A Profile of Jewish Believers in the UK Church
A Profile of Jewish Believers in the UK Church

Jonathan Allen
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This book evolved out of the work undertaken for my doctoral studies at Trinity College, Bristol. It addresses a largely unasked and—as I was to discover during the process of three and a half years’ research—somewhat unpopular question: where are all the Jews in church? Given that the early church as described in the book of Acts is entirely Jewish and the church has been actively converting Jews for the following two millennia, we might expect to find that there was a significant and recognizable contingent of Jewish people in the church by now. Moreover, given that it isn’t difficult to find many flavors of black church, as well as lots of Chinese, Korean and Filipino churches in London and the larger cities of the UK, we might expect to find a healthy number of Jewish or Jewish-friendly churches in the same places or in areas of Jewish population. Not only is neither expectation approaching reality within the range of church expressions in the UK, but there seems to be opposition to the question being asked. Jews are simply not expected to retain any of their Jewish religious or cultural expressions on coming to faith in Messiah—a strange position indeed given that the Bible was written almost exclusively by Jewish people, about Jewish people and, in most cases, for Jewish people. Christianity was born out of Second Temple Judaism and expresses itself in so many terms and expressions taken from that time: covenant, redemption, forgiveness, salvation, and so on.

This book, however, is not an historical account of how we got to this curious position. Rather it is a survey or a profile of what it is like to be a Jew in the UK church today, based on a series of interviews conducted in the last few years with Jewish believers either still in or with significant experience of, life in churches in the UK. The interviews also included some Gentile Christians both leading or attending churches that are attended by Jewish believers. The group also included some Jewish believers who themselves lead Gentile churches. While the survey is not definitive and cannot be extrapolated to address the whole of the UK or assumed to reflect the lives of every Jewish believer in a UK church, it does paint a sharp picture of the feelings of,
and difficulties experienced by Jewish believers and the pressures under which they live, in or on the edge of the church. It is certainly a reliable indication that many Jewish believers in church are not happy and that the church is failing to benefit from the riches that could be available for all to share were the biblical mandates correctly understood and implemented today.

As a latecomer to the field of academic studies—having been a chartered engineer specializing in language analysis, compliance and translation software all my professional career, while being a part-time theologian and teacher for more than twenty years—the transition to full-time study and academia was actually easier than I had feared. I was welcomed into the research community at Trinity College by Dr. Justin Stratis, the Director of Postgraduate Studies and most especially by my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Howard Worsley. Howard and I worked hard to define the research question and we talked about the issues of inclusion and assimilation in many ways. My external supervisor, Dr. Richard Harvey, recommended more books than I ever found the time to read, and made valuable suggestions and contributions throughout the process.

My long-suffering family put up with the obsessions, distractions and other antisocial research and writing habits that I am told are all too normal for those undertaking doctoral research, and allowed me to plunder the family coffers for the necessary funds to undertake the program as an independent student. They also helped read and critique the various drafts of ideas, papers and chapters as the research drew together.

The research, and this book resulting from it, are dedicated to the generations of Jewish believers in Yeshua who have struggled with church and, although their efforts are almost unseen, made a difference so that some of us today have less explaining to do and more liberty to be ourselves as part of the remnant of Israel that still follows Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah.

*Rockbeare, December 2017*
### Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<td>BMJA</td>
<td>The British Messianic Jewish Alliance</td>
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<td>CME</td>
<td>Continuing Ministerial Education</td>
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<td>CMJ</td>
<td>The Church’s Ministry Among Jewish People</td>
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<td>CRS</td>
<td>Chain Response Sampling</td>
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<td>GTM</td>
<td>Grounded Theory Method</td>
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<td>JBY</td>
<td>Jewish Believer in Yeshua</td>
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<td>MJ</td>
<td>Messianic Jew</td>
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<td>NT</td>
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<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
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<td>TGA</td>
<td>The Gateway Approach</td>
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# Glossary of Terms

**Bar-/Bat-Mitzvah**

Literally: son or daughter of the commandment. A ceremony where a girl (typically aged twelve) or a boy (typically aged thirteen) demonstrates their ability to lead and take part in the synagogue prayer services, by leading some of the prayers, chanting a portion of Hebrew Scripture, and giving a short talk or *drash* about the passage.

**Christian Zionism**

Although commonly used to refer to Christian support for the State of Israel, this denotes the doctrine that the return of Jews to the Promised Land will fulfill biblical prophecy and inaugurate the end times.\(^1\)

**Hebrew Christianity**

Allows “a Jew who [has] ‘converted’ to Christianity to retain some measure of Jewish (Hebraic) culture and identity,” while attending and participating fully in Gentile church as a primary locus of identification. “Hebrew Christianity denies that its link with ethnic Judaism requires *Torah* observance and favors a stronger connection with historical Christianity.”\(^2\)

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Messianic Judaism  “A movement of Jewish congregations and congregation-like groupings committed to Yeshua the Messiah that embrace the covenantal responsibility of Jewish life and identity rooted in the Torah, expressed in tradition, renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant.”

Yeshua  The original Hebrew name for Jesus in English transliteration

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Introduction

By way of starting, this chapter introduces the subject of and reason for the program of research from which the profile is built. It defines some key terms and discussion partners before giving a brief overview of the methodology used to conduct the research. This latter can safely be skipped by those whose interest lies in the data itself.

This work began several years ago when I was editing one of Dr. Daniel Juster’s articles for publication in Charisma magazine. Titled, “When Jews Assimilate into the Christian Faith,” it laments that although there are a significant number of Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBYs) in the church, they are “often strongly resistant to the Messianic Jewish call . . . assimilating into the Gentile world” without strengthening the saved remnant of Israel and, on the contrary, “weakening the numbers of the Jewish people.” Although Juster had expressed this concern on a number of occasions before, he went on to offer a solution to Paul’s challenge for the church to “make Jewish people jealous” (Romans 11:11).

I am convinced that the answer is a shift in the pastoral leadership of the churches. Church leaders must adopt a doctrinal foundation that insists that their Jewish members identify and live as Jews. This was anticipated in R. Kendall Soulen’s book, The God of Israel and Christian Theology. In this monumental study, Soulen approvingly quotes Jewish Orthodox theologian Michael Wyschogrod, who argues that we will not see full repentance for anti-Semitism in churches until the pastors of the churches teach their baptised Jewish members that they are called to live Jewish lives based in the Torah (I would add, obviously as interpreted by the New Testament). Without church leaders teaching the reality of the Jewish calling, Jewish Christians in the church will not take that call seriously.

Arguing that the church’s early position differs from what later became its standard view, Wyschogrod claims that, “Had the church believed

1 See the magazine website: http://www.charismamag.com
2 Juster, “When Jews Assimilate.”
3 Ibid.
4 Wyschogrod and Berger, Jews and Jewish Christianity, 64.
that it was God’s will that the seed of Abraham not disappear from the world, she would have insisted on Jews retaining their separateness, even in the church.”

Soulen, in turn, recommends that “The church, for its part, should repent of having turned its back upon the original determination of the Council of Jerusalem, where the Jewish obligation to maintain Jewish identity was universally presupposed.”

Answering a question about the low response rate of Jewish people to Christian evangelism, Mark Kinzer quoted Elias Friedman, saying, “God is not allowing Jews to become Christians en masse because the Jews would disappear.”

How, Kinzer asked, would the prophecy of Zechariah—“Thus says the L-RD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that G-d is with you’” (Zechariah 8:23)—be fulfilled if Jews have become indistinguishable from Gentiles?

My own personal experience suggests that Juster’s fears are well-founded so, following other articles by Juster—“Do we want the Jew to disappear?” “Jews in Christian Churches”—it seemed appropriate to ask whether the claims about loss of Jewish identity could be substantiated and what exactly is the state of Jewish identity among Christians of Jewish descent within the UK church. From there, it is a logical step to considering whether there is a role for a continuing Jewish identity in Jews who have come to faith in Yeshua and, if so, what that ought to look like and how it could be promoted and secured in the face of apparent disregard from the historical church world.

Anecdotal evidence from friends and family, and from others in the Messianic Jewish (MJish) movement, suggested that the church in the UK was almost universally hostile to the continuance or manifestation of any Jewish identity in a church or church-related context. One MJish leader, now leading a congregation in the United States, kept his family out of mainstream church in the UK for three years while studying for his PhD at Cambridge, saying that the church environment was simply “far too corrosive of Jewish identity” for a JBY to feel comfortable or safe attending a church for any length of time. Strong words, certainly, but clearly at variance with Juster’s suggestion that there are many JBYs firmly embedded in the church. Perhaps the only way to reconcile the positions is that there are very different ideas about Jewish identity, its

5 Wyschogrod, Abraham’s Promise, 183.
6 Soulen, The God of Israel, 171.
7 At a conference at Christelijke Hogeschool, Ede, in 2014.
8 Friedman, Jewish Identity.
9 Juster, “Do We Want the Jews to Disappear.”
10 Juster, “Jews in Christian Churches.”
value or continuation, and appropriate ways in which it can be expressed or manifested.

The research project, then, set out to discover the significance and state of Jewish identity among JBYs in the churches in the UK. Identity theory says that identity can be a negotiated commodity, so the situation depends not only on JBYs themselves but the way they are received or tolerated in the churches and the level of freedom that they feel they have to express their Jewish identity in the church world. Historical and cultural overtones add to the mix. A further complication may be whether church is the primary or dominant religious group in a JBY’s social world. Last, but by no means least, is the crucial question of what vision JBYs have for their Jewish identity; what they are trying to achieve for themselves and their families, and how that influences their choices of expression, lifestyle, and participation in their religious communities.

The study sought to assess the current experience of JBYs in the UK church, drawing on church leaders, members, and JBYs outside the church with significant church experience. It was assumed that, although not representative, since the study followed the Grounded Theory Method theoretical sampling procedure towards saturation as time allowed, this would give enough consistent data for an investigative study and to allow a cohesive profile to be built.

This study breaks new ground in two ways. Firstly, the overall subject of the study—the existence of and reception of Jewish identity in Jewish believers in Yeshua within the mainstream churches in the UK—is largely unacknowledged and unexplored territory. Secondly, this study brings together sociology, translation theory, and theology to develop measures for assessing the degree and success of inclusion currently being achieved by JBYs in the UK church.

Before proceeding further, an important term that needs to be defined is “supersessionism”—something that occurred in almost all of the interview data and was clearly much to the fore in many of the respondents’ minds and experience.

12 Stuart Dauermann points out the power of influence that an individual’s “community of reference” has over the shape of his or her lifestyle and choices (Dauermann, “Community of Reference”).
13 Ikonen, *Daughters of the Vale of Tears*, 56.
Supersessionism

Supersessionism or, as it will more frequently be called in this study, replacement theology, is the belief or teaching that the church has replaced or superseded Israel as the chosen people of God. The Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations says that the two terms are “substantially equivalent” and “sometimes used interchangeably.” The entry for replacement theology says:

Both designate a theological perspective that interprets Christian faith generally and the status of the church in particular so as to claim or imply the abrogation or obsolescence of God’s covenant with the Jewish people.  

The entry for supersessionism traces the root of the word to the Latin verb *supersedere*, “to sit above or be superior to,” and goes on to say that “in recent decades” the term has gained currency in scholarly and theological circles:

To refer to the traditional Christian belief that since Christ’s coming the church has taken the place of the Jewish people as God’s chosen community and that God’s covenant with the Jews is now over and done.

Both entries date the beginning of supersessionism to the earliest times; the former stating that “Replacement theology took shape during the second century CE,” the latter that “supersessionism has stood at the centre of Christianity’s understanding of its relationship to the Jewish people from antiquity until recent times.” Both implicate Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Marcion, and Augustine as being complicit in the process.

At the beginning of his groundbreaking book, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, R. Kendall Soulen provides an easy definition:

According to this teaching, God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. After Christ came, however, the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the church, the new Israel.

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15 Soulen, “Replacement Theology,” 375.
16 Soulen, “Supersessionism,” 413.
17 Soulen, “Replacement Theology,” 375.
18 Soulen, “Supersessionism,” 413.
Soulen describes three kinds of supersessionism: economic, punitive, and structural.  

Economic supersessionism asserts that both Israel and the church depend exclusively on Messiah for their salvation. Whereas Israel is said only to correspond to Messiah in a typological or prefigurative way, a physical or carnal way, the church corresponds in a definitive and spiritual way. When Yeshua came, he made the type obsolete, replacing physical Israel with the spiritual church. Everything in “the economy of salvation in its Israelite form becomes obsolete and is replaced by its ecclesial equivalent.” Israel is not declared temporary and obsolete because of its sinfulness, but because by definition its only role was to prepare the ground for the reality of the spiritual, permanent and universal salvation brought by Yeshua.

Punitive supersessionism names the position that, “God abrogates God’s covenant with Israel on account of Israel’s rejection of Christ and the gospel.” In effect, God is punishing the Jewish people because they have rejected his Messiah and refused to accept the truth and effect of the Christ event.

Lastly, in Soulen’s definitions, structural supersessionism “unifies the Christian canon in a manner that renders the Hebrew Scriptures largely indecisive for shaping conclusions about how God’s purposes engage creation in universal and enduring ways.” By foregrounding a standard Christian biblical narrative consisting of just four pieces: creation, the fall, the Christ event, and the end times, the Hebrew Scriptures are completely ignored with the exception of Genesis 1–3. The Jews as a distinct people are no longer required in the overall story of the Bible because the Bible has become about individuals getting saved and becoming part of the church.

N. T. Wright also offers three flavors of supersessionism: hard, sweeping, and Jewish. By “hard,” Wright refers to that which can be found in some early Christian writers—he particularly mentions passages from the Epistle of Barnabas—teaching that “Jews were now cast off for ever and that gentile believers had replaced them as the people of God.” Visualized as a horizontal line with a break in the middle between Israel and gentile Christians, “according to that scheme, Jewish people have no place in the church, so that one has to say that Paul and the others were

20 Soulen, The God of Israel, 29–33.
21 Dauermann, Keeping the Faith, 15.
22 Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 806–11.
lucky to make it in before the door slammed shut.” Wright thinks it unlikely that this been suggested since the 1950s and “is not normally to be found in contemporary biblical scholarship.”

Wright calls his second form of supersessionism, “sweeping,” both because of its sweeping acceptance in the church and in scholarship, and because of its sweeping nature. By this he describes the view that the Christ event was of such a radical and apocalyptic nature that it swept away everything that preceded it. This is not discontinuity, Israel has not turned into the church; rather the fresh revelation has swept everything away—including Israel—so that everyone starts again, from the same zero-base footing, and operates on a new and different footing. Now “being Jewish and adhering to the Jewish hope that God would fulfil His long-awaited promises to Abraham, appears to be exactly the wrong kind of thing.”

Lastly, Wright sees a third possibility for supersessionism: “Jewish supersessionism.” He locates this in the Essene community at Qumran and describes it as:

the claim that the creator God has acted at last, in surprising but prophecy-fulfilling ways, to launch His renewed covenant, to call a new people who are emphatically in continuity with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to pour out His Spirit afresh upon them, to enable them to keep Torah in the new way He had always envisaged . . .

This is a kind of super-Judaism, doing right all the things that Jews had never managed to get right before, replacing or superseding the old corrupt Temple-based Judaism and seeing their leader, the Teacher of Righteousness, as the new Moses.

Stuart Dauermann identifies one more type of supersessionism, which he calls crypto-supersessionism. This is an “unconscious and entrenched cluster of presuppositions held by those who oppose supersessionism” but whose practitioners “affirm the expiration or setting aside of those identity markers”—such as, for example, keeping a kosher diet or observing Shabbat—”that formerly applied to the Jewish people.” He reports that “its proponents vigorously reject supersessionism while failing to see how their presuppositions and theology rob their Israel-affirming words of substance, leaving religious Israel a hollow shell.”

In a paper presented at Trinity College, Bristol, the scholar Susannah Ticciati agrees with Soulen’s definitions and points out how the church can be seen as engaging in identity theft in the way it reads and

23 Dauermann, Converging Destinies, 131.
appropriates the Hebrew Scriptures. “The implied community of readers,” she points out, referring for examples to the Psalms, the narrative of the Exodus, and the Torah itself, is Israel.

Thus, for a community to claim these pages as its Scripture is—arguably—to step into the place of Israel, or to claim for itself the name of Israel. Such an argument does not for a minute undermine a Jewish claim on Israel, but it does insinuate Christians in a jarring way in respect of the assumed identification of Israel and the Jewish people. How can Christians who read the Old Testament as Scripture not in some way identity themselves as Israel?24

Other commentators describe this as anti-Judaic theology, suggesting that since the Council of Nicea in 325 CE, “all accepted church theology has been built on an anti-Judaic foundation.”25 The church was identified with the “new Israel” or “Israel of God,”26 replacing the Jews, and was declared to be the kingdom of God that had replaced the kingdom of Israel.27

The basic teaching of replacement theology is thus, firstly, that natural Israel, who are the physical seed of Abraham, failed—as documented by the Old Testament—and so have been rejected or cast off: “Jews are no longer special and are like everyone else.”28 Secondly, that the church is a new spiritual Israel—now the spiritual seed of Abraham through Yeshua—and has replaced the old. Thirdly, the physical promises of God to the Jewish people—such as the possession of the Land of Israel—are now to be fulfilled spiritually for and through the church.29

Following the claim that Israel has been superseded by the church, the case is also made that “the law of Moses—that ancient charter of the Jewish people—has now been superseded with the coming of Christ. It no longer has a place in redemptive history; its time has passed.” Not only has it passed, so is no longer applicable for guiding and regulating the lives or conduct of God’s people, but it is now “superfluous with the advent of the Spirit.”30

Consequently, “the church holds that the preservation of Jewish identity within the new Israel is a matter of theological indifference at

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26 Galatians 6:16.
27 Gruber, The Church and the Jews, viii.
28 Gibson, Supersessionism, 263.
29 Gruber, The Church and the Jews, 333.
best and a mortal sin at worst.” This assumption has shaped both the church’s standard canonical narrative and doctrinal structure in “fundamental and systematic ways” that are still part of liturgies, lectionaries, interpretations, and training—taught and inherited almost subconsciously—by the church today. As Magnus Zetterholm observes, “The binary ideas that Christianity has superseded Judaism and that Christian grace has replaced Jewish legalism, for example, appear to be essential aspects of most Christian theologies.”

Connecting to the idea of repentance mentioned above, Ellen Davis writes:

One of the forms of repentance most necessary for Christian theological interpreters to exercise, not just personally, but on behalf of tradition, is demonstrating theological respect for and, indeed, gratitude towards Jews.

Supersessionism’s implicit demand for assimilation—calling Jews to abandon Jewish tradition and denying the right to express Jewish ethnicity—causes rejection of JBY identity within the mainstream Jewish community, thus complicating efforts to share the gospel into the Jewish world.

Most of the respondents in the interview data are unaware of the term “supersessionism” or of the nuances of the scholarly debate. They present, as will be seen below, a somewhat monochrome view resembling an amalgam of all positions, rather than any particular position, outlined above. Their chosen wording is almost always “replacement theology” so we will most frequently follow their lead.

The next important factor to consider is Messianic Judaism; not that it directly forms a part of this profile, but because it speaks of an alternative to church, is mentioned in a number of the interviews and is how some of the respondents self-identify.

**Messianic Judaism**

Many of the respondents interviewed have a significant connection with MJism which—where available—offers an alternative to church for

32 Even as recently as 2016, some scholars perpetuate the idea that “Christian” equals “Non-Jewish,” that a Christian identity is set over and against a Jewish identity (Tucker and Baker, *T&T Handbook to Social Identity*, 4).
33 Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism,” 34.
34 Davis, “Teaching the Bible Confessionally,” 23.
JBYs, so is described here and elsewhere as a critical partner in understanding the larger JBY picture.

Although the Jerusalem church recorded in the book of Acts was entirely Jewish, as the gospel spread into the Roman Empire and the number of Gentile converts becoming followers of Yeshua grew, the Jewish proportion and influence shrank. The Gentile church leadership strongly deprecated Jewish practice and traditions as part of the Gentile church.36 There were no Jewish bishops present at the Council of Nicea in 325 CE37 and it is thought that there were no Jewish churches or groups of believers remaining past the year 400 CE.38

From beginnings in the UK in the early-to-mid 1800s, a desire for Jewish fellowship among Jewish believers grew, often hosted and supported by evangelical churches and missionary organizations. These were often termed Hebrew Christian groups, reflecting their close ties to church denominations, seminaries or colleges, and leadership. The MJish movement started growing rapidly in the USA in the late 1960s and has spread to Europe, Russia, and Israel. The growth is variously attributed to a general increase in Jewish awareness and identity since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, and the 1967 Six Day War.39

Contemporary MJism in the USA has been described by Shoshana Feher, Carol Harris-Shapiro, and Francine Samuelson.40 In the UK, Pauline Kollontai has written three papers based on small-scale surveys41 and Simon Dein has published an ethnographic study of a MJish congregation.42 Dan Cohn-Sherbok wrote perhaps the earliest definitive guide to MJism.43 Writing from within the movement, Dan Juster’s early book has been through several editions,44 while other MJish scholars such as John Fischer45 and David Stern46 have contributed work. Richard Harvey has documented the various theological streams within the MJish

36 Schonfield, History of Jewish Christianity, 62
37 Ponsonby, God is For Us, 292.
38 Pritz, Nazarene Jewish Christianity, 108; Schiffman, Return of the Remnant, 25.
39 Feher, Passing Over Easter, 47; Harris-Shapiro, Messianic Judaism, 24–5.
40 Samuelson, “Messianic Judaism.”
41 Kollontai (“Messianic Jews,” “Between Judaism and Christianity,” Women as Leaders”.
42 Dein, “Becoming a Fulfilled Jew.”
43 Cohn-Sherbok, Messianic Judaism.
44 Juster, Jewish Roots.
45 Fischer, Olive Tree Connection.
46 Stern (Messianic Judaism, Restoring the Jewishness).
movement. The most recent definitive guide to MJism at a scholarly level comes from David Rudolph and Joel Willitts.

In describing the MJish movement, Feher talks of “consistent inconsistency” as the movement constantly negotiates its positions. Borrowing elements from both the Christian and Jewish worlds while refusing to acknowledge the boundary that exists between Christianity and Judaism, Messianic Jews (MJs) muddy the water and cause offense to both “parent” religions who, typically, are uncomfortable with or refuse to recognize their child. MJs threaten the existing classification system in a way that Jews who convert to Christianity don’t, because the former straddle a previously strong boundary, insisting on retaining and exercising both identities. They construct a new coherent identity from two identities that have considered themselves—and each other—as mutually exclusive for many centuries. Intermarriage between MJs and Gentile Christians further blurs both cultural and religious boundaries.

Feher suggests that MJism is an unique religious movement, because it provides “a new conservative religious expression combined with a new ethnic identity,” Jewish identity being strengthened beyond a previous cultural-only identity. MJs are considered a threat by the mainstream Jewish communities, not because they are JBYs, but because they deny the Jewish-Christian boundary. MJs challenge the boundaries and beliefs of both Judaism and Christianity. MJism heightens the tension by projecting itself as a Judaism, rather than a Christian denomination, and asserting a Jewish identity that is not a blended tradition.

Today, in the UK, the British Messianic Jewish Alliance (BMJA) is an umbrella group connecting some fourteen MJish fellowships and congregations, as well as several thousand JBYs in church. A few groups meet weekly on Shabbat morning, most less frequently; some are open, public meetings, others are closed groups only allowing visitors by invitation or request. The BMJA holds an annual conference. There are

47 Harvey, Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology.
48 Rudolph and Willits, Introduction to Messianic Judaism.
49 Feher, Passing Over Easter, 20–1, 31.
50 Harris-Shapiro, Messianic Judaism, 14.
52 Feher, Passing Over Easter, 61, 65, 142.
53 Harvey, Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology, 1
55 Harris-Shapiro, Messianic Judaism, 14.
a number of other independent congregations and smaller groupings of congregations that are not BMJA affiliated.57

Christian Friends of Israel (CFI)58 and Prayer for Israel (PFI)59 are Christian organizations with many church and individual members and links, focused on prayer and practical support for Israel. Both produce regular prayer bulletins and reports from Israel and the Middle East and have a political position. Both organize tours to Israel. They do not have a MJish vision and often, though not always, support or encourage evangelism. Although they may have or have had some Jewish leadership, they are predominantly Gentile led and are church based, connected and financed.

The next thing to consider is an overview of the way the data collected and used to build this profile was assembled and managed.

Research Methodology

The research data collected in order to build this profile of JBYs in the UK church was organized using a combination of Grounded Theory Method and The Gateway Approach. Particular attention was also paid to issues of translation: both language and cultural translation have significance in considering the communication between Jewish and Gentile believers in a church context.

The basic premises are twofold. Firstly, there are now, and have been through the centuries since the foundation of the church, Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBYs) in the church. According to the Bible, JBYs were the first churches in Jerusalem60 and continued to be the majority composition of churches for perhaps another ten to twenty years. Gentile believers quickly became the overwhelming majority and the dominant voice in both the church and the churches, a situation that has prevailed until today. Secondly, Jewish identity has not historically propagated or endured in a church context. While there is evidence throughout history of Jewish people becoming believers in Yeshua, joining the church and, often, serving as missionaries to the Jewish people or elsewhere, there has until recently been no record of either them or their children retaining a Jewish identity or any relationship with the larger Jewish world. A Jewish convert to Christianity became just that: a Christian; they, their

57 Brewer, “Jewish Believers,” 239.
60 For example, Acts 2:41.
children, and any future generations became not so much Gentile as amorphous Christian members of the church.

The principal research question concerning the role of ongoing Jewish identity in the UK churches is difficult to approach directly, since the majority of UK churches would either not understand what the question meant or would respond that there was not one. The research process needs, therefore, to build an answer from a number of simpler questions that can be asked of church leaders and members—both Jewish and Gentile—and JBYs currently outside but with some experience of church. Such questions might be, “What is the Jewish experience in church?,” “What do JBYs in church think about Jewish identity?,” “What does the church think about Jewish identity?,” “What is the role of Jewish identity in your church?”

The research works in the interpretivist paradigm: listening to informants and then describing and explaining the social phenomena to which they are responding. Opinion and the answers to the question, “How was it for you?,” are essentially a matter of experience and understanding; each respondent provides their own subjective view of the research field as well as the wider world. Individuals have their own story and set of experiences to relate, their own biases, and possibly their own agenda.

Interpretivism implies that each person’s information is valid; they relate events, experiences and opinions drawn from within their own value system. Their narratives are essentially unverifiable and significance will be attached to experiences and opinions as they recur in other informants’ narratives. While similar results should be expected, this study will not be easily replicable, as it represents a snap-shot in time of opinion and experience.

It follows, therefore, that the aim was to listen to and understand each respondent’s data, cross-referencing to other respondents’ data to reveal commonalities and to build an overall framework from the different realities each respondent has experienced and the way they report and interpret that reality. Notice that there is essentially a double hermeneutic in play here: this study is trying to interpret the interpretations that the informants report of how they have made sense of the original phenomena they have experienced.

Since this is an area where there has been comparatively little work done and literature published, the decision was taken to use Grounded

61 Scott and Morrison, Key Ideas, 131.
62 Thomas, How to Do Your Research Project, 108.
63 Smith et al, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, 35–6.
Theory Method (GTM) as the main method for collection and analysis of the field data. Insights from The Gateway Approach\textsuperscript{64} (TGA) have influenced interview technique, coding and subsequent analysis.

GTM was developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in the 1960s as a reaction against an obsession with testing and verification rather than what they saw as the sociologist’s real work of generating sociological theory.\textsuperscript{65} They sought to move away from using qualitative analysis only as a means of proving theories and hypotheses, to deriving and understanding theory directly from the data they collected.\textsuperscript{66} The theories or research results are grounded in the collected data, which become the key focus of the research.\textsuperscript{67}

GTM data is collected in one or more slices, depending on the richness and number of sources available to the researchers. Each slice may be collected from a different medium; for example: interviews, books, journal and magazine articles and websites. The slices may also differ in orientation, some being snapshots or parallel data, others being longitudinal.\textsuperscript{68} The collection of interview data is most often undertaken in a relatively informal style, guided by a schedule of points or areas that the researchers want to explore but led by the informant. In this case, one data slice was a series of informal but fairly detailed interviews, and a second slice was extracted from a series of auto-biographical books written by JBYs in the last twenty or so years.

TGA is a methodology developed by Carolyn Lunsford Mears in 2005 in the wake of the Columbine High School tragedy in Littleton, Colorado, in April 1999. Mears is herself a Columbine survivor. Her son was not physically injured but—like every parent and pupil involved—they were deeply affected by the trauma of the shooting. She developed TGA during the course of documenting and exploring the effect that the tragedy had on parents like herself from her own unique “insider” perspective.\textsuperscript{69}

TGA deals, in particular, with two phenomena in particular: the difficulty of communicating with and understanding the experiences of what is essentially a closed group, and overcoming the concern about bias or lack of objectivity when the researcher is themselves effectively part of the group being studied. A number of TGA themes are

\textsuperscript{64} Mears, Interviewing.
\textsuperscript{65} Glaser and Strauss, The Discovery of Grounded Theory.
\textsuperscript{66} Urquhart, Grounded Theory, 5.
\textsuperscript{67} Scott and Morrison, Key Ideas, 119.
\textsuperscript{68} Urquhart, Grounded Theory, 18.
\textsuperscript{69} Mears, “Experiences of Columbine Parents.”
particularly significant in the study context: the trauma membrane, the gateway, and oral history techniques.

The trauma membrane, first described by Jacob Lindy in the 1980s, is part of the healing process following catastrophic stress. Defined as “a temporary psychosocial structure, a buffer zone or covering that protects traumatised people in the aftermath of catastrophic stress,” it can be formed around individuals or groups in response to stress or trauma applied to individuals, groups, or communities. As in the biological world, its presence implies that there has been a wound; the membrane may be semi-permeable and is not always visible. The trauma membrane appears to allow isolation of trauma events until they can be broken down and processed, but will resist repeated trauma stimuli that threaten to breach the membrane. Mears used the concept of the trauma membrane to describe the way that the Columbine parents isolated themselves from those outside the event, either to prevent further violation or because the reality of the event cannot be understood by others.

TGA provides a gateway between those inside a trauma membrane and those outside, often by means of one or more individuals who have a privileged position within the inside community because of having shared some or all of the trauma. These individuals share vocabulary and experience of the trauma event, so are recognized as insiders by others within the trauma community, and are able to communicate on behalf of those inside with those outside who are seen to lack the relationship and experience. TGA uses oral history techniques to allow narrators to tell their own story. This places the narrator in a position of honor as an expert with value to share and offers positive validation to their experiences. Allowing the narrators’ own voices to be explicitly heard, and listening in the context of the cultural background, social setting and community of experience brings the power of the narrators’ experiences to the fore and gives memories social meaning.

The act of translation is more common than most people think. It takes place where people with different “first” languages are in communication with each other; either one or the other will translate into the other’s first language. It can also take place between speakers who do not speak each others’ languages, via a third “intermediate” language. George Steiner argues that translation is implicit in every act of communication, even when the parties to that communication share the

70 Martz and Lindy, “Exploring the Trauma Membrane,” 27, 29, 30, 35.
72 Ibid., 160, 164.
same first language: “to hear significance is to translate.” The history of a language, the means by which it carries nuance and a record of social being, is an essential adjunct to a translation process. Translation can also be seen as a “constant process of updating and elaborating, rather than some kind of physical movement across cultures.”

Connecting with the TGA themes above, it is the researcher’s job to translate the special or “experience” vocabulary of the closed group into terms that those outside the subject world(s) of the interviewees can understand. In so doing, the researcher has to determine the measure of a respondent’s vocabulary and word usage, to detect and report the significance of what the respondent is actually communicating (or not) rather than the simple transcript. This requires translation of vocabulary, culture, and time. The researcher also has to ask his or her questions and interpret each response within the group context of each respondent.

Initial interview scripts were written to explore the issues raised by Juster, Soulen, and Wyschogrod. Data collection continued in line with GTM’s theoretical sampling principle until effective saturation, that is: nothing new was being said. The transcripts were then grouped to allow a small sample size with a more particular examination, and the TGA position of privileged access and antecedent knowledge was deployed to select a small subset of three to six of the most significant transcripts in each case for a number of the sample population groups or themes and subject them to a close comparative scrutiny. Lastly, the TGA principle of not obscuring the individual narrators was used to give an active and personal, albeit anonymized, set of voices to the issues being described.

**Nomenclature**

Please note that, in deference to Jewish and Messianic Jewish custom, unless in a direct quotation, Jesus is always referred to by his Hebrew name, transliterated in English as Yeshua.

So with the decks cleared for action and some basic groundwork defined and established, the next chapter will take an overview of the all important data.

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73 Steiner, *After Babel*, xii,26.