

LOP 7: Christian Witness to the Jewish People

Lausanne Occasional Paper 7 The Thailand Report on Jewish People

Report on the Consultation on World Evangelization

Mini-Consultation on Reaching Jewish People

Prefatory Note

This report, *Christian Witness to the Jewish People*, is one of a series of Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs) emerging from the historic [Consultation on World Evangelization \(COWE\)](#) held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 1980. The report was drafted by members of the "Mini-Consultation on Reaching Jewish People" under the chairmanship of Erwin J. Kolb, with C. David Harley who served as International Co-ordinator of the pre-COWE study groups on the Jewish people.

The major part of this report went through a draft and a revised draft, which involved all members of the mini-consultation. It was also submitted to a wider "sub-plenary" group for comment, but the responsibility for the final text rests with the mini-consultation and its chairman.

The report is released with the prayer and hope that it will stimulate the church and individual members in reaching this large segment of the population.

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1. Why Go To Jews?

Whereas the theme of COWE Thailand, 1980, is "How shall they hear?", we call attention to the fact that although application of this text is made to all people (Romans 10:12f.), the context of the passage is Paul's discussion of Israel. By Israel, we refer to the people described in Romans 9:3-5:

". . . my [Paul's] brothers, those of my own race ... Theirs is the adoption as sons ... the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Jesus ..."

Scripture gives the rationale for Jewish evangelism in John 14:6 and Acts 4:12, which indicate that salvation is found only in Christ. For Christians to know that Christ is the only way to be saved and then not proclaim the gospel to Jews presumes the exclusion of Jews from the need and possibility of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is a reflection of inadequate biblical and theological understanding. The great commission given in all four gospels makes no exception for Israel. To decline

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to preach the gospel to Jews, then, calls into question the credibility of all the church's evangelistic activity.

Scripture not only gives the rationale for Jewish evangelism; it also speaks of its priority. Jesus stressed in his ministry that he came first to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." St. Paul in his ministry followed that procedure for evangelism. In every city on his missionary journeys, he went first to the Jews and then subsequently to the Gentiles.

He also stated to the predominately Gentile church in Rome that the gospel is "...the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16). It might be difficult to be precise about what Paul understood by the phrase, "to the Jew first." (Compare Romans 2:9-10 where he uses the same phrase when speaking of future rewards and judgment). However, it can be argued that Paul does state that the Jewish people, far from being outside the scope of the great commission, should have a special place in the church's evangelistic outreach.

First, God has used the Jewish people to give the Christian the way of salvation. Secondly, the Jewish people have a prior and continuing covenant relationship with God (Jeremiah 31:31ff., Isaiah 49:6). Part of that covenanted responsibility involves their being a light to the world. Jews, however, cannot perfectly fulfill that responsibility without Christ. Thirdly, Paul anticipated the turning of Jews to Christ which would have a life-giving impact on the entire church.

There is, therefore, a great responsibility laid upon the church to share Christ with the Jewish people. This is not to imply that Jewish evangelism is more important in the sight of God, or that those involved in Jewish evangelism have a higher calling. We observe that the practical application of the scriptural priority is difficult to understand and apply. We do not suggest that there should be a radical application of "to the Jew first" in calling on all the evangelists, missionaries, and Christians to seek out the Jews within their sphere of witness before speaking to non-Jews! Yet we do call the church to restore ministry among this covenanted people of God to its biblical place in its strategy of world evangelization.

2. The Jewish World

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A. Who Is a Jew?

Since the rise of modern Judaism in the last century, the definition of who is a Jew and identification of Jews have been provocative issues. Indeed, in Israel, those issues are of major political and ideological import and, for obvious reasons, demand some sort of workable definition of Jewish identity.

In contemporary Jewish thinking, a Jew is considered to be anyone who has some Jewish origin by birth or who has undergone conversion. According to Jewish Orthodox law, a Jew is one born of a Jewish mother. For us, the definition of a Jew is a person who belongs to the people with whom God made certain immutable and eternal covenants. (We are aware of the biblical demand that outward conformity be accompanied by an inner transformation.) In the case of Jews who accept Jesus, it must be understood that their Jewish identity is maintained and usually heightened as a result of belief in Jesus as Messiah.

B. Population

Accepted estimates of the percent world Jewish population produce a picture of a small and scattered world community of some 14.4 million. This is the result of several factors: the decimation of Jewish communities during the Holocaust when an estimated one-third of the total Jewish population was annihilated by Nazis, a declining birthrate in most Jewish communities, and a process of assimilation into non-Jewish societies in significant numbers. (Some modern demographers argue that, considering the antiquity of the Jewish people, under normal patterns of population growth, the Jewish population would have by now reached some 700 million.) For a more detailed breakdown of major Jewish population centres in today's world, see [Appendix A](#).

C. Jewish Communities

The Jewish people of the world should be regarded as one people sharing a common

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identity in diverse forms. Thus, for example, Jews living in the United States and in the United Kingdom, while part of the same Anglo-Saxon milieu, reflect different socio-religious patterns. A larger percentage of U.S. Jews adhere to more liberal forms of Jewish religious identity than do Jews in Britain who, for the most part, tend to identify as members of Orthodox (or more traditional) synagogues. American Jews tend to be more actively involved in secular humanist movements and are often more prominent in the promotion of secular humanism than their British counterparts. Nevertheless, even within the same national Jewish community, there will be significant variations in their structure.

The Jewish community of Baltimore, Maryland, on the eastern seaboard of the United States provides an illustration. It is one of the oldest and most cohesive Jewish communities in America with a strong sense of Jewish religious identity. Its members tend to occupy the same residential neighbourhoods and to act in concert on many Jewish social issues. This degree of cohesion and co-operation inhibits the rate of assimilation and loss of Jewish identity prevalent in other American Jewish communities. For example, in nearby Washington, D.C., the Jewish community is more widely dispersed and is more liberal in its religious and social outlook. This tends to promote a higher rate of assimilation and loss of Jewish identity.

It must be constantly borne in mind that in the Diaspora, even within identifiable national and urban Jewish communities, separate Jewish people groups may be clearly recognized by their distinctive cultures, religious rites, traditions, and national origins. This extends even to dress and language (e.g., Orthodox and Liberal) as well as to attitudes on Jewish and universal issues. This is most dramatically evident in Israel, the Jewish national homeland. Jews from over 100 lands as well as native Israelis provide an amazing mosaic in miniature, running almost the entire gamut of human and Jewish distinctiveness.

The composition of Jewish communities in Israel includes the ultra Orthodox pietists of Mea Shearim (in a kind of transplanted Eastern European ghetto) and also anti-religious militants committed to Marxist ideology. Intermediate trends will include the moderately Orthodox, adherents of Conservative and Reform Judaism (both late nineteenth century trends), secularists, agnostics, and some Messianic Jews (or Hebrew Christians). Culturally, it will embrace the diversity of Eastern and Western life colored by the age-old experiences of the Jewish dispersion among the nations. While modern Hebrew is the official national language of the Jewish people in Israel (and the religious language of the Jews of the Diaspora), the influence of other tongues and cultures—like Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic—reflect a particular Jewish adaptation of Gentile host cultures. Others—like English, French,

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German—are the result of large-scale integration of Jewish communities (especially in the West following the so-called "Emancipation" of Jewry in the nineteenth century) into their countries of residence.

It should be noted, however, that in Communist-dominated areas, particularly in the Soviet Union, there is a very large group of unreached Jews who have very little or no awareness of any form of Jewish religion, language and/or culture. Many view the world in patterns of Marxist "dialectical materialism," of which atheism is an essential part.

It is obvious that reaching those Jews requires different approaches, methods, and media than those outlined in this paper. We recommend study in this area which is possible due to the steady emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union not only to Israel but to the rest of the free world as well. In reaching those Russian Jewish immigrants, a coordinated effort with the Russian-speaking Christian community and Slavic missions would be of great help.

3. Social Change

A. Population Movement in Cities

There has been a significant shift in Jewish population to the suburbs from neighbourhoods containing Orthodox synagogues in major urban areas. Whereas this has been a pattern among Conservative and Liberal Jews in the past, there has also more recently been a significant number of Orthodox Jews moving to the suburbs—contrary to their habitual practice, which is to stay near the Orthodox synagogues and institutions.

Two illustrations which reflect the worldwide picture are London and New York City. London's East End district has seen a decline in Jewish population, particularly among young people, whereas the adjacent counties and suburbs have had comparable growth. New York City's Jewish population dropped by many thousands in the years 1970-76, while the outlying boroughs and counties have seen an increase.

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In moving away from inner-city areas, many Jewish families often find themselves in closer proximity to evangelical Christians who would not usually be found in the compacted Jewish ghettos. Recognizing this as an opportunity, we call upon the church to bear its responsibility in living and sharing a testimony to the Jewish people within the parish of each witnessing congregation.

B. Shrinking Communities

It must be recognized that through intermarriage, declining birth rate, and general assimilation, there is a continual shrinkage in the Jewish communities in most nations.

C. Assimilation

Many Jews today would wish to be identified both as citizens of their country of adoption or birth and as Jews. Another major trend in the Jewish Diaspora community is one of economic and social assimilation. It affects almost all levels of Jewish society at the cost of Jewish distinctives. This is particularly true of young Jews. A high rate of intermarriage with non-Jews is evident in all major Jewish population centres except Israel. (In the United Kingdom and New Zealand, the rate of intermarriage is estimated at 25%, in some U.S. communities as much as 40%, and in South America up to 60%.)

D. Insecurity

Because of the size and influence of the Jewish community in the United States, it has experienced a greater sense of security than those of most other Jewish communities. However, even in the U.S. there are occasional outbreaks of anti-Semitism which disquiet Jews. Worldwide outbreaks, which include the occasional daubing of temples and synagogues, the existence of the National Socialist movement, etc., cause some Jewish people to wonder if the Holocaust could be repeated. Some rabbis teach that Jews can be secure only in Israel.

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Another factor which adds to Jewish insecurity has always been anti-Semitism cloaked in representations of historical Christianity. An example of this is the charge sometimes heard in sermons that all Jewish people are guilty of putting Christ to death. We call upon the church to denounce, as anti-Christian, anti-Semitism in all forms whether it be secular or religious.

E. Attitude to Israel

It is this insecurity that gives the State of Israel such importance to Jewish people. While most Jews in the free world are not disposed to settle in Israel, it is reassuring for them to know that, if the worst should happen, there is a possible refuge. The founding of the State of Israel and her survival through four wars has proved to be a strongly unifying force among Jews today. Most Jews, to some degree, are Zionists. Concern for Israel and pride in her achievement transcend all other barriers.

For a very large number of Jews across the world, support for Israel has become the major rallying point for religious as well as cultural Judaism. A common interest which many Jews and Christians share in the land of Israel and its future can be a viable way to draw them together in friendship.

4. Religious Change

A. Religious Decline

Decline in synagogue attendance and religious observance appears to be widespread. Although there was, for example, a short period in the early '50s when synagogue membership rose in the United States, the overall pattern in North America and elsewhere has been that each generation is less observant than the preceding one. In Britain and Australia the percentage of regular synagogue attenders has reportedly dropped to as low as 8% to 10%. In South America there seems to be an even greater religious decline. The number of religiously active Jews in Argentina is put at 3% to 5% of the Jewish community, while in Brazil there are

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many large synagogues that are closed or sparsely attended. In Israel the Jewish religious community is universally recognized to be a minority segment of the total Jewish community.

B. Involvement in Cults, Secularist Phenomena, Etc.

A significant number of Jews have sought fulfillment in many bizarre sects. Some, for example, are involved in spiritism, others in Eastern religions such as Zen Buddhism and Hare Krishna. In the United States many Jewish youth have been attracted to the drug culture, hippie movement, Transcendental Meditation, and various mystical cults. The church needs to recognize these trends and adapt its evangelistic approach accordingly. (It should also be pointed out that Jewish young people are sometimes taught by Rabbis that Hebrew Christian missionary organizations and associations are "cultic.")

C. Religious Revival

While the major trend is towards secularism, there is a smaller but significant trend in the opposite direction towards Jewish religious identity. This is due to the activities of Orthodox renewal groups and even some more liberal groups seeking to restore secularized Jews to some form of religious observance. Recent trends have included "Mission for Judaism" among such widely divergent groups as the Lubavitch and similar Orthodox movements, working entirely among Jews, and the U.S.-based Reform movement reaching out to the "unchurched Gentiles" for converts to Liberal Judaism.

5. Blocks in Evangelism

There are many obstacles to the communication of the gospel to the Jewish people. Some of these communication blocks arise when Christians fail to take into account the uniqueness of the Jewish people, or fail to appreciate the harm done to the Jewish people by some who have called themselves Christians. On the other hand, it must be recognized that, as a defensive measure to preserve the Jewish people, Jewish leaders have set obstacles, both intellectual and social, to prevent Jews from

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considering the claims of Christ. These communication blocks are unique to Jewish-Christian relations. Special consideration is therefore necessary if the church is to relate meaningfully with Jewish people. Christians must deal courageously and decisively with such communication blocks if they hope to overcome resistance and share Christ with Jewish people.

A. Persecution

It has been said that the Jewish community suffers from a persecution complex wherein the notion is held and fostered by Jews that the Jewish people are the perpetual victims of their non-Jewish neighbours, Christians in particular.

Even the most cursory examination of history will show that the Jewish feelings of persecution are justified. We would wish to point out that true Christianity teaches its adherents to love all people in general and particularly to love and appreciate the Jewish people. We urge Christians to follow the example of those ministers of the church who, through heroic acts, have given themselves to work for the welfare and preservation of the Jewish people even to the point of risking death.

B. Misrepresentation of Scriptural Truth

In some sermons, Jews are portrayed as those who reject Christ, and Gentiles as those who listen and heed the Word of God.

Some churches which believe themselves to be "the true Israel" *at times* misappropriate Scripture to relegate the promises of blessings to themselves and deny the validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people.

Some churches have an over-emphasis on prophecy which concentrates on God's dealings with the Jews in the past and the future, but fails to teach adequately concerning the role of the Jewish people and their spiritual need today.

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A tendency to use typology in Christian preaching can be confusing to the Jewish inquirer trying to understand Christian precepts.

C. Divisions Within the Church

It is confusing to the Jewish inquirer to be confronted with many different denominations, and it is disturbing when he senses rivalry between mission agencies. We must be very careful to present Christ to the Jewish person in such a way that, should he choose to become a Christian, he doesn't enter the Christian life with a set of prejudices that separates him from others of the household of faith. As far as the rivalry between mission organizations is concerned, it is regrettable, but true, that a certain amount of competitiveness is inevitable. It is suggested that those agencies involved in Jewish evangelism confer and agree on a code of ethics to enable them better to relate to one another and, as much as possible, co-operate in the work of evangelism.

D. Inadequate Verbal Communication

One who would testify to the Jews must be made aware of the fact that many commonly used Christian terms do not represent the same concepts to Jewish people. Christians must become aware of the jargon we constantly use which fails to communicate and, where possible, either teach the meaning of the terms or use words which carry less negative emotional connotations. For example, the word "congregation" is more easily understood than the word "church." Jews have congregations, but they never refer to them as Jewish churches.

E. Christian Cultural Identification

Christian life-style conditioned by Western culture seems rather devoid of the intensity which the Jew recognizes as the way life should be lived. The Christian life seems too austere with a multiplicity of taboos.

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F. Lack of a Positive Witness

Christians, because they are uncaring or fearful, may fail to make a reasonable attempt to communicate. We call on Christians to care and be courageous, to risk rejection for Christ's sake, and to follow his example of courage and vulnerability because of his love.

G. Indoctrination by the Jewish Community

Unfortunately, Jewish community leaders, sensing the gospel to be a threat, have fostered attitudes which would cause Jews to ignore the statements of the gospel. Motives for evangelism are taught to be suspect. Jews are told that Christians desire to make Gentiles of them culturally, and that is the reason for Jewish evangelism.

We call on the church to demonstrate that, when a Jew accepts Christ, he not only remains a Jew but he is fulfilling the destiny of the Jewish people to serve the God of Israel. We ask the church to come to the defense of those Jews who have accepted Christ when their motives for conversion are impugned. It has become common to discredit the testimony of the Jewish believer, and thus blunt the value of one Jew telling another, "I have found him of whom the prophets and Moses spoke."

To answer the charge that a Jew who accepts Christ is no longer a Jew, we call upon the church leaders to encourage and promote those elements of Jewish life, culture, and worship by which a Jew identifies himself. Jewish Christians should be encouraged to be loyal to Jewish causes which they recognize to be honorable, e.g., Zionist causes, concern for Soviet Jewry, participation in and support of Jewish charities. The Messianic Jewish congregations should be recognized as one distinctively Jewish testimony to Jews. Yet at the same time, those Jews who choose to affiliate with mainline or standard congregations should be respected.

At all times and in all ways the untrue notions which prevent Jews from considering the claims of Christ must be lovingly and tactfully challenged by statements of the

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truth.

H. Opposition of Christian Leaders

Lastly, we must mention that one of the obstacles to Jewish evangelism has been unco-operative Christian leaders who, for reasons of their own, have sided with the opposition to some forms of Jewish evangelism. They must be admonished to be faithful to their calling, and, for their part, Hebrew Christian agencies should scrutinize programmes and personnel.

6. Areas of Response

A. Statistics

From contemporary Jewish and non-Jewish sources, a picture emerges of Jews in many communities turning to faith in Christ. A recent conservative estimate suggests 20,000 to 30,000 conversions worldwide in the past two decades. Alarms are sounded periodically by Jewish rabbis, community leaders, and the Jewish media, among whom this phenomenon is viewed as a threat to the survival of the Jewish community.

Nevertheless, the numbers of Hebrew Christians reported vary greatly and seem often to be colored by the impressions the sources wish to create. If the numbers are used by the Jewish community to indicate a threat, then they tend to be very large. At other times rabbis, desiring to show missions as being ineffective, give numbers that are too small. Overzealous Christian societies are also sometimes less than precise in their statistics out of a desire to demonstrate effectiveness.

B. Age and Background

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Most of the new believers in Jesus have come to faith out of the larger pool of liberal and secularized Jews; others have come to faith from a strongly religious Jewish background. One recent survey conducted by a Hebrew Christian agency indicated considerable Jewish knowledge among the new believers polled. Furthermore, faith in Christ has often led to a renewal of Jewish identity among more who were in the process of total assimilation into the non-Jewish community.

C. Influential Factors

Let us delineate basic influential factors leading Jewish people to faith in Christ:

- (i) The quality of individual life of the Christian who bears witness;
- (ii) The initiative of the Christian who cultivates friendships with Jewish people;
- (iii) The corporate life of Christians as expressed in congregations demonstrating the love of God, and joy in a personal yet corporate relationship;
- (iv) Scripture in proclaiming the gospel of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as the great redeeming act in the history of the people of God;
- (v) Literature that is sophisticated, culturally sensitive, and addressed to the felt needs of the community;
- (vi) The proclamation of a faith that answers the desires of the heart.

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7. The Theological Issues

The following issues are some of the most significant in relating a biblical message to Jewish people.

A. One God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

We acknowledge that the concept of the Trinity is difficult to explain and accept and that Jewish people often understand it to mean tri-theism.

While we adhere to the formulation of the doctrine on the Trinity in the creeds of the early church councils, we feel that it is essential to present our faith in the one God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-in biblical terms, making use of the rich material found in both Testaments as well as in the intertestamental literature.

We affirm that God is One as reflected in the confession of Israel (the Sh'ma, Deuteronomy 6:4). However, the Hebrew Scriptures give witness to the mystery of his Being. The Law, the Prophets and the Writings already intimate that his oneness is a composite unity. And in the unfolding of the history of salvation, the one God has revealed himself to Israel and all mankind as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the New Testament has made him fully known to us. It is the history of salvation that must be the conceptual bridge as we speak to Jews.

B. Christology

In recent years, a number of Jewish authors have written books about Jesus stressing his humanity, admiring his character, and hailing him as a teacher within Israel. But as the apostles, those early Jewish witnesses to Jesus, have taught us, we affirm Jesus is more than mere man. The gospels testify that he is greater than the Temple, greater than Jonah and Solomon, and even Lord of the great King David (Matthew 12:6, 12:42, 22:41-46, cf. 12:8 and 11:9). As he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he is the unique Son of God. In his preaching

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and acts, he is Immanuel: God with us. In his atoning death and in his resurrection and ascension, he is our Suffering Servant and Lord. The early church therefore rightly proclaimed Jesus to be true man and true God, and early Jewish and Gentile believers addressed Jesus as Jews addressed God in the Old Testament. The change that has taken place among many Jews in their new understanding of Jesus of Nazareth should be appreciated by all Christians.

However, bound as we are by the biblical witness, we call upon the church to ensure that we do not bring Jewish people to a Jesus who is less than the Jesus of the New Testament.

C. Soteriology

A church that is uncertain of its doctrine of Christ is inevitably uncertain of its doctrine of salvation. Those of the church who hold a doctrine of universalism reject Jewish evangelism as a valid or necessary enterprise. The two-covenant theory proclaims two ways of salvation, stating that God has a covenant with Israel distinct from His covenant with the rest of the world. It therefore denies the need for Jewish evangelism. Judaism also proclaims its own way of salvation. It is argued that Jews are exempt from the necessity of a faith-response to Christ. Such statements, however, deprecate the unique salvation offered by God as the only way to be saved from sin.

It was to Jewish brethren of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem that Peter stressed the one way of salvation and the uniqueness of Christ in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Similarly in Matthew 1:21, the angel explained to Joseph why Christ should be given the name "Yeshua" (Jesus) ". . . for he shall save his people from their sins."

Because Christ died the atoning death on the cross and was raised from the dead in order to provide forgiveness of sins and new life and hope for His own people, Israel, he is also the one Saviour and Mediator between God and man for the people of all nations. There is, therefore, one gospel which is "the power of God for salvation" and to which Jews and Gentiles are called to respond in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. We cannot, therefore, withhold from

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the Jews the good news and discriminate against them concerning the best we have to offer. We call upon the church to be forthright in proclaiming Christ as the only way of salvation for Jews.

D. Covenant

It is necessary for the church to affirm that it is an elect people and that unity in and with Christ is open to both Jew and Gentile through faith and baptism (Galatians 3:27,28). But there remains the question of the present standing of the Jewish people as a nation before God. There is an attitude among many Christians that the Jews as a people no longer have a part in God's plan since Israel's prerogatives have passed in toto to the church.

However, God called Abraham from among the nations and established a universal covenant with the patriarch and his seed to be a blessing to all peoples (Genesis 12:1-3). This promise includes the preservation of Israel to carry out God's purpose, which was reaffirmed by Jeremiah (31:35-37). Paul echoes the promise in Romans 11:1, "Did God reject his people? By no means," and again in Romans 11:28 . . . but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs." God has therefore preserved Israel according to the flesh and he is not yet finished with the Jewish people in his redemptive plan for mankind.

There was always a remnant of Israel in Old Testament times which entered into the plan of salvation (Romans 11:2-4). When Christ came and died for our sins and rose again, he fulfilled the promise of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:33-34) and also what was promised to Abraham (Galatians 3:15-29). In the days of the apostles, a remnant of Jewish people recognized this fulfillment and received Christ in faith. Similarly, a remnant has always belonged to the new covenant in the one body of Christ. While a part of Israel continues to reject God's Messiah, yet it is God's will that the church reach the remnant of Israel in every generation until the day when "all Israel will be saved." (Romans 11:26).

We therefore call upon the church to labor for the re-gathering, of these natural branches into the olive tree, the covenantal fellowship with God in the Messiah, through faith in Christ and through the seal of the new covenant, which is baptism. We encourage the church to look forward to the day when we are again united with

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this Israel in the body of Christ, and when we together with Christ and one another will celebrate the meaning of the new covenant both here and in the eternal kingdom of God.

E. Revelation

(i) One Bible with two Testaments

The revelatory word that testifies to the one revelation of the Father in history, and finally through his Son, is the one Bible with two Testaments. The New Testament must therefore be held together with the Old and understood and interpreted on the background of the Old Testament Scriptures in study, worship, preaching, and witnessing. We make this call to the church not only to enhance the ability of the church to communicate the original Jewishness of Christianity to the Jewish people, but also because it is the Word of this one Bible that gives the church its identity, its mandate in the world, and its power to serve.

The Hebrew Bible is the unique heritage we have in common with the people of the synagogue. As we appreciate this common heritage, we call upon the church in its encounter with the Jewish people to affirm that the Old Testament can only be fully and finally known through the New Testament and through his Son, who gives Jews and Gentiles access to the Father.

(ii) Prophecy and Eschatology

There exist among evangelicals different opinions as to the interpretation of Old and New Testament prophetic texts with regard to the prophecies concerning the nation and land of Israel. Whereas some of us are hesitant to speak about the fulfillment of specific prophecies with regard to the establishment of the State of Israel, others are convinced and believe that various Old and New Testament prophecies still await further fulfillment in the restoration of the National Israel and of the fullness of the Messianic Kingdom. A third opinion among us is that it is not necessary to give these prophetic texts an exclusive application to either ethnic Israel or the church, and that it does not detract from the reality of the promise to apply it both to the

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church and to the Jewish people in their homeland.

We recognize that the Promised Land is the home of both Jew and Arab. We lament the continued tension between the Israeli and Palestinian people. We are conscious that God loves both Jew and Arab, and we look together to God for a just solution to the present tension.

However, we do see the return of the Jews to the land and to their life in Israel as a sign of God's faithfulness. In our conversations, this can lead to a focus on his love in Christ. At the same time we ask our Christian sisters and brothers to avoid seeing the fulfillment of prophecies in every event in the State of Israel so that we miss the centrality of the crucified and resurrected Christ in our evangelistic approach.

Finally our expectation of the imminent return of Christ is a spur to us to evangelize the Jews. The return of Christ will be his personal and visible coming. He will return in glory and power in order to consummate his salvation and judgement. As we look and long for Christ to come back, we remember that the gospel must first be brought to the fullness of the nations and to all Israel for their salvation. We therefore call upon the church to be faithful in the proclamation of the gospel to the Jews so that Israel may be saved and our Lord return in his glory.

(iii) The Place of the Law

The question about the Law is a central one in our encounter with Jews, and in Jewish evangelism. Jews often ask, "How is it that the church, claiming to be the people of the Messiah, so consistently neglects the Torah, the revealed will of God?"

Whereas modern Judaism can describe the Law and the commandments as the ladder on which man shall climb up to God, the New Testament proclaims that we are all sinners, condemned by his holy Law and unable to reach up to him through any manner of works. There is only one way, Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven and has given us access to the Father through himself. However, Jesus also strongly states that he did not come to abolish the Law. The Law still contains the revelation of the perfect will of God, and the new life in Christ is meant to be lived in

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full accordance with this will. But this life is not guarded by prohibitions and prescriptions such as in the rabbinic halakha. It is a life lived in and under the Spirit according to the example of Christ and on the basis of the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

As we approach Jews it is very important for them to see that we are saved by grace alone, but also that life in Christ is lived in accordance with the holy will of God. We therefore call upon the church to reject antinomian tendencies, and particularly to give new emphasis in its instruction of believers to do the will of God as revealed in the Old Testament.

(iv) Anti-Semitism

Throughout the centuries, from antiquity and the Middle Ages up to our own age, Jews have been persecuted within Christendom and in the name of Jesus Christ. The old historical churches, as well as churches of the Reformation, share a common guilt in their contribution to the development of anti-Semitism. It was particularly at the time of Easter/Passover that the Jews suffered from pogroms. Thus the cross became for them a sign of persecution and suffering. Although not every Christian or national church was responsible for these atrocities, Christians should know that, in the eyes of world Jewry, there is a collective responsibility for atrocities perpetrated against Jews.

Certain verses of the New Testament contain harsh statements concerning some of the Jewish people of that day. But we affirm that the New Testament directly and by implication condemns everything anti-Semitic as sin against God. When Christ hung on the cross, he himself prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He was aware of the fact that his own death was the utmost expression of God's love to save his people and the people of all nations. We therefore call upon the church to denounce the hostile expressions against God's ancient people in the writings of the church fathers and to declare forthrightly that what is anti-Semitic is anti-biblical.

We further call upon the church, in its literature, teaching, preaching, and witnessing, to rectify distorted pictures and hostile defamations of pharisaic and rabbinic Judaism. (We also ask the church today to oppose anti-Semitic tendencies

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that are developing in various parts of the world, including that kind of anti-Semitism which is disguised as "anti-Zionism.") The Christian church has been called upon NOT to be an instrument of judgement in history, but an instrument of reconciliation, healing, and peace.

8. Methodology

An effective methodology for Jewish evangelism should have as its basis a commitment to reasonable goals and the perseverance to see them through. Any methods, materials, or techniques which are consistent with Scripture and which have proved effective in one area should be considered for use in other areas. However, full consideration must be given to the different context. The following guidelines are suggested:

A. The task of Jewish evangelism should be seen as a responsibility and privilege of every Christian.

B. A Christian needs adequate instruction so that his approach to Jewish people can be sensitive, forthright, and effective, and so he can also overcome his natural reluctance to witness to Jewish people. We recognize the value of education and scholarship, especially in connection with the exposure of the Jewish roots in the Old and New Testaments.

C. We should be aware of the atrocities committed against the Jewish people in the name of Christ and combat every form of anti-Semitism.

D. Christians must be aware of their indebtedness to the Jewish people through whom God has committed to the church a rich heritage including both the Saviour and the Scriptures. The liturgical riches of prayer, psalmody, and the Law, as well as the use of symbols which relate to the Jewish tradition, can appropriately be incorporated into worship.

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E. Our message should be one of affirmative proclamation of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, of all people. While we cannot accept the synagogue's rejection of Jesus, there is no need to speak negatively of Judaism.

F. The preaching of the gospel should be a proclamation of the uniqueness of Christ, not of Christianity as a religion, and of Christ as the fulfillment of the hope of Israel as contained in Scripture.

G. We must be aware of the fact that certain Jewish communities are convinced that Christian evangelism to the Jewish people is accomplished by means of bribery and deceit. While it is clear to every Christian that true faith cannot be bought, care should be taken that we do not inadvertently reinforce the mythology about alleged missionary bribery. By the same token, the witness to Jewish children and young people should normally be conducted with the knowledge of their guardians. Our testimony must always be ethical.

H. Dialogue with Jews cannot be a substitute for the proclamation of the gospel. There may be both formal and personal opportunities of dialogue, however, which build bridges and enable Christians to discuss the meaning and interpretation of the New Testament message. However, dialogue can only be conducted when Christians honestly assert their intention to uphold the message of salvation in Christ.

I. Christians who would witness to the Jewish people must be relentless in their love and friendship toward Jews regardless of their response to the gospel. While we should avoid all unnecessary offense, Christians should not seek friendship with Jews at the expense of compromise with Christian convictions.

J. As soon as possible, the Christian should introduce the Jewish inquirer to a fellowship of believers and, if possible, to some Jewish Christians. It is regrettable that some missionaries maintain exclusive "rights" over their contacts and deprive them of the corporate and individual witness of other Christians. Such parochialism injures the contact.

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K. New Jewish believers need specialized pastoral care to compensate for the difficulties they face. However, they should not be given a special status within the church, but be treated in every way as any other believer.

L. Converts should have complete freedom in Christ to maintain their national and cultural identity or to assimilate with their surroundings in what measure the Spirit dictates. (For further treatment of this subject, see Section 9, Contextualization.)

9. Contextualization

Cultural identification with the Jewish community is vital if we are to communicate the gospel properly. Christian witness to the Jewish people has often suffered from a lack of this awareness. For instance, Jesus has been presented to the Jews as a non-Jew and even as being anti-Jewish. Furthermore, Jewish Christians have felt culturally alienated from their communities due to the pressure to conform to the standards of a predominantly Gentile church. The means of cultural identification, however, may vary. The approach to the religious Jew might differ from that to the secular Jew, and the approach to an Israeli will not be the same as that to a Jew in New York. Yet there is a Jewish way to communicate Christ to each.

The Jew who is brought to faith in Christ does not cease being a Jew. Therefore, although he has the freedom in Christ to conform to common patterns of piety and religious observances practiced by all Christians, he must be accorded the freedom in Christ to observe religious elements appropriate to him as an Israelite (e.g., Jewish religious festivals) so long as they are kept in a manner consistent with the Scripture.

According to the [Willowbank Report](#) (L.O.P. No. 2, p. 7), "Biblical clues to the understanding of the human culture are found in the threefold dimension of people, land and history on which the Old Testament focuses attention. The ethnic, territorial and the historical (who, where and whence we are) appear as the triple source of all forms of human life." This is affirmed in Acts 17:26 where the ethnic, geographical and historical elements are indissolubly linked.

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The history of Israel has already been referred to in various paragraphs, but we would reemphasize the need for the church's awareness of that history as Jewish history and in its relation to redemptive history.

The question of the land cannot be ignored. It is a constituent element in the cultural identity of the people. No doubt it poses many difficult questions, but at a minimum, the church must affirm the nature of this divine gift (cf., Genesis 10, Amos 9:7f.) and its perpetuity and endeavour to contribute to the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem.

As to the ethnic element, several areas are suggested as examples of how this may be applied:

- a. By bringing the gospel to bear in areas of expressed needs of individuals in the Jewish community, applying the Word of God to the issues of the day.
- b. By identifying with that community in such issues as support for Israel, the fight against racial and religious discrimination, and concern for oppressed communities in various parts of the world.
- c. By fostering and encouraging Jewish Christians to continue to enjoy their heritage and to enhance the life of the church through elements of Jewish culture such as music, drama, dance, art, literature, and humor.
- d. By identifying with the Jewish community through adaptation of a Jewish life-style, e.g., observing of religious and national festivals, traditions and events of life (Jewish-style weddings, funerals, etc.).
- e. By having Messianic Jewish, congregational-type worship. One such congregation in the United States, for example, has found that two types of worship services are necessary, both for its members as well as for outreach to the community. One is a freer service that a person from a secularized Jewish background could understand.

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The other is structured according to the more traditional Jewish style of worship. The value of such identification can readily be seen. It presents the gospel in a Jewish way. It shows that Jews can believe in Jesus as the Messiah while also retaining their Jewish heritage and identity. A number of criteria however need to be applied to these efforts.

(i) Efforts at contextualization must be faithful to Scripture and cannot include anti-Christian elements that might be common understandings of other Jews.

(ii) Such worship and retention of Jewish customs must be an authentic expression of the life of members of the group.

(iii) In the Diaspora there is a necessity for Jewish believers in their congregations and assemblies to recognize the wholeness of the body of the Messiah. In the State of Israel there must also be an acknowledgement of the organic unity of Jewish and Arab believers in Christ ,

(iv) These efforts must be undertaken with care regarding relationships with the wider Christian community.

f. We recognize the need to explore alternative ways in which Jewish Christians can express their Jewishness, and we encourage initiatives that are meaningful to them. Freedom in these efforts will be limited only by fidelity to Scripture so that the substance of faith will not be neglected by overemphasis on the forms in which the faith is expressed.

10. Strategy

A. Mobilization of the Church

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Where there is a Jewish community, the local churches should be motivated and educated for effective outreach and witness to the Jewish people. Such evangelism should be seen not only as a legitimate activity of the church, but also as an obligatory activity and responsibility of all Christians. (See Appendix B for suggested readings.)

Parachurch missionary agencies can offer expertise and support to the church in its missionary task. There needs to be a highly mobile task force that is available to respond to the Holy Spirit in various communities and locales to meet extraordinary opportunities for witness.

B. Categories of Workers

There is a need for three categories of workers.

(i) Full-time workers with a variety of gifts. Such workers are especially needed where there is no local church, or where it needs strengthening in its witness.

(ii) Associate workers who are well-trained in matters relating to Jewish evangelism but remain in secular jobs. Following the tent-making principle, they would not be a financial burden and would not be labelled as "missionaries."

(iii) Christians, Jewish and Gentile, who are given adequate training and encouragement in their local witness.

C. Reaching the Jewish People in People Groups—A Suggestion for Israel

As we try to realize the potentiality of the Israeli Christian community, there is a need for a more systematic approach in order to reach a broad spectrum of the Jewish society.

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There is a need for a new start in order to reach into the different communities and *language groups*. Although there has been a definite dominance of Ashkenazim among the Hebrew Christians in the past, there are Hebrew Christians from many different communities who should learn to consider themselves as bridge-persons in this respect. Believing individuals and families have members of other communities in their neighbourhoods. For example, there are believers in some of the development towns where many of the Oriental Jews are situated, and they should be encouraged to witness to the people of these communities. It seems that a bilingual approach would be in place for the congregational or united communal outreach programs with special communities in mind. To that end, the foreign language newspapers could be used. Visitors from abroad with special affiliation to one language group can also be used in such efforts.

Although the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* represent closed communities, there are always personal links that can be pursued. Furthermore, members of these communities have proved open to receiving Scriptures, including New Testaments. Volunteers serving in the kibbutzim are a resource not yet fully utilized.

The *universities* and the higher institutions of learning seem to represent a section of the population to which a special ministry should be considered. Local believers are to be found there, and there are openings for people from abroad. Persons having links with the universities should be encouraged to recognize a special task in this area of youth evangelism.

To reach the people in the *army* seems to be possible only through a personal approach. Local Hebrew Christians who are enlisted need to be prepared in advance in order to maintain their faith in the new setting and to be witnesses to their Lord.

One ought not to forget the *geographical* dimension in an evangelistic strategy. There are areas of the country where there is almost no Christian presence. A united approach could help plant the body of Christ in all major towns throughout the country.

An additional question must be asked. Are there particular times in the year which

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would be appropriate for a congregational/communal approach or for a personal, home-based approach? We are thinking here of religious and national holidays and also of particular events or circumstances which would give opportunities for positive and meaningful communication.

D. Areas of Response

Attention should be directed to areas of response, and personnel and resources should be concentrated accordingly. In such situations, the type of mobile task force mentioned above would be particularly valuable.

E. Training Programmes

There should be greater co-operation between missions in the training of personnel. More thought should be given to the nature of the training necessary for reaching the different segments of the community. We observe that some training is more geared to reaching Orthodox Jews, whereas secular Jews form a great majority in most communities.

F. Inter-Mission Co-operation

Every attempt should be made to effect the merger or closest co-operation of mission organizations, especially in areas of literature, deployment of personnel, and support from churches. It is encouraging to see what has already been achieved in this area, but more effort is necessary if Jewish missions are to retain their credibility in the eyes of the church, and to avoid an unnecessary stumbling block for young Jewish believers.

G. Critical Assessment

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There should be objective appraisal of all evangelistic agencies at regular intervals. All programmes, methods, and materials must be constantly reviewed and revised or replaced where necessary. Because something was successful in the past is not enough reason to continue using it, if it does not work! It is also expected that every endeavour be made for accuracy in the reporting of the effectiveness and achievements of evangelistic outreach.

H. New Task Force

We propose the formation of an international task force as described below. [*Web Editor's note: This proposal came into being with the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.*]

(i) *What the task force is not:*

- (a) It is not a duplication of the efforts of any existing agency.
- (b) It is not a representation of any one theological viewpoint or member agency.
- (c) It is not an accrediting agency making judgements on the validity of other ministries.
- (d) It is not an institution that continues beyond the time that it serves the stated purposes.

(ii) *Purpose.*

- (a) To gather and catalogue information useful in Jewish evangelism and to furnish such material in an occasional publication.
- (b) To provide a platform on which Jewish missions can meet to co-ordinate strategies.
- (c) To monitor and report trends in the Jewish community.

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- (d) To stimulate theological and missiological research related to Jewish evangelism.
- (e) To arrange for consultations that will be useful to those engaged or interested in Jewish evangelism.

(iii) Membership.

Any agency or person which has been recommended by two or more members, which has an interest in Jewish evangelism, and which is in substantial agreement with the [Lausanne Covenant](#). This agency or person must also be able to pay annual dues to cover the cost of mailings.

(iv) Who should join?

- (a) Any congregation which has applied itself to a ministry which includes Jewish evangelism,
- (b) Any agency or person directly involved in Jewish evangelism.
- (c) Any scholar who has done work in the field of Jewish evangelism.
- (d) Any writer who has written on subjects which reflect on Jewish evangelism.

Conclusion

As we conclude the work of this consultation, we are in agreement as we appeal for Jewish evangelism as a central and unavoidable task for the body of Christ. We regret with sorrow that there are local churches, church leaders, and missionary agencies which deny the need to return the gospel to the Jewish people from whence it first came; and that evangelicals who say they love the Jewish people sometimes lack the will to bring them the gospel.

Including Jewish people is a test of our willingness to be involved in world

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evangelization. It is a test of our faith in the one exclusive way of salvation and of our proclamation of Christ as an adequate Saviour for those who are apparently adequate so far as worldly righteousness is concerned.

Appendix A: World Jewish Communities

According to the American Jewish Yearbook of 1979, the largest Jewish communities in the world are:

U.S.A 5,860,000
Israel 3,135,000
Soviet Union 2,666,000
France 650,000
United Kingdom 410,000
Canada 305,000
Argentina 300,000
Brazil 150,000
South Africa 118,000
Australia/New Zealand 75,000
Iran 50,000

The cities with the greatest numbers of Jewish people are given as:

New York 1,998,000
Los Angeles 455,000
Tel Aviv/Jaffa 394,000
Paris 300,000
Philadelphia 295,000
Moscow 285,000
London 280,000
Jerusalem 272,000
Chicago 253,000
Miami 225,000
Haifa 210,000
Lyons 200,000

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Kiev 170,000
Boston 170,000
Leningrad 165,000
Washington, D.C 160,000
Odessa 120,000
Montreal 115,000
Toronto 115,000

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Appendix C: In Attendance

Participants

Betty Baruch, Australia

Menehem Benhayim, Israel

Rev. David Harley, England (International co-ordinator)

Dr. G. D. James, Australia

Kai Kjaer-Hansen, Denmark

Rev. Ole Chr Kvarme, Israel

Tony Lewin, South Africa

Rev. Murdo MacLeod, England

Rev. Rodney Mechanic, South Africa

Jh'an (Alan) Moskowitz, U.S.A.

Susan Perlman, U.S.A.

Rev. J. S. Uhrinak, U.S.A.

Brian Wells, New Zealand

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Consultants

Dr. Gerald Anderson, U.S.A.

Dr. Richard R. de Ridder, U.S.A.

Dr. Louis Goldberg, U.S.A.

Dr. Erwin J. Kolb, U.S.A (consultant chairman)

Moishe Rosen, U.S.A.