

PAUL AND THE EARLY CHURCH:

A Study in Messianic Judaism



Part One

"The Apostle Paul: Pharisee and Jew"

By

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--- The End of Part One ---

“I am a Jew, and Jesus is my Rabbi!”

-- Messianic Judaism

Preface

There are no scripturally redemptive advantages to being a Jew or a member of the disbursed Jewish nation. Even the Jewish nation's own divine oracles justify the reasons for its disbursal throughout the nations. Indeed, as the sons of Noah, the Gentiles have received just as much favor, grace, and love from the Almighty God as have the Jews. Nevertheless, I believe that the Jews – through their covenantal obligation to keep the Torah – have been set aside as a “chosen people” and as a “light unto the nations.” Moses described this obligation as a Blessing or a Curse. If the Jews demonstrate holiness and virtue, or if the Jews succeed in their worldly affairs, then the Jews thereby “preach” the Torah. Likewise, if the Jews sin and are divinely punished for those sins, then they also still “preach” the Torah. This is precisely why, I think, the Jews will forever remain a “chosen people” and a “light unto the nations.”¹

In volume one of my postdoctoral study, *Puritanism and the Presbyterian Enlightenment* (2023), I deduced that the Jewish Torah was actually a re-statement of the same natural law which God had revealed to all the Gentiles, including the Patriarch Noah. I also argued that the Torah partly a restatement of the “Covenant of Nature” which God gave to Noah, whereby the Gentiles – just like the Jews – also stand in a very special *covenantal relationship* with God.

I have since learned that certain Rabbinical Jews, in their Midrash and Talmud, have reached the same theological conclusions. These Jews hold that “seven laws of Noah” were assigned to the Gentiles, to wit:

The universal morality of the Noahide covenant for Gentiles (non-Jews) was already affirmed in the Torah and was

¹ See St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library), p. 238 (“This same nation, too, was afterwards dispersed through the nations, in order to testify to the scriptures in which eternal salvation in Christ had been declared.”) Again, I say this not to elevate the Jews to a superior status over the Gentiles, but simply to say clearly that the Jews have been ordained in this way to function as a “light unto the nations.”

subsequently highlighted in the Book of Genesis (e.g., relating to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-20), the Book of Job, and the Book of Jonah (showing that God would be known and his call for repentance responded to even by the evil Ninevites, making them acceptable to God), showing that God directly related to every person regardless of their culture or religion, and would save all 'Righteous Gentiles' who conformed to the Seven Laws of Noah....

The Seven Laws of Noah as traditionally enumerated in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 56a-b) and Tosefta (Avodah Zarah 9:4), are the following:

Not to worship idols.

Not to curse God.

Not to commit murder.

Not to commit adultery or sexual immorality.

Not to steal.

Not to eat flesh torn from a living animal.

To establish courts of justice.²

Furthermore, as a Reformed theologian, I sought confirmation of this Jewish theology within the writings of fellow Augustinians and Calvinists. Within *The City of God*, I found that Augustine of Hippo had affirmed this Jewish theological perspective in Book XIX, Section Thirteen, which is titled, "Of the universal peace which the law of nature preserves through all disturbances, and by which every one reaches his desert in the a way

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Laws_of_Noah

regulated by the just Judge.” Likewise, among the Calvinists, this same Jewish theological principle is both affirmed and adopted.³

As a Christian and a constitutional lawyer, I have long grappled with these theological concepts. The question that I have long grappled with had to do with the Christian foundations of Anglo-American law and jurisprudence, as well as the overlap between the Sacred Scriptures and the English common law and American constitutional law. These career-long questions led me to Whitefield Theological Seminary’s department of church-and-state studies, where I completed my postdoctoral study, mentioned above. In that postdoctoral study, I desired to explore, among other things, whether the Declaration of Independence was actually a restatement of the “Covenant of Nature” (i.e., the “Noahide Laws”); and, if so, whether such restatement justified that Declaration’s characterization as a “Christian constitutional document.” In that study, I thus argued:

The constitutional foundation of the United States of America is indeed a ‘Covenant of Nature,’ and, as such, it is fundamentally Augustinian, Calvinistic, Puritan, and Judea-Christian. For these reasons, the United States is constitutionally and legally a ‘Christian’ nation. Wherefore, this postdoctoral study holds that ‘natural law,’ ‘natural rights,’ and ‘natural theology’ — which constitute the divine ‘Covenant of Nature’ — are expressly incorporated into the American Declaration of Independence and are thus vital components of American constitutional law and jurisprudence.

In retrospect, I now recognize how fundamentally “Jewish” my legal interests, legal inclinations, legal analysis, and legal conclusions were. During the whole period of time, from when I first became interested in this subject matter in 1992 up to the year about the year 2015, when I

³ See, e.g., Ernest F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2018), pp. 110-111 (discussing the “Covenant of Works” or the “Covenant of Nature”).

embarked upon intensive research on “Christianity and Law,” I had been operating fundamentally from a “Jewish” template – and not necessarily a Christian one! And, as I have learned from Rev. William Goodell’s *The Democracy of Christianity*, that fundamentally “Jewish” template comes from the epistles of the Apostle Paul – a Jew and a Pharisee!

Unwittingly, I recently admitted to an ordained itinerant elder within the African Methodist Episcopal Church that, because of my legal background and tendency to view the Sacred Scriptures through the lens of law and jurisprudence, I have essentially become a “Jewish Pharisee!” Immediately, I ascertained that this Methodist elder – with a facial expression of surprise and bewilderment – totally misunderstood what I was trying to explain. What I impliedly meant by the words “Jewish Pharisee” was that my approach to the Sacred Scriptures was no different than the Apostle Paul’s approach – and Paul was a Jew and Pharisee!

Accordingly, this series on the epistles of the Apostle Paul is designed to fully set forth my reasons for describing myself – a trained lawyer – as a proverbial “Jewish Pharisee.”

I would be remiss, however, if I did not forewarn the Readers of these several essays on the Apostle Paul, that I have now completely changed the description of my religious beliefs and practices from “Christian” to “Messianic Jew.” This change acknowledges my African-Jewish roots in the Lemba clans of southern Africa, and it most accurately reflects my interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures.

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Introduction

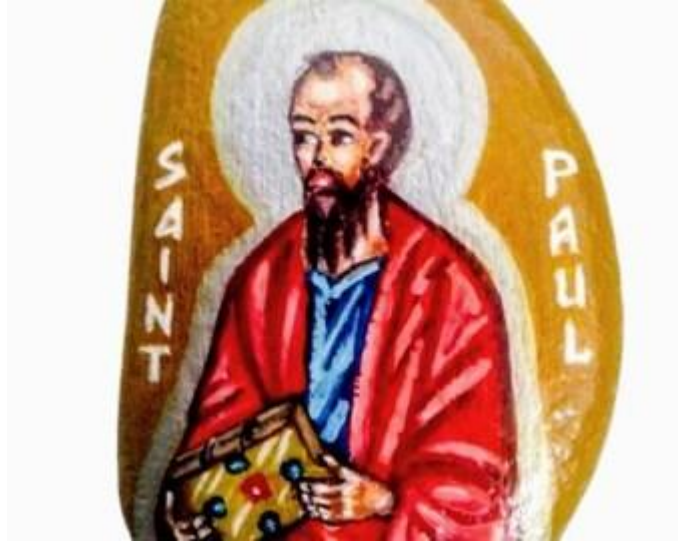
W.E.B. Du Bois once said that American slavery and the transatlantic African slave trade had placed a veil over the eyes of the African slaves and their descendants—including, to some extent, the veil of *fatalistic* religion. As a black southerner who grew up on the outskirts of the Bible Belt, I had learned to read the Sacred Scriptures purely in spiritual and not racial terms.⁴ And yet I must admit that upon learning of the influence of ancient Kemet (Egypt) on ancient Israel and the Hebrew religion, I began to consider whether an “anthropological” analysis of the Sacred Scriptures might also help to lift the veil from over the eyes of the descendants of the African slaves in the Americas. To be sure, this series on the epistles of the Apostle Paul does not focus on Africans, race, or racism. However, I would be remis if I did state that my deep interest in the life and times of the Apostle Paul has an African foundation in my anthropological interests in Black Hebrews and (or) the Black Jews in Africa, especially the Ethiopians and the Lemba.

I have heard, for instance, that the Apostle Paul (circa 5 – 64/65 AD) was probably a darker-skinned Jew who looked like an Egyptian.⁵ As I learned about Black Jews in the horn of Africa and in Egypt and Ethiopia, this information about Paul’s mistaken identity as an Egyptian was disclosed to me when I was a student in Baltimore. Decades later, I received my own genetic tests linking my ancestral roots to the Lemba clans of Zimbabwe and South Africa. These Lemba had long claimed to be descendants of Benjamite-Levitical tribes from ancient Israel. Several years ago, scientists conducted genetic testing on the Lemba and discovered that the Lemba men carried the same percentage of “Levitical-priestly” Y

⁴ See, e.g., Acts 17: 26.

⁵ See, e.g., Acts 21:37-38. https://www.instagram.com/reel/CovpjTRJYC_/ (opining that the Apostle Paul was mistaken for being an Egyptian because he was obviously a darker-skinned Jew).

chromosomes that are found within two or three distinct groups of Jewish men from southern and central Europe and in the state of Israel! With all of that in mind, I am writing this series on the epistles of the Apostle Paul as proud descendant of the Lemba Jews of southern Africa — *as a black Messianic Jew* who is, like Paul, a servant of the Lord Christ Jesus.



The Apostle Paul

(Here depicted as a darker-skinned, Black Jew)

Indeed, Ethiopia and the continent of Africa loom large — both in terms of the Sacred Scriptures and in scientific archeology. Early in the book of Genesis, Ethiopia is first mentioned in connection with the Garden of Eden!⁶ And in scientific archeology, the first known human remains have been found in Ethiopia, where it is believed that all human beings originated.⁷

⁶ Genesis 2: 13.

⁷ See, e.g., “Prehistoric Ethiopia,” *Wikipedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_Ethiopia. (“Ethiopia is considered the area from which anatomically modern humans emerged.”)

Egypt also looms large in the development of ancient Israel.⁸ The law of Moses is said to have been extracted from Egyptian law and customs.⁹ Indeed, “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.”¹⁰ That God chose Moses, who was an educated Egyptian-Hebrew, to lead his chosen people, is noteworthy. Moses was a prince in Egypt. His “law of Moses” has withstood the test of time and it remains one of the great cornerstones of global jurisprudence and modern civilization – serving as the foundation of the canon laws of the great Western and Eastern Christian churches, European civil law, the English common law, Islamic law, and the laws of dozens of nations around the world.

In the history of ancient Israel, the law of Moses became the foundation of Israelite civilization.¹¹ And during the period of the Second Temple (circa 539 BC to 70 AD), a group of non-priestly, highly-educated, and politically influential Jewish elders known as the Pharisees became the foremost experts in the law of Moses.¹² The Pharisees were learned rabbis. And the Apostle Paul was a Pharisee. Although Jesus of Nazareth was not a Pharisee, he was himself a learned rabbi who argued and debated the true meaning and application of the law of Moses with the Pharisees. Such

⁸ See, e.g., E. W. Hengstenberg, *Egypt and the Books of Moses* (New York, N.Y.: M.H. Newman, 1843).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Acts 7: 22.

¹¹ Acts 7: 22; E. W. Hengstenberg, *Egypt and the Books of Moses*, *supra*.

¹² “The Life of Flavius Josephus,” *Josephus: The Complete Works* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1998) p. 14 (“the sect... which are supposed to excel others in the accurate knowledge of the laws of their country”).

vigorous debate of the Torah is still part and parcel of Jewish culture.¹³ This series on the epistles of the Apostle Paul is a continuation of that debate.

Since ancient times, Judaism has tended to emphasize the commandment in Deuteronomy 16:20 ("Justice, justice shall you pursue...."). And Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostle Paul, as Jewish rabbis, were a part of that religious legal tradition. Hence, ancient Judaism was constitutional, governmental, legalistic, ethical, practical, and mundane. The Pharisees (and the Apostle Paul) were experts in this legal tradition. The Jewish synagogues functioned, in part, as local courts and local governmental chambers where trials were held and where religious law was contentiously debated.¹⁴

Notably, Jesus of Nazareth chose and trained his twelve disciples over a period of three years. But Jesus entrusted his evangelistic ministry to the Gentiles to the Apostle Paul whom Jesus had given no prior training! That Jesus himself chose Paul – without any prior “Christian” teaching--speaks volumes about Jesus’ favorable assessment of the Pharisee’s rigorous training and expert knowledge of the law of Moses. A similar parallel can be made of the LORD’s selection of Moses, who had been educated and trained to be a prince, or perhaps to be a Pharaoh, in Egypt. In both instances, the selections of Moses and Paul – two highly educated men with expert legal knowledge and training – speak volumes about the divine essence of law. I note, too, that Melchizedek was king and priest!

¹³ See, generally, Noah Feldman, *To Be A Jew Today: A New Guide to God, Israel, and the Jewish People* (New York, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024); Alan M. Dershowitz, *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Random House LLC, 2015).

¹⁴ See, also, “Jesus in the Synagogue” <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/magazine/jesus-in-the-synagogue/> (“As the local town hall and place of Jewish law, public synagogues also served other civic functions, especially that of a court of law and justice. The Gospels and Acts mention this on a number of occasions (Mark 13:9; Matthew 23:34; Luke 12:11-12; Acts 22:19).... Similar hints at the judicial function of synagogues appear in the Mishnah as well (Makkot 3:12; Shevu’ot 4:10).” [See, e.g., Luke 10: 25-37 (Jesus tested by “expert in the law” (NIV) or “lawyer” (KJV)); Luke 11: 45-52 (Jesus’ debating “experts in the law” (NIV) or “lawyers” (KJV))]. Hence, Jesus of Nazareth “discussed and debated the interpretation and practice of Jewish law in synagogues (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:14-17; John 6:30-59).”

Accordingly, the basis of my review and critique of the epistles of the Apostle Paul is both (a) the law of Moses and (b) the legal training of the Pharisees. The law of Moses (i.e., Torah) is a complex system of constitutional and statutory law that regulated the civil polity of ancient Israel, as well as religious mandates for the tabernacle (or temple) and synagogue. The Pharisees' legal training encompassed not simply a mastery of Hebrew theology and Jewish philosophy, but it required a master of secular civil, criminal, and constitutional law as well. The arenas in which the Pharisees operated and dominated were the chambers, councils, and courts of ancient Judea – and not simply the Temple (where the priests and Sadducees had primary jurisdiction).

With all of this in mind, the Christian world today cannot properly contextualize the world of Jesus, the Pharisees, and the Apostle Paul without having some understanding of present-day courts, lawyers, judges, and legislators. In Jesus' day, to be a Pharisee or to be a rabbi was to be a lawyer, a judge, or a ruler of a local court system organized under the auspices of a public synagogue and the Sanhedrin.¹⁵ But in modern times, the Church of Jesus Christ, which has conceptually stepped into the shoes of the Second Temple and (or) the various synagogues of ancient Judea, has disserved law school and legal training from its seminal training of Christian pastors, presbyters, deacons, and bishops. The Protestant Church has disserved lawyers and judges from the ranks of its ordained elders; and it seemingly looks with grave suspicion upon the notion of an advanced type of Christian jurisprudence that is meant to govern the daily lives of the Christian faithful. Mindful of Jesus' run-ins with the Pharisees, the modern Protestant Church does not trust modern lawyers and would be hard pressed to substitute, e.g., the Bachelor of Divinity degree for the Bachelor of Laws degree, as adequate preparation for its ordained clergy.

¹⁵ See "Jesus in the Synagogue," *supra*; Alan M. Dershowitz, *Abraham: The World's First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Random House LLC, 2015); Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (New Orleans, LA: Quid Pro Quo Books, 2010).

Today, for instance, when an American trial lawyer decides that he wants to become an ordained Protestant Christian minister, he is likely to be held in great suspicion; and (or) to be accused of being a “Pharisee.” This tendency within the Protestant Church is a tragic occurrence, because it radically takes the Gospel of Jesus Christ out of its historical context in ancient Judea and it subverts the divine essence of so-called secular law as an instrument of civil justice (i.e., Deuteronomy 16: 20, “Justice, justice shall you pursue.”)

As an experienced American trial lawyer who became interested in obtaining ordination in the Protestant Christian Church, I encountered a vast misunderstanding amongst Christian pastors regarding the relationship of the Christian religion to law and jurisprudence. It was obvious that the Jewish legal heritage (as well as the Roman Catholic legal heritage) had been completely obliterated from Protestant theological discourse.

In 2015, my foray into the Christian ministry, after I had practiced law for over twenty years, was met with suspicion among various Christian clergymen from within a variety of Protestant Christian denominations, even those who had once retained me as their legal counsel and presumably thought highly of my acumen and legal skills.¹⁶ The Protestant Christians frequently, but jokingly, held me in suspicion of being a “Pharisee lawyer.” Moreover, I encountered no real enthusiasm amongst the Christian clergy for bringing me into their various ministries as an ordained preacher of the Gospel. They somehow conceived that my experience as a lawyer had somehow disqualified me as a preacher of the

¹⁶ In January of 2015, I published *Jesus Master of Law: A Juridical Science of Christianity and the Law of Equity* (2015).

Gospel – and this was true even after I promised to attend seminary to obtain an advanced divinity degree!

I soon realized that most of the Protestant Christian faithful had become so suspicious of lawyers that they frequently associated law, or lawyers, with the “excessive legalism” of the Pharisees in the New Testament, and with the Apostle Paul’s admonition: “*for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*”¹⁷ Nor did my Protestant Christian brethren ever seem to entertain the notion that a lawyer, who was also a sincere Christian, could also be blessed with God’s grace, or with spiritual gifts, along with having a deep understanding of the Sacred Scriptures.

As a Protestant Christian lawyer, then, I turned to my Roman Catholic brethren and to their voluminous writings on law and Christian jurisprudence. The Catholics had not lost what the Jewish rabbis and lawyers had developed over the centuries. The Catholics had robust literature on constitutional law and jurisprudence, and they published this literature from a biblical and Christian perspective (i.e., the *spirit of the law*) – especially the Catholic understanding of the *spirit of the law* in the form of *agape*; the *spirit of the law* in the form of *equity*; the *spirit of the law* in the form of *mercy*; and the *spirit of the law* in the form of *justice*. But the one objection I developed towards Roman Catholicism is its conception of the “city of God” as being solely inside the institutional organization of the Roman Catholic Church. As a Protestant Christian lawyer living in the United States, I wanted to see that same “city of God” (i.e., substantive justice) inside of the secular courtrooms as well. Amongst my Jewish brethren, I found a kindred legal spirit! The Jewish lawyers still approached the practice of secular law as though divine justice is to be

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 3: 6.

obtained in secular world, as well as in the synagogues!¹⁸ And I wholly agreed with this Jewish perspective of the law and law practice.¹⁹

Jewish lawyers who are sincere about social justice are the heritage of Hebrew prophets and Jewish rabbis.²⁰ In general, such Jewish lawyers seek “to repair the world” through the practice of law.²¹ And, in so doing, Jewish lawyers often find themselves in controversy, while on the brink of revolution and social change.²² In Jewish literature, as in the Old Testament, persecution and honest, hard-fault suffering are badges of righteousness and honor. This was true of Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah, Zacharia, Daniel, and the three Hebrew boys – Meshach, Abednego, and Shadrach. In each of these cases, the question of whether evil human power can supplant God’s omnipotent will are at issue; and the protagonists are assigned the task of maintaining faith in an almighty and all-powerful God. Jewish lawyers who fight for social justice believe, in part, that they are carrying on this tradition.²³

There is no reason why Christian lawyers, who sincerely care about justice, should not follow suit and mimic their Jewish counterparts. And there is no reason why the Christian Church should not recognize such Christian lawyers as “ordained elders.” In the New Testament, the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, a Pharisee and rabbi, thus appears as a

¹⁸ See, generally, Alan M. Dershowitz, *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Random House LLC, 2015).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See, generally, Alan M. Dershowitz, *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Random House LLC, 2015); Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (New Orleans, LA: Quid Pro Quo Books, 2010).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

continuation of those Old Testament themes of social justice, persecution, suffering, and triumph – as Paul himself once explained:

Are they servants of Christ?

I am a better one... with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;

[I was] on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;

[I was] in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

Who is weak, and I am not weak? ...

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.²⁴

As a Pharisee lawyer, the Apostle Paul represented and spoke on behalf of his Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke to both the Jews and the Gentiles. To the Jews, Paul endeavored to demonstrate how Christ was the same

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 11: 23-30.

promised messiah who is referenced in the law of Moses and in the prophets. To the Gentiles, Paul endeavored to demonstrate that a singular God of heaven had demonstrated His love for the entire world by sending His own son, Christ Jesus, to redeem the entire world from its sins. Paul endeavored to demonstrate that both Jew and Gentile were made by the same God, and in His image. For this reason, Paul emphasized that the Jew had no advantage over the Gentile; and that the Lord Christ Jesus had come into the world to redeem both. Nevertheless, Paul received and endured persecution from both the Jews and the Gentiles. Indeed, prior to 318 A.D., the Christian religion was illegal; and the practice of the Christian religion was subject to capital punishment throughout the Roman empire. During Paul's lifetime, to confess Christ's resurrection and reigning sovereignty was considered seditious speech. Nevertheless, the judicious Paul kept preaching, teaching, advocating, and persevering. Within a modern-day context, Paul's example of perseverance is what a true Jewish or Christian lawyer (and judge) should endeavor to replicate.

When I was a law student, I first discovered that there was a sacred Jewish legal tradition from Jewish law professors and Jewish law students.²⁵ My fellow Christian law students did not give me the

²⁵ Several years ago, for instance, I wrote a seminary paper on John Calvin, which I dedicated to the entire Jewish Legal Community, as follows:

"This paper on the Protestant Reformation in England (1530 -1650) is dedicated to the Jewish legal community. At the University of Illinois College of Law, certain Jewish professors were of great assistance to my professional development: **Marvin Gerstein, Esq.** (moot court adjunct); **Professor Anthony Taibi** (civil procedure; legal theory); **Professor Steven Ross** (comparative constitutional law).

"Jewish history and culture, as reflected in the Old Testament, have also deeply influenced me ever since my early childhood. I knew no Jews as a child growing up in the Bible-Belt in rural, northern Florida, but I had a profound respect for the Jewish heritage. I had been taught that the Jews were God's chosen people. And, up to the late 1980s, the contemporary clashes between African Americans and Jews in cities such as New York and Chicago, I had heard and knew nothing. This lack of exposure to some of the contemporary challenges between African Americans and Jews allowed me to

objectively assess Jewish heritage and culture, and to freely dialogue and embrace Jewish law professors and fellow law students during the early 1990s.

“No other group (not the Roman Catholics, African Americans, Hispanics, or whites) were as open, willing, and eager to discuss with me such unique topics such as “race, law and economics,” and “law and religion” as were the Jewish law professors and students. I also found the Jewish law faculty to be a treasure trove of practical instruction, mentoring, and wisdom. The Jewish law professors seemed to have a thorough grasp of what everybody else was thinking and doing; they seemed to be able to move diplomatically and fluidly between the various groups of conservative and liberal whites, Hispanics, and African Americans, without losing a sense of their own internal Jewishness.

“The Jewish law professors and law students at the University of Illinois were the first real Jews whom I actually met and held conversations with. And, given my rural background in the Bible Belt of northern Florida, I could not pass up the opportunity to discuss the forbidden topics of “law and religion,” “the Jews and Christianity,” “black and Jews,” etc., etc. The Jewish legal community has always been willing to share with me their thoughts, history, and heritage. For it has been their insights into the origins of law and constitutional law that have tremendously helped me to unravel many questions that I have had regarding the role of Christianity in shaping the secular legal system.

“The life’s work of John Calvin reminds me of how much the Old Testament has influenced the building of Western law and civilization. Calvin based most of his theology on Hebrew traditions found in the Bible. And he believed that the ancient Hebrew polity which God had given to Moses was the best form of government known to mankind. Calvin based his Christian polity off of the ancient Hebrew polity as found in the Bible. And yet, the Old Testament is seldom, if ever, discussed within the American legal academy. This is a very tragic development in Western legal education....

“I entered law school thoroughly prepared to research and discuss legal theory, law and religion. I distinctly remember that one new topic that caught my attention was the 16th century era New England colonies and the Virginia colony (i.e., the Puritans and the Anglicans of early colonial America). I readily noticed how closely the Bible was aligned to early America’s court opinions, statutes, and constitutional provisions. 16th and 17th century New England pastors were of some interest to me. I therefore maintained a vague interest in the development of early American jurisprudence from 1607 up to 1776, in order to ascertain precisely how, why, and when American legal positivism supplanted the natural-law foundations of American jurisprudence.

“As a Christian law student, the Christian foundations within American law and jurisprudence continuously preoccupied my extra-curricular and supplemental readings in law. And Calvinism remained one of the predominant themes within those supplemental readings.”

impression that they had gone to law school to carry on a Christian legal tradition. If any of my law professors were Christian, I could not ascertain this information on the basis of anything they said – with the exception of one, a Roman Catholic with a J.D./ Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and Harvard! Indeed, Judaism emphasizes Deuteronomy 16: 20 (“Justice, justice shall you pursue.”) This sacred, divine commandment, I was told, is partly why so many Jews become lawyers – and excel within the legal profession.

Two decades after I graduated from law school, I published a book titled *Jesus Master of Law: A Juridical Science of Christianity and the Law of Equity* (2015). During the three years of conducting the research for this work, I did not know, at that time, that by describing Jesus of Nazareth as a “Master of Law,” that I was unwittingly and actually describing the usual and typical role of the first-century Jewish rabbi. Indeed, “[o]ur rabbis,” wrote distinguished Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz in *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer*, “have served as advocates, judges, and lawmakers, resolving disputes among quarreling Jews for centuries.”²⁶ Coincidentally, and perhaps providentially, both my own book *Jesus Master of Law* and Professor Dershowitz’s *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* were published in 2015. In retrospect, I wish that I had been afforded the privilege of reading Professor Dershowitz’s book, *Abraham*, before I published *Jesus Master of Law* in 2015; because in *Abraham*, Dershowitz vividly depicts Jesus of Nazareth within the Jewish sacred law tradition, while even explicitly describing Jesus as “a talented ‘lawyer,’ employing legal logic to defeat older rabbis in disputations.”²⁷ Moreover, Professor Dershowitz’s *Abraham*

²⁶ Alan Dershowitz, *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* (New York, N.Y.: Schocken Books, 2015), pp. 82- 121.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

goes on to describe the Jewish lawyer in general as an “Abrahamic idol smasher, advocate, collaborator, rescuer, and deal maker,” while concluding, “whenever the downtrodden need legal representation, you will often find a Jewish lawyer refusing to stand idly by, repairing the world, showing compassion, and seeking justice.”²⁸ Professor Dershowitz’s description of the Jewish lawyer is perfect description of the Apostle Paul, who set about his ministry duties to repair the world, to show compassion on the lost, and to seek justice through the Gospel.

A few years ago, I also discovered the Beit Din of America, a Jewish alternative dispute resolution panel of lawyers, mediators, and arbitrators, and I then noticed that it was not unusual for Jewish rabbis to also hold the Juris Doctor degree and be members of the secular bar. My informal conversations with several Jews reinforced my understanding that it is certainly not unusual for the Jewish rabbi to also be a lawyer. One such rabbi whom I consulted with is Dr. Michael Rudolph of Washington, D.C., who is a retired member of the Virginia bar and an active Messianic Jewish rabbi. I surmise that for the Jew, the sacred is both intertwined with, but always superior to, the secular; and that, fundamentally, the daily familial, business, and community functions of individual Jews are of primary concern to Jewish rabbis – thus necessitating knowledge of secular laws.

Interestingly, in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul counseled the Corinthian church to form local tribunals so that the bishops, elders, and deacons could adjudicate disputes between their fellow Christians. Paul believed that local Christians should manage their own internal affairs without relying upon ungodly, secular tribunals.²⁹ What Paul was recommending to the Corinthian church was a carbon copy of the judicial functions of the ancient Jewish synagogues of his day. In Judaism, insular

²⁸ Ibid., p. 131.

²⁹ I Corinthians 6: 1-11 (Christian saints should adjudicate their own mundane disputes among themselves).

Jewish communities throughout the diaspora were compelled to self-govern themselves and to manage their own internal affairs. As a result, the Jews established local courts, where the law of Moses was thoroughly incorporated into the daily and practical lives of the Jewish people. Today, the Beth Din of America (and other similar Jewish courts) is vital institution that safeguards the integrity of the Jewish family structure, as well as preserving Jewish culture, tradition, and law.

This Jewish conception of law and religion was originally a fundamental part of the Christian religion. In Western Europe before the Enlightenment, the Roman Catholic Church established similar religious or ecclesiastical courts which performed functions similar in nature to the Jewish local courts. This was especially true in England, where the Church of England comprised two sides of the same coin as the Parliament, and where English ecclesiastical and chancery tribunals were established to incorporate Christian principles and ideals (i.e., the “law of Christ”) into the English common law. In both England and continental Europe, Paul’s influence was not lost sight of; for, as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Henry de Bracton, John of Salisbury, and Richard Hooker have long ago attested, fundamental Catholic Christian jurisprudence held that a “Higher Law of God” governs the all nations.³⁰

The early Protestant Reformers both inherited and embraced this Catholic Christian jurisprudence. For instance, the Protestant clergymen named Rev. William Goodell, who was a prolific writer on the subject matter of the Puritans and the Christian foundations of the United States, held the same views on the “Higher Law of God.” Rev. Goodell’s

³⁰ See, generally, Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989); John Whitte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Goldwin Smith, *A Constitutional and Legal History of England* (New York, N.Y.: Dorset Press, 1990); Goldwin Smith, *A History of England* (New York, N.Y.: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957); and William Goodell, *The Democracy of Christianity, or; An Analysis of the Bible and its Doctrines in Their Relation to the Principles of Democracy* (New York, N.Y.: Cady and Burgess, 1852).

Democracy of Christianity (1853) opined that this “Higher Law” constitutional doctrine was incorporated into text of the Declaration of Independence (1776)], because the Declaration’s drafters – particularly Thomas Jefferson – had been influenced by the thirteenth chapter of the Apostle Paul’s epistle to the Romans.³¹

Rev. Goodell opined that the Apostle Paul’s Epistle to the Romans had been the foundation of the English Common Law, going all the way back to Henry de Bracton; and that Paul’s esteemed letter has also influenced the drafting the Declaration of ’76. Fundamentally, Paul’s Epistle to the Romans taught Western jurists and theologians that no king or earthly ruler may rightfully claim legitimate authority, unless they rule in accord with the “Higher Law of God,” and that all earthly powers have been ordained by God alone.³² Notably, in more recent times, the Baptist minister Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Letter from the Birmingham City Jail* served as a restatement of this same “Higher Law of God” theology and jurisprudence. (In modern times, Martin Luther King, Jr. most resembles the Apostle Paul than any other – a milestone within the Black Church!)

But the primary importance of this series on the Apostle Paul has to do with the field of church polity and ecclesiology. The study of Paul is simultaneously the study of the Puritan or the Protestant Reformation against imperial, episcopal abuses within the hierarchical Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Episcopal churches. As a Black Jew – a Messianic Jew – my preference is to treat the first-century Jewish synagogue as the model for

³¹ Romans 13: 1-10. See, also, William Goodell, *The Democracy of Christianity, or; An Analysis of the Bible and its Doctrines in Their Relation to the Principles of Democracy* (New York, N.Y.: Cady and Burgess, 1852), pp. 376-377 (stating that the great English jurist and cleric Henry de Bracton, “in his exposition of Romans xiii, had said: ‘He is called a king for ruling righteously, and not because he reigns. Wherefore he is a king when he governs with justice, but a tyrant when he oppresses the people committed to his charge.’” Goodell opined that Jefferson’s words in the Declaration of Independence were directly inherited from both the Apostle Paul (Romans xiii) and the English jurist Henry de Bracton).

³² Ibid.

the Christian church. A synagogue could be public or private – but they were always run by laymen, albeit influential rulers and elders such as Nicodemus, who is mentioned in the Gospel of John. Apostles Peter and Paul, who led the Jewish and Gentile churches, respectively, organized loosely-connected egalitarian, local churches. The letters of both men suggest that they disdained worldly wisdom and elitism, and they also promoted egalitarian brotherhood and presbyterian leadership. I suggest through this series that both Peter and Paul modeled the Early Church after the organization and structure of the ancient Jewish synagogue.

The imperial, episcopal structures of the Western Church at Rome and Constantinople have *not* theological nexus to the Jewish synagogue. But these imperial, episcopal church structures come obviously from very poor efforts to copy the structure of the First and Second Temple in Jerusalem, and to combine that ecclesiastical structure with the hierarchical, sophisticated system of pontiffs and pagan priests who governed the official religions of the Roman empire. Hence, the hierarchical, episcopal structure of the Christian church was taken partly from pagan sources and from the Levitical priesthood, which Christ himself ended. But Christ did not do away completely with “priests,” but He did institute himself as the only “high priest,” and he instituted every Christian believer as “royal priests,” or what the Protestant Reformer Martin Luther would later popularize as the “priesthood of all believers.”

Significantly, the differences between church structure and polity are not without great meaning and significance to the ultimate liberty of the common man. There was top-down ecclesiastical oppression wrought by the papacy and Anglican episcopalians; there was the top-down civil oppression wrought by aristocracies and monarchs; and there was the top-down economic oppression wrought by monopolies and the courts. Against all of this stood Christ, and the spiritual legacy of the Hebrew prophets speaking out for social justice; the ecclesiastical struggle of the Protestant reformers; and the economic struggles of labor movements,

socialists, and even godless communists. In England, historians have ascribed the more moderate component of these ecclesiastical and economic struggles to the great Methodist movement.

Jewish tradition and law greatly influenced the Protestant ecclesiastical struggles against imperial, episcopal abuses. As the Reformers studied scriptures in original Hebrew and Greek, and consulted with Jewish rabbis from Spain, they soon became adept at recognizing the fallacies within the Pope's claim to papal infallibility and other similar ecclesiastical claims. The "Hebrew" influence led, for instance, the Puritans of colonial New England on an errand to establish a biblical civil polity based upon the Old Testament. In Geneva, the Protestant reformer John Calvin had already done something similar. The Old Testament taught American colonists that a system of federated judges had been God's original plan of civil government for ancient Israel – not monarchy! To a very great degree, the American revolution was a Puritan and Presbyterian revolt – inspired in great measure by the ancient Hebrew constitution as it is reflected in the Book of Deuteronomy – against the British monarchy and the hierarchical, episcopal structure of the Church of England. For this reason, many Jewish historians, rabbis, and constitutional lawyers have claimed the American Declaration of Independence of '76 and the United States Constitution as foundational constitutional documents that were greatly influenced by Judaism.³³

In this series on the Apostle Paul, I shall endeavor to remind Christian readers that the Jewish sages – and particularly the Pharisees – had laid the foundations for Paul's legal and religious interpretation of the law of Moses and the New Covenant. I shall emphasize the plain fact that Paul was a Pharisee, and that the Pharisees were law men and experts in the law of Moses. Although the New Testament highlights several vicious

³³ As a Messianic Jew, however, I must remind rabbinical Jews that the Jewish Pharisee Paul deserved the lion's share of credit for this so-called Jewish influence upon the Christian West.

encounters that Christ had with the Pharisees, the original objectives of the Pharisees, which was to preserve the integrity of the law of Moses and of the Jewish nation, appear to be noble, egalitarian, and laudable. In fact, when Paul originally persecuted the Christians, he believed that he was carrying out the noble objectives of these Pharisees. However, upon learning that Christ himself was the end of the law of Moses, the great Paul did not make a 180 degree change in his viewpoints on the law of Moses, but he instead began to read the “law of Christ” as a fulfillment of the Law of Moses. For instance, in his Epistle to the Romans,³⁴ Paul identified Jesus Christ as being the “word” of God, just as Moses had described the “word” in the Book of Deuteronomy.³⁵ In light of Christ, Paul saw the “law of Christ” already buried inside of the law of Moses. For this reason, Paul gave the law of Moses a “Christocentric” reinterpretation. According to Paul, faith in Jesus Christ does not annul the law of Moses but rather it enables the Christian faithful to fulfill or to carry out that law — i.e., “love,” says Paul, “is the fulfilling of the law.”³⁶ And since Paul understood that the heresy of the new Christian faith could lead to capital punishment, he was willing to risk everything that he had — and ultimately his own life — in service to Christ and to Higher Law.

Finally, I write as a African American Messianic Jew to commemorate the great Apostle Paul, not because Paul was a man of color, but because Paul was a man of great principle — a great principle which, I argue, would be of great benefit and use to the Black Church, and toward the liberation of the Black poor and Black oppressed all over the world.

³⁴ Romans 10: 5-10.

³⁵ Deuteronomy 30: 14.

³⁶ Romans 13: 10.

Chapter One: “Jacob Blesses Judah”

As a Pharisee and expert in the law of Moses, the Apostle Paul relished the whole history of the seed of Abraham. Upon learning that his risen Lord Jesus was actually the “seed” of Abraham,³⁷ Paul’s expertise on the law of Moses helped to facilitate his profound exhortation of the Gospel. Indeed, Paul’s Gospel was deeply rooted in his profound understanding of the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham and his seed. As a Jew, Paul understood the blessing of Jacob to be a watershed moment in the prophetic history of Abraham’s seed.

When Jacob blessed his twelve sons, who became the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, he noticeably predicted that from his son Judah would come the kings and rulers of Israel. Jacob said:

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;

Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;

Your father’s sons shall bow down before you.

Judah is a lion’s cub;

From the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He stooped down; he crouched as a lion

And as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet,

³⁷ Galatians 3: 15-29.

Until tribute comes to him;

And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.³⁸

Thus, from Israel's son, Judah, shall come a "ruler" or "Shiloh"; and to this "ruler" or "Shiloh" shall be the gathering and obedience of the people.³⁹

Who this "ruler" or "Shiloh" is, the rabbinical Talmud tells us is a reference to a future anointed king or Messiah.⁴⁰

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul specifically names Christ as Abraham's "seed," and concludes "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."⁴¹

Similarly, Augustine of Hippo, one of the great fathers of the Western Church, adopts the same rabbinical interpretation in his *The City of God*, but with the fundamental difference that the anointed king or Messiah, who is referenced in Genesis 49:10, is Jesus of Nazareth.⁴²

³⁸ Genesis 49: 8- 10 (English Standard Version). In the King James Version (KJV), verse 10 says, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, *until Shiloh come*; and unto him shall be the gathering of the people be." In the Jewish Study Bible, verse 10 says, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet; So that tribute shall come to him and the homage of peoples be his."

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "The name as a title of the Messiah is first found in a fanciful passage of the **Talmud (Sanh. 98b)**, where the present passage is quoted." Commentary on Genesis 49:10 <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/hastings/genesis/49-10.htm>.

⁴¹ Galatians 3: 15-29.

⁴² St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XVI, Sec. 41, "Of the blessing which Jacob promised in Judah his son" (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 564-565. ("And it is He in whom the promises of Judah were laid up, so that until they come, princes, that is, the kings of Israel, shall never be lacking out of Judah. 'And He is the expectation of the nations.' This is too plain to need exposition.") Here, Augustine defines "people" to mean "nations."

Chapter Two: “Origin and Use of the Name ‘Jew’”

The Apostle Paul was a Jew. Paul never stopped being an orthodox Jew, a Pharisee, or a member of the Jewish nation. But as a Jew, Paul held most of the imperfections, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies of first-century Jews. This would have included prejudices against the Samaritans and the willingness to execute heretics such as the early Christians. Even after Paul met his risen Lord Jesus Christ, Paul still considered himself to be a Jew, albeit a reformed Messianic Jew — there being no extrinsic evidence that Paul ever called himself a Christian.

The name "Jew" comes from the Hebrew word Yehudi, meaning "Judahite." The word "Judahite" means "to praise." After the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C., the southern kingdom of Judah became associated with representing all Hebrews from all twelve tribes of Israel, even though many of these tribes has left ancient Judea. Today, the term "Jew" can be problematic, to the extent that Jewish people reject, or discriminate against, other descendants from the other Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Such discrimination was readily apparent in the New Testament, where Jews frequently discriminated against their Semitic brethren who were known as the Samaritans.

The name "Jew" is significant for a number of reasons. From the perspective of the descendants of Jacob who are not directly descended from Jacob's son Judah, the willingness to accept the title of "Jew" is to pay homage to Genesis 49 (i.e., Jacob's blessing of Judah). And so, from this perspective, the entire twelve tribes of Israel are "Jews." Thus, to be a true "Israelite" is to acknowledge the tribe of Judah (i.e., the House of David) as the foundation and as the source from which the "anointed king of Israel" would ascend.

Chapter Three: “The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel- *Biological Jews*”

The Apostle Paul’s status as Christ’s missionary to the Gentiles forced Paul to re-conceptualize the law of Moses and the prophets as making a way for the lost tribes of Israel to reenter into God’s covenant. Interestingly, and contrary to his orthodox Jewish teachings, Paul conceived that the Gentiles who would be saved in Christ constituted fellow members of a spiritual Isreal which already comprised of many biological Jews. As a biological Jew himself, Paul never disaffiliated with the Jewish nation or lost hope in the ultimate salvation of his fellow biological Jews. To better understand Paul’s theology on the relationship of Gentiles to the Jewish people, we must first analyze Paul’s understanding of “physical” Isreal and the “biological” Jews who lived there.

Following the reign of King Solomon, the United Kingdom of Israel spit into two: the Kingdom of Judah (in the south) and the Kingdom of Israel (in the north). This northern kingdom established a monarchy whose kings did not hail from the House of David or the tribe of Judah. The northern kingdom’s capital headquarters were established at Shiloh, Schechem, Tirzah, and Samaria, before it was conquered by the Assyrians in 720 B.C., thus commencing the theological and social-cultural idea of the “Lost Tribes of Israel.”

From this time forward, the word “Jew” may be seen as something distinct from these other “Lost Tribes of Israel” (e.g., the “Samaria” or “Ephraim” as northern Kingdom of Israel was loosely called). Clearly, there were descendants of Jacobs 10 other sons were we scattered to the four corners of the earth following the Assyrian conquest in 720 B.C.; and

they became separate and distinct from the descendants of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin (with the Levites in the capital city of Jerusalem).

By the time of Jesus Christ, Jews were certainly separate, apart, and distinct from the Samaritans. The Samaritans having once been a constituent part of greater Israel under the United Kingdom of Israel, were severed from Judea, Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of Judah in about 932 B.C. And after the Assyrians conquered the Samaritans (i.e., the northern Kingdom of Israel) in 722 B.C., the Samaritans who was sent into exile became a part of the 10 “Lost Tribes of Israel.” These disbursed Israelites, wherever they may be, are the biological cousins to the present-day Jews.

Even though the Samaritans were not Gentiles, neither were they Jews. During the time of Jesus, the Samaritans were treated as apostates (see, e.g., John 4: 4-42; “Jesus approached a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well”), which is why Jesus’ amicable associations with the Samaritans made him a radical (See, e.g., Luke 10: 25 – 37; “Parable of the Good Samaritan”). So, by the beginning of the first millennium, we find two broad categories of “Jews,” namely:

United Kingdom of Israel

Greater Israel (Judea, Galilee, and Samaria)

<u>Kingdom of Judah</u>	<u>Kingdom of Israel</u>
Jew (Ancient Judea & Galilee)	Samaritans (Ancient Samaria)

Already, within broader Jewish identity, there were Hebrews or Semites (i.e., the Samaritans or the Israelites from the 10 lost tribes), who were first cousins to the “orthodox” Jews, but who were nevertheless considered to be an “outgroup” by “orthodox” Jews. This was evident during the time

of Jesus, as demonstrated in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.⁴³ See, e.g., Table 1, below.

Thus, a core component of the Apostle Paul's mission to the Gentiles was to recover the "Samaritans," as well as all other *biological Jews* or *ethnic Hebrews* who are descendants from the so-called Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Against the prejudices of orthodox Judaism, Paul's reformed Judaism was now open to all other biological Hebrews whom orthodox Judaism had forgotten about or rejected.

Table 1. Jesus Meets Samaritan Woman at Well

"Jesus Meets the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well"

⁵ Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

⁷ There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

⁸ (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

⁹ Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

¹¹ The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

¹² Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

⁴³ John 4: 5-30.

¹³ Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

¹⁴ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

¹⁵ The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

¹⁶ Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

¹⁷ The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

¹⁸ For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

¹⁹ The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

²⁰ Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

²¹ Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

²² Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

²³ But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

²⁴ God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

²⁵ The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

²⁶ Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

²⁷ And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

²⁸ The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

²⁹ Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

³⁰ Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

As demonstrated in Jesus' treatment of the Samaritan woman, as well as in his "Parable of the Good Samaritan,"⁴⁴ the core mission of the Messiah was to retrieve "forgotten Israelites" from Samaria and throughout the Jewish Diaspora. The Apostle Paul was Christ's emissary to those "forgotten Israelites." As he traveled throughout the Greco-Roman world, Paul reached out to Jews from throughout the diaspora.⁴⁵

To a very significant degree, one of the main missions of the promised Jewish Messiah – as stated in ancient Hebrew prophecies such as in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Daniel, Hosea, and Zephaniah – was to re-unify "greater Israel," by uniting the House of Judah with the disbursed House of Israel. Many mainline, orthodox Jews consider these Jews who are dispersed throughout the Jewish diaspora to constitute this "greater Israel."⁴⁶

On the other hand, there are yet other motley Jewish diasporic groups who are today treated more like the Samaritans, because, as a part

⁴⁴ Luke 10: 25-37.

⁴⁵ Thus, in addition to the "orthodox" Jews of ancient Judea, there had always been for a long period of time many "orthodox" Jews throughout the Jewish diaspora, particularly in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. These Jews never lost their connection to Jerusalem and orthodox Judaism.

⁴⁶ Within mainstream Judaism, there is an acknowledge class of Jews who live within the Jewish diaspora and who are connected with mainstream rabbinical Judaism. This House of Israel (i.e., "greater Israel") naturally includes a variety of a diverse categories of Jews who are distinct from, and perhaps do not agree with each other on every major theological point. For instance, within the genre of white European and American Jews, there are the German Jews, the Russian or Eastern European Jews, the Sephardic Jews, the Ashkenazi Jews, Mizrahi Jews. Furthermore, in the United States, Jewish denominations are also described as Ultra-Orthodox (Hasidic), Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reformed, and Reconstructionist.

of the “Ten Lost Tribes of Israel,” they *lost their cultural ties to “orthodox Pharisaic or rabbinical” Judaism*. See, e.g., Table 2, below.

Table 2. “Ten Lost Tribes” in the Diaspora

Jews in Arabia, Yemen, Ethiopia, and Southern Africa (since beginning of the United Kingdom; King Solomon & the Queen of Sheba; and since the Babylonian captivity of Judah in 598 BC). This group includes the Beta Israel in Ethiopia and the Lemba in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Jews in Persia (since the Assyrian captivity of Samaria in 722 BC; and since the Babylonian captivity of Judah in 598 BC)

The Apostle Paul’s reformed Judaism tended to bring all types of Jews and Hebrews back within the fold of a greater Israel. Paul’s unique mission has implications for today’s rabbinical Judaism which does not readily accept some Jewish sects that exist throughout the diaspora. Today, Paul’s conception of orthodox Judaism would significantly challenge modern rabbinical Judaism.

For instance, Paul’s conception of orthodox Judaism would certainly include the “Judaism” that exists within Ethiopian Christianity. In Ethiopia, for instance, prior to the 4th Century BC, probably one half of its population were religiously Jewish; but after Coptic Bishop Frumentius led the Ethiopian King Ezana’s conversion to the Christian faith in approximately 330 A.D., the kingdom of Ethiopia became proto-Messianic Jewish. That is to say, the Church of Ethiopia retained its Jewish customs and traditions, while implementing Christian liturgical practices. Similarly, the Lemba Jews of southern Africa, who are cousins to the Ethiopians, evolved into a Messianic Jewish community, retaining Jewish, Christian, and even Muslim beliefs and practices. Taken together, these communities from throughout the Jewish diaspora represent the heritage and legacy of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, which many theologians have interpreted to

be “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,”⁴⁷ the recovery of which is a Messianic hope.

Mainstream rabbinical Judaism – whether Ultra-orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Reformed, Reconstructionist, or Conservative – have a complicated relationship to these so-called Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Modern rabbinical Judaism will not recognize these so-called Ten Lost Tribes as “Jews,” unless they convert to rabbinical Judaism. Similarly, Messianic Jews will not recognize these so-called Ten Lost Tribes as “Messianic Jews,” unless they convert to the Christian faith. In the theology of the Apostle Paul, however, all these dispersed “biological Jews” is already one in Christ. Significantly, Paul would allow “biological Jews” to accept Christ while continuing to practice orthodox Judaism (i.e., Messianic Judaism).

Nevertheless, for the purpose of this series on the Apostle Paul, I shall categorize the Ten Lost Tribes as “biological Jews” having been disbursed throughout the diaspora – whether they have been accepted by mainstream rabbinical Jews or by present-day Messianic Jews. These “biological Jews” fit within the category of the so-called Ten Lost Tribes, including the Beta Israel from Ethiopia and the Lemba from southern Africa. Other groups that may also fit within this “Lost Tribes” category may also include the Bnei Menashe of India.

In the Apostle Paul’s understanding of the development of the Early Church, “biological Jews” could accept Christ as their Lord and Savior while remaining within mainstream, orthodox Judaism. This is perhaps why the Christian church should treat orthodox Jews as *potential* brothers in the Christian faith.

⁴⁷ Matthew 15:24.

Chapter Four: “The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel- *Spiritual Jews*”

The Apostle Paul’s radical conception of the “spiritual” Jew, as set forth in his *Epistle to the Romans*,⁴⁸ presents perhaps the greatest threat to mainline rabbinical or orthodox Judaism. According to Paul’s definition of “Jew” within his *Epistle to the Romans*, all Christian believers are really Jews – i.e., Jews in spirit who are the spiritual children of Abraham, father of the faith. To be sure, Paul’s radical, allegorical conception of “Jew” is one that the “biological” Jewish community – both the Messianic Jewish community and the orthodox, rabbinical Jewish community – has categorically rejected. In the Jewish worldview, there has to be clear biological or legal boundaries; and one of those clear boundaries is that a Christian, by definition, cannot also be a Jew.

Nevertheless, one may very credibly argue that the entire Christian religion is yet another form of Judaism; and that every Christian is really a “spiritual Jew” and a part of a “spiritual Israel.”⁴⁹ Indeed, when Jesus of Nazareth preached the Good News, it was exactly a message of the gathering together of the entire House of Israel (i.e., the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel) under one divine and kingly head – the “king of Israel.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Romans 2: 28-29 (Paul stating that a real Jew is any person who has been circumcised inwardly in the heart. This viewpoint is in keeping with Moses (Deuteronomy 30:6 and the Prophets (e.g., Jeremiah 31: 33).

⁴⁹ See, also, St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 658 (discussing “the true Israelites, the citizens of the country that is above” as consisting of non-Jews, such as the patriarch Job “of the Idumean race.”)

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Hosea 1: 10-11 (“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered.... Then shall the children of Judah and the

According to the Apostle Paul, the word “Jew” could rightfully apply to any person (i.e., whether Jew or Gentile) who accepts the divine authority of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Jewish Messiah, the King of the Jews, and the King of Israel. According to Paul’s definition of “Jew,” the appellation was spiritual rather than biological – i.e., all Jews were “spiritual Jews” and not Jews merely because they had been born Jewish. Remember: Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel” by an angel; and the name “Israel” means to wrestle with God. So the “spiritual Jew” may have more salience, even with a conservative reading of the law of Moses, than does the concept of the “biological Jew.” According to Paul, both biological Jews and Gentiles could very well qualify as “spiritual Jews” according to God’s promise to Abraham.⁵¹

For instance, when Paul once appealed to the Greeks at Athens, he deduced that “THE UNKNOWN GOD,” whom they “ignorantly worship[ped]” with superstition, was the same “God that made the world and all things... Lord of heaven and earth... [who] hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth... [who] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”⁵² Here, Paul references Jesus Christ where he says, “that man whom he hath ordained”; and he references both Jews and Gentiles where he says “all nations of men” to whom Christ shall judge “in righteousness.” For this passage of Scripture,

children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”.

⁵¹ See, e.g., Romans 2: 28-29 (Paul stating that a real Jew is any person who has been circumcised inwardly in the heart. This viewpoint is in keeping with Moses (Deuteronomy 30:6 and the Prophets (e.g., Jeremiah 31: 33). See, also, St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 658 (discussing “the true Israelites, the citizens of the country that is above” as consisting of non-Jews, such as the patriarch Job “of the Idumean race.”)

⁵² Acts 17: 22-31.

Paul obviously believed that among even the Greeks to whom he spoke were “spiritual Jews” who had been predestined, from the foundations of the world, to be engrafted into the spiritual seed of father Abraham.

Chapter Five: “Paul’s Cosmopolitan Training as a Pharisee”

The Christian religion owes a great debt to the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle Paul himself owes a great debt to his cosmopolitan Pharisee training and Greco-Roman education. In his great epistle to the Romans, Paul wrote that he was a “debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and the unwise.”⁵³ Indeed, it is unlikely that he could have achieved his tremendous success in evangelizing the Gentiles; in mediating the conflict between Jew and Gentile within the Early Church; and in reconciling the tensions between orthodox Jewish theology and the new tenets of the Christian faith.

For this reason, it is a very grave mistake for Christian intellectuals, theologians, pastors, and church leaders to have evaded the significance of Paul’s *ministerial preparation* as a Jewish Pharisee.

Paul’s Formula for Ministerial Success

Pharisee Training (Law of Moses) + Personal Revelation of Jesus Christ

Significantly, Paul himself admitted that he received no formal training from the other apostles. Paul described himself as “an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead).”⁵⁴ Paul wrote that he had received no additional teaching

⁵³ Romans 1: 14.

⁵⁴ Galatians 1:1.

or training “after man”⁵⁵ or “of man”;⁵⁶ and that he had even gone to “Jerusalem to which were apostles”⁵⁷ for input or advice. Quite simply, Paul said that his only training was “by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁸

Notably, however, Paul had already received life-long training and vocation as a Pharisee, before he received his revelation from Jesus Christ. Hence, if we compare Paul’s thirteen letters (the Gospel) to the four synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the Gospel) – we find Paul’s Gospel is qualitatively different! For instance, these four synoptic Gospels were written to document the life and sayings of Jesus the Christ. But Paul’s Gospel was written to demonstrate how Jesus was, in fact, the Torah (i.e., the Law of Moses) as well as the fulfillment of Torah (i.e., the new Law of Christ),⁵⁹ for the salvation of not just the Jews alone (i.e., the House of Judah) but also of the entire world (i.e., the House of Israel).

A similar comparison can be made to other parts of the New Testament. For instance, the Epistles of James (circa 45 A.D.); First Peter (circa 62 A.D.); Second Peter (circa 65 A.D.); and Jude (circa 65-80 A.D.) are excellent letters from one Messianic Jew to other Messianic Jews. The Epistles of First John (circa 85A.D.); Second John (circa 90 A.D.); Third John (circa 95 A.D.) are excellent letters from a Messianic Jew to a mixed Gentile and Jewish audience. Notably, none of the authors of these several epistles had been trained as Pharisees, as had the Apostle Paul. And only in the Apostle Paul’s thirteenth epistles do we find a detailed and sophisticated analysis of the Torah; the law of nature (e.g., as in the Greek and Roman conception of the logos and natural law); and the new “law of Christ.”

⁵⁵ Galatians 1: 11-12.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Galatians 1: 17.

⁵⁸ Galatians 1:11-12.

⁵⁹ Romans 13: 1-10.

Even Saint Peter made this admission about the depth and sophistication of Paul's many letters, stating:

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.⁶⁰

Indeed, especially in the Apostle Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, we see traces of his cosmopolitan, Pharisaic legal training that are reminiscent of great Jewish rabbis such as Hillel and Gamaliel the Elder.⁶¹

⁶⁰ 2 Peter 3: 15-16 (ESV).

⁶¹ See, e.g., "Jewish Christianity," Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Christianity ("The Gospels contain strong condemnations of the Pharisees, though there is a clear influence of **Hillel's interpretation of the Torah** in the Gospel sayings. However, certain laws followed the more stringent views of Shammai, such as regarding divorce. Belief in the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic age was a core **Pharisaic** doctrine.")

Chapter Six: “Paul used the Torah to explain Christ to Orthodox Jews”

We find Paul throughout the Book of Acts preaching “in the synagogues of the Jews.”⁶² On one occasion, at Antioch, following “the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue” invited Paul to speak if he had “any word of exhortation for the people.”⁶³ What follows is a clear indication that Paul believed that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was fully consistent with same meaning, themes, and principles set forth in the “law and the prophets.”⁶⁴ Paul explains that Jesus was David’s seed and heir; that although the Jews, through Pilate, had put Jesus to death, that God had raised Jesus from the dead.⁶⁵ This resurrection, explained Paul, was God’s fulfillment of his promise to the Jews; and hence Paul sought to bring “glad tidings, how that promise which was made unto the fathers” unto the Jews.⁶⁶

The Apostle Paul also debated with certain Jews both in their synagogues and in market places.⁶⁷ And, finally, towards the end of Paul’s ministry at Rome, he was taken and arrested by the Jews. After speaking in the Hebrew tongue, he was given a brief audience, in which he said:

⁶² Acts 13: 5; 13: 14-52; Acts 17: 17; and Acts 24:20.

⁶³ Acts 13: 15.

⁶⁴ Acts 13: 14-52.

⁶⁵ Acts 13: 30-33.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Acts 17: 17.

I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.⁶⁸

Paul then informed the Jewish officials of his Roman citizenship, a legal status which prohibited these Jewish official from flogging him without first being given a hearing.⁶⁹ Suddenly, after getting into a dispute with the high priest Ananias, Paul noticed that both Sadducees and Pharisees were amongst the crowd, to which he cried out:

I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.⁷⁰

This caused a stir, and great dissension, within the crowd. The Pharisees began to advocate in favor of Paul and requested that he be released. Nevertheless, a conspiracy to kill Paul fomented amongst several other Jews. To avoid this, the chief captain ordered that Paul be delivered safely to Governor Felix.⁷¹ For it was here, in his defense against charges of heresy, that Paul again defended the purity of his orthodox Judaism, stating:

Paul's Defense Before Governor Felix

¹⁰ Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

⁶⁸ Acts 22: 3.

⁶⁹ Acts 22: 25-30.

⁷⁰ Acts 23: 6.

⁷¹ Acts 23: 12-22.

¹¹ Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since **I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.**

¹² And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

¹³ Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

¹⁴ But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so **worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:**

¹⁵ And **have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow,** that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

¹⁶ And **herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men.**

¹⁷ Now **after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.**

¹⁸ Whereupon certain **Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple,** neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

¹⁹ Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

²⁰ Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

²¹ Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.⁷²

Paul thus defended himself, as well as his own orthodox Judaism, by claiming that his worship of the God of his fathers, that his belief in “the law and the prophets,” and that his hope in “a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” were fully aligned with the predominant

⁷² Acts 24: 10-21.

orthodox Judaism of his day.⁷³ Paul indicated that he had come to Jerusalem in order to practice orthodox Judaism, and “to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.”⁷⁴

And in his hearing before Governor Festus at Ceasarea, it is clear that the Apostle Paul considered himself to be an orthodox Jew and a Pharisee. And this is how Paul had addressed other Jews while in Synagogues and in the markets.

Significantly, just before Paul had been arrested at Jerusalem, one of his fellow Christian brothers said to him, “seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.”⁷⁵

But Paul assured these Jews that he had never taught the Jewish Christians to ever forsake Jewish law or custom. In keeping with his Pharisee training, Paul admonished the Jewish Christians to “walkest orderly, and [to] keepest the law [of Moses].”⁷⁶ Clarifying his position, Paul stated that a different rule applied to the Gentiles. “As touching the Gentiles which believe,” said Paul, “we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Acts 24: 14-15.

⁷⁴ Acts 24: 17.

⁷⁵ Acts 21: 20-21.

⁷⁶ Acts 21:24.

⁷⁷ Acts 21: 25 (referencing Acts 15:1- 21).

This is an important development in the history of the Christian Church, because here Paul could have completely rebelled against Jewish law and tradition and interposed a new Christian theology of complete freedom from the Mosaic law through faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, some Christian pastors and theologians give a false impression that Paul had rejected Judaism altogether. But, in truth, after Paul's conversion to the Christian faith, he remained both a Pharisee and a Jew — he was, in fact, a "Jewish Christian."⁷⁸

This last sticking point — i.e., *Paul's belief in the risen Lord Jesus* — was the nub of the problem.

Although there was nothing inconsistent with the practice of orthodox Judaism and the belief that Jesus was the Messiah who had fulfilled the law of Moses, many orthodox Jews, who lived in Jerusalem at that time, desired to kill Paul.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ See, e.g., "Jewish Christian," *Wikipedia*, stating:

Jewish Christians were the followers of a Jewish religious sect that emerged in Roman Judea during the late Second Temple period, under the Herodian tetrarchy (1st century AD). These Jews believed that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah and they continued their adherence to Jewish law.

Jewish Christianity is the historical foundation of Early Christianity, which later developed into Nicene Christianity (which comprises the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Protestant traditions) and other Christian denominations....

Jewish Christians were the original members of the Jewish movement that later became Christianity. In the earliest stage the community was made up of all those Jews who believed that Jesus was the Jewish messiah. As Christianity grew and developed, Jewish Christians became only one strand of the early Christian community, characterised by combining the confession of Jesus as Christ with continued observance of the Torah and adherence to Jewish traditions such as Sabbath observance, Jewish calendar, Jewish laws and customs, circumcision, kosher diet and synagogue attendance, and by a direct genetic relationship to the earliest followers of Jesus.

⁷⁹ Acts 23: 12-22 ("A Conspiracy to Kill Paul").

At the conclusion of Paul's hearing before Governor Felix, there appears to be some resolution that Paul be released. This appears to have been made after Paul was afforded that opportunity to explain his new Christian faith to both Governor Felix and his wife Drusilla. Nevertheless, for political reasons and to appease certain Jews who wanted to kill Paul, Governor Felix left Paul bound in prison.

Certain Jews kept clamoring for Paul to be returned to Jerusalem where he would be heard and tried at the Sanhedrin.

But Paul, understanding that his return to Jerusalem would mean certain doom (i.e., execution), availed himself of his Roman citizenship and appealed to Caesar through the Roman legal system.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Acts 25: 1- 12. After Paul made this appeal to Ceasar, he was subsequently brought before King Agrippa who desired to be entertained by this famous prisoner named Paul. It is speculated that King Agrippa might have released Paul, had the latter not appealed to Caesar; but this is doubtful given the politically charged nature of Paul's prosecution.

Chapter Seven: “Orthodox Jews Continue to Reject Paul’s Interpretation of Torah”

To this very day, the orthodox Jewish community rejects the Apostle Paul’s version of “Messianic Judaism.”⁸¹ These orthodox Jews never embraced Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of “law and the prophets.” In fact, these orthodox Jews still consider this belief in Jesus as Messiah to be heresy and, to some extent, an *existential threat* to Judaism and the Jewish people.

In my effort to understand why many orthodox Jews consider the Christian religion to be an existential threat to Judaism and the Jewish people (as well as to understand antisemitism and the plight of European Jews since the Holocaust), I have read Sarah Hurwitz’s *As A Jew: Reclaiming Our Story from Those Who Blame, Shame, and Try to Erase Us* (2025); Josh Hammer’s *Israel and Civilization: The Fate of the Jewish Nation and the Destiny of the West* (2025); Noah Feldman’s *To Be A Jew Today: A New Guid to God, Israel, and the Jewish People* (2024); Alan Dershowitz’s *Abraham: The World’s First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer* (2015); and Jerold S. Auerbach’s *Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey From Torah to Constitution* (2010). And, most significantly, in my effort to understand the formation of Judaism since Malachi the prophet up to the time of the birth of Christ, I have also read a compilation of the Apocrypha (Authorized (King James) Version, to wit: 1 Esdras; II Esdras; Tobit; Judith; Esther (Additional Chapters); Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus; Baruch; The Song of the Three Holy Children; The History of Susanna; The History of the Destruction of Bel and the Dragon; The Prayer of Manasses Kin of Juda; First Book of the Maccabees; and Second Book of the Maccabees. And in addition to these wonderful writings, I have

⁸¹ See Acts 21: 17-26 (Paul encouraged Jewish Christians to continue to keep the law of Moses and Jewish customs, while acknowledging a more relaxed standard for the Gentiles).

frequently consulted *Josephus: The Complete Works* (1998 by Thomas Nelson Pub.); *The Works of Philo* (1993); and H. Polano's *The Talmud: Selections* (2003).

Interestingly, in the back of my text on the Apocrypha, I have scribbled the following notes:

Egyptian * Greek * Roman * Jew

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Jesus Christ

Alexandria: Egypt (Church)

Jerusalem (Church)

Antioch (Church)

Constantinople (Church)

Rome (Church)

Roman Catholic Church – Eastern Orthodox Church

Puritanism- Protestant Church (“Priesthood of All Believers”)

*** Philo (Hellenized Jew)**

*** Paul (Hellenized Jew)**

Here is the problem, and it is deeply-rooted in the history of the Jewish nation since at least the reign of Alexander the Great in 322 B.C. The Jews have been in some form of an existential struggle to preserve their own integrity and identity ever since the commencement of these Greco-Roman incursions into ancient Judea.

The Jews' main problem with the Samaritans within the northern kingdom of Israel had to do with their loss of the authentic, orthodox

Jewish faith that had been passed down from Moses to the elders. The Jews' struggles against Hellenized Jews who desired to capitulate to Greece and Rome had to do with their willingness to trade authentic, orthodox Jewish faith for political favors and material gain. Similarly, the Jews' considered the Apostle Paul's introduction of Jesus as the new Jewish Messiah of their religion to be yet another form of Hellenized incursion into the authentic, orthodox Jewish faith.

Here, then, is the rub for Jews throughout history: how should Jews preserve their rich cultural heritage and resist being completely absorbed into Gentile history (and thus obliterated)?

Chapter Eight: “Paul Invited Orthodox Jews to Become ‘Messianic Jews’”

As a Pharisee who fully understood the psychology of orthodox Judaism, the Apostle Paul repeatedly invited orthodox Jews to believe in Jesus as their promised Messiah while retaining their orthodox Judaism – i.e., to become “Messianic Jews.”

However, for most of the two-thousand-year history since the decimation of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., Paul’s invitation to “Messianic Judaism” was largely extinguished amongst the Jews in Europe, where Christendom spread; because the new Christian faith that emerged was largely uninterested in the plight and welfare of orthodox Jews, and because orthodox Jews were uninterested in learning more about Jesus Christ as their potential Jewish messiah.

So long as Jewish Christians continued to meet in synagogues and to identify as Jewish, the rise of “Messianic Judaism” among the Jews remained possible. No doubt, such a “Messianic” movement among the Jews would have likely functioned as a safety valve in Europe, or as a buffer, or as an ambassador between the Christian church and the Jewish synagogue. But during the second century, following the failed rebellion of Bar Kochba in circa 135 A.D., the Jewish Christians left the synagogues en masse.⁸² And during later centuries, Christians themselves began to urge

⁸² See, e.g., “Jewish Christian,” *Wikipedia*, stating:

While previous scholarship viewed the First Jewish–Roman War and the destruction of the Second Temple (70 AD) as the main events, more recent scholarship tends to argue that the Bar Kochba revolt (132–136 AD) was the main factor in the separation of Christianity from Judaism. The split was a long-term process, in which the boundaries were not clear-cut.

Jewish Christians to stop incorporating Jewish laws and customs into the practice of their Christian faith.⁸³ Here is where antisemitism likely began.

The Apostle Paul himself lived and operated ministerially and productively in both the orthodox Jewish and the Gentile worlds. While doing so, and in keeping with his strict Pharisee training, Paul upheld Jewish law and custom, and made sure that, while preaching to the Jews or in the synagogues, that he did not violate those laws and customs — including even the law on circumcision. This point is plainly exemplified in the fact that Paul had his junior minister Timothy to be “circumcised” in order that he could legitimately minister in the synagogues before the Jews.⁸⁴

But the Apostle Paul’s clear embrace of Messianic Judaism is not fully developed or explained in his thirteen epistles, because Paul’s ministry was to “the uncircumcised” and “the heathen” and “the Gentiles.”⁸⁵ The Jewish apostles at Jerusalem expressly adopted and approved of Paul’s specialized mission, and extend their “right hands of fellowship.”⁸⁶

⁸³ See, e.g., “Jewish Christian,” *Wikipedia*, stating:

There was a post-Nicene “double rejection” of the Jewish Christians by adherents of gentile Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. It is believed that no direct confrontation occurred between the adherents of gentile Christianity and the adherents of Judaic Christianity. However, by this time, the practice of Judeo-Christianity was diluted by internal schisms and external pressures. Gentile Christianity remained the sole strand of orthodoxy and it imposed itself on the previously Jewish Christian sanctuaries, taking full control of those houses of worship by the end of the 5th century....

⁸⁴ Acts 16: 1-3. (Timothy’s mother was a Jew and his father was Greek. Since this fact was widely known among the Jews at Lystra and Iconium, Paul required that Timothy be circumcised “because of the Jews.”)

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

According to Paul's letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Peter was appointed to establish, organize, and lead this "Messianic Jewish" church, whereas the Apostle Paul was appointed to establish, organize, and lead the "Church of the Gentiles."⁸⁷

Hence, from the very beginning the Early Church was bi-furcated between Jew and Gentile – a *Church of the Jews* and a *Church of the Gentiles*.⁸⁸

Unfortunately for Messianic Jews, the Apostle Paul's letters, which are predominant within the New Testament, overshadow the "Church of the Jews," or what we might call "Messianic Judaism," because the Apostle Paul's chief mission was not to ensure that the orthodox Jews who converted to the Christian faith do so while maintaining their orthodox Jewish customs, laws, and traditions. Instead, as previously mentioned, Paul's mission was to convert and establish the churches of the Gentiles.

Without question, however, the Apostle Paul himself was a Messianic Jew. He stood firm in his orthodox Jewish beliefs and practices, while embracing a "reformed" and "Christocentric" conception of the Torah. Hence, to the orthodox Jews to whom Paul preached, he invited to follow suit, to retain their orthodox Judaism while acknowledging Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah who is referenced in "the law and the prophets."

⁸⁷ Galatians 2:8-9.

⁸⁸ The "Church of the Jews" might very well use continue to use the traditional name "Synagogue of the Messianic Jews."

Chapter Nine: “St. Augustine acknowledged Messianic Jews as ‘Sons of Judah’”

I have frequently pointed out in my Whitefield Seminary papers that Augustine of Hippo was the “most seminal Christian thinker after Saint Paul, of whom he would be an influential interpreter.”⁸⁹ As such, I have in this chapter briefly analyzed Augustine’s assessment of Paul’s views of the two broad categories of proselytes within the Early Church: namely, (a) the Messianic Jews and (b) the Gentile Christians.

According to Augustine, there are “two walls of partition” between the Jew (sons of Judah) and the Gentile (sons of Israel). To that point, while commenting on the prophecy of Hosea, Augustine writes:

The prophet Hosea speaks so very profoundly that it is laborious work to penetrate his meaning. But, according to promise, we must insert something from his book. He says, ‘And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, **Ye are not my people, there they shall be called the sons of the living God.**’ Even the apostles understood this as a prophetic testimony of **the calling of nations who did not formerly belong to God**; and because this same **people of the Gentiles is itself spiritually among the children of Abraham**, and for that reason is **rightly called Israel**, therefore he goes on to say, ‘And **the children of Judah and the children of Israel** shall be gathered together in one, and **shall appoint themselves one headship**, and shall ascend from the earth.’

⁸⁹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions* (New York, N.Y.: Barnes & Nobles Pub., 2007), preface, “Augustine.”

We should but weaken the savour of this prophetic oracle if we set ourselves to expound it. Let the reader but call to mind **the corner stone** and those two walls of partition, the **one of the Jews**, the **other of the Gentiles**, and he will recognize them , the one under the term **sons of Judah**, the other as **sons of Israel**, supporting themselves by one and the same headship, and ascending from the earth.⁹⁰

I believe that Augustine's description of this situation between Jews and Christians is a clarification of Paul's own understanding. Both Paul's and Augustine's theologies contend that the "sons of Judah" who believe in Christ Jesus (i.e., the "Messianic Jews") form a unique and distinct class within the New Covenant; whereas the "sons of Israel" (i.e., the Gentiles) form another district class.⁹¹

Accordingly, I shall, throughout this series on the Apostle Paul, deem Messianic Jews and Messianic Judaism to constitute the "House of Judah" within a *prophetic sense*.⁹²

⁹⁰ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 634.

⁹¹ The general theme or thesis of this series on the Apostle Paul is a general critique of ecclesiology within Christendom. Throughout 2000+ years of church history, there have been numerous cases where Gentiles have desired to structure their churches in a manner that was more "Jewish" than "Gentile." The Protestant Reformation appears to be only one example of tension and struggle. Gentiles who have sought to establish more "Jewish" structures have tended to be classified as "reformers" or as "separatists" within the established Gentile Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches. These reformers or separatists include the Calvinists in Geneva, the Baptists in England, and the Puritan-Congregationalists of colonial New England. But today, there is a "Hebrew-roots" movement within Protestantism that is continuing the tension or struggle in modern times.

⁹² See, e.g., Hosea 1: 10-11 ("Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered.... Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.").

But it is important that the Reader of my writings do not misinterpret my intentions. I do not here intend to demonize, or to discriminate against, those orthodox Jews who have not embraced Christ as the promised Messiah. I do not discriminate against these orthodox Jews, because I am compelled not to by the very words of Christ himself, who says, “[l]et both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest....”⁹³

In other words, the House of Judah (which is orthodox Judaism) contains within it both “wheat and tares,” from which only God’s anointed Christ ultimately will distinguish and separate at the Last Judgment.⁹⁴

Here I would be remiss if I did not point out the great Jewish field from which Christ has sent his laborers to labor, from which has come a great harvest from the “House of Judah,” to wit:

a). *Philo of Alexandria* (c. 20 BC to 50 AD) was a Hellenistic Jewish theologian who lived in Alexandria, Egypt. As a contemporary of Christ and the Jewish apostles, Philo deduced many of the same principles from the Torah as did the Apostle Paul. But, remarkably, Philo deduced those principles without having made contact – so far as the historical record reveals – with the risen Lord Jesus or with any of the other apostles. “Philo’s immediate influence seems to have been greatest upon Christian interpreters, such as Origen [of Alexandria] and Clement of Alexandria.”⁹⁵ “Indeed, he was appropriated so completely by some Christians that he was retrospectively regarded as a Christian.”⁹⁶

b). *Hillel the Elder* (c. 110 BC – c. 10 AD) was President (Nasi) of the Sanhedrin and leader of the Pharisees during the time of Herod the

⁹³ Matthew 13: 30 (“The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares”).

⁹⁴ Matthew 7: 1-2; Matthew 13:30; Romans 2: 11-16; Revelation 20: 11- 15.

⁹⁵ *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), p. 1847.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1846.

Great.⁹⁷ He is known for his proverbial maxim: “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow; this is the entire Torah, all the rest is an elaboration. Now go and learn it.”⁹⁸ I have mentioned Hillel here because his life-span both pre-dates and overlaps with the birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth. And so, we may consider Hillel’s Jewish theology or philosophy to be fairly representative of Pharisaic Judaism during the time of Christ. Secondly, Hillel’s summary of the Torah is eerily similar⁹⁹ to that of Jesus of Nazareth’s¹⁰⁰ and the Apostle Paul’s.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ H. Polano, *The Talmud: Selections* (San Diego, CA: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 2003), pp. 228-231.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Darryl L. Tippens, “‘Love Calls Us to the Things of This World’: The Pauline Tradition and ‘The Law of Christ,’” *Agape, Justice, and Law: How Might Christian Love Shape Law?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2017), p. 38, stating:

According to Rabbi Hillel, love of neighbor is the essence of the Torah, ‘The rest is commentary. Now go study the commentary.’ Christianity builds on the venerable Jewish tradition of law, love, and the just treatment of others. In the Gospels, Jesus emphasizes the centrality of love and its connection to law when he declares love of neighbor one of the two greatest commandments. Indeed, ‘the entire law’ and the prophets hang upon love of God and neighbor (Matt. 22: 37-40).

⁹⁹ See, e.g., “Jewish Christianity,” *Wikipedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Christianity (“The Gospels contain strong condemnations of the Pharisees, though there is a clear influence of **Hillel's interpretation of the Torah** in the Gospel sayings. However, certain laws followed the more stringent views of Shammai, such as regarding divorce. Belief in the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic age was a core **Pharisaic** doctrine.”)

¹⁰⁰ **Matthew 7:12** (“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the **law** and the prophets.”); and **Romans 13:10** (“Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the **law**.”) This overlap between Hillel’s understanding of Torah and that of Christ and Paul exemplifies why there is a “Judea-Christian” ethos. See, e.g., Darryl L. Tippens’ “‘Love Calls Us to the Things of This World’: The Pauline Tradition and ‘The Law of Christ,’” in Robert F. Cochran, Jr. and Zachary R. Calo, *Agape, Justice, and Law: How Might Christian Love Shape Law?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. P., 2017), pp. 38 -54.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

c). *Gamaliel the Elder* (died c. 52 A.D), who was the grandson of Hillel, also became Nasi of the Sanhedrin. “In the Christian tradition, Gamaliel is recognized as a Pharisaic doctor of Jewish Law. Gamaliel was named as a member of the Sanhedrin in the fifth chapter of Acts and the teacher of Paul the Apostle in Acts 22:3. Gamaliel encouraged his fellow Pharisees to show leniency to the apostles of Jesus in Acts 5:34.”¹⁰² “According to Christian tradition, Gamaliel embraced Christianity and was baptized by St. Peter and St. John.”¹⁰³

d). *Saul of Tarsus* (“Apostle Paul”), who studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), was also a Pharisee (Acts 23: 6, “I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee....”). Saul converted to the Christian faith and became a most influential proponent of the new Christian religion.

e) *Nicodemus*, a Jewish ruler and a Pharisee (John 3:1). Nicodemus secretly sought Christ’s counsel, referring to Christ as “Rabbi.” (John 3:2). After the crucifixion, Nicodemus “brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight” to the dead body of Jesus upon his burial.

f). *Joseph of Arimathea*, a member of the Sanhedrin and (according to tradition) a Pharisee.¹⁰⁴ Joseph was at Christ’s trial, but he *did not consent* with the other members of the Sanhedrin who voted to execute Christ.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² “Gamaliel,” Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamaliel>.

¹⁰³ “Gamaliel,” Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gamaliel-I>

¹⁰⁴ “Passion Week Day 2: Joseph of Arimathea” <https://khcb.org/uplifted-living/joseph-of-arimathea/>; and see, “History of the Holy Disciple Joseph of Arimathea” <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/history-of-that-holy-disciple-joseph-of-arimathea.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Luke 23:50-51.

g). *Unnamed Pharisees* who converted to the Christian faith. The New Testament explicitly states that some Pharisees believed that Christ was the Messiah and joined the Early Church at Jerusalem. These Pharisees was certainly “Messianic Jews” who advocated that Gentile converts be “circumcised” and required to follow Jewish laws, customs, and traditions.¹⁰⁶ Although many Pharisees did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ, an untold number of other Pharisees did believe and converted to the Christian faith – albeit and likely as Messianic Jews.

The proverbial “House of Judah” – which is the Jewish religion – is within the New Testament Covenant, but only Christ himself (rather than Gentile Christians rendering antisemitic judgments) still holds the keys as to whether individual Jews, while following the Torah and other Jewish laws and customs, shall enter into the kingdom of salvation.

Theologically, orthodox Judaism is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, because all the sacrifices, holy days, customs, and laws within Judaism points towards Christ.¹⁰⁷

But this begs the question: what should be the general approach and treatment of Gentile churches towards this “House of Judah” (i.e., orthodox Judaism and Jews)?¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Acts 15: 1-5.

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 238 (“This same nation, too, was afterwards dispersed through the nations, in order to testify to the scriptures in which eternal salvation in Christ had been declared.... [T]he rites, priesthood, tabernacle or temple, altars, sacrifices, ceremonies, and whatever else belongs to that service which is due to God... all these signified and fore-announced those things which we who believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life believe to have been fulfilled, or behold in process of fulfillment, or confidently believe shall yet be fulfilled.”)

¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the relationship between Jews and Christians was prophesied in Genesis, where the father Isaac mistakenly blessed the younger son Jacob (Israel) instead of his older son Esau. See, e.g., Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 559-560 (Augustine writes that the patriarch Isaac prefigured the “law and the prophets”; the older son Esau prefigured Judaism (or the House of Judah); and the younger son Jacob prefigured Christianity (or the House of Israel). Esau lost his

Culturally and politically, Christians are far more numerous than Jews; and Christians have held a sort of superior position in their relations with the Jews.¹⁰⁹ This arrangement is not man-made but appears to be prophetic in nature.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Jews (or the “House of Judah”) represent a royal people (or a royal house) whose rich history and tradition overlap with the Christian faith. Hence, I believe, as Pope Francis has said, that the Jews are “[o]ur older brothers and sisters.”¹¹¹

To be clear, Judaism (or the “House of Judah”) ought to receive “human rights” protection from Christian nations and the Christian faithful, but not because of the platitude that “to bless Israel is to be blessed,” but rather because *Judaism is the source from which Christ himself shall continue grow his kingdom*. In other words, within Judaism, there are individual Jews who are still being called into Christ’s kingdom. Such individual Jews are foreordained to Christ’s salvation (just as any other Gentile whom we customarily refer to as being the “elect”). These individual Jews will thus be saved, whether (1) as Messianic Jews who openly believe in Christ but continue to practice orthodox Judaism; (2) as professed Christians who join the Gentile churches; or (3) as “righteous Jews” or as “anonymous Christians,” who only secretly belief in Christ or who Christ himself shall judge and deem worthy of salvation.¹¹² Hence, in

birthright owing to his “immoderate greed.” The blessing was transferred to the younger brother Jacob. Spiritually speaking, according to Augustine, the “carnal Jew” (i.e., Esau) lost his birthright to the “spiritual Jew” (i.e., Jacob). This is why the elder brother was condemned to serve the younger brother. “[Christ] is the Lord of His brethren,” writes Augustine, “because His people rules over the Jews.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. See, also, Josh Hammer, *Israel and Civilization: The Fate of the Jewish Nation and the Destiny of the West* (New York, N.Y.: Radius Book Groups, 2025).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Pope Francis, *Hope: The Autobiography* (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 2025), p. 211.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 657 (Augustine points out that “very many of [the Jews], considering this, even before His passion, but chiefly after His resurrection, believed on Him, of whom it was

this regards, Gentile Christians thus do not have judicial authority to adjudge orthodox Jews.

Indeed, according to Augustinian eschatology, the ultimate turning of the hearts of orthodox Jews to Christ is *sin quo non*. For, as Augustine has observed in *The City of God*, “in the last days before the judgment **the Jews shall believe in the true Christ**, that is, our Christ, by means of this great and admirable prophet Elias who shall expound the law to them.... [T]he Jews also, who had previously hated, should then love the Son who is our Christ.”¹¹³ “That the last judgment, then,” wrote Augustine, “shall be administered by Jesus Christ in the manner predicted in the sacred writings is denied or doubted by no one.... And at or in connection with that judgment the following events shall come to pass, as we have learned: Elias the Tishbite shall come; **the Jews shall believe**; Antichrist shall persecute; Christ shall judge; the dead shall rise; the good and the wicked shall be separated; the world shall be burned and renewed.”¹¹⁴

Therefore, as we consider the ministerial career of the Apostle Paul, we may easily deduce that the Jewish synagogue may be seen as a “type of Christian church” from which Christ himself is continuously drawing out his lost sheep from within the “House of Judah.” Christ does this without “forced” conversions to membership within any specific or particular Christian church or denomination. The Apostle Paul’s approach to his Jewish brethren suggests that he believed that the orthodox Jew should be respected as a “proto-Christian” brother; and that the orthodox Jewish synagogue should be considered to be a “proto-Christian” church. Today, I

predicted, ‘Thou the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant [i.e., the Jews who believe in Christ] shall be saved.’”)

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 757 – 758.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 762.

find no reason why Christians should not adopt Paul's same approach to orthodox Judaism.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ My impression is that much interfaith dialogue between Jewish and Christian clergy and lay leaders will be needed for this to materialize. See, also, Pope Francis, *Hope: The Autobiography* (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 2025), pp. 210- 211 ("The dialogue between Jews and Christians has to be more than interreligious, for it is a family dialogue.").

Chapter Ten: “Pharisees Became Christians. Can Gentiles become Pharisees?”

Finally, I come to what is perhaps the real reason that I am, as an American lawyer, really interested in the Apostle Paul’s status as a Pharisee. As a Christian lawyer, I am attracted to the Pharisees and to their influence upon Paul’s understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. If a credible claim that Paul benefited from his Pharisaic knowledge and training, or that his ministry could not have had the influence that it did without this Pharisaic knowledge and training, then should Christian churches model their seminaries and ministerial training after the legal training which Paul and the Pharisees received?¹¹⁶

The Apostle Paul – as a Jew and a Pharisee – extrapolated from orthodox Judaism (i.e., “law of Moses”) a theology and a jurisprudence which he also called the “law of Christ.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, the “law and the prophets” was Paul’s primary source for this “law of Christ.” He reminded his Gentile audience that “[a]ll scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

¹¹⁶ Acts 22: 3 (Paul said “I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers....”)

¹¹⁷ For example, as I have explained elsewhere, the Jewish Pharisee and sage Hillel held a definition of the Torah that is eerily similar to Jesus saying in Matthew 5:17 and 7:12 (i.e., the “law of Christ”). That said, the “law of Christ” has become the cornerstone of western civilization, law, and jurisprudence. See, e.g., Roscoe Pound, “Legal Profession in the Middle Ages,” 3 *Notre Dame Law Review* 229 (1944); John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Robert F. Cochran, Jr. and Zachary R. Calo, *Agape, Justice, and Law: How Might Christian Love Shape Law?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”¹¹⁸

According to the Apostle Paul’s letters, the Old Testament is still an authoritative source for the “law of Christ.” And where Paul says “law,” he, of course, means the “Law of Moses.”¹¹⁹ Hence, the words “all Scripture” refers to the Old Testament books (i.e., the Pentateuch (Law of Moses); the Nevim (Prophets); and the Ketuvim (Writings), because when the Second Letter to Timothy was written (c. 66-67 A.D.), the New Testament canon had not yet been assembled and organized into a canon of Scripture.¹²⁰ See, e.g., Table 3, below.

Table 3. “Chronological Order of New Testament Books”

<u>Chronological Order of New Testament Books</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• James (45-48 AD)• Galatians (48-50 AD) – written by Paul• 1 Thessalonians (51-52 AD) – written by Paul• 2 Thessalonians (51-52 AD) – written by Paul• Mark (50-65 AD)• 1 Corinthians (55-56 AD) – written by Paul• 2 Corinthians (55-56 AD) – written by Paul• Romans (57-58 AD) – written by Paul• Luke (60-62 AD)

¹¹⁸ 2 Timothy 3: 16-17.

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., David A. Hagner, “The Law in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians” (May 15, 2007) <https://www.modernreformation.org/resources/articles/the-law-in-pauls-letter-to-the-galatians>

¹²⁰ The modern 27-book New Testament canon was established in the late 4th century, primarily due to a list provided by Athanasius of Alexandria in 367 AD, and subsequently confirmed by church councils. The Synod of Hippo in 393 AD and the Councils of Carthage in 397 and 419 AD formally adopted this list as the authoritative New Testament canon. See, e.g., “The Development of the New Testament Canon,” Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_New_Testament_canon

- **Acts** (62-64 AD)- describes the life and ministry of Paul
- **Philippians** (61-63 AD) – written by Paul
- **Colossians** (61-63 AD) – written by Paul
- **Philemon** (61-63 AD) – written by Paul
- **Ephesians** (61-63 AD) – written by Paul
- **Matthew** (65-85 AD)
- **1 Timothy** (62-64 AD) – written by Paul
- **Titus** (62-64 AD) – written by Paul
- **2 Timothy** (66-67 AD) – written by Paul
- **Hebrews** (64-70 AD)
- **1 Peter** (64-67 AD)
- **Jude** (60-80 AD)
- **2 Peter** (65-68 AD)

******* The Romans Destroyed the Second Temple in 70 AD *******

- **John** (80-100 AD)
- **1 John** (90-110 AD)
- **2 John** (90-110 AD)
- **3 John** (90-110 AD)
- **Revelation** (95-96 AD)

As Table 3 demonstrates, when most of the Gospels and other apostolic letters were written, the Second Temple [and the “old Jewish religious system and priesthood”] had not yet been destroyed. It is believed that the Apostles Peter and Paul were both executed in Rome in 64 or 65 A.D. These two stalwart apostles were called home before the old Jewish regime in the Second Temple would come to its *prophetic* end.¹²¹

¹²¹ See, e.g., Daniel 9:26 (“After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and **the sanctuary**. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.”)

What was Paul's conception of the Law as it pertained to his fellow Jews? As previously mentioned, Paul himself was a Jew and a Pharisee. And he remained an orthodox Jew even after he accepted Jesus as his risen Lord. Paul kept the Jewish feast days and continued to visit the Temple and the synagogues. When questioned about whether his fellow Jews who had accepted Christ as their savior should no longer circumcise their children or keep the law of Moses, Paul admonished them to "walkest orderly, and keepest the law."¹²²

Simultaneously, Paul maintained a slightly different perspective on the Gentiles. As previously mentioned, Paul fulfilled the role of "the apostle to the Gentiles."¹²³ This assignment has been explicitly acknowledged by Peter and the other apostles. Therefore, Paul's commission to the Gentiles was ordained by the Early Church. Paul had been at the Council of Jerusalem, where the question on the circumcision of the Gentiles was discussed. That Council debated and deliberated on this question before reaching its announcement that the Gentiles need not be circumcised in order to become members of the church, to wit:

We trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God. But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from thins strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hat in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Acts 21:20-26.

¹²⁴ Acts 20-21.

Here we may deduce that, although the Early Church decided that the Gentiles need not be circumcised, they did require that Gentiles to attend the weekly Sabbath meetings where the law of Moses was read and taught.

But the Apostle Paul took this requirement a step further. Paul informed the Gentiles that they must live up the standards of the law of Moses. Paul did not insist that the Gentiles put the yoke of this law around their necks, as many of the Pharisees had put upon the poorer classes of Jews. However, Paul thus admonished the Gentiles to live righteous and holy lives, as reflected in the moral laws and standards within the Old Testament. “Do we then make void the law through faith?” asked Paul, “God forbid: yea, *we establish the law.*”¹²⁵ Thus, according to Paul, newly-converted Gentiles who have been justified “through faith” in Christ Jesus, must afterwards endeavor to “establish the law.”¹²⁶ In summation, Paul clearly admonishes the uncircumcised Gentiles to live up to the holiness or righteousness standards that are set forth in the Law of Moses.¹²⁷

Without question, Paul’s judgment on these complex matters was likely greatly informed by his own *expert legal knowledge* of the Old Testament Law – and that *expert legal knowledge* was derived from his training as a Pharisee.

¹²⁵ Romans 3: 31. Note: the English Standard Version (ESV) states: “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.”

¹²⁶ Romans 3: 31.

¹²⁷ Writing on the meaning of this Scripture, Augustine of Hippo also held that only the “Holy Spirit” could enable the Christian faithful to “establish the law” – i.e., to live holy and righteous lives. In other words, Augustine of Hippo, who was a foremost interpreter of the Apostle Paul, did not believe that Christ’s redemption and **the pouring out of the Holy Spirit** annulled the moral standards of the Law of Moses but rather these simply enabled the Christian faithful to fulfill the Law of Moses. See, generally, St. Augustine, “On the Spirit and the Letter,” <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1502.htm> (“For that teaching which brings to us the command to live in chastity and righteousness is the letter that kills, unless accompanied with the spirit that gives life.”)

But this only begs the question: Who were the Pharisees?

The Jewish historian Josephus described the Pharisees as “the sect.. which are supposed to excel others in the accurate knowledge of the laws of their country”;¹²⁸ “the profession of the Pharisees” was “to be righteous... and to do all things whereby [they] might please God”;¹²⁹ the Pharisees “have so great a power over the multitude, that when they say anything against the king or against the high priest, they are presently believed.”¹³⁰ But Josephus also said that the Pharisees could, through “cunning” and “mischief,”¹³¹ hold “the authority” of regents, lords, and monarchs.¹³²

This description of the Pharisees of ancient Palestine is eerily similar to Alexis de Tocqueville’s description of the powerful, aristocratic class of lawyers in the early 19th-century United States. Since ancient times, the Jewish rabbis had been law men.¹³³ “[T]he rule of Torah, the law of divine

¹²⁸ “The Life of Flavius Josephus,” *Josephus: The Complete Works* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1998) p. 14.

¹²⁹ “The Antiquities of the Jews,” *Josephus: The Complete Works*, supra, p. 426.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 544.

¹³² Ibid., pp. 436, 544.

¹³³ Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers*, supra, pp. 37-53 (describing the Rule of Sacred Law), to wit:

[T]he historically decisive understanding... came only after the Roman destruction of the Second Temple. In ‘those days’ of national devastation, which again culminated in the loss of independence and exile, the very rule of sacred law was in doubt. In a momentous assertion of legal authority, rabbis – superseding priests, prophets, judges, and kings – became the law men of Judaism, the judges ‘that shall be in those days’....

The rabbis who gathered at Yavneh confronted the momentous task of reconstituting Jewish life without either a sovereign Jewish government or the Temple to sustain it. The loss of both, by 70 C.E., left an enormous void. As long

revelation contained in the five books of Moses and shaped by two millennia of rabbinical interpretation, not only defined the Jewish people but also, as their 'tree of life,' sustained them."¹³⁴ "[O]nce the Israelites reached their promised land, they bore responsibility for interpreting the word of God. The Torah itself offered certain guidelines: it called for judges to hold court in city gates (conspicuous places of public commerce and assembly); it instructed them to perform their task 'with righteous judgment'; and it provided for difficult issues to be referred to the priests and 'to the judge that shall be in those days....'"¹³⁵ "Judaism was to be forever defined by the book of the law, the Torah."¹³⁶ "As the supreme law of divine revelation, the Torah had become the foundation of Jewish national and religious life."¹³⁷ Jewish [r]enewal took the form of synagogue worship, prayer, and instruction in Torah."¹³⁸ "The written law was now 'the decisive factor in the way the community understood itself and ordered its life.' No less significantly, as the innovative exegetical role of Ezra and the priests suggests, divine revelation had become inseparable from the human interpretation of divine law."¹³⁹

as the Temple had stood, it served as the focal institution for religious and political life. Not only were the priests cultic officials; they were also political leaders and judicial authorities. The destruction of the Temple undermined the political base of the priesthood, enabling the Pharisaic party of rabbis to ascend to dominance. The Great Revolt against Rome had weakened, if not destroyed, their competitors.... Only the Pharisees, the rabbis who were prepared to make their peace with Rome to preserve the authority of the Torah, survived to devise the appropriate terms of legal authority amid the loss of national sovereignty.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 36.

At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had been amongst the foremost legal interpreters of the Old Testament Law, as well as amongst the foremost civil servants, administrators, and members of the Sanhedrin and rulers of the synagogues. Jesus fully understood that the Pharisees took seriously the law of Moses and they had endeavored to make it practical and relevant to daily lives of the average Jew. Perhaps for this reason, Jesus did display a measured level of respect towards the Pharisees:

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.¹⁴⁰

It is therefore debatable as to whether Jesus himself generally disapproved of the Pharisees and Pharisaic teachings. This passage certainly suggests that Jesus had no qualms with how the Pharisees devoted themselves to, studied, and taught the Law of Moses, in general. Jesus himself expressed no misgivings towards their authoritative status, stating that the Pharisees “sit in Moses’ seat.” Jesus did not object to the Pharisees’ sitting in Moses seat. He never claimed that they had usurped authority from the priests, himself, or from any other person or group. *In fact, Jesus admonished his disciples, and the multitudes to observe and do that which the Pharisees had taught them to observe and do.* Here, we may rightfully deduce that Jesus himself ratified, at least theoretically, the organization and office of the Pharisees within the general constitutional framework of ancient Judea.¹⁴¹

There is no wonder that Jesus of Nazareth had to contend with, and to confront, the Pharisees at every turn. The Pharisees compelled Jesus to

¹⁴⁰ Matthew 23: 1-3.

¹⁴¹ And, more significantly, we might legitimately explore whether present-day Christians or Messianic Jews, such as myself, may legitimately read and study the Mishna and Talmud, alongside the Apocrypha for their wisdom, historical importance, and ethical guidance.

argue with them, and to expound upon a more correct interpretation of the law of Moses. Indeed, in Jesus' first sermon (i.e., the Sermon on the Mount), he forewarned: "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹⁴² Given the immense political power of the Pharisees, Jesus placed himself in harm's way and was destined for ultimate confrontation with the Jewish power structure.

Without question, when Jesus sought to reform Judaism, he also sought to reform the Pharisees! For instance, Jesus complained that the Pharisees "*say, and do not.*"¹⁴³ In a word, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for being "*hypocrites.*"¹⁴⁴ This was a criticism of the Pharisees' willful refusal to live up to, or to carry out, the very ideals and principles which they claimed to espouse. Jesus' fundamental complaint against the Pharisees was that they were "*hypocrites.*" Jesus ultimately wanted to reform Pharisaic practices and application of the law – e.g., Jesus advocated against strict legalism and for "justice, mercy, and faith."¹⁴⁵

Jesus also disdained the Pharisee's legal and juridical manipulation of the law in order to perpetuate injustice and exploitation of the poor. For instance, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for taking things out of proper context and, most egregiously, for substituting the true meaning and objective of the law of Moses with their own ulterior purpose – i.e., "teaching for doctrines the commandment of men";¹⁴⁶ "laying aside the commandment of God, [to] hold the tradition of men";¹⁴⁷ "reject[ing] the

¹⁴² Matthew 5: 20.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ See, e.g., the "Seven Woes" in Matthew 23: 13-31.

¹⁴⁵ Matthew 23:23.

¹⁴⁶ Mark 7: 7.

¹⁴⁷ Mark 7:8.

commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition”;¹⁴⁸ and “making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.”¹⁴⁹ And as a Jewish rabbi himself,¹⁵⁰ Jesus was also in direct competition with the Pharisees with regards to providing the correct interpretation of the Law of Moses.

Yet Jesus of Nazareth never explicitly rejected outright the Pharisaic theoretical or juridical conception of the Torah (both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah). To be sure, Jesus disagreed with how the Pharisees administered the law, but he did not object to their institutions, offices, and authority as administrators of the law in ancient Judea. In fact, Jesus’ own ecclesia or gathering was to function under the auspices of the same Pharisaic institutions, offices, and authority – but only in a more egalitarian, spiritually authentic, and just manner. Jesus was a reformer.

At this point, present-day orthodox Jews and Judaism can be of little help to the Christian, because since 70 A.D., after the Second Temple was destroyed, the Jewish conception of the Christian religion became both hostile and superficial. The Jews have seldom been able to conceptualize the church as a natural extension of the synagogue, or the Christian pastor as the natural extension of the Jewish rabbi. Instead, many Jews view the Christian church and the Christian pastor as radical breaks from the institutions of Judaism. But this view is neither historically or theologically accurate. Authentic Christianity is Messianic Judaism, and Messianic Judaism is authentic Judaism. This was Paul’s message to Jew and Gentile.

The critical factor is the life, example, and legacy of Jesus of Nazareth himself – a Jew and a rabbi. Both Jesus and Paul were orthodox Jews who honored Jewish law, customs, and institutions. And the type of Judaism

¹⁴⁸ Mark 7:9.

¹⁴⁹ Mark 7: 13.

¹⁵⁰ John 1:38.

that Paul ultimately advocated and promoted for all Jews was that of “Messianic Judaism.” Just as the Jews attended synagogue where they committed to prayer and the study of Torah, so did the Messianic Jews under the Apostle Paul’s leadership and the leadership of other reformed Jews and Pharisees- rulers of synagogues who now believed in Jesus.

Hence, the risen Lord Jesus’ selection of a Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus (also called Paul) was not a coincidence. As a Pharisee, Paul was an expert interpreter of the law of Moses. In the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ from the pages of the Old Testament Law, such an expert knowledge of this Law was indispensable, and the Apostle Paul retained that expert legal knowledge. Ultimately, the risen Christ, as Lord and Savior, would enlist that expert legal knowledge for assistance with advocating before the Pharisees, the Jewish nation, and the entire Greco-Roman world.

The problem of Christian hermeneutics, and its rejection of Judaism, turns often upon semantics and an over-emphasis upon the Jews’ involvement in Christ’s arrest and crucifixion, as well as the Jews’ subsequent oppression of Paul and other followers of Christ. But if the “Golden Rule” (i.e., Matthew 7:12) that is elaborated upon in the Jewish Mishna and Talmud are carefully and objectively examined, even a sane, rational Christian would have to admit that the rabbinical Jews’ *Oral Torah is not inherently inconsistent with Christ’s teachings*. The Christians’ peremptory rejection of the Jewish Oral Torah is more of a knee-jerk reaction against dogma emanating from a class of Jewish persons who openly reject Christ as their Lord and Savior. But even here, even the Christian faithful must come to terms with Christ’s own admonition: “whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, **it shall be forgiven him**: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Matthew 12: 32.

Let me be clear, the point that I am making is not a vindication of the Jews' unbelief in Jesus as the promised Messiah. That unbelief I vehemently disagree with, without being violently objectionable or antisemitic in my disagreement. The point that I am making is that the Torah (and the Old Testament) is a sacred law that must be venerated, studied, and applied to the daily affairs of the practical lives of the Christian faithful. Clearly, for a period of over two thousand years, the rabbinical Jews have mastered the practical administration of the sacred law of Moses:

During the first centuries of the Common Era, there was considerable pressure for written consolidation.... For many centuries, perhaps dating back to Ezra's return from Babylon or even earlier, the Torah had been developed through midrash, or interpretation. The written Torah had been supplemented by discussions, interpolations, opinions, and decisions. Known as the Oral Torah, the supplementary commentary had provided interpretive flexibility.... But with the dangers posed by Roman political domination and Christian religious challenge, the very fluidity of the Oral Torah had become a liability.

The decisions, principles, disagreements, and interpretations that comprised that oral legal tradition were gathered into the *Mishna* (meaning 'study'). It functioned both as 'a complementary legal code' to the Torah and as stimulus to further study and exegesis. The process of compilation and restatement was carried out over centuries in Babylon and Palestine, until its final redaction in the Talmud.... Under rabbinical direction, a process of oral teaching had evolved into the final canon of authoritative rulings; but the Talmud, like the Torah, was subject to continuing rabbinical interpretation.

The Talmud signified the reformulation and reassertion of the sacred law as the basis of communal order. The very

Talmudic passage that had placed the rabbis directly in the line of Mosaic succession also enjoined them to 'be deliberate in judging and raising up many disciples and make a hedge for the Torah.' The rabbis wove their authority into a virtually sovereign legal system, creating within that hedge of 'sacred enclosure' for human contemplation of divine command. The multitude of rabbinic decisions that regulated the minutiae of life – diet, dress, family relations, commercial activity – were designed to apply divine precepts to mundane human relations, 'thus to bring the whole of life into conformity with the will of God.'¹⁵²

This vigorous law effort amongst the Jews is just as necessary amongst the Christians – nay, it is much needed. But in the United States, where the Jewish population is the largest outside of the state of Israel, American Jews have somehow missed the commonality of Torah in both Jewish and Christian life; and that American Christians are as much in dire need of Torah as are Jews in the United States and throughout the diaspora.

Conversely, American Christians have likewise misjudged the Jewish approach to Torah – falsely considering the Torah as being exclusively Jewish and not Christian. And, as a consequence, the cultural threat which hyper-secularism poses to the sacred law of orthodox Judaism also threatens wholesome Christian values and the institution of the Christian Church.¹⁵³ Both Jews and Christians now appear to be on the same proverbial boat that is sinking!¹⁵⁴

Nevertheless, as a follower of Jesus Christ I am forced to admit that orthodox Jews – through their rabbinical laws and systems of courts – are

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁵³ See, generally, Josh Hammer, *Israel and Civilization: The Fate of the Jewish Nation and the Destiny of the West*, *supra*.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

far better at administering the sacred law than the Christians. And I do not see where the New Testament absolved Christians of that same responsibility of venerating, studying, and applying the sacred law to the lives of the Christian faithful. In general, most of today's Jewish rabbis—who uphold the Oral Torah and utilize the Mishna and Talmud, as well as the written Torah—trace their spiritual lineage to the Pharisees. But in this series on the Apostle Paul, I shall demonstrate that Christian theologians and ministers likewise trace their lineage to those same Pharisees.

For instance, the life, ministry, and letters of the Apostle Paul, who was a Jewish Pharisee, as well as Christ's other apostles, predates the Mishna (circa 200 A.D.) and the Talmud (circa 500 A.D.) by over 130 years.

- A. Messianic Judaism predates Rabbinical Judaism by *at least* 30 or 40 years, if not more.
- B. Rabbinical Judaism began to develop after the fall of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., about 30 or 40 years after the establishment of the Early Church (i.e., Messianic Judaism), which already included numerous Pharisees and leaders of synagogues;
- C. Paul's letters; the letters of the other apostles; and the four synoptic Gospels, predate the Jews' Mishna (circa 200 A.D.) and the Talmud (circa 500 A.D.), by over 130 years. (Moreover, these Christian writings function as a sort of "Oral Law," just like the Mishna and the Talmud within Rabbinical Judaism); and,
- D. The Pharisaic law training of the Apostle Paul (and perhaps of many other Pharisees who became Christians) laid the foundation for Messianic Judaism and the Christian religion (including its ecclesiology, theology, and epistemology).

Moreover, the Apostle Paul, *as a Pharisee*, was “the teacher (doctor) of the nations in faith and truth.”¹⁵⁵ Naturally, this Christian connection to the ancient Pharisees begs the question as to whether Christian bishops, pastors, theologians, or other lay persons should function more as lawyers and as judges, while simultaneously proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As a Christian lawyer, I have answered this question in the affirmative. Just as Jesus of Nazareth,¹⁵⁶ the Apostle Paul, and the Pharisees conceptualized “the law and the prophets” *as practical and pragmatic law*,¹⁵⁷ and just as today’s Jews administer their Oral Torah in proclamation of the Written Torah, so must today’s Christian clergy administer that same Torah in their proclamation of the Gospel and in their administration of the sacraments.

For all these reasons, I advocate here that our ordained Christian ministry (which includes our Messianic Jewish ministry) must have the expert legal knowledge and legal experience of the ancient Pharisees and of the Apostle Paul, as well as the spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit, in order to interpret and administer the *sacred law of Christ*.¹⁵⁸

Amen.

--- The End of Part One ---

¹⁵⁵ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 453.

¹⁵⁶ See, e.g., Mark 7: 1-13 (Jesus argues with the Pharisees, accusing them of changing the commandments within the law of Moses by substituting those commandments with manmade doctrines that nullified the text of the law of Moses.) Here, Jesus himself made a doctrinal legal argument in vindication of law of Moses. Today’s Christian leadership must be afforded the proper legal training in order to follow suit.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Both the Old and New Testament.

Russian Orthodox icon of the Apostle Paul, 18th century CE.

