and ceremonial law. He wrote the *Biblia Hebraica cum paraphrasi Chaldaica et commentariis rabbinorum*, which contains rabbinic commentaries and Aramaic passages from the Targums, showing his extensive knowledge of rabbinics as well as the Hebrew language.¹⁶

1581-1617 – Christoph Helwig was a German linguist and theologian, a professor of Greek and Oriental languages at the University of Giessen. He believed that knowledge of Hebrew was essential for a correct understanding of the Old Testament. To help with this goal, in 1608, he published a Hebrew grammar, the *Compendiosa Institutio Linguae Ebraicae*, in which he tried to make Hebrew accessible to students by using summaries, tables, and simplified explanations. He saw Jews as curiosities, as can be seen in his *Jüdische Historien*, the complete title of which reads “Jewish stories or wondrous Talmudic-Rabbinic legends that are read by the Jews as truthful and sacred stories on their Sabbaths and holidays: from them can be seen the superstition and fabulist works of this obstinate people: from their own books produced in German print.” His stated goal in writing this was to show that Christianity was superior to Judaism.¹⁷

1602-1675 – John Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, was one of the first Christian scholars to call attention to the importance of understanding the Talmud in New Testament interpretation. He applied rabbinic learning to his exegesis of the New Testament, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae: Hebrew and Talmudical exercitations upon the Gospels, the Acts, some*

16 Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564-1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Brill, 1996).

17 Nathanael Riemer, “The Christian Hebraist Christoph Helwig (1581–1617) and His Rendering of Jewish Stories in (His Work) *Jüdische Historien*,” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 6, no. 1 (2012): 71–104, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187247112X637560>.



chapters of *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, and the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*. He also wrote commentaries on other New Testament books. Utilizing his knowledge of rabbinics, in 1650 he wrote *The Temple, especially as it stood in the Days of our Saviour*. In addition, Lightfoot revised the Samaritan version of Brian Walton's 1657 Polyglot Bible.¹⁸

1633-1705 – Johann Christoph Wagenseil was professor of Oriental languages at the University of Orleans. Based on reading the *Toledot Yeshua*, he became convinced that the Jews were guilty of blaspheming Jesus, and wrote his *Denunciatio Christiana de Blasphemiis Judæorum in Jesum Christum* (Altdorf, 1703). He addressed this to the government authorities with the aim of preventing the Jews from mocking Christianity and devoted his life to publishing anti-Jewish, Christian books. In spite of this, he remained opposed to forcible baptism and advocated publicly against the charges against Jews of ritual murder.¹⁹

1694-1760 – Johann Heinrich Callenberg was a German Lutheran professor of theology and Orientalist. He studied philosophy at the University of Halle and in 1728 founded the *Institutum Judaicum et Muhammedicum* there. Callenberg's first interest was Islam, although by traveling he became aware of the great need among the Jewish people. He failed in his outreach to Muslims, but through the *Institutum Judaicum* trained and sent out more than twenty missionaries to the Jews. The *Institutum* produced a Yiddish translation of the New Testament and published biographies of famous Jewish believers in Jesus and

18 See Jace Broadhurst, *What Is the Literal Sense? Considering the Hermeneutic of John Lightfoot: Discovery Service for Biola University*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

19 See Piet van Boxel, Kirsten Macfarlane, and Joanna Weinberg, eds., *The Mishnaic Moment: Jewish Law among Jews and Christians in Early Modern Europe*, First edition, Oxford-Warburg Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

other Christian literature before it was dissolved in 1791.²⁰

1786-1842 – Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar is the standard work in Hebrew grammar and lexicography, not only in Germany where it was first written, but in the entire scholarly world today. Well versed in the Hebrew grammarians of the Middle Ages, Gesenius combined their exegetical insights with comparative Semitic philology. He was a popular professor whose lectures often attracted 500 or more students. In 1811, he became *professor ordinarius*, a professor of the highest rank, at the University of Halle, where he spent the rest of his life. Gesenius was buried in Halle, and according to tradition, students at the university put stones on his grave on the eve of their Hebrew exams.²¹

1813-1890 – Franz Delitzsch was a Christian Hebraist and German Lutheran theologian. He specialized from an early age in Semitic studies. His Old Testament commentary series, written in collaboration with Carl Friedrich Keil and first published in 1861, is still in popular use today. Delitzsch spent fifty years translating the New Testament into Hebrew, an extraordinary feat considering that Hebrew was no longer a living language. He wrote it as a corrective to the Hebrew version of the New Testament published by the London Missionary Society, which he felt was not ideal for the work of Jewish evangelism. It was to this project that he devoted his last strength.

20 See Alan Levenson, "Missionary Protestants as Defenders and Detractors of Judaism: Franz Delitzsch and Hermann Strack," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92, no. 3-4 (2002): 383-420, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jqr.2002.0038>; See also Yaakov Ariel, "A New Model of Christian Interaction with the Jews: The Institutum Judaicum and Missions to the Jews in the Atlantic World," *Journal of Early Modern History* 21, no. 1-2 (March 23, 2017): 116-36, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700658-12342538>.

21 See Edward Frederick Miller, *The Influence of Gesenius on Hebrew Lexicography, Contributions to Oriental History and Philology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927); For this anecdote, see Yaakov Shavit, "גנבים בריוך יהיה - 'And Also Gesenius Shall Be Blessed,'" *HaAretz*, April 16, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/1.1197789>.



During his lifetime, it was often supposed that Delitzsch was of Jewish descent. His defense of Jewish people against attacks and his strong interest in Jewish learning contributed to this impression. His benefactor, Lewy Hirsch, lived in his family home, was Jewish, as was his godfather, Franz Julius Hirsch. Delitzsch was a leader in the fight against antisemitism prominent in his time. His last literary effort before his death was his *Messianic Prophecies in Historical Succession*.²²

Seeing the decline of Jewish missions in the Lutheran Church, in 1863 he founded *Sown in Hope: a magazine for the mission of the Church to Israel*, and maintained the publication, writing articles for it over the next 25 years. In the preface to the first volume, he wrote:

But we are persuaded that not a single word of prayer for Israel is in vain, but will have its part in filling up the chasm [between the Church and the Synagogue]. Therefore we sow in hope, and water our seed with our tears; and even though the black earth swallows our grain, yet the indwelling power of the Divine promise will not be in vain... Although the soil may be so barren, we hope against hope. Our hope rests in God's promise (Isa. xxvii. 6): "It will at length come to pass that Jacob shall strike root, and Israel shall blossom and become green, that they may fill the earth with fruit."²³

Franz Delitzsch in 1886 founded an *Institutum Judaicum* at the University of Leipzig, which was renamed in his memory after his death in 1890. The *Delitzschianum* was closed by the Nazis in 1935 but re-opened in Vienna in 1936 and was re-established in Münster in conjunction with the Evangelical Theological

22 Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies in Historical Succession*, trans. Samuel Ives Curtiss (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891).

23 Samuel Ives Curtiss, *Franz Delitzsch: A Memorial Tribute* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1891), 117, [https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h7h&bquery=\(HJ+5K2K\)&type=1&site=ehost-live](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h7h&bquery=(HJ+5K2K)&type=1&site=ehost-live).

Faculty of the Westphalian Wilhelm University. It now serves as a research center for Christian and Jewish scholars. There were similar institutes in Tübingen and Hamburg. All of these institutes offered courses in rabbinic literature as well as on the New Testament with an emphasis on the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.²⁴

1848-1922 – Hermann Strack, a German theologian and Semitic scholar, was the leading Christian authority of his time in rabbinic literature and Talmud. He produced an introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, German editions of several Mishnaic tractates, a Hebrew grammar, a concise commentary on the Old and New Testaments, and edited the journal *Nathanael, Zeitschrift für die Arbeit der Evangelischen Kirche an Israel* [Journal for the work of the Evangelical Church in Israel]. In 1883, Strack founded an Institutum Judaicum in Berlin, which was responsible for publishing his writings. In 1923, the institute changed its focus from missionary education to theology, and was disbanded in 1933.²⁵



What motivated these non-Jewish Christians to devote time to learning the Hebrew language? For some it was the desire to establish the text of the Hebrew Scriptures and to better interpret and understand the Bible. For some it was polemical: a desire to either prove to Jewish people that they were wrong, or to show them from their own Scriptures or the Talmud that Jesus was their Messiah. And for some, it was simply a drive for knowledge.

Historical periods and contextual situations influenced

24 See Ariel, “A New Model of Christian Interaction with the Jews.”

25 See Levenson, “Missionary Protestants as Defenders and Detractors of Judaism.”



the type of Hebrew studies of their times. The earliest Gentile Christians, such as Justin Martyr, clearly turned to learned Jews and rabbis to obtain a knowledge of Hebrew and even to Jewish customs in their polemical arguments. The Church Fathers, such as Origen and later Jerome, immersed themselves in the Hebrew Scriptures, also with the aid of Jewish rabbinic scholars, to establish accurate translations of the Old Testament texts. Some who devoted themselves to studying Jewish literature such as the Talmud, Midrash, and other rabbinic writings, did so for polemical reasons with the aid of Jewish converts.

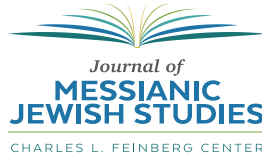
Later scholars devoted themselves to “oriental” languages in general, Hebrew among them, to gain philological understanding. These early Hebraists established programs and chairs of Hebrew studies. Some of these scholars devoted themselves to producing lexicons, concordances, grammars, and tools to further the study of Hebrew. More recently, academics such as Callenberg, Delitzsch, and Strack, established schools of Jewish studies, motivated by their desire to witness to the Jewish people.

We may never fully understand the motivation of Christian Hebraists through the centuries. Did they view Hebrew as a vehicle for evangelizing, or studying the Scriptures, or a quest for knowledge itself? Motivations are complex and can be difficult to discern merely from historical evidence. But we do know that from the first to the nineteenth centuries, there were non-Jewish persons, Christian Hebraists, who pursued an interest in the Hebrew language and often in the Jewish people as well.

Editor’s Note: The impact of the Hebrew Scriptures on the Christian begins with the careful translation of the text by faithful scholars of the language and culture. The fact that there have been so many non-Jewish, Christian Hebraists who painstakingly parsed, defined, declined, and interpreted the Hebrew Bible (as

well as the Septuagint and other versions) makes it clear that the ancient text profoundly influenced them and those who studied after them.

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies is indebted to Dr. Zhava Glaser for this excellent summary of the most significant Christian Hebraists in the history of the church.



The Unity and The Goodness of The Law

Richard E. Averbek

The issue of the OT law in the life of the NT believer and the church is one of the great problems of the church age — some think it is the greatest of them all!¹ The first church council was about this very topic: “Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses’” (Acts 15:5, NIV).² Essentially, the question was whether or not the Gentiles who trusted in Christ needed to become Jews? How do we navigate this issue and the biblical approach to handling it?

1 I first delivered the two essays published here as oral presentations in the Feinberg Lecture series March 10, 2022 at the Chosen People Ministries Feinberg Messianic Center in Brooklyn, New York.

2 Unless otherwise noted, this essay will cite biblical passages from the New International Version (NIV).



My work on this complex topic took a certain turn some twenty-five years ago, and is now, recently published, in a book on the OT law for the life of the church.³ It arose out of working on the so-called “ceremonial law” in Leviticus. I had been accustomed to hearing that Levitical law does not apply to the Christian life because Yeshua the Messiah has fulfilled it for us by dying for us on the cross as a sacrifice. As I studied and wrote articles on the sacrificial ritual terminology for a reference work, part of the assignment was to run this terminology into the NT to see how the writers of the NT understood and applied it.⁴

Along the way, it struck me that, in addition to applying the Levitical terminology to Yeshua, the NT writers were regularly applying it to the life of the church and the Christian. It eventually occurred to me that Yeshua fulfilled the *whole* law for me, so does that mean the so-called “moral” and “civil” law do not apply to me either? Moreover, the Levitical law is largely worship law. As believers in Yeshua, we are *worshippers* above all else! That is how the NT authors applied the “ceremonial law.” The question is not whether this or that regulation in the OT law applies to me, but *how* it applies. I have come to believe that the separation between moral, civil, and ceremonial law is neither a good way to read the OT law to begin with, nor a good way to think about how we apply the law to the NT church and believer.

3 Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church: Reading the Torah in the Light of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2022).

4 See Willem A. VanGemeren, editor, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 volumes (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), abbrev. NIDOTTE. My articles on sacrificial and ritual terminology total about 275 printed pages in this set.

THREE MAIN THESES

All this eventually led me to an approach guided by three main theses: first, the OT law is good, second, the OT law is weak, and third, the OT law is one unified whole. The reader may notice that the first two theses draw directly from the Apostle Paul's discussion in Romans 7-8. Why not? Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, crystallized the major issues so well in these chapters and in other places in his writings. My approach to the topic of the OT law for the church, however, arose initially from ongoing study of the OT law in its OT context. This is natural since my focus over the years has been on the OT, especially the Torah, but there is more to it than that.

In my reading of the scholarly literature on the OT law as it relates to the church I have found that it is common for scholars to discuss the law in the NT without giving due attention to the law itself. One needs to understand what it says, how it says it, why it says what it says, and how it worked in ancient Israel in OT times. This is essential background for reading what the NT says about it, and for this reason, the first two parts of my book are devoted to understanding the OT law to begin with in its covenantal context, and looking forward to the NT from there. The third part focuses on the NT and looks back at the OT from there.

Psalms 119 is the longest Psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible by far. It belabors the importance and goodness of the Mosaic Law from all different angles. The writers of the NT understood the law well and had a deep appreciation for it. This shows in their writings. They were preaching the Gospel from the OT before they wrote the NT. They expected the readers of the NT to have this background too. After all, the first Bible of the church was the OT, whether in Hebrew or in its Greek translation(s).



FIRST THESIS:
THE GOODNESS OF THE LAW

Returning now to the first main thesis, as Paul put it in Rom 7:12, 14a: “So then, the law *is* holy, and the commandment *is* holy, righteous and good. . . . We know that the law *is* spiritual . . .” (Rom 7:12, 14a), all present tense. It is not that the OT law was good in the past and not so anymore. It continues to be good for the church as it was in Paul’s day and today. The OT law was then and still today is not only “good” (Rom 7:12-14) but also *useful* for the Christian: “. . . from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for *teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training* in righteousness, so that the man of God may be *thoroughly equipped for every good work*.” (2 Tim 3:15-17).

What scriptures were they that Timothy had known since he was a little child? The dating of the NT books suggests that hardly any, if any, of the NT books could date that early. The focus is clearly on the well-known OT scriptures. Moreover, it is significant that Paul wrote 2 Timothy near the time of his death (2 Tim 2:9; 4:17-18), so he was still devoted to the OT scriptures even at the end of his life. He never let go of their ongoing importance for him and the church. We need to follow him in this. The point is that the OT law applies to the life of the Christian today in a New Covenant “written on the heart” sense (Jer 31:33), so that we live it from a *transformed “heart”* (or “spirit”) and, therefore, manifest it in the way we live life (Jer 31:31-34, Rom 8:4, 6, 2 Cor 3:3, 6-8).

SECOND THESIS:
THE WEAKNESS OF THE LAW

The second main thesis is that the OT law is weak — it has limitations. Yes, on the one hand, the law is good and we need to hang on tightly to that point and never let it go, but, on the other hand, the law is weak as compared to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We need to reckon fully with the fact that “For what the law was **powerless** to do in that it was **weakened** by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man” (Rom 8:3).⁵ Although the law was and still is “good,” it was and still is also weak in that it has never had the power in itself to change a human heart and motivate godly living. No law can change a human heart, not even God’s law. That is just not what law does.

Law is not designed for this. As Rom 7:14 puts it, “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.” In other words, the problem is in me, my flesh, and the OT law cannot do anything about that even as good and spiritual as it is. Something needs to be done in me that the OT law could never do. That work requires the continuing practice of faith through the power of the work of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit (Ezek 36:26-27, Gal 3:1-7, Rom 8:16; also vv. 10 and 15? cf. 1 Cor 2:10-13, etc.).

5 Similarly, Heb 7:18-19 tells us that “¹⁸The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.” No one should argue that we go back to the OT tabernacle and temple system of priestly mediation. We have moved on to the Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus talked about in that context and developed further in Hebrews 9-10.



THIRD THESIS:
THE UNITY OF THE LAW

The third thesis is that the OT law is a unified law in the OT and is treated as such in the NT too. We need to work out the implications of the fact that it is the whole unified OT Mosaic Law that is to be (metaphorically) “written on the heart” of the New Covenant believer, not just one aspect of it or another, or some combination thereof. The so-called “moral” versus “civil” versus “ceremonial” system of dividing the law is unnecessary and misleading not only in the OT but also in applying it to the Christian life. The question is not what applies and what does not apply, but how the whole law applies to the church and the believer!

As the Lord says it in the primary OT New Covenant passage: “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jer 31:33; cf. also Ezek 36:25-27 with 2 Cor 3:3, 6, 14-16, discussed below). He does not pick out one part of the law and not the other. We cannot deal with every regulation in the OT law in these two essays, of course, and neither does the NT. The goal here is to explain and illustrate how all parts and kinds of law come into the NT for the Christian life.

For example, what about the so-called “ceremonial” ritual law? Virtually all scholars in the field agree it does not apply to the Christian life because Yeshua the Messiah fulfilled it in his death, burial, and resurrection. As noted above, working on the OT ritual sacrificial terminology convinced me that the NT writers not only applied it extensively to Christ, but also to the lives of his followers. This led me to reconsider the whole topic of the law in the NT, the church, and the Christian life.

THE UNITY OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW

We will discuss the weakness (or limitations) of the law in more detail in the second essay. Before turning to a more full discussion of the goodness of the Mosaic Law in this essay, we need to look at some important points on the unity of the law. As noted above, scholars often teach that Jesus fulfilled the “ceremonial” law for us, so therefore it is not a requirement for how we should live the Christian life. The goal here is to show that the NT writers do not treat the so-called “ceremonial law” in this way. They take it very serious in their teaching of the Christian life — how we should think and how we should act.

THE CHURCH AS THE TEMPLE
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

For example, Ephesians 2-3 explains that the believing community is now the “temple” of the Holy Spirit. The wall of partition between believing Jews and Gentiles has been broken down by their common faith in Yeshua. “. . . now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. . . .¹⁸ For through him we both [Jew and Gentile together] have access to the Father by one Spirit” (Eph 2:13 and 18). We are now “. . . fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (vv. 19-20). The whole body is “. . . joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” This passage refers



to the corporate body of believers as a temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. also, e.g., 1 Cor 3:16-17). Some other passages declare the individual believer to be the temple of the Holy Spirit (e.g., 1 Cor 6:18-20).

The argument for the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit continues in Ephesians 3, that is, after a digression about the mystery of the church in vv. 1-13. See the repetition of “For this reason” in v. 1 and then again “For this reason” in v. 14, coming back to pick up the argument from the end of Ephesians 2. Ephesians 3:14-21 puts it together this way: “¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father,” and “¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” This is “¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” Note the allusion to Christ “dwelling” in our hearts as in a temple, creating a temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 17a). Thus, the temple is deeply rooted in love, which is its foundation (v. 17b). This empowers them to grasp the immense dimensions of the temple of Christ’s love (i.e., its width and length, height and depth), enabling them to know and show the love of Christ (v. 18).

This love of Christ surpasses all knowledge, so that the church “is filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (v. 19), like the glory cloud in the OT filled up the tabernacle and the temple at their dedication (see Exod 40:34 and 1 Kgs 8:10). The ongoing work of God within us, which is beyond measure (Eph 3:20), abounds so that “to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (v. 21). We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to shine forth the glory of God in the world:

“let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

Thus, the principles and patterns of OT tabernacle and temple theology come into the NT. Church buildings are not temples, and we do not have a tabernacle tent out in the church parking lot. The people of the church are the temple; that is, the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles apply the OT tabernacle and temple background to the people of God in the NT. They use it to teach us who we are in Christ and how we should therefore live. It is significant that Paul applies this teaching to the concern for the unity of believers in Christ. We are one temple together and need to function as a unified people. This was also the major concern of Jesus in his high priestly prayer to the Father just before he went to the cross (John 17:20-23).

THE LAWS OF HOLINESS AND PURITY

The temple in Jerusalem no longer exists, but the OT patterns of temple, ritual, and purity come through into the church in ways that correspond to the nature of the New Covenant church. Even within the OT law itself, there are changes in law. One clear example is the difference between the sacrificial regulations in Lev 17:1-9 and those in Deut 12:15-25. Leviticus 17 regulates the sacrifice for their travel through the wilderness as a community surrounding the tabernacle. Whenever they wanted to eat meat from their herds or flocks, they must slaughter the animal at the tabernacle and pour the blood out on the tabernacle altar. They must not slaughter an animal for meat in any other place. The law changes in Deut 12 because there the regulation for “profane slaughter” anticipates them spread out in the land after



the conquest. If they wanted to eat meat in this new situation, they may not be close enough to the tabernacle (or later the temple) to take it there for slaughter. In that case, they would not have to travel to the central sanctuary to slaughter the animal they wanted to eat at dinner that evening. Instead, they could slaughter it as if it were wild game and just pour the blood out on the ground. The envisioned circumstances changed between Lev 17 and Deut 12, so the regulations changed accordingly.

The move from the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant was a more substantial shift, of course, but it did not leave the Mosaic Law behind. On the contrary, the New Covenant has the OT law written on the hearts of the people of the covenant (Jer 31:33, see more on this below). The reality is that the church arose out of Yeshua's inauguration of the New Covenant (see, e.g., Luke 22:20). It started as an exclusively Jewish movement (Acts 2), but later came to include Gentiles. The Jewish believers, even the Apostles, had not anticipated this, which led to Peter's vision of a sheet that came down out of heaven containing "all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds," including unclean animals and birds (Acts 10:12). As a good Jew, of course, the command to kill and eat them was repulsive to him (v. 13). This happened three times in the vision.

It was not until later that he understood what this vision meant. While he was still preaching the Gospel to the Gentile Cornelius and the people with him, "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (v. 44, cf. vv. 27-29), like it came on the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter, therefore, had them baptized and accepted their invitation "to stay with them for a few days" (v. 48). Of course, this brought criticism from the Jewish believers in Jerusalem: ". . . when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, 'You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with

them” (Acts 11:2-3). Peter then explained what the Lord had done, and they all praised God for the Gentile acceptance of the Gospel (vv. 4-18).

The Mosaic Covenant was a national covenant for the people God delivered from slavery in Egypt. The church is not a nation, but consists of communities of faith spread out among all the nations. This affects how certain OT regulations do or do not come through into the church. Adjustments were necessary, as in the shift Leviticus 17 to Deuteronomy 12 treated above. Perhaps the best example of this is one given a good deal of attention in the NT; namely, the dietary meat stipulations in Leviticus 11 (cf. also Deuteronomy 14 and the remarks on Acts 10 above).

We are not able to consider here all the details about clean and unclean animals.⁶ The important point for our present discussion is the function of these regulations in separating the Jews from the corrupt Gentile peoples around them. Leviticus 20 shows special concern for this problem. Near the end of the chapter the Lord declared: “²² Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, . . . ²³ You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them” (Lev 20:22-23). A few verses later, the Lord brings the clean and unclean animal regulations forward as a primary way to keep the Israelites separate from these corrupting peoples: “²⁵ You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds” (v. 25a). If they could not eat what the surrounding nations would eat because of these diet regulations, they could not have binding relationships with them.

The point here is that the shift in the NT to a unified church made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers meant that they

⁶ For more details on this, see Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 210-214 and the literature cited there.



could not practice purity and holiness in a way that would separate them. God has broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile in Christ (Eph 2:14-15), so the food laws could no longer have the function of separating Jews from Gentiles in the church. In fact, when God began to bring them together in Acts 10-11, he used the clean and unclean animal regulations to communicate that (see the remarks on the sheet and eating together above). It took time to work this important teaching into the view of the Jewish church in the early days. Paul confronted Peter about this in Gal 2:11-14, when Peter stopped eating with the Gentile believers because he was afraid of the reaction of the Jewish believers who arrived from Jerusalem.

This does not mean that God is no longer concerned about purity and holiness in the church. On the contrary, this is one of his primary concerns. Peter, for example, highlights this in 1 Peter 1:13-25. He writes: “¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (vv. 14-15). The first occurrence of this holiness motto in the Bible is in the chapter on clean and unclean animal regulations (Lev 11:44). Peter uses it to urge believers to conform to holiness by not giving in to their evil desires in their way of life. He goes on to expound on our redemption through the precious blood of Jesus Christ our savior (vv. 17-21), and then comes to this: “Now that you have purified yourselves [lit. ‘your souls’] by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart” (v. 22). The reason we purify our souls is so that we can love each other well. That is the real goal of purity. One cannot love others well if their soul is impure. Their evil desires will get in the way. Thus, the holiness and purity concerns of the OT law come through into the church in ways

that correspond to the New Covenant nature of the church. The OT law is “written on the heart” (Jer 31:33).

THE LAWS OF PRIESTHOOD AND SACRIFICE

The regulations regarding sacrifice and priesthood in the OT law likewise come through in ways that correspond to the nature of the New Covenant. Peter unpacks this in an overall comprehensive manner in his next chapter. He likens believers to “living stones” that are “being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). This recalls Paul’s explanation of the church as a temple of the Holy Spirit (see the discussion of Ephesians 2-3 above). Yeshua is the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God (1 Pet 2:4, see also vv. 6-8). As believers, we are living stones built into a spiritual house that is a holy priesthood. As priests, we offer up sacrifices that are spiritual and acceptable to God. In other words, we are the stones of the temple and the priests who offer sacrifices there, and these sacrifices are acceptable to God because we are in Yeshua.

Another related and very famous passage unpacks this analogy from another perspective and in further detail: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Rom 12:1). In this verse, the Apostle Paul urges believers to present their whole body as the sacrifice they offer, a living sacrifice, not a dead one. Paul is drawing here primarily from the whole burnt offering regulations in Leviticus 1. In making this kind



of offering, the ancient Israelites placed the whole body of the burnt offering animal piece by piece on the fire on the altar so that it would rise up to God in smoke as a holy gift that would produce “an aroma pleasing to the Lord” (Lev 1:9, 13, 17). In order to qualify for the altar, the animal must be without blemish so that the Lord would accept it to make atonement for the one who offered it (Lev 1:3-4). Romans 12:1 echoes these regulations, using terminology from Leviticus 1.

The temple is the people of the church. The people of the church are also the priests who serve in the temple, making sacrifices. The people themselves are also the sacrifices, and they are acceptable to God in the temple of the Holy Spirit. These are not just illustrations from which to teach. The analogies themselves are the teachings. These are some of the ways Peter and Paul use the OT priesthood and sacrificial terms and patterns to teach Christians how to live their life in Christ. We apply them by seeing ourselves as the temple, the priests, and the sacrifices.

Paul, for example, extends this in application to his ministry as the Apostle to the Gentiles: “He (God) gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:16). Similarly, whatever acceptable ministry anyone does for God is a sacrifice that the believer offers to God. The Holy Spirit sanctifies it. The writer of Hebrews urges us to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name” (Heb 13:15). He adds to this that we must “not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (v. 16).

THE GOODNESS OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW

The so-called “ceremonial law” is, at its core, worship law. Our calling as Christians is first-of-all, above all, and throughout to be worshippers and servants of God, so the NT does not leave OT worship regulations behind. Yeshua gave himself as a sacrifice for us. If we are going to become like him, we need to present our own lives as sacrifices too. This brings us back to the first thesis: the goodness of the law. This begins with a fundamental understanding of how it fit into God’s program for ancient Israel in the OT. How was it “good” for them? What made it good in their walk with God as those whom he delivered from slavery in Egypt?

THE EXODUS
AND THE LAW

The law was given in the context of the already accomplished deliverance from slavery out of Egypt. The Lord God had already redeemed them out of Egypt. The whole law is imbedded within this deliverance. There would be no Mosaic Law without the deliverance from Egypt. They were not commanded to do the law to be delivered, but to do it in response to already having been delivered by God’s grace.⁷ This is very much like the Gospel pattern in the NT, where deliverance is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Yeshua alone: “⁸For it is by grace you have been

7 On this point see esp. Richard E. Averbeck, “The Mosaic Law and the Gospel in Jewish Evangelism,” in *Upholding God’s Word, Reaching God’s Chosen: A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Mitchell L. Glaser*, ed. Jim Melnick, Zhava Glaser, Gregory Hagg, Alan shore, and Robert Walters (New York: KFIM Publications, 2022), 23-29.



saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.” The next verse goes on to say that “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (v. 10). Yes, God wants his people in the OT and the NT to do good works, but our relationship with him is based on what he has done for us, not what we do for him. This is as clear in the OT as it is in the NT. In fact, it is a key feature of the law from beginning to end — it “frames” the law.

After arriving at Sinai, the Lord proclaimed through Moses, Exodus 19:4, “‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.’” The Lord starts with his deliverance from Egypt. Based on that deliverance already accomplished he calls them to covenant commitment and faithfulness to himself. The proclamation of the covenant law begins with the same theme as the starting point for the covenant regulations—the Ten Commandments: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Exod 20:2). Based on this deliverance, he says, “You shall have no other gods before me” (v. 3). There are several traditions about how to enumerate the Ten Commandments, which are literally in Hebrew “the ten words” (Exod 34:28, lit. “the ten words”; cf. also Deut 4:13 and 10:4). There is no imperative in v. 2, but it is a “word,” and is commonly treated as the first “Word” in Judaism. Even the Masoretic text reflects this in its double accent system of these verses.⁸ The point is that the deliverance from slavery in Egypt is fundamental to the basic ethos of the Mosaic Law.

Similarly, the regulations in the Book of the Covenant begin with “debt slavery” regulations: “These are the laws you

8 For more on this see Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 117-121 and the literature cited there.

are to set before them: 2 ‘If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything’” (Exod 21:1-2). No other code of law in the Ancient Near East begins with slave law. This was placed first here because they had been delivered from slavery, so they must not re-enslave each other. Debt slavery regulations for native Israelites also conclude the giving of the law at Sinai (Lev 25:39-55). The last two verses read: 54 “Even if someone is not redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee,⁵⁵ for the Israelites belong to **me** as servants. They are **my** servants, whom **I** brought out of Egypt. **I** am the Lord your God” (Lev 25:54-55). This is the last section of legal regulations before the blessings and curses of the covenant in Leviticus 26, which ends with a colophon: “These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the Lord established at Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses” (Lev 26:46). The repeated first person pronouns in Lev 26:55 emphasize the fact that Israel belonged to God and no one else. No one could take them as their own (permanent) slave because he had brought them out of Egypt. God alone was their deliverer, so they were his servants.

The same theme appears prominently in the last chapter of legal regulations in Pentateuch: “7 . . . we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. 8 So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. . .” (Deut 26:7-8). Furthermore, the same theme permeates the law through and through. See, for example, Exod 22:21; 23:9, 15; 29:46; 32:7, 11; Lev 11:45; 19:34, 36; 22:31-33; 23:43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45; Num 15:41; 20:15-16; Deut 4:20, 34, 37; 5:6, 15; 6:12, 21-22; 7:8; 8:14; 9:26; 10:19; 11:3-4; 13:5; 15:15; 16:12. The



deliverance from slavery in Egypt is the historical basis of the Sinaitic covenant and undergirds the Mosaic Law.⁹

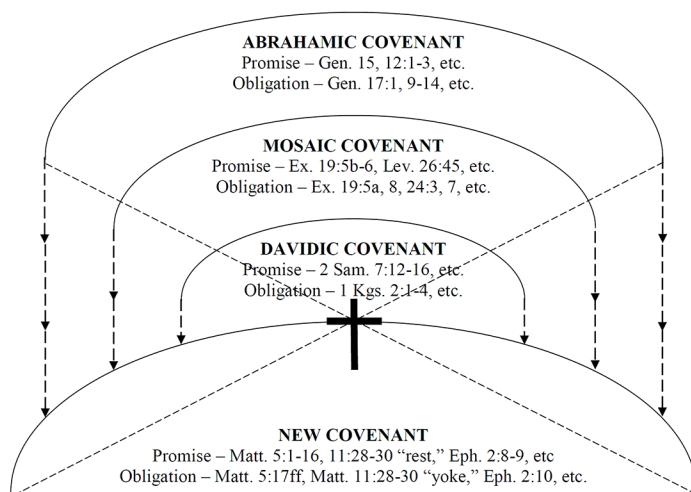
The point of all this is that God gave the law as guidance for a people that he had already redeemed. The law worked out the details of the covenant relationship between the Lord and his people, and between one another, as they walked with the Lord. It would also keep the Israelites separate from the peoples around them and their corrupting influences. This brings us to the relationship between the law and the covenants.

THE LAW AND THE COVENANTS

There are four major “redemptive” covenants in the Bible: the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants (see the chart below). What I mean by “redemptive” here is that they help us follow the progressive development of God’s redemptive program for his people from Genesis to Revelation. I have not included the Noahic Covenant here because God made that one with all flesh, not just humans (Gen 9:8-11), and the purpose was to stabilize the creation before moving forward into his redemptive program, beginning with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). I have treated this more fully elsewhere and cannot develop all the details here.¹⁰

⁹ See the more detailed discussion in Richard E. Averbeck, “The Egyptian Sojourn and Deliverance from Slavery in the Framing and Shaping of the Mosaic Law,” in “*Did I Not Bring Israel Out of Egypt?*” *Biblical, Archaeological, and Egyptological Perspectives on the Exodus Narratives*, Bulletin of Biblical Research Monograph Series, ed. James Hoffmeier, Alan Millard, and Gary Rendsburg (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 143-175.

¹⁰ For more detailed treatments of the four covenants and relationships between them, see Richard E. Averbeck, “Israel, the Jewish People, and God’s Covenants,” in *Israel the Church and the Middle East: A Biblical Response to the Current Conflict*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2018), 21-37, and especially Averbeck, *The Old Testament*



NOTE: Both “promise” (yielding peace) and “obligation” (yielding purpose) are built into the very organic nature of God’s redemptive program. One makes no sense and will not work without the other. Our “rest” depends upon the combination of the two.

THE REDEMPTIVE COVENANTS

The goal here is to use the chart to provide biblical and theological context for the Mosaic Law as it fits within the covenant program of God revealed in the Bible. Of course, the Mosaic Law is embedded within the Mosaic Covenant and is part of it, but the Mosaic Covenant is based on the previous Abrahamic Covenant. On the one hand, there would be no Mosaic Covenant without the Abrahamic Covenant. God’s grace to ancient Israel in delivering them out of slavery in Egypt was based on his previous covenant commitment to the patriarchs: “²⁴God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (Exod 2:24-25). On the other hand, the Mosaic Covenant does

Law for the Life of the Church, 27-78.



not replace the Abrahamic Covenant: “The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise” (Gal 3:17).

The chart above illustrates this by inserting the Mosaic Covenant umbrella under the Abrahamic Covenant, and then the Davidic Covenant under the Mosaic and Abrahamic Covenants. The New Covenant is the goal toward which these OT covenants progress. God built permanent promise and ongoing obligation in each of these covenant commitments (see, e.g., the passages listed under each umbrella), so each of them still bears weight for God’s covenant commitment to his people today. The dashed lines with arrows down the sides capture this reality. The diagonal dashed lines that run through the chart meet at the peak of the New Covenant umbrella, at the cross of Christ. Thus, the previous covenants come through into the New Covenant through the lens of what Yeshua did for us through his life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

Around 2,000 BC, God made his covenant with Abraham, calling and commissioning him as the one through whom he would bless the whole world (Gen 12:1-3; cf. Genesis 15 and 17). This would culminate in the New Covenant some two thousand years later. In the meantime, he maintained his commitments to Abraham by giving him a son through whom he would build a family over the next two generations. The covenant with Abraham was a family level covenant. Eventually, this family grew into a nation, so God made a covenant with them that was suitable for guiding a nation of Abrahamic descendants, not just a family or clan; namely, the Mosaic Covenant with its regulations for how they should live as God’s covenant people (ca. 1400 BC). God was the theocratic king of ancient Israel, but there would come a time

when the nation would need a human king, which brings us to the Davidic Covenant (ca. 1000 BC). The Davidic king was called to live under the authority of the theocratic king even to the point of writing his own copy of the Mosaic Law so that he could read it regularly so that he could live and rule according to it (Deut 17:18-20; James 2:23).

The Lord, therefore, gave the Mosaic Law as a means of covenantal guidance for the descendants of Abraham, who he intended would have Abrahamic faith (Gen 15:6, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness”; cf. Ps 106:31; Rom 4:3, 20-24; Gal 3:6;). The king would likewise have Abrahamic faith and rule over them according to the Mosaic Covenant law. This same covenant law comes through into the New Covenant: “‘This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,’ declares the Lord. **I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jer 31:33).

The New Covenant is not like the Mosaic Covenant, which the Israelites had violated leading to the Babylonian exile (see Jer 31:31-32). Nevertheless, the New Covenant does not leave the Mosaic Law behind. It has the law written on the heart of the New Covenant believer. Paul brings Jer 31:33 together with Ezek 36:26-27 in 2 Cor 3:3-6: “. . . (3) You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, *written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God*, not on tablets of stone but *on tablets of human hearts*. . . . (6) . . . ministers of *a new covenant*—not *of the letter* but of the Spirit; for *the letter kills*, but *the Spirit gives life*.” The “Spirit” is the Holy Spirit (Ezek 36:27), who writes the law “on tablets of human hearts” (Jer 31:33). In the New Covenant (Jer 31:33), the Spirit “gives life” to “the letter” of the law, which kills without the Spirit: “. . . I



will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezek 36:27).

We will come back to the weakness of the Mosaic Law as opposed to the power of the Spirit in the next essay, but it is important here to explain that the law is not left behind even in the focus on the Spirit in Romans 8. We walk by the Spirit rather than our flesh, “in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us” (Rom 8:4). Again, in Rom 8:7-8, “7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.” Pleasing God, still today, depends on submitting to God’s law, but only the Spirit can empower that.¹¹

As explained earlier in this essay, this does not mean that the NT always applies the Mosaic Law to the church in the same way as the OT applied it to ancient Israel. Even in the OT the law sometimes changed according to the situation or circumstances of God’s people (see, e.g., the remarks above on Lev 17 and Deut 12). The law was designed and given with this flexibility built into it. The shift to the NT does not leave the law behind, but the church is not a nation, Jesus had come and made atonement, the Holy Spirit had come powerfully on the church at Pentecost, and so on. The NT brings the law into the life of the church in accordance with this progress of redemption. As noted above, for example, the OT diet regulations could no longer serve as a means separating Jews from Gentiles in the church. Nevertheless, New Covenant believers have the OT law written on their heart. The law is a good, holy, and spiritual for us too. The NT works out how this true in many various ways. This brings us to Jesus and the law.

¹¹ See the remarks on the interpretation of these verses in Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 296-97 and the literature cited there.

JESUS
AND THE PERMANENT
GOODNESS OF THE LAW

Jesus Himself sets forth the basic principles of the relationship between the “kingdom of heaven” and the law in Matthew 5. Of course, this is before Jesus had accomplished His work on the cross, but v. 18b tells us that we must take this teaching seriously “until everything is accomplished”: that is, the law does not pass away until all things have come to their conclusion, which is still in the future. The main points in Jesus’ line of argument in Matt 5:17-19 are especially important here:

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

First, Jesus did not come to “abolish” the OT law and prophets (v. 17a). This verb occurs only three other times in Matthew’s Gospel: Matt. 24:2 (every stone of the temple will be “thrown down”), and in 26:61 and 27:40 (they accuse Jesus of saying he is able to “destroy” the temple and rebuild it in three days). This Gospel is written to Jewish Christians who would be rightly concerned that turning to Yeshua as the Messiah would not contradict what God had already revealed in the law or the prophets. He wanted to make sure they understood that turning to him would not violate scripture.

In fact, the second clause affirms that he did not come to



abolish but to “fulfill” the law and the prophets. There have been several different interpretations of this. I will briefly summarize the views and some of their variations here based on a survey of over twenty commentaries on Matthew. Some say it refers to Yeshua fulfilling the requirements of the law for us like he has fulfilled prophecies that predicted and patterns that foreshadowed him and his work as our redeemer. The major problem with this way of reading it is that the verb “fulfill” is in the active voice. When it appears in the fulfillment formula elsewhere in Matthew it is in the passive voice. See, for example, Matt 1:22, “All this took place to fulfill (lit. ‘that it might be fulfilled’) what the Lord had said through the prophet, . . .” (cf. Matt 2:15, 17, etc.).

Matthew uses the active voice of this verb only two other times in his Gospel. When John the Baptist resisted baptizing Jesus because of who he was, Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15). He had John baptize him because this was a righteous act to do. This is not the fulfillment of a prophetic prediction. The other active voice passage is part of a woe against the teachers of the law and Pharisees, who were the descendants of those who had killed the OT prophets. Jesus said, “Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!” (Matt 23:32). Finish doing the evil deeds of you fathers. Aside from this grammatical issue, the following verses suggest a different reading of “fulfill” in this passage (see more on this below).

Other scholars, therefore, read the passage not as fulfilled prophecy, but as a way of saying that in his life and ministry Jesus (1) established or upheld the law, (2) added to and, therefore, completed the law, or (3) brought out the intended meaning of the law in the first place. Still others say it refers to Yeshua’s own fulfillment of the provisions of the law in

the way that He lived and taught the law during his life and ministry, as displayed in the Gospel narratives. The following lines reinforce this way of reading v. 17.

According to v. 18, absolutely no part of the OT law (or the prophets) has “passed away,” not even today, since “heaven and earth” have not passed away. It all stays in place “until everything is accomplished.” The law as understood, lived, and taught by Jesus remains valid even today, since heaven and earth have not disappeared and not everything is yet accomplished. Moreover, v. 19 tells us that one’s status in the “kingdom of heaven” depends on whether one “sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others” to do so. This person “will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” Conversely, “whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

In the following verse, however, Yeshua pushed back against the insufficient righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in his own day (v. 20). The people hearing Yeshua’s sermon would have been shocked by this. They thought of their teachers as the most righteous among them. Jesus explained what he meant by this in the following antitheses (vv. 21-48). They teach you not to murder. I teach you not to hate. They teach you not to commit adultery. I teach you not to commit adultery even in your heart. And so on.¹² Yeshua is teaching the Mosaic Law as it would be written on the heart of his kingdom people (see the remarks on Jer 31:33 above). They would have circumcised hearts (see, e.g., Deut 10:12-13, 16; Jer 4:4; 9:25-26 with Rom 2:25-29).

12 For a careful review of Yeshua’s antitheses about the teaching of the law and prophets in Matt 5:21-48, see Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 234-41 and the literature cited there.



JESUS
AND THE PERVASIVE
GOODNESS OF THE LAW

Another important Gospel passage for the goodness of the Mosaic Law arises out of a question put to Yeshua in a test by a legal expert: “which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” (Matt 22:36). Yeshua famously replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (vv. 37-39). It is interesting and important that the expert asked for only one commandment, but Yeshua gave two.

The same two commandments appear also in Mark 12:29-31 and Luke 10:25-28, but with contextual and rhetorical variation. They do not appear in John’s Gospel, but in 1 John 4:7-21 the youngest of the twelve belabored the unbreakable relationship between loving God and people, concluding, “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister” (vv. 20-21).

Finally, in Matt 22:40, Yeshua added, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (cf. Mark 10:31b). It reads literally, “On these two commandments the whole law hangs, and the prophets” too. It can be compared to a door hanging on its hinges. A door will not work without hinges, and so all the law, and this goes for the prophets too. Evidently, he was not satisfied with the question as the expert had asked it, or perhaps this was part of the expert’s trap. In either case, Yeshua went beyond the expert in his answer as well as in its application

to not only the law but also the prophets. As Mark 12:34b puts it, “And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions” (cf. Matt 22:46). Our Lord knew what he was talking about. They could not survive a dispute with him on what the law and the prophets were all about. Yeshua himself was the real “expert.”

The Bible never specifically tells us exactly what “the law of Christ” is (see Gal 6:2 and 1 Cor 9:21; cf. James 2:8).¹³ Paul’s highlighting of the second great commandment in Gal 5:13-14 suggests that this is at the core of it: “13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (see also James 2:8 and cf. more remotely Matt 5:43 and Rom 13:8-10). Most would agree that the two great commandments are part of the law of Christ. 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 distinguishes it from conformity to the OT law as a Jew who does not know Yeshua as their savior: “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law” (v. 20).

In my view, the best understanding of the “law of Christ” is that it includes Yeshua’s teachings about adherence to the Mosaic Law as he himself taught and lived it. This would include his references to the teachings of the law in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) and elsewhere in the Gospels, especially the two great commandments (Matt 22:34-40, see the remarks above). It also includes the priority of the most important matters of the law (Matt 23:23-24), and other such passages.¹⁴ To put

13 See the helpful review of the various views and the discussion in T. R. Schreiner, “Law of Christ,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 542-44.

14 See the details in Richard E. Averbeck, “Chapter 25: The Law and the Gospels, with Attention to the Relationship Between the Decalogue and the



it another way, the “law of Christ” is the way Yeshua mediates the OT law to his followers. It is all about the New Covenant writing of the law on the heart (Jer 31:33). There are shifts in the application of the OT Law to the church because of the shift from the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant, as discussed above. Nevertheless, it is the whole unified Mosaic Law that the Holy Spirit writes on the heart of the New Covenant believer, whether Jew or Gentile.

Finally, what does Paul mean when he says that he and other believers in Yeshua are “not under the law” (see, e.g., 1 Cor 9:20-21; Gal 3:23, 25; 4:4-5, 21; 5:18). He means two things. First, he means that we are no longer under the curse of the law if we are in Christ (Gal 3:13; Rom 8:1; etc.). This is true for both Gentiles and Jews. Second, he means that the one who trusts in Yeshua is not under the law in the sense that she or he does not depend on the law as the force that enables them to live the Christian life. The power for the transformed life comes through the power of the Holy Spirit working in my human spirit, the spirit of adoption (Rom 7-8, esp. 8:15-16).¹⁵

CONCLUSION

The Lord God gave the Mosaic Law as a guide for those who lived as Abrahamic Covenant believers under the Mosaic Covenant. It was and still is good, holy, righteous, and spiritual. The Apostle Paul depends on this truth in Rom 7-8, but at the same time he picks up on the “weakness” of the law — its limitations. This is the subject of the next essay. How do we hang on tightly to both

Sermon on the Mount/Plain.” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law*, edited by Pamela Barmash (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), 409-23.

¹⁵ See the more detailed explanation in Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 290-93.

the goodness and the weakness of the Mosaic Law? And what does this mean about how the law fits into the life of the church and the believer?



The Limitations of The Law

Richard E. Averbeck

The previous essay argues that the law, the whole unified Mosaic Law, always was good, and still is good (Rom 7:12-14), and it is profitable for the Christian (2 Tim 3:16-17). We must never compromise on this truth. This essay moves on from this foundation to another essential truth about the law. The Mosaic Law as good as it always was and still is, it always was and still is also “weak” (Rom 8:3). It has limitations. This does not make the law any less good, righteous, holy, and spiritual, but it does require that we also consider what it cannot do. How is the law weak? What are its limitations?

YESHUA AS A SIN OFFERING

I have drawn the terminology for this discussion from Rom 8:3, “³For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh (lit., “in which it was weak through the flesh”), God



did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, . . .” Romans 7:14 anticipates this: “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.” The real problem is with me and you, not the law. We are captured by our own slavery to sin, our “flesh” (v. 18, NIV ‘my sinful nature,’ lit. ‘my flesh’). No law, not even God’s law, can change a human heart. Law just does not do that. The Mosaic Law is a spiritual standard of life, but it has no power to make any of us spiritual. That requires the work of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit to push back against the sin filled “flesh” that each of us has operating within us.

The writer of Hebrews says something similar, but in a different way. The OT priesthood was Aaronic, but Jesus was a priest after the priestly order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:1-10 and 7:1-28). Since the priesthood changed, “¹⁸ The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God” (Heb 7:18-19). The Mosaic Law regulations for sin and sacrifice made nothing and no one perfect. Hebrews 9-10 explains the difference between those sacrifices and the better sacrifice of Christ.

We cannot go into all the details of this here. In brief, the blood of the OT sacrifices cleansed the earthly tabernacle, while the sacrifice of Christ cleansed the tabernacle in heaven (Heb 9:11-12 and 21-24). The blood of the OT sacrifices cleansed the people “outwardly” (lit. ‘cleansed the flesh’), whereas the blood of Yeshua cleansed our “conscience” (vv. 13-14). The OT priests had to offer the same Day of Atonement sacrifices over and over, every year, but Yeshua offered himself as our sacrifice once and for all, and finally, at the consummation of the ages (vv. 25-28). On the one hand, the OT sacrifices could not make anyone “perfect,” as can be seen from the fact that they had to keep on

offering them (Heb 10:3; cf. 7:18-19 above). It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats take sin away permanently (v. 4). On the other hand, those who trust in the bodily sacrifice of Christ have been made permanently holy (vv. 5-10).¹

All this brings us back to Yeshua as a “sin offering” in Rom 8:3. The atonement, cleansing, and forgiveness comparisons and contrasts between the OT sin offerings and that of Yeshua in Hebrews 9-10 are all based on the function of the “sin offering” in the tabernacle (and later the temple), through the year and on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 1-16). This is at the heart of the shift from the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant. Yes, the OT system of offerings has been set aside, but not because it was not a good system in its day. It was ordained by God and accomplished what God intended for the ancient Israelites at that earlier time. Moreover, based on analogies to that system, we can understand what Yeshua did for us on an altogether higher level and once for all. We no longer need the repeated old sin offerings because Yeshua took us beyond them by becoming a sin offering for us that applies once for all and forever.

The OT sin offering regulations are not left behind, but taken further. It is not that we do not need a sin offering to make a way for us to draw near to God. We do! Yeshua is it. His bodily sacrifice brought the old system to completion and set it aside because it could never make anyone perfect before God. Only Yeshua as a sin offering could do that, and he did: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). Jesus came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3), but without the sin, so that he could be a “sin offering” for us to redeem us from our own sin filled flesh. In this way, “the

1 See Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 199-205, and the more detailed discussion of Hebrews 9-10 in *idem*, “Sin offering,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2.101-103.



law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (v. 2). This “setting free” is the topic of Romans 6-8. It is the Holy Spirit who brings the sin offering of Yeshua to bear powerfully in the lives of those who come to God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

LAW AND SPIRIT IN ROMANS 6-8

It is the weakness of the legal stipulations by themselves, without the heart of faith empowered by the Holy Spirit, that Paul emphasized in Romans 6-8. The passage begins with three images: baptism, slavery, and marriage. Our baptism makes us dead to sin and alive to Christ (Rom 6:1-14). We are therefore no longer slaves to sin but to righteousness (vv. 15-23). We are no longer bound to the law as in marriage, but have died so that we are free (Rom 7:1-6). The law was and is absolutely good, but it is just as absolutely weak because it cannot motivate godly living. Instead, it incites sinful passions in the lives of corrupt people (Rom 7:7-13).

Interestingly, Paul uses the tenth commandment “You shall not covet” (v. 7) to help explain what he is getting at. Not even the Ten Commandments are “strong.” They are just as weak as every other part of the Mosaic Law. The tenth commandment is good and right, of course, not sinful, but the sinful flesh takes advantage of the law to produce all sorts of coveting (v. 8). So the law was intended for my good, to give me life, but it yields death instead (v. 9-11). The sequence here reminds one of the original fall into sin in Genesis 3: sin to deception to death (v. 11). We keep on replaying the dynamics of the fall. We inherited it, yes, but we keep on replaying it in our own lives too. After repeating the point that the law is holy, righteous, and good (vv.

12-13), we arrive back at the fact that the law is spiritual, but I am not (v. 14).

At this point the Apostle Paul begins his explanation of how tangled up we are in our own sin filled nature, our “flesh” (Gk. *sarx*; 7:18, 25; 8:3-9, 12-13). He begins, “15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out” (vv. 15-18). The passage overflows with frustration. There has been an ongoing debate among scholars about how to understand these verses.²

Some scholars think it describes the experience of Paul and others in their unsaved condition, especially Jewish unbelievers. They want to follow the law, but end up frustrated, if they are honest about it. Other scholars take the view that this passage describes the experience of Paul and others as believers in Christ when they try to keep the law. Even when they try really hard, they end up experiencing their own corruption. They cannot get past their “flesh.” There are also some compromising positions. For example, some have thought this was the experience of a person under conviction for sin but not yet a believer. They are on their way to faith, but not there yet.

The debate continues, but, in my view, there is a better way to come at the passage. The use of “I” here is a rhetorical way to draw everyone into the passage, whether they know Christ or not. All people are fallen. Paul has been arguing about the way the law works by its very nature in the heart of fallen people.

2 See the extensive and helpful review of the debate in Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 466-75 who takes it to refer to unbelievers, and my own conclusion in Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 293-97.



His argument continues in these verses. He is treating the law generically in terms of its inherent dynamic if one attempts to live rightly by means of it as their principle of life. That which is good (the law, 7:8-11, 13) becomes in the depraved human heart an occasion for the outworking of the dynamics of deception unto death (see v. 11 with Genesis 3). In other words, the law that is completely good and spiritual (7:12, 14a) is likewise completely weak and ineffective at making us spiritual (7:14b; cf. the remarks on Rom 8:3 and Hebrews 7 and 9-10 above). This part of the argument ends in despair: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” (v. 24).

The argument then turns in the opposite direction. There is indeed an escape from the tangled up mess that we are: “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (v. 25a). Yes, when I seek to live by the Mosaic Law as my principle of life, I am a tangled up mess, but “. . . there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, . . .” (Rom 8:1). Aside from reference to the Mosaic Law (Rom 7:7-14, 22, 25; 8:3, 4, 7), there are at least three other “laws,” metaphorically speaking, that Paul is concerned with in Rom 7-8. First, there is the “law of sin (and death)” at work within me (7:23, 25; 8:3). The identity of this law is clear starting in 7:21, “So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.” Second, this law is made manifest in the “waging war” (v. 23) between it and the “law of my mind” (vv. 22-23), which wishes to live according to God’s law and is enslaved by it (v. 25b). Third, victory and “freedom” in this waging war between these two laws is gained only by switching to another principle of law altogether, namely: “the law of the Spirit who gives life” (8:2). Paul develops this “law” in Rom 8:2-17.

The major turning point in this section of Romans is 8:1 is,

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. . . .” As Romans 7:14-25 describes it, our struggle with sin ties us into one big tangled up knot. One can feel this just reading the passage. Some readers may have heard the expression “cutting the Gordian knot.” It comes from a legend about Alexander the Great (300’s BC). There was a town named Gordius in the hinterlands named after its king, Gordius, and in that region there was a widely known oracle associated with a cart that was bound to a yoke with a knot that no one could untie. The knot was tight and had no ends visible. It was called the “Gordian knot.” The oracle stated that whoever could untie it would become the emperor of the Asian world. Alexander came up to Gordius in a campaign and learned of the oracle. His response was to draw his sword and cut through the knot with one fell swoop. Alexander, therefore, became the conqueror and ruler of all Asia, and we have the expression “cutting the Gordian knot,” referring to one drastic action that accomplishes everything that it necessary.

This is what God did on a cosmic scale for all eternity when he sent his Son to die for us. As our sin offering, Yeshua accomplished all we need to be right with the Father. As Rom 7:14-25 puts it, our lives are a tangled knot of sinful corruption. Romans 8:1 tells us that by one fell swoop God cut through the knot so that if we are in Christ we are under no condemnation as far as he is concerned. We can now move on in life, but along a different path. We don’t go back to try to untangle the knot, which would only get us all tangled up in ourselves again. Instead, we get on by the power of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit can do the very thing that the law cannot do; that is, the Holy Spirit works within us to change our heart so that we live by the good, holy, righteous, and spiritual standard of God’s law. The divine Holy Spirit testifies in and with the human spirit



of one who is in Christ Yeshua, so they are transformed by the “spirit of adoption” in our human spirit. We do life with God, as his adopted child.

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION

The point of all this is that we are captivated by our own depravity, and the OT law, as good as it is, cannot deliver us from that (8:3). This is what Paul means by the weakness of the law. There are basically three main steps in this passage overall. First, there is living under the condemnation of the law (Rom 7:7-25). Whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, this is the reality of life for those who live under the condemnation of the law, whether the Mosaic Law or the law of their conscience (see Rom 2:14-15). Second, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus because through him the law of the Spirit of life has set them free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:1-3).

Third, we can now get on with living our life by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit working a spirit of adoption in our human spirit, so that the righteous requirements of the law can be fully met in us (Rom 8:4-17). The Holy Spirit does this work in and with our human spirit amid all the struggles and contingencies of life in this fallen world. The constant goal is the will of God the Father to conform us to the image of his Son, Yeshua the Messiah, through all that happens in our lives (vv. 18-30). This is a Trinitarian work of God. All three persons of the Godhead are fully involved in this process in and among those who know Yeshua as their savior.

At this point it is important to attend to the meaning of “spirit” and the importance of the human spirit here and elsewhere in the Bible. Unfortunately, the human spirit has not received the

attention it deserves in our theological anthropology. Jesus drew upon it at the point of his physical death on the cross when he said, according to Luke 23:46, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (*pneuma*),” which is an expression from Psalm 31:5a, “Into your hands I commit my spirit (*ruakh*).” Jesus was referring to his own human spirit. The parallel in Mark 15:37 puts it differently, retaining the close link between “breathe” and “spirit” discussed above: “With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last” (i.e., ‘breathed out, exhaled; expired’; Greek, *exepneusev*, related to *pneuma* cf. John 19:30). We learn from James 2:26, “. . . the body without the spirit is dead . . .” The human “spirit,” therefore, is the person who remains alive when the body dies.³

The Old Testament uses “spirit” (*ruakh*) for the human spirit about 120 times.⁴ Sometimes it refers to the vitality of life: “the spirit of their father Jacob revived” (i.e., ‘became alive’ Gen 45:27b), when he heard that Joseph his son was still alive. Contrast Josh 5:1, when the people of Canaan “heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear and they no longer had the courage (lit., ‘there was no longer *spirit* in them’) to face the Israelites.” Similarly, when the Queen of Sheba saw all of Solomon’s wisdom and his royal court, “she was overwhelmed”;

³ I will not engage here with the discussion in biblical anthropology concerning the two, three, four, or more elements that make up the human person. James 2:26 refers to the body and the spirit of the person. In other places, the two parts appear as body and soul (e.g., Matt 10:28). Still others suggest perhaps three parts (spirit, soul, and body; e.g., 1 Thess 5:23), or four (body, heart, soul, and mind; Mark 12:30), or five, with variations. In my view, generally, the terms for the “immaterial” person do not refer to different “parts” of us, but take different angles of view on what we experience in our inner person: cognitive, affective, volitional, and more.

⁴ See the more full discussion in Averbeck, “Breath, Wind, Spirit, and the Holy Spirit,” 29-31 and Richard E. Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” in *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1:1 (Spring 2008): 30-33.



literally “there was no longer breathe (or ‘spirit,’ *ruakh*) in her” (1 Kgs 10:5b).

Sometimes “spirit” (*ruakh*) refers to moral or spiritual character: “My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my *spirit* longs for you” (Isa 26:9). Sometimes it refers to capacities of mind and will: “the skilled workers to whom I (God) have given wisdom” (lit. ‘a spirit of wisdom’; Exod 28:3). In other cases, it refers to a person’s disposition: for example, “if feelings (lit. ‘a spirit’) of jealousy come over her husband” (Num 5:14), and “their resentment (‘spirit’) against him subsided” (Judg 8:3). Proverbs 16:18-19 tells us a “haughty (‘high’) spirit” comes before a fall, in contrast to being “lowly in spirit.” Proverbs 17:22 refers to a “crushed spirit,” and, according to Prov 14:29, “Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered (lit. ‘short of spirit’) displays folly.” Many more passages in both the OT and NT could be cited and discussed, but this is enough for our purposes here.

Returning now to the argument in Romans 8, The translation of the Greek word “spirit” (*pneuma*), referring either to the Holy “Spirit” (upper case) of God or the “spirit” (lower case) of a human person is sometimes disputed in Romans 8:4-17. They are not distinguished in the Greek text, so it becomes a matter of contextual interpretation. In the NIV, Romans 8:10 says, “But if Christ is in you, then even though your *body* is subject to death because of sin, the *Spirit* gives life because of righteousness” (see similarly, e.g., KJV, NRSV, and ESV). NASB has human “spirit,” highlighting the correspondence between the human “body” and the human “spirit” in the verse, “If Christ is in you, though the body is *dead* because of sin, yet the *spirit* is alive because of righteousness” (NIV and NRSV put this rendering in the margin).

Similarly, in Rom 8:15 the NIV has “The *Spirit* you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the *Spirit* you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘*Abba, Father*’” (Aramaic *Abba* means “the father”). “*Abba, Father*” is the cry of a child who knows their father and cries out to him in confidence, joy, or need. The NIV capitalizes both occurrences of “Spirit.” The ESV has, “For you did not receive the *spirit* of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the *Spirit* of adoption as sons,” capitalizing the second but not the first. The NRSV rendering is “For you did not receive a *spirit* of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a *spirit* of adoption,” as does NASB, putting both in the lower case.⁵

The debate, however, ends in Rom 8:16, “The *Spirit* himself testifies with our *spirit* that we are God’s children” (NIV). The first *pneuma* clearly refers to the work of the Holy Spirit and the second says that the Holy Spirit does his testifying work with “our spirit,” referring to the human spirit. There is debate among scholars about whether “testifies with” (Greek *summarturei*) means that the Holy Spirit and human spirit both together testify to our adoption as the children of God, or whether the point is the Holy Spirit testifies to and assures our

⁵ See the helpful summary of views in C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh & New York: T&T Clark, 1975, reprinted with corrections 2001), 1.390 and 396. Cranfield himself accepts “Spirit” in v. 10b and “Spirit of adoption” in v. 15b. Likewise, Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 550-52 and 560-67 argues for “Spirit” in all of vv. 10 and 15.

Robert Jewett, *Romans, A Commentary*, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 491 remarks on the “bewildering variety of interpretive suggestions” that have been proposed for v. 10, but notes that most scholars see it as a reference “to the human spirit enlivened by Christ.” Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 697-99 and 703 accepts “spirit” in all of vv. 10 and 15. See more on this below.



human spirit that God has adopted us as his children.⁶

Both are true. When a person comes to Christ as his or her savior, she or he receives the Holy Spirit (see, for example, Acts 2:38-39 and 1 Cor 12:13). Within the person, the indwelling Holy Spirit works confidence in our human spirit from the start, and, furthermore, continues to convince and assure us of our adoption to God as his child from that point forward. As believers we are already convinced in our human spirit, and that conviction bears upon us as we go forward in life. The vicissitudes of life and our own temptations, weaknesses, and overall corruption, however, require the ongoing testifying work of the Holy Spirit in and with our human spirit, empowering our walk with the Lord.

The term “spirit” in the Bible when used for the human spirit refers to whatever is happening within the person. It can refer to anything we think or feel, our likes or dislikes, how we look at things, our view of events or people, whether of ourselves or others, our wisdom or foolishness, our state of being at any moment, whether gentle, fearful, powerful, perceptive, self-controlled, discouraged, in despair, or whatever. The main point here is that we have received the Holy Spirit within us; that is, within our human spirit. It is because of this that we can truly understand and take into our human spirit the reality of all that God has prepared for those who love him.

Like the wind, the Spirit of God is a powerful force, and it is especially in the human spirit as described above that God

6 Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1.403 and n. 1 argues forcefully for the view that the Holy Spirit testifies to our human spirit in the sense that it assures us that we are the adopted children of God (v. 16). Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 568-69 objects to Cranfield’s view and those who follow him, but, in the end, he admits that the “inner witness” of the Spirit results from this testifying (p. 569). This inner witness of the Holy Spirit in our human spirit was important in Luther’s understanding of the passage; Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. xv, newly translated and edited by Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), 234-35.

intends us to experience the full force of the Spirit in our lives (Rom 8:15-16). The point of the direct contact between God and us is between God's Spirit and our human spirit. This is where and how the core of God's transforming work takes place in us. Jesus said it this way: "Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them" (Mark 7:15).

1 Corinthians 2:10b-12 draws out the correspondence between the divine Spirit of God and the human spirit of a person in a helpful way:

. . . The *Spirit* searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts (lit., 'the things') of a man except the man's *spirit* (lit. *the spirit of the man*) within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts (lit., 'the things') of God except *the Spirit of God*. ¹² We have not received the spirit of the world but *the Spirit who is from God*, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (Greek *charizomai*, 'given by grace')

According to this passage, the "spirit" of the man knows the deep things of the man; that is, his inner thoughts, feelings, attitudes, etc. (v. 11a). Similarly, the "Spirit" of God knows the deep things of God (vv. 10b and 11b). Since believers in Jesus have received the Holy Spirit, we can understand "what God has freely given us" (v. 12); namely, what God has provided for us in our reception of the Gospel by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone (see the focus on the Gospel and the Spirit in vv. 1-10a).

CONCLUSION

Christians are first of all and above all, worshippers. Worship is about getting impressed with God: who he is, what he has done,



and what he has done for us. The problem is that we are so often impressed with other things, and what we are impressed with is what we live for. This is why worship of God can be such a powerful transforming practice in our lives, perhaps the most powerful. The “spirit of adoption” that the Holy Spirit of adoption is working into our hearts and lives is all about being so impressed with God’s love for me that I think, feel, decide, and live based on it. Moreover, worship in the spirit of adoption is about seeing God while looking life squarely in the face. It is about becoming more and more impressed with him amid the ongoing groaning’s in our lives (Rom 8:18-30). We do not leave this worship behind as we face our issues and concerns in daily life. The Psalms make this clear. They are songs that come out of all kinds of experiences in life and take us to God from there.

This is what the last section of Romans 8 focuses on. Basically, it is like a worship song to the love of God in Yeshua our Messiah. This is the song God wants us to be singing in our human spirit. By the power of the Spirit testifying to our spirit (Rom 8:16) we can embody a “spirit of adoption.” The song begins with God the Father’s adoptive love to us: “³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rom 8:31-32). God is not fickle. When he commits, he stays committed. It’s just the way he is. When we come to faith in God’s Son, God devotes himself to us in eternal love as an adopted child.

The song continues with Yeshua’s commitment to us as the one who stands in the throne room of the Father, speaking up in our defense. “³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then

is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (vv. 33-34). The following verses elaborate on the love Yeshua has for us: “³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . .” (vv. 35-36).

It concludes with an elaborate declaration of our victory in Christ. No matter what is happening in our world and in our personal life, the spirit of adoption we are singing in our human spirit lifts us up. All sorts of troubles come at us from various directions, but can any of them undo or overcome God’s love for us? The answer is, “³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vv. 37-39). This is the end of the matter. This is the song the Holy Spirit is working to produce in our human spirit. The “spirit of adoption” gets us caught up in the fact that we really are the adopted children of God, and of all things, heirs to the very Kingdom of God (Rom 8:16-17).

The Gospel is always good news to every one of us because, in our fallen condition, amid our groaning, there are always ways and places within us that the Gospel has not yet touched. We are still looking forward to glorification. We are not there yet (v. 30). In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is constantly working to see that all the nooks and crannies of my human spirit get occupied with this “spirit.” We worship God from here: there is absolutely nothing from anywhere or on any level in this entire cosmos that can separate us from the love of God. The more



deeply and comprehensively we are convinced of this in our human spirit by the Holy Spirit, the more there is nothing left to do but go love God and people. Nothing else makes sense to me anymore! I lose track of the other things that tend to tangle me up in my own passions and the darkness and groaning of this world.



The Puzzle of Paul and the Law A Hermeneutical Solution

Brian Rosner

The only thing upon which interpreters of Paul and the law seem to agree is that the subject is complex: “Paul’s views on the law are *complex*” (Ben Witherington III);¹ “Paul and the law – The subject is *complex*” (Donald A. Hagner);² “There is nothing quite so *complex* in Paul’s theology as the role and function which he attributes to the law” (James D.G. Dunn);³ “There is a general agreement that Paul’s view of the law is a very *complex* and intricate matter which confronts the interpreter with a great many puzzles” (Heiki Raisanen).⁴

1 Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998, 66. Italics added.

2 Donald A. Hagner, “Paul as a Jewish Believer – According to His Letters,” in Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (eds.), *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, 104. Italics added.

3 James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008, 441. Italics added.

4 Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*. 2nd edn., WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr,



The crux of the problem of Paul and the law is the fact that his letters present both negative critique and positive approval of the law. Paul describes the law as ‘holy, just and good’ (Rom. 7:12), a very positive gift of God (Rom. 9:4). On the other hand, he speaks of the law as an enslaving power, increasing trespass and used by sin to bring about death (Gal. 4:1-10; Rom. 5:20; 7:5).

Ephesians 2:15 is a clear example of negative critique of the law: Christ has “abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances.” Yet in Ephesians 6:1-2, we find positive approval of the law. Paul quotes one of the “commandments” that Christ had presumably done away with and uses it as an instruction for Christian living: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—this is the first *commandment* with a promise.” And in Romans 3:31 Paul asks whether his teaching about the critical nature of faith abolishes the law: “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?” Paul answers: “By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” The verb translated “overthrow” is *katargeō*, the same word that appears in Ephesians 2:15. If in Romans Paul insists his teaching about Christ and faith by no means abolishes the law, in Ephesians he affirms that Christ has indeed abolished it.

What makes Paul and the law a puzzle is such seeming contradictions. How are we to explain such tensions in Paul’s thought?

A HERMENEUTICAL SOLUTION

In my view, asking the question of ‘the capacity in which,’ or ‘the force with which,’ the law meets the Christian resolves the tension between the negative and positive material. If Paul’s

1987, xii. Italics added. Cf. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991, 211 commenting on the law in Rom. 8:4: “This is complex.”

letters are marked by negative and positive statements about the law, the question to ask is not “which bits” of the law is he referring to in each case, but the hermeneutical question of “in what sense,” or “as what”?

Paul generally deals with the law as a unity, customarily referring to Mosaic “law,” not “laws.” This means that, in the main, his responses to the law are not to its various parts, however we may wish to divide it, but to the law as a whole, which was the standard Jewish view in his day. And he can not only introduce “laws” from the Pentateuch (e.g., “you shall not covet” in Rom. 7:7) as “law,” but also narrative as “law,” as in Galatians 4:21 (Hagar and Sarah).

In the following sections I lay out in brief a hermeneutical solution to the puzzle of Paul and the law: in his letters Paul undertakes a polemical re-reading of the Law of Moses, which involves not only a repudiation and rejection of the law in one capacity and its replacement by other things, but also a re-appropriation of the law in two other ways.⁵

NOT “UNDER THE LAW”
EXPLICIT REPUDIATION OF THE LAW AS LAW-
COVENANT

Paul uses the phrase “under the law,” *hupo nomon*, eleven times (in eight verses) in Galatians, Romans, and 1 Corinthians. He employs the phrase: to indicate that Jews are “under the law” six times (1 Cor. 9:20 [3x]; Gal. 3:23; 4:4,5); to affirm that believers are not “under the law” three times (Rom. 6:14,15; Gal. 5:18); to affirm that he himself is not “under the law” once (1 Cor. 9:20);

⁵ This article summarizes and builds upon my book: *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013.



and to address believers who want to be “under the law” once (Gal. 4:21).

What does Paul mean when he says that believers in Christ are not under the law? Ephesians 2:15 clarifies the sense in which the law is abolished for Paul. If in Ephesians 2:1-10 Paul reveals how the mercy and grace of God solves the plight of every human being, in 2:11-22 he focuses on the plight of the Gentiles as a people estranged from God because of their alienation from Israel. In the former passage all those who believe are “made alive together with” Christ (v. 5), “raised together with” Christ (v. 6) and “seated together with” him (v. 6). In the latter passage Gentile believers are “citizens together with” the saints (v. 19), “joined together” into a holy temple (v. 21), and “built together” into a dwelling place for God (v. 22).⁶ God in Christ has achieved both peace between Jews and Gentiles and peace with himself. As Thielman puts it, Ephesians 2:14-18 “explores precisely how Christ’s death brought ‘peace’ (vv. 14,15,17) to a divided humanity and to a humanity divided from God.”⁷ It is in this context that Paul’s comments about the abolition of the law appear.

The clause of most interest for our purposes is v. 15a, which affirms that Christ has abolished the law. Although translated as a full sentence in most English versions, in the Greek “abolished” is a participle that modifies the breaking down (*lusas*) of the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles in the previous verse: Christ tore down the dividing wall *by abolishing the law*.⁸ He did this in order to (*hina*) “create in himself one new humanity” (v. 15b), achieving peace and reconciliation (vv. 16-17).

The verb “to abolish,” *katargeō*, is in fact a favourite word for Paul to describe what Christ does to the law. Its strength in this

6 Each of the six verbs in question has a *sun-* prefix in Greek underscoring the corporate focus of the whole chapter.

7 Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*. BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010, 149.

context can hardly be missed, as it sits in company with “tearing down” and “putting to death.” In 2 Corinthians 3:7 Paul uses it in the passive voice to say that the Law of Moses has been “set aside” (NRSV), with its “ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets.” Similarly in Romans 7:6 believers have been “discharged from the law,” just as a wife is “discharged from the law concerning the husband” when her husband dies (7:2). In each of these uses someone is released from the obligations to obey certain laws and free from the sanctions of disobedience to those laws.

But is it only certain elements of the Law of Moses that Christ has abolished in Ephesians 2:15? John Calvin held that Paul intends only certain ceremonies in the law are abolished.⁸ Some proponents of the New Perspective hold to a similar position in taking the phrase “commandments and ordinances” to refer only to those Mosaic laws that marked off Jews from Gentiles, thereby excluding them. While this position does fit with Paul’s main idea in the second half of Ephesians 2, the usage of *entolē* and *dogma* does not support a reference to such specific laws, and the categorizing of the law in such a manner is anachronistic. “Commandments and ordinances” is better understood as a reference to the content and promulgation of the Law of Moses; “Paul clearly intends the phrase to refer to the entire Mosaic law.”⁹ As Meyer put it, “the dictatorial character of the legal institute (as a whole, not merely partially) is exhibited.”¹⁰

In what sense then is the law abolished? Paul’s positive reference to the law in Ephesians 6:1-2 suggests that it is not in every sense. F.F. Bruce writes that what has been done away with

8 Cited in Thielman 2010, 169.

9 Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999, 197; cf. Thielman 2010, 169.

10 H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to Philemon*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880, 130.



in Christ is not the law “as a revelation of the character and will of God” but the law “as a written code, threatening death instead of imparting life.”¹¹ Schreiner draws a similar conclusion, arguing that the abolition of the law concerns “the commanding focus of the law . . . the law in terms of its requirements.”¹² Christians are not under the law as law-covenant.

Filling out the picture from Romans and Galatians, according to Paul Christians are not imprisoned and guarded under the law, nor are they subject to the law as a disciplinarian. Those who are under the law are under a curse and under sin. Even though the law promises life to those who keep it, it is evident that no one keeps the law. Consequently, no one receives life through the law. Christ has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances.

However, a caveat needs to be added: Paul does seem to distinguish how Jewish and Gentile Christians relate to the law. There is a sense in which all believers, both Jewish and Gentile, are not under the law, and a more limited sense in which Jewish believers may choose to live under the law. This more limited sense is clearly demonstrated in Romans 14:1-15:6, a passage in which Paul addresses the observance or non-observance of certain laws from the Law of Moses in the Roman churches. Two topics are mentioned directly, namely the restriction of diet (see 14:2, 21) and observing certain days in preference to others (14:5). Barclay summarizes the consensus of commentators: “In common with many others, I take these verses to refer to Jewish scruples concerning the consumption of meat considered unclean and the observance of the sabbath and other Jewish

11 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984, 298.

12 Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of the Law*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993, 39.

feasts or fasts.”¹³ Whereas “the weak” keep Jewish kosher laws and observe the sabbath, “the strong” do not.¹⁴

Paul counts himself among the strong (see 15:1) and is convinced that the Christian believer may “eat anything” (14:2); Christians are not under the law (6:14-15; 7:1-6). But while holding his own convictions, “Paul accepts an element of subjectivity in the definition of proper conduct relating to diet and calendar.”¹⁵ On such matters, each individual is to act in accordance with their own convictions (14:5-6). As he states in 14:22: “the faith that you have, keep to yourself before God.” In effect, Paul allows for the expression of Jewish cultural tradition, living under the law’s direction, but not its dominion.

NOT “WALKING ACCORDING TO THE LAW”
IMPLICIT REPUDIATION OF THE LAW
AS LAW-COVENANT

What an author does not say, especially when they are expected to say it, can be just as significant as what they do say. On this score Paul’s Jewish roots invite a comparison of his teaching with contemporary Jewish teaching on matters to do with the law. It is telling that Paul the Jew refrains from saying what we might expect him to say in connection with the law. Two case

13 John M. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*. WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011, 39. See his full treatment, 37-59, for an illuminating study that arrives at similar conclusions to my own.

14 The two groups probably did not divide neatly into Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians; “the weak” may have included some Gentile Christians and “the strong” may have included some of Paul’s Jewish Christian friends in Rome, such as Prisca and Aquila.

15 Barclay 2011, 51. Barclay 2011, 54 notes that Paul’s response to the issue is echoed by Justin, in *Dialogue with Trypho* 46-47, who accepts that Jewish Christians may practice circumcision, keep the sabbath and observe other Jewish laws, but strongly opposes attempts to persuade Gentile Christians to follow suit.



studies are enlightening: the metaphor of walking; and Jewish identity vis-à-vis the law in Romans 2.

“How to walk and please God” (1 Thess. 4:1) was a question asked and debated in every quarter of Judaism in the first century. The standard Jewish answer, based firmly on Scripture, was to walk “according to the law.” The Old Testament regularly calls Israel to “walk in God’s law / statutes / ordinances” (Exod. 16:4; Lev. 18:4; 26:3; 1 Kings 6:12; 2 Kings 10:31; 2 Chron. 6:16; Neh. 10:29-30; Jer. 44:23; Ezek. 5:6-7; 11:12; Pss. 77:10; 89:30; 119:1). Leviticus 26:3 is typical: “*Walk* in my statutes and keep my commandments and do them.”¹⁶

In agreement with this Jewish idiom, “teaching Christians how to walk” is a good description of Paul’s pastoral work. He uses the metaphor no less than thirty-two times in his letters. Banks notes that it “is present in every one of the letters ascribed to him [Paul] except Philemon, the briefest, and the Pastorals, the most disputed.”¹⁷ Holloway’s comprehensive study of Paul’s use of the metaphor of walking as a metaphor concludes correctly that “themes introduced by the verb [to walk] in Paul’s letters are fundamental ... *peripateō* acts as a thematic marker for Pauline ethics.”¹⁸ The striking thing about Paul’s use of the walking theme is that he never once says that believers should walk according to the law. Given his capacious knowledge and prodigious use of Scripture, this can hardly be accidental. Every one of his letters offers moral teaching, and yet Paul avoids the standard Jewish answer to the question of how to walk and please God.

16 The words “keep” and “do” in this verse translate *phulassō* and *poieō* respectively in the LXX. As we will note below, Paul uses both these verbs to describe how Jews are meant to respond to the law, but does not do so in relation to believers in Christ.

17 Robert Banks, “Walking as a Metaphor of the Christian Life,” in E.W. Conrad and E.G. Newing (eds), *Perspectives on Language and Text*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987, 304.

18 Joseph O. Holloway, *Peripateō as a Thematic Marker for Pauline Ethics*. San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992, vi.

What do we learn about Jews and the law in Romans 2? Paul says that Jews: rely on the law (v. 17a); boast about the law (v. 23; cf. v. 17b); know God's will through the law (v. 18); are educated in the law (v. 18); have light, knowledge, and truth because of the law (vv. 19-20); do the law (v. 25); observe the righteous requirements of the law (v. 26); transgress the law (vv. 23, 25 and v. 27); and possess the (law as) written code (v. 27). Significantly, every one of these ways in which Paul says Jews relate to the law (which are often reflected in writings by other Jews) is conspicuously absent when he describes how Christians relate to the law. Such absences provide implicit evidence that Paul taught that Christians are not under the law.

“UNDER THE LAW OF CHRIST”
REPLACEMENT OF THE LAW

If not according to the law, how are Christians to walk? The Christian walk “in newness of life” / “in the light” / “in the Spirit” / “according to the truth of the gospel” replaces life under the law.

Instead of walking according to the law, Paul recommends walking according to a different set of norms: not as the Gentiles do (1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 10:2; Eph 4:17), nor in idleness (1 Thess. 4:12), or as enemies of the gospel (Phil. 3:18); but according to or by the Spirit (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16), apostolic example (Phil. 3:17), apostolic teaching (2 Thess. 3:6), and the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:14); in Christ (Col. 2:6), in love (Rom. 14:15; Eph. 5:2), in newness of resurrection life (Rom. 6:4), and in good works (Eph. 2:10); as in the day (Rom. 13:13), as children of light (Eph. 5:15); by faith (2 Cor. 5:7); and wisely (Eph. 5:15; Col 4:5).¹⁹

19 The walking motif is obscured in many English Bible translations, which



However, many of the positive norms which Paul employs in the context of his use of the walking metaphor suggest that he presents the Christian walk as a replacement for the Jewish walk of obedience to the law. In particular, the language of “newness,” “light,” and the “Spirit” associate the Christian walk with the new age of the Spirit, a time when the Mosaic dispensation has come to an end.

Walking “in newness (*kainotēs*) of life” in Romans 6:4 is Paul’s description of life under grace, not under the law (see 6:15). The polemical edge to this new life is clear from the context in Romans. At the end of Romans 5 Paul states that “the law was brought in so that the trespass might increase” (5:20) and then feels obliged to explain how life under grace does not do likewise. That the noun “newness” points not only to resurrection life but can also point to life not under the law is evident from its other use in Romans 7:6: “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the *new way* of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” (TNIV). Paul’s use of the adjective *kainos* offers further confirmation that a walk in “newness of life” is the attractive alternative to life under the law: Paul writes of a “new covenant” (1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6), the “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) and a “new humanity” in Christ (Eph. 2:15; 4:24).

The other part of the phrase, “newness of *life*,” namely, “life,” also suggests that the Christian walk under grace is set in contrast to and substitute for living under the law. “Life” consistently connotes “eternal life” in Romans. When Paul speaks of “life” in Romans, especially in Romans 5-8, the implicit contrast with “death” is never far from view. In Romans 5 Adam’s trespass leads to death for all. And in Romans 7:5,10 and 13 it is the law that leads to death. The fact that the new life in Christ is the

prefer to speak of more literal “conduct.”

solution to life under the law is made explicit in 8:2: “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” Paul’s walk “in newness of life” is the happy substitute for a walk “in oldness of death” under the law.

Walking in the *light* or in the daytime in Ephesians 5:15 and Romans 13:13 respectively is not only an apt figure for appropriate conduct, it too points to life in the age of eschatological fulfillment. According to Conzelmann, Jewish apocalyptic theology regularly employed “light” language in a “generally eschatological” manner . . . the new thing is that for Paul it [the eschaton] is already present.”²⁰ Specifically, the visions of Isaiah 59-60 may have influenced Paul’s language of walking in the light.²¹ In Isaiah 59:9-11 sinful Israel is depicted as blind men walking in darkness but hoping for light and in Isaiah 60:19-20 the glory of God is an “everlasting light.” Then in Isaiah 60:1-3 the bright light of salvation dawns when the Lord returns to his people and “nations shall walk to your light.”²²

Walking in the *Spirit* is in Galatians 5 and Romans 8 in the contexts of both letters is set in opposition and as an alternative to walking according to the law. Furthermore, Beale argues convincingly that the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, which fleshes out what walking in the Spirit involves, is a general allusion to Isaiah’s promise that the Spirit would bring about abundant fertility in the coming new age.²³ Isaiah 32 and 57 prophesy that in the new creation the Spirit would be the bearer of plentiful fruitfulness, which Isaiah often interprets to be godly

20 Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975, 345-46.

21 A suggestion made to me by Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary student Jesse Peterson.

22 The Hebrew has *halak*, but in this context it is not usually translated literally. On the contrast of walking in newness of life as the superior eschatological alternative to the OT walk in the law, see Dunn 1988a: 315-16.

23 See G. K. Beale, “The Old Testament Background of Paul’s Reference to “the Fruit of the Spirit”,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15 (1) (2005), 1-38.



attributes such as righteousness, patience, peace, joy, holiness, and trust in the Lord, traits either identical or quite similar to those in Galatians 5:22-23. To walk in the Spirit is thus to experience the ethical blessings of the new age of the Spirit, an age in which the dispensation of the law has passed away.

Another example of Paul replacing the Law of Moses appears in Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill *the law of Christ* (*ton nomon tou christou*; Gal. 6:2).” The context of Galatians favours taking “the law of Christ” to mean behaviour in keeping with the Christ’s example. “Law” then has the meaning of “normative pattern” which all who are in Christ are called to fulfill in their relationships with others. The idea of Christ’s self-giving sacrifice appears throughout the letter: 1:3-4; 2:20; 3:13-14; 4:4-5. In this following of Christ’s example of self-sacrifice on behalf of others Paul leads the way, as 2:19-20 attest (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9-16). In this sense, “fulfilling the law of Christ” is the equivalent of Paul’s hope for the Galatian believers that “Christ be formed in you” (4:19).

“WITNESS TO THE GOSPEL”
RE-APPROPRIATION OF THE LAW
AS PROPHECY

To this point in our investigation of Paul and the law we have emphasized Paul’s negative stance towards the law, both his explicit and implicit rejection and replacement of the law. But these two moves are not the whole story. A third more positive take on the law is also evident across the Pauline corpus; the law has ongoing value and validity in two ways: as prophecy of the gospel and as wisdom for Christian living.

Romans is an ideal test case for the notion of the law as

prophecy. Five statements in Romans affirm the belief that the law points to salvation in Christ:

1. The gospel of God was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, which includes the law (1:2);
1. The disclosure of the righteousness of God is attested by the law and the prophets (3:21);
1. We uphold the law as prophecy, in stressing the critical role of faith in justifying both Jews and Gentiles (3:31);
1. The account of Abraham's faith being credited to him as righteousness was written for believers in Christ (4:23-24);
1. The revelation of the mystery, which is the gospel about Jesus Christ, is disclosed through the prophetic scriptures, which includes the law (16:25-26).

Consistent with this, Paul then cites the law and the prophets together in Romans as a witness to his gospel:

1. In Romans 4 the law and the prophets testify to righteousness by faith apart from the law: in connection with Abraham's faith in Genesis 15:6, 22 (Rom. 4:1-4,9ff); and David's forgiveness in Psalm 32:1-2 (Rom. 4:6-8).
1. In Romans 9 the law and the prophets testify to the partial hardening of Israel that has accompanied the gospel: in Genesis 21:12; 18:10, 14; 25:23 and Exodus 33:19; 9:16 (Rom. 9:6-18); and in Malachi 1:2-3, Isaiah 29:16; 45:9, 10:22-23; 1:9 and Hosea 2:23; 1:10 (Rom. 9:25-29).
1. In Romans 10 the law and the prophets testify to righteousness by faith: in Deuteronomy 9:4 and 30:11-14 (Rom. 10:6-9); and in Isaiah 28:16; 53:1 and Joel 2:32 (Rom. 10:11-15).



1. In Romans 10 the law and the prophets testify to not all Israelites accepting the gospel: in Deuteronomy 32:21 (Rom. 10:19); and in Psalm 19:4 and Isaiah 65:1-2 (Rom. 10:18, 20-21).
1. In Romans 11 the law and prophets testify to the hardening of Israel; “As it is written” in Deuteronomy 29:4 / Isaiah 29:10; “And David says” in Psalm 69:22-23 (Rom. 11:8-10).
1. In Romans 15 the law and the prophets testify to Gentiles glorifying God; in Deuteronomy 32:43; and in 2 Samuel 22:50 / Psalm 18:49, Psalm 117:1 and Isaiah 11:10.

The six examples illustrate Paul’s conviction that the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ for all who believe does not overthrow the law, but rather upholds the law as prophecy (3:31).

“WRITTEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION”

Both Paul’s moral teaching and the Law of Moses have a wisdom character. According to 2 Peter 3:15, “our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him.” Paul calls the Corinthians to “become wise”(1 Cor. 3:18); deplores the fact that none of the Corinthians is wise enough to settle the dispute between brothers (1 Cor. 6:5); calls the Roman Christians to “be wise about what is good” (Rom. 16:19); prays that believers will be filled with the perception of God’s will in all wisdom (Col. 1:9-10); admonishes and teaches “in all wisdom” (Col. 1:28), and expects believers to do the same (Col. 3:16); and tells the Colossian Christians to be “wise in the way you walk” (Col. 4:5) and the Ephesian Christians to “be careful how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise” (Eph. 5:15). Note not only how widespread

is this material, but also how Paul uses language expected of Jewish Torah observance, transferring it to Christian wisdom.

There is also evidence that Jews read the law as wisdom. The seed of the notion of the law as wisdom is in fact planted in Moses' description of the purpose of the law in Deuteronomy 4:6: "You must observe them diligently, for this will show *your wisdom and discernment* to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and *discerning* people!'"

Putting these two together, we find that Paul on occasion refers to the law as wisdom and reads it accordingly. In 1 Corinthians 10:11 Paul describes the law as "instruction," *nouthesia*, in Romans 15:4 as a source of moral "teaching," *didaskalia*; both terms are associated with wisdom in other parts of Scripture and in Jewish writings.

What does reading the law as wisdom look like? In practice, for Paul, reading the law as wisdom involves internalizing the law, and undertaking reflective and expansive applications, based in part on the moral order of creation and the character of God that stand behind the law.

The example of the laws of tithing is instructive. The practice of giving ten percent of your income is legislated in the Law of Moses (e.g., Lev. 27:30-33) and is taken by many Christians to be part of God's law that must be obeyed. Does Paul enforce or even recommend tithing? Despite having numerous opportunities to do so in his many discussions of giving, Paul nowhere endorses tithing; Paul is consistent with his often-repeated insistence that Christians are not under the law. But does that mean that the laws of tithing are irrelevant to believers in Christ? Paul's discussions of giving range widely, covering contentment, greed, the futility of riches, being rich towards God, and so on. What advice does Paul give when it



comes to how much believers should give? Three passages in particular address this subject.

First, in 2 Corinthians 9:7 Paul talks against any form of compulsion when it comes to giving: “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” His instructions on giving do not come with the force of law. There is no appeal to the moral law of the Law of Moses or any other law for that matter.

Secondly, in 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul recommends giving that is deliberate and proportional to your income: “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income.” Paul’s emphasis falls on the value of advanced planning and preparation rather than last-minute scrambling and pressure. The key word in the phrase, *in keeping with your income*, *euodoō*, has the sense “have things turn out well, prosper, succeed” (BDAG).²⁴ Paul recommends giving that is proportionate, a principle shared with the laws of tithing in Torah. It would seem that Paul has been instructed by the notion of a tithe, even if he does not enforce it as a law. Or as Keener points out,²⁵ Paul’s instruction that each one should give as they have prospered may be an application of Deuteronomy 15:14, the advice of which also seems to be indebted to the notion of tithing combined with the principle that those with more are expected to give generously: “Provide liberally out of your flock,

24 The translation *in keeping with your income* may be read in a very modern way, as though each one’s income would be consistent each week, while in Paul’s world most people would be more likely to have good and bad weeks, weeks in which things turned out well financially and weeks in which they did not (weeks in which they were regularly employed and weeks in which they were not or weeks in which they experienced greater or less benevolence on the part of others). The point is that those who made a lot of money in a given week would be expected to give more than those who did not.

25 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993, 489.

your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the LORD your God has blessed you” (Deut. 15:14; NRSV).

Thirdly, in 1 Timothy 6:17 Paul appeals to the generous character of God in creation as a motivation to give liberally: “Command those who are rich in this world to be generous and willing to share, not to put their hope in wealth, but in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” The person who “puts their hope in wealth” experiences the world as a problem of scarcity. Money’s function is to identify numerically what goods we most want, according to how scarce they are. Therefore “hope in wealth” is an agreement with that system of evaluation: whatever is scarce is valuable, and whatever valueless must be worthless. But the person who “hopes in God” experiences the world as an expression of his abundance. On this view, we are so awash with good things that we generally have no reason to worry. For such a person, it follows that monetary wealth is simply a tool for orderly sharing of this great, God-given abundance that surrounds us. Of course, such sharing is transacted amongst others who experience their world as a problem of scarcity, a system that sustains the monetary value of things. But the Christian is not hoodwinked by that system, and simply uses that system to bless others with God’s abundance. Such a person has “seen into the matrix,” and knows that abundance, and the possibility of sharing it, remains with or without any monetary system.

When it comes to giving and sharing possessions, it is indeed striking that Paul does not enforce the law of tithing. He does give commands (see 1 Tim. 6:17a), but not without exposing their foundations in the order of creation and character of God. And he has evidently been instructed by the law, as his appeal for proportionate giving suggests, a principle enshrined in the



tithes and offerings, and as the echo of Deuteronomy 15:14 in 1 Corinthians 16:2 demonstrates.

CONCLUSION

The subject of Paul and the law is rightly regarded as one of the knottiest puzzles in the study of the New Testament. Paul affirms that, “the law is holy, just and good,” insists that, “we uphold the law,” and asks rhetorically, “does the law not speak entirely for our sake?” Yet the same Paul also holds that believers in Christ “are not under the law,” believes that “the law brings death and works wrath,” and maintains that “Christ is the end of the law.”

It is possible to disagree with my understanding of some of the details and still see the three signature steps as characteristic of Paul’s dance with the law. Along with engaging in careful exegesis, the biggest task for students of Paul is to clarify the sense in which, and the extent to which, the apostle *repudiates*, *replaces*, and *re-appropriates* the Law of Moses.

With respect to the law, Paul is like the restaurant proprietor who fires a waitress, replaces her, and then hires her as the *maitre de’* and as the *sommelier*. Her function of serving tables would end and someone else would perform that role. But she would then carry out two different functions in the restaurant, as *hostess* and as *manager of the wine service*. To get the full picture of the status of this particular woman you need to take all three moves into account, namely her *termination*, *substitution*, and *re-hiring*.

A hermeneutical solution to Paul and the law reads Paul as undertaking a polemical re-reading of the Law of Moses, which involves not only a repudiation and rejection of the law as “law-covenant” and its replacement by other things, but also a re-appropriation of the law “as prophecy” (with reference to the

gospel) and “as wisdom” (for Christian living). This construal finds support not only in what Paul says about the law, but also in what he does not say and in what he does with the law. And it highlights the value of the law for preaching the gospel and for Christian ethics.



The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible

Mitch Glaser

Editor's Note: The reader will notice this article was originally written as a book review of the 1999 historical work by Dr. Irene Eber, *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible: S.I.J. Schereschewsky (1831–1906)*, which was in *Studies in Christian Mission*, Brill: Leiden, 1999. However, the length and content of the review merited inclusion with the the other journal articles related to Christians and the Hebrew Scriptures.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

Dr. Matt Friedman, professor of Intercultural Studies at Kingswood University, began his chapter in a book celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland by summarizing the ways God used Jewish believers in Jesus to touch the world. Dr.



Friedman offers the following summary by Rev. William Ewing who writes in 1910,

A youth named Lederer was converted in Budapest. Glowing with fresh enthusiasm, he went to New York. There he met a young, able, and accomplished student, Schereschewsky by name, and led him to Christ. Schereschewsky went to China, acquired the language, and translated for the first time the Old Testament into Chinese, direct from the original Hebrew, of which he was absolute master. His translation is the standard Chinese version to-day – the instrument used by every missionary in the land. By the blessing of God, the conversion of a Jewish youth in Budapest was the means of giving the Bible to the vast Empire of China. This one fact surely sheds a vivid light upon that word of the great Jewish Christian missionary “If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?”¹

Friedman’s mention of Schereschewsky provides the fundamental reason why so many who are concerned with both Jewish missions and world missions pay careful attention to the life and work of one who is affectionately called “the Jewish Bishop.”

I would augment Dr. Friedman’s summary of the life of Bishop Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky (1831–1906), who translated the Hebrew Old Testament into vernacular Mandarin, by noting he was the Anglican Bishop of Shanghai, China, from 1877 to 1884 and the founder of St. John’s University (1879), a well-known Academic institution in China.

He was baptized by immersion in 1855 and joined a Baptist congregation, but he soon became a Presbyterian and went to Western Theological Seminary (now Pittsburgh

1 Qtd. in Matt Friedman, “Back to the Future: Nineteenth Century Foundations for Messianic Judaism” in *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic World: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*, edited by Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 204.

Theological Seminary), a Presbyterian Church-sponsored seminary.

Two years later he again changed denominations and became Episcopalian, entering General Theological Seminary in New York City. He did not complete his degree as he volunteered for mission work in China. On May 3, 1859, he was appointed as a missionary to China and ordained as a deacon on July 17, 1859 at the Episcopal Calvary St. George's church in Manhattan, New York City. He sailed to China from New York on July 14, 1859. During the journey, which took almost six months, he received instruction in Chinese. Along with another missionary, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Boone on October 28, 1860.

He translated Old Testament into Mandarin, which was published in December 1874. Schereschewsky was ordained the Bishop of China in 1878. On April 21, 1868, he married Susan Mary Waring (1837–1909). One observer commented, “No one save the Bishop himself knows how much the successful completion of his work is due to the devoted self-sacrifice of Mrs. Schereschewsky.”²

The American Bible Society published his revised Mandarin Old Testament in 1899, and the entire “easy Wenli” Bible was published in 1902. The demand overwhelmed the publisher. Schereschewsky also participated in the committee to translate the New Testament, which was published in 1872.³

Missionary historian Marshall Broomhall wrote: “The success of this version was more immediate, more widespread, and more permanent than the most sanguine of the translators had hoped. It marked an epoch in the history of the Bible in China.”⁴

In the same year, the *Book of Common Prayer* appeared. John

2 James Arthur Muller, *Apostle of China, Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky, 1831-1906* (New York: Morehouse Pub. Co., 1937), 236–237.

3 Muller, 65.

4 Muller, 88.



Burdon, the Anglican bishop of Hong Kong, partnered with the bishop in this effort. The two also translated several hymns.

Schereschewsky's major ministry focus and greatest achievement, however, was the painstaking translation of the Old Testament into Mandarin, which was published in December 1874. The American Bible Society not only supported this project but paid the salaries of Schereschewsky and one of his Chinese assistants.

His remarkable linguistic proficiency included the ability to speak thirteen languages and read twenty. Despite his almost total paralysis later in life and confinement to a chair all day long, he labored at his task for an average of nine hours a day for the rest of his life.⁵

A fellow bishop remarked, after visiting Schereschewsky in his study, that he was "much superior to myself and all his surroundings. . . . He struck me as a man not only of great scholarship but of exceptional refinement of temper and nobility of spirit"⁶ Commenting on Schereschewsky's monumental achievement, the eminent Presbyterian missionary W.A.P. Martin wrote, "Such an example of heroic perseverance, combined with such abilities and such antecedent preparation for his work, is rarely met."⁷

After his best assistant left to rejoin his family in China, however, Schereschewsky found it very difficult to get along with the man who replaced him. "What with scribal irritation and delays in printing and printer's errors, which were legion, the Bishop found it 'rather uphill work.'"⁸

5 "Samuel Schereschewsky," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, accessed January 20, 2023, <http://bdconline.net/en/stories/samuel-isaac-joseph-schereschewsky>.

6 Muller, 215.

7 Muller, 220.

8 Muller, 234.

Work at it he did, nevertheless, for eight hours a day, six days a week.

The Bible Society published the new Mandarin version, including his revised Mandarin Old Testament, in 1899. The entire Easy Wenli Bible was published in 1902. The demand for it overwhelmed the publisher. One observer commented, “No one save the Bishop himself knows how much the successful completion of his work is due to the devoted self-sacrifice of Mrs. Schereschewsky.”⁹

He died in 1902 and his wife, Mary Schereschewsky, died on August 20, 1909. She had been nearly blind since before her husband died. All agreed it would have been impossible for Schereschewsky to have done his work without her constant and comprehensive support and help. She was buried in Tokyo beside her husband. One cross mark their graves.

ABOUT IRENE EBER (1929-2019)

The author of this biography of the Jewish Bishop was written by Israeli scholar, Irene Eber. Dr. Eber was a Holocaust survivor and China scholar who was the first to hold the Louis Frieberg chair of Asian Studies at Hebrew University. She received her PhD in 1966 from the Claremont Graduate University in California in Chinese Intellectual History.

In his moving eulogy of Dr. Eber, the former Chairman of the Department of East Asian Studies at the Hebrew University, Dr. Yitzhalk Shichor writes,

She was born in Halle (Germany). Irene’s family was expelled to Mielec in Poland in 1938, when she was nine. She managed to survive, spending the war years hiding in a

9 Müller, 236–237.



chicken coop, in misery and deprivation, a story which she told in her autobiographical book *The Choice: Poland, 1939-1945* (New York: Schocken, 2004), and after the war left as a refugee to the United States. In the United States she could have studied anything but chose Chinese intellectual history. Unknowingly, this was her first step on her way to Israel.

He continues,

The story of the late Professor Irene Eber, who passed away on April 10, 2019, is a typical Jewish story and I want to tell her story from my own perspective. Few people are aware of the story. In 1987 I ended my term as chairman of the Department of East Asian Studies at Hebrew University. Prof. Eber was selected to replace me. Although her academic work began with China's intellectual history, and more specifically with one of modern China's leading reformers, much of her later efforts were concentrated on the links between Judaism and the Jews with China. Her latest book *Jewish Refugees in Shanghai in 1933 through 1947* was published months ago on March 13, 2019. She left a legacy of studies on China, its intellectual history, Confucianism, Jewish communities in China and the history of Judaism in China.¹⁰

From the perspective of Messianic Jewish history, Eber, perhaps because she was a secular Jewish scholar, did not focus on or fully comprehend the spiritual commitments of Bishop Schereschewsky. She described what I would characterize as his spiritual choices and concomitant actions in institutional terms such as his relationship to the Episcopal Church, becoming a bishop, and the details of interchurch politics both in the United States and on the mission field of China. Eber focused on Schereschewsky's work of translation methodology, and to some

10 Eber was a member of the Middle East Institute and participated regularly with their programs (Yitzhak Shichor, "Professor Irene Eber, 1929-2019," Middle East Institute New Delhi, April 12, 2019, <http://www.mei.org.in/mei-remembers-18>). Also see: Holly Mengel, "Irene Eber's 'Choice' to Tell Her Story," Unique at Penn, September 16, 2021, <https://uniqueatpenn.wordpress.com/2021/09/16/irene-ebers-choice-to-tell-her-story/>.

degree his personal history and accomplishments. Yet she says very little about the spiritual dynamic that led to his dedication to Jesus the Messiah and the personal spirituality that motivated him to do the work he was best known for within China. To learn more about his “conversion” and spiritual pilgrimage, one must review other sources and biographical material beyond the pale of Eber’s understanding and interests.

FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE

This article will focus on Schereschewsky’s faith in Jesus the Messiah as a Jewish man and as a well-trained student of the Bible and Hebrew language. We will explore the ways Dr. Irene Eber, the author of the biography, understood the bishop’s faith and what this meant to him in various areas of his life. We believe his faith in Jesus the Messiah was at the core of his motivation for the embracing lifelong work of translating the Hebrew Bible into Chinese and doing so with great sacrifice of soul. Eber places greater focus on the socio-historical dimensions of Schereschewsky’s life, yet we suggest that if this inner spiritual drive is not fully understood, it is impossible to fully understand the accomplishments of the bishop. We will attempt to add this dimension and perspective to Eber’s most able effort.

THE EARLY YEARS

The bishop was born Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky in May 1831 to an Orthodox Jewish family in the town of Touragè, a *shtetel*¹¹ in southwestern Lithuania.

11 One of a series of small Jewish villages dotting the landscape of the Pale of Settlement, which included areas of Russian Lithuania, where the bishop was



The family was well-off and lived in a college town where a third of the total population of 6,655 was Jewish. His father spent many months away from home cutting down trees and bringing them to the sawmills in the areas primarily owned by Jewish families. Touragè was built on a road with commercial and religious connections to many other cities, and the culture was influenced by the Jewish communities in the west and east.

The Schereschewsky family was well-known in Jewish Lithuania and was Ashkenazi, though his mother was part Sephardic. He was named Samuel Joseph after his father, which was a Sephardic tradition. He learned the basics of Jewish life and religion, attending cheder (weekly Hebrew school). At first, he did not attend a yeshiva (boys' private religious school) as his parents felt it was too expensive.

However, as time went by, Schereschewsky faced the possibility of long-term conscription into the Russian army. Since attending yeshiva was one way to avoid that possibility, his family decided to send their son to the well-known yeshiva in Zhitomir, a town in what is now Ukraine. He left home to study in 1847 at sixteen years of age.

The yeshiva in Zhitomir was well-known and yet for a time was viewed as “modern” as it was heavily influenced by the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment. He studied more secular topics during this unique moment in the yeshiva's history. Schereschewsky enjoyed his time and completed a four-year general degree after which he was able to specialize in rabbinic studies or teacher training.¹²

According to Eber, “it furthermore exposed young Jewish boys, most of them probably for the first time, to non-Jews who are neither peasants nor servants.” Some of the teachers at this

born.

¹² Eber, *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible*, 26.

yeshiva were leading men of what was known as the Russian Haskalah and wrote books and articles on topics related to society and religion in both Yiddish and Hebrew.¹³

Schereschewsky and the other students were allowed to wear European dress and not required to wear a yarmulke. The Bible was taught in German—most likely Mendelssohn’s (1729–1786) translation. “Bible and language study were separated, thereby allowing teachers to instruct their charges in the systematic study of the Hebrew language.”¹⁴

Eber suggests this early experience caused the young Schereschewsky, who was reading a translated Bible, to become aware of the importance of a well-prepared translation. This yeshiva and others like it grew increasingly unpopular with the local and traditional orthodox community and closed in 1885. According to Eber, “these new *republic schools* were said to support apostasy and to be steppingstones to conversion. . . . Such fears were not exaggerated for even if they did not actively support apostasy, it was certainly a means towards secularization.”¹⁵

According to Eber it was quite possible that the teachers at this Yeshiva studied other German philosophers and that Schereschewsky was introduced to these writers and secular thinkers.

She adds a startling statement that gives a window into the role of Jewish missions in Lithuania at this time, “the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, moreover, was circulating large numbers of Yiddish and Hebrew Old and New Testaments, and the latter especially aroused the curiosity of young inquiring minds.”¹⁶

13 Ibid, 26–27.

14 Ibid, 27.

15 Ibid, 29.

16 Ibid, 30.



BECOMING A BELIEVER
IN JESUS THE MESSIAH

Eber claims that not only did this Haskalah-influenced study program open the mind of Schereschewsky and influence his scholarship, but it also impacted his soul. She was certain the London Society¹⁷ New Testaments, in whole or in part, found their way into the school. However, as much as I personally appreciate hearing about the efforts of the Jewish missions, Eber did not substantiate her claim with any noted research though these resources were available at the time Eber wrote the book.

We do not understand why she did not take this extra step to review various LJS annual reports and histories of the LJS available at the Bodleian library at Oxford. This could easily be done, but it seems the available resources were not used or noted.

She simply writes, “whether it [the New Testament] was on one of the teachers’ bookshelves, or whether one of the students brought it to the Yeshiva, it was most certainly clandestinely passed from hand to hand.” She suggested the New Testament both fascinated and repelled young readers. She adds, “Interest in this text, so very different from anything that they ever read, probably ranged from intense rejection to mild curiosity.”¹⁸

Yet, once again, she shows no actual historical documentation Schereschewsky found or read the New Testament in the yeshiva, though there is no evidence to believe she is mistaken or overstating. She writes “there is little doubt Schereschewsky’s first encounter with Christianity, via the

17 The London Jews Society (LJS) was a Jewish mission sponsored by the Anglican church.

18 Ibid.

New Testament, occurred at the yeshiva.”¹⁹ Years later in 1859, his letter of application to enter a missionary career stated he had been a believer in Jesus for seven years. This would mean he became a Jesus follower in 1852.

It is possible his newfound faith was one of the reasons he decided to withdraw from the yeshiva as Schereschewsky left Zhitomir in 1852 and arrived in Breslau, Germany after an additional year of rabbinic studies in Frankfurt. Eber asks, “was there a chance encounter with a missionary? Or did someone give him a name, an address, and suggest contacting members of the London Society in Germany, where the London Society has been especially active in the past two decades?”²⁰

Once again, this is speculation on Eber’s part as she does not utilize archival material and apparently leans upon more anecdotal information.

According to Eber, upon arrival in Breslau, Germany, Schereschewsky worked as a *glazier*— one who works with glass. In an interesting footnote, Eber quotes David Eichhorn, a Jewish scholar who wrote his dissertation on nineteenth-century Jewish missions and mentions that one of the occupations Hebrew Christians were taught in Germany was to work with glass.²¹

Once again, Eber takes some liberty in positing the ways Schereschewsky may have been influenced by LJS missionaries. She mentions, “for the activities of the London Society and other less well-known and short-lived societies were directed towards Jewish paupers in addition to non-Jewish immigrants in Germany’s port cities.” She adds, “still, the young Schereschewsky, now 19 or 20 years old and about to

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid, 31.

21 Ibid, 32.



embark on a momentous journey into the outside world would have had few misgivings about leaving Eastern Europe.”²²

She suggests he may have studied at the University of Breslau, but there is little evidence to substantiate this idea. She adds that Schereschewsky may have heard of Dr. Henricus Christophilius Neumann (1778–1865) through sympathizers in Zhitomir. Neumann was a lecturer in Hebrew at the University of Breslau and, according to Eber, was a covert “agent” of the LJS. The history of the LJS corroborates the story as Neumann served with the LJS for two decades and taught at the University of Breslau. He was also a Jewish believer in Jesus.

According to Eber, “If these assumptions are correct, Schereschewsky’s arrival in Breslau was far from accidental. Even as early as 1852 he may have accepted the warm fellowship and help offered by the LJS rather than turning to the mainstream Jewish community.”²³

We can see that Eber is framing Schereschewsky’s turning to Christianity as something based upon his need, cultural background, and the possible “duplicitous” attention from members of the LJS towards young impressionable men who were deemed ready to move outside of Orthodoxy. She wrote,

In spite of their small membership and their essentially ephemeral existence, the many Protestant missionary societies were amazingly active, with missionaries and converts or potential converts maintaining personal relationships between Europe and America. The intensely mobile Jewish population, both within and without Germany, provided a fruitful field for missionaries to extend a helping hand to single young men only just emerging from close knit small communities in Eastern Europe. Although the missionary goal was eventual conversion or baptism—an effort that sometimes took years—they also offered advice,

²² Ibid, 33.

²³ Ibid.

shelter and employment. Saving souls often began with saving bodies. In addition, missionary societies provided a new social context for people who were cast adrift and had a need to belong. The missionaries were active in most major East Prussian and Silesian cities, for example, Berlin, Leipzig and Cologne. The number of Protestant baptism in Breslau was especially high.²⁴

Once again Eber fails to quote directly from LJS missionary reports, which were readily available. There is no reason to question her quantification of the LJS' efforts at the time as various resource corroborate the level of their missionary work in Germany at the time.²⁵ She does make some use of W.T. Gidney's history of the LJS as a secondary source quoted by Dr. Louis Meyers, a well-known and respected Messianic Jew and historian of missions to the Jews during this period.

Eber goes into some length regarding the "conversion" of Schereschewsky, suggesting he became a believer in Jesus in Breslau. She shows a bit more understanding of the gospel message the bishop believed:

The message was simple and, while it may have been expressed in different ways, it always contains two central elements: acceptance of Jesus Christ as the savior, and the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. Belief in Jesus was sometimes described as the direct approach to the "heart of God" through Jesus, the Savior, with no need for human intermediaries. Messianic expectations, the missionaries explained, is a part of Judaism. Even the holy trinity, without

24 Ibid, 33–34. She draws her information from an article penned by Dr. Louis Meyer writing in the *Missionary Review of the World*, vol. 15, 12 [December 1902], 905–906. She also quotes from LJS historian, W.T. Gidney's work on the history of the LJS (Eber, *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible*, 128–129).

25 W.T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, from 1809 to 1908* (London: London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, 1908).



which the coming of the Messiah cannot be explained, is mentioned in Jewish sources.²⁶

She goes on to say “the Jew was not asked to give up anything” regarding identity:

All Jews were asked to do was to include faith in Jesus Christ in their belief. They did not have to join the church either before or after baptism, they can continue to observe some or all of the Jewish commandments (*mitzvot*) if they so desired. As part of their recompense, Jews would gain entrance into a new congregation of believers in which they would have full status. No longer outsiders, they would belong.”²⁷

Eber thought Schereschewsky and other “converts” to Christianity through the mission agencies were told that they would not lose their Jewish identity but rather it would be strengthened. Far from losing their Jewish identity, the converts’ Jewish identity is reaffirmed. She said that the missionaries taught the Jewish believers that “their role in God’s plan [was] given a special, universal meaning. Proselytizing Jews is thus a holy task, and each Jewish conversion brings the world process one step closer to salvation for all.”²⁸

This accurately reflects what she believed the missionaries were teaching Schereschewsky regarding Romans 11:25–36.

However, Eber does not think Schereschewsky was baptized in Breslau, which in Eber’s mind was synonymous with becoming a believer in Jesus and joining the church. She writes,

More importantly, [those who influenced him in Breslau] also played a role in his intellectual development and his concept of mission, enunciated at a later time. They also contributed toward his self-identification as a Christian who wished to

26 Ibid, 34.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid, 35.

retain his culture and past experience by integrating them with another faith. His encounter with Judeo-Christian ideas, both in conversations and from reading about them [in various missionary publications] probably left a deep and lasting impression. Many years later, Schereschewsky's name still appeared on the patrons list of several Hebrew Christian Brotherhoods, as these societies were later called in America.²⁹

Eber concludes that Schereschewsky's academic and religious mentor in Breslau was Dr. Neumann, whose academic career began in 1832 and greatly influenced both Jewish students and more learned Jews. She writes,

Still active in the early 1850s, when he was already some seventy years old, he was the sort of grandfather figure young Schereschewsky had never known. A kindly old man, Neumann cared especially for the young men among his students who, having left home, were now embarked on a new and daunting venture. . . . he provided a model for young men like Schereschewsky. Associated with the London Society for over two decades, when young Samuel arrived in Breslau, it is likely that Neumann introduced the newcomer to the ideology of Jewish Christianity. He may have even directed Schereschewsky's academic studies at a crucial time in the young man's life. . . .

Literary texts were used for the teaching of European languages, and unspecified historical texts, portions of the Old Testament and prophetic books for Hebrew. Between 1842 and 1845 . . . Neumann taught a variety of Hebrew grammar courses based on Genesis, the Books of Samuel and Malachi. He also taught the Psalms, Amos and selected historical texts. He seems not to have authored many books.³⁰

She adds, most importantly from our perspective, rational theology and biblical criticism did not flourish at Breslau. The

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid, 36.



faculty for Protestant theology gave Schereschewsky access to the works of men who were well-known and more conservative scholars of the Hebrew Old Testament at the time. Eber states, “in short, Breslau was his first systematic introduction to the New Testament, to Christian theology and to ethics as well as to Greek, English and French.”³¹

Again, Eber was uncertain whether Schereschewsky was officially enrolled at Breslau or if he simply attended lectures and was influenced by Neumann. However, she writes, “the Greek he learned in Breslau was sufficient to allow him to read the New Testament in that language, as was noted later by his American teacher, Professor Samuel H Turner.”³²

Additionally, Eber mentions China was not quite on the consciousness of German theologians and Christians in the West as it was to become thirty years later. But reaching the Chinese with the gospel message was already a growing concern in the early 1850s. There was a well-known lecture in 1850 by Carl Godslowe who called for men and women to become missionaries to China. She says it is possible he was influenced by the echoes of this message reverberating through the community of faith in Breslau.³³

In the 1840s and 50s there was increasing interest in missionary work in China as well as the translation of the Bible into Chinese. Eber summarizes the Breslau portion of Schereschewsky’s life as follows:

Schereschewsky must have had access to these articles in Breslau, thereby further stimulating his interest in Bible translation awakened by reading the Mendelssohn Bible [a German version of the Old Testament]. . . .

31 Ibid, 37.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid, 37.

The problems connected with translating the Bible into Chinese provided a linkage that joined intellectual interest with personal and spiritual needs. Although the connection between Bible, mission and translating would have been only vaguely articulated then, if at all, it partially explains why Schereschewsky took the fateful step of immigrating to America in 1854 and why, after only a little more than a year at the Western Theological seminary, he requested a missionary appointment in 1857.³⁴

NEW YORK CITY
AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

Caroline Cheryl Schereschewsky, Joseph's daughter, wrote that her father had come to America because, "democratic ideals appealed to him because Jews did not have to suffer the indignities they did in Europe."³⁵

Eber mentions that Schereschewsky had a letter of introduction to John Neander "a convert and missionary agent" (note Eber's prejudicial language) given to him by John Jacobi, who was a staff member for LJS and immigrated to America in the 1820s. Jacobi was the publisher of a German newspaper in St. Louis and sporadically acted as an agent for the American Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews.³⁶ Eber notes,

Neumann may have arranged this letter, although the missionaries also recruited emigrants waiting at ports of embarkation. One such short-lived missionary group in Bremen was the 'Society of Friends of Israel' in which

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid, 40.

36 Ibid, 41.



Neander was active before his departure for America in 1845 and with whom Jacobi had worked.³⁷

She writes about Schereschewsky possibly joining a group, “not so much out of solidarity with the Jewish community as for companionship and practical support in managing the crossing.”³⁸

Eber obviously held a traditional mainstream Jewish view of Jewish believers in Jesus and did not recognize the depth of faith and connection with other Jewish believers and Jesus as the real reason why Schereschewsky identified with other Messianic Jews in America at that time. She viewed this move in sociological rather than spiritual terms and believed Schereschewsky was acting out of need and not necessarily out of conviction.

Eber mentions that Schereschewsky would have landed in New York City in March or August 1854. Immediately, according to Eber, his letter of introduction proved effective. “Instead of turning for help to any of the existing German or Jewish networks, he was aided by the American Society and its German Jewish converts.”³⁹ Eber writes,

During the year and a half that he remained in New York, Schereschewsky lived, worked and walked in these parts of Manhattan [the poor areas]. Here, and venturing into the newer business districts west, he plied his trade as glazier, needing only his diamond for cutting and a frame box with glass. . . .

The Jewish population within the immigrant communities grew by leaps and bounds. Between 1825 and 1865, the 10,000 strong community increased to 150,000. The Jewish community of New York lost its monolithic character as the initial Sephardi community of Portuguese and Spanish Jews

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid, 43. The American society refers to the American Association for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Jews, which was established by Joseph Fry, the founder of the LJS in the UK.

was soon outnumbered by the German Jews and a sprinkling of Polish, Russian and other Eastern European Jewish co-religionists. Although by 1850 they were nine congregations with synagogues on the lower East Side, congregational life among the German-Jewish immigrants developed slowly.⁴⁰

According to Eber, who viewed religious fervor primarily in sociological terms of changes and circumstances, the reactions of this group to their new life in a new land were often mixed. They resisted change yet were also quick to abandon their old ways and tended to rapidly assimilate. “Among these uprooted men and women, Protestant missionaries—themselves mostly immigrant converts—sought candidates for conversion.”⁴¹

According to Eber, the Jewish missions were active for more than two decades and mostly interdenominational in affiliation as their baptized converts were free to join any church though they seemed to maintain close connections with the Presbyterian churches. She writes,

Despite their widespread activities none of their missionary societies had any spectacular success with Jewish immigrants to the New World. Indeed, their energetic proselytizing galvanized community leaders against the missionaries, stirring them to counteract the missionary challenge. To that end, they worked to build stronger community among the immigrants by melding disparate Jewish groups together.⁴²

As mentioned, Eber held academic prejudices towards Jewish believers in Jesus and missions to the Jews. This perspective kept Eber from fully appreciating the life, motivation, and accomplishments of the Jewish bishop.

40 Ibid, 45–46.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid, 47. Eber draws these conclusions from Jonathan Sarna, “The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions,” *The Journal of American History* 68, no. 1 (June 1981): 49.



According to his daughter, in the spring of 1855, while celebrating the Passover with believers, Schereschewsky finally committed himself to Christ. An observer wrote, “At last he rose, and in a voice stifled with emotion, said, ‘I can no longer deny my Lord. I will follow Him without the camp [a reference to Hebrews 13:13].”⁴³

SEMINARY TRAINING AND CALL TO CHINA

Schereshewsky began his Christian theological training at the Presbyterian Seminary in Pittsburgh. For several reasons, he did not find the training to be valuable and was not a committed Presbyterian. He transferred to General Theological Seminary, an Episcopal seminary New York City. He already had a missionary burden for China and was hoping this move would enable him to receive an appointment as a missionary to China in order to translate the Bible, which he believed was God’s call on his life.

MINISTRY IN CHINA

Schereshewsky arrived in Shanghai on December 21, 1859, was ordained into the Anglican priesthood on October 28, 1860, and served in Beijing from 1862 until 1875 as part of the Beijing Translation Committee. He was the primary translator for the Psalms and eventually the Book of Common Prayer.

He completed the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Mandarin in 1874. In the preface to the translation, he wrote the following, which sums up his life’s chief work:

43 Muller, 32.

This book is the holy scripture. The holy scripture was revealed by God, so that men will know the true way. Should men desire to examine the rules of life and death, heavenly Justice, the distinction between body and soul after death as such man may attain the heavenly kingdom, separating from hell, and giving them a method for saving their souls.⁴⁴

He returned to the United States in 1875 and eventually accepted a call to be the Bishop of Shanghai and was consecrated at Grace Church, in Greenwich Village on October 31, 1877. He returned to Shanghai and founded St. John's College in 1879. He served as Bishop of Shanghai until 1883, when he resigned for health reasons and returned to the United States.

According to one biographer the details of the illness are as follows,

During 1879, Schereschewsky translated the whole Prayer Book into Wen-li, or classic style. Later that year, he went up the river to Wuchang, and began the translation of the Apocrypha. He had only completed one book when he was smitten down during the intense heat of the summer of 1881, and his physicians ordered his removal to Europe. He left for Geneva, Switzerland in 1882 and resigned his Bishopric in 1883 when it became evident that his treatment would be protracted.⁴⁵

Twelve years later he returned to China although, according to Marshall Broomhall, a historian of the Chinese church, he became "paralyzed in every limb, and with his powers of speech partly gone, sitting for nearly twenty-five years in the same chair, slowly and painfully typing out with two fingers his Mandarin

44 "Preface," *The Old Testament in Mandarin* (Peking: American Bible Society, 1875), P1.

45 "Dr. Joseph Schereschewsky," *Messianic Good News*, October 5, 2012, <http://www.messianicgoodnews.org/dr-joseph-schereschewsky/>.



translation of the Old Testament and Easy Wen-li translation of the whole Bible”⁴⁶

He did complete a new translation of the Hebrew Bible into Mandarin and a new translation of the New Testament into Mandarin in 1899.

SCHERESCHEWSKY,
HIS JEWISH IDENTITY
AND TRIP TO KAIFENG

Early in his career, Schereschewsky traveled to the traditional Jewish area within China. Kaifeng was one of the early capitals of China and would today be considered a third-level city in China. I had an opportunity to visit Kaifeng,⁴⁷ meet some of the current Jewish community living in this area and visit a museum dedicated to the history of the Chinese Jews. Schereschewsky was tested by his ministry in Kaifeng. He traveled there expecting to be able to minister to the Chinese Jews, perhaps exploring the more direct missionary side of his responsibilities as a bishop. Or perhaps it was more than this, and he was trying to do something spiritual for his own people?

However, he found very few Chinese Jews living there, and secondly, did not find them to be open to the gospel message. This frustrated the bishop but also reaffirmed his call not to be a direct missionary, but rather a Bible translator as his way of helping the Chinese people.

Schereschewsky was able to accept his spiritual gifts and

46 Marshall Broomhall, ed. *The Chinese Empire: A General and Missionary Survey* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1907), 442.

47 Madison Jackson, “The Jews of Kaifeng: China’s Native Jewish Community,” *My Jewish Learning*, accessed January 26, 2023, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jews-of-kaifeng-chinas-only-native-jewish-community/>.

nature, recognizing that he had quite a bit to contribute to God's work on earth, but it would not be in the form of direct missionary work. There is no doubt the bishop loved his own Jewish people. It was not a lack of love that kept him from continuing to minister in Kaifeng, but rather his sense of duty and calling, and keen ability to focus on his task of translation.

Eber explores Schereschewsky's Jewish identity in chapter seven of her biography. She notes Schereschewsky attempted to integrate his identity as both a Jew and a Christian.

He never denied his Jewish antecedents. Nor was he allowed to forget them. Lydia Fey in Shanghai [one of his fellow missionaries in China] called him a Polish Russian Jew. . . . A visitor in Cambridge described him as "the most Jewish appearing man." But, aside from Lydia Faye (who gave the word, "Jew" pejorative implications), and especially in the early years of the mission, Schereschewsky was apparently accepted precisely for who he was: a devout Christian of Jewish background.⁴⁸

Eber further explores,

That Schereschewsky never saw himself as anything but a Christian in adulthood is beyond doubt. But even if a Jew cannot reconcile Jesus Christ, the son of God and Messiah, with Judaism—something Schereschewsky clearly knew—he nonetheless succeeded in integrating his Jewish past with his Christian present. Both parts of his life, one so different from the other, became necessary ingredients of who he was.

The decision to convert and accept baptism is revealing. We can safely dismiss the suggestion that Schereschewsky sold out to buy in. . . . In New York, if not earlier, Schereschewsky had found a group of like-minded man, Hebrew Christians, among whom baptism was not a prerequisite for acceptance.

⁴⁸ Eber, *The Jewish Bishop*, 242.



Nor did abject poverty drive him to baptism. He had friends, and he had a trade, such as it was.⁴⁹

His daughter Carolyn suggested that her father had a life-changing spiritual experience. Carolyn wrote, in Breslau “one day he entered a Cathedral, and a light shown upon the crucifix on the altar, a thrill passed through him.”⁵⁰

Eber claims that Carolyn never refers to this event again. Eber does not seem to recognize any type of spiritual experience of the bishop.

Schereschewsky’s decision to become a baptized Jew had apparently germinated for several years until what was probably a somewhat emotional Passover *seder* at a gathering of his Hebrew Christian friends in April 1855. . . . it was also significant that, when he was in London for the [Global Anglican] Lambeth conference of 1878, he attended services of the London Society, then at Palestine Place [in London], where prayers were read in Hebrew. Was it that he needed to hear the prayers in the familiar language?⁵¹

Eber takes the discussion one step further and reflects her own secular and quasi-religious Jewish perspective,

According to Jewish law (halakha) Schereschewsky was an apostate (mumar). A Jew who accepts Christianity . . . is seen in Jewish eyes as an apostate in the fullest sense. He loses certain legal rights under Jewish law and the rules of mourning are not observed upon his death. Although popularly such a person was regarded as “dead”, halakhic opinion throughout the ages has maintained that an apostate remains a Jew. Indeed, . . . it is technically impossible for a Jew (born to a Jewish mother or properly converted to Judaism) to change his religion. In terms of halakha, the apostate is a sinner, but

49 Ibid, 243.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

he is a Jewish sinner. The basis for this halakhic reasoning is Deuteronomy 29:13–14: God made His covenant with Israel then and for all times; with this and all later generations.

Schereschewsky was surely aware that by converting he did not cease to be a Jew. Thus, when he presumably uttered on that fateful April 1855 eve, “I will follow Him without the camp,” he was not saying “I renounce being a Jew.” His self-perception ... was fortuitously reinforced by missionary colleagues in Peking who charged him with translating the Old Testament. He fully accepted their dictum as his own when he wrote in 1864, “. . . I ought to regard it as my special call in this country until this work is done, and . . . with the assistance of God I . . . shall have contributed a great share toward the missionary cause in China.”⁵²

ILLNESS, PARTIAL RECOVERY, AND COMPLETION OF HIS WORK

It is important to understand the spiritual impetus and drive the bishop had for his translation, particularly the update of his translation of the Hebrew Bible into Chinese. He produced this work through great hardship and sacrifice, as he was suffering from what seems to have been an ALS-like disease of his nervous system that infected him for twenty-five years and seemed to be the result of severe sunstroke.

The summer heat in Shanghai was almost intolerable for him, to the point that Mary wrote in 1879, “We have grave doubts whether, with a constitution impaired by long residence in China, he will be able to stand the Shanghai climate.” He also suffered from frequent diarrhea.⁵³

⁵² Ibid, 243–244.

⁵³ Muller, 142.



The summer of 1881 brought prolonged and intense heat that further sapped his energy. The shack in which he spent hours translating was like an oven. These and other cares occasioned constant worry and anxiety, leading to a visible decrease in energy and health. Finally, overcome by heat exhaustion and a high fever, he suffered from a lesion in his brain that forced the physicians to order him to leave China, lest he not survive. His colleague Dr. Boone said that there was “no indication that he will recover full power of mind or body or be capable of any sustained mental effort.” His career as a missionary seemed to have ended abruptly.⁵⁴

On the advice of their doctors, in March 1882, the Schereschewskys went to Geneva, Switzerland, for treatment. After four years, he was still paralyzed in his legs and arms and could speak only with difficulty. For the rest of his life, he had to be carried up and down stairs and could travel only in a three-wheeled chair pedaled by someone else. His mental powers, which had never suffered damage, were as keen as ever, and he had regained his nervous energy. The disparity between his physical incapacity and his mental and nervous vitality caused him considerable suffering. Still, his wife Mary said,

He accepts everything with his usual lovely patience and tranquility, which is a perpetual support and comfort to me. This has been our Heavenly Father’s special gift to him, and had it been otherwise I hardly know how we could have met and sustained the many trials that have arisen from his illness.⁵⁵

That he held his stylus in his mouth to write the Chinese letters for his Old Testament translation update is corroborated as are many of the other stories about his exemplary life.

⁵⁴ Muller, 175.

⁵⁵ Muller, 185-186.

RETURN
TO CHINA

Finally, after thirteen years, he was given permission to return to China. Almost as soon as the Schereschewskys returned to Shanghai in 1895, he resumed his translation work, assisted by three Chinese, including one woman who knew English.⁵⁶

The 1890 General Missionary Conference decided to sponsor a Union version of the Chinese Bible. He didn't think that a new Mandarin version was needed, and he knew that a Union version would take many years to complete, so he worked on the revision of his Mandarin version and on the Easy Wenli.

The revised Mandarin Old Testament was ready for publication in December 1896. It would be printed in Japan, so The American Bible Society, who sponsored the Bible, recommended that Schereschewsky move to Japan and oversee the printing of the Bible. He and Mary left Shanghai for Japan in December 1897. Both benefitted greatly from the more temperate climate of Tokyo.

The Schereschewskys spent the next ten years in Tokyo where he oversaw the printing of the new Mandarin Old Testament in 1899 and the Wenli Bible in 1902 (Classical Chinese, also known as literary Chinese).

The Jewish bishop died on October 15, 1906, and his wife Mary passed into the presence of the Lord on August 20, 1909.

⁵⁶ Muller, 223-224.



CONCLUSION

Value of the Book for Messianic Jewish History, OT Translation, and Chinese Missions

Dr. Irene Eber's book on the life of Bishop Schereschewsky is extremely valuable in several areas: for Messianic Jewish mission history, missions to China, and of course, translation of the Hebrew Bible into Chinese and other languages. I highly recommend this book as Eber is a careful scholar. I would only add the caveat that she did not share or even understand the faith of the bishop. This is a profound, weak point in her biography. On the other hand, because of her understanding of translation and the Hebrew Bible as literature, her comments on this very significant area of the bishop's work are excellent.

In Hebrews 11–12, the author lists some of the great Jewish faith heroes of the Hebrew Scriptures. These faithful men and women who followed their God with sacrificial service now reside in the presence of God and form a "great cloud of witnesses." They provide an example to us in how to walk by faith, endure hardship by faith and even to die in faith knowing the promises of God will one day gloriously be fulfilled, when we will hear the voice of the Lord Jesus saying, "well done good and faithful servant" (Mathew 25:23).

Bishop Schereschewsky should be included in this list of heroes of the faith. His dedication and faithfulness to the Bible, the Chinese people, and the task of translation echoes through the ages, serving as a modern-day example of selfless and sacrificial service to the Jewish Messiah. At the end of his life, the bishop was plagued by a mysterious neurological disease, which did not allow him to write with his hand or utilize his primitive typewriter. Still, he continued in his task completing

his update of the Mandarin Bible by placing the stylus between his teeth and writing out the Mandarin words he cherished and believed were spoken by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through Jewish authors.

Perhaps this is why his life and work became the subject of many different books and chapters within volumes penned by both Christian missiologists and historians of Bible translation and the Messianic Jewish movement over the course of the last century.

Scherschewsky's Mandarin and Easy Wenli Bible were in high demand for more than ten years, until they were superseded by the Union Version of the Chinese Bible in 1919. His Mandarin Old Testament was the basis of that version and a Wenli translation. Since he worked from the Hebrew Masoretic text, that text is the one from which the Union Version Old Testament was translated. Years later, several qualified scholars believed that his Old Testament was superior to the Union Version. Schereschewsky's lasting legacy was his translations of the Bible and example of sacrificial, even heroic, service for the Lord despite enormous obstacles and incapacitating illness.

Contributions to Translation

Eber does an excellent job summarizing some of the basic issues related to the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Chinese, including the issue of the terms used for God and whether a literary or non-literal translation was best. The latter was especially important as the bishop's translation was a single-author translation rather than a committee-led one. Eber does an excellent job summarizing Schereschewsky's contributions to Bible translation in general, especially the Chinese translation of the Hebrew Bible.



For example, the “term question” raged at this time in history—that is, how to translate the name of God into Chinese. The bishop objected to Shang Di, “which, as the name of the chief deity in the Chinese pantheon was . . . no more appropriate for the Christian God than Jupiter or Baal. He had less objection to Shen, but favored Tian Zhu (Ti’en Chu), which had long been used by the Roman Catholics.”⁵⁷

The Anglican church chose to honor the bishop on the Day of Pentecost, and the collect (prayer) for that day is well worth noting:

O God, who in your providence called Joseph Schereschewsky to the ministry of this church and gave him the gifts and the perseverance to translate the Holy Scriptures: Inspire us, by his example and prayers, to commit our talents to your service, confident that you uphold those whom you call; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.⁵⁸



⁵⁷ Muller, 67.

⁵⁸ “The Lessons Appointed for Use on the Feast of Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky,” Lectionary Page, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.lectionarypage.net/LesserFF/Oct/Scheres.html>.

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Reviews

The Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies

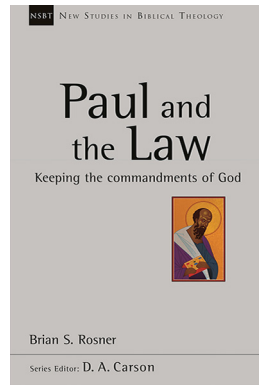


JMJS/CHARLES L. FEINBERG CENTER



Brian S. Rosner,
*Paul and the Law:
Keeping the Commandments
of God (New Studies in Biblical
Theology)*. Nottingham, UK:
Apollos, Inter-Varsity Press,
2013

Review by
Brian Crawford



Jewish believer in Jesus and New Testament scholar Brian Rosner contributes the following opening line to his book *Paul and the Law*: “Understanding Paul’s relationship to the Law of Moses is fraught with difficulty” (19). Indeed. After this appropriate introduction, Rosner notes that three common solutions have been Lutheranism (law is abolished), Reformed theology (Christians are under the moral law), and the New Perspective on Paul (Jewish identity markers no longer disqualify Gentiles from being the people of God). Rosner sees valid insights in all three paradigms but proposes that they do



not do justice to the full range of Pauline thought.

Rosner's thesis is that Paul makes three "moves" with the law. First, Paul *repudiates* the law as a law-covenant with continued obligations for Christians. Second, Paul *replaces* the obligations of the law with obligations toward Christ and the apostles. Third, Paul *reappropriates* the Law of Moses to serve as a source of prophecy and wisdom.

Rosner begins his analysis in chapter one with the verse that inspired the book's subtitle: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Corinthians 7:19, NASB). The paradox, of course, is that circumcision is one of the commandments in the Torah. In what sense could circumcision be "nothing" if it was commanded? Rosner answers by citing parallel passages (Galatians 5:6, 6:15) and concluding that the "commandments of God" mentioned here are not the Law of Moses, but a new set of commandments that are also from God: the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21). Thus, in 1 Corinthians 7:19 Rosner sees Paul repudiating the commandment of circumcision (i.e., the Law of Moses) and establishing a new set of commandments (the Law of Christ) which do not require circumcision.

Chapter two is devoted to explicit Pauline statements that Christians are "not under the law." Rosner notes Pauline affirmations that Jews are "under the law," (Galatians 4:4–5), "in the law" (Romans 2:12), and possessors of the law (Romans 9:4), but that Paul does not consider himself, though Jewish, as under the law (1 Corinthians 9:20). Likewise, when speaking to fellow believers, Paul says that they are not "under the law" either (Romans 6:14–15; Galatians 5:18). On this point, Rosner differs with the New Perspective, citing Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 as evidence that the entire law is meant by the phrase "under the law," not just Jewish identity markers.

Chapter three addresses implicit Pauline statements which imply a repudiation of the law as obligatory for Christians. Rosner does this largely by noting how Paul describes Jews' relationship with the Torah and contrasting that with how Paul never describes believers' relationship with the Torah in equivalent fashion.

In chapter four, Rosner cites evidence that Paul replaced the Law of Moses with "the Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21, Romans 3:27, 8:1).



He notes that Paul's audience is given instructions "to walk and to please God" (1 Thessalonians 4:1), not in accordance with Torah commandments, but through the new halachah of the teaching and examples of Christ and the apostles (Colossians 2:6; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Galatians 2:14).

Chapters five and six are devoted to Paul's reappropriation of the Law of Moses to serve as a source of prophecy and wisdom. Rosner notes that Paul describes the Torah as being "for us" on three occasions (1 Corinthians 10:9–10, 10:11; Romans 4:23–25). The first two instances pertain to wisdom in living, but the Romans passage pertains to the prophetic character of the law as the forerunner of righteousness by faith. Regarding the Torah as a source of wisdom, rather than law, Rosner surveys multiple ethical categories (tithing, greed, stealing, etc.) and says that Paul does not ground his ethics in the commandments of Torah, but rather in the wisdom of Torah. In Romans 13:9, Paul cites four of the Ten Commandments, but does not say Christians are obligated to keep them, but rather "he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8). The one commandment to love—emphasized by Christ and Paul himself—is the binding command; the Torah serves as a wise guide as to how to accomplish the command.

In chapter seven, Rosner briefly summarizes his thesis: "According to Paul, believers in Christ do not read the law as law-covenant, but rather as prophecy and as wisdom" (218). He then presents helpful tables that categorize individual Pauline phrases according to the schema of "repudiation," "replacement," "reappropriation as prophecy," and "reappropriation as wisdom." Rosner ends the book with his own paraphrase of Paul's thought in each category.

There is much to commend in Rosner's multifaceted approach



to Paul's thought on the law. By avoiding the oversimplification of Paul's thought to a single principle, Rosner is able to plausibly account for more passages than a solely repudiatory (Luther) or partially-continuous view (Reformed). As a synthesizing view, Rosner's solution escapes easy classification. Against Lutheran and dispensational views, Rosner sees a positive role of the law in prophecy and wisdom, but he agrees with their emphasis on the Law of Christ replacing the Law of Moses as the guiding principle for believers. Against the Reformed view, Rosner denies that the law may be subdivided into civil, ceremonial, and moral laws, instead asserting that the entire law is repudiated as a source of obligations. However, in agreement with Reformed thought, Rosner sees a positive role of the law for Christians, just not as law-covenant. Unfortunately, Rosner does not interact much with the New Perspective on Paul besides disagreeing with its handling of Leviticus 18:5 in Paul's thought.

Although Rosner presents a compelling case for understanding the Pauline epistles, non-Pauline passages in the New Testament present his thesis with loose ends. Rosner never cites or discusses Matthew 5:15–19, thereby leaving a void in how to integrate Paul's theology of the law with Christ's. Rosner only gives the briefest of mentions to Acts 21:20–26 (50), where Paul underwent James's plan to undermine critics who thought that Paul was teaching against the law. James referred to myriads of Jewish believers who were "zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20). If Paul repudiated the law, then why did he go along with the plan and ally himself with Jewish brothers who were zealous for the law? Likewise, why did Paul continue to celebrate the festivals of the Hebrew calendar (Acts 20:16, 27:19), which are nowhere mandated in the New Testament? There may be a way to retain much of Rosner's thesis in light of these passages, but such a solution is missing from the book.



In his first chapter, Rosner states that neither Jews nor Gentiles who believe in Jesus are obligated to keep the law, but “Jewish believers may choose to live under the law” (31). This is a generous attitude toward more Torah-observant Jewish believers, but Rosner does not devote much space to fleshing out the idea. His book usually calls believers undifferentiated “Christians,” rather than addressing “Gentile Christians” and “Jewish believers” as distinct subgroups in the body of Christ who have different covenantal and cultural identities. Indeed, in two locations (112, 216–18), Rosner undermines continued Jewish election, covenantal identity, and cultural markers. Because Rosner does not account for continued Jewish covenantal identity in the church, “voluntary observance” for Jewish believers does not enter into Rosner’s “three moves.” However, to counterbalance the harsh nomenclature of “repudiation” and “replacement,” the Jewish apostles’ continued observance—including Paul’s—deserves a hearing.

Finally, in his paradigmatic verse (1 Corinthians 7:19) and throughout the book, Rosner treats circumcision as something Paul repudiates along with the Torah (especially on 112). However, while circumcision is part of the Torah and can be emblematic of Torah observance as a whole (i.e., Galatians 5:3), circumcision is grounded in the Abrahamic covenant and was only repeated in the covenant at Sinai 430 years later. Thus, circumcision of Jewish believers’ sons could survive a repudiation of the Law of Moses because circumcision predates the Law (cf. Galatians 3:17). This would account for why the Jewish apostles continued the practice of circumcising Jews (Acts 21:21, cf. 15:5), including even Paul, who circumcised the Jewish Timothy (Acts 16:3, cf. Romans 3:1–2) but refused to circumcise the Greek Titus (Galatians 2:3).

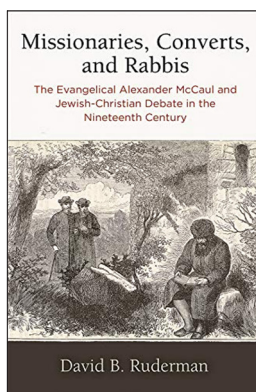
In sum, Rosner advances the discussion on Pauline use of the



law with his “three moves.” The book is cogently argued and often convincing. However, when it comes to a more positive use of the law by Jewish believers—beyond just wisdom and prophecy—Rosner may need to consider a few more moves.

David B. Ruderman,
*Missionaries, Converts, and
Rabbis: The Evangelical
Alexander McCaul and Jewish-
Christian Debate in the
Nineteenth Century (Jewish
Culture and Contexts).*
Philadelphia, PA: University of
Pennsylvania Press, 2020

Reviewed by Brian Crawford



In the nineteenth century, *The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews* was the oldest and most influential Jewish mission, and Alexander McCaul was its most celebrated missionary. In that century and today, McCaul has been best known for his comprehensive and relentless attack on Orthodox Judaism in his series of essays entitled *The Old Paths*, first published as one volume in 1837. In *The Old Paths*, McCaul attacked rabbinic halakhic innovations, Jewish sayings about Gentiles, the rabbinic practice of astrology and magic, rabbinic treatment of women, the oral law’s contradictions with the Tanakh, and rabbinic oppression of the poor.

Despite McCaul’s stature, there was no published study of McCaul’s life and works until David Ruderman’s 2020 monograph, *Missionaries, Converts, and Rabbis*. Ruderman,



a professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Pennsylvania and a Reform rabbi, is to be commended for his impeccable scholarship on McCaul and his fair treatment of evangelicalism and the missionary enterprise. Ruderman's portrait of Alexander McCaul provides readers an opportunity to consider how to accomplish the Apostle Paul's admonition to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). McCaul's rhetoric against Judaism and the Talmud was harsh, but his critiques, arguably, often had basis in truth. What happens when truthful arguments are presented in a condescending tone to Jewish people? *Missionaries, Converts, and Rabbis* narrates how this played out in a nineteenth-century context.

Ruderman's book investigates the life and works of McCaul and traces his impact on his colleagues and adversaries. In chapters 1–3, Ruderman details McCaul's ministry with the *London Society*, the writing and impact of *The Old Paths*, and McCaul's lesser-known emphasis on defending biblical inerrancy toward the end of his life. These chapters present a textured profile of McCaul from a variety of original sources. For example, Ruderman presents touching vignettes of McCaul's life from his daughter Elizabeth Finn (20–22). Finn claimed that her father had written out the Torah in Hebrew five times, and that he taught her Hebrew, Yiddish, and cursive Hebrew script as a girl (20).

The remaining chapters of Ruderman's book are devoted to the reactions of McCaul's friends and adversaries. Chapter 4 details the life of Stanislaus Hoga (1791–1860), a Jewish believer in Jesus who translated *The Old Paths* into Hebrew in 1839, but subsequently repudiated the book and the work of the London Society. He objected to McCaul's aggressive approach to criticizing Judaism and the Society's insistence that Jewish believers cease practicing the Mosaic law. Chapter 5 profiles two



Christian opponents of McCaul, Reverend John Oxlee (1779–1854) and magazine editor Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (1790–1846), both premillennial Zionists who forged romantic attitudes toward Judaism. Oxlee was originally a supporter of the London Society, but he promoted the adoption of Kabbalistic metaphysics and the observance of Torah by Jewish converts, ultimately leading to a break with the Society and their evangelistic goals. Tonna also insisted that Jewish believers should be encouraged to observe the Torah, but she disavowed direct evangelism as ineffectual until the return of Christ to Zion. Chapter 6 focuses on the tragic life of Moses Margoliouth (1818–81), a Jewish convert and follower of McCaul who published his own anti-Talmudic work in the style of *The Old Paths*. Margoliouth was supposedly a model convert, repudiating Torah observance and obtaining ordination in the Church of England before experiencing anti-Semitism in Christian circles and souring to the prospects of getting many Jewish converts. He, too, came to be a sharp critic of the London Society. Finally, chapters 7–8 focus on a selection of McCaul’s Jewish opponents, Isaac Baer Levinsohn (1788–1860), Samuel Joseph Fuenn (1818–90), and Raphael Kassin (1780–1871), none of whom were Orthodox Jews but still attempted to refute McCaul’s attacks on Orthodoxy. At the end of his historical survey, Ruderman reflects,

In the final analysis, the story of McCaul and each of his seven associates and their intense encounter with the other was less about mutual affection and admiration and more about the acquisition of self-knowledge through contrast and contestation, through an intense exposure to the other, leading ultimately to the construction of religious and cultural identities sometimes internally inconsistent and even conflicted (201).

David Ruderman has provided a multifaceted portrait of Alexander McCaul and those he influenced, skillfully tracing



their conflicting motivations, theologies, strategies, perspectives, and attitudes. His monograph sheds light on a significant moment in the early Jewish missions movement, and that moment is not without relevance today. Ruderman's cast of characters prefigure twenty-first century debates on the limits of Jewish identity, the relationship of apologetics and evangelism with anti-Semitism, rabbinic authority, ethics and rhetoric, the role or non-role of Torah observance, Hebrew Christianity versus Messianic Judaism, and the dynamics of syncretism and separation regarding Judaism and Christianity. It is likely that many readers will find an attraction to one or more of the cast of characters, and a dislike of others. However, since these characters lived in a world removed from today, they can serve as a morality tale, even a mirror for self-introspection and correction.

Ruderman's balanced handling of these topics is to be commended. For example, despite McCaul's attacks on Judaism, Ruderman avoided depicting McCaul as an anti-Semite, for McCaul was also an outspoken defender of the Jewish people. Moreover, Ruderman treats evangelical theology, motivations, and goals fairly. In fact, each of the three groups mentioned in the book's title are treated respectfully and are given an opportunity to present their reactions to McCaul's work.

One weak spot, however, is in Ruderman's handling of Isaac Baer Levinsohn's responses to McCaul in chapter 7. Levinsohn's arguments against McCaul often amounted to ad hominem: McCaul had poor credentials, and McCaul unfairly criticized Judaism for things that Christians were guilty of. Unfortunately, Levinsohn's critiques were often strawman arguments against McCaul's positions (i.e., arguing as if McCaul was Catholic), or did not handle McCaul's arguments directly. Levinsohn's main strategy appeared to be mere whataboutism, a redirection of criticism onto Christianity without addressing the original



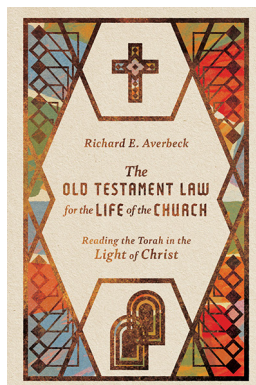
critiques. Instead of pointing out this sophistry, Ruderman tips his hand by narrating that Levinsohn’s book “successfully refuted” McCaul and that he was “capable of responding effectively to the formidable McCaul” (163). However, it appears that Levinsohn only *rhetorically evaded* McCaul’s critiques, rather than refuting them, so Ruderman’s analysis could use refinement.

Alexander McCaul’s nineteenth-century example remains ever relevant today; in the twenty-first century, the names of the principal characters may be different, but the same issues, debates, and schools of thought are present in contemporary Jewish-Christian relations. Those in the Jewish missions world would all be wise to learn lessons—both good and bad—from this fascinating evangelical apologist to the Jewish people, and David Ruderman’s historical overview is an excellent place to start.

Richard E. Averbeck
*The Old Testament Law for the
Life of the Church: Reading the
Torah in the Light of Christ*
(Downers Grove, Ill:
InterVarsity Press, 2022).

This review is based on the
Kindle Edition.

Reviewed by Gregory Hagg



Dr. Richard E. Averbeck is currently Emeritus Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages and Lecturer at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School where he taught for 27 years as Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages. Previously,



he taught in the Old Testament and Ministry departments at Dallas Theological Seminary and Grace Theological Seminary for 14 years. He earned his PhD at the Annenberg Research Institute (Dropsie College).

Of particular interest is Averbeck's work as the director of the Spiritual Formation Forum, having added an MA in Biblical Counseling to his academic credentials. He is also a licensed therapist who is adept in the application of Scripture to the believer, a fact which shows up prominently in this thoroughly academic and thankfully practical volume on the Law. He is aptly suited to draw significance from the Law to the Christian life.

The two articles above by Dr. Averbeck have provided an excellent summary of the major tenets of his book reviewed here in the fourth volume of *the Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies*. His lectures and articles on the goodness, weakness, and unity of the Law come from decades of study on this topic.

Introduction.

Averbeck launches this volume by clearly stating the primary hermeneutical problem. What role should the Old Testament law play in the life of the Christian? Is the Law of Moses obsolete or irrelevant? His introduction extolls the virtue and excellence of the Old Testament scripture reminding the reader that "old" means former, not obsolete.

He acknowledges that we are forced to deal with direct and indirect application of the Law, "Our goal will be to understand how the Old Testament law does and does not come through into the New Testament for the church and the life of the believer" (3).

After a helpful description of five basic views of the Law (Reformed, Theonomy, Dispensational, Lutheran, and



Holiness) Averbeck opts for the fifth view, which shows how the “ceremonial” aspect of the Law applies to the Christian life today. This is the primary contribution of his book, seeing the use of the Law as “guidance for the promotion of holiness today.”

He states that dispensationalism asserts, “The Old Testament law no longer has a regulatory function but continues to have a revelatory function. That is what Paul refers to when he says the law is good (e.g., Rom 7:7-14)” (11). Averbeck believes more needs to be said.

When he says concerning the Lutheran view, “Individual commands from the law may be binding on the believer, but only those repeated within New Testament teaching for the church”

(11-12), Averbeck wants to refine this understanding to take more seriously the unity and application of the entire Law for the believer today.

While he recognizes the challenge, he seeks to find the contribution of every part of the Law to the church. “This does not mean we should bring every specific law in the Old Testament over directly into the church and the Christian life. However, every law does contribute to some dimension of the law that, in turn, does indeed apply to the Christian life as part of the “law of Christ” (18). An exhaustive study of each of the 613 commandments is beyond the scope of his book, but the application of them would be a worthy project.

Part One

Part One, *Covenant and Context*, has two chapters that deal with the covenants in the Old Testament and the nature and progression of the redemptive covenants. Here Averbeck succeeds in simplifying the complex discussion of the



interrelatedness of the Mosaic Law to the Covenants given to Israel. Of special interest is how he sees the Law fitting into the New Covenant.

He does not skirt the issue of theological systems such as Covenant Theology. While acknowledging the contribution of that system, Averbeck argues for a better way of understanding the actual covenants of the Old Testament. “The point is that the explanation of the covenants in the Bible that follows here depends on the explicit covenants in the Bible, not on any particular form of systematic theology” (36).

After delineating these covenants (Genesis 6, 9, 11, 12, 15, etc.), he provides comparative literature from the Ancient Near East. This is a major strength of the work. Averbeck’s exceptional expertise in cognate studies will satisfy the scholar. Unfortunately, some of the discussion may fly over the heads of many readers.

The interrelatedness of the Mosaic covenant to the Lord’s Table, complete with the blood oath and covenant meal, is a fascinating observation. While some may say that too much is made of the parallels, Averbeck offers an astute analysis of the Christian covenant-renewal ritual (51-52).

Part Two

The second part, *The Old Testament Law in Context*, chapters 3-7, provides a thorough discussion of the Law of Moses within the Hebrew Scriptures. He also shows how the Law is presented in narrative genre and repeated in various ways. The section includes an exposition of the Book of the Covenant, the Kingdom of Priests, the Offerings and Sacrifices, and laws of Holiness and Purity. Parts One and Two provide an exceptional exegetical treatment of the Pentateuch.

Here Averbeck presents the most academically rigorous



material in the book. He plumbs the depths of Ancient Near Eastern parallelism with the Old Testament. Averbeck also goes into considerable detail concerning the Levitical system of tabernacle, sacrifice, and purity laws. The style of his writing makes this material equally accessible to the Christian who is not trained in technical matters as well as the serious scholar, professor, or pastor. Decades-long research by this eminent scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures is on display in this portion of the book. Averbeck's shares his grasp of cognate studies with the reader in a manner that clearly elucidates the biblical text rather than obscuring its meaning.

As he states in the introduction, "One of the major problems with the way the discussion has been carried on, as I see it, is the tendency to write on the New Testament use of the Old Testament law without expending the necessary time and effort to know the law well in the first place in its Old Testament and Jewish context. This is one of the ways I hope to contribute to the discussion in the present volume" (3). In this volume the reader is taught by one who has expended the necessary time and effort to know the law well.

Application to the Christian is ever in Averbeck's mind. Even the "goring ox laws" find a connection to 1 Timothy 5:18. Oxen are to be treated well as they work (Deuteronomy 25:4).

He states, "It is mean and abusive to muzzle an ox while it is walking in food. Think of the ox straining at the muzzle to try to eat some of the grain. It amounts to torturing the ox. Similarly, it is vicious and callous for people in the church to benefit from the ministry and not supply the needs of the minister (94).

Part Three

The third part, The Old Testament Law in the New Testament, is the most practical portion of the book regarding "The



Christian and the Hebrew Scriptures.” Chapters 8-11 deal with the topics of Jesus and the Mosaic Law, the Law in Acts and the Epistles, the Goodness of the Law, the Weakness of the Law, and the Unity of the Law. While his articles in this volume of *the Journal of Messianic Jewish Studies* distill the last three topics, his 382-page book expands those ideas and surrounds them with countless illustrations and detailed explanations.

For most readers this third section will be seen as the greatest contribution of the book. Averbeck isolates the most controversial passages. His explanation of Matthew 5:17ff is an example of how lucid and convincing his comments are. He states, “According to Matthew 5:18, absolutely no part of the Old Testament law has passed away, not even today, nor will it until heaven and earth pass away” (233). Jesus does not end the Law, but He is the example of fulfilling the Law. “If one wants to know how to live properly according to a full and filled up understanding of the law, they need only hear his teaching and observe his way of life as narrated in this Gospel” (234). Further, he states Jesus disputed the Law’s meaning with His opponents, “. . . but he never intended that anyone undermine its key importance for guidance in the lives of his followers” (254).

Two areas deserve special consideration—sacrifice and temple. How do the ceremonial aspects of the Law apply today? Many, if not most, expositors argue that Jesus Christ’s final sacrifice for sin renders such application irrelevant. If Averbeck is correct, this is not a tenable position, given the unity of the Law. That is, we should not apply some of the Law, like moral and civil, and then ignore other portions of the Law. So, what is the role of the sacrifices? Dr. Averbeck’s treatment of the issue seeks to answer the question in a manner that will likely satisfy most readers.



Sacrifice is at the core of the Christian faith. Early in the book he refers to Luke 9:23 and states, “Christ gave himself as a sacrifice for me. If I am going to become like him, I must give myself as a sacrifice too, as he said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (19). It makes sense that Jesus may have been referring to the “sacrifices” of the NT believer found in Romans 12:1, Hebrews 13:15-16, and 1 Peter 2:4-10.

These connections tell us how we are to live as believers, so, “From this point of view, the ‘ceremonial’ law is as applicable to the Christian life as the ‘moral’ law (22).

In this section, Part 3, Averbek also underscores the temple imagery that links Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. “The church and the believer are the temple of the Holy Spirit today. . . . We need to take seriously the new covenant line about having the Old Testament law written on our minds and hearts (Jer 31:33). The Holy Spirit does this writing on the heart and mind (Ezek 36:26-27; cf. 2 Cor 3:3-6). Jesus taught the law this way in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout the Gospels. The whole Old Testament law hangs on Jesus’ two great commandments. They come from the Old Testament law too” (330).

Add to this the concept of the priesthood of the believer offering spiritual sacrifices, and we are drawn to ceremonial imagery. Also, Jesus is the cornerstone of a spiritual temple being built now (1 Peter 2:4; Ephesians 2:20). These connections might lead one to think in terms of “replacement.” Of course, this is a basic argument used by those who see no future role of national Israel in the plan of God. They say if these things are true, then the OT Law, Prophets, and Writings (the Tanach) are fulfilled in Jesus and the church. Nothing else remains. However, why limit this application to the “already”



enjoyment of kingdom blessings and not extend it to the “not yet” things to come? Averbeck seems to allow for both in his analysis.

He implies that Ezekiel 40-48 should be taken in a “relatively literal way” with future sacrifices in a future millennial temple: “If this is the case then the sacrifices offered in that temple would have the same purpose as those in the Old Testament—on the physical and temporal level on earth. This includes the burnt, grain, drink, peace, sin, and guilt offerings for making atonement, as well as the Zadokite priesthood; the daily, weekly, and monthly regular cult; and the annual festivals (see Ezek 40:38-43; 42:13-14; 43:18-27; 44:15-16; 45:15–46:24)” (338).

Conclusion.

It would take a book several times the length of this one to discuss all the individual commandments of the Law and how they apply to the Christian today. The reader will leave the book wanting more specifics. Questions certainly remain. However, Averbeck wants believers to acknowledge the goodness of the law as it is viewed through New Covenant lens. It was always the intent of the Lord to transform the inner man. Averbeck seeks to give validity to the Law from a biblical and theological perspective. The entirety of the Mosaic Law must find usefulness in the church today, but how? Dr. Averbeck states, “In my view, we should not be thinking in terms of the limits of the application of the Old Testament law in the life of the church and the believer but rather the real issue of how it applies—all of it!” (329).

Yet he is quick to add that no law has ever transformed or saved. “The Old Testament law continues to be good for the believer, but it is also weak. It never had the power to change



the mind and heart of any believer in any age. . . . The Spirit does that by bringing all that God has freely given us in Christ to bear down deep within us—our thoughts, motives, perspectives, purposes, and all” (332).

Appendix

The appendix, “Jewish Messianic Believers and the Torah” is an extra added attraction of this book. Dr. Averbeck speaks to the special significance of this book to the overarching theme of this volume of *the Journal of Messianic Judaism*. After a detailed account of the intersection of his personal academic career with Jewish evangelism and discipleship, Averbeck offers “Biblical Support for the Messianic Movement” (336). Anyone in the movement will want to carefully study Dr. Averbeck’s “Cautions for the Messianic Movement Today” (340). He is also currently a member of the Board of Directors of Chosen People Ministries, so his observations in this area of Messianic Judaism are particularly helpful to all who are committed to sharing the good news with the Jewish people.

Application is always on his mind, and this is especially true as it relates to the evangelism of Jews and Gentiles. He addresses the missional observance of the Law when he speaks of Paul’s stated goal in following the Law of God while under the Law of Christ and not under the Law of Moses (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). In a light-hearted moment Averbeck puts these words in the mouth of the Apostle Paul, “I just do not give a rip about that! My passion is for preaching the gospel in the most winning way possible without any compromise in my commitment to Yeshua” (339).

The reader will be delighted to see an extensive bibliography and subject index followed by a thorough Scriptural index



listing nearly all the problematic passages in both testaments. Averbeck offers commentary on most of the thorny issues. Although his explanations will not satisfy everyone in every instance, his exegesis is superb, and his gentle way of expressing the application is quite appealing.

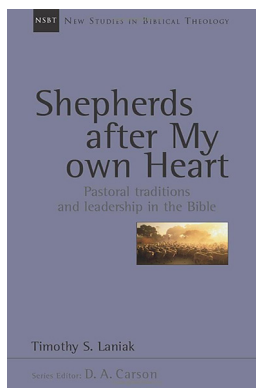
Some readers will want to hear more from him about passages that seem to set aside the Law or “render the Law inoperative (καταργέω)” during the church age (Ephesians 2:15; 2 Corinthians 3:7; Romans 7:6). Others may appeal to a kind of progressive revelation that says observance of the Law is only required of the New Covenant believer when it is repeated (literally or in principle) in the New Testament. Still others will want more on how Paul seems to re-purpose or restate the Law to make a particular point. In other words, perhaps more needs to be said about the weakness of the Law and the uniqueness of walking in the Law of Christ. Perhaps the old distinction of Continuity versus Discontinuity would help inform the discussion.

Regardless of any possible critique, this excellent book serves as a helpful review for those already committed to the dictum “all the Bible was written for us, but not all the Bible is written to us (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The unity of the Law is maintained while the emphasis on the Spirit’s role is emphasized. This book presents a healthy challenge to those committed to the careful application of “all Scripture.”

Hopefully, this review will entice the reader to acquire *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*. No short review can do justice to Dr. Averbeck outstanding work. It deserves careful study and, above all, serious application of the Law to the Christian today.



Timothy S. Laniak,
*Shepherds after my own
Heart: Pastoral Traditions and
Leadership in the Bible*
(New Studies in Biblical Theology)
Nottingham, UK: Apollos,
Inter-Varsity Press, 2006



Reviewed by Richard Flashman

Shepherds After My Own Heart (Shepherds) was written by Dr. Timothy Laniak. Dr. Laniak is the Senior VP of Global Content for the “Our Daily Bread Ministries,” and the co-founder of Bible Journey Inc. of Charlotte, NC. Before that he served as Professor of Biblical Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) Charlotte, NC Campus for twenty-six years as well as the past Dean of that campus for eight of those years. He holds a ThD in Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Period Judaism from Harvard University as well as an MDiv from GCTS and a BA in Biblical Studies and Social Science from Wheaton College of Wheaton, IL. His published works include, *Finding Lost Images of God* (Zondervan 2012), *Guide for Hebrew Exegesis* (Logos, 2009), *While Shepherds Watched their Flocks* (Shepherd/Leader Publications, 2007), *Esther, NIBC Commentary Series* (Baker 2003) and *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther* (Scholar Press, 1998).

In the interest of full disclosure, Dr. Laniak was my mentor in the GCTS DMin Program and the first reader for my DMin thesis. I count him as a friend.

As part of the preparation for writing *Shepherds*, Dr. Laniak and members of his family lived with and interviewed Bedouin



shepherds in the remote pasturelands of the Jordanian hill country. From that experience he gained firsthand knowledge of life in a contemporary middle eastern shepherding family which in turn provided practical insight and real-life texture to the biblical-theological study reflected in *Shepherds*. Many characteristics of shepherding mentioned in Scripture were validated during the time spent with his Bedouin hosts back in 2003.

Dr. Laniak asserts that “a discernible pastoral stream of tradition flows through Scripture . . . this tradition provides a broader context for the nature of leaders in the covenant community, and for understanding the nature of that community as the flock of the divine Shepherd,” (p. 24). In other words, shepherding is a foundational biblical metaphor for the leadership role in the covenant communities established by God, both old and new.

No single metaphor can provide a comprehensive picture on any topic, including the role of leadership in the covenant community, but “Shepherding is a felicitous metaphor for human leadership because both occupations (shepherds and covenant community leaders) have a comparable variety of diverse tasks that are constantly negotiated (based on changing conditions). . . . A good shepherd is one who does what is required by each circumstance in each context,” (*Shepherds*, p.40-41). Laniak notes that the stories associated with the shepherding metaphor in the biblical narrative go a long way in providing even richer meaning to the root metaphor itself. When we think of the “Good Shepherd” a whole “host of associations” come to mind about the role of leaders from the great history of salvation.

As a result of their work, shepherds were known for their independence, resourcefulness, adaptability, courage, and vigilance. Their profession cultivated a capacity for



attentiveness, self-sacrifice, and compassion. . . . For these and other reasons, the shepherd naturally became an icon of leadership,” (*Shepherds*, p. 57). So much so, that the shepherd moniker was adopted by ANE monarchs and associated with the gods themselves.

In perusing this theme Dr. Laniak attempts to find the continuity between the older and newer Testaments and to balance the interests of both cultural backgrounds and literary context. He writes introductory chapters on shepherding cultures from his experience with the Bedouin shepherds (see above), and another chapter on the pastoral language in ANE extra-biblical official documents, including those of ANE rulers. He does this to better understand cultural and literary context of the shepherding metaphor of the Bible.

According to Laniak the “pastoral stream of tradition” in scripture is embedded in two great expressions. First in the “exodus/wilderness complex” represented by Moses’ leadership of Israel from Egyptian bondage to the precipice of the promised land 40 years later. In that tradition the Lord reveals himself as the Shepherd of his people, their protector, provider, and guide, through the office of his faithful under-shepherd Moses.

Once in the Land, God’s people eventually demanded a king to lead them, so the Lord ultimately raises up the shepherd-king David and his lineage. Laniak notes that many of the Messianic promises are situated in this Davidic stream. But ultimately these men are just under-shepherds, as the true Shepherd Ruler of his people is the LORD himself.

After investigating these two shepherd streams Laniak turns to the prophets of Israel who “make sustained use of pastoral imagery: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah,” (p. 25).

The next section tracks the shepherding theme through



the four Gospels. Mark picks up on the theme of the second exodus. Matthew, the compassionate Davidic shepherd, Luke, the seeking and saving shepherd, and John the self-sacrificing shepherd.

After the gospels, Laniak by-passes the “Pastoral Epistles” to the reflections of shepherd leadership in *1 Peter*, and the *Revelation of John*. Laniak notes that both these authors understand the people of God as a persecuted community in exile called to follow the divine shepherd even to the point of death.

Finally, Laniak summarizes the key take aways of his biblical and cultural research noting that,

1. Shepherd leadership is comprehensive in scope. Biblical shepherds are accountable for the lives and well-being of their sheep. All their decisions and behaviors are to be done for the benefit of the flock. This does not mean they are to indulge the people of God. Rather they are to care for and exercise discipline over those entrusted to their leadership. They are to wield the Iron Rod of Psalm 2:9 and the nurturing love of Isaiah 40:9-11. Toughness and tenderness, compassion and social order, authority and gentleness, courage and conflict, all are part of the biblical shepherding role (1 Corinthians 4:21).
2. False or bad shepherds use their positions to serve their own needs. They forget whose flock they serve. It’s the Lord’s flock, not theirs (John 21:15-17), and they are responsible to God and the flock for the biblical quality of their leadership.
3. God wants humans to enlist in his mission. This is a risk for God. The human role is derivative of the divine



role. God grants royal prerogatives to his creatures to lead in anticipation of the day they will rule and reign with him forever. Shepherd leaders are first and foremost sheep who relate to their divine Shepherd. “The Lord is my shepherd.” They are appointed and empowered by God. This requires humility toward God and responsiveness to God’s people. New Testament leaders are God’s coworkers in a supporting role (1 Corinthians 3:9).

4. God’s people are vulnerable and dependent. They are prone to wander, scatter, and get lost. Bad leadership, which either neglects or abuses the flock, puts them at risk for all the above and more. One day, all such leaders will have to give an account for their stewardship.

5. Pastoral Leadership is part of a larger redemptive historical narrative that depicts the Lord’s leadership in wilderness settings. The Lord is the Shepherd of his people, leading them by under-shepherds through hostile, arid places to the abundance of the Promised Land (Revelations 7:15-17). Laniak points out that this is what the Torah Festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles) had anticipated all along.

6. While metaphors are creative in making meaning they are also limiting. No one metaphor gives us the whole picture of God’s acts in redemptive history. The shepherding metaphor is important but not comprehensive of God’s attributes and behaviors. This is why the biblical authors often mix their metaphors in communicating the person and work of God, picturing him as a warrior, king, father, lamb, etc. Doing this communicates to the reader “the dynamic but ultimately inexpressible nature of God,” (p. 250).



7. Through biblical pastoral imagery we are the heirs to an enduring metaphor that stretches back 4000 years and has been applied to the leadership of prophets, priests, kings, and those called to watch over and care for the Messianic communities of Yeshua. Through that enduring imagery God has provided his human co-laborers of every age with a powerful picture of the nature and challenges of their task. And in the Messiah Yeshua, The Good and True Shepherd, we have the example of one who was able to complete that task with selflessness and perfection.

As Laniak notes, this book has something for both the biblical scholar and the pastoral leader. Both will come away with valuable information and/or insights for their work (p. 26-27).

While Dr. Laniak notes Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders, laden with pastoral imagery as it is, he does so in the context of his study of Luke's Gospel and 1 Peter. In his Gospel of Luke study, he does not give Paul credit for the quote in Acts 20:28 and instead credits Paul's recorder, Luke, for it (p. 202). The informed reader understands that this can be a manner of referring to the biblical record, but it still begs the question if this might be part of an effort to avoid having to deal with Paul's pastoral theology.

While he does credit Paul when he quotes from this passage in 1 Peter, he is also quick to note (in the footnotes) that there is only one other place (Ephesians 4:11) that Paul uses the shepherding metaphor (fn. 37, p. 232). While true, still, it is hard to ignore the fact that when Paul wants to leave a lasting impression on church leadership, he goes to the shepherding metaphor, and presses it hard (Acts 20:25-31).

Dr. Laniak passes over the Pastoral Epistles in this otherwise comprehensive Biblical Theology of the shepherding metaphor.



There is no explanation for this in the body of his work, but in an introductory footnote he explains, “Pastoral imagery is not a central organizing rubric in the Pauline Corpus” (Introduction, fn. 7, p. 25). But he also states, “Paul is quite pastoral in his ministry, engages in second exodus theology at times (W.D. Davies, 1997) and refers to church leaders as shepherds occasionally,” (Ibid).

Assuming the accuracy of the above, one still must wonder why pass over such a rich collection of inspired pastoral insights and counsel. It seems in the Pastoral Epistles (and elsewhere for that matter) Paul, the quintessential biblical scholar, is practically applying the shepherd metaphor to the unique task of leadership in the messianic communities of his day. It’s almost as if he is fleshing out his Acts 20:25-31 pastoral theology in his pastoral epistles.

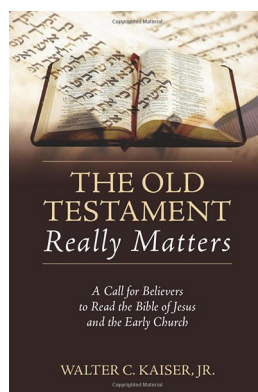
In those epistles we get a senior leader in the messianic community counseling junior leaders (Timothy and Titus) to “keep watch” (Acts 20:28) over themselves (1 Timothy 1:18-19a; 4:7, 12, 15-16; 6:11-14, 20–21; 2 Timothy 2:3-7, 15-16, 22-24) and the flock (1 Timothy 4:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:14; 25-26); to oversee and shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28; cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-15, 5:1-21; 6:17-19; 2 Timothy 1:3-14; 2:1-2; 3:14-4:2; Titus 1:5-9; 13-14; 2:1-3:3, 8-11, 14); to be “on their guard” (Acts 20:31, cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-7) against “savage wolves” (Acts 20:29; cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-6; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 4:3-4), and to do so selflessly for the good of the flock and not for personal gain (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Timothy 6:6-10). Again, why pass over what seems to be such rich applications of the shepherding metaphor?

Aside from that omission, *Shepherds after My Own Heart* is a masterpiece of Biblical Theology on the critical issue of



leadership in God's covenant communities. Its rich academic and practical content will be a great source of information, inspiration, and even warning to the careful reader, whether serious academic or busy ministry/congregational leader. Enjoy!

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.,
The Old Testament Really Matters: A Call for Believers to Read the Bible of Jesus and the Early Church.
 Silverton, OR: Lampion House Publishing, LLC , 2022



Reviewed by Jeff Millenson

Walter Christian Kaiser, Jr., was born into a Christian home on April 11, 1933, in Folcroft, Pennsylvania. He entered Wheaton College in 1951, and, after earning his A.B. there, began graduate studies in the Old Testament at Wheaton Graduate School.

After graduate school, he pursued further studies in Old Testament and ancient history at Brandeis University and there completed a Ph.D. in Mediterranean Studies in 1973. In 1966 he joined the faculty at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, eventually becoming the chair of the Old Testament department. In 1980 he became the Vice President and Academic dean of Trinity and continued as such through 1992. In 1993, he was called to serve as the Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and in 1997 became



the president of that institution. He retired in 2006. Currently he is President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Old Testament and Ethics at Gordon-Conwell.

Dr. Kaiser has been teaching and preaching the Old Testament for more than fifty years and has written over forty books on the subject. This current volume addresses the value and necessity of studying the Old Testament, rather than “unhitching” the Christian faith from these essential thirty-nine books.

In his preface, Kaiser points out how Jesus and the apostles fully engaged with the Bible they had (which we now call the Old Testament), why we must read and study the Old Testament to understand the New, and the heresy of disengaging, disbelieving, and rejecting the Word of God.

One of the reviewers of this book suggests that he will henceforth use it as a required textbook in his Old Testament Survey course. That’s an excellent idea, for Kaiser paints the Old Testament with a broad brush, in language accessible to the average non-theologically trained reader, yet he unearths precious details and nuggets of truth because of his thorough knowledge of the language, the history, and the cultural milieu of the Old Testament.

The book has 18 chapters, each one discussing an aspect of the Old Testament narrative, covering the vast sweep of the Old Testament: Creation, Death and Immortality, the Land of Israel, Life and Wisdom, Psalms, the Messiah, and more. The final chapter concerns the New Testament book of Revelation, and Kaiser posits that it cannot be properly understood without reference to, and a thorough knowledge of, the Old Testament.

Rather than trying to cover each of the eighteen chapters in the book in depth (a review that would be a book in itself), I would like to highlight Chapter Four, “The Old Testament View of the Law of God Really Matters.” One reason for this choice



is that I am a Jewish believer in Jesus as my Messiah, and I am always interested in a scholar's view of the relationship of the Old Testament Law to the modern Jewish or Gentile believer.

In the chapter, Kaiser makes an excellent point regarding what happens when we try to:

... personally legitimize what is meaningful and true for each of us individually, apart from any standards set by God, then we make up our own rules and morals and become our own gods, saying, 'This is what it means to me!' This is precisely what the Nazis reflected in the German society in the 1940s as they murdered more than six million Jewish people! (53).

In the same chapter, Kaiser points out that:

We are helped when the broader command in the Old Testament is sometime followed by a narrower command that illustrates how it coordinates with both the larger view and the more specific aspects of the law. For example, Leviticus 19:13 has the indirect prohibition: 'You shall not defraud your neighbor or rob him,' but that is followed by the direct injunction, 'Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight,' while verse 15 adds, 'You shall do no injustice in court.' This then is also followed by a real case in point: 'You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great.' Thus, the general principles are illustrated by the particular illustrations of the larger general principle (58-59).

Later in the chapter, Kaiser deals with several different views about how the Law can be applied to Christians today. He provides a helpful analysis of "Reconstructionism," also known as "Theonomy," and how it misses a crucial point in Numbers 35:31, which states that the Israelites were not to "accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who deserves to die. He must be put to death.' This implied, therefore, that all other capital crimes ... [could allow] a 'substitute,' i.e., a 'ransom' for any and every



case except murder” (60).

Kaiser then contrasts the view of Dispensationalism, which:

. . . holds that God’s administration of the Church is by grace and is therefore altogether separate from the way he administered Israel in the past by laws. The cultural differences are just too great between the Christians and the society of Israel; therefore there must be two separate programs for two separate peoples in God’s plan (61).

Finally, Kaiser presents his own view, “The View of Principilization,” which states that, “when we interpret Old Testament laws, we should look for underlying abstract principles that give to us the moral and spiritual teaching that stands behind the particular command” (63).

He then presents the “Ladder of Abstraction” to explain his method of interpreting the laws of the Bible:

In this method, the interpreter moves up the Ladder in a continuous way from the bottom rung of the detailed specificity found in an Old Testament particular law, all the way up the rungs to the high point of a generally observed overarching principle or paradigm that undergirds what is commanded in the text” (63).

In a similar way, the interpreter moves down the other side of the ladder to a

. . . particular concrete application in the New Testament times, or even in our contemporary culture. So, it is not so much the concrete command from the Old Testament that is the focus of our attention, but it is the abiding truth of the principle that undergirds the comments that is the teaching to which God is calling us (64).

Kaiser concludes his chapter on the Law of God with this statement:

God’s law gives us the direction and the guidance we need.



Moreover, the same law that seemed at times to set such high demands for us to observe was the same law that provided for forgiveness in the grace and mercy of God's provision of the animal sacrifices—a provision he set into play until he personally came and paid all our debt on the cross (65).

Kaiser often provides keen observations regarding connections between various passages of Scripture. For example, he points out the parallels between Psalm 22 and some of the “Servant” passages of Isaiah (171). He sees connections in Scripture that validate its wholeness:

Three times in the Bible the theology of fulfillment has come (‘It is finished’): (1) In the beginning, God put a stop (a Sabbath, Gen 1:31) to his creative work, (2) on the cross, once again our Lord said ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30), and (3) at the conclusion of the end times, God will once more say ‘It is done’ (Rev 21:6) (173).

Occasionally, Kaiser makes a statement that, while being theologically accurate, is not supported by the text. For example, he states that, “Even though Job was given the same number of children again, they too were actually doubled in number as well, for Job would meet his former family in heaven once more when the Lord returned in his second advent.” But the book of Job is silent about Job’s “former family” and does not suggest that his children were “doubled in number” (217).

At times, Kaiser dismisses an alternate viewpoint without providing grounds for his view. In the chapter about the book of Esther, while discussing the fact that God is not explicitly mentioned in the book, he states:

However, some Bible students amazingly (but probably, uselessly) cite Esther 1:20; 5:4, 13; 7:7 as possible hidden acronyms of the divine name, YHWH (i.e., Yahweh) in this biblical book So the question is this: where is God hiding in this book, if he is there at all? Certainly not in the above



suggested acronyms! (232).

But the author does not explain how he can be so sure that God's name couldn't have been "hidden" in the text in just this way? Esther 5:4 is a good example of the suggested acronym: "May" (the word begins with a "yod"), "the king" (begins with a "he"), "and" (a "vav"), "Haman" (another "he") – yod, he, vav, he, which form the tetragrammaton YHVH (or YHWH). To dismiss the possibility of someone's "hiding" the name of God in the book in this way, it would help his case if evidence were cited proving that nowhere else in Scripture or contemporary Near East writings did that practice occur.

No book by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., would be complete without some puns. Here are a couple of his most notable ones: regarding a view that Genesis 3:15 addresses only why mortals kill snakes, he says: "Image [sic] (it should read, "imagine") snaking that view of Scripture as being part of divine theology! Would such a reptilian view be worthy of being part of our Lord's point?" (93) [emphases mine].

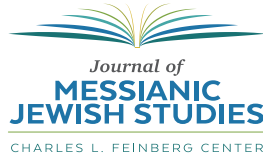
The main drawback to one's enjoyment of this book is its poor editing. There are several typographical, grammatical, and editorial mistakes that mar the otherwise high quality of the book. Here's a partial list: Extra comma (xi); Misplaced apostrophe (xiv); repetition of an entire block of text (41-42), in "The King of the Promise-Plan of God," which mirrors 175-176, in "False Starts to the Role of Kingship"; comma splice (51); repetitive material (67, 68); missing comma that should join an independent clause and a dependent one (78); duplicate words: "he was he was focused on. . . ." (83); missing negator: "we are surprised. . ." [about Jerusalem's role in the future] – the context makes it clear that we are not to be surprised (84); sentence fragment (96); misplaced quote marks (100); "Zechariah" misspelled as "Zachariah" (112);



another missing negator: “God would let his ‘Favorite One’ . . . see decay” should read, “God would not let his ‘Favorite One’ . . . see decay” (114); four pages (114-117) in the chapter concerning “Messiah” are quoted almost verbatim (159-162) in the chapter regarding “The Psalms and Worship” without any acknowledgement. The overlapping material, not surprisingly, concerns the shared topic of the Messianic Psalms; and a typographical error: “kinship” instead of “kingship” (168).

These errors are distracting to the reader. Perhaps a second edition of the book will be forthcoming in the future, at which time these matters can be addressed.

All in all, I highly recommend the book for anyone who wonders why we should read, study, and learn the Old Testament. It is especially important for those Christians who think that we no longer do need it – they are neglecting three-fourths of God’s written Word for His people!



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Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies

The *Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies* in Brooklyn, New York is a partnership between Chosen People Ministries and Biola University's Talbot School of Theology. Several years ago, the leadership of Chosen People Ministries recognized a tremendous need within Messianic Judaism and Jewish missions for more seminary-trained leadership. Through this partnership with Biola University's Talbot School of Theology we were able to develop this cutting-edge new Master of Divinity program with an emphasis on Messianic Jewish Studies. After receiving accreditation through the New York Board of Regents and the Association of Theological Schools, we began classes in summer of 2007.

The Feinberg Center program contains 98 credits and awards a Master of Divinity degree in Messianic Jewish Studies from Talbot School of Theology. Our program is still the only one of its kind in the world; it offers unique coursework to prepare leaders for Jewish ministry as missionaries, Messianic congregational leaders, non-profit leaders, and educators. Three key components



of the program make it unique: the coursework, field ministry, and cost.

COURSEWORK

We have designed the curriculum for the Feinberg Center to incorporate both a typical Jewish studies program and an evangelical seminary program, while also catering each specific class towards the current needs of Jewish ministry. Each of our Jewish studies courses, like *Rabbinic Literature and Theology*, *Theology of the Siddur* (Jewish prayer book), and *Jewish History*, contains practical elements on how a better understanding of Jewish tradition can enhance our work in Jewish missions. Additionally, each of the traditional evangelical seminary courses, like *Pastoral Studies*, *Church History*, and *Apologetics*, provides a unique Jewish perspective for the context of Jewish ministry. Our professors are all excellent scholars with a long history of personal experience in Jewish ministry.

FIELD MINISTRY

We placed the Feinberg Center in New York City because it is the center of Jewish life in America. With close to two million Jewish people, the city provides endless possibilities for students to immerse themselves in Jewish culture and ministry while completing their coursework. In fact, each semester we organize various Jewish-focused field ministry programs to help each student put what they have learned in the classroom into practice.

We have designed the different field ministry opportunities to expose our students to several aspects of Jewish ministry over the course of their studies. These aspects include direct

evangelism, discipleship, leading Bible studies, Messianic congregation leadership, and non-profit administrative training. We also provide other unique projects each semester, such as our evangelistic Jewish holiday celebrations, interfaith benevolence projects, debates, and café-style youth outreaches. These numerous field ministry programs take students into several areas of New York City, including Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

COST

We established the Feinberg Center to provide our students an affordable education and give them the opportunity to graduate debt-free, enabling them to enter vocational ministry without the tremendous burden of student loans. To achieve this affordability, we offer a wide range of scholarships and subsidies to offset student costs. Not only is our tuition a quarter of what it would normally cost, we also provide student housing for single students and offer students with families a housing scholarship to make their rent affordable. The generous and regular support from our ministry partners makes an affordable education possible.

THE CHARLES L. FEINBERG MESSIANIC JEWISH CENTER – HISTORY, PURCHASE, AND PROGRAMS

While we have hosted classes for the Feinberg Center in our Manhattan administrative offices since it launched in the summer of 2007, we knew we would eventually need to find a larger and more suitable space to house the seminary. In 2010, as God continued to bless and develop the seminary, we began a search for the right facility to house the program—and the Lord miraculously provided the perfect location.



Brooklyn is home to more than 750,000 Jewish people, making this borough of New York City one of the highest concentrations of Jewish people in the United States. We discovered a building in Brooklyn that had previously functioned as a Jewish funeral home. This rare, 14,000 square foot facility, which provides three floors, a basement and a sanctuary on the first floor, is located in the heart of an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood. We thought it seemed too good to be true.

This facility gives us significant opportunities to expand our ministries. It sits right on the borders of Orthodox Jewish, secular Jewish, and Israeli communities. It is within an even larger neighborhood of Russian Jewish immigrants. We believe this facility provides unprecedented opportunities for evangelism, as there is no other Jewish ministry in the area. God has clearly placed us at the center of this key location.

After extensive renovation, the building floors allow the following functionality:

1st Floor – Sanctuary for Messianic Congregations, reception area, kitchen, and multi- purpose ministry room

2nd Floor – Three classrooms, study areas with computers, professor and missionary offices

3rd Floor – Separated living quarters for students, guest bedroom for visiting professors and missionaries

Basement – The 12,000-volume Feinberg Center Library

In addition to housing the seminary, the facility gives us increased ministry space. The sanctuary has allowed us to plant a new English-speaking Messianic congregation, along with hosting our current Russian-speaking congregation. The kitchen and multipurpose room has allowed us to host special meals and event, coupled with other benevolence work, like ESL classes

and addiction care ministries. As the only Jewish missions organization in the heart of this strategic area, we pray the Lord will continue to use this space for His glory.





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