

Yaakov Ariel's article "A Different Kind of Dialogue? Messianic Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations" (2012) examines the relationship between Christians, Jews and Messianic Jews, beginning with a Messianic Jewish renewal in the 1970's. He affirms the positive effect that Messianic Jews have had upon relations between Christians and Jews, a type of middle ground where they can see their many shared values. Ariel ultimately asserts that dialogue has led to a breakthrough and change of heart in how conservative Christians view Jews.

Ariel contrasts the different levels of reception Messianic Judaism has received from her liberal and conservative Jewish and Christian counterparts. He explores the struggle Messianic Jews have with the extent to which Jewish culture and customs should be reflected in their Messianic congregations. Ariel asserts how the trend in Messianic Judaism has given a greater appreciation and support for Israel and Jews among Christians. As Messianic Judaism saw a renewal from the 1970's-2010's, Israel diversified, and acceptance of Christianity and Messianic Judaism grew. Ariel reflects upon the different schools of thought from conservative Messianic Jews to those who wish to incorporate more Jewish customs and traditions, thus striking more of a balance between Christianity and Judaism. Ariel presents these contrasting perspectives in order to encourage a greater level of understanding and empathy among all communities.

The global rise of Messianic Judaism has led to a more accepting attitude from Jews, whereas before, Messianic Jews have had a hard time finding acceptance among both Christians and Jews alike. Jews have been resistant to the idea that one could embrace Messianic Judaism and still maintain their Jewish identity. Ariel relates the resistance from both Christian and Jews to a type of "Frankenstein" religion that is neither here nor there; a "bizarre fringe group" (p. 4). Ariel doesn't conclude with a certain or definitive vision for Jewish and Messianic-Jew relations, as he posits this is a sensitivity going back millennia, and will probably continue to be so.

In “Beyond Dialogue- Envisioning a Jewishly Enriched Body of Christ” (2019), Faydra Shapiro is essentially seeking the answer to the question: “What is it that Jews, Judaism, the Jewish experience actually have to offer Christianity?” (p. 2). Shapiro argues that Christians can learn and greatly benefit from the values of the Jewish community, in very practical and tangible ways, in nearly every facet of life. Shapiro points out that indeed, Jesus, His parents and all of the apostles were Jewish; and there is still much that can be gleaned from Judaism today.

Shapiro explores the many areas of life in which Christians can learn from the Jewish community, such as: caring for fellow Christians; embracing, instead of bring ashamed of, ‘separateness,’ (a common distinction in both Christianity and Judaism); family and sabbath rest, to name but a few. Christians, like Jews, have historically experienced tremendous persecution and suffering for their faith. Shapiro argues that Christians can learn from millennia of Jewish experience and triumph in the midst of suffering. “The Jewish experience should, at its best, be able to offer a moving, living example of perseverance and hope to the persecuted Church” (p. 6). Shapiro draws these parallels in order to convince Christians that instead of seeing themselves as separate and even superior to Jews, they are rather inextricably connected to “the root that *supports* you,” (Rom. 11:18; p. 2). Shapiro also argues that a Jewishly infused Christianity is good for Judaism, so as to root out any trace of anti-Semitism that might be present among the Christian community. She also argues that this mutual understanding is good for the world, to demonstrate a pattern of giving and receiving from “the Other.”

Shapiro conjectures that Christians today can greatly benefit from Judaism. Christian embrace of Jewish values would create an appreciation for a community with whom there has been long-standing historical tension. It would benefit not only their own community, but there would also be a reciprocal benefit to the Jewish community and the world at large as well.

Shari Rabin, in “Jews in Church: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in Nineteenth-Century America” (2018), explores the historical precedent of Jewish exposure to Christianity In America. Rabin argues that while many believe that Jews attending church in America has been a means of social involvement and communal participation, and that while many leaders in the Jewish community have seen value in Jewish exposure to Christianity, others posited it as a threat, and even saw it as crossing over into idolatry.

Rabin notes that while the majority of literature upon Jewish-Christian relations focuses primarily on the negative, presenting Jews as a historical target for Christian evangelism, a Jew attending church “could be an important space for sociability and for self-examination, helping ordinary Jews elaborate and even strengthen—rather than threaten—Jewish identity” (p. 1). Rabin presents numerous examples of Jews that have benefitted throughout American history by exposure to a church environment without it impeding or infringing upon their faith heritage. This phenomenon has been so commonplace that Rabin says “Indeed, it is impossible to prove but entirely conceivable that there were weeks in the nineteenth century when more Jews attended church than synagogue” (p. 6). Not all of their experiences have been positive, however, as Rabin notes that at times Jews encountered sermons that attacked Judaism directly. Rabin presents these various perspectives in order to convey a compassionate, informed understanding of Jewish-Christian relations historically in America, and to charge the reader with tolerance for various religious persuasions across a diverse cultural landscape.

Historically, Jews in America have opted for exposure to a religion that has offered many benefits including social and communal participation as well as shared values; and one that in some ways contradicts, and has at times stood in opposition to their own religion. Nevertheless, Jews have engaged Christianity “on their own terms” (p. 8), and will continue to do just that.

Yaakov Ariel, Faydra Shapiro and Shari Rabin, in their respective articles, examine the historical relationship and tensions between Jews, Christians and Messianic Jews alike, and explore different ways that cross-exposure has brought a new era of healing, reconciliation and restoration where there have been significant historical tensions. Ariel explores the relationship between Messianic Judaism to her Jewish counterparts, and the resulting positive impact this has had upon Jewish-Christian relations. Rabin explores Jewish exposure to Christianity, conjecturing that it has procured mutual tolerance and understanding of shared values. Shapiro examines the opportunity Christians have to mine from the rich values of Judaism, as well as rooting out any anti-Semitism that might be present. Common among all of these articles are an effort to bring reconciliation between religions that share the same foundation, and yet have historically been at odds. There have been grave injustices perpetrated against Jews in the name of Christianity, which has created a rift and a profound wound and sensitivity. Inter-exposure between the religions has created the opportunity for Christians and Jews to realize the commonality of shared values and foundations of faith. Not to mention the hybrid of such; the Messianic Judaism, which encompasses values from both Christianity and Judaism, and has helped build a bridge between the two. At its onset, Messianic Judaism was regarded as illegitimate and even heretical to most Jews, who saw Judaism and Christianity as incompatible. A diversification of culture and religion in Israel led to a more widespread acceptance of the relatively new phenomena of Messianic Judaism. Inter-exposure between the religions has real-world implications, especially Christian exposure to Judaism. A robust theology concerning the roots of our faith and potential resulting appreciation and respect for Israel can help uproot Anti-Semitism, which has sadly been perpetrated against Jews in the name of Christianity. Only when both have understanding of the other, can we realize we come from the same vine, Jesus.