

Seeds of Separation (Part I)

By Tony Robinson

Introduction

The study of the early Christian Church is crucial to our understanding of how and why Christians parted ways from their Messianic Jewish brothers and ultimately separated from their Hebraic roots. The following survey illustrates the chasm that developed quickly between Jewish people and the Christian church after the first and second centuries, as well as how Christianity systematically substituted pagan practices for biblical ones. The events of this turbulent time in Jewish-Christian history mark what would be an 1800-year split that God never intended for His redeemed. The following is easily verified in Church history books and in the writings of the early Church Fathers.

Soon after the deaths of the apostles there began the sowing of seeds in the Body of Messiah that would eventually cause non-Jewish believers to separate from Jewish believers. This can be demonstrated simply by noting that the early Church Fathers—some of whom were even contemporaries of the Apostles—began to introduce anti-Semitic¹ doctrines and practices.

Did Adonai intend for there to be two streams of God's people—Judaism and Christianity? Did God desire a pure Biblical faith, or the creation of two distinct religious institutions? What were the seeds of separation that formed this chasm? Just where did the split occur? This section will question various conventions established in Christianity in the hopes of challenging the reader's relationship to any particular belief system, encouraging him to strive toward a greater understanding and application of the faith. —FFOZ

The Church Fathers Spoke!

First, Israel's birthright as Adonai's chosen people was stolen. The so-called Epistle of Barnabas (written approximately 135 CE) spiritualized the Tanakh, claiming that it only prefigured Messiah and the Christian Church.² "Do not add to your sins and say that the covenant [the Tanakh] is both theirs and ours. Yes! It is ours; but they thus lost it forever."

One of the most eloquent Church Fathers, John Chrysostom (344-407 CE), whose name means "golden mouth," denounced the Jews in the strongest language: "They sacrificed their sons and daughters to devils; they outraged nature and overthrew their foundations of the laws of relationship. They are become worse than the wild beasts, and for no reason at all, with their own hands, they murder their offspring, to worship the avenging devils who are foes of our life... They know only one thing, to satisfy their gullets, get drunk, to kill and maim one another... The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jews must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is incumbent upon all Christians to hate the Jews."³

From as early as the 2nd century Christian leaders began to repress the inherent Hebraic nature of the Brit Chadasha and instead teach anti-Semitic doctrines. Below are a few selected quotes from some of the early Church Fathers.

In Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, Justin Martyr emphasized that what had previously belonged to Israel was now the property of Christians. The Tanakh was a central part of this transference. The Scriptures are "not yours but ours," Justin stated emphatically to Trypho. That is, the Church has replaced Israel as Adonai's children and people.⁴ Here is a direct quote from Justin Martyr: "For the law [Torah] promulgated on Horeb is now old, and belongs to yourselves alone; but this [new covenant] is for all universally. Now, law placed against law has abrogated that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one; and an eternal and final law—namely, Christ—has been given to us, and the covenant is trustworthy, after which there shall be no law, no commandment, no ordinance."⁵

Jerome (author of the Latin Vulgate) and Augustine taught that the Jewish people were eternally accursed by God. Ignatius, third bishop of Antioch, said that "The Christian faith does not look to Judaism, but Judaism looks to Christianity."⁶ In 339 CE, it was considered a criminal offense to convert to Judaism. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, Italy, praised the burning of a synagogue, as an act pleasing to God. Tertullian and Origen called the Jewish people "Christ killers" and "deicides (God-killers)." Augustine, a Roman Catholic theologian, called the Jewish people "sons of Satan." Augustine was highly influenced by Marcion, a heretic who lived during the 2nd century and called Adonai "an evil god."

The following three canons are from the Council of Laodicea (364 CE):

- Canon 29. "Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ."
- Canon 37. "It is not lawful to receive portions sent from the feasts of Jews or heretics, nor to feast together with them."
- Canon 38. "It is not lawful to receive unleavened bread from the Jews, nor to be partakers of their impiety."

Christianity—Religion of Rome

These teachings flourished and took root within the hearts and minds of the early non-Jewish believers. Until the time of Constantine, believers had suffered many persecutions. However, after Constantine won the battle of the Milvian Bridge, he issued the Edict of Milan in 313 CE. Although this edict did not make Christianity the official religion of the empire, Constantine claimed to be a Christian, put an end to the persecution of believers and put Christianity on an equal footing before the law with other religions of the empire. Furthermore, Constantine showered favors upon the Church. He granted large sums of money, and erected magnificent Church buildings in numerous places (Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Constantinople and elsewhere) and granted many other privileges.

With a sitting Emperor confessing Christianity, it was no longer a shame to be a Christian. Now, being a Christian could even secure great material and social advantages such as political, military and social promotion. As a result many heathens and pagans entered the Church—of course they brought their pagan influences with them. Because of the deepening spiritual vacuum in the leadership of the Church of the Western Roman Empire, the Church leaders were more than happy to pacify the heathens by allowing them to continue their pagan practices in the name of Christianity. As a result the heathens brought into the Church numerous unscriptural practices and "doctrines of men," which superseded the Word of God and brought further corruption and apostasy into the Church. Constantine subsequently translated theology into government policy. In spite of this development, Adonai had faithfully preserved a remnant of truly faithful followers throughout Church history, but they were always the minority and always persecuted.

The above quotations and historical facts have not been cited to condemn these men, but to show that soon after the deaths of the apostles, there was a deliberate separation from anything Jewish, resulting ultimately in the suppression of the Hebraic nature of the Scriptures and faith in the Messiah Yeshua. Furthermore, this separation manifested itself in an overt disdain for the Torah. History records the unfortunate result that the disciples of these early Church fathers learned and practiced their anti-Semitism, disdain for the Tanakh, and spiritualization of Scripture. Hence, by the end of the 5th century the following unscriptural practices and "doctrines of men" were deeply rooted within the Western Roman church.

- Prayers for the dead
- Belief in purgatory
- Penance
- The view that "The Lord's Supper" is a sacrifice that must be administered by priests
- The division of the Church into a clergy and laity
- Worship of martyrs
- Worship of relics
- Salvation by works
- Monasticism
- Asceticism
- Worldliness
- Ascription of magical powers to relics

Most of us can readily understand the obvious dangers of the "doctrines of men" listed above. What most of us don't readily realize is that repression of the Hebraic roots of the faith has been just as dangerous. Perhaps if the non-Jewish believers had remained grounded in their Hebraic roots, they possibly would not have succumbed to the "doctrines of men" listed above. By the 1500's we can add the following items to the list of unscriptural practices and "doctrines of men" engaged in by those who called themselves followers of Messiah.

- Worship of Mary
- Payment of indulgences
- Wars fought with "Christian" armies
- Political corruption
- Inquisitions
- The Word of God taken from the common man
- Greed, idolatry, pagan festivals, and more
- Persecution of the Jewish people as heathens and heretics
- The Spanish Inquisition

During the Spanish Inquisition, in 1480 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain established a tribunal to purge the Church of those who clandestinely clung to their Jewishness. Wholesale arrests followed. In 1481 the first victims were burned at the stake. Over the years an estimated 30,000 Jewish people were consigned to the flames.

It is obvious by any standard, that by the early 15th century the condition of Christianity was best described as APOSTATE—separated from the Jewish people with a prejudicial misunderstanding of the Scriptures. Furthermore, it is easy to understand why the Reformation (in the 1600's) was necessary. Surely, the prophecy of Sha'ul found a significant fulfillment in the Church era before the Reformation.

"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods." I Timothy 4:1-5

Martin Luther

One particular example of anti-Semitic teachings in the Church that we would like to expose pertains to Martin Luther. Luther (1483–1546 CE) originally favored the Jewish people in the hope that they would accept his form of the faith, even praising their contribution to Christianity. However, most people aren't aware that later in his life, when he did not succeed in converting the Jewish people, his attitude towards them changed dramatically. The following are quotes taken from Martin Luther's, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (published 1543 CE).

- "The rabbis should be forbidden to continue teaching the Law [Torah]."
- "Therefore be on your guard against the Jews, knowing that wherever they have their synagogues, nothing is found but a den of devils in which sheer self-glory, conceit, lies, blasphemy, and defaming of God and men are practiced most maliciously and vehemingly with eyes on them."
- "In brief, dear princes and lords, those of you who have Jews under your rule—if my counsel does not please you, find better advice, so that you and we all can be rid of the unbearable, devilish burden of the Jews, lest we become guilty sharers before God in the lies, blasphemy, the defamation, and the curses which the mad Jews indulge in so freely and wantonly against the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, this dear mother, all Christians, all authority, and ourselves. Do not grant them protection, safe-conduct, or communion with us... With this faithful counsel and warning I wish to cleanse and exonerate my conscience."
- "Accordingly, it must and dare not be considered a trifling matter but a most serious one to seek counsel against this and to save our souls from the Jews, that is, from the devil and from eternal death. My advice, as I said earlier, is: First, that their synagogues be burned down, and that all who are able toss sulphur and pitch; it would be good if someone could also throw in some hellfire... Second, that all their books—their prayer books, their Talmudic writings, also the entire Bible—be taken from them, not leaving them one leaf, and that these be preserved for those who may be converted... Third, that they be forbidden on pain of death to praise God, to give thanks, to pray, and to teach publicly among us and in our country... Fourth, that they be forbidden to utter the name of God within our hearing. For we cannot with a good conscience listen to this or tolerate it..."

Footnotes

1. Discrimination against or hostility toward the Jewish people
2. "The Church" is the established entity that institutionalizes the Christian religion. This is a distinct entity from the "Body of Messiah" which transcends the institution of the Church and more properly describes the body of believers that has existed both in and out of the Christian religion.
3. Dixon, M. *The Rebirth and Restoration of Israel*, Chichester, Sovereign World, 1988, p. 80
4. Wilson, Marvin, *Our Father Abraham*, Eerdmans Publishers, 1989 p.89
5. Justine Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*
6. Epistle of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, to the Magnesians, 115 CE

Seeds of Separation (Part II)

By Tony Robinson

In the previous article¹ we examined the seeds of separation between the Jewish people and the emerging Western Roman Church². We looked at numerous quotes from the early Church Fathers to demonstrate how they deliberately rejected beliefs and practices considered “Jewish.” Most of the quotations pointed to a rejection of Jewish people and Judaism. Furthermore, we saw that many of the doctrines were anti-Semitic in nature. A cursory examination of the anti-Semitic doctrines of the Church Fathers may lead one to believe that the basis of their antagonism was a rejection of Judaism. However, as we begin to analyze their writings, we find a consistent rejection of the Torah of Moses as the root cause. In Dialogue with Trypho, Justine Martyr states emphatically, “For *the law* [Torah] promulgated *on Horeb is now old*, and belongs to yourselves alone; but *this* [new covenant] is for all universally. Now, law placed against law has *abrogated* that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like *manner has put an end to the previous one*; and an eternal and final law--namely, Christ--has been given to us, and the covenant is trustworthy, after which there shall be no law, no commandment, no ordinance (italics mine).”³ In these words we see that the basis for the rejection of anything “Jewish,” was the premise that the Torah had been “abrogated” and superseded by the New Covenant. In the minds of the Church Fathers, what further need was there for the Torah with its “old” commandments. Since the Church Fathers also taught that the Jewish people were “Christ killers,” those who remained steadfast to Judaism were viewed as accursed by God, who had cast them and their Torah off to establish a “new Israel.” This mindset, that the Torah had been abrogated (and replaced by the New Covenant), became the basis for the separation of the western Roman Church from the early Jewish believers in the Messiah.

Did ADONAI intend for there to be two streams of God’s people—Judaism and Christianity? Did God desire a pure biblical faith, or the creation of two distinct religious institutions? What were the seeds of separation that formed this chasm? Just where did the split occur? This section will question various conventions established in Christianity in the hopes of challenging the reader’s relationship to any particular belief system, encouraging him to strive toward a greater understanding and application of the faith. --FFOZ

The clearest picture we have of the actual faith and practices of the early Jewish believers comes from the book of Acts. A brief perusal of the book of Acts confirms that the early believers in Messiah understood that the Torah had not been abrogated. Furthermore, their faith and practices were consistent with one based on the Torah-submissive lifestyle modeled and taught by Yeshua in Matthew 5:17-20. This lifestyle was firmly rooted in the foundation of the Torah. The book of Acts informs us that there were tens of thousands of Jewish believers in the Messiah (Acts 5:14; 21:20; 22:12) who zealously kept the Torah commandments of Moses. These early Jewish believers met regularly in synagogues (Acts 9:2; 22:19), on the Sabbath (Acts 13:5; 17:1-4), celebrated the feasts (Acts 2; 18:21; 20:6, 16; 24:11; 27:9) and by their own sworn testimony confessed that they kept the Torah of Moses (Acts 24:14; 25:8; 28:17) even as Yeshua taught they should. These Torah-submissive Jewish believers, who were called Nazarenes (Acts 24:5), and their offspring were to become the victims of the seeds of separation sown by the western Roman Church.

One of the earliest records of the developing antagonism between Torah-submissive Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers concerns statements by Ignatius, Bishop at Antioch,

approximately 98–117 CE. Ignatius argued “against the Judaizing tendencies of his territory, which, not far geographically from Palestine, *had suffered the influences of the synagogue and of the Judaeo-Christians* (italics mine).”⁴ In this statement Ignatius is lamenting the fact that some of the practices in Antioch had been influenced by the non-Messianic and Messianic Jews. With our knowledge of the Torah-based lifestyles of the early Messianic believers we should not be surprised that any customs, ceremonies or practices within the body of Messiah would reflect Judaism. What is surprising however is the lament by Ignatius concerning the “influences” of the Jewish believers. Elsewhere Ignatius writes “...if we are still practicing Judaism, we admit that we have not received God’s favor...” and “it is wrong to talk about Jesus Christ and live like the Jews...”⁵ In these statements Ignatius has certainly made “Jewish” practices and the Christian lifestyle mutually exclusive. However, as we shall see, what Ignatius rejected as “Jewish” were actually the commands of ADONAI from the Torah.

Some of the most revealing statements concerning the Messianic Jewish believers of his time were made by the Church Apologist, Epiphanius of Salamis, 370 CE.

“We shall now especially consider *heretics* who... call themselves *Nazarenes*; they are mainly... *Jews and nothing else*. They make use not only of the New Testament, but they also use in a way the Old Testament of the Jews; for they do not forbid the books of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings... so that they are approved of by the Jews, from whom the Nazarenes do not differ in anything, and they *profess all the dogmas pertaining to the prescriptions of the Law and to the customs of the Jews*, except they believe in Christ... They preach that there is but one God, and his son Jesus Christ. But they are very learned in the Hebrew language; for *they, like the Jews, read the whole Law, then the Prophets*... They differ from the Jews because they believe in Christ, and from the Christians in that they are to this day *bound to the Jewish rites, such as circumcision, the Sabbath, and other ceremonies* ... Otherwise, this sect of the Nazarenes thrives most vigorously in the state of Berea, in Coele-Syria, in Decapolis, around Pella, and in Bashan... After they departed from Jerusalem, they made their start from here, as all the disciples dwelt in Pella, having been admonished by Christ to depart Jerusalem and emigrate because of imminent danger (italics mine).”⁶

From this quote we see that by the fourth century the relationship between the descendants of the original Jewish believers and the western Roman Church had deteriorated to one of overt antagonism. By referring to the Jewish believers as “heretics” the Church clearly showed it had theological disagreements with them. By stating that they are “mainly... Jews and nothing else,” the Church was clearly practicing anti-Semitism towards the Jewish believers. More importantly, we can also see why the Nazarenes were viewed as heretics. Twice Epiphanius mentions that the Nazarenes make use of the Tanakh.⁷ He also states that they continued to practice “customs of the Jews,” and “Jewish rites,” including circumcision and the observance of Sabbath. The Jewish people who practiced Pharisaic Judaism and those who were Messianic both shared one thing in common. In the words of Epiphanius they both “profess all the dogmas pertaining to the prescriptions of the Law and to the customs of the Jews.” Thus, we see that the Nazarenes were viewed as heretics because they continued to uphold the Torah as the basis for their faith and practice in Messiah Yeshua and the customs of the Jews. This aversion to the Torah as the “old” covenant that had passed away was the main factor motivating the Church to persecute Jewish people who practiced Judaism and those who believed in Yeshua as the Messiah.

The quote from Epiphanius demonstrates he knew that the Nazarenes of his time were the direct descendants of the earliest Jewish believers in the Messiah⁸. It also provides evidence that the Jewish believers of his time (400 CE) continued to live Torah-submissive lifestyles as taught by Yeshua in Matthew 5:17-20, and demonstrated in the book of Acts. In fact, we can continue to trace the presence of Torah-submissive Jewish believers through many centuries by examining the writings of their detractors who continued to ostracize and persecute them. The Church Father Jerome (author of the *Latin Vulgate*) described the Nazarenes as “those who accept

Messiah in such a way that they do not cease to observe the Old Law.”⁹ Once again, we see that it was obedience to the Torah that caused the Nazarenes to be viewed as different from the Church.

We have seen testimony from early Church history that the Jewish believers in the Messiah continued to observe the Torah. There is also historical evidence that they existed well into the 13th century. *The History of the Sabbath* records for us, “As late as the eleventh century Cardinal Humbert still referred to the Nazarenes as a Sabbath-keeping Christian body existing at that time.”¹⁰ Furthermore, the author states, “And these so-called ‘Judaizing Christians’ were none other than the Nazarenes mentioned by Cardinal Humbert... the true Israel of God, who amid all the persecutions through which they had passed, bore the reproach of Christ more than any other Christian party, wandering about as ‘pilgrims and strangers’ to preach the faith of Jesus and the commandments of God.”¹¹ These Jewish believers in Messiah were called Pasaginians, who were “so named by the Italians from the Latin word ‘passagium,’ meaning ‘passage,’ because of the ‘wandering, unsettled life of these people.”¹² Concerning the Pasagini, the Catholic writings of Bonacursus says, “Let those who are not yet acquainted with them, please note how perverse their belief and doctrine are. First, they teach that we should obey the law of Moses according to the letter – the Sabbath, and circumcision, and the legal precepts still being in force. Furthermore, to increase their error, they condemn and reject all the Church Fathers, and the whole Roman Church.”¹³ Furthermore, Gregorius of Bergamo wrote about the Nazarenes (Pasagini) in 1250 CE stating, “there still remains the sect of the Pasagini. They teach...that the Old Testament festivals are to be observed, circumcision, distinction of foods, and in nearly all other matters, save the sacrifices. The Old Testament is to be observed as literally as the New; circumcision is to be kept according to the letter.”¹⁴ All of these quotations show how the western Roman Church has reacted to the Jewish believers in Messiah. In all of the quotes above it is plain to see that hostility towards the Jewish believers had its basis in a rejection of the Torah of Moses.

This brief survey of the antagonism between the western Roman Church and the Messianic Jewish believers has shown us why the Church felt it necessary to sever its ties with the Jewish believers. Not only had the western Roman Church rejected the Torah as “old,” they began to despise Jewish people, thinking themselves better. It will be shown later that the seeds of separation were planted and nurtured predominantly by the western Roman Church (as opposed to the Eastern Churches, e.g., those of Asia Minor). Therefore, it is very interesting, that of all the epistles Paul wrote, it *was the epistle to the Roman’s* where he wrote his most impassioned pleas to the non-Jewish believers, 1) admonishing them to not think ADONAI had rejected His people Israel and 2) not to arrogantly boast against the natural branches. Unfortunately, by their own written testimony, history has shown that the non-Jewish believers of Rome did not heed Paul’s admonition.

“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid....*Boast not against the branches*. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee...Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee....For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, *lest ye should be wise in your own conceits*; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.”¹⁵

Footnotes

1. Seeds of Separation, Bikurei Tziyon, Devarim 5761, page 26
2. “The Church” is the established entity that institutionalizes the Christian religion. This is a

distinct entity from the “Body of Messiah” which transcends the institution of the Church and more properly describes the body of believers that has existed both in and out of the Christian religion.

- 3 Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Tyrpho, A Jew
- 4 Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph.D., Andrews University, From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity
- 5 Ignatius, Epistle to the Magnesians
- 6 Epiphanius; Panarion 29
- 7 Tanakh, a Hebrew word designating the Torah, Prophets and Writings; equivalent to what is called the Old Testament.
- 8 The Nazarenes of Acts 24:5
- 9 Jerome; On. Is. 8:14
- 10 Andrews, J.N. & Conradi, L.R. *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week* (4th ed., R&H, 1912 edition), p 545.
- 11 See *ibid.*, p 547.
- 12 Richard Chamberlin, Article entitled, *The Forgotten History of Messianic Judaism*
- 13 Luana Fabry, Article entitled, *How Long, O Lord, how Long?: A History of Anti-Semitism*
- 14 See *ibid.*,
- 15 Romans 11:1, 18-21, 25

The Earliest Divisions Within the Christian Church

(Part III)

By Tony Robinson

In the previous two articles we examined how the rejection of the Torah of Moses led the Western Roman Church to reject the Jewish people and separate themselves from the Jewish believers in Messiah. Now we will see how issues related to Torah observance also caused separations within the Christian Church. But first, let us examine the book of Acts to determine the Scriptural pattern of how the non-Jewish believers related to the Jewish believers in the body of Messiah.

Before Paul's salvation experience on the road to Damascus, he persecuted the early Jewish believers, searching for them *in the synagogues* (Acts 22:19; 26:11). Thus, we know the early Messianic Jewish believers remained a sect within Judaism worshipping in the synagogue. The earliest believers were ethnically Jewish and culturally Hebraic. During Acts chapters 1–10 (which comprise 7–10 years of history) we don't see any efforts to evangelize Gentiles. In fact, ADONAI had to use supernatural means (including angelic visitation, visions, and a sovereign outpouring of the Ruach) to show the disciples that repentance had been granted unto the Gentiles also (Acts 10:1–11:18). Only after the evangelization of Cornelius's household was there a determined effort to evangelize non-Jewish people (Acts 11:19–21).

Let us examine Acts 15 with the understanding that Jewish believers remained a *sect within Judaism*. This chapter recounts the Jerusalem council, which was established to answer the question, "How are gentiles saved?" Furthermore, they determined *the minimum requirements for Gentiles to meet in order to be accepted within Messianic Judaism*. Although Paul is called the apostle to the Gentiles, we must be careful not to think that he established Gentile Churches that met separately from the Messianic Jewish believers of the synagogue. Throughout the book of Acts we see that Paul's custom was to evangelize within the synagogue.¹ At that time there were many Gentiles, known as God-fearers or proselytes at the gate², who met regularly within traditional Judaism throughout the world. They were the primary source of Gentile converts for Paul during his missionary journeys.³ Evangelization apart from the synagogue was more the exception than the rule (Acts 17:18–34). Thus, Paul, uniquely equipped to evangelize Gentiles, ministered mainly to those who would be most open to the gospel—Gentiles already meeting in the synagogue. *Paul did not have the Gentile believers leave the synagogue and form "Churches."* They continued to meet in synagogues (except when persecution from non-Messianic Jews prevented them) as one body in Messiah. This view is in harmony with the Pauline epistles where Paul sometimes appealed to the Jewish believers (Romans 2:17–29; 7:1) while at other times he appealed to the non-Jewish believers (Romans 11:13). In the book of Acts we learn that Paul established congregations from Jewish and non-Jewish people who were already actively participating in the synagogue. Furthermore, they were believers who related to each other in Torah-based communities as one body in Messiah (Acts 15:13–21; Ephesians 2:1–3:21).

Two significant historical events, the 1st (66–70 CE) and 2nd (133–135 CE) Jewish revolts against Rome, changed the balance between the number of Jewish and Gentile believers in the body of Messiah. Moreover, other factors converged to cause the Gentile believers to separate themselves from their Hebraic roots and the synagogue. These events included:

¹ Acts 13:5,14, 42, 44; 14:1; 17:1–2, 10, 17; 18:4, 8, 19; 19:8

² David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1992, p 257.

³ Acts 13:42–44; 14:1; 17:4, 12; 18:4; 19:10

- 1) The influx of more Gentile converts than Jewish converts
- 2) The destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and traditional Judaism
- 3) The expulsions of Jews from Rome and Judea
- 4) The antagonism between traditional Judaism and the Messianic believers
- 5) The growing battle between traditional Judaism and the increasingly numerous Gentile believers.

Having already seen how the rejection of Torah led the Gentile believers to reject the Messianic believers, we will now see how rejection of the Torah led to schisms within the early Christian Church as they tried to deal with the issues of Sabbath and festival observance.

Many in the Church assume that practices such as Sunday worship and Easter celebration, etc., have existed since the book of Acts. Furthermore, many think the Biblical Holy Days were never a valid form of Christian worship. However, when we examine Church history we find a totally different picture. As we go back in time, approaching the era when the early Christian believers separated themselves from the Messianic believers, we discover that the *earliest Christian assemblies worshipped on the Sabbath and kept the Biblical Holy Days*. Numerous Christian and non-Christian historians of the ante and post-Nicene period have left us with a plethora of information concerning the practices and beliefs of the early Christian assemblies.

It is a fact that the early Christian Churches continued to meet on the Sabbath. Commenting on variations regarding religious assemblies within the Christian Church, Socrates Scholasticus writes, "For although almost *all Churches throughout the world* celebrate the sacred mysteries [the Eucharist] *on the sabbath of every week*, yet the Christians of *Alexandria and at Rome*, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this."⁴ This "ancient tradition" spoken of by Socrates was initiated in the early second century in Rome and Alexandria, the first Christian assemblies to break the tradition of meeting on the Sabbath. To understand their reasoning we must examine the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr and the letter of Barnabas, all writings of the first half of the second century. Ignatius (approximately 98-117 CE) warned about, "the *Judaizing tendencies* of his territory, which...had suffered the influences of the synagogue and of the *Judaeo-Christians* [Messianic Jewish believers]."⁵ Furthermore, Ignatius writes, "For if we are still practicing Judaism, we admit that we have not received God's favor."⁶ Ignatius goes on to upbraid Christians specifically for partaking in the Sabbath, "after the Jewish manner," exhorting them to, "keep the Sabbath in a spiritual manner . . . not in the relaxation of the body . . . and not eating things prepared the day before . . ."⁷ The fact that Ignatius felt the necessity to write these admonitions demonstrates that the early Christians were predisposed to the Jewish Sabbath practice. Furthermore, it is one of the first extra-Biblical instances of an emerging conflict concerning issues of Torah obedience among Gentiles. Lastly, it shows a developing antagonism to things considered "Jewish."⁸

The Epistle of Barnabas (130-138 CE, probably in Alexandria) is valuable because it contains the first explicit mention of Sunday observance by the Christians. Barnabas is more acute in his attacks on "Jewish" practices. The purpose of his epistle was to provide a basis for the total rejection of Judaism as a religious practice and to provide a theological basis for Christians to forsake "Jewish" practices and take on their new role as the true Israel. In order to do this he states that the Sabbath is not a present reality but an eschatological rest at the Second Coming

⁴ Socrates Scholasticus (379-450 CE), *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, Chapter XXII; A similar statement was recorded by the historian, Sozomen (357-447 CE), *Ecclesiastical History*, Prologue, Book VII, Chapter XVIII.

⁵ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5,2,8,4.

⁶ Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, Chapter 8:1,2

⁷ Pseudo-Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians* 9, ANF I, pp. 62-63.

⁸ *Jewish*, is in quotes because these are actually Scriptural instructions to Israel and those grafted into Israel.

of Messiah. He condemned Christians who continued certain Torah observances by stating, “take heed to yourselves and be not like some, piling up your sins and saying that the covenant is theirs as well as ours. It is ours, but they lost it completely just after Moses received it . . .”⁹ Furthermore, he allegorized the entire Tanakh stating that it only prefigured Messiah and His Church. By using the midrash that one day is as a thousand years, he states, “This is why we also observe the eighth day [Sunday] with rejoicing, on which Jesus also arose from the dead . . .”¹⁰ Thus he equates the eighth day with the resurrection of Yeshua on the first day of the week and the beginning of the eternal state on the eighth day (8000th year) after the 7000th year millennium. By allegorizing the Sabbath and equating Yeshua’s resurrection with the eighth day he provided a basis for Sunday worship (the eighth day) to supersede the Sabbath. In the minds of the early Christian Church, the Epistle of Barnabas clearly redefined Torah commands as only allegorical. Furthermore, we see increasing intolerance to those Christians who desired to practice Scriptural commands.

Justin Martyr, who wrote Dialogue with Trypho (138-161 CE) lived in Rome. In his writings he endeavors to show that the Torah was only given to the Jews because of their “sins and hardness of heart,”¹¹ until the Messiah would come. Furthermore, Justin states that, “God imposed upon you the observance of the Sabbath as a mark.”¹² Obviously, this trivializing of the Sabbath was acceptable since the western Roman Church already had a different day of worship. In an attempt to define Christians as distinct from the Jews (to Emperor Antoninus Pius), Justin states, “Sunday, indeed is the day on which we all hold our common assembly . . .”¹³ In fact, Justin provided three major reasons why the Christians of the Western Roman Church met on Sundays; 1) to commemorate the first day of creation when ADONAI transformed darkness into light, 2) because Yeshua was resurrected on Sunday, and 3) because the eighth day was more mysterious than the seventh day. Thus in Justin’s writings we see more devaluation of the Torah and its applicability to the Christians of Rome. Most scholars agree that Sunday observance probably originated in Rome and Alexandria. The Christian Churches of the East however, did not relinquish their faithfulness to Torah commands so readily.

Most believers are only familiar with the history of the Western Roman Church, which eventually gave rise to Roman Catholicism and then Protestantism. Few are aware that there was an official split between the Churches of the East and West¹⁴ giving rise to two separate developments of Christian expression. Although the official split occurred in 1054 CE, one of the most significant initial causes of animosity and eventual division between Churches of the East and West began in the mid second century of the common era. It involved the issue of Passover celebration. That the early Christian Churches celebrated Passover is readily demonstrated through early Christian writings. For example, Epiphanius (378 CE) informs us that confusion among Christians developed concerning Passover observance soon after the Messianic Jewish believers lost their authority in Jerusalem after the Bar Kochba revolt (133-135 CE).

“For long ago, even from the earliest days, the Phasekh [Passover] was celebrated at different times in the Church . . . In the time of Polycarp [158 CE] and Victor [196 CE] *the East was at odds with the West* . . . This has been the situation ever since [the Church] was thrown into disorder *after the time of the circumcised [Messianic Jewish] bishops.*”¹⁵

⁹ *Epistle of Barnabas* 4:6-9

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 5:9

¹¹ Justin, *Dialogue* 18, 2

¹² Justin, *Dialogue* 16, 1 and 21, 1

¹³ Justin, *Apology* 67, 3-7

¹⁴ The Latin Western Churches included Europe. The Greek Eastern Church included Asia Minor and the Balkan Peninsula.

¹⁵ Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 70:9:7-9

The controversy existed because, “all the bishops of Asia . . . were in the way of celebrating the Passover festival without question, every year, whenever the 14th day of the moon had come.”¹⁶ They cited the teachings of the Torah and B’rit Chadasha as well as the examples of Messiah and Apostles as foundational to their practice. In opposition to them was the Western Roman Church (especially those of Rome and Alexandria) who decreed that the Passover had to be celebrated on the Sunday after the spring equinox. The Western Roman Church called those of the Eastern Church Quartodecimans, which means 14th keepers, “because they observe this festival [of Passover] *like the Jews*, on the 14th day of the moon and hence their name.”¹⁷ In fact the Churches of the East continued to celebrate the other Biblical feasts as well. We know this because John Chrysostom (a Church Father and vehement detractor of the Jews and Jewish practices) condemned the Quartodecimans because they celebrated Yom Kippur, Sukkoth and Yom Teruah.¹⁸ “The staunchest supporters of the Quartodeciman view were the eastern Assemblies listed in the book of Revelation.”¹⁹

To the dismay of the Quartodecimans, the Western Roman Church made other changes to the original Passover Festival. For example, *the Scriptural emphasis (and typology) of Passover as a picture of the death of Yeshua was transformed into an emphasis on His resurrection*. Epiphanius refers to, “the day of *resurrection* and great festive day of the *Passover*.”²⁰ While Augustine says, “our yearly *festival* [of Passover] renews the memory of his *resurrection*.”²¹ Later, leavened bread replaced unleavened bread since unleavened bread was a sign of Judaizing. Today’s celebration of Easter Sunday has preserved these changes.

At two separate times the Churches of the East and West hotly debated the issue. Victor, bishop of the Western Roman Churches wanted to excommunicate all Churches of the East concerning Passover ritual. In one instance Polycrates, who represented the Eastern Churches had this to say concerning Victor’s threats of excommunication:

“All these [bishops of Churches in Asia Minor] kept the 14th day of the Passover according to the Good News (B’rit Chadasha), never swerving, but followed according to the rule of the trust. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all live according to the tradition of my kinsman . . . For seven of my family were bishops and I am the eighth, and my kinsmen always kept the day when the people put away the leaven. Therefore, brothers, I who have lived sixty-five years in the sovereign and conversed with brothers from every country and have studied all the sacred Scripture, am not afraid of threats, for they have said who were greater than I, ‘It is better to obey the deity rather than men.’”²²

Even the historian Epiphanius (who opposed the Quartodecimans) admitted that the Quartodeciman view *was the original view when the Messianic Jews were still in Jerusalem* (until 132-135 CE) stating, “it was necessary at that time that the whole world follow them [the Messianic Jews] and celebrate with them so that there should be a single confession . . . celebrating one festival [of Passover].”²³ In the final analysis the words of Constantine summarized why the Western Roman Church chose to change the Passover ritual, date and emphasis. Concerning the timing of the Passover celebration he stated, “. . . *it becomes us to*

¹⁶ Anatolius, 10.

¹⁷ Sozomen, 7:18; See also *John of Damascus*, 50 and Jerome, *Lives*, 45.

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, *Adver. Jud.*,

¹⁹ Famous Quartodecimans included Polycrates (bishop of Ephesus), Melito (bishop of Sardis), Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna), Apollinarius (bishop of Hierapolis) and Sagaris of Laodicea

²⁰ Epiphanius, *Expos. Faith*, 22:14

²¹ Augustine, *Serm. Wil.*, 4:3

²² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5:24:6f.

²³ Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 70:10:2

*have nothing in common with the perfidious Jews.*²⁴ The Passover battle between the East and West raged on for centuries and is well documented elsewhere.

In the previous two articles we saw how anti-Torah and anti-Semitic beliefs caused animosity between the emerging Christian Church and the Jewish Messianic believers and traditional Judaism. Now we've seen how anti-Torah and anti-Semitic beliefs were major issues resulting in the division between the Eastern and Western Churches. The central issue in all divisions was rooted in a misunderstanding and/or rejection of the Torah of Moses.

²⁴ Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Chapter XXII.

Seeds of Separation, Fruits of Replacement (Part IV)

By Tony Robinson

Introduction

In previous articles we examined how the rejection of the Torah by the emerging Western Roman Church caused it to reject traditional Judaism, separate themselves from the early Messianic Jewish believers and reject certain Torah observances as “Jewish.”²⁵ In this article we will examine how the seeds of separation bore the fruit of Replacement Theology. What is Replacement Theology and its foundational assertions? It is a doctrine developed by the Church Fathers²⁶ stating that the (Gentile) Church has replaced (Jewish) Israel as the covenant people of God. This doctrine asserts although the Jewish people were the covenant people of God as taught in the Tanakh,²⁷ when they rejected Yeshua as Messiah, they forfeited their status as Adonai’s chosen people. Having rejected the Jewish nation, they surmised Adonai had established the Church to be His new bride, chosen to take forth His message of salvation to the nations. Therefore, the Church is the new Israel. In their minds the Mosaic Law was given because of the hardness of heart of the Jews and is therefore no longer useful. It has been abrogated and superseded by the Brit Chadasha²⁸ writings. Furthermore, this doctrine asserts that all of the blessings designated for the nation of Israel in the Tanakh were transferred to the Church, while all of the curses abide upon the Jews forever. Although today many believers would readily discern that the foundations of Replacement Theology listed above are preposterous, most of us may not have considered how this doctrine, formulated hundreds of years ago, affects our faith and practices in this day. Therefore, it is important to examine why and how this doctrine came about.

Events Motivating the Separation

The book of Acts and the Epistles of the Brit Chadasha clearly teach that the body of Messiah was composed of Jewish and non-Jewish believers worshiping in harmony as one new man²⁹. During the early part of the first century, Gentile believers viewed themselves as part of Renewed Covenant Israel. Extra-Biblical sources also indicate that before 49 CE the Messianic believers (including believing Gentiles) were seen as an extension of Judaism³⁰. However, by 64 CE Rome recognized Gentile Christians as a religious group separate from Judaism. In the following years numerous events caused the non-Jewish believers to define themselves as an entity separate from Israel.

²⁵ Bikurei Tziyon, *Seeds of Separation Part I*, Devarim, 5761, page 26 & *Seeds of Separation Part II*, B'reisheet, 5761, page 32.

²⁶ Prominent Church Fathers include Origen, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, Justin Martyr and others. Prominent Church historians include Socrates, Sozomen, Eusebius, and Epiphanius.

²⁷ Tanakh, a Hebrew word designating the Torah, Prophets and Writings; equivalent to what is called the Old Testament.

²⁸ Brit Chadasha is Hebrew for the Renewed Covenant, which is referred to as the New Testament in most Bibles.

²⁹ Ephesians 2:11-18; 3:1-13.

³⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, 1958, p. 140; Leonard Goppelt, *Les Origines de l'Église*, 1961, p. 42, similarly remarks: "In the imperial city Christians are distinguished from Jews by A.D. 64, but not as early as A.D. 49. The State's recognition of their separate status occurred somewhere between these two dates according to the Roman sources."

First, prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE the Messianic Jews fled Jerusalem to the mountains of Pella located in modern-day Jordan.³¹ Although some Messianic Jews returned to Jerusalem after its destruction, this was the first event to dilute their leadership and influence from Jerusalem.³² Second, between the two Jewish revolts (70 - 135 CE) the antagonism between the Messianic Jewish believers and the Synagogue had heightened mainly because of their theological differences concerning the Messiahship of Yeshua. Third, the number of Gentile converts in the emerging Messianic congregations increased rapidly giving them a majority over the Messianic Jews. This demographic shift augmented tensions between traditional Judaism and the Gentile believers, because, unlike the Messianic believers who accepted Gentiles into the congregation apart from the prerequisite of circumcision (Acts 15), Judaism would never consider a Gentile as grafted into Israel apart from circumcision first. Furthermore, Gentile leadership became dominant in great centers of Christian growth such as Alexandria, Antioch and Rome. A Gentile-dominated leadership amongst those proclaiming to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was totally unacceptable to traditional Judaism, and cause for antagonism and numerous confrontations between the two groups in the ensuing years. Lastly, the destruction of Jerusalem and expulsion of the Jews from Judea in 135 CE was the climax of increasingly bitter relations between the non-Messianic Jews and Rome. Jerusalem had been the seat of authority amongst the Messianic believers; however, the expulsion of Jews from Judea in 135 CE shifted the balance of authority (among New Covenant believers) to the regions of predominantly Gentile leadership.³³ Within Jerusalem, this left Gentile believers in control of the body of Messiah for the first time and they quickly appointed a man named Mark as Jerusalem's first non-Jewish pastor.³⁴ By this time the chasm between Messianic Judaism and non-Messianic Judaism was insurmountable. It was the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135 CE) that resulted in the Jewish dispersion in 135 CE. The declaration by Rabbi Akiva that Simon Bar Kochba was the Messiah made it impossible for the Messianic Jews to participate in the Bar Kochba revolt since they knew Yeshua was the true Messiah.³⁵ Thus, the non-Messianic Jews viewed them as traitors to their country, their people and the Torah. Furthermore, as we saw earlier in this series, the Gentile believers in Gentile dominated centers such as Alexandria and Rome had begun to differentiate themselves from their Hebraic roots and the Messianic Jews. In an effort to distinguish themselves from the Jews in the eyes of Rome, the Church Fathers began to define their religion as separate from and superior to that of the Jews. This was a significant step towards the doctrine of Replacement Theology. Of the many factors that influenced the Church Fathers, we shall consider how the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and the dispersion of the Jewish nation in 135 CE biased the opinions of those who developed the foundations of Replacement Theology.

The Destruction of the Temple—A Sign of Adonai's Rejection of the Jews?

History has shown how quickly the Western Gentile nations responded to the Gospel. Despite the general acceptance of the Gospel by the Gentiles, the Synagogue continued to cling tenaciously to its ancient faith. Therefore, the Church sought in every way possible—through sermons, dialogues and polemics—to demonstrate that Judaism was a "dead and legalistic faith."³⁶ The

³¹ Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company & Dayton, OH: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1989), p. 76.

³² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.5.1-4--Eusebius of Caesarea (325 CE) records that a succession of 15 Jewish elders served in Jerusalem until the beginning of the second Jewish revolt.

³³ David Rausch, *The Legacy of Hatred*, (Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1984).

³⁴ Ron Moseley, *Yeshua*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Messianic Jewish Publishers a division of the Lederer Foundation, 1996), p. 8.

³⁵ Heeding Yeshua's words found in Luke 21:20-24, when the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem the Messianic believers fled to the area of Pella. This fact is also verified by the historian Epiphanius in *Epiphanius; Panarion* 29.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Marvin Wilson, p. 92.

destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and the dispersion of the Jewish nation in 135 CE were the most powerful arguments mustered by the Church to substantiate this claim. The Church felt that the destruction of the Temple was proof of Adonai's disfavor, and it signaled the end of Judaism as a religion. In addition, the dispersion of the Jewish nation was proof that Adonai had rejected them as a people. Justin Martyr understood that the burning of Jewish cities, the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews from Jerusalem were fitting judgments upon them because of their rejection of Yeshua and the Christian good news.³⁷ Furthermore, Origen stated that, "... these calamities they [the Jews] have suffered, because they were a most wicked nation . . ."³⁸

The Church Fathers felt that the destruction of Jerusalem was caused by "those [sins of the Jews] that were committed against our Jesus."³⁹ Using terms such as "Christ-killer," and "Deicide," the Church Fathers leveled a sustained verbal attack against the Jewish nation. For example, Augustine declared, "The true image of the Hebrew is Judas Iscariot, who sells the Lord for silver. The Jew can never understand the Scriptures and forever will bear the guilt for the death of Jesus."⁴⁰ While John Chrysostom vehemently exclaimed, "They are perfidious murderers of Christ. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ and for killing God [Deicide] there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jews must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is incumbent upon all Christians to hate the Jews."⁴¹ This *extreme anti-Semitism*⁴² and the notion that the Jews *were eternally culpable for the death of Yeshua* were essential ideas leading the Church Fathers to formulate the mistaken notion that Adonai had abandoned them forever in favor of Christians. The sermons and apologetics of the early Church Fathers were filled with anti-Semitic contempt and slander. Referring to Jews as wretched men, a wicked nation, idolaters, worse than wild beasts, worthless, torturers, blasphemers, gluttons, adulterers, less than human, cannibals, brute beasts, perverse, accursed, a brood of vipers, and serpents, the Church Fathers crafted a theology of eternal rejection of the Jew. The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas endeavored to demonstrate the total bankruptcy of Judaism stating, "they [the Jews] were thus [at length] abandoned."⁴³ He was even bold enough to state that the Mosaic covenant was broken *at Sinai*, "... in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed upon our heart [to the exclusion of the Jews] . . ."⁴⁴ Chapter 13 was written to prove that Christians are the only legitimate heirs of the New Covenant. So utterly rejected were the Jews that the writer informed his readers it was a sin to even say that, "The covenant is both theirs and ours."⁴⁵ This rejection of Jewish people also necessitated the rejection of the Torah. Thus, the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas stated, "He has therefore abolished these things [the sacrificial system], that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." may be instituted.

Their utter contempt for the Jews led some to view the Torah as a special covenant instituted only for the Jews because of their hardness of heart. Justin Martyr emptied the Torah of any significance and regarded it as, "an unimportant portion of the Scriptures, a temporary addition to a book otherwise universal and eternal, added because of the special wickedness of the Jews."⁴⁶ With the faulty reasoning that before the Mosaic covenant mankind did not circumcise, observe the

³⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 16.

³⁸ Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.8.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Calendar of Jewish Persecution.

⁴¹ Dixon, M., *The Rebirth and Restoration of Israel*, Chichester, Sovereign World, 1988, p. 80.

⁴² Discrimination against or hostility toward the Jewish people.

⁴³ Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter 4. Furthermore, See Ibid., James Parkes, on p. 84 he observes: "The whole of the epistle of Barnabas is an exposition of *the Church as the true Israel* [italics mine]. It is heresy even to try and share the good things of promise with the Jews. In tones of unusual gravity, and with a special appeal, the author warns his hearers against such mistaken generosity."

⁴⁴ Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and Synagogue*, 1934, p. 101.

Sabbath or any other rites, Justin concluded that the Torah was enjoined upon the Jews simply because of the hardness of their hearts. Concerning the Sabbath Justin writes:

*"The custom of circumcising the flesh, handed down from Abraham, was given to you as a distinguishing mark, to set you off from other nations and from us Christians. The purpose of this was that you and only you might suffer the afflictions that are now justly yours; that only your land be desolated, and your cities ruined by fire, that the fruits of your land be eaten by strangers before your very eyes; that not one of you be permitted to enter your city of Jerusalem. Your circumcision of the flesh is the only mark by which you can certainly be distinguished from other men . . . As I stated before, it was by reason of your sins and the sins of your fathers that, among other precepts, God imposed upon you the observance of the Sabbath as a mark."*⁴⁷

The Church is the "New" Israel?

With the Jews eternally disinherited from the covenants and blessings of Adonai, the Church Fathers went on to stress that Christians had *replaced the Jews* as Adonai's covenant people. In his treatise, "Against the Jews," Tertullian proclaimed that Adonai had rejected the Jews in favor of the Christians. The Christian historian Eusebius claimed that the promises of the Tanakh were bestowed upon Christians while the curses were heaped upon the Jews. Furthermore, he claimed that the Church was "the continuation of the Old Testament and thus superseded Judaism. The young Church had declared itself to be the true Israel . . ."⁴⁸

Although the early Church historians and Church Fathers accepted the Tanakh as inspired, their writings are filled with statements rejecting the divine calling of the people of Israel and the applicability of the Torah as a standard of faith and practice. Furthermore, many of them rejected the Torah and its seemingly strange laws, stating that they were not applicable to Christians. Yet at the same time they needed to preserve the ancient Scriptures—with its plethora of Messianic references—to justify the religion of Christianity and the Messiahship of Jesus. Therefore, how could they preserve the Messianic value of the Tanakh while simultaneously rejecting the Mosaic laws and the eternal divine calling of the Hebrews?

Clearly, anti-Semitism was a key factor influencing the Church Fathers to reject the applicability of the Torah's commandments and Israel's divine election. Blinded by anti-Semitism, the Church Fathers (Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine and others) rejected their Hebraic roots, the collective wisdom of the sages of Israel and the interpretive methods developed by the Jewish Torah scholars. Instead, they developed a system of *allegorical exegesis*⁴⁹ that destroyed the literal or plain meaning of the texts. The Hebraic methods of Scripture interpretation (hermeneutics) include gaining an understanding of the literal meaning of the text (pashat) and the allegorical interpretation (midrash) of the text. The Sages of Israel taught that the allegorical (midrashic) interpretation could never annul the literal meaning (pashat) of a text. However, using Western logic, the Church Fathers spiritualized many passages in the Tanakh and used whimsical allegorical interpretations *at the expense of* the literal meaning of the texts.

For example, the Tanakh and the Brit Chadasha teach that the Torah is eternal.⁵⁰ Using allegory, Tertullian taught that the Torah was only temporary:

"Therefore, since it is manifest that a Sabbath temporal was shown, and a Sabbath eternal foretold; a circumcision carnal foretold, and a circumcision spiritual pre-indicated; a law temporal and a law eternal formally declared; sacrifices carnal and sacrifices

⁴⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Tyrpho, A Jew*.

⁴⁸ Clarence H. Wagner Jr., "The Error of Replacement Theology," *Bridges for Peace Israel Teaching Letter*, Vol #771201, December, 2001.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Marvin Wilson, p 97.

⁵⁰ Psalm 119 and Matthew 5:17-20.

*spiritual foreshown; it follows that, after all these precepts had been given carnally, in time preceding, to the people Israel, there was to supervene a time whereat the precepts of the ancient Law and of the old ceremonies would cease, and the promise of the new law, and the recognition of spiritual sacrifices, and the promise of the New Testament, supervene . . .*⁵¹

Often the Church Fathers would point to the righteous men who lived before the giving of the Torah as examples to buttress their anti-Torah conclusions. For example, Justin Martyr argues erroneously that since there was no need of circumcision, Sabbaths, feasts and sacrifices before Abraham, then "no more need is there of them now."⁵² This appeal to those who lived before the Mosaic covenant was also used to teach that Torah commands were only spiritual and symbolic. Using those who lived before the flood and some descendants of Noah (including Abraham) as examples, Eusebius tries to make the argument that *the Christian faith was not new in time but existed before the giving of the Torah!* In order to justify his position that the Torah commands were only symbolic he states of them:

*"They did not care about circumcision of the body, neither do we. They did not care about observing Sabbaths, nor do we. They did not avoid certain kinds of food, neither did they regard the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to their posterity to be observed as symbols; nor do Christians of the present day do such things."*⁵³

In an attempt to empty the Sabbath of any practical significance, the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas allegorized Sabbath observance, stating that its only true meaning is "that in six thousand years the Lord will bring all things to an end, for a day with him means a thousand years."⁵⁴ Thus, the only significance of the Sabbath is that it is an eschatological rest to be realized at the coming of the Messiah.⁵⁵

In some instances the Church Fathers appealed to the Tanakh to show how its true purpose was to pre-figure the Church. In their eyes, Christianity was a religion practiced by those before the Mosaic covenant. They saw Christianity as "the religion of Abraham," that, while absent during the period of the Mosaic covenant, had "reappeared at the present time"⁵⁶ in the form of Christianity. This was done by spiritualizing Scriptures that clearly spoke of the nation of Israel. With his understanding that Christianity was a "new nation," Eusebius looked to the Tanakh to justify such a nation. He used Isaiah 66:8⁵⁷ to prove that Isaiah prophesied concerning the advent of the "nation" of Christianity. In one of the most brazen acts of replacement, Eusebius stated that the promise given to Abraham—that his descendants would become a great nation⁵⁸—was "fulfilled in us [the Church]."⁵⁹

By defining the Torah as a system of commands given only as symbols, the Church was able to relegate Torah obedience as relevant only to the stiff-necked Jews. By using the techniques of allegory and spiritualization, the remainder of the Tanakh was said to pre-figure the Christian Church. Now that the Scriptures were reinterpreted to support the doctrine of rejection of the Jewish nation and its replacement by the Church, Christianity could proudly state to the Jew, the

⁵¹ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, Chapter 6.

⁵² Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Tyrpho, A Jew*, Chapter 23.

⁵³ Eusebius of Caesarea Church History, Book I, Chapter IV.

⁵⁴ Epistle of Barnabas Chapter, 15:5a.

⁵⁵ Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph.D., Andrews University, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*, Chapter 7.

⁵⁶ Eusebius of Caesarea Church History, Book I, Chapter IV.

⁵⁷ Is 66:8a—Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once?

⁵⁸ Genesis 12:1-3.

⁵⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea Church History, Book I, Chapter IV.

Scriptures are "not yours, but ours."⁶⁰ Elsewhere it was written, "To profess Jesus Christ while continuing to follow Jewish customs is an absurdity. The Christian faith does not look to Judaism, but Judaism looks to Christianity . . ."⁶¹

Salient Reminders of Replacement Theology

Unfortunately, the seeds of separation and fruits of replacement were strengthened throughout the centuries. There are numerous testimonies, and salient reminders of Replacement Theology throughout history. Church art has preserved many penetrating images of the fruits of rejection and replacement. At the south entrance to the Strasbourg Cathedral (approx. 1230 CE) two statues were erected named Ecclesia (Church) and Synagoga (Synagogue)⁶². The statue of Ecclesia is depicted as proud and triumphant with an imperial robe on her shoulders and a staff shaped into a cross in her hand. Synagoga is shown rejected with her head down, blindfolded, and a broken staff. Furthermore, she is holding broken tablets of the Torah. A wood carving at the choir benches of the Erfurt Cathedral in Thuringia, Germany (1400 - 1410 CE)³⁸ shows Ecclesia with the Christian symbol of a fish on her shield, riding on a horse, attacking Synagoga with a spear. The Synagogue is symbolized as riding a pig with her eyes closed. A Church window of St. John's Church in Werben/Elbe River, Germany (1414 - 1467 CE)³⁸ shows the Church riding a tetramorph as she holds the cross in one hand. A divine hand from heaven is seen placing a crown on her head. In another window the Synagogue is depicted as riding a donkey, which is about to break down. She is blindfolded with her crown falling down and her staff is broken. Lastly, a divine hand from heaven pierces her head and body through with a sword.

The information presented in this article isn't meant as a diatribe against the Church. It is written to help us understand how and why non-Jewish believers left their Hebraic roots centuries ago. As we look back through the history of the body of Messiah, we can see that the original fellowship and brotherhood shared by Jew and non-Jew in the body of Messiah was broken. When non-Jewish believers rejected their Hebraic roots, we began to travel down a road that eventually led to a total separation between Jew and non-Jew. As we assess the current situation concerning Jewish/Christian relations we cannot help but notice the many reminders of the doctrine of Replacement Theology. It is a rare occasion that the Church and Synagogue move in cadence on any type of religious gathering.

True reconciliation will occur only when each group can see the complete Divine picture and plan for the *one new man* spoken of in Ephesians 2:15. This *one new man* keeps the commandments of God, *AND* has the testimony of Yeshua HaMashiach (Rev 12:17). I believe the heart of Adonai is for teshuvah (repentance) and reconciliation between the two groups. Although the task seems impossible, our heavenly Father has already begun to bridge the chasm of separation. Through the current restoration movement, He is beginning to do two seemingly impossible things. He has begun to show the Jewish people that Yeshua of Nazareth is their Messiah, giving them ***the testimony of Yeshua HaMashiach***. At the same time, He has begun to show ***non-Jewish believers*** that the Torah is their Torah that ***they may keep the commandments of God***. Knowing that this cannot occur by human might or power, it is my prayer that the two would become one, in Messiah by His Ruach (Spirit).⁶³

⁶⁰ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Tyrpho, A Jew*, Chapter 29.

⁶¹ Ignatius to the Magnesians.

⁶² Web Site, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, <http://www.jcrelations.net/frmain.htm>.

⁶³ Ephesians. 2:1 - 3:6; Zech 4:6.