



LUTHER'S PROTESTANT REFORMATION has strongly influenced the modern Messianic movement

Martin Luther and Jewish Believers in Yeshua

Exactly half a millennium ago, in 1517, German theologian and monk Martin Luther laid the foundations for a global religious revolution. Initially, he attempted to reform the Roman Catholic Church, yet eventually his raw doctrines became the foundation for numerous Protestant denominations.

One of these new denominations is the modern Messianic movement of Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBY). These followers of Yeshua (Jesus) embrace rabbinical traditions and Jewish folklore, support Zionism, and also accept the theological guidelines of Protestantism. However, from a Christological perspective, the Protestant doctrines are not much different from Roman Catholic ones. Both Protestant and Catholic Confessions of Faith follow the creedal formulas of the ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD), which introduce non-biblical terminology.

Nowadays, most JBY adopt, nearly verbatim, the creeds of different Protestant denominations including Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism and Adventism, alongside the beliefs of the Baptists and Plymouth Brethren. The majority of contemporary JBY have adopted the faith in the Lord Yeshua through the testimony of Christians and Protestant missionaries.

Naturally, these JBY absorbed the doctrines of their spiritual parents. Not a few among them were also encouraged to become "leaders" and teachers and to attend denominational schools of theology, often described incorrectly as "Bible Schools." In these institutions

they were systematically indoctrinated with Protestant dogmatic principles. After they were ordained and authorized to teach, they repeated what they learned to new generations of JBY.

A salient example of this situation is Luther's fundamental doctrine called in Latin *sola scriptura*—"salvation by Scripture alone"—which is based upon his German translation of Paul's Epistle to the Romans (3:28). According to this standard, God's ultimate Word, spiritual authority and conclusive guidance are now embodied exclusively in the Bible because the Almighty has stopped communicating with humans via revelations, prophets, etc. Thus, in order to discover God's sovereign will one must search exclusively in the canonical text. In other words, the original and infallible divine truth is found only in the "Christian Bible." Part of this doctrine is the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture.

However, the Bible itself does not teach *sola scriptura*. In the Gospels, for example, one reads about the great and unique instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. The clear teaching of Yeshua places the direct instruction of the Holy Spirit above the teachings of biblical verses. Thus in the Gospel of John the Lord Himself says: "When He,

the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth." These divine words come straight from the Son of God, who sends the Holy Spirit as "He [the Spirit] will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13). To put this differently, the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Truth, is not only part and parcel of biblical interpretation, but it also guides true believers in a personal way as well as unfolds individually the secrets of the Kingdom of God. This is consistent with the Lord's teaching that "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23).

While on the one hand human interpretations of Scripture can mislead believers, on the other hand the true guidance of the Holy Spirit is infallible. Moreover, no biblical verse can fully convince a person unless the Holy Spirit provides assurance. Only the Holy Spirit can touch every believer on earth. The one who "has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says" (Revelation 2:7). If one loves the Lord Yeshua and keeps His commandments (John 14:15, 21; 15:10), he will indeed hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. •

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Critique of the article “Martin Luther and Jewish Believers in Yeshua”

As many of my readers know (and those of you who don't, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/author.htm>) I come from a “Sabbath-keeping Church of God” background, not Messianic Jewish. What this article fails to show, is that the Messianic Jewish revival was a revival driven by the Holy Spirit, resulting in the calling, so far, of about a million Jews into recognizing and accepting Yeshua of Nazareth into their lives as their Messiah. The fact that God used Protestants who hold “doctrines not much different from Roman Catholic ones” has directly resulted in their absorption of some doctrines from Roman Catholicism which are decidedly not Biblical. At this point I would like to remind the Messianic Jews, as Dr. Michael Brown has in his book “Our Hands Are Stained With Blood,” that the Catholic Church has not been friends or friendly to Jews or early Messianic Jews alike. Millions of Jews and Sabbath-keeping Church of God brethren have died at the hands of the Catholic Church over the past 1700 years, right up to 1945. And what's more, over that same period of time the Catholic Church has infected almost all Protestant denominations with its unbiblical doctrines which are laced with a combination of truth and error. The Sabbath-keeping Churches of God, due to their being driven underground by extreme Catholic persecution early on in their history, have retained a greater degree of doctrinal purity. This does not mean the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God are without doctrinal error either. But I would highly recommend the Messianic Jews take a **very careful** look at the Catholic doctrines they have absorbed—and reject what is false. For a well-researched article about what the early Church was like, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/earlychurch1.htm> and read through that whole history article.

Sola scriptura is not a wrong doctrine per se, for as the author of this article didn't bother to point out, ***the Holy Spirit will never go against or say anything against the written Word of God (the written Word of God being Jesus in print)***. The author is correct in noting that the work of the personal revelation and communication of God to an individual through the Holy Spirit has been way under-emphasized by the various denominations. And I am not talking about Pentecostalism, I'm talking about real guidance and communication between God and a believer via the Holy Spirit—personal relationship between God and believers stuff.

To read a good Sabbath-keeping Church of God history taken from Sabbath-keeping Church of God sources, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/revivals.htm>. Take a good look where this part of the Body of Christ came from, and see what they've been through. It will help explain why they tend to be so "hard-shell." The Sabbath-keeping Churches of God are a more pure reflection of early Messianic Judaism, without the Jewish traditions and customs inherited from the sect of the Pharisees, which survived the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. In the time of the early Church, that body of Jewish believers were stepping **away from** the party and customs of the Pharisees, those who had been in direct opposition to Yeshua haMeschiach.

Messianic Jews should take a very careful look at the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God. Why? 1) For they have not been infected with Catholic dogma, and, 2) Very interestingly, historically they are your long-lost spiritual cousins in Yeshua.

related links:

Although my background is Sabbath-keeping Church of God, I currently attend a Messianic Jewish congregation. See, <http://www.unityinchrist.com/author.htm>

What was the early (Messianic) Church really like? See, <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/earlychurch1.htm>

To read a history of the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God going all the way back to 1st century Asia Minor, see, <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/revivals.htm>