

1. After years of study, I came to the conclusion that many of the essential and critical doctrines that underlie Christian theology, all Christian theology - Catholic or Protestant - are in reality based on essentially Greek philosophical ideas, especially the Greek idea of perfection and person.

2. Since that time, I have realized (again with considerable study) that this Greek foundation of Christian thought is not an accident. I now am convinced that the early Church fathers, not to be confused with the apostles, were significantly influenced by two critical motivations: 1) to incorporate their Hellenistic philosophy into their new-found religion, now called Christianity; and 2) to separate the identity markers of this new religion from anything Hebraic. To do this, the early Christian fathers redefined a series of crucial cultural and religious markers, in particular, circumcision, dietary instructions, Sabbath, atonement and the tri-unity of God. These redefined concepts were much more in line with the current cultural practices (e.g., the consumption of pork and the worship on the day of the sun god) and were philosophically the children of the Greek thinkers, not the Jewish prophets. At this point in my life, I am convinced that a careful examination of both the history and the philosophy of the early centuries following the Resurrection confirm without doubt this trend - a trend that is still the majority opinion of Christians today, but which has now come under serious examination by important scholars.

3. For me, this implies that the apostolic writings are not set in an ante-Nicene environment but rather in a thoroughly Jewish understanding of YaHoVeH and the world. In other words, the Messianic Writings (re-named New Testament) are Hebraic in origin, not Christian as Christianity is understood after the middle of the 2nd century. The concepts, language, practices and beliefs of the apostles are Hebraic. The only difference between the expressions of the apostles and the expressions of the rabbinic sages is the assertion that Yeshua is the expected Messiah to the Hebrews. Otherwise, the theology, practices, rituals and expectations for the community fit completely within one or more of the sects of Judaism in the first century.

4. This is acknowledged by scholars on both sides of the issue - that is, both Hebrews and Christians. The real separation between Jews and Christians today is the separation caused by the assertions of the Church on two critical issues - the Trinity and the place of the Mosaic Torah. Even those Jews who acknowledge that Yeshua is thoroughly Hebraic in his teaching and practice are unable to recognize him as the Messiah of Israel because the Church has adopted a replacement theology and claims that the Torah has been abolished in spite of Yeshua's clear claim to the contrary in Matthew 5:17. No Jew, either in the first century or today, could have or will accept these claims, and rightly so since they deny everything about YHVH's revelation in the Tanakh (re-named OT). I am convinced that the apostles and the followers of the Messiah in the first century did not embrace these two Christian claims. I believe that both Scripture (the full Bible) and history bear this out. The first century followers of Yeshua, whether of Hebrew or Gentile ethnicity, understood his Messianic claim within the context of Judaism and they practiced obedience to the Mosaic Torah as a sign of their acceptance of this claim. Examination of the Messianic documents in the culture of the first century absolutely confirms this.

5. What this means is that Christianity was formed as a competitive religion sometime between 135CE and 325CE. The essential tenets of this new religion were anti-Hebraic in their inception, and later became anti-Semitic in their practice. This was in line with some of the prevailing intellectual culture of the later Roman Empire. This formation was not based on Scriptural claims although Scriptural claims were used as proof-texts for the shift. It was rather the product of political, social and intellectual motivations which we can now identify from the historical records. In particular, the replacement of Sabbath, abolishing the dietary instructions and substituting a single baptism as the sign of the “new” covenant for the “old” circumcision were attempts to remove affiliation with Judaism and to redefine the faith of the apostles.

6. I am convinced that the true practice of faith in the God of Israel and the Messiah Yeshua requires, for Christians, a complete overhaul of their assumptions about Torah, the relationship to the Hebrews and the faith of the apostles, and for Jews, an examination not of the teaching of the Church concerning Jesus and Paul but of the record of their teachings found in the New Testament, stripped of the subsequent layers of Christian theology. With this platform, I believe that faithfulness to Yeshua includes Torah obedience. It is not optional, although it is obviously adapted to the culture of the believer, that is, it must find expression where and when we live since we no longer live in Israel in the first century. Nevertheless, Torah obedience is the objective, not because it provides a means of salvation (which has never been the case) but because it is the way that YHVH wants His people to live in this world as a sign of His sovereignty over their lives and a demarcation of their difference. This also implies that Judaism today is not the same as the Judaism practiced by the first century followers of Yeshua, and we can trace the development of contemporary Judaism from the historical record just as surely and easily as we can trace the development of contemporary Christianity. In other words, I am not trying to become "Jewish."

7. Therefore, I reject the artificial and theologically-motivated separation of “Law” and “Grace.” I cannot find such a separation in Scripture nor in the practice of followers of the Messiah until after the introduction of Greek philosophical categories and anti-Judaism. This means that I hold myself responsible for Torah observance as best as I am able, and that I encourage and teach such as a true reflection of the apostolic, Messianic faith. While I understand that most Christians are ignorant of the conditions, both theologically and historically, that led them to conclude the “Law” does not apply to them, this is a grave error and needs to be addressed and illuminated, both historically and theologically.

8. Ultimately, the choice is about identification. One may identify with Messianic believers of the first century by adopting the markers that they embraced. These include the Sabbath, the dietary instruction and the rest of Torah as it applies to the gender, location and opportunities of a person's life. Or one may identify with the Christian markers, that is, Sunday worship, the absence (or selective endorsement) of Torah, a "spiritual" circumcision and a theology based in Greek thought. Or one can become Jewish, adopting the path of the Talmud and its commentators over the last 2000 years. But this choice is not the same as the choices made by followers of Yeshua in the first century and one should be brave enough to acknowledge so. We can be Messianic, Jewish or we can be Christian, but we cannot be consciously a combination of these options.

9. I believe that this identification issue separates the entire world into Christian, Jew or Messianic. My desire is to embrace the identification markers that were consistent with followers of Yeshua. These are scriptural as opposed to theological. I continue to examine the Scriptures to be sure that I am in alignment with these - and only these. I only want to do what YHVH has revealed, but in order to do that I must be knowledgeable of the other "religious" cultures so that my faith isn't based on mistakes and assumptions.

10. And I am learning in spite of mistakes.