

# THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MESSIANIC JEWISH THOUGHT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

My subject is a challenging one, both for myself as a Jewish believer in Jesus, and for the whole church as it searches for the most effective ways to share the Good News of the Messiah with both Israel and the nations. The title raises the questions of the impact of Christianity on the development of Messianic Jewish thought, but as we will discover, Messianic Jewish thought also impacts on Christian thinking generally. In line with the theme of this Conference and the work of this organisation, my hope is that the following presentation will challenge all of us in our thinking and in our practical witness as we respond together to our Lord's challenge to 'go and make disciples of all nations.' (Matt: 28:18)

## 2. THE THEOLOGY OF MESSIANIC JUDAISM

### 2.1 WHAT IS MESSIANIC JUDAISM?

Messianic Judaism is the religion of Jewish people who believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah.<sup>1</sup> It is a Jewish form of Christianity and a Christian form of Judaism, challenging the boundaries and beliefs of both. The Messianic Jewish Movement<sup>2</sup> refers

to the movement of Jewish people who have come to believe in Jesus (Yeshua<sup>3</sup>). Messianic Jews construct a new social and religious identity which they express communally in Messianic Congregations and Synagogues, and in their individual beliefs and practices. Since the early 1970s the significant numbers of Jewish people coming to believe in Jesus and the phenomenon of Messianic Judaism have raised several questions concerning Jewish and Christian identity and theology.<sup>4</sup>

There are some 150,000 Jewish believers in Jesus worldwide, according to conservative estimates.<sup>5</sup> More than 100,000 are in the USA, approximately 5,000 in Israel, the remainder being found throughout the approximately 13.2 million worldwide Jewish population.<sup>6</sup> There are over 200 Messianic groups in the USA, over 80 in Israel and many other countries. Whilst they are not uniform in their beliefs and expression, the majority adhere to orthodox Christian beliefs on the uniqueness and deity of Christ, the Trinity and the authority of Scripture. They express these beliefs in a Jewish cultural and religious context whilst affirming the continuing election of Israel (the Jewish people) with which they identify.

To varying degrees Messianic Jews observe the Sabbath, keep the kosher food laws, circumcise their sons and celebrate the Jewish festivals. They look to the practice of Jesus and the early church of the book of Acts as their model and example. They celebrate Passover showing how Yeshua came as the Passover Lamb, and practice baptism, linking it to the Jewish mikveh (ritual bath). They worship with their own liturgies, based on the Synagogue service, reading from the Torah and the New Testament. Their hermeneutic of scripture repudiates the tradition of Christian Anti-Judaism that 'the Jews killed Christ'<sup>7</sup> and the metanarrative of Supersessionism that the Church replaces Israel as the 'new Israel'.<sup>8</sup> They argue for continued 'Torah observance' that witnesses to the presence of Jewish members within the Church, and of a believing 'remnant' in the midst of Israel.

Despite opposition from the Jewish community, and misunderstanding in some Christian quarters, the Messianic Jewish Movement is recognised as an important expression of contextualised theology, a case study in ethnotheology<sup>9</sup> (Conn). The Homogenous Unit Principle (McGavran) does not precisely apply, as Jews are far from being a homogenous unit, yet the solidarity that Jewish believers in Jesus recognise does promote the need for an ethnic church which remains part of the universal Body of Christ, and is also connected to the majority of the Jewish people who do not yet believe in Jesus.

## 2.2 WHAT IS MESSIANIC JEWISH THOUGHT?

Messianic Jewish Theology has developed in the light of its Protestant

Evangelical background and its engagement with Jewish concerns. The doctrinal statements of Messianic Jewish organisations are uniformly orthodox, but are often expressed in Jewish rather than Hellenistic thought forms, and are more closely linked to Jewish concepts and readings of scripture.<sup>10</sup> Many Messianic Jews are influenced by the Charismatic movement, although an increasing number are opting for more formal styles of worship using the resources of the Jewish prayer book, and standard liturgical features such as the wearing of prayer-shawls (tallit) and the use of Torah-scrolls.

Messianic Jewish Theology is both the process and product of theological reflection that articulates and explains the beliefs and practices found within the Messianic movement.<sup>11</sup> It addresses both its own adherents and the Jewish, Christian and wider communities to which it relates, presenting itself as both an authentic form of Jewish discourse and as an expression of faith in Jesus as Messiah. The aim of this paper is to understand the describe the impact of Christianity on Messianic Judaism, and also to indicate where Messianic Jewish theology challenges the Church to a more effective understanding and presentation of the Good News of the Messiah to both Israel and the nations.

Its key concerns are the nature and functions of the Messiah, the role of the Torah, and the place of Israel in the purposes of God. Its ongoing fashioning of Messianic Jewish identity, self-definition and expression in lifecycle and liturgy are the visible manifestation and practical applica-

tion of its theological activity. Messianic Jewish Theology is thus theoretical and theological reflection that arises from the faith and practice of Messianic Judaism. It is a theology of Jewish identity linked to belief in Jesus as Messiah.

So what does Messianic Jewish thought say in response to its Christian and Jewish audiences? How is it impacted by both traditions, and how does it respond? Before considering three key topics below (God, Jesus and Torah) we will make brief observations on the theological method which Messianic Jews follow, in contrast with and challenge to much Christian thought.

Messianic Jewish thought is holistic, not dualistic. Much of Western Christian theology has been influenced by Aristotelian dualism, Enlightenment rationalism, and contemporary materialism. Jewish, or Hebraic thought, does not dichotomise the soul from the body, the spiritual from the physical and the material, or the individual from the community. It keeps them in relationship, as aspects of a whole, rather than parts that can be divided up. Greek thought, often described as Hellenism, separated the body from the soul, the idea from the manifestation. Although Judaism was greatly influenced by Hellenism, and the greatest Medieval Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) combined a biblical worldview with Aristotelian thought, the general trend of Jewish teaching is to put forward a holistic view of life. We do not separate the sacred from the secular, and the holy from the normal.

Like Jewish thought generally, is not systematic, in the sense that it is bound to abstract philosophical concepts that result in tight philosophical systems. This can be very frustrating for those who like their theology, like their thinking, neatly tied up. This does not mean that Jewish people do not engage in philosophy or theology. Far from it! But our thought is always practically oriented, and it is not always clear what the theoretical base is for much practical discussion. Nowhere is this more true than in the main corpus of Jewish teaching, the Talmud. This massive corpus of discussions on everything from the detection of mould in the walls of a house to how to say prayers correctly is un-systematic, repetitive and difficult to follow. Studying the Talmud (an orthodox Jew studies one page a day and takes seven years to complete the cycle) is like setting sail on an ocean. You are carried along by its discussions, but you never arrive at your destination. It is the journey itself that teaches, and the composite of hundreds of years of tradition and the discussion of hundreds of rabbis on a multiplicity of topics adds up to a comprehensive, if not systematic, presentation on God, humanity and the world.

Messianic Jewish thought is biblical. It sees the scriptures as God's revelation in written form, with final authority in all matters of faith and conduct. But Messianic Jews do not limit their hermeneutical procedures to a historic-critical approach, which dissects scripture on the operating table of the human sciences without allowing the theological vitality of the text to challenge the reader with its

own authority as God's living Word for us today. Messianic Jews bring a theological reading to scripture, which is both canonical (the whole bible, not just the New Testament), christological (seeing Yeshua [Jesus] as the Messiah and fulfilment of promise) and community-based (received and interpreted in both Jewish, Christian and Messianic Jewish communities). Their hermeneutic often employs midrashic<sup>12</sup> methods of exegesis and interpretation, using the interpretive grid of the first Jewish believers in Jesus. They read the Torah (the law of Moses) in the light of the Prophetic traditions, and the fulfilment of the promise of the Hebrew Bible (the Tanach) in the light of the coming of the Messiah. But also read the whole Bible as the story of Israel, the people of God, with the inclusion of the nations in the promises God makes to Israel through belief in the Messiah. This 'enlargement theology' does not exclude the Jewish people today from the promises of God to Israel, but sees the promises as fulfilled by faith in Yeshua as Messiah.

Messianic Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures sees Israel not just as a concept, but a living, present reality of the covenant people of God. In order to understand the ministry and message of Jesus, we have to understand him in the context of his first century Palestinian Jewish background, and in the context of the salvation history of Israel from the time of the Exodus from Egypt. Reading the life and teaching of Jesus in the context of his Jewishness is a challenge, and many critical scholars have reconstructed a Jesus who is against the Judaism of his day, or

a Jesus who is not God and Messiah, but just a special rabbi, prophet or miracle worker. Messianic Jews see Yeshua as fully Jewish, fully human and fully divine.

Messianic Jewish thought reacts against supersessionism and anti-judaism. The teaching that God has replaced the Israel of the Old Testament by the Church of the New Testament as the People of God oversimplifies the complex relationship between Israel and the Nations in the body of Christ, and was often used for polemical purposes in the early Church's struggle to define itself in the Roman empire in contradistinction to the Jewish people.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Messianic Jewish thought is both principle-driven and practical/pragmatic. There is nothing as practical as a good theory, and Messianic Jews, with their experience of 3,000 years survival as Jews, and 2,000 years of survival as the faithful remnant within the house of Israel, a minority within a minority, need a theology which is clearly based on sound biblical, missiological and theological principles, and is culturally relevant, sensitive and practically oriented. So practical and direct applications are needed, or our theology is too abstract. Sound principles are required, or our methods are too situational. Quite a challenge!

### 3. GOD

#### 3.1 THE DOCTRINE OF GOD IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND MESSIANIC JUDAISM

We begin with God, because in both Judaism and Christianity the doctrine of God is central. The Shema (Deut.

6:4) declares the existence, identity, unity and authority of God, as do the first five articles of Maimonides' 13 Articles of Faith.<sup>14</sup> The Jewish understanding of God is seldom presented as systematic theology, but is addressed philosophically.<sup>15</sup> Christian theology pursues similar investigative pathways, with the doctrine of the Trinity lying at its heart.

### 3.2 CREDAL STATEMENTS

Where Messianic Jews have discussed God, the emphasis has been on the Trinity and the Incarnation, and other aspects of the subject have followed the lines of Protestant Dogmatics.<sup>16</sup> The Creeds and Articles of Faith produced by Messianic Jewish organisations are uniformly orthodox from a Christian perspective. The first modern Messianic Jewish creed, composed by Joseph Rabinowitz for the 'Israelites of the New Covenant', affirms traditional aspects of God's nature.

There is but one true and living God, not corporeal, without divisions, cannot be apprehended by the bodily senses, of great goodness, power and wisdom beyond comprehension, who creates, forms, makes and upholds everything by His Word and by His Holy Spirit. All things are from Him, all things in Him, and all things to Him.<sup>17</sup>

Rabinowitz adopted the Hebrew translation of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, omitting the phrase 'three persons of one substance in the godhead.'<sup>18</sup> Whilst Gentiles, who are accustomed to polytheism, need instruction that the three persons in the Holy Scriptures are one, Jews find it very difficult to use the num-

ber three, although they know from Scripture that the One God is three persons or personalities.

The believing Gentiles call the three persons in the Godhead: 'Father, Son and Holy Ghost'; we name them: 'One God, and His Word, and His Holy Spirit', which is the same. Why should the Christian Church burden Israel with doctrines, which were taught them from false conceptions of the Godhead?<sup>19</sup>

Messianic Jewish organisations make similar statements. The MJAA basis of belief affirms: GOD – We believe that the Shema, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Deut. 6:4), teaches that God is Echad, as so declared: a united one, a composite unity, eternally existent in plural oneness.<sup>20</sup>

The UMJC similarly asserts: We believe that there is one G-d, eternally existent in three persons.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3 DETAILED PRESENTATIONS

Five extended contributions on the Doctrine of God available reflect various approaches, methods and concerns.<sup>22</sup> Baruch Maoz begins with God's existence, essence and attributes.<sup>23</sup> The fatherhood of God, the divine and human natures of the Son and the person of the Holy Spirit follow. 'Important but wrong views' are refuted,<sup>24</sup> including heretical christologies.<sup>25</sup> Acknowledging his sources, Maoz invites readers to adopt a 'Reformation approach' to Scripture, as found in Calvin, the Puritans, and contemporary Reformed Dogmatics. The Westminster Confession is included.<sup>26</sup> Apart from translation of concepts into Hebrew there is little

engagement with Jewish sources. Arnold Fruchtenbaum expounds God as Father of the Son, of creation, heavenly beings, Israel and all believers.<sup>27</sup> He considers the love and revelation of God through the Son and the Scriptures.<sup>28</sup> The Trinity is explained in the light of heresy.<sup>29</sup> Fruchtenbaum does not interact with Jewish philosophical tradition or Christian theological debate. His method is biblical exposition with little use of secondary sources.

David Stern finds the traditional Christian and Jewish understandings of God are sufficient, up to the point where they are seen to divide.

In theology proper, the study of the nature of God, one can begin with the elements common to Jewish and Christian understanding or 'Judeo-Christian tradition, – for example, the oneness, eternity, omnipotence and holiness of God. But soon one must deal with the two chief issues which divide, the divinity of the Messiah and the inner nature of God.<sup>30</sup>

For Stern the historical developments of Judaism and Christianity bring non-Messianic Judaism to the point of 'utterly denying the possibility of the incarnation and insisting on the absolute unity of God in a way that negates most Christian assertions about the trinity.'<sup>31</sup> Yet Stern insists that there are 'hints within Judaism' that the opposition 'is not so monolithic.' Whilst Stern does not give a systematic presentation of the Doctrine of God, his theological reflections are found in comments on several biblical passages in his Jewish New Testament Commentary.<sup>32</sup>

Louis Goldberg's chapter 'Specific observations on the Doctrine of God' engages with the classical sources of Jewish and Christian debate.<sup>33</sup> He first formulates and explains propositions about God from the biblical material. Then problems are addressed, and the 'practical value' for the believer is emphasised. The material is well-suited for discipleship and catechesis.

Mark Kinzer's unpublished lectures on 'God and the Messiah' incorporate classical and contemporary Jewish and Christian material, demonstrating a reflective approach to the task of MJT in addition to the articulation of the nature of God.<sup>34</sup> Kinzer's published work does not address the doctrine of God directly, but his recent Postmissionary Messianic Judaism has a section on the nature of Revelation.<sup>35</sup> In the light of this material Messianic Jewish understandings of God are presented, with due consideration of the method, content and resources used, and with awareness of the creativity and originality of the discussion.

What does the Messianic Jewish understanding of God have to say to the Church? It challenges the Aristotelian and Platonic formulations of the Creeds to be directly relevant. Jewish thought is functional, not ontological. God is known through his redemptive acts in history, not through Aquinas's five proofs for his existence. Yes, God exists, as the Holy One of Israel, the Ruler of all Nations, and the Saviour of Humanity. A Messianic Jewish understanding of God sets His being in the light of His Creation, Redemption and Consummation of All Things.

## 4. JESUS

Jacob Jocz, a Hebrew Christian of the last century, wrote: At the centre of the controversy between Church and Synagogue stands the Christological question. This is not a question whether Jesus is the Messiah, but whether the Christian understanding of the Messiah is admissible in view of the Jewish concept of God. Here lies the dividing line between Judaism and Church. On this point neither can afford to compromise.<sup>36</sup>

However, most Christians, when they understand the doctrine of the Trinity, do not explain it in Jewish terms. Lev Gillet wrote: What is needed is a 'translation of meanings'. A re-thinking of Christology in Jewish terms, i.e. not only in Hebrew words, but in Hebrew categories of thought.<sup>37</sup>

Today there is great discussion about the divinity of Jesus in the Messianic movement. Gershon Neirel writes: Like in ancient times, also the modern movement of Jewish Yeshua-believers is shaping its corporate identity through theological debates and doctrinal definitions. Particularly during the last two years we are observing unceasing discussions concerning the topic of Yeshua's divinity.<sup>38</sup>

### 4.1 THE NEED FOR A MESSIANIC JEWISH CHRISTOLOGY

Messianic Jews stand astride Jocz's 'dividing line', refusing the partition of Judaism and Christianity into mutually exclusive theological systems.<sup>39</sup> Nowhere is this more apparent than in their belief in Jesus, which appears blasphemous to Judaism and heretical to Christianity,

either clashing with the fundamental tenets of Jewish monotheism or compromising the uniqueness of Christ. The nature of Yeshua as Messiah and Son of God has always been a matter of controversy between Jews and Christians. It is bound to be a focal point for MJT.

The divine nature of Yeshua was again brought to prominence in the Messianic movement by the November 2002 articles in 'Israel Today'.<sup>40</sup> In that issue 12 Messianic Jews were asked their views on the Divinity of the Messiah, and some of the answers given 'were made to seem to state that Yeshua is not God'.<sup>41</sup> Tzvi Sadan notes the uncertainty that is found in the Messianic movement on the issue.<sup>42</sup> Joseph Shulam of Netivyah in Jerusalem is also concerned at the level of heat generated by the controversy on the divinity of Christ,<sup>43</sup> as is Elazar Brandt.

Those who question the deity of Yeshua but serve him faithfully ought not to be labelled as heretics or unsaved for their ideas alone; likewise, Trinitarians ought not be labelled idolaters by non-Trinitarians if their intent is to worship and serve one G-d. If we cannot grant each other some room for fresh thought, we will never advance beyond Nicæa in our concept of G-d.<sup>44</sup>

David Stern recognises the need for Messianic Jews to develop their Christology: I challenge Messianic Jews, especially those of us who feel in our gut the need for staying Jewish, to get enough training in theology to deal seriously with the complex data underlying the



Church's affirmation of Yeshua's deity – which can even be supported by material in the Talmud and other classical Jewish writings.<sup>45</sup>

**4.2 CHRISTOLOGY IN DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS**  
The creeds and doctrinal statements produced by the Messianic movement reflect an orthodox Christian understanding of Jesus and the Godhead. All are uniformly Trinitarian, but expressed with varying degrees of Jewish content.<sup>46</sup> For example, the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) Basis of Belief affirms the triune nature of God and the deity of the Messiah:<sup>47</sup>

GOD – We believe that the Shema, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Deut. 6:4), teaches that God is Echad, as so declared: a united one, a composite unity, eternally existent in plural oneness [Gen. 1:1 (Elohim: God); Gen. 1:26 'Let us make man in our image'; Gen. 2:24 Adam & Eve were created to be as one flesh (basar echad)], that He is a personal God who created us (Gen. 1 & 2), and that He exists forever in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as mentioned in Romans 8:14–17 (Father, Spirit, and Messiah – Son) and Matt. 28:18–20 (immersing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

A. GOD THE FATHER (Abba) – John 6:27b; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:1; Rev. 3:5, 21; Jer. 3:4, 19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; Matt. 6:9, 32; Luke 10:21–22; John 1:14; 4:23; 5:17–26; 6:28–46; Rom. 8:14–15.

B. GOD THE SON (HaBen)

1. God does have a Son [Ps. 2; Prov. 30:4–6 (cf. Heb. 1); Luke 12:35–37; John 1:29–34, 49; 3:14–18].

2. The Son, called Yeshua (Jesus), meaning salvation, came to this world born of a virgin [Isa. 7:14 (cf. Luke 1:30–35)].

3. The Son is God (Deity), and is worshipped as God, having existed eternally [Ps. 110:1 (cf. Heb. 1:13); Isa. 9:6–7; Matt. 28:18–20; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–19; Rev. 3:21 (Heb. 1 – worshipped by angels); Rev. 4:8, 5:5–14].

4. This One is the promised Messiah (Messiah) of Israel [Is. 9:6–7; 11:1; Dan. 9 (esp. verses 20–26); Isa. 53; John 1:17, 40–41, 45, 49; Mark 8:29].

5. He is the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star (Num. 24:17; Rev. 22:16).

6. He is our Passover, the Lamb of God (1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5; John 1:29).<sup>48</sup>

**4.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTOLOGY**

Christological methods and resources in the Messianic movement are derived from previous approaches. Amos Funkenstein has identified five phases in the history of Jewish-Christian encounter and the presentation of the Messiahship and divinity of Yeshua.<sup>49</sup> The first stage was the early debate on the interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Tanach. The use of Testimonia, collections of texts from the Hebrew Scriptures confirming the Messiahship of Jesus, may be seen in some of sermonic material in the New Testament writings, and the Dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Trypho is an example of this type of apologetic. A second phase developed with the use of Jewish sermonic material, the Aggadah, in the context of mediaeval debate, as exemplified by Raimundus Martini's



manual for Christian Preachers, the *Pugio Fidei*.<sup>50</sup> The debate between Paulus Christiani and Nachmanides in 1264 in Spain illustrates this approach. The third development was the use of the Jewish mystical tradition, the Kabbalah, to prove the Messiahship and divinity of Jesus, which will be examined below.<sup>51</sup>

The fourth stage combined modern critical methods of study of scripture with changing views of the historical Jesus. In some cases this led to a liberal and rationalist perspective on Jesus, setting him within the Jewish context of his day, but not recognising his Messiahship or Divinity.<sup>52</sup> The Jewish reclamation of Jesus, and the loss of confidence in the uniqueness of Christ both emerged in the light of this development of 19th and 20th century critical studies. At the same time, the modern missionary movement developed, and Hebrew-Christian apologetics were developed and propagated by writers such as Frey, Delitzsch, Hengstenberg and Reichardt.<sup>53</sup>

A fifth 'Postmissionary' stage can be detected in recent presentations Messianic Jews employing postliberal and postcritical readings of the biblical and rabbinic materials.<sup>54</sup>

#### 4.4 EMERGING CHRISTOLOGIES

Previous studies have emphasised the uniformity of the orthodox (Christian) christologies within Messianic Judaism.<sup>55</sup> The presence of heterodox views has caused some embarrassment within the movement.<sup>56</sup> It is clear that there is considerable variety within Messianic Judaism on the nature of the Messiah. Five emerging christologies

are identified which represent the spectrum of thought within the movement. The first reflects Protestant Reformed and Evangelical tradition. The second recontextualises the Nicæan formulation without losing its substance. The third articulates the deity of Christ in terms of the Kabbalah and the Jewish mystical tradition. The fourth attempts a new Christological method in its handling of the traditional materials. The fifth arises from Unitarian thought that denies the deity of Jesus and echoes adoptionist christology.<sup>57</sup>

All these approaches accept that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah, and are happy to base this on his fulfilment of prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures. They acknowledge his Jewishness, atoning work, and resurrection. The question is rather what kind of Messiah he is, and how to express this in response to both Jewish tradition and Christian teaching. The focus of the current debate is the relationship of Yeshua's Messiahship to the nature of God.<sup>58</sup> The redefinition of the Christology of the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds challenges Messianic Jews to link Jewish and Hellenistic ways of thinking about the uniqueness of Christ.

#### *Transcending Hebrew and Greek Categories*

Daniel Juster recognises that: To raise the question of Yeshua's divinity is to open one of the greatest debates between Jews and Christians. This question leads to the whole debate about the Trinity, since the Messiah is said to be divine as one part of the Triune God.<sup>59</sup>

Juster rejects the ‘widely held conclusion of modern scholarship’ that sharply differentiates between Hebraic and Hellenistic modes of thought as functional and ontological. For him the real question is rather: how a metaphysic that is implied by biblical teaching compares and contrasts with a Greek metaphysic. Because all human beings are created in the image of God, communication and evaluation with regard to metaphysical views is cross-culturally possible.<sup>60</sup>

This recognition gives the debate on Christology a more fruitful foundation. The Nicæan statement is neither ‘totally Greek and unacceptable’ nor an absolutely ‘accurate metaphysical statement of biblically implied truth’. The affirmations of Nicæa which are implied by the Bible, are that Yeshua is ‘Son of God’; ‘only begotten from the Father’; ‘begotten not made (created)’ and ‘light from light’.<sup>61</sup>

Juster reformulates the truths safeguarded by Nicæa in order to better communicate to the modern Jewish mind. He urges Messianic Jews to look to the original Jewish roots that influenced the Nicene Creed and from these roots speak afresh to our day. Juster defends of the plural nature of God in the Tenach, and follows this with discussion of the Angel of the LORD, the super-human nature of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6–7) and discussion of New Testament passages that show the divinity of Yeshua. He then gives his own understanding of Yeshua’s two natures.

He is one person or aspect of that plural manifestation of God (from

the Tenach) who became a human being. He, therefore, is a man who depends on the Spirit, prays to the Father, gets weary and dies. His divine nature never dies, but he is human as well as divine. As such, prayer in the New Testament is not primarily addressed to Yeshua but to ‘Our Father’ in the Name of Yeshua. For Yeshua is the human revelation of the Father.<sup>62</sup>

Whilst there is a suggestion of patripassianism here, Juster warns against the Christomonism that loses sight of God the Father, calling for full recognition of Yeshua’s divinity whilst recognising that God is more than just Yeshua. He then calls for a deeper expression of the Trinity in Jewish terms.

Jewish ways of expression are needed, ways more consistent to the New Testament, if Jews are to penetrate Christian rhetoric to see the Truth of Yeshua’s divine nature.<sup>63</sup>

There are several reasons why it is important to accept the ‘uni-plurality of God’ and the divine nature of Yeshua. Only a perfect man could bring a full revelation of God, as humanity is made in the image of God. The revelation of God’s love in the form of a human being is the greatest way possible to show God’s love. Such revelation has unique redemptive significance, as the Messiah’s suffering is the revelation of the suffering love of God himself. Because the Messiah is divine his suffering has infinite redemptive value. So for Juster ‘the divinity of the Messiah is not idolatry, but reflects the fullest revelation of God.’

The scriptures thus communicate to us the impression of one great divine reality of three inseparable manifestations of God. The relationship of love and accord blends the three into eternal oneness beyond human comprehension...The reciprocal giving relationship of love is eternally existent within the plural unity of God.<sup>64</sup>

Daniel Juster responds to the argument that in the distinction between Hellenistic and Hebraic thinking Jerusalem and Nicæa can be so easily juxtaposed. In reality, the interaction and inter-dependence of Jewish and Hellenistic thought is complex and varied.

The bifurcation of Hebraic thinking and Greek thinking as respectively functional and metaphysical-ontological is a widely held conclusion of modern scholarship (cf. O. Cullman, *Christ and Time*, also Bishop J.S. Spong, *The Hebrew Lord*). Yet, in my view, this absolute separation of functional thinking as Hebraic and metaphysical thinking as Greek can not be maintained. Functional thinking at least implies statements about the nature of being or it would lend to relativism in questions concerning the nature of reality. (This distinction has been used to bolster relativism in theology.) The real question is rather one which raises the issue of how a metaphysic that is implied by biblical teaching compares and contrasts with a Greek metaphysic. Because all human beings are created in the image of God, communication and evaluation with regard to metaphysical views is cross-culturally possible.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.5 SUMMARY

The UMJC position paper on the Tri-Unity of God summarises the biblical data for the plurality of God, the basis in Jewish tradition for plurality in the divinity, then goes on to state: It has also been pointed out that traditional Judaism has always rejected the concept of the tri-unity of G-d, interpreting the Shema in a narrower sense as an absolute oneness. This traditional view is in no way monolithic. The biblical data is also [part of] Jewish thought. Within Jewish thought, albeit mystical, the Zohar contains a trinitarian concept of G-d. While the Zohar is not our authority, it does demonstrate that the trinitarian understanding of G-d is NOT non-Jewish. Regardless of traditional views, we must not look to traditional Jewish teaching to tell us what is proper for us to believe. Our authority is the Word of G-d. Traditional rejection of the tri-unity is not based upon what we believe, but based upon their erroneous interpretation of what we believe. We in no way affirm the existence of three gods, but ONE G-d eternally existent in three persons.<sup>66</sup>

It concludes with the strong affirmation of the deity of Jesus and the plural unity of God: Because the tri-unity of G-d has a central bearing upon the rest of our theology and the scriptures do support it as a biblical doctrine, Messianic believers need to affirm the tri-unity of G-d as a central part of our faith and not relegate it to secondary importance or opinion for the sake of palatability to others.<sup>67</sup>

Messianic Jews need to avoid both an 'arid biblicism and a shallow

Trinitarianism<sup>168</sup> in their search for an appropriate Christology and Trinitarian theology.<sup>69</sup>

## 5. TORAH

Many Jews and Christians consider Christianity to be a religion of Grace, and Judaism to be one of Law. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin summarises a common misconception.

The laws of the Torah are to Judaism the quintessence of permanent goodness. Christianity, on the other hand, advances its claims on the strength that the 'Law' is superseded and abrogated by 'Faith' in Jesus.<sup>70</sup>

Michael Schiffman notes the importance of the topic.

The relationship between Messianic Jews and the law is an important issue in the Messianic movement because the law is not solely a theological issue to be debated, but part of Jewish culture, heritage and worship. At the same time, Messianic believers recognise their relationship to the law is not the same as that of traditional Jews because the center of a believer's life is not the law, but the Messiah.<sup>71</sup>

David Stern realizes that the question of the Law is important not just for Messianic Jews.

The lack of a correct, clear and relatively complete Messianic Jewish or Gentile Christian theology of the Law is not only a major impediment to Christians' understanding of their own faith, but also the greatest barrier to Jewish people's receiving the Gospel.<sup>72</sup>

The term 'Torah' means more than just 'law'.<sup>73</sup> It includes teaching, instruction and revelation. It refers both to the Pentateuch and Mosaic Law, the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament, the Jewish religious tradition (the Mishnah, Talmud and later Rabbinic writings) and as a general term for revelation or teaching. The intended sense of Torah is not always clear. Jewish religious groupings interpret Torah differently. Orthodox Jews are strict in their observance of the laws of the Pentateuch, which are further expanded, interpreted and applied by Rabbinic tradition. Conservative Jews modify this traditional observance in the light of modernity. Reform, Liberal and Reconstructionist Jews adopt a humanist and revisionary position that looks to the Torah for moral principles and cultural norms, but these may be re-negotiated and there are few absolutes. Most Jewish people observe some aspects of the Mosaic Law as customary and traditional rather than out of the conviction that God commands them.

'Torah' is a both a key concept and a matter of controversy within the Messianic Jewish movement. There is no agreed-upon definition, and this leads to a lack of clarity in the discussion. 'Torah' may mean one or several of the following in Messianic Jewish discussion: the Pentateuch (the Mosaic Law); the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament); the Written and Oral Law; Jewish tradition (including its Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Liberal and Reconstructionist expressions); the New Testament and the teaching of Jesus; 'Law' as opposed to 'Grace'; and individual statutes and

commandments. The term 'Torah' thus functions as a theological short-hand for various of understandings of Jewish law, from the most flexible to the most rigorous halachic requirements. The relationships between 'Law' and 'Grace', between Yeshua and the Torah, and between the practice of the early Jewish Christians and today, are all matters of debate.

Several rationales are given for Torah observance. It has value in witness to and cultural identification with the Jewish people. It sheds light on the life and teaching of Yeshua. For some it has a validity of its own, in that the Torah remains in effect as the grounds for the life of the covenant people, leading to ethical and spiritual wholeness, and preserving the distinct witness of Israel to her God. For others, there is deep concern that all talk of 'Torah observance' may lead to legalism and 'bondage to the Law'. In this chapter the full range of opinion on the Torah is given, as failing to express views which some in the MJM would exclude as 'Hebrew Christian' (Baruch Maoz and Arnold Fruchtenbaum) gives a distorted picture of the breadth and diversity of opinion found within the movement. At present there is no normative view of Torah, although all seek legitimacy for their position.

Messianic Jews believe that the Law has been fulfilled by Yeshua (Matthew 5:17) and that He is the 'goal of the Law' (Romans 10:4). Just as there are different understandings of Torah in the Jewish community, so too among Messianic Jews. Some see the Law of Moses as obsolete. Yeshua has inaugurated the new covenant. The

old has gone. The laws of sacrifice have been fulfilled in Christ. The civil laws were only relevant to ancient Israel. Only the universal moral law as exemplified in the Ten Commandments is still applicable. It is therefore misguided to observe aspects of the Mosaic Law that lead back to bondage in legalism. If Messianic Jews observe the Mosaic Law they are denying the grace of God and justification by faith alone. They rebuild the 'middle wall of partition' (Ephesians 2:14), attempting to justify themselves by works of the law.

A second view affirms the cultural and social practices of the Mosaic Law yet this is not for 'religious' reasons. Customs that make up Jewish identity have been incorporated into Jewish life by tradition over the centuries, such as the calendar, circumcision and the food laws. These are still normative for ethnic, cultural and national identity but have no theological merit and do not add to righteousness. Consequently they are not prescriptive on Jewish believers in Jesus, who are free to observe them if they choose.

A third approach recognises the continuing validity of Jewish tradition as the interpretative context for understanding the biblical Torah of the Tenach and New Covenant. Yeshua, in His teaching and example, and the practice of the early church, defined a new halacha for the new covenant community. This halacha is developed today following the first Messianic Jews' example in the book of Acts. They observed Jewish lifestyle and practices, adapted some, abandoned others and applied

only a few to the nations. Messianic Jews who observe Torah in this way both acknowledge its value but challenge its interpretation by the main branches of Judaism. They propose a new interpretation of Torah based on the teaching and practice of Yeshua and the first disciples.

A fourth position argues that Messianic Jews should observe the Torah according to Orthodox or Conservative tradition, with only a few exceptions. Torah observance is a necessary response of gratitude and obedience in the light of God's election of Israel, which has not been abrogated, diminished or substantially altered with the coming of Yeshua. Torah observance preserved the Jewish community through its rabbinic leaders over the centuries, and Messianic Jews should accept their normative authority and work within this. This will enable them to develop their primary identity within the Jewish community rather than the mainstream church. They should see themselves as members of the community of Israel, even if others do not accept them.

This challenges Messianic Jews to identify fully with their cultural and religious heritage rather than deny, ignore or approach it in an adversarial manner. A few would extend this approach to a complete identification with non-Messianic Judaism in its observance of Torah. The Jewish tradition is itself the inspired, God-given vehicle for the preservation of the Jewish people, and should not be criticised except from within, by those who already adhere to it. The problem raised by this approach is the potential compromise on the si-

gnificance of Yeshua, and his soteriological role. Whilst such an option may be attractive for those wishing to receive a validation of their identity from the Jewish community, it can lead to a diminishment of effective testimony. The self-understanding that may be gained from such an approach leads to isolation from other believers. Torah observance at the cost of the visible unity of the Body of Messiah made up of Israel and the Nations can only result in loss of fellowship and faith.

MJT has yet to reflect seriously on these options, which are still at an early stage of presentation and debate. The manifold values behind some form of 'Torah observance' will continue to challenge and inspire the movement. Living a godly life, following the example of Yeshua, having a culturally sensitive lifestyle and witness, demonstrating the freedom given to observe or not observe aspects of halacha, taking up the responsibilities of Israel, reacting against assimilation, are all motivations to be integrated in 'taking up the yoke of Torah'. What is needed for the future development of MJT is further reflection on the theological assumptions, hermeneutical methods and exegetical processes that Messianic Jews bring to the subject of Torah. Also needed is a systematic development and working out in detail what a Messianic halacha will look like.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Messianic Jews have much to contribute to the Church's understanding on many matters vital to its life, faith,

and witness. The Hebrew Bible and the Jewish understanding sees life lived as a member of a community, not an isolated individual. The community has a 'corporate personality' and bears a corporate responsibility for its members before God. Its holiness must be preserved collectively and its sinfulness collectively atoned for on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The family is the building block of this society under God, and the family, through the clan and the tribal unit, makes up the People of God. The Church today urgently needs to recover what it means to celebrate the life of the People of God as a community, and not just a collection of individuals.

Messianic Jews see the purpose of this community as witness to the nations. The community gathers for worship and scatters for witness. It witnesses to God's character and standards through its obedience to Torah, not as an act of self-justification, but as a response of gratitude for God's grace, and as an act of humble obedience and recognition of its responsibility to be a light to the nations. Only with Yeshua, the light that lightens every person, can Israel live up to this covenant responsibility. Even when she fails, God graciously forgives through the atoning love of the Messiah.

Messianic Jews see God's faithfulness to his people Israel as a reminder of His faithfulness to all who believe in the name of Jesus. The character of Israel as the people of God, bound together by the Torah, is a reminder to all those who believe that we are called into New Covenant relationships with God and our brothers and sisters in the Messiah.

Yet Messianic Jews long for their people, and all nations, to know the Messiah, and pray earnestly for that to happen. A venerable Jewish anecdote describes a man hired by his shtetl to sit at the outskirts of town and alert his village should he see the Messiah coming. When asked why he had accepted such a monotonous form of employment the watchman would invariably reply: 'The pay is not so good, but it's a lifetime job.' Judaism considers waiting for the redeemer a lifetime job, and Jewish people are obligated not only to believe in the coming of the Messiah but also to yearn for his coming.<sup>74</sup> But waiting and yearning are not enough. Messianic Jews, and the whole Church, are called to put the watchman out of business by announcing that the Messiah is here, and is no longer hidden. We can recognise Him now, and know His presence with us. It may still be a lifetime job (unless He returns first), but our task has changed from that of watchmen to being heralds of Good News. Messianic Jews, like the whole Church, exist to make the Good News of the Messiah known to Israel and all nations.

RICHARD HARVEY (Ph.D. cand.) is Lecturer in Old Testament studies, Hebrew and Judaism at All Nations Christian College in Ware/London, England. Member of the European Board of Jews for Jesus; Vice-President of the British Messianic Jewish Alliance; Member of the Board of Reference, Caspari Centre, Jerusalem.



## ENDNOTES

1. Other expressions of Jewish Messianism are not part of the present study. Pace Eugene Fisher, 'Divided Peoples of the Covenant: Book Review of *After the Evil: Christianity and Judaism in the shadow of the Holocaust* by Richard Harries,' *The Tablet*, 23rd August 2003, 'All branches of rabbinic Judaism, of course, are "messianic", so one wonders at the usage of the term in this title. Likewise, why the insistence on claiming to be a form of "Judaism"? Does being ethnically Jewish give these Jewish Christians (or Christian Jews), the right, once they have accepted Christ as their saviour, to redefine for other Jews what forms of "Judaism" are valid? Somehow the name, for me, breaches both common sense and common courtesy.' Also Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith* 2nd ed. (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 254–5. 'Messianic Judaism is Judaism that takes seriously the belief that Jewish history, in spite of everything that has happened, is prelude to an extraordinary act of God by which history will come to its climax.' Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) for discussion of Messianic expectation in religious Zionism.

2. Frequently shortened to 'Messianic movement'.

3. Yeshua, alternatively 'Y'shua', is the preferred way of referring to Jesus, and will be used interchangeably with 'Jesus' throughout. See Moishe Rosen, *Y'shua: The Jewish Way to Say Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).

4. The modern Messianic Jewish Movement began after the Second World War, the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Jewish believers in Jesus from a new generation were concerned to rediscover their ethnic roots and express their faith from a Jewish

perspective. In the wake of the Jesus movement of the 1970's 'Jews for Jesus' moved from a slogan used on the streets of San Francisco to an organisation of Jewish missionaries to their people. At the same time, the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America encouraged the establishment of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues. In Israel a new generation of native-born Israelis ('sabras') were finding the Messiah, and starting Hebrew-speaking congregations. By the end of the twentieth century an international network of Messianic groups exists, with denominational, theological and cultural distinctives, but united in belief in Yeshua.

5. Tuvia Zaretsky, ed., *Jewish Evangelism: A Call to the Church* (Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 60, Thailand: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, 2005), 5–11; Kai Kjær-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjøtt, *Facts and Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel* (Jerusalem: United Christian Council in Israel/Caspari Centre for Biblical and Jewish Studies, [Mishkan Double Issue 30–31], 1999), 71.

6. Sergio DellaPergola, *World Jewish Population 2000*, vol. 100 (New York: Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics, American Jewish Year Book). 'We define as the core Jewish population all those who, when asked, identify themselves as Jews; or, if the respondent is a different person in the same household, are identified by him/her as Jews. This is an intentionally comprehensive and pragmatic approach. Such definition of a person as a Jew, reflecting subjective feelings, broadly overlaps but does not necessarily coincide with Halakhah (rabbinic law) or other normatively binding definitions. It does not depend on any measure of that person's Jewish commitment or behaviour – in terms of religiosity, beliefs, knowledge, communal affiliation, or otherwise. The core Jewish population includes all those who

converted to Judaism by any procedure, or joined the Jewish group informally, and declare themselves to be Jewish. It excludes those of Jewish descent who formally adopted another religion, as well as other individuals who did not convert out but currently refuse to acknowledge their Jewish identification.' Whilst DellaPergola's definition excludes some Messianic Jews, who are considered to have 'formally adopted another religion', the estimate of the World Jewish Population is more reliable than others.

7. Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Search Press, 1974).

8. R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, USA: Fortress, 1996).

9. Conn, Harvie, "Ethnotheologies" in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (ed. A. Scott Moreau), Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000, pp. 328–330.

10. Most Messianic Jews are Premillennial in their eschatology, seeing God's purposes for Israel being played out with various degrees of linkage to the present political events in the Middle East. Many advocate Aliyah (immigration to Israel) for Messianic Jews, although the majority of Messianic Jews live in the Diaspora. A growing number are concerned for Reconciliation ministry with the Arab Christian neighbours. See Richard Harvey, 'Eschatology in Messianic Jewish Thought' in *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (forthcoming).

11. Mark Kinzer defines Messianic Jewish Theology as:

Disciplined reflection about God's character, will, and works, and about God's relationship to Israel, the Nations, and all creation, in the light of God's irrevocable election of Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and God's creative, revelatory, and redemptive

work in Messiah Yeshua. Messianic Jewish theology is rooted in divine revelation (Torah), pursued in the context of Jewish communal life and tradition and in respectful conversation with the entire Christian theological tradition, and informed by prayer, by experience of the world, and by all available sources of human knowledge and understanding. In 'The Shape of Messianic Jewish Theology [Session 1]: What Is Messianic Jewish Theology?' Paper presented at Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2005.

12. Midrash ('interpretation') is the pre- and post-critical exegesis and interpretation of scripture which looks primarily at the 'plain meaning' of the text (p'shat), but also at the allusive (remez), interpretive (derash) and mystical/allegorical (sod) meanings of a text. The rabbinic tradition says there are 'a hundred ways' of interpreting each biblical verse!

13. See Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Martin Goodman, Adam H. Becker and Peter Schafer, eds, *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

14. Louis Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith: An Analytical Study* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 14.

15. Louis Jacobs, 'God' in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, edited by Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York: Macmillan/Free Press, 1988), 290.

16. Whilst half of Louis Jacobs' *A Jewish Theology* is given to discussing God (pp. 21–151) and Alister McGrath's *Christian Theology: An Introduction* devotes some eighty pages (pp. 265–344), Messianic Jews give little space in their published works to this fundamental topic. David Stern devotes just two pages to the

nature of God. Daniel Juster does not even have a section on God in his *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology for Messianic Judaism*, although he devotes ten pages to the question 'Is the Messiah Divine?' The subjects of God, the Trinity or the nature of Messiah do not appear in *Voices of Messianic Judaism*, a collection of essays by Messianic Jewish thinkers 'confronting critical issues facing a maturing movement.' Similarly Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Jewish Faith* (London, SPCK: 1993), 29–71 and Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 29–205.

17. Kai Kjær-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1995), 103. Cf. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (New York: Cassell, 2000), 21.

18. Kjær-Hansen, Joseph Rabinowitz, 98.

19. *Ibid.*, 107–8.

20. MJAA, 'MJAA Doctrinal Basis, Article 2,' <http://mjaa.org/StatementofFaith.html>, (accessed August 8, 2005).

21. UMJC, 'UMJC Doctrinal Statement, Article 2,' <http://www.umjc.org/main/documents/DoctrinalBasis.pdf>, (accessed August 8, 2005). The spelling 'G-d' is retained in Messianic Jewish materials where it occurs. It expresses concern that even in translation the name of God might not be defaced.

22. Many others were approached, but have not produced material on the topic.

23. Baruch Maoz, *Lessons on the Doctrine of God: A Tutorial on the Biblical Doctrine of God* (Rishon Le Tzion, Israel: Grace and Truth Congregation, 1997).

24. Eg. Atheism, Agnosticism, Polytheism, Dualism and Pantheism.

25. Docetism, Ebionism, Modalistic Monarchianism, Arianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism and Appollinarianism.

26. 'There is only one living and true God. He is infinite in his substance and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions, unchangeable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute. He causes everything to work according to the determination of his unchangeable and most righteous will for his own glory. He and his will are most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth. He forgives evil, rebellion and sin; the rewarder of those that diligently look for him, as well as most just and terrible in his judgments. He hates all sin and will by no means pronounce the guilty innocent. Baruch Maoz, *Lessons on the Doctrine of God: A Tutorial on the Biblical Doctrine of God* (Rishon Le Tzion, Israel: Grace and Truth Congregation, 1997), 73.

27. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *God the Father* (Tustin, Ariel Ministries, 1985).

28. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Grace of God* (Tustin, Ariel Ministries, 1985); *The Bible and Divine Revelation* (Tustin, Ariel Ministries, 1983); *The Inspiration of the Scriptures* (Tustin: Ariel Ministries, 1983).

29. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Trinity* (Tustin, Ariel Ministries, 1985). The heresies are Arianism, Sabellianism, Socinianism, Unitarianism and Tritheism

30. David Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, 93.

31. *Ibid.*

32. David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Jerusalem: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), *passim*.

33. Louis Goldberg, *A Messianic Jewish Theology* (manuscript, Jews for Jesus Reseach Library, 2003). At the time of his death in 2003 he had assembled some 47,000 words of material for a Messianic Jewish theology, due to be

edited and published posthumously by Rich Robinson of Jews for Jesus.

34. Mark Kinzer, 'God and the Messiah: Course Outline, MJ518' (Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, Fuller School of Theology, 2004).

35. Mark Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic/Brazos, 2005), 38–46: 'Theology and History: Divine Action in Human History'.

36. Jacob Jocz, 'The Invisibility of God and the Incarnation' in *The Messiahship of Jesus*, edited by Arthur Kac, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Baker: 1986), 189. Reprinted from *Canadian Journal of Theology* 4, no. 3 (1958).

37. Lev Gillet, *Communion in the Messiah: Studies in the Relationship Between Judaism and Christianity* (London, Lutterworth Press: 1942), 73.

38. Gershon Nerel, 'Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History and the Modern Yeshua Movement: Some Comparisons,' *Mishkan* 39 (2003), 80.

39. Cf. Daniel Boyarin, *Boundary Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

40. A. Schneider, ed., 'Messianic Jews Debate the Deity of Jesus,' *Israel Today* 22 (November 2001) 21.

41. David H. Stern, 'Israel's Messianic Jews and the Deity of Yeshua: An Update,' *Israel Today* 23 (July 2002), 23, <http://mayimhayim.org/Academic%20Stuff/David%20Stern/Article.htm> accessed May 24th 2007.

42. Tzvi Sadan, e-mail message to author, June 5, 2003. 'As far as the Trinity is concerned, the truth is that there are as many opinions as there are people. I have talked to many and sometimes it was scary to find out what some of them believe in.'

43. Joseph Shulam, e-mail message to author, March 3, 2003. 'The question...is one of the hottest in all of Christianity and especially among the brothers and sisters in Israel. There have been inquisitory actions taken here by some brothers as if they were Savonarola or Torquemada during the darkest periods of Christian history, but with God's help we shall overcome this wave of tyrannical leadership with the love of the Lord and the Grace of the Cross.'

44. Elazar Brandt, e-mail message to author, March 10, 2003.

45. Stern, 'Israel's Messianic Jews', 2.

46. Gershon Nerel, 'Creeds among Jewish Believers in Yeshua,' *Mishkan* 34 (2001), 61–79. Nerel examined the creeds of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America (HCAA) (1915); the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA) (1925); the IHCA Hebrew Christian Church Commission (1932); Abram Poljak's 'Jewish Christian Union' (1939); and the Warsaw Hebrew Christian Community (published by Jacob Jocz) (1939).

47. Michael Schiffman, 'Messianic Jews and the Tri-Unity of God' in *The Enduring Paradox: Exploratory Essays in Messianic Judaism*, edited by John Fischer, 93–104. (Baltimore: Lederer, 2000), 93. 'Belief in the triune nature of God is not merely held by a group within the Messianic community, but is believed by every Messianic organisation of the community: the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, the Fellowship of Messianic Congregations and the Messianic Alliance of America.'

48. MJAA, 'MJAA Doctrinal Statement.' <http://www.mjaa.org/statementOfFaith.html> (accessed March 3, 2003).

49. See Funkenstein, Amos, 'Basic Types of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Middle Ages' *Viator* 2 (1971): 373–382.

50. Cf. Richard Harvey, 'Raymundus

Martini and the Pugio Fidei: A Survey of the Life and Works of a Medieval Controversialist.' MA diss., University College, London, 1991.

51. Section 2.3 'Jewish Mystical Christology'.

52. Cf. Donald Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

53. Cf. J.C. Frey, *The Divinity of the Messiah*, (Israel: Keren Ahavah Meshichit, 2002); Delizsch, Hengstenberg, Reichardt.

54. The term 'Postmissionary' is employed by Mark Kinzer, but typifies a less adversarial and apologetic approach to Jewish tradition. Cf. Mark Kinzer, *Post-missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic/Brazos, 2005). This approach is eclectic, and as yet undefined, but may allow for a rediscovery of Jesus as both Jewish Messiah and Incarnate deity. It is concerned with the construction of Jewish identity and 'Messianic Jewish social space' as much as with the nature and being of the Messiah. The materials of the Jewish tradition, Torah, Talmud and Kabbalah, are all resources from which a contemporary Jewish expression can be formulated, but these are filtered through the lens of modern and postmodern Jewish thought, which deconstructs, challenges and re-addresses age-old problems of Jewish existence.

55. E.g. Rausch, 'Messianic Judaism,' 125–126.

56. John Fischer, 'Yeshua – The Deity Debate,' *Mishkan* 39 (2003), 27. The theme of the issue is 'the Divinity of the Messiah', with seven significant articles on the topic.

57. Developments in Christology outside the Messianic movement are not part of the present study except where their contributions have been adopted by MJT,

eg. N.T. Wright, Larry Hurtado, Richard Bauckham, Oscar Skarsaune and Risto Santala,. Also not included are those who have written on Christology in the context of Messianic Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations, but are not actively part of the Messianic movement such as Rosemary Ruether and John Pawlikowski. Jewish scholars such as Geza Vermes, Pinchas Lapidé are also not included.

58. Other aspects of the person and work of the Messiah, such as Yeshua's self-consciousness, Jewish identity, revelatory presence, saving work (sin and atonement) and example for life are beyond the scope of the present study. Yeshua's relationship to Torah will be discussed in chapter 4.

59. Daniel Juster, *Jewish Roots: A Foundation of Biblical Theology for Messianic Judaism* (Rockville: Davar Publishing, 1986), 181.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.* According to Juster, other dimensions of the Nicæan formula although biblically defensible, but are unhelpful in a Jewish context because they lend themselves to connotative misunderstanding. "God from God" and "true God from true God" are phrases that too easily lend themselves to misconception. These statements emphasize divinity to such a degree that the humanity of the Son and His submission to the Father are eclipsed (e.g., a danger of Docetism). New Testament Christology, at least with regard to the relationship of the incarnate Messiah to the Father, in all biblical language and in all apocalyptic pictures of the Father and the Lamb in heaven, reflect[s] subordinationist overtones. 'One substance' language is difficult philosophically even if there are reasons for its use. He is in His divine nature everlastingly one in being with the Father. Perhaps other language such as 'one in essence' or 'one in His divine being' could be more helpful."



62. *Ibid.*, 187.

63. *Ibid.*, 188.

64. *Ibid.*, 189–190.

65. Daniel Juster, 'The Christological Dogma of Nicaea – Greek or Jewish?' *Mishkan* 1 no. 1 (1984), 54.

66. UMJC, 'The Tri-Unity of G-d from a Messianic Perspective', UMJC position paper, <http://www.umjc.org/aboutumjc/theology/triunity.htm> (accessed March 12, 2003).

67. *Ibid.*

68. A phrase borrowed from N.T. Wright.

69. An Adoptionist Christology is also found in some parts of the Messianic movement. This is reminiscent of the Ebionites and Arius of the early church and denies the divinity of Jesus. According to Ray Pritz,

An extremely small minority of congregations in Israel (I would estimate no more than 5%) would hold a formal doctrinal position that does not affirm the divinity of Jesus.

Uri Marcus, a member of the Heftzibah congregation in Israel, summarises this position.

Myself as well as our entire congregation of Believers in Ma'aleh Adumim, completely reject the Trinitarian notions of plural unity, and will not acquiesce to any theology which challenges the ONEness of HaShem in any fashion... Yeshua is the Son of the living G-d, never G-d the Son, in our view.

Marcus argues against the Deity of Jesus on the grounds that the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish tradition forbid idolatry; the Christian understanding of the Incarnation is idolatrous, and Trinitarian doctrine is a Hellenistic misreading of the biblical data. Trinitarians misread scripture without taking into account their original Jewish background and frame of reference. This is given by

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rabbinic tradition, which provides the authoritative understanding of the nature of God, the meaning of idolatry and the nature of the Messiah. Only with the use of this interpretive tradition can the Early Church's excessive reliance on an 'anti-Semitic' Hellenistic influence be avoided. Daniel Juster responds appropriately to these arguments (see above). Cf. Richard Harvey, 'Jesus the Messiah in Messianic Jewish Thought,' *Mishkan* 39 (2003), 4–19.

70. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, *Judaism and Christianity: The Differences* (New York: Jonathan David, 1943), 81.

71. Michael Schiffman, *Return from Exile: The Re-emergence of the Messianic Congregational Movement*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teshuvah Publishing Co., 1991), 72.

72. David Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, (Israel: JNTP, 1988), 125.

73. Ariel Berkowitz and Devorah Berkowitz, *Torah Rediscovered: Challenging Centuries of Misinterpretation and Neglect*, 3rd ed. (Littleton, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 1998), 144. Berkowitz lays down the challenge: 'We have seen how theological error and misinterpretation of the Brit Chadasha have led to an outright neglect of the Torah at best, and a stiff-necked rejection of it at worst. Let us now attempt to do what no other generation has ever done. Let us be the first generation of Jewish believers since the early days of our history to begin turning back the tear-drenched pages of our history and again to follow the covenant which the Holy One made with Moshe Rabbenu.'

74. Soloveitchik, Meir. 'Redemption and the Power of Man.' *Azure* 16 (Winter 2004). <http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=172>