

18 Page Free Excerpt from

*RESTORING*  
*OUR*  
**LOST**  
**LEGACY**

*Christianity's Hebrew Heritage*

*Selected Essays and Lectures*

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## FOREWORD

As a child, I heard the late Grady R. Kent minister on the Jewishness of Jesus and of the gospel. The pure and simple truth taught by this man of keen understanding and insight made a deep impact on my life and has since brought me to a full appreciation of the heritage of my Christian faith in the ancient religion of the Jewish people.

I have devoted much of my academic and spiritual life to research, writing, teaching, and preaching the truth about Christianity's historical and theological emergence from the matrix of biblical Judaism. I have come to realize that the church has been robbed of its rightful heritage with and among the Jewish people. As a result of the Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism that have characterized Christianity for some nineteen centuries, the church and individual believers have been denied the rich relationship with God that should have been theirs if the church's inherent Jewishness had not been either outright denied or benignly neglected by Christian leaders.

Surely it is time to restore the church's lost legacy. As we prepare for the coming of Messiah, Peter's teaching in the earliest days of the church echo in our ears: "And that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:20, 21). To understand what is to be restored, we must make a careful, detailed search of Scripture and history to determine what has been lost, damaged, or covered over. Then, restoration can begin.

For forty years, I have studied and written extensively on various aspects of this theme, analyzing the historical and scriptural Jewishness of earliest Christianity and the need for restoring the church's ancient heritage. At the urging of many of my colleagues, I have endeavored to collate some of my essays and lectures on Christianity's Hebrew foundations and publish them in this book.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

When we use the term *Judaism*, we speak of biblical Judaism, a Judaism that is grounded in the Torah, the written Word of God, in contrast with Rabbinic Judaism, which is based both in Scripture and in the traditions of the sages and rabbis. While much can be learned from the Talmud and from rabbinics to expand our understanding of God's Word and of Judaism, our faith must ever be established in the Hebrew Scriptures, both the

first and the second testaments, which are able to make us “wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Our use of the term *Judaism*, then, connotes the system of praise, worship, and service that was manifest among the Hebrew prophets, kings, and sages from the time of Genesis to Malachi and perfected and extended to all mankind by Jesus the Messiah.

When we speak of the *Jewish roots* of Christian faith, we are talking about the biblical foundations of Christianity, which happen to have been from and of the Jews (John 4:22). We could perhaps more accurately use the term *biblical roots*; however, the term *biblical* does not convey our meaning clearly, for virtually all the diverse cultural manifestations of Christianity consider their doctrines and practices to be *biblical*. To be truly *biblical* is to think and act Hebraically, as Jesus did during his incarnation. We, therefore, emphasize the biblical roots of our faith as they were cultivated in the soil of Judaism and among the Jewish people.

Many practices in modern Judaism are biblical; however, others are merely cultural additions to biblical faith. We do not encourage Christians, therefore, to become culturally Jewish, to adopt the appearance or lifestyles normative among contemporary Jews. We do urge Christians to allow their faith in Jesus to manifest Judaic principles in their lives, to cause them to become Jewish in heart, and to help them support the international Jewish community.

### MAINTAINING OUR EQUILIBRIUM

The quest to restore the church’s biblically Judaic heritage is an exciting effort that draws clear lines between scriptural truth and the accretions of human tradition. This effort represents the ultimate reforming and restorative work, perhaps the final restoration in preparation for the coming of Messiah. Because of the momentous and historic nature of this work of restoration, it is imperative that those who share the vision—and work toward its fulfillment—maintain their equilibrium both theologically, spiritually, and practically. We simply cannot afford the luxury of extremism. This effort is so important to the health and renewal of the body of Messiah that we cannot allow it to be marginalized by losing our balance. We cannot allow the pendulum to swing from the extreme of the antinomianism of the Christian past to the other extreme of legalism, where we seek to acquire or maintain status before God by obedience to the law rather than by or in addition to grace through faith only in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Many Christians lose their balance and find themselves falling for everything, being blown away by every wind of teaching (Ephesians 4:14).

They like the comforts of their “ego trip” or their “holier-than-thou” status. They are like the Corinthians who simply delighted in hearing some new thing and indulging in spiritual excess. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40, Paul gave a lesson on balance to this Gentile church, addressing its history of extremism, flights of fancy, and immaturity. His fear was that they would be “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). He appealed to their familiar Olympic tradition, urging them to be like athletes who strive for mastery—“*temperate in all things*” (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25). Temperance is the art of maintaining the balance between extremities. Neither abstinence nor indulgence is the answer. Temperance finds a happy medium, a safe position that is both reasonable and practical and does not bring offense to others. Temperance in all things is *the law of the New Covenant*.

Balance is maintained in our physical bodies by two small organs in the inner ear. In like manner, it can be said that our spiritual balance is effected to a large degree by the still small voice in our inner spiritual ear that seeks to maintain our equilibrium and keep us on track. It is the Spirit of God that gently woos us and keeps us centered in God’s will. When we hear his voice, he will never lead us into the dangers of excess.

There is one surefire way to avoid the extremes of legalism *and* antinomianism. The New Testament must always be for us the lens through which the “shadows” found in the Old Testament Scriptures are brought into picture-perfect focus (Colossians 2:17). Our faith must always remain Christocentric, grounded in the person of Jesus Christ. To deviate either to the left or to the right is to lose our equilibrium and our effectiveness in sharing this restoration truth with our fellow believers in Messiah.

The restoration of the Jewish roots of our faith has the potential to be one of the greatest blessings that we have experienced since the church lost its “Jewish connection” some nineteen centuries ago. Extremism and unbalanced approaches to this restoration, however, can do much damage not only to the restoration itself but also to the spiritual condition of those who are so engaged.

I encourage you, therefore, to read carefully chapters 6, 7, and 8: “A Perfect Sacrifice,” “Christ, Our Righteousness,” and “Raised Again for Our Justification.” Without a clear understanding of New Testament foundations, one treads dangerous ground in exploring Judaism and can easily be enticed by his own immaturity into legalism, elitism, and judgmentalism. The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, and believers are justified before God only by grace through faith in him. As we build upon the bedrock-firm foundation of his teachings, we will find ourselves enriched by God’s system of praise, worship, and service that was revealed

in Judaism and perfected by Messiah Yeshua.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of this book would not have been possible without considerable input from many close personal friends and colleagues. I would like to honor and offer my deepest gratitude to those who have shared their lives, minds, and spirits with me over the years.

Foremost among these was my mentor, the late Bishop Grady R. Kent, a devout man of pioneering insight who developed many of the fundamental ideas contained in this book in the 1940's and 1950's, at a time when there was little understanding in the church about its biblical Hebrew foundations. His teaching kindled a fire in my heart that has burned incessantly for over thirty-five years.

I am deeply indebted to my late father, Rev. D. E. Garr, a faithful pastor and overseer with over 65 years of service to the body of Christ, for his balanced and rock-solid theological perspectives and his dignified, unassuming approach to every aspect of life.

Other scholars, teachers, and ministers who have shared insights that have helped develop and polish many of the concepts contained in this book include Dr. Marvin Wilson, Dr. Karl Coke, Dr. Howard Morgan, Dr. Clifford Denton, Dwight Pryor, Rev. Isaac Rottenberg, Rev. Robert Somerville, Dr. John Looper, Dr. Terril Littrell, Dr. Leon Mohammed, Dr. Doug Wheeler, Randy Felton, David Bivin, Dr. Brad Young, Dr. Bill Bean, Clarence Wagner, Rev. David Andrew, and Dr. Ron Moseley. Each of these has not only supported me intellectually but has also undergirded me with their prayers, love, and sound advice.

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my family has given me their unwavering love and support, sacrificing time and comforts to facilitate my research, writing, teaching, and ministry. My wife, Pat, and my sons, David, Tim, and Steve always insist that I can do more.

I salute all these and countless others who have significantly impacted my life for Christ. May God grant each of you his eternal *shalom*.

Fraternally in Messiah

John D. Garr

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## INTRODUCTION

The New Testament, the will that was sealed in the blood of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ), provided a profound legacy to all those who would be begotten again unto the hope of life through his resurrection (Hebrews 9:15-18; 1 Peter 1:2-5). This irrevocable testament guaranteed its provisions to all those who would come under the aegis of the kingdom of God through faith in the completed work of Calvary (Colossians 1:12). Unfortunately, however, the vast majority of those who have become heirs of God through Jesus Christ have been deprived of much of the inheritance that was provided for them in the last will and testament of our Lord. The legacy of Jesus has been lost to much of the church, covered over by centuries of human tradition.

The provision of the will was simple and clear. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the faith of father Abraham that had been reserved to his progeny alone was extended to all mankind. What had once been held exclusively by and for the Jews as the fleshly descendants of Abraham was then made available to Jew and Gentile alike as the spiritual children of Abraham. This is the truth set forth by the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:14, 29: “that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith . . . And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Simply stated, Abraham is “the father of all them that believe. . .” (Romans 4:11).

### **A RICH LEGACY FOR THE GENTILES**

This is also the apostle’s thesis in Romans 11:7, 11, 12, 33: “Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. . . . So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! . . . O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” The failure of the collective Jewish nation to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth the coming of their Messiah was a part of God’s plan to bring salvation and the wealth of his knowledge and wisdom to the Gentile peoples of the world. This is what Paul meant in Romans 3:1, 2 when he posed the questions, “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circum-

cision?”, and gave his own conclusion, “Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God [the Word of God].” The advantages of being Jewish or of practicing the Hebrew faith of the Bible are many, but the chief advantage is the wealth of knowledge about God and his Word that is gained by being and doing so.

With God there is no respect of persons; therefore, he gives “glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 2:10). Fundamentally, then, everything that God had given to the Jews was to be extended through the New Covenant to the Gentiles. This was the wealth of God’s inheritance of good things that was enjoyed by the joint heirs with Jesus Christ through the New Will that Jesus sealed with his own blood. The Gentiles, who were “once not a people,” came to be included in the people of God as a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own” (1 Peter 2:9, 10). They did not replace the Jews as the people of God, but they did come alongside them as “fellow citizens” of the “commonwealth” of Israel with all the rights and privileges extended therein (Ephesians 2:12, 19). Through the New Covenant, the Gentiles entered into the household of God, which Israel had been for centuries (Ephesians 2:19). They were cut out of their wild, unproductive olive tree and were grafted into the cultivated, productive olive tree of salvation (Romans 11:17). They who had been no people became a part of the people of God (1 Peter 2:10), when they became a part of God’s family tree of covenant relationship. They partook of the rich sap from the root of the olive tree and were subjected to the pruning hook of God’s Word that made them even more productive.

From the time of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus around 30 C.E. and of the inclusion of the converted Gentiles shortly thereafter, the church continued to function as a sect of Judaism which was struggling to make its understanding of the Messiahship of Jesus normative for all of their brethren according to the flesh. The church did not seek to break away from the rest of Judaism, despite the fact that its leaders were engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the leaders of Israel, a dialogue that was often vitriolic and occasionally violent. The apostles, however, maintained their loyalty to the faith of their fathers (Acts 24:14) and continued to worship in both the temple, in the synagogues of their ancestors, and finally in their own synagogues (cf. James 2:2 where the word translated *assembly* in the Authorized Version is literally συναγωγή [synagogue] ).

## LOSING THE LEGACY

By the end of the first century C.E., however, as the church became

increasingly Gentile in demographics and leadership, the fierce loyalty to the Holy Scriptures and to the Judaic faith which Jesus and the apostles taught and practiced was replaced by an inclination toward traditions of the Gentile cultures and religions of the Greco-Roman world. As the church spread rapidly in obedience to the Great Commission to “go into all the world,” it was increasingly influenced by the cultures into which it expanded. Gradually, various elements of the first century Christian Judaism were replaced by Gentile customs and traditions. The faith of Jesus was very rapidly Hellenized, influenced through and through with neo-Platonism and other Gentile philosophies.

Finally, even Palestinian Christianity became Gentilized when Hadrian’s armies crushed the Bar Kochba rebellion, expelled all Jews from Jerusalem, and built the Roman city *Aelia Capitolina* upon its ruins in 135 C.E. Since the Roman Empire then persecuted the Jews and proscribed things Jewish, the church in Israel rapidly distanced itself from both Jewish believers and Jewish practices. Tragedy was occurring, for the church’s beautiful, rich legacy from Judaism was being buried by the winds of false doctrine under the sands of human tradition.

Since the law and its symbolic ritual were not necessary as means of establishing righteousness before God, the value of the principles of Old Testament worship was gradually diminished until it reached the point of insignificance. Other concepts of worship were considered of equal value at first and, then, of superior value to those of Judaism. The Gentiles were simply more comfortable with forms of worship employed in the temples of the Hellenistic world’s pantheon of gods. They felt more at home with the reason and logic of neo-Platonic philosophy than they did with the faith and trust of the nascent church’s Judaism. They functioned better with their own calendars than they did with Judaism’s biblical liturgical calendar.

When the New Testament order of Judaism became detestable in the eyes of the ecclesiastical and political authorities, it was finally forbidden upon penalty of death. The transition was completed in 321 C.E. when Constantine the Great issued the imperial edict which prescribed Sunday as the day of rest for the Roman empire and in 325 C.E. when he effectively outlawed the Christian observance of communion on the day of Passover.

## **DEPRIVED**

Since the time when these tragic events occurred, millions of believers in the Jewish Messiah have been deprived of their rightful heritage in biblical Judaism as a part of the faith race of Abraham. A vast legacy of knowledge of the eternal God and the opportunity to worship and praise

him in the manner which best pleases him have been lost to them, buried under nearly two millennia of Gentile tradition. Countless believers have not even understood that their Lord Jesus himself was Jewish, much less that the reformed faith which he commissioned his apostles to teach among all nations remained itself inherently Jewish. The church has been torn from its moorings and set adrift in the maelstrom of human tradition and doctrines of demons. Its history bears witness to its lost identity; for, instead of being the body of the suffering Jewish Messiah, it became little more than a whip of political imperialism, enslaving the souls of millions of people in superstition and darkness and wreaking havoc in the lives of millions of Jewish people.

Lately, however, spiritual archaeologists have been digging in the Word of God and have begun to uncover bits and pieces of this lost legacy. Scholars of various denominations have awakened to the realization that our over-Hellenized, over-Latinized Christian faith needs to be restored to its original context. Since Christianity is inherently Jewish, many theologians are calling for a reevaluation of traditional Christian attitudes toward Judaism. Some are calling for a full restoration of the Hebrew foundations of Christian faith, reattaching church to its Jewish roots. Due to the extensive Gentilization of the church, this call to reclaim Christianity's Judaic heritage seems radical and even revolutionary to some; however, it is both scriptural and prophetic, for everything biblical is to be restored at the time of the Messianic age (Acts 3:20, 21).

Many Christian believers today are daring to demand that the rights and privileges provided for them under the will of the New Testament of Jesus be restored in full. They are claiming their Christian heritage in biblical Judaism, the faith of Jesus and the apostles. They are finding in the legacy of the children of Abraham a manner of praise, worship, and service that more scripturally honors the Heavenly Father. Entitlements of which the church had no knowledge until recently are being claimed and enjoyed by believers from all backgrounds, denominations, nationalities, and ethnic groups. In what can only be described as a work of the Holy Spirit (since no single earthly source can be identified), God is leading Christians into ancient truths long obscured by human tradition.

We invite you to join the growing numbers of those who are rediscovering and claiming their long-lost spiritual legacy, Christianity's heritage in biblical Judaism.

*Chapter 1*

# **Biblical Judaism— The Root of Christian Faith**





*Chapter 1*

## **BIBLICAL JUDAISM—THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH**

“They were all together part of the Jewish community, which included all sorts of movements. The Christians, as they eventually were called, didn’t have a uniform approach to Jewish law, but they were not trying to break away from Judaism. They were a group within it, trying to make their views normative. First-generation Christianity was a part of Judaism, but the next generation read us out of it.” This is Presbyterian theologian Harry Gaylor’s enlightening observation concerning the first century Christian church. Bible scholar Morton Scott Enslin noted that the scattering of the Jerusalem church, together with the destruction of its records when Jerusalem was conquered by the Romans in 70 C.E., was “the last blow which separated mother [*Judaism*] from child [*Christianity*].”

These two scholars of religious history have discovered a truth that more and more believers in the Christian community are learning today: Christianity’s roots are in Judaism. Without Judaism, there would be no Christianity, for biblical Judaism is the parent of Christianity. One of history’s most ironic aberrations is the fact that Christianity, the child, has for the most part risen up in antipathy toward Judaism, the parent, so that Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism have come to characterize Christianity for more than nineteen centuries.

### **JESUS, THE JEW**

Let’s face it, Jesus was a Jew! He was proud of his Jewish heritage. His own genealogy, outlined in both Matthew and Luke, was founded in the great patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and included Israel’s great kings, David and Solomon. Jesus was called the son of David, the son of Abraham, and the Son of God (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:38).

The physical seal of his faith was placed in him on his eighth day when his devoutly Jewish parents had him circumcised, initiating him physically into God’s covenant with Abraham and incorporating him into Israel’s ancient covenant, making him an heir of God’s promises to Abraham and his natural, linear descendants.

From the time of his birth until he reached adulthood, his parents “performed everything according to the law” (Luke 2:39), fulfilling their parental responsibility to the faith of Abraham (Genesis 18:19). They dedicated

him at the temple and trained him in their home, in the synagogue, and in the temple, teaching him Judaism's Scriptures, history, culture, and tradition. When he was twelve, they introduced him to Yahweh's pilgrimage festivals, a custom that he continued throughout his life.

By his own admission, Jesus came not to abolish the law and religion that God himself had given to Israel but to complete or perfect that "one faith" forever (Matthew 5:17-19). He came as a reformer, but his reformation was actually a restoration in which he sought to return Judaism to the original principles upon which it had been founded in Abraham and at Sinai (Hebrews 9:10, 11; 12:2). As a result of tradition, Judaism had drifted from its inherent ideal; therefore, Jesus promoted restoration of the pure faith of God grounded solely in the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27-32; 38-41, 43-44). Naturally, his reforming ideas often brought the charge that he was a destroyer of Judaism's law; however, he immediately countered such charges with the affirmation that he had come only to fulfill (or complete) the law. The record of the gospels is clear: our Lord never undermined but always strengthened the law (Torah) of God, which was the foundation of the many sects of Judaism in his day, including the emerging Christian faith (Matthew 19:16-19).

## A REFORMED MOVEMENT

When Jesus established the church by ordaining the twelve apostles, he did so to maintain the order that had been unique to Israel since the days of Jacob. When he introduced new methods for observing Passover and the Sabbath, he did so to perpetuate eternal ordinances of God in a new and living way. When he offered up his own blood for the sins of mankind, he did so to continue the divine law of atonement, unique to Judaism, by dying once and for all.

No, Jesus was not a renegade. He was not a disrespectful rebel. He was a Jew who declared that he was "not sent except unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24) and who initially instructed his disciples, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5, 6). He was a Jew who hesitated to give the children's bread (healing) to the Gentiles (Matthew 15:26). He was a Jew who wept bitterly over the fact that his fellow Jews had not embraced the reformation that he brought to Judaism (Matthew 23:37).

The church which Jesus established was altogether a reform movement within Judaism. Since there was no such thing as a monolithic Judaism in the first century, the Jesus movement was in fact one of the many Juda-

isms, albeit a reformed Judaism that differed in many ways from the Sadducean, Pharisaic, and Essene Judaisms that were dominant in first century Israeli society. Its leaders were Jews who still honored God's only religion while at the same time seeking to cause their fellow Jews to understand that their religious faith had been perfected by Jesus of Nazareth, whom they recognized as Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

When the Gentiles came into the church, they were not required to carry out all the ritual of Judaism; however, they were not at liberty to maintain practices adopted from pagan rituals, mystery religions, or Greco-Roman philosophy, and they were not at liberty to ignore the eternal principles of Judaism that were to be applied to their lives in new and living ways. In the earliest times, these Gentiles continued to observe this "Jesus-reformed" Judaism, God's appointed system of praise, worship, and service in its New Testament order.

### **THE APOSTASY**

After the death of the apostles of Jesus, and according to their predictions, grievous wolves entered into God's religion, not sparing the flock or the sheepfold (Acts 20:29). Various theological and Christological heresies challenged the very existence of the church, and though the church survived these challenges, it was, nevertheless, persuaded to deny much of its Judaic heritage in favor of concepts from the Greco-Roman world in which it functioned.

Earliest and greatest of these challenges against the church was Gnosticism, a form of which was championed in the early second century by Marcion, who taught that Jesus was the good God who had replaced and cast into hell Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, whom he recognized as the Demiurge of Greek philosophy. Marcion introduced the first canon of Scripture, a truncated and self-edited version that included parts of Luke and some of Paul's letters. He declared that Jesus was not really a man, and he maintained that Jesus was most certainly not the Jewish Messiah predicted by the Hebrew prophets. While Marcion was branded a heretic and excommunicated from the church, the influence of his teachings has remained to this day, particularly his efforts at de-Judaizing the Scriptures and the church.

From this time, some church leaders began well-intended and sincere efforts at introducing the intelligentsia of the Greco-Roman world to Christian faith. Since some of them were converted neo-Platonists (so named because they were disciples of Plato's philosophy), they thought that Platonic philosophy could be reconciled with biblical teaching. Some even

declared that Plato was really a Christian despite the fact that he had been unaware of it! Others said that the same God who revealed himself through Moses also spoke through Plato. Unfortunately, this line of reasoning that was an attempt to indiginize or contextualize the gospel in order to make it relevant to Greek society resulted in the sacrifice of the Judaic world view and mind-set of biblical times in favor of Platonic dualism which has pervaded subsequent Christian thought.

In an effort of self-preservation, many leaders of the church sought to syncretize Greco-Roman philosophy and polytheistic religion with the purity of their Judaic heritage. As had happened numerous times throughout Old Testament history, Yahwism (the religion of the God of the Jews) was overcome by concepts which were, in fact, based in the traditions of ancient Babylon. Century after century of Babylonian accretions were added from peoples, religions, and philosophies that were foreign to the religion of Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Jesus, and the apostles. The result is what we know as Christianity today, a far cry from the faith which Jesus and the apostles practiced in the first century.

### SEVERED FROM THE ROOT

Christianity was systematically excised from its Jewish roots, as one by one the church transplanted the teachings of Jesus into the foreign soil of human tradition. The final blow of the Greco-Roman axe which severed Christianity from the tap root of Judaism was wielded by Constantine the Great, *pontifex maximus* of Roman polytheism, when he arrogated to himself the headship of the church, enjoined the observance of Sunday as a day of worship in the Roman Empire, and outlawed any practice in the church which was obviously rooted in Judaism. Constantine's impact upon the church was summed up in his own words: "Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries . . . therefore this irregularity [Passover celebration] must be corrected, in order that we may no more have anything in common with [the Jews] the parricides and murderers of our Lord."

If some of the Jewish branches had been broken off from the life-giving sap of the olive tree because of their unbelief, the Roman axe struck at the very root of the tree itself because of the continuing anti-Judaism—if not outright anti-Semitism—of both Greek and Latin church fathers and finally of the "Christian" emperor himself. Is it any wonder, then, that the tree of faith in the God of Israel was replaced by the rationalistic sacramentalism of an imperialistic church and that the church took on a totally different appearance from what it had when Jesus and the apostles led it in reform-

ing Judaism and restoring its inherent biblical ideals?

### **REAWAKENING TO OUR JEWISH HERITAGE**

Today, after many convulsive efforts at shaking off the Babylonian traditions of men that have been heaped on the faith of Jesus through the centuries, thousands of believers are coming to recognize the fact that they are deeply indebted to Judaism and that Christianity is far more Jewish than they had ever dared to imagine. As more and more people get back to the Bible, they find that the parts of modern Christianity that are founded on the Word of God are deeply rooted in Judaism. When you read the Bible, you get the picture: true Christianity is a New Covenant Judaism. Every theological and ethical concept in Christianity that is authentic is based in Judaism, as is the vast majority of Christian practices.

Look at what Christians have received from Judaism. The four greatest and most important things in Christianity—the one true God, the Bible, the Messiah, and salvation—are direct products of the Jewish faith. The Christian understanding of God is purely Judaic. Though some primitive cultures believed in the existence of one God, there was simply no concept of ethical monotheism in the ancient world except in Judaism. The understanding that God is a person who interacts with his people was totally unique to Judaism. (Gentile religions, on the other hand, recognized polytheism's pantheon of capricious gods, or they conceived of God as an impersonal cosmic force, much as they still maintain to this day.)

The Bible is a Jewish book from Genesis to maps. All of the authors were Jews (with the possible exception of Luke, a proselyte to Judaism). The message of the Bible is uniquely Judaic and can be found in no other religion in the world (except, of course, in Christianity, which came from Judaism).

Jesus, himself, was a Jew. "According to the flesh" he was called an "Israelite" (Romans 9:3-5). He calls himself the "root and offspring of David" in Revelation 22:16, and Hebrews 7:14 tells us that it is "evident that our Lord arose from Judah," the Israelite tribe that was first called "Jews," a contracted form of their tribal identity.

Salvation, both as a person (Jesus) and as a concept, comes to us from Israel and Judaism (John 4:22). Indeed, no other religion in the world conceives of the doctrine of sin and atonement except Judaism and Christianity which sprang from its matrix; therefore, no other religion espouses the idea of salvation, much less the person of salvation, Jesus, himself.

Numerous Christian practices have their roots in Judaism. Believers practice water baptism because proselytes were initiated into Judaism by cir-

cumcision and immersion in the waters of the *mikveh*, the ritual bath and because transitions in status were also confirmed in the *mikveh*. The church celebrates communion because Israel had the Passover, the elements of which our Lord used to celebrate the first New Testament Passover with communion. Christians tithe their income because Israel tithed and give offerings because Israel offered sacrifices. Believers gather for public worship because Israel of old had the temple and because they gathered in homes for prayer, study, and worship in a system that became synagogal Judaism.

So, to one extent or another, we recognize Judaism in our worship of God. Some are more obedient to the faith of God than others, carrying out the ordinances of the New Testament order of Judaism. But, to one degree or another, all Christians are Jewish, for every believer in Christ Jesus is rightly called spiritually Jewish by the apostle Paul (Romans 2:28). Judaeo-Christianity, then, is an all-inclusive faith. Every believer in Messiah Jesus has a part, for every believer is a spiritual Jew and as such is entitled to the rights of Judaism. Having been grafted into God's family tree of salvation (Romans 11:17), they have become naturalized citizens of the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12-16), and as such, they have all the rights of citizenship. They have not superseded or supplanted the natural Jews in God's plans, nor have they received citizenship in the modern nation of Israel; however, they have come alongside the Jews in the economy of salvation.

If you are a Christian looking for your roots, look into Judaism. Many who have been searching for their roots have found themselves "on the Canterbury trail" and have embraced Anglicanism. Others have returned to Roman Catholicism, and still more have accepted Greek Orthodoxy. Why stop at Canterbury or Rome or Constantinople? Why not go all the way back to Jerusalem, where Christianity began? The answer to the search for roots is in your Bible, which proves that your Christian faith was birthed from biblical Judaism. Let us join Edward H. Flannery in affirming that an over-Hellenized, over-Latinized Christianity needs a "re-Judaizing process" to restore it to its founding Jewish roots and renew it in its own inherent ideal. Let us reconnect with the roots of our faith and begin again to draw from Judaism and the Jewish people the rich and nourishing sap that healthy, productive believers need.