

Ramifications Of Greek Influences On The Church

A variety of perspectives from Professor Arthur (Skip) Moen

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Romans 1:21

Foolish Heart – Are you sitting down? You might want to. As we approach the end of this year, (according to the pagan calendar) ... I see some connections between almost 2000 years of Christian teaching and the current condition of our world. They aren't connections that I want to see. Perhaps you will be able to convince me that I am mistaken. But like Paul, I am concerned. Some time ago I stood at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and wept. I went there to pray, but there were no words to speak. I was simply crushed by the enormous despair in our world. I don't mean that I saw despair in those who were at the Wall. They celebrated God. What struck me was the awareness that the Church I know has contributed a great deal to this sense of hopelessness, in spite of all its words to the contrary. It is simply not possible to continue to refuse to honor God as God, the way in which He reveals Himself, and expect to walk away unscathed. So, here are some straight-line depreciation ideas to consider.

Christians have suffered for lack of knowledge. Long ago, our faith was dislodged from its Hebraic roots and cut off from the history of interpretation that followed the Jewish path. By the end of the third century, Christianity trod the road of Greek metaphysics, leaving behind it the insights of twenty centuries of exploration by believers in the one true God. In these days, there seems to be a movement afoot to recapture some of those insights. Christians are seeking the same experience that anchored the Jewish faith through millennia. One place that they can go to uncover this treasure of the centuries is the Talmud, a collection of the thoughts of Jewish sages.

Step back a moment from the contemporary Christian preoccupation with an evangelical theology, a rather young participant in theological history, and remember that Yeshua was a Jew. So were all of the disciples and nearly all of the authors of our New Testament canon. These men did not think like we do. We have twenty centuries of Greek logic at our backs. They have thirty centuries of community experience of the Most High God. Sometimes the two different approaches send us on such divergent paths that we get lost before we have traveled even a mile.

Perhaps it is time to take just a peek at the way that a rabbi thinks. After all, Yeshua was a rabbi. So was Paul. How can we expect to follow their arguments, illustrations and insights if we pull them out of their own context? **It is a tragedy of the greatest magnitude that Christians often treat the Scriptures as the only book in the world that comes to us without a cultural bias.** It is a tragedy because it removes us from the wonder of men who thought deeply about their history with God. It is a tragedy because it ignores the fact that God comes to us clothed in human context. Apparently, God preferred Hebrew.

If we look at just one verse (The word of the Lord is tried - Psalm 18:31), we find something incredibly important about the perspective of the Talmud and the orientation of Jewish faith. The rabbis taught that this verse implies that Torah was given for the refinement of human beings. **In other words, man becomes human in the process of observing Torah.** Because we find our true humanity in the deepest possible relationship with God, and God has given us His instructions about living in this world in that deep relationship, we become the best human beings we can be as we align our lives with His eternal instructions. **We grow into our humanity in the process of obedience to Torah.**

This thought has a powerful corollary. Torah observance should be a joyful experience of discovering my humanity in the midst of my voluntary commitment. Keeping Torah is never simply a matter of legislation. Torah is not a collection of rules. It is a way of life - in fact, it is the only way of real life because it makes me fully useful to my God and Creator. From the rabbinic perspective, I am really only human in the joyful celebration of observing God's instructions. Therefore, Torah is the most valuable possession I can own. Nothing else is able to make me what I find most fulfilling, most satisfying and most aligned with my design. Torah is joy to keep because it is exactly right for who I am.

How do the rabbis draw this conclusion? They focus on the Hebrew word *tsarah* (in this verse translated "tried"). It means "to test, to purify and to refine," as a silversmith would refine his metal. From this practical application, they conclude that God's Word is the medium by which we are refined, and, of course, the way that His Word refines us is in the way that we are instructed to live by it. Therefore, as we conform our lives to His Word, we ourselves are refined as human beings. We emerge as pure silver. That, my friends, is a joyful state of being.

Unfortunately the early church fathers introduced the idea of the "new" Israel, a spiritual replacement of God's elect people. Political opportunity, theological hubris, anti-Semitism

and other forces conspired to promote what is now the standard, unquestioned theological position of every Protestant denomination and the Catholic Church. This declaration marginalized the people of Israel, obscured or denied their unique place in God's government and shifted the outlook of the Church from a Hebraic to a Greek worldview. The result has been more than one Holocaust. Centuries of disregard for God's people led to the systematic expunging of everything Jewish from Christian thinking. There is a straight-line between this failure to honor God as He revealed Himself and the current collapse of any significant influence of the Church on culture. Look around you. Has the Church stood in solidarity with its Jewish brothers? Has the Church done anything of real significance to stem the tide of immoral, heretical, apostate behavior even in its own ranks? Is the Church anything more than a "religious" reflection of cultural values? What can we say to the world when we are responsible for centuries of hatred, violence and rejection of God's people and God's word given to His people? Why doesn't the Church have the power of Acts coursing through its veins? Maybe it's because we are no longer grafted into Israel.

Christianity today is the syncretism of political, economic, social and epistemological views that are not based in the Word of God. Replacement theology did more than promote the supremacy of the Church ... it broke the continuity of the culture of God's people. By the end of the second century, the beliefs and practices of Yeshua and his disciples had been eliminated from the newly invented religion of Christianity. Perhaps the reason we read the book of Acts and wonder why our churches do not exhibit such power and persuasion has more to do with our systematic denial of the Hebraic worldview than anything else. We Christians are the apostates ... we left the God of Israel behind in our pursuit of power, programs and promises. We converted Israel's faith into a religion of our own making. Of course, most Christian believers today have no idea of the heretical history behind their form of worship, but this much they do know: Something is terribly wrong. Something vital is missing. There is a straight-line between the ignorance, denial and rejection of a Torah-based lifestyle and the insipid, vacuous, frantic romanticism of Christians. A Jew without Torah is obsolete. A Christian without Torah is a hypocrite.

It's worth noting that Paul uses the singular "foolish heart" in this verse. We would have expected "hearts," one for each person. But Paul tells us that they participated in one morally mistaken discernment ... they were as one in their vain attempt to replace the God of Scripture with their own invention. I wonder if we Christians haven't arrived at the same singular place.

Paul laid a challenge before the Roman followers of Yeshua in his proclamation of the deterioration of their culture. That challenge was simple: Will you follow the pathway of those who deny the God of Israel as He revealed Himself, who refuse to thank Him for His choice of one people to bring all the world to His feet, who pretend that their endless speculations are a substitute for His revealed truth ... OR will you acknowledge Him as He is, honor Him and thank Him by repenting of your hubris and returning to His revealed ways?

A Case of Mistaken Identity ... Don't Blame Yeshua

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.” Matthew 5:18 NASB

All is accomplished – When do the words of Torah pass away? When are God's instructions for living no longer applicable to you? According to both Jews and Christians, the Torah became obsolete when Yeshua died on the cross. Yes, that's right, even Jewish rabbis acknowledge that Yeshua's death was the end of the Torah – as far as Christians are concerned. Jewish scholars and rabbis recognize that as early as Origen (between 200 and 250AD) and certainly by the time of Ambrose (340AD), Christianity embraced replacement theology. The Torah no longer applied. The “Law” was nailed to the cross with Jesus. This historical fact allows even scholars like Abraham Heschel to claim that “Jesus” overthrew Torah.

But it's a case of mistaken identity. In all the material I have read from a Jewish perspective, one striking fact emerges. Jews are not responding to the actual claims of Yeshua. They are responding to what Christians have said about those claims. The same fact emerges about Paul. **Over and over, Jewish believers reject Yeshua and Sha'ul because Christian theologians say that these men replaced Torah.** Even when they cite verses like this one, they defer to the interpretations of Christian proponents. In other words, Jews react to Christian claims about Jesus and Paul, not to the actual words of Yeshua and Sha'ul. Since Christianity has been claiming that Torah doesn't apply since the time of Origen, **is it any wonder that Jews reject the claim that “Jesus is the Messiah”?** **No Jewish Messiah would ever, not in a million years, discard Torah.** Therefore, as long as Christians continue to assert the abrogation of Torah, Jews will and must reject the Christian Jesus. All of the Christian efforts to “convert” Jews to Christianity are tantamount to an appeal to paganism.

It is hopelessly deficient because the central issue separating Jews and Christians is not “Jesus.” It is Torah! As long as Christians continue to embrace the theologically unsupported idea of Torah “fulfillment” (abandonment), Jews will rightfully reject the Christian Jesus.

We who follow YHWH from a Hebraic perspective realize what a travesty this is. Two thousand years of unnecessary separation because a small group of Greek-educated, politically savvy men drew lines in the sand in order to make Christianity something other than Jewish. Two thousand years of animosity, violence, fragmentation. Two thousand years of bloodshed. Over what? Over the attempt of a few individuals to carve out their own religious uniqueness. Today even our English Bibles contain the unmistakable veneer of this deliberate division. When the NASB translates the Greek *an panta genetai* as “all is accomplished,” it incorporates a contradiction into this very sentence, a contradiction that would not exist if the translators had recognized that Yeshua was speaking Hebrew. What is the contradiction? How can “all is accomplished” be about the death on the cross when the first part of the verse makes it clear that Torah will be in effect until “heaven and earth pass away”? Did the cosmos suddenly collapse when Yeshua died at Golgotha? Not the last time I looked. So why would Yeshua say in one breath that the Torah will last until the end of the earth and in the next breath say that it will end when His life ends?

But if we recognize that Yeshua is speaking Hebrew, then there is no contradiction because in Hebrew the phrase doesn’t mean “all is accomplished;” it means “all is filled up.” The Torah will pass away when everything God has in store for His redemptive purposes is completely full. Not at the cross! At the final end. The cross is only the guarantee that everything else will happen. But it hasn’t been filled up yet. The glass isn’t filled to the brim. There is more to come – like the return of the King. Until then, Torah continues.

Only men who wanted to get rid of Torah would be brave enough to translate and interpret this verse with an inherent contradiction – which they can later explain away through paradigm-dependent theology. But if Yeshua didn’t say this, why in the world do Christians believe it? Does that make any sense at all? Hopefully not. ... Of course, there is still one huge problem. Jews still think that we believe Torah doesn’t matter. So, how are we going to fix that?

Marching In Disobedience

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. John 3:36”

Obey – Even in translation this verse demands that we see the connection between “believe” and “obey.” But when we realize that Yeshua’s thought and sentence structure is Hebraic, the force of this connection is undeniable. **Believing has nothing to do with gathering the facts. If there is no obedience, there is no belief.** This fact is emphasized when we see that John uses two present active participles for “believing” and “disobeying.” There are no nouns here. It is not the collection of correct beliefs versus the collection of mistaken opinions. It is the action of believing versus the action of deliberate disobedience (in Greek *apíetheo* – do you see something familiar here? Disobedience is connected to apathy).

The Christian church preaches a theology of divorce. It has separated believing from doing. It claims that knowing that Yeshua is the Christ and proclaiming this truth is sufficient for a salvation ticket. The church today rarely speaks of the demand for obedient perseverance. Its goal is to get you to heaven by whatever means possible. If that means divorcing behavior from declaration, so be it. **But Yeshua will not tolerate such foolishness.** John’s gospel captures this in bold type in the parallelism of this verse. In John, “to believe” is never to simply acknowledge the facts. John uses the Greek word *pistos* ninety-two times. It is never a noun. It is never “belief.” It is always “to believe into,” to move from one worldview to another, to shift everything about who I am and what I do from the system of this world to the Kingdom of God. It is action, not information.

Hebrew loves to describe concepts with opposites. Here Yeshua paints a picture of opposites that clearly defines what believing means. **The opposite of believing is not being ignorant. It is not being confused or having the wrong facts. The opposite of believing is disobeying.** This can only mean that believing is the same as obeying. **Anyone who claims to believe in Jesus but does not obey the teachings of Jesus is not only deceived, he is condemned. To divorce believe and obey is spiritual suicide.**

For a Christian, nothing should be more important than obeying Yeshua. He is the only means for graceful access to the Father. He is the only sacrifice that reconciles the rift between us and God. To ignore what He says is insanity. Yet week after week, in congregation after congregation, we preach divorce. **We march in goose-step to the beat of**

the Greek drum, wrongly dividing the word of truth by telling ourselves that Jesus' example of obedience does not apply to us. Is it any wonder that the scariest verse in the Bible is the one that says, "I never knew you."

There is hardly a single page of Scripture that does not speak of obedience. It is the consistent theme from Genesis to Revelation. It is the neon sign that stands above the salvation billboard. If obedience is the hallmark of our Savior, can it be any less important for us? There is no avoiding this subject. It is not "Jewish." Yeshua was a Jew, but He came for all of us. His instructions are for all of us. His example is for all of us. It's time to bring the divorce to an end and reconcile believing and obeying. There is no train to glory that does not pass through the plains of the wilderness and in the wilderness I must learn to obey or be left behind.

Selective Ethics

and now Israel, what does the LORD require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ... Deuteronomy 10:12 ESV

Israel – One of the principal differences between the Greek-Christian biblical worldview and the Hebrew-Semitic worldview is the scope of the precepts. **Greek thinking is universalized thinking.** That means the vocabulary, the theology and the ethics are applied as if they were meant for all people. There is good reason for this universal tendency. After all, YHWH is not simply the local god of Israel. He is the Almighty, the One True God, the Sovereign, the only Creator, the Master of the Universe. Hebrew Scriptures constantly reiterate this theme. All other "gods" are false and non-existent. It's easy to project universal consequences from this ontological superiority. Even without Christian theology, Greek philosophy thought in terms of absolutes. The Greeks did not define Man as Athenian or Spartan or Mycenaean. Man was Man wherever he happened to appear. Truth was truth. Law was law. The highest ethical principles were held to be the same for all human beings. It was a small step for Christian theology to move from this philosophical foundation to the claim that Christian doctrine is true for all or that the Christian idea of salvation is the only right answer. For the most part, Christian theology universalized the first three chapters of

Genesis, applied the Messianic prophecies of the Tanakh to Yeshua and concentrated on the doctrines of salvation, the Church and heavenly reward in the New Testament. As the “new” Israel, the actual history of Israel (which occupied most of the Bible) could be set aside as no longer relevant.

But notice how Moses delivers the obligations of Torah. “And now Israel.” Moses doesn’t say, “And now to everyone in the world.” He doesn’t add that these commandments apply to Egyptians, Sumerians or anyone else for that matter. He says that God’s requirements are for Israel. God is Israel’s God. God has a special relationship with Israel. God reveals His demands to Israel. God makes covenant commitments to Israel. The Italians, the Norwegians, the Chinese and the Nigerians aren’t included. Does that mean they can’t be included? Of course not. They can become part of Israel. But there is no Torah for Germans or Russians or Iranians. The Torah, God’s instructions for how He desires His people to live, is given to His people – Israel.

The point here is that in this sense Torah is not universal. God doesn’t demand that everyone walk in His ways, love Him or serve Him. He just demands that those who choose to align themselves with Israel, who become part of the Kingdom of His children, walk in His ways, love Him and serve Him. In fact, if you think that you are connected to the God of Israel but you do not walk in His ways, love Him or serve Him, then we can raise serious questions about your claim. There is no biblical example of any person who lived in opposition to God’s way, who did not love Him or who did not serve Him and yet was considered one of His children.

Back To Deuteronomy - “I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” John 8:26

I Heard From Him – Read the verse again. Then ask yourself, “How would I understand this verse if I were hearing it in Hebrew?” Some things immediately change. First, in Hebrew, to hear is to obey. Remember shema. So, when Yeshua says, “the things which I heard,” he also means “the things which I obeyed.” To hear without obeying is to have ears that are deaf. Yeshua is not talking about theological propositions or the mysteries of the cosmic

beginnings. He is talking about hearing and doing the will of the Father. By the way, you and I can hear and do too. We also participate in shema, if we choose to do so.

This implies that it is possible to hear and do the will of the Father. It isn't always necessary to wring our hands, cry out loud, fall to the floor and beg God to please tell me what He wants me to do. He already told us. Doing what we already know is a precursor to discovering what we do not know. It would hardly have been possible for Yeshua to claim that He heard the Father if He were not obedient to all that the Father already revealed. That would be like trying to survey a piece of property without bothering to take any mathematics courses. First things first. And first comes Deuteronomy.

Now notice something else Hebraic in this statement. Shema is connected to dabar (to speak). Hearing (obeying) and speaking go together in God's world. Yeshua makes the connection for us. What is heard and obeyed becomes reality. God's word manifest in us is the same as obedience to Him ~ and that is the proclamation of His message to the world.

Do you want to be like Yeshua? In this aspect of discipleship, you know just what to do. You start by listening and doing. You do what you are told to do. Yes, I know that sounds so authoritarian, especially to citizens of a Greek-based individual rights, "free to do what I want" kind of world. But submission comes from bending my desires to the service of another master. So, you do what you're told. By the way, God only tells you to do things that you can do and that are in your best interests, so it's a pretty good bargain. By doing what we are told to do, we are able to speak to the world. What we speak is life ~ the whole manifestation of who we are as obedient children of the Great Father. What we manifest is His will in living reality. We speak volumes, sometimes without a single word. It was not necessary for Yeshua to proclaim His authority and His divinity. His actions demonstrated both. If we want to be what God has in mind for us, we will have to start where He started, with hearing from God. Only after shema becomes our way of life will we be qualified to deliver God's message to others.

Professor Moen:

Educational Background

- D. Phil. Oxford University, Oxford, England. 1979
- Dissertation: "God, Time and the Limits of Omniscience"
- M.A. University of Washington, Seattle, WA. 1975
- M.A. (cum laude) Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL. 1973
- Dissertation: "The Epistemology of Karl Popper in Relation to the Problem of Science and Metaphysics"
- B.A. University of Washington, Seattle, WA. 1971
- B.A. (magna cum laude) Seattle Pacific College, Seattle, WA. 1969

Experience

- Taught college level undergraduate and graduate courses in religion, ethics, philosophy, and human sciences.
- Developed several courses that explored the relationships between religion and the sciences, including foundations of social and behavioral sciences and philosophical inquiries in physics.
- Taught business ethics in MBA curriculum.
- Taught graduate courses in Greek philosophy and philosophy of science.
- Established a successful independent consulting firm that provided human resources consulting for employee compensation and sales channel development to Fortune 500 companies.
- Contributed to development of national surveys on employee motivation and productivity with the American Productivity and Quality Center.
- Taught professional seminars on motivation and compensation design.
- Consulted with start-up companies and small businesses on marketing and sales strategies.
- Provided consulting expertise to third world development programs.
- Developed and managed a corporate sponsored fund raising program for charities that produced several million in revenue in 2 years.

- Employed in executive management positions in both the commercial and non-profit worlds, I am now Dean of the Department of Biblical Leadership at Master's International Divinity School and a speaker at various business and religious functions. I devote much of my time to writing and teaching.

Personally speaking: Professor Moen's Resume and Education do not suffice in providing adequate insights with respects to his capabilities in handling and understanding G_D's Word!

Over the course of many years Professor Moen has worked steadfastly to expose the truth of Yeshua's Gospel Message through painstaking diligence and great personal effort. Most assuredly his efforts have been blessed by ADONAI ELOHIM and undoubtedly Professor Moen has drawn thousands of people closer to the truth and consequently closer to Yeshua our LORD and SAVIOR.

Professor Moen's Web-Site can be located at: <http://skipmoen.com/>

These very brief excerpts from Professor Moen's vast storehouse of writings are provided so that you the reader have more than an understanding that the Hebraic and Greek Worldviews are not compatible. These writings have been provided so that you have an understanding of what the impact on mainstream Christianity, and hence the world, has been due to the integration of the Greek Worldview into the once Messianic Orthodox faith.

Professor Moen is not alone in his assessment with respects to the state of both past and modern Christianity. This being stated I personally believe that one would be hard pressed to find a more qualified and compassionate critic to reference. Professor Moen is on a mission to get people back to the HaDerech ... The Way! And like others attempting the same ... at some point the message is not going to be pretty or well received.

Shalom Aleichem ... P.R. Otokletos