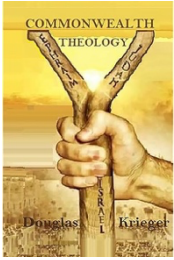


**A review of *Commonwealth Theology Essentials*, by Douglas Krieger, Douglas Hamp, Gavin Finley, and Chris Steinle (Phoenix, AZ: Commonwealth of Israel Association, 2020)**



If you're like me, you had never heard of "Commonwealth Theology" until very recently—perhaps not until this very moment. One of the leaders of this movement, and coauthor of *Commonwealth Theology Essentials*, suggested he and I meet for a debate.<sup>1</sup> Once I'd read the book, I suspected an engagement of this sort was not likely to be fruitful. However, I hoped it might be productive to address the teachings of Commonwealth Theology (henceforth CT) in a short article. I will do my best to summarize their teachings, and to be fair when I disagree. All page number references are in brackets. These are not endnotes, which are indicated in superscript.

***(1) A Modern-Day Movement of God?***

According to CT, "Within the current move of Almighty God, there is a plan for the body of Christ to awaken to the Hebraic nature of the Kingdom and learn their place in the Commonwealth of Israel. This is no accident. This awakening is paramount for the Remnant fulfilling their role in the Kingdom of God as end-time prophecy unfolds before us" [xvi]. For promoters of CT, "Back to the Bible" means "back to Hebraic thought and practice" [xviii].

Does "Hebraic" refer to OT times and practices, or to the time of Jesus and the Pharisees, or to subsequent centuries in which Judaism moved in new directions? The sources on which CT draws are often much later than Bible times.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, the Palestinian background is key for understanding the New Testament. This view was forcefully presented in the 1970s and has been accepted by most NT scholars. After all, Jesus and his apostles were Jewish, and the OT was the Bible of the earliest Christians. Yet we cannot just assume that Judaism in the time of Jesus—four decades before the Romans destroyed the Temple and effectively extinguished all Jewish sects apart from the Pharisees—is the same as that of the post-70 AD Jewish world. Most sources appealed to by modern preachers of a Jewish Christianity date from *after* the war with Rome, and it is likely there is a fair amount of retrojection going on. That is, the views of the rabbis in 200, 300 or even 500 AD are being *read back into* the record.<sup>3</sup>

According to CT promoters, their discoveries are "easily the most important advance in Judeo-Christian relations in 100 years."<sup>4</sup> So what are the specific insights which CT claims to have unearthed? Is their bold assertion warranted?

***(2) Two Houses***

The central claim of CT is that all of humanity belongs to one of "two houses," Judah or Ephraim (Israel), and that God is reuniting these two houses. "Behold, the days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31).<sup>5</sup>

The division between the houses (or kingdoms) dates to the inception of the Divided Kingdom (c.931 BC), when Jeroboam I led northern Israel away from the Davidic dynasty based in Jerusalem. The two houses were alienated from each other for centuries. Most of the world (being Gentiles) belongs to the House of Ephraim, since Israelite blood runs in their veins. CT holds that reuniting these two houses is God's grand plan. "The purpose for Messiah's coming was the restoration of Israel. Not, the replacement of Israel" [20]. This implicitly means that Jews (the House of Judah) are still in a covenant with God. But what about passages like Gal 4:21-31?

<sup>21</sup> Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? <sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. <sup>23</sup> His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

<sup>24</sup> These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. <sup>25</sup> Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. <sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother... <sup>31</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

The Sinai covenant is no longer in effect. Many groups, including quite a few evangelicals, are confused about the status of Israel, believing that somehow the old covenant was never repealed. Doesn't the new replace the old (Heb 8:6-13)?

<sup>6</sup> But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. <sup>7</sup> For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. <sup>8</sup> But God found fault with the people and said:

“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

<sup>9</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

<sup>11</sup> No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

<sup>12</sup> For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

<sup>13</sup> By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

CT claims the reconciliation achieved through the Cross (Eph 2) is reconciliation between Jews (the House of Judah) and Gentiles (the House of Ephraim, or Israel), not (primarily) peace between God and humankind. That is, the covenant not only *involves* both houses, but is *between* the two houses (Jer 31:31). Eph 2:12,16 is also enlisted in support of this claim—a passage nearly all interpreters agree refers to the Gentiles and not to the remnants of the Northern Kingdom.

“So what is the New Covenant? It is the renewed marriage contract between Yahweh and His wife Israel (reunited House of Israel and House of Judah)” [327]. The marriage analogy is pressed too far, as we shall see below. The parallel passage in Col 1:21ff doesn't support this interpretation, either. Moreover, the ingathering of which Jesus speaks in John 11:52 is *not* one of Gentiles, but of Israelites. He refers to them as “children of God.” The CT interpretation seems to require that there are no longer any true Gentiles on the earth—that they have become Jewish genetically.

### (3) *A Bold Scientific Claim*

To equate Ephraim with non-Judeans, the Gentiles, CT reasons that Jewish (Israelite) blood flows in Gentile veins. While some of us reading this article may have Hebrew blood in our veins, it strains credulity to claim that all humans, or even most humans, do. (My surname looks Jewish. Were my ancestors who brought the German name to America in the 1700s Jewish? I don't know, nor does it matter theologically one way or the other.)

- “We are in fact biological and chosen descendants of Ephraim...”<sup>6</sup> [258].
- “How does it feel to be of Joseph, the Stick of Ephraim? That is precisely what the Almighty claims we are. No, even with the best DNA testing, it still can't be proven—although the scientific proof is still processing...” [258].
- “... Israelite DNA can be found virtually throughout the planet but tribal specifics [are] as ambiguous as ever—indeed, Israel was swallowed up of the nations” [273].
- “... After nearly three thousand years of ‘mixing,’ it is likely that nearly everyone on earth carries some genes from the lost House of Israel”<sup>7</sup> [6].

We Gentiles have Israelite blood in our veins, they say, because in the diaspora unfaithful northern tribes interbred with Gentiles. If I eat a fig newton, my body takes in and digests the cookie. To some degree, it becomes part of me. Yet is that what happened when the northern tribes were “swallowed up”? What biblical support is there?

A favorite CT text is Hosea 8:8: “Israel is swallowed up; now she is among the nations like something no one wants.” But why should “swallowing up” not be a simple metaphor?

- In 2 Sam 18:8 the forest “swallows up” soldiers—but their genetic material doesn't become part of the arboreal flora.

- In Lam 2:5 the Lord has “swallowed up” Israel. This is a way to describe punishment, not a declaration of Israel becoming part of God.
- In 1 Cor 15:54 death is swallowed up in victory. Yet it is certainly not incorporated into victory; no trace or taint of death remains!<sup>8</sup>

According to CT, national Israel need only recognize its redemption by faith [366]. After all, “... physical descent from Abraham has *not* been disqualified in order for someone to become a child of God...” [259]. Really? Tell that to John the Baptist, Jesus, or Paul (Matt 3:9; 8:11; Rom 9:6-8). Unfortunately, CT is fundamentally misguided about genetic descent. And that throws everything else off.

For CT, what should be at most a peripheral doctrinal matter becomes the touchstone of orthodoxy. “No, this is *not* a peripheral doctrinal issue. This involves the very Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ—His Ekklesia would restore the Breach of Jeroboam and open the floodgates to Esau; the “rest of mankind”... creating in Himself *One New Man*... so making peace!” [276].

#### ***(4) Further considerations militating against the Two Houses***

Much more can be said against the CT doctrine of the Two Houses. They are correct in citing Isa 14:1 to prove God’s blessings were available to all Israelites, whether of Judah or Ephraim. Yet their interpretation of Acts 15:17 as distinguishing Gentiles from “the rest of mankind” is unpersuasive [66].

CT understands Peter (in Acts 2:36) to mention “all the house of Israel” because Judah was still under a covenant [370-371]. Yet after the Cross that covenant loses force. Consider Heb 9:15-17:

<sup>15</sup> For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. <sup>16</sup> In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, <sup>17</sup> because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.

In Matt 10:6 Jesus makes no distinction between Judah and Ephraim. Similarly, in Matt 15:24 his apostles are not told to focus on Judeans only, but to go throughout Israel. If the distinction is so important, why didn’t Jesus discuss it? Granted, there are a number of important issues not addressed in the four gospels, but he also taught his apostles extensively (John 14:26; 16:12-13), and we could have expected them to give us at least an inkling of CT doctrine.

“The fullness of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:25) is equated with the “multitude of nations” in Gen 48:19 [325]. “... What is even more amazing is that through the dispersion of the House of Israel to the nations, the entire world is being blessed because the House of Israel was assimilated into the nations and became one with them. Thus, their return is nothing other than the ingathering of the Gentiles into the kingdom and fulfills Yahweh’s original promise to Abraham that his seed would be like the stars of the heavens” (Gen 15:5) [327]. I’m not sure how amazing this is, nor whether it follows that such an ingathering would lead more people to follow Christ.

The phrase “the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (Heb 8:8) is fulfilled in the church. The house of Israel are not the “lost tribes,” let alone the Gentiles. Eph 2:12-22 prohibits a “two house” interpretation. The division between Jews and Gentiles—the distinction—was nullified in the first century AD.

CT freely admit that a number of major Messianic groups reject Commonwealth Theology, despite the common ground they share [51].<sup>9</sup> So they aren’t claiming to speak for all such groups, and in *Essentials* take care not to misrepresent others. They seem to be aware that they are unique in what they proclaim.

#### ***(5) God “dies” in order to remarry?***

The CT take on Romans 7:1-6 is ingenious. In the OT God had two wives, Israel and Judah. Understanding the old covenant as a marriage contract [310]—there is some truth in this view—but interpreting marriage not as figurative, but literal, CT wrestles with the problem of Yahweh accepting back the wayward House of Israel.<sup>10</sup> He had never “divorced” Judah, so they hold, but he had put Ephraim away. Let’s take a look at the passage in question:

<sup>1</sup> Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? <sup>2</sup> For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. <sup>3</sup> So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

<sup>4</sup> So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Their move works if we allow Rom 7:2 to indicate that God (Yahweh) died [319]. But Christ died—the Son, not the Father. “The only way the wife (Northern Kingdom Israel) could be released of her fate of having been put away... and divorced... by Yahweh was for Yahweh (her husband) to *die* which would annul and dissolve the original marriage contract” [318].<sup>11</sup> Yahweh dies (!) so that “through Yeshua/Jesus (the incarnate Word of Yahweh), his wife, Israel, can be married to a different man—which is none other than the Risen Yeshua—Wow!” [319]

“As a result, their joint status as adulterers was wiped away. Israel’s utter hopeless situation as a divorcée was annulled and Judah’s status as adulterous wife was cancelled. Furthermore, the House of Judah and the House of Israel have become one again and the wall of separation between them has been removed” [324].

CT believes Judah was never divorced, only Ephraim (based on Jer 3:8 and Ps 89) [322]. Yet Isa 50:1 (in the context of the surrounding chapters) refers to Zion (Judah). Both “sisters” were “sent away.” Moreover, marriage and divorce are relational metaphors. Pushing an analogy too far normally fails.

Another point tells against the CT view of God’s remarriage. Rom 7:6 envisions the *opposite* situation—the widow is free to marry another—not that the deceased husband comes back to life and remarries her!<sup>12</sup>

Yet the downfall of this doctrine is that God the Father does not die on the Cross. Unless we believe that only the pre-incarnate Son of God was in a covenant relationship (“married”) with Judah and Israel, the doctrine is unbiblical. In Jer 3, it is Yahweh who is the husband.

## **(6) Israel in the sovereign plan of the God**

In the understanding of CT—as in that of many evangelical Christians—“God isn’t through with Israel yet.” The Jews are still his people, and Torah is still binding, and Israel stand under a covenant with Yahweh.

- “Both the everlasting Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant remain in place on God’s part: ‘Concerning the election... the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable’ (Rom. 11:28-29)” [487].
- “The throne of David... will be established *nationally* at Jerusalem, even the New Jerusalem that John saw descending from heaven” [194].
- “You might be able to see where I’m going with this—for if we conclude that unbelieving Judah/Jews are not of Israel, when the very State of Israel bears their name—then is not the accusation of the Replacement Theologians that today’s ‘Israel’ on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean has no eschatological bearing whatsoever—and is, at worst, apostate or simply a gathering place for Jacob’s Trouble (at best); but, more likely, it is simply a happenstance, meaning nothing?” [134].

CT goes even further in their claims, speaking of “our Jewish brothers and sisters” [197, 200, 359]. But did not the Jews—the ones who rejected Christ—refuse God’s plan? What about 1 Thess 2:14-17? What about Matt 21:43? And doesn’t Heb 3:18-19 equate disobedience with unbelief? Is there a way to be saved apart from faithful obedience?

The CT defense: “Why cannot the Household of God be comprised of believing Judah (Jews) and Ephraim (‘Elect from among the nations’) and yet within that same Household are His brethren who rejected their brother Joseph?” [133]. In other words, because Joseph’s physical brothers were still his biological brothers—despite the harm they caused him—there is nothing Israel can do to sever the covenant relationship with Yahweh.

## **(7) Interpretative faux pas**

CT scriptural interpretation is marked by hyperliteralism, slapdash interpretation, and misreading of Torah.

### *Hyperliteralism*

I found *Commonwealth Theology Essentials* to be characterized by a consistently confused literalism. For example, in Rev 12:3, stars mean angels, and once we realize this, they explain, we can take the passage literally [390]. But that is not what “literal” means. If stars are not literal stars, this fact doesn’t change by our possessing an interpretive key. Let’s consider a couple more examples. Rev 16:20 (= Isa 24:19-20) is understood as an “extinction level event” [386]. Or how about this one? “We believe [Rev. 16:3-4, in the light of Isaiah 26:21] says that all the blood that was ever shed from the days of Abel, up until the very last person to be murdered, will come back and come out in the oceans and rivers” [459]. This is hyperliteralism indeed. It’s hardly a CT phenomenon; many commentators on Revelation fall into this trap.

“Every aspect of doctrine, then, is vital; and can only be interpreted one correct way because the ‘word is truth’ (Jn. 17:17)” [10]. Such language should alarm the reader as it alarms the theologian. Simply put, not everything is so cut-and-dried, black and white. We are then warned, as in the game Jenga,<sup>13</sup> “Removing any one block could bring down the entire structure” [10].

### *Slapdash interpretation*

Jer 16:16 (fishers and hunters) is cleverly connected with Mark 1:17 (fishers of men) [380]. But what about context? The appearance of the same word in more than one passage doesn’t necessarily mean those passages are connected. Such an approach to the Bible is irresponsible. “There are symbols in Scripture and there are keys to unlocking our understanding of the symbols. The Bible can be taken literally once one understands the key for unlocking the symbols” [461]. Again, this is nonsense. *Symbolic* and *literal* are not equivalent.

### *Confusion over Torah*

To their credit, the authors admit “... promoters of Commonwealth Theology hold differing opinions on how, and to what extent, the Old Testament laws are to be observed”<sup>14</sup> [206]. Yet a major weakness of CT is its failure to appreciate that the commands of Torah are fulfilled not by literal obedience to its hundreds of *mitzvot*, but by love:

- For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:13).
- Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law (Rom 13:8).

They see Col 2:20-23 (“commandments and doctrines of men”) as *not* pertaining to the Law of Moses. Col 2:16-17 refers not to Torah, but man-made ordinances, according to CT [208], and Eph 2:14-15 refers to dogmatic commands associated with doctrines of men, not Torah [58]. While these passages come short of saying the Torah was nailed to the Cross, the consequence is still that Christians need no longer structure their lives by the holy times, foods, and customs of Judaism. That is the most natural reading of these passages. CT also takes Col 2:14 to mean that the broken marriage covenant with Ephraim was annulled on the Cross [319].

CT says Christians are under the Law [229]. “*The only time Christians need not heed the Law, is when they are walking so close to God in the Spirit that the fear of God keeps them within the Law—without the aid of the written law and its penalties.* That is the only time they are not under the Law because they *are* under grace” [234]. It seems they want it both ways: to be under Law and not to be under Law. In commenting on Gal 3:24 (Law as tutor), their reasoning becomes convoluted: “When Christians are not walking in the Spirit of grace they cannot disregard the tutor of the Law. The Law will keep them from getting too beat up, until such time when they become so hungry for the life of the Spirit that they repent and return to the presence of God” [235].

So we need the Law when we aren’t walking in the Spirit? What about Rom 6:14? We are “not under law, but under grace.”

## **(8) Eccentric Doctrines**

“Eccentric” has been defined: “deviating from the recognized or customary character, practice, etc; irregular; erratic; peculiar; odd.” Here is a sampling of eccentric doctrines I found in *Essentials* (besides the doctrines of the Two Houses and Jewish blood flowing in the veins of all mankind).

- Posthumous salvation—Ezek 37 speaks of salvation for those dead in their sins [338]. That is not what the passage is talking about. Rather, Ezekiel sees a figurative “national resurrection” of God’s people. And again, “amnesty” granted to those who had died in their sins, which “ended once Christ took His seat in glory” [347].
- The “rapture” of 1 Thess 4:17 (“caught up,” ESV) should be interpreted as “plundered / robbed / spoiled” [451]. This is unconvincing. At the return of Jesus, we will hardly be “robbed” of our physical bodies. The old body isn’t destroyed, but transformed.
- A Wednesday crucifixion, on Passover, which was also Jesus’s birthday [301]. This goes squarely against the consensus of NT scholarship.
- “In that great geological cataclysm of swirling waters, mud and rocks the broken bodies of dinosaurs came to be deposited in certain special places. The polar ice event froze woolly mammoths. There is evidence from specimens found in the permafrost that this happened very suddenly” [171]. To attempt to attribute every fossil to a global flood simply doesn’t work.
- The Amorites were Nephilim—hybrids [466]. “I believe Jesus will also be fighting hybrids because people that have taken the mark of the Beast would have mingled themselves with demons. The world will believe them to be aliens, but that is all a ruse to deceive the nations. The Day of the Lord will be a long day because Jesus has a lot of work to do on that day.” (No comment.)
- Nothing in the NT suggests we are adopted into the family of Abraham—but we are adopted into family of God... [257]. This is too fine a distinction. We are the seed of Abraham (the book admits this [258]); we are in the family. If we are Israel, we are in the family of Abraham. Not everyone in the family of Abraham is of Israel—e.g. Ishmael—but all in Israel are inherently in the family of Abraham.

There are many more eccentric doctrines and simplistic teachings that distract and detract from the central arguments of CT.<sup>15</sup>

### ***(9) End-Times Distraction***

“In recent years Bible prophecy has begun to line up with current events” [397]. CT expects a literal battle of Armageddon in Jerusalem [457]. “What are the conditions of the earth before the second coming? There will be an ash cloud that blankets the earth, blocking the sun and the moon. Billions would have been killed by the two hundred million demonic horsemen that come out of the pit (Rev. 9). All the oceans, rivers, lakes etc. are blood instead of water. The earth at this time is not a place that we would want to be. Satan and the fallen angels in actual bodily form are on the earth” [458].

Furthermore, “National Israel, during the ‘latter days’ shall corporately enter the New Covenant at the commencement of the literal one-thousand-year Millennium” [38]. This wooden millennialism is part of the CT view that the earth is 6000 years old [56].<sup>16</sup>

Yet most Bible prophecy is about the immediate present, not the distant future. Fascination with such distractions violates Jesus’ and Paul’s counsel (Mark 13:32; 1 Thess 5:1-11). The end-times are not an area for speculation, prediction, or calculation.

### ***(10) Not an Easy Read***

Although not directly bearing on the central arguments of the book, *Essentials* is written in a rambling style. The book hardly needed to be 544 pages. The work is poorly proofed. (There are multiple errors on nearly every page—not only stylistic, but grammatical, punctuation, and factual errors. I have preserved these in the citations from *Commonwealth Theology Essentials*). There is unnecessary sarcasm. There are inane number games. Exaggerations are common.<sup>17</sup> There are several instances of anachronism.<sup>18</sup> Bogus linguistic insights abound.<sup>19</sup> And there are copious errors where Greek, Latin, and Hebrew words appear. (I prefer not to waste ink spotlighting the hundreds of errors, or in refuting them.)

## Conclusion

These are committed people. They write with energy and conviction. They strongly oppose the common Protestant doctrine of “greasy grace” [189]. I don’t doubt their sincerity—as I don’t doubt the sincerity of most Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or other heterodox groups on the margins, convinced of their idiosyncratic doctrine. Yet the question is not one of their sincerity, but whether their teaching is biblical.

At the end of *Essentials*, we read “In Spanish, a jig saw puzzle is called a ‘rompecabezas’ because it breaks your head. I feel that I have been breaking my head trying to put the pieces together. Now, though, I am very excited to share them with you because I believe that the Lord has guided me in discovering how these puzzle pieces fit together. I will let you be the judge, of course, but I think you will see that the pieces fit incredibly well; and that you can take them very literally, which always excited me because God’s Word is very literal” [469].

The writer (Douglas Hamp, in this case) claims that the Lord has guided him. (Presumably the Lord has *not* guided those who disagree with him.) According to their Amazon blurb, “Mainstream theologies... have all overlooked the obvious. Is it possible that the truth has been concealed for nearly 2,000 years?” (I doubt it.)

“How could mainline theologians have missed the correct understanding of the relationship between Christians and Jews? And, for nearly 2000 years? This proposition doesn’t seem likely—or even possible!” [xxiv]. Agreed! The eccentric proposition of Commonwealth Theology doesn’t seem likely. Nor is it credible.<sup>20</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

For more on the general topic, <https://www.douglasjacoby.com/messianic-judaism-1-why-focus-on-this-movement/>, my series on Messianic Judaism, may be of interest.

---

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Hamp had seen my little 2022 volume, *Messianic Judaism*, and asked if we could have a debate. Before nailing down a date, I thought it best to become familiar with my prospective opponent’s position. I asked him what book he most recommended, and he suggested *Commonwealth Theology Essentials*. I carefully read the entire book (544 pages). By the time I’d reached the halfway point, I knew this would not be a productive debate—too many convoluted notions to refute. Yet I also realized, with more and more evangelical Christians being influenced by Jewish-Christian currents of thought, someone might benefit from my analysis.

<sup>2</sup> This reliance on sometimes-late Jewish sources makes CT similar to Messianic Judaism and Bema Discipleship.

<sup>3</sup> It is not the case that our analysis of the New Testament should totally bypass the later Jewish compendia of tradition, as many of these do reflect more ancient ideas. We should not assume that just because a text was written in the 4th century AD that it only reflects 4th century ideas. However, this kind of comparative work has to be done carefully. Simply reading these later traditions back into the New Testament is likely to throw up all kinds of false trails. Jewish literature more contemporary with the New Testament—and less likely to lead us down false trails—would include the works of Josephus and Philo (both of whom lived in the first century) and the Old Testament Apocrypha (mainly 2nd and 1st century BC). Without having a sound grasp on this sort of literature, it is difficult to properly contextualize the New Testament. Of course that is very different from claiming that modern gentile believers are in any way beholden to the demands of the Torah. Adapted from <https://www.douglasjacoby.com/qa-1636-reading-the-new-testament-through-a-jewish-lens/>.

<sup>4</sup> “Easily the most important advance in Judeo-Christian relations in 100 years, *Commonwealth Theology* (CT) cuts across denominational divisions to reveal God’s plan for the Church and the Jews. CT is based on a more literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Interpretations have, since the 2nd century, been influenced by man’s philosophy and politics... Mainstream theologies... have all overlooked the obvious. Is it possible that the truth has been concealed for nearly 2,000 years? ... In January 2018 Douglas W. Krieger premiered his groundbreaking work, *Commonwealth Theology: An Introduction*. Joined by Bible researchers Dr. Douglas Hamp, Dr. Gavin Finley, and Chris Steinle, *Essentials* expands the application of Commonwealth Theology to address even more aspects of biblical theology... resolving Christendom’s greatest areas of conflict by examining these heretofore enigmas in the light of Commonwealth Theology....” From Commonwealth Theology’s book promotional.

<sup>5</sup> “Jeremiah considered the God of Israel to have *two houses, two families*—Israel and Judah, plain and simple” [422]. That is correct: the northern and southern kingdom are referred to as houses. But then CT takes Jer 31:1 (“all the families”) to refer to Israel and Judah [423]. Yet *mishpāchāh* means clan, not house. Confusion over the Hebrew and inconsistent interpretation of terms makes it sometimes difficult to follow CT’s reasoning. As

---

for Jer 33:24-26 (two “families” [or “kingdoms,” depending on one’s translation] Yahweh promises something even better than the original plan (a political king, a national homeland, the observance of all Torah). The Davidic descendant is Jesus Christ, and the new covenant will replace the old.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Krieger adds, “Today it is very likely that most of the world could trace their lineage back to the house of Israel (100 generations)—literally ([good] grief, my little grandson did a precursory DNA test and found out that he was 1% “Middle Eastern”—whatever that is!” [86].

<sup>7</sup> For reference, the World Population Review 2023 estimates 411 million living in the Middle East, and about 7 million Jews (less than 2% of that total).

<sup>8</sup> Paul himself is an “Israelite” (his term, Rom 11:1), even though he hails from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5), historically part of Judah). The widow of Asher, Anna, knows which tribe she is from (Luke 2:36). Asher wasn’t apparently swallowed up.

<sup>9</sup> The doctrine of the two houses is roundly rejected by the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, as well as by the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America.

<sup>10</sup> Marriage / divorce language is analogical, not literal. Similarly, In Isaiah 62:5 the sons are not *literally* marrying Zion (their mother)!

<sup>11</sup> “... Yeshua’s death on the cross annulled Judah’s marriage contract with Yahweh and thereby allowed for the House of Judah to have a new covenant with Yahweh (because their first marriage was marked by gross adultery) even though she was never divorced. Judah could have a new relationship with Yahweh and so too Israel could come back into fellowship with her husband” [323].

<sup>12</sup> Further, the sanctioned remarriage of Rom 7 does not seem to be that of an adulteress; have CT scholars misread the passage?

<sup>13</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenga>

<sup>14</sup> They claim that the Ten Commandments and sexual purity laws all still valid [229]. Further, “... the Messianic style worship/Torah observance and the post-apostolic style worship semi-Torah observance are both valid according to personal conviction” [227].

<sup>15</sup> Examples include:

- The clean/unclean passages in Torah have to do with hygienics [228]—a view rightly ejected by most scholars.
- A naïve view of founding of America [237].
- “Even in heaven tribes and nations will retain their distinction” [6]. But nations at *which* time—since political boundaries are constantly changing?
- Souls are already in heaven [345]—not an eccentric view among Christians, although I believe it is mistaken. They read Eph 2:5-6 (“heavenly places”) to refer to heaven. But Paul is writing to the living, not the dead. All the saints have been seated in the heavenlies.
- The doctrine of a “veil” between heaven and earth [461]. Of course there is a some sort of separation, but CT seems to refer to a literal veil.

<sup>16</sup> Many millennialists believe there were approximately four millennia before Christ, that there will be two millennia in the “church age,” and one millennium it still to come—to cap history, once the Lord comes, reigning on the earth.

<sup>17</sup> Two examples will suffice. “The gospel of grace reaching billions of souls who have come to saving faith... through the Messiah’s First Coming” [502]. *Billions?* Perhaps if everyone even loosely affiliated with any church is counted, regardless of their faith commitments or lifestyle. Next, “The Jewish historian Josephus (37-100 CE) wrote that ‘the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude and not to be estimated in numbers’” [83]. This is interpreted as billions. However, I’m not saying that Jews were a minuscule fraction of the population of the Roman world. /They were numerous and relatively well known.

<sup>18</sup> Gnostics opposed Paul [xvii; also 191]? Proto-Gnosticism may have been current in the first century, but Gnosticism was the great second-century heresy. Another example: “... The Roman Empire of the second century... didn’t consist merely of the West, controlled by the western capital at Rome; but also of the eastern regions, ruled from Constantinople” [xxiv]. But there was no Constantinople till the *fourth* century.

<sup>19</sup> Let’s take one example. What does God look like? “The Scriptures clearly tell us that He has fire from His waist up and from His waist down, and it’s mingled with electricity. The word in Hebrew is *Ashman*, which means ‘electricity.’ In Greek, it’s *electros*, again ‘electricity’” [461]. Etymological fallacies are common among those who haven’t learned a language well.

<sup>20</sup> Further, CT claims “... Anti-Roman patriotism influenced the theology of the Early Church Fathers; especially in the Latin Church where Gnosticism had migrated from North Africa and infiltrated the Church. Eastern Dualism underpinned the notion that God’s people consisted of two camps: The spiritual Church, and the earthly Jews” [xxv]. The authors of *Essentials* do not seem to be well versed in early church history.