

# **Implications of Postmissionary Messianic Judaism on Christian Faith and Practice**

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Mark Kinzer's, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* explains and expresses one of the most pressing issues of the messianic movement in relationship to the Church<sup>1</sup>.

In this response I intend to address the implications of his fivefold test for the Christian Churches, primarily for evangelicals with its implications for faith and practice should his bilateral ecclesiology be taken seriously. My theological comments will apply to Reformed and Protestant Church communities but the centralized nature of the mainline denominations make practice issues more difficult to address. Orthodox churches (Roman and Eastern) will have to be addressed by others. I am interested in the development of Hebrew Catholicism and hope for a parallel in the Eastern Church, but my experience and participation is in the Free Church tradition and I speak best from that perspective.

Kinzer rightly identifies the problem of supersessionism (replacement theology) as the basis for the present inappropriate ecclesiology. This view popularly held by Christians whether understood as a formal doctrine or “felt” as an aspect of Christian pride maintains the replacement of “law based salvation” with “grace and faith based salvation”, Torah with Gospel, the Old Covenant with the New Covenant, the Old Testament with the New Testament, and Israel as the people of God with the Church as the people of God. This doctrine goes further with normative Christians than with Christian scholars to include Jerusalem as replaced with Rome and *Erets Israel* (the land of Israel) with America as a Christian, and therefore God's, Nation.

Kinzer suggests a bilateral ecclesiology which posits a Jewish ecclesia as well as a Gentile ecclesia which together are the people of God. He further argues for the necessity of this Jewish ecclesia to be recognized and in some manner function as a recognizable Judaism by the larger Jewish community, both religious and national, and that it also be recognized as a significant and fully participating aspect of the Christian Church so that it can both link the largely Gentile Church with Israel, and maintain the authentic Jewish identity of Messianic Jews. As difficult as this is to imagine and explain, it is even more difficult to attempt to put into practice. But despite the difficulty, I am convinced, with Kinzer, that this is the appropriate ecclesiology.

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<sup>1</sup> By the term Church, I am referring to the historic Christian Church that is fully established at the time of the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. and continues to the present in three forms, Orthodox (Eastern and Western), Reformed (or Protestants) and the Free Church (Baptists, Pentecostals, Evangelicals and related para-church groups).

I will not, in the space of this response, review each aspect of his book. It demands to be reviewed by many from various perspectives. But I must address the implications of this removal of supersessionism and the establishment of a bilateral ecclesiology for the evangelical Christians who participate in the churches of America. These implications are not small, nor are they easy. They are in some cases threatening to Christian identity and to much that is believed and unquestioned among Christians.

These implications involve faith (theology) and practice (religiosity). This does not just affect ecclesiology. It also directly affects soteriology, eschatology, and Christology. In practice, it will affect liturgy, worship style and architecture, and life cycle, symbolism in churches and even dietary practice among Christians. And most drastically it will affect missiology and evangelism with regard to dialog with, and evangelism of Jews, both religious and assimilated.

I will begin with a review of the five point test used by Kinzer to measure agreement with the thesis of his book. Then I will address the theological and practice changes necessary in Christian Churches, if the paradigm shift he suggests is accepted. Finally, I will suggest some ways to move in this direction without creating additional problems.

### ***The Five Point Test of Bilateral Ecclesiology***

Kinzer establishes five principles of a bilateral ecclesiology. They are:

1. The perpetual validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people.
2. The perpetual validity of Jewish way of life, rooted in the Torah, as the enduring sign and instrument of that covenant.
3. The validity of Jewish religious tradition as the historical embodiment of the Jewish way of life rooted in the Torah.
4. The bilateral constitution of the ekklesia, consisting of distinct but united Jewish and Gentile expressions of Yeshua-faith.
5. The ecumenical imperative of the ekklesia, which entails bringing the redeemed nations of the world into solidarity with the people of Israel in anticipation of Israel's—and the World's—final redemption. (Kinzer, p.264)

It is clear that the first two principles are completely dependant on the issue of supersessionism. If the Torah given to the Jewish people as a covenant has been ended or aspects have been replaced so that their peoplehood has no present spiritual value, then this whole approach to ecclesiology is lost. Christians in America have grown up with the assumptions of this replacement theology which makes the Gospels and related New Testament books reinforce this doctrine. But there are Biblical texts that become awkward or painful for Christians to read while holding to a replacement theology. *Do not think that I came to abolish the Law (Torah) or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*(Matt. 5:18)

This statement by Yeshua does not say that the fulfilled parts of the Torah will pass away with the cross, but that all Torah (to the letter) remains valid until all of it is fulfilled and the present heavens and earth pass away. There is no indication here that parts of the Torah (ceremonial, animal offerings, dietary laws, or temple requirements) will end before the rest. The whole Law is in force, whether it can be practiced or not, until it is all fulfilled. No Christian theology can easily dismiss the words of Jesus<sup>2</sup> Himself and claim him as Lord. Kinzer rightly points out that the Temple issues are more difficult than the dietary laws when the Temple is absent, but I believe he is too willing to drop the Temple aspects of Torah because the Temple is lost, at least temporarily. The Temple will be included in the fulfillment yet to be and the Torah commands will apply.

Yeshua continues that the least of the commandments are to be retained. *Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:19).* Apparently, the Torah covenant remains wholly valid until it all ends. And its end is after all is fulfilled and heaven and earth passes. Torah commands are not for gaining access to the kingdom of heaven, but one's place in the kingdom appears dependant upon the extent of observance. If so, the Torah has as its primary purpose something other than salvation. This may be the meaning of Yeshua's next statement. *For I say that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:20).* It is possible here that Yeshua is addressing the two kinds of righteousness described by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Paul suggests that there is a righteousness of faith attested to by the Torah and a righteousness of obedience to the Torah. Of the later, he makes no connection with salvation. Thus salvation is by grace through faith. The righteousness of obedience is related to reward and place in the kingdom to come with its respective reward and curse. If this is so, then those who mistakenly believe that salvation comes by obedience to Torah are wrong. *Because by the works of the Law, no flesh shall be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. (Rom. 3:20,21).* Paul goes further to say, *Do we nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. (Rom. 3:31).* The Law then testifies to the righteousness of faith, shows the problem of sin, and instructs in the righteousness of obedience related to the kingdom to come. It also establishes the righteousness of obedience which is the basis of Israel's identity and reward.

Paul is clearer regarding salvation and the Torah in Galatians. *What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later (than the promises that included salvation by grace through faith as established in Abraham) does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. (Gal. 3:17)* In effect, Paul is saying that salvation and the promise of the Land and the Kingdom to come was not part of the Mosaic Torah. It preceded it. If salvation and the promises of the kingdom were established with Abraham by grace through faith, then the Torah cannot replace it

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<sup>2</sup> I will exchange Jesus and Yeshua as I speak in Messianic or Christian context.

430 years later. This means that any Christian or Jewish view that sees Torah as a basis of personal salvation is in error. The Torah came later and for another purpose. And that purpose, among others, is to serve as a manifestation of God's wisdom and glory through Israel to the nations, and as the basis of identification of Israel. It will also serve as the norm in the restored kingdom of Israel.

In establishing Israel as His chosen people, God begins with Abraham, giving him the sign of circumcision upon his faith in the promise of being a father of many nations. As the first of those nations, and playing a central part, Israel (the children of Abraham by promise) is redeemed by the Passover lamb from Egypt and given the Torah at Sinai. This Torah is not a basis of salvation. They were redeemed according to the promise made to Abraham and manifest by the Passover lamb. The Torah was about establishing God identified people on earth and His kingdom among the nations.

The story of Israel in the prophets is one in which God remains faithful to Israel in their sin and obedience. They will be blessed and punished, but not rejected forever. He even promises a New Covenant in which He will place His Torah in their hearts. He will be their God and they, His people. This covenant will be different than before. His Laws on stone which they broke will be in their heart and they shall all know Him from the greatest to the least, the very terms used by Yeshua regarding Torah observance. And this New Covenant will, according to Jeremiah, establish once for all that Israel will continue as a nation before Him as long as the present earth and heaven continue. (Jer. 31:31-37)

The New Covenant Jews<sup>3</sup> of the first century were convinced that this New Covenant had begun with the coming of Messiah Yeshua. But they did not see this as a replacement. It was all fulfillment of what the Torah and Prophets had promised. But it was not the total fulfillment. All that Yeshua did was a beginning (as Luke puts it) and He would return at the end of the age to complete the fulfillment. If this is so, The Mosaic covenant would continue and Israel would continue until all was fulfilled, the kingdom was fully restored to Israel and then, and only then, the New Heaven, the New Earth, The New Jerusalem and all of the New Covenant would be in place.

So, the writer to the Hebrews could speak of the Old Covenant as preparing to pass away (Heb. 8:13), not now, but after the Day of the Lord and the restitution of all things (Heb.10:25). In the meantime, the Former Covenant which carried the promise and shadow of the New would remain in full force without the loss of a letter or a stroke. Kinzer either ignores or omits this aspect of the Book of Hebrews. Its theme is a theology and comparison of the New Covenant with the First Covenant showing that the first is temporal and earthly and the second is better and eternal, but never that the new has now replaced the old. (Heb. 12:18-24)

Kinzer is correct on the first two principles. God has an ongoing covenant with Israel as His people, for better or worse on their part, until the total fulfillment of that covenant,

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<sup>3</sup> I have often wanted to call Messianic Jews and Hebrew Christians New Covenant Jews. For me, the term Jew demands some connection to Torah. And the New Covenant is a Jewish, not Christian, term in its origin.

and, while the present creation remains. Until then, even though the New Covenant has begun, the former one remains. It follows then that the split between Christianity and Judaism over Torah observance among New Covenant Jews was a serious mistake. The apostles correctly understood that Torah observance was the God ordained burden of Israel in all their generations, but salvation was a hope shared by Israel and those from the Nations who feared the Lord. The implication of dropping Torah observance for New Covenant Jews, required by the emerging Greco-Roman Church was too much to ask. How can Israel remain Israel without Torah? The answer is, she can't. Kinzer fully addresses the issue of assimilation and Israel's refusal to believe in a Messiah who demands that Torah be dropped. This is not, in fact, a rejection of Yeshua as He really is, but is an act of saying Yes to God. In addition, the blinding of Israel for the sake of the salvations of the Gentiles is a major focus of Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles. Though enemies of the Gospel for the sake of the Gentiles, they remain the Chosen people of God. As Joseph was rejected by his brothers so that by his suffering, they and others were kept alive, so Jesus, rejected by His brethren, suffered so that they would be saved. Their "No" to Him was for the sake of the Gentiles. But His Yes to them is eternal.

This brings us to the issue of Rabbinic Judaism as a valid religion for Jews. All Jews are under the covenant at Sinai. To not observe is to be cut off from the people. Kinzer uses several sources to establish that observance is the heart and soul of being a Jew. This is true for non-Yeshua faith Jews and Yeshua faith Jews. They are all under the Mosaic Covenant as long as heaven and earth remains. But the remnant who have come to Yeshua faith are Torah and New Covenant Jews. There is no such thing as a New Covenant only Jew, unless replacement is correct. There are New Covenant only Gentiles, and even this is only partially correct<sup>4</sup>. But New Covenant Jews in the Gospels and Acts were Mosaic Covenant Jews. They varied in practice from the other Jewish groups to be certain, but they knew nothing else than to be obedient to Torah. Kinzer points this out with a litany of scholars that establishes the disciples as normative Jews. Torah observance is only an issue for New Covenant Gentiles in the Book of Acts. And as a result of the later split between Judaism and Christianity, the Torah issue is lost in replacement. The only place where Torah observance is retained and taken seriously is within Judaism<sup>5</sup>. It is not unreasonable then that this is the place where Messianic Judaism must go for questions and guidance regarding observance. In addition, this implies that the Torah observance of modern Judaism is a God directed and God maintained channel. This is not to say that Rabbinic Judaism cannot error. But there is a basic validity in Rabbinic Judaism as there is in Historic Christianity with all its error and variability. The problem is that the valid part is part and parcel with aspects that are problematic as a result of the split and separation between the Torah observant non-Yeshua faith of Israel and the Non-Torah Yeshua faith of Gentile Christianity. I view it this way.

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<sup>4</sup> New Covenant Gentiles are placed under many aspects of Torah. Acts 15 expresses this, and the use of Love as a fulfillment of the Torah is also founded upon Torah as normative. But not all of Torah is to be observed by Gentiles.

<sup>5</sup> This is not completely accurate. There are traditions of Torah observance among several Christian groups, but they would have little authority for messianic Jews.

Our religious parents (Historic Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism) divorced long ago. As with most divorces, they have tended to vilify the other spouse. In addition, they have made it clear to the children living with them, that the children of the other spouse are illegitimate. Over the centuries, they have emphasized their own aspect of the relationship (covenant) with God and compensated for the part of the promises (family inheritance) that was taken by the other (Judaism took the Torah, Christianity took the righteousness by Grace through faith) by living with other lovers (Judaism in Babylon and in conjunction with Islam, and Christianity with the Greco-Roman world)<sup>6</sup>.

Today, Messianic Jews and Judeo-Christians<sup>7</sup> (people like me) are trying to discover our lost siblings and common inheritance. But to get to it, we must separate the Truth retained by the Rabbis and the Truth understood by the Church Fathers without the nonsense that they attached to obscure the other. The reason for this, of course is that Judaism and Christianity is now pregnant with the Messianic Movement. This “out of due time” child is a reminder of the past and both parents are struggling with its embarrassing presence.

This leads us to the fourth principle of bilateral ecclesiology. This is the removal of a uniformity between Jewish Yeshua-faith and Gentile Yeshua-faith expressions in worship and lifestyle toward a unity with distinctive. In other words, there is One Lord, One Faith, and two expressions. In fact it will be many sub-expression within these two<sup>8</sup>. The primary reason for keeping the difference between a New Covenant Jew and a New Covenant Gentile is that Israel must not be assimilated, but remain a light to the nations. And the nations have a place in the economy of God for Abraham will be the blessing to them. There are two dangers here. One is the problem of unity. We are to be one. But which one? The answer is the one new man made up of Jew and Gentile as part of the emerging new creation. But that new man will not be complete until the end of the Kingdom (Messianic) age. So for now, the difference will be primarily related to Torah. Torah makes distinctions between Israel and the Nations, between men and women, between clean and unclean, between Israel and the stranger who dwells with Israel. A bilateral ecclesiology will have to address how different and how similar we can and should be within the bounds of Torah and New Covenant commands. Acts 15 began this discussion and we must pick it up there again. This time, we must be more careful and pay attention to what the distinctions are between the Jewish members and the Gentile members of the Body of the Messiah. Kinzer is correct in calling for this new ecclesiology but calling for it and making it practical will require incredible grace and patients with each other. We have been separated for a long time. Martin Luther and the reformers caught a glimpse of this and considered putting the communities back together and even restoring Sabbath to the New Covenant. But in the end they dropped the idea, and Luther went from Jewish friendly to anti-Semitism. We must proceed carefully. This

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<sup>6</sup> Please forgive the over generalization here used for the sack of the analogy.

<sup>7</sup> I am forever struggling with self identity as a Baptist who feels estranged from both parents. At the present time, Judeo-Christian helps my self identity.

<sup>8</sup> I am of the opinion that each nation's disciples will have a distinct cultural form that is related to Israel but distinctive to their cultural history.

will require something that brings us together. And this is found in Kinzer's final principle.

The restored Kingdom and the culmination of the plan of God for this present world give Jews and Christians, Judaism, and Christianity, Israel and the Nations, common ground. But there are difficulties in establishing this focus. And this brings me to the theological issues that Christianity must address.

In conclusion of this section, I agree with each principle posited by Kinzer regarding a new bilateral ecclesiology. Israel's covenant with God is present and ongoing along with the New Covenant as begun in Yeshua affecting both Jews and Gentiles. Jews are not exempt from Torah observance either by assimilation or by Yeshua Faith. The Torah is normative, binding and necessary for all Jews. To drop parts of Torah reduces a Jew's identity and his place in God's kingdom. To drop it completely, removes one's Jewish identity and mission as a child of Abraham.

Rabbinic Judaism is a valid Torah based religion and way of life for Jews. It also has validity for instruction and wisdom for Gentiles with Yeshua faith. This implies that the non-Yeshua faith Jew is still part of the plan and calling of God and may be faithful to that call even if partially hardened toward an altered but real Messiah<sup>9</sup>. Israel's "no" to Yeshua is not Yeshua's "no" to Israel. This is temporal and relates to the opening and calling of the Gentiles through the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Kingdom and the New Covenant has begun through the advent of Messiah. The New Covenant Jew remains obligated to the Torah and connected to Torah based Israel. The New Covenant Jew is also connected in the Messiah to Gentile Yeshua believers. The Ecclesia is bilateral and consists of Torah Covenant Yeshua faith Jews and Yeshua faith Gentiles. These are one in a unity of the New Covenant but are distinct based on Torah requirements and cultural identity. Together, they share with all Israel and all creation a common end which will glorify the God of Israel among the nations and before the angels of God.

### ***Theology Changes Required for Christianity***

If this new bilateral ecclesiology is to be taken seriously by Christians, then there are several areas of systematic theology that will have to be addressed. This includes Eschatology, Ecclesiology and Soteriology.

The primary issues for eschatology must be that of a new approach to the coming Kingdom of Heaven and the restitution of Israel. The Historic Church, under replacement theology dropped the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, hoped for by Jews during the time of Yeshua and still a primary focus of the apostles after the resurrection (Acts 1:6).

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<sup>9</sup> This is similar to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They believed in Him but did not recognize Him. He taught them without revealing Himself until the last moment. So it may be with Rabbinic Judaism.

Yeshua did not tell them to drop the whole idea. He told them it was in the Father's hands. They were to be witnesses of Him. Even dispensational theology is a partial and inadequate fix of the elimination of Israel. A theology of Israel based on the Torah and Prophets must be established as a foundation to any eschatology related to the return of the Messiah. In it, the Law must go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (earthly, not heavenly). Isaiah sees this as part of the last days before the heavens and the earth are removed and replaced (Is. 2:1-4). And it will include a Temple with Gentiles able to sacrifice burnt offerings along with Jews<sup>10</sup> (Is. 56:6-8). But Isaiah also sees the New Covenant with a new heaven and a new earth and a new created (not rebuilt) Jerusalem (Is. 65:17-25). John, the New Covenant Jew and Apostle of Yeshua, sees this as well. (Rev. 21:1- 22:27). John takes note that there will be no temple in the new creation, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple.

It is vital, then that we have a theology that includes an eschatology which addresses the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel and which includes New Covenant Gentiles as associated with but not a replacement of Israel. Kinzer's bilateral Ecclesiology brings us closer to that understanding.

Christian Theology must also address a complete and full New Covenant Theology that compares and contrasts from the former earthly and present age covenant. I believe a complete rethinking of the Book of Hebrews is in order. Its focus must be on the comparison and contrast of the Sinai Covenant and the Mount Zion Covenant (Heb. 12:18-29). These are not opposed but related and distinct. One is earthly with a temporal glory. The other is eternal with a heavenly glory. But they do overlap and are related (shadow and substance). And as the writer to the Hebrews points out, this covenant is with all Israel; The House of Israel and the House of Judah (Heb. 8:8). He hardly mentions Gentiles. How can he be thinking in replacement theology? He considers only in the replacement of the old creation with a new one once the old one has been completely fulfilled. My understanding of this is found in the following example.

I own a house that has served me well, but decide to build another that will be better. I begin the process of building the new house. It will contain the best of what is in the old one but will also have new and improved aspects. The new one will accommodate family and friends who will become family. As the new one is built, I do not leave or tear down the old one. I will live in it, repairing and improving as I need until the new one is complete. Then, once the new one is complete and my full purpose for the old one ended, then and only then will I tear it down. Not because it's bad. It has served its purpose which is temporary. And the best of it remains in the new one. My family and friends who now are also family will live together in the new house, where much of its warmth is a reminder of the former one. But none of the problems of the old one will come to mind.

The final and most difficult area of theology that must be addressed is soteriology. This will be a problematic undertaking. In what way is Yeshua to be understood as the Savior of the pre-gospel Jew? Once the Messiah has come, how can He be misunderstood by

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<sup>10</sup> I intend to stand before that Temple and fulfill this promise when the Temple of God will be a house of prayer for all peoples. I know of no historic period when this was possible. It must be future.

Jews without it counted as rejection? To what extent is blinded Israel saved or unsaved as individuals? We must address these questions. They are painful, emotional and difficult. But they are of eternal consequence. If Messianic Jews do not enter the discussion, who will? Kinzer mentions this issue in passing and I will not suggest answers here, but I believe that the need to bring Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews along with Judeo-Christians and Traditional Christians into dialog on this critical doctrine is critical as it will directly effect a bilateral ecclesia in relationship to all Israel and the nations.

### ***Practical (Behavioral) Implications of Bilateral Ecclesiology***

The practical implications of a bilateral ecclesiology are the most difficult part of this issue. Even a person convinced of the truth of the view may not be willing to act on it. The struggle to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, remains (James 1:22-25). Kinzer suggests by his bilateral ecclesiology a structure requiring the church to consider doing the following.

1. Christians with Jewish backgrounds (Hebrew Christians) and Messianic Jews must be encouraged and allowed to be Torah observant within the Gentile churches<sup>11</sup>.
2. Hebrew Christians should be encouraged to participate in Messianic Congregations where they can learn authentic observance and function as a bridge to the larger Jewish community while reinforcing their own identity.
3. Christian pastors must teach bilateral ecclesiology to their congregations so that the messianic movement is fully accepted by the Church as its authentic link to Israel.

With the conviction that the Body of the Messiah is made up of Torah observant Jews and Torah aware and partially observant Gentiles, comes the necessity that Christian congregations must allow and encourage Torah observance among its Jewish members. This is carefully stated as “allow and encourage” because it will be resisted by two groups; traditional Christians and Hebrew Christians. Both must be convinced that this is an option for Yeshua faith Jews before it can be enforced. If the bilateral doctrine is true, a transition from non-Torah Jews and Gentiles in Christian Churches will have to include a stage of openness, to consideration, to option, to conviction, to requirement. This will not happen over night. The process will more likely require churches to vary in this as they do regarding Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (or Eucharis). Some require these, some limit them, and others have avoided them as a sign of respect<sup>12</sup>. Among Baptists, congregational covenants and advertisements describe whether a given congregation is pre-millennial or a-millennial. Churches may have to announce whether they are

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<sup>11</sup> Kinzer doesn’t actually call for this. He mentions it as the normative requirement of his bilateral ecclesiology. Had this truth continued in the historic Church, Yeshua faith Jews would have maintained Torah observance among the Yeshua faith Gentiles.

<sup>12</sup> Quakers (Friends) have refrained from the ordinances or sacraments precisely because other Christian groups divided over them.

“observant friendly”, “observant optional”, or “observant required” in their membership polity. This may also become a more obvious practice in Messianic Congregations as with traditional Judaism. The biggest hurdle to this is that most Christian congregations will struggle with the notion of Judaizing and ignorance of the Torah’s requirements and the Rabbis’ halakic interpretation. So, while this is a worthy goal, its progress will be slow and we must consider the second implication which is more explicit in Kinzer’s book.

The best place to learn and reinforce any faith and practice is to maintain a community of like minded persons seeking the same goal. It is reasonable that many would suggest that Hebrew Christians must be encouraged to join the Messianic Movement at some level (preferably in congregation) and develop an authentic identity and observance for the sake of Israel and the Church. The draw toward messianic identity and congregation involves three pressures. The pressure of truth is found in Messianic and Christian leaders teaching and defending the basic principles of bilateral ecclesiology. The pressure of opportunity involves the opening of multi levels of observance in messianic congregations so that Hebrew Christians can move slow and sure toward their full place in the Yeshua faith ecclesia. One of the issues that will need to be addressed in this context is Messianic Gentiles. They have been an important part of the congregational movement but may become a liability for the movement as the new bilateral ecclesias develop in cooperative separation. My hope is that more Judeo-Christian congregations like my own will become places where Gentile believers can support the movement, learn their own place in the Body of the Messiah and avoid the problem of making the movement look like Gentiles in Jewish clothing<sup>13</sup>.

The final implication is the one with which I am most involved. Christian leaders and congregations must assist the messianic movement from the side, as brothers, not as those who would control it or use the movement for their own purpose, but to assist God’s purpose. At present, the messianic movement is receiving and/or seeking help from the para-church community (Promise Keepers and other such organizations). That is helpful but insufficient. Christian congregations must publicly and seriously join themselves to messianic congregations. We must share facilities with full synagogue and full sanctuary architecture. Having an Ark in the fellowship hall or youth room is a statement of inferiority. Covering a cross gives Christians an inappropriate message. Shared sanctuaries can be developed. Dual facilities housing separate worship centers can be built. We must work together. And show our distinction in the context of unity and respect. Anything less is unworthy of Yeshua, the Light of Revelation to the Gentiles, and the Glory of God’s people Israel (Luke 2:32).

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<sup>13</sup> This perception exists in the larger Jewish community and among Christian leaders who are critical of the movement. We must find a way to meet the needs of these Gentile believers without compromising Jewish identity. I am already on record about this issue.

## References

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