

ONE NEW MAN

by

George and Eileen Anderson

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INTRODUCTION

Where are we coming from and what are we selling? We were brought up in Britain as Protestant Christians. Our parents taught us a strong regard for the Jews as God's people and Israel as their land. We were taught to read the Old Testament at least as much as the New, and to believe that the stories (including the miracles) are historical facts, and that the prophecies and promises refer specifically to the Jews.

Separately we had a revelation from God that Jesus is the Messiah. One effect of that revelation was that we gave up belonging to or attending church; we realised that the Christian religion had become saturated in paganism. And we saw that whatever was good in Christianity came from the Jews; whatever was pagan in Christianity came from Rome. We emigrated with our family to New Zealand, and in 1981 we made a brief visit to Israel. The result of that visit, which centred on the Old City of Jerusalem, was to make Israel and the Jews of deep and lasting interest to us.

Then, when George was 60, his elderly aunt wrote from Britain to tell him what had been a family secret until then: his mother was Jewish. When his mother was young she had a revelation that Jesus was the Messiah. So when George was born in 1935 and British Jews were fearing that Hitler had plans to invade Britain, she resolved to keep her (and George's) Jewishness a secret from him. For us, the news was both a delight and a responsibility. We were not about to deny the truth that God had revealed to us, but we knew the discovery meant we were to become involved with Jews in some specific way. We are not into joining churches, so neither did we fancy joining a synagogue. Then we heard of Sar-El, a volunteer organisation run by the Israel Army. They place volunteers in hospitals to care for sick people in hands-on situations. From that time we have made trips to Israel to do such work.

What are we selling? Not an organisation, secular or religious. We've both discovered the reality of God in everyday life and we want people - especially religious people as we were - to know that. And we believe it is time Jews and Christians stopped hostilities and pressure to convert, and began understanding the essentials (the essential Jewishness) of each other's beliefs. One final point. We have attempted to make this booklet readable by both Jews and Christians. But we have not elaborately written all biblical names in their Hebrew forms, nor have we written God as G-d. And we have used the Christian terms of 'Old Testament' for the Hebrew scripture, 'New Testament' for the Greek scriptures, and 'Bible' for both together. We are trying for more than a superficial cultural niceness. However, we are interested in feedback and comments, and if they are reasonably polite we will reply similarly.

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For about nineteen hundred years there has been a stand-off between Christianity and Judaism. On many occasions that stand-off has led to deliberate murder. Mass murder.

Murder commemorated by celebrations and medals. And yet, during those very same nineteen hundred years, there have been individual Christians who have shown an unselfish love for the Jews. Often at great personal cost. Personal cost that included life itself. It was a warm Shabbat evening in Jerusalem. The elderly couple - twenty years older than us, and with a sprightliness that many younger people would envy - had invited us to spend a few hours with them in their flat. Over coffee they told their story.

They were newlyweds in Holland when Hitler's troops invaded. Like so many Jews, they were forced to hide. A Christian farmer and his wife gave them the shelter. Then the young couple discovered they were going to have a baby. Unhesitatingly, although food was extremely scarce, the farmer and his wife gave the pregnant girl half their scanty rations. Not only did she survive the nine long months, but the boy who was born in those intolerable circumstances was a healthy baby. He - and his young parents - owed their lives to the generosity of the Christians who concealed them and fed them, risking death themselves if their actions had been discovered.

An isolated event? No, this elderly couple knew of many such stories. And during our time in Israel we heard over and over again of Christians who had gone to great lengths to help Jews. Something, somewhere, didn't add up. Christianity was notorious for persecuting the Jews. And, at the same time, some Christians would put their own lives at risk to show their love for the Jews. It didn't make sense. Then an odd incident gave us the explanation we needed. We were working in Israel as volunteers with a military organisation, Sar-El. At intervals we would be taken on lecture tours. Massada, Yad Vashem, Safed, the Western Wall, Qumram, and through the finest of Israel's museums. This time it was the Diaspora Museum in Tel-Aviv. The girl soldier who led us had researched her subject well and we were whisked from one area to another and given a brief talk on the significance of each exhibit.

Then our group came to a reproduction of two famous statues from an Italian church. Two women; one proud and haughty, representing Christendom, the other blindfolded and dejected, representing Judaism. The Jewish soldier began to speak. Her words were a stinging attack, she was cutting and critical - and, as Christians, we mentally prepared ourselves to answer back as soon as she paused for breath. But we were in for a surprise. To our amazement we found that we were agreeing with every word she said. And we began to understand why - century after century - there had been a crazy contradiction between the religion called Christianity and many of the people called Christians. In simple terms: Christianity had been hijacked. There is currently a grassroots movement among Christians throughout the world.

It is a desire to cut through nineteen hundred years of tradition and layers of paganism, and to find out what Christianity was originally intended to be. But before we explain what people are discovering, we need to deal with a very, very hot subject. Two subjects in one. Conversion, and missionary work. (As we write these words, there is a bill before the Knesset to outlaw missionary work and missionary literature in Israel. It is a subject that stirs up violent feelings on all sides.)

Perhaps it is not surprising that Jews have often had an antipathy toward Christian missionaries. Partly it is the normal reaction of the Jewish personality to being pressured by an outsider. And partly it is the normal reaction of a people who are conscious that Judaism is rooted in a revelation given by God at Sinai. They don't want another religion, thank you very much. But that is precisely the point; the all-important point. Are Christianity and Judaism different religions? Yes or no? Don't be too hasty to answer, because the implications for a yes or no are interesting and far-reaching. You can, of course, say 'Who cares?', which is unlikely if you have read this far, and at any rate is akin to Cain's glib put-down to God: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Some questions need to be faced and answered with care. So - are Judaism and Christianity different religions?

Let's assume your answer is an uncompromising 'yes'. You are of the firm opinion that Judaism and Christianity are separate, different religions. In that case, whether you like it or not - and whether you are a Jew or Christian - you need to realise that it is the duty of Christians to conduct missionary work among Jews. Distasteful that may be to you, but

reasonable. But that is only half the story. You need to realise also that it is the duty of Jews to conduct missionary work among Christians. For two very important reasons. One is that, assuming Christianity to be a different religion, then, from the perspective of Judaism, Christianity must be wrong' - and Judaism, being right', must share its truth. The second reason is a moral one. Christianity originated with the Jews and came from Judaism. If it is an error, it is a Jewish error - one which has spread around the world and influenced millions - and Jews need to take responsibility for the spread of that error and put people right. The permeating effects of a Jewish heresy (if Christianity is indeed a different religion) are too far-reaching to be dismissed with a traditional ethnic shrug and a pious 'What can I do?'

The two belief systems must aggressively evangelise each other if they are different religions. Apathy and a desire to be left alone will turn out to be inadequate excuses to present to God on Judgement Day. But ... But what if ... But what if Judaism and Christianity are essentially one religion? Laughable? Perhaps - until recently. But a few paragraphs ago we mentioned a grassroots move among Christians ... to find out what Christianity was originally intended to be'. Here is what they are discovering: Jesus was a Jew. In fact he was a fairly typical observant Jew of his day. His followers were Jews. All the writers of the New Testament (with one possible exception) were Jews. The significance of what Jesus taught and did was centred around the Feasts, and without an understanding of Judaism, his words and actions are liable to be misunderstood.

Christians are also discovering that they have been sold a package with a significant pagan content. Easter' (from the goddess Eostre) has been substituted for Passover/Pesach, and the calculation of its observance (with a few exceptions) was designed to avoid Passover. To aid the confusion and make Bible stories difficult to follow, the start of the day was moved from sunset to midnight, the start of the year from Rosh Hashanah to January 1st, and the day of rest from Shabbat to Sunday. (This change is particularly spurious, because the usual reason given by church authorities for it is that Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday' - whereas all that can be inferred from the text of the gospels is that the resurrection took place at some point between sunset on Saturday and sunrise on Sunday.)

It is scarcely surprising that many Christians are seriously re-thinking the details of beliefs they may have previously accepted unquestioningly. They are re-examining their origins, learning the significance of the Jewish calendar. And they are taking a long, hard look at their attitude to the Jews, and the Jews' relationship to God. So let's ask a question that has in the past led to discrimination, persecution and murder. Because it is a question that all Christians and Jews have to face and have to answer.

Who killed Jesus? Historically, the church has regularly justified the entire anti-Semitic spectrum from insults to systematic massacre by the simple expedient of labelling Jews as Christ-killers'. Is that true or not? The question is too serious to be dealt with by smooth platitudes. A death occurred - an execution that amounted to prolonged torture; so who was responsible de facto et de jure - in fact and in law? One blatantly obvious area of responsibility that Christians often gloss over - especially Roman Catholic Christians - is, simply, Rome. Rome executed Jesus. The centurion and his squad of soldiers from the Antonia Fortress were obeying orders given by Governor Pontius Pilate. Pilate was chief representative of the invading, conquering and occupying power of Caesar, who in turn represented imperial Rome.

(Maybe, in some courts, the plea 'We were only obeying orders' can be accepted from the lower ranks of army personnel. But it is highly debatable whether, before God, we can pass the buck and be excused because we did what someone else told us to do.) Rome was responsible. Whatever Rome symbolises was responsible. People who choose to identify with what Rome symbolises are presumably making themselves responsible for the death of Jesus. Christians who call themselves Roman Catholics need to be aware of that. But aren't the Jews guilty of the death of Jesus?

Specific Jews are guilty. There are several religious authorities identified in the four gospels. Let's assume that the accounts are accurate; the Jews mentioned in those accounts are responsible. Romans. Some Jews. But didn't the Jewish authorities involve others in their

responsibility for the execution of Jesus? They emphatically stated: His blood be on us and on our children'. Does that declaration carry any weight? Maybe. Or maybe not. Curses are strange things, and some people are very liberal with their use of curses. A curse is a form of magic and should never be used thoughtlessly. Better still, a curse should never be used. Jesus once said: Bless, and curse not'. He gave sound advice. But whether or not the curse would have been effective, whether or not the Jewish authorities were responsible for the execution, whether or not the Romans were responsible - it is also a matter of historical record that, on the cross, Jesus said: Father, forgive them'. Such a prayer, at such a time, has to be heard and answered. Even if Jesus were only an unfortunate rabbi who happened to offend the establishment of the day, his prayer for the forgiveness of those involved was a gracious act. And if in fact Jesus was the Messiah, his standing with God and his ability to act according to the will of God would ensure that those responsible were forgiven.

And Christians must accept that, no matter what legal blame ought to rest on some Jews for the execution, they are forgiven because Jesus asked for them to be forgiven. And only a limited number of Jews were involved, not all Jews. In other words, being Jewish' did not equal being guilty'. Any Christian who does not accept that has a serious problem. Because if being Jewish' equals being guilty of the execution of Jesus', then being Christian' equals being guilty of all Jewish deaths in the Holocaust, and in the Inquisition, and in most - perhaps all - of the pogroms and persecutions in which the church has played its part'.

And any Jew who regards all Christians everywhere as guilty of all Jewish deaths in those circumstances must equally hold all Jews everywhere guilty of the murder of Jesus. So where does the problem really lie? This division between Jew and Christian that has existed for centuries - what is at the root of it? Currently the division is based on ignorance. Christians are ignorant of Jewish belief. And during our visits to Israel, and in our discussions with Jews there and in other countries we had to make certain points clear. The Pope is not regarded by the majority of Christians as head of the church. Christians do not worship three gods. (This is not the place for a discussion of the term trinity', but please note: 1. the word trinity' is not found in the New Testament and 2. any statement on the nature and manifestation of God needs lengthy clarification and explanation; just as the 13 principles of Maimonides contain much condensed wisdom, but superficially appear at variance with certain accounts of God's relationship with mankind as clearly stated in the Torah.) Christians do not read the New Testament exclusively. They may be unaware of the importance Jews place on the Torah compared with the rest of the Tanach, but the Old Testament is read and studied to a degree that is comparable with the New. Christianity is not monolithic. You cannot say all Christians believe...' any more than you can say all Jews believe...' The old phrase Two Jews - three arguments' applies equally to Christians, except that Christians (usually) aren't quite so noisy when they argue.

So - having made those points - why the division between Judaism and Christianity, given the purely Jewish origins of Christianity? Answer: the branch of Judaism we currently call Christianity has been systematically hijacked and manipulated in an attempt to make it unrecognisable. This attempt has been so successful that today there are many people who are members of churches who haven't the slightest idea of what Jesus taught or set in motion. Mention that Jesus was a Jew and they blink and pause, think for a while, then say: Oh, yes, well I suppose so'. To them, Christ' is some form of surname; the significance of Messiah' has never been learned. What has been learned is some form of replacement theology which assumes that God has simply cancelled all his promises to the Jews and given them to the church. So all prophecies and covenants are to be understood in that light. We use the word assumes' deliberately; there is not the tiniest shred of evidence in Old or New Testaments to support such theorising.

Why should Christianity have been hijacked? And by whom? The by whom' is easy to answer. First by opportunists and power-seekers within its own ranks who worked hard at dividing those who believed in Jesus as Messiah into two distinct classes: laity and clergy. Us and them. Lower class and upper class. Jesus had left clear instructions against a situation like that; his orders were conveniently ignored. Then, as more Gentiles became Christians, Rome started to pay attention. Here was a setting with political advantages. So Emperor Constantine became a Christian'. Later, we'll deal with the question of what becoming a

Christian' really means. Or what is a real Christian'. For now, however, it is sufficient to be aware that Emperor Constantine joined a structured, hierarchical organisation that had already lost its egalitarian origins. Constantine came in at the top as a leader. He should have served a lengthy apprenticeship cleaning toilets. And Christianity hardened into the Roman Catholic, Vatican-driven, celibacy-oriented, Pope-dominated structure that the world in general and Jews in particular have confused with the totally different aims of Jesus. Which raises the question: what were his aims? Do they hold the key to why Christianity was hijacked? The essence of the teaching of Jesus can be summed up in one phrase: the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God (also referred to as the kingdom of heaven) is a simple, yet revolutionary concept that can be grasped by anyone and put into action immediately. And it can withstand any political, social or religious pressure, and be incapable of external manipulation or suppression. The kingdom of God is the direct, immediate, personal rulership of God in the day-by-day life of an individual. Not as a set of rules or precepts, but as a conscious awareness of what God wants that individual to do or be at any given moment. The kingdom of God is an involvement in the will of God, not in the broad sense that mankind has often found itself fulfilling (for better or for worse) the purpose of God, but in specific places and tasks that amount to a partnership between the person and God, in a loving sense rather than a business sense. Can you understand the threat that such a concept represents to all the vested interest in the world? The kingdom of God is a threat to empire builders, to religious bullies, to totalitarian régimes, to Satan's dreams of global control.

May we quote Professor David Flusser? Professor Flusser, a Jerusalemite, is Professor Emeritus at Israel's Hebrew University, where he taught Judaism in the Second Temple Period and Early Christianity. The following extracts are from the 1997 edition of his biography of Jesus:

'Even at the present, there may be individuals who are, so to speak, living in the kingdom of God.' Jesus...is the only Jew of ancient times known to us who preached not only that people were on the threshold of the end of time, but that the new age of salvation had already begun.' Thus, for Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is not only the eschatological rule of God that has dawned already, but a divinely willed movement that spreads among people throughout the earth. The kingdom of heaven is not simply a matter of God's kingship, but also the domain of his rule, an expanding realm embracing ever more and more people, a realm into which one may enter and find one's inheritance, a realm in which there are great and small.' We do not mean to assert that Jesus wanted to found a church or even a single community, but that he wanted to start a movement.' Because Satan and his powers will be overthrown and the present world order shattered, it is to be regarded almost with indifference, and ought not to be strengthened with opposition... For where the kingdom of God is fully realised, all this will vanish.' ('Jesus', published 1997 by Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem. ISBN 965 223 978 X)

In other words, the eruption of the kingdom of God on earth, introduced by John the Baptist and taught by Jesus, is the beginning of the end of personal power-play and Satanic rulership. It cannot be stopped - it is an irreversible equation where spirit impinges on and controls the material world, but the material world cannot turn around and control the spirit - and the only way to delay its inevitable victory is to cause mankind to forget what it was supposed to be.

Hence the hijacking. Labels became an important tool to mislead. Jesus and his followers used the word 'outcalled' to identify those who had been summoned from various mundane kingdoms or the kingdom of darkness itself and were invited to enter the kingdom of God. The Greek word used for 'outcalled' was ekklesia, a compound word made of ek (from) and kaleo (to call) and was readily understood in the first century AD. But there were those who wanted to blur that understanding. So, when the New Testament was later translated from Greek into Latin, instead of translating ekklesia by 'evocatus', it was simply Latinised to ecclesia, a meaningless word capable of manipulation. Later still, the Greek phrase kyriakus domus

('house of God') was substituted, which evolved in its travels through Europe to kirken and kirk and finally hardened into the English form church. And although clergy admonish their layfolk to remember that church is people', in fact the word church' is capable of a wide variety of meanings.

Sometimes (with a capital C) it means all Christians who have ever or will ever exist, or even the Roman Catholic denomination. Sometimes (with a small c) any denomination, or a building where Christians meet. And the original word outcalled' has been safely forgotten by the majority.

The other technique for detracting people's attention from the kingdom of God is the simple divide and conquer' method. Set up an us and them' situation and watch the real issue become forgotten. So we are conditioned to think in terms of Jews and Christians', Judaism and Christianity' - phrases that assume a tension, a conflict, an essential variance. But isn't there an essential variance between Judaism and Christianity? What about the obvious conflict - where Christians say Jesus is the Messiah and the Jews say he isn't?

Yes, the rôle of Jesus as the Messiah is central for all Christians. No, there is no conflict, even with the hard-line elements of Judaism. How can that be? The answer lies in the response from the disciples of Jesus to his question: Whom do men say that I am - and whom do you say that I am?' Various answers are forthcoming - including, not surprisingly, Elijah. Then Peter makes the unequivocal statement: You are the Messiah, the son of the living God'. The reaction from Jesus is as interesting and as significant as the declaration by Peter. Jesus does not say: At last you are starting to understand my teaching'.

Jesus says: Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, Shimon, but my Father in heaven'. In other words, belief in Jesus as Messiah is not a matter of academic, logical proof, but a direct consequence of divine revelation. This is not to say there aren't good logical and scriptural grounds - there are, and well worth the study. But the continual theme of the New Testament is that, for its teaching to have any lasting impact, such belief needs to be received via a bat col, a function of God's spirit, a divine revelation.

If, in ancient times, such revelations were reserved for very special people - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets - we must remember that God gave by Jeremiah a specific promise that, in addition to all the covenant promises which he had sworn with an unbreakable oath to Abraham, there was coming a new covenant, an intensely personal one, in which the great feature would be direct and on-going revelation from God to each individual. In specific terms, God stated: I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah ... I will put my law in their inward parts and write it on their hearts ... and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother saying "Know the Lord", for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest ... for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more'. (Jer. 31 vv31-34, also quoted in Heb. 10 vv 16-17)

It follows from this that it should not be the object of Christians to convert Jews. For one thing, conversion implies a change of religion, which we maintain is not the case. For another thing, any attempts to pressure are simply a denial of New Testament teaching. The first requirement was (and is) that a person is born from above'. The second is a revelation that Jesus is the Messiah. Later comes the need to receive personally the ruach (spirit) of God. An acceptance that these steps are correct might appear to be a radical change in outlook for any Jew; but a mental acceptance has little value until and unless there is a corresponding and ongoing revelation.

Why, then, should Jews pay any attention to Christian belief in its original form? The answer is that the Second Temple period around the time of Jesus was a pivotal point in Jewish history, including enemy occupation, the destruction of the Temple and yet another dispersion of God's people among the nations. The New Testament is a significant series of historical documents from that period. If the history of Israel - the land and the people - has any importance, then the records from that time are worth reading and understanding. There is another reason why Christian belief needs to be known and understood by the Jewish people. There is - what? a myth? a pious hope? a stubborn pride? - an inference that the evolution of

Jewish life and belief is infallible and inspired and does not admit of error. (Similar, as you may recognise, to the myth of the Pope's infallibility.) This attitude is not borne out by scripture. The prophets repeatedly pointed out serious errors; the mistakes of the kings brought serious consequences on themselves and their subjects; and even the twelve patriarchs...Consider the rather lengthy tale of the twelve patriarchs in the Torah. A factual record? Definitely. But more than that: an object-lesson for their children, for their children's children, for us - telling us that here are mistakes that we, as a people, are likely to repeat. (And didn't somebody, somewhere, say that those who ignore the lessons of history are doomed to repeat its mistakes?)

Twelve brothers; and somehow a bit of favouritism creeps in between the father and one of the younger ones. It happens in families. The father - Israel (he'd been named Ya'akov, Jacob, but God had changed that) - had dressed Joseph up in something fancy, which naturally enough annoyed his brothers. Plus, Joseph had dreams. Not daydreams, but powerful, unforgettable, symbolic dreams that never originated in his sleeping mind; dreams that suggested Joseph would be inconceivably greater than any of his family; dreams which might have originated in heaven itself.

Joseph was tactless enough to tell those dreams to his family. Understandably, the brothers decided something had to be done about Joseph. Let's not be unduly squeamish and prudish about their plans; in most ages, in most societies, even today despite the hypocritical tut-tuttings of governments, killing has always been an easy and effective option. Even the killing of Jew by Jew. But at the last minute the eleven decide to pass over their brother to a convenient bunch of Gentiles. What happens to Joseph after that is scarcely any of their responsibility. Is it?

And the eleven concoct an account to convince Israel that Joseph is well and truly dead. Finish. Full stop. End of story. Fast forward many years. Whether Israel really believed the obstinate claims that Joseph was no more is open to debate; however, his memory was surrounded by guilt, and we can imagine that the eleven brothers (now married with their own families) would discourage camp-fire talk about the long-gone favourite of the father.

Famine sets in. Nomadic herdsmen can manage for a time, but when rumours of grain supplies in Egypt are confirmed, the brothers make the long trek there to buy supplies and stave off starvation. It's an ironic story. The statesman between them and starvation is the very-much-alive Joseph. Their very own brother Joseph. They fail to recognise him. That is scarcely surprising: he has Gentile clothes, a Gentile name and a Gentile wife. Plus the brothers had a mindset that Joseph was dead. Again fast forward to the end of the story. There has been revelation; Joseph has made his identity known. The brothers have gone back to Israel and admitted that their earlier tales about this dreamer, this favourite, were false. There is forgiveness, reconciliation, reunion. And Joseph sums up the entire saga: 'You planned it for evil; God planned it for good'. The parallel between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus must be considered. (In passing: there are many other significant aspects in Joseph's story, but they have been omitted for the sake of brevity.) Jesus - Yeshua - has been given a Gentile name; he has a Gentile bride; his identity has been obscured by Gentile trappings. And he has been ignored and attempts have been made to forget about him by his own family, the Jews.

But now, when Christians are seriously trying to understand the Jewish origins of their beliefs, it is time that Jews made the effort to understand the one Jew who has done more than any other to change the world: Yeshua. Jesus. And just as the rejection of Joseph by his brothers led to the abundant provision of food for all, so the nearly two thousand years of rejection of Jesus by his brothers has led to the good news of the kingdom of God going out to the Gentiles.

In the past, in the days of the First and Second Temple, it was possible for non-Jews to come to Jerusalem and worship God at a discrete distance in the Court of the Gentiles. It was also possible for non-Jews to convert. Understandably the procedure failed to attract large numbers. This may be of little importance to a nation that grows by natural family increase, but if the God of the Jews is the one true God, then he needs to be known, worshipped and

obeyed by all nations.

So one major purpose of the kingdom of God is to deal with the great division between Jew and Gentile. The death of Jesus and his rejection by the leaders of the Jewish people was not an event that took God by surprise. God doesn't make contingency plans. God doesn't have a Plan B. God planned the sequence of events so that the Gentiles would be brought in, with the intention of making one new man out of the two, removing the great barrier that existed for centuries between Jew and non-Jew - a barrier created in the first place by God.

This does not abolish the Torah. (Indeed, the life of Jesus was the consistent life of an observant Jew of his day.) But it solves the problem of being righteous before God. It is one thing to have a list of 613 commandments; it is another matter to keep them. With no Temple, and hence no sacrifice system, a large proportion of these commandments are not being obeyed. Cannot be obeyed' is not a valid excuse; real people in real life cannot keep many of the commandments. The fact is that the Law is the Law. As a temporary measure it may have been expedient to keep what we can', but it must not be assumed therefore that we have outgrown the sacrifice system. Even if it is politically unwise to rebuild the Temple, there is nothing to prevent the reconstruction of the Tabernacle, that great tent which not only functioned in the wilderness, but in the Promised Land until Solomon built a house for God. A new Tabernacle could be sited in any convenient and politically correct position.

But in the absence of the Temple or Tabernacle there is still the need to be righteous before God. Not just briefly (and hopefully) on one day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, but every moment of every day. Idealistic? Impractical? Not according to Jesus. He stated: First of all, seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness'. In practical terms, in the kingdom of God the righteousness of the Messiah is credited (imputed) to the believer. It is the equivalent of the blood of the lamb at Pesach daubed on the lintel and uprights of the doorway of the house: When I see the blood, I will pass over you'. So this imputed righteousness means we can come into God's presence at any time with no further preparation. It is no licence to sin, because God then begins a continuing program of change and cleansing; but at the same time it avoids the usual guilt trip that tends to make us hide from God.

So for the Jew to whom has been given the requirements of the Torah, and to the Gentile who has no such demands (...if the Seven Noahide Laws have any validity, they are certainly not well known, and scarcely better kept than the 613...) there is common ground, God-ordained. This common ground is not found in any organisation. Jews do not become Gentiles. Gentiles do not become Jews. Scripture is not cancelled, but fulfilled. The common ground is found in a revelation from God. In that revelation comes a genuine unity between Jew and Gentile, the one new man' spoken of in the New Testament. (Eph. 2 v 15)

And, incidentally, this explains the strange contradiction that has existed down the centuries: why the Christian church has persecuted the Jews, yet so many Christians have unselfishly loved the Jews. The simple explanation is: personal revelation from God. An organisation cannot have personal revelation, so a church', any church' may be good, bad or Satanic. But an individual can walk in the light of God as Jesus walked in the light of God, and thus be able to relate perfectly to other people of God, while the blood of God's son, Jesus, works an inner cleansing on a permanent basis.

Let's be frank. Judaism has grimly struggled to preserve its identity, since the destruction of the Temple, by methods which often involved a certain amount of bullying. (All religions are like that, but the Jewish psyche has a significant degree of vigour which does not always hesitate to bully.) Consequently, Jews have been discouraged from understanding for themselves the life and teaching of Jesus, and the content of the New Testament. Now that attitude is changing. Jews and Christians alike are aware that there is a bigger picture', and without compromising what both believe to be the truth, there is a steadily growing desire to understand what God has done, is doing, and what he will do.

In a sense, this is true mysticism. Mysticism for ordinary people in real-life situations. Yes, there are deep, convoluted mysteries only to be discovered through a lifetime of dedicated

study. But the majority of this world's inhabitants are poor and uneducated, or simply too busy with the routines of life for such devotion. And God knows that. Therefore he has made a way directly into his presence, directly into the Holy of Holies. The way, the truth, and the life are not concepts, but a person.

George and Eileen Anderson, PO Box 946, Whangarei, New Zealand
