MISHKAN | A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE | *Issue 48 / 2006*

# *Reactions to* POST-MISSIONARY MESSIANIC JUDAISM

# MISHKAN

**A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People**

ISSUE 48 / 2006

**General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen**

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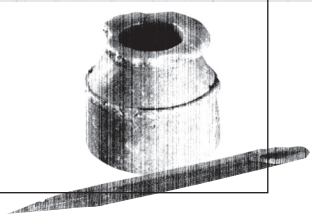
**Mishkan** is a forum for discussion, and articles included do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors.

**Mishkan** is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



# Postmissionary in Three Senses

By **Kai Kjær-Hansen**

This issue of Mishkan discusses Mark S. Kinzer's *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (2005) – a book which has created considerable debate within the Messianic movement.

Kinzer is president of the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, the leadership-training center for the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, and has in the past years acted as one of the trendsetters for UMJC's theological agenda.

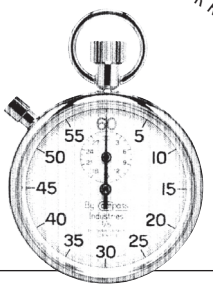
Kinzer's Messianic Judaism is – in his own words – "postmissionary in three senses: (1) it treats Jewish observance as a matter of covenant fidelity rather than missionary expediency; (2) it is at home in the Jewish world, and its inner mission consists of bearing witness to Yeshua's continued presence among his people; (3) its outer mission consists of linking the church of the nations to Israel, so that the church can become a multinational extension of Israel and its messianically renewed covenantal relationship with God."

This opens up discussions on ecclesiology and soteriology; on mission/evangelism and Jewish identity; on whether or not Messianic believers are obligated to keep the Law and follow Jewish Halachic traditions; on "Yeshua's presence within the Jewish people," etc.

These are all important issues for Kinzer – but also so important for others that they argue against his theological positions and conclusions.

Kinzer concludes his book with this statement: "The church must come home to Israel, if it would again breathe freely and deeply."

Others might say, "The church – and Jewish believers in Jesus – must come home to Jesus, if …"



A CURRENT ISSUE

# Mark Kinzer and Joseph Rabinowitz

By **Kai Kjær-Hansen**

On the following pages Mark Kinzer's book *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* will be debated and looked at from various angles. Let me open the discussion by asking how Kinzer deals with – and uses – prominent Jesus-believing Jews from the 19th and 20th centuries to support his project of "Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People."

Kinzer mentions four such persons. First and foremost is Joseph Rabinowitz, the founder of the Israelites of the New Covenant (*Bnei Israel, Bnei Brit Chadasha*) in Kishinev; then Isak Lichtenstein, Christian Theophilus Lucky (Chajim Jedidjah Pollak), and Paul Levertoff.

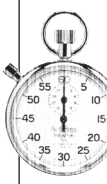
Kinzer's book is a systematic work and should be treated as such. Still it is surprising that Kinzer only uses secondary sources when he deals with these important figures in modern Messianic Jewish history. If he has read their primary sources, he does not reveal this in his book. For example he reads Levertoff only through the eyes of Lev Gillet: "Gillet – and, we presume, Levertoff...," he writes [281]. This is unfortunate.

## Joseph Rabinowitz – Not Quite "Kosher"

I do, of course, appreciate that Kinzer [273-278] uses my book *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (1995), which the frequent references to it show. But how I wish that Kinzer had taken time to struggle with the primary sources and had even found others than those mentioned in my book.

With that said, Kinzer should be commended for not hiding from his readers that he – based on the secondary material – finds things in Rabinowitz's theology and practice that he cannot use to support his own program. In conclusion, he says:

> How does the Rabinowitz program match up with our five ecclesiological principles? First, Rabinowitz emphatically affirms Israel's enduring covenant and election. Second, he likewise affirms the enduring importance of Jewish practice, though his attitude towards the obligatory quality of that practice remains ambiguous. Third, he denies the value and validity of rabbinic tradition. Fourth, he takes



> the initial steps toward the formation of a bilateral ecclesiology. Fifth, though he demonstrates a radical solidarity with the Jewish people, his ecclesiology still reflects a missionary orientation in its disregard for historical Jewish religious experience and its focus on Israel entering the (universal) church (without a corresponding emphasis on the church joining Israel). [277-278]

Kinzer here makes it clear that Rabinowitz is not quite "kosher." The question is whether Rabinowitz is so "non-kosher" as to refute Kinzer's program rather than support it.

It is surprising that the issues in Rabinowitz's theology which do not live up to Kinzer's program play hardly any role in the discussion on the following pages. Neither do the differences which existed between Rabinowitz and the others mentioned above. As it appears now, Rabinowitz, Lichtenstein, Lucky, and Levertoff stand as one group, supporting Kinzer's cause. He can even say:

> Citing Hugh Schonfeld's statement of 1936, Kjær-Hansen calls Rabinowitz "the Herzl of Jewish Christianity." In light of the developments of the last three decades, Rabinowitz could now be called "the Herzl of the Messianic Jewish movement." [292]

I stand behind my statement. Of course I believe that Rabinowitz has been of enormous importance for the Messianic movement – broadly understood. I do, however, find it problematic when Kinzer defines Rabinowitz "in light of the last three decades." By doing this, does Kinzer take the "soul" out of Rabinowitz and what he stood for at the end of the 19th century?

That circumcision and keeping the Sabbath and Jewish holidays were precious practices for Rabinowitz is not open for discussion. But in order to understand Rabinowitz one must also consider what else he stood for. Otherwise we end up with an amputated Rabinowitz.

Briefly, and with reference to Kinzer's five above-mentioned ecclesiological principles:

1. However "Israel's enduring covenant and election" was understood by Rabinowitz, Israel does – according to Rabinowitz – need Jesus Messiah. Israel will die in its sins if she does not turn to God and believe in Jesus, the Son of God. This is fundamental for Rabinowitz's theology and practice. He makes this clear in public speaking and in writing. They need Jesus! By stating this, Rabinowitz loses the recognition he previously had in Jewish circles.

2. It is completely correct that Rabinowitz wanted to hold on to circumcision, Sabbath, and the celebration of Jewish holidays. From a "patriotic" or national point of view he felt obligated to keep the Law as far as circumstances made it possible. But this is subordinate to religious liberty.

Kinzer finds that this is "incomplete because it fails to deal with the complementary theme (also prominent in Rabinowitz's writings) of Jewish obligation" [275]. Kinzer expresses this viewpoint by saying:

> Thus, in making a distinction between religious and national obligations, Rabinowitz retains the belief that Jewish practice is divinely commanded and obligatory for Jews while portraying the nature of that commandment/obligation as qualitatively different from and lesser than the essential "moral" commandments/obligations.

This fundamental question about "freedom" or "obligation" can hardly be dealt with any further without a closer reading of Rabinowitz's writing, and especially what he meant by "The Messiah is the end of the law" (cf. Rom 10:4). In his first worship hall there was a Torah scroll with this inscribed in Hebrew. What does this indicate? And can we imagine something similar in a Messianic congregation today?

3. In sharp contrast to Kinzer's program Rabinowitz – in strong terms – writes off the Mishna and Talmud and Shulchan Aruch; these "have darkened our eyes so that we failed to see the ways of the true and life-giving Faith." Kinzer does not hide this from his readers.

Although there is more to say about Rabinowitz's relationship to rabbinic tradition, Rabinowitz takes a different direction than the one Kinzer argues for.

4. That Rabinowitz "takes the initial steps towards the formation of a bilateral ecclesiology" is not very clear when – according to Kinzer [24] – a bilateral ecclesiology not only affirms Israel's *covenant* and *Torah,* but also affirms Israel's *religious tradition* (cf. 2).

5. Kinzer writes that Rabinowitz demonstrates "a radical solidarity with the Jewish people." I agree. He is and remains a Jew. This "radical solidarity" is expressed not least in the fact that Israel needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus in order to be saved. That one could be a Jesus-believing Jew without being part of the universal Christian church is beyond the horizons of Rabinowitz's thought. His activities are driven by his desire for his people: that they will hear about Jesus and receive him in faith.

## Let All the House of Israel Know

When he deals with Jews for Jesus, Kinzer writes, among other things: "Thus Jews for Jesus is much less radical in vision than Rabinowitz" [290]. I ask: Could Jews for Jesus today be much more "missionary" than the following examples?

Sommerville Memorial Hall was dedicated at the end of 1890, and was used for services until Rabinowitz's death in 1899. Along the side of the hall, facing the street, were written these words from Acts 2:36, in Hebrew

and Russian: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The same words were to be written on the railway coach which Rabinowitz planned to build in 1897. His plan for railway evangelization was never realized. Had the project been carried out, it would have taken him far and wide in Russia.

This was also Rabinowitz. And I find it difficult to fit such a Rabinowitz into Kinzer's program.

## Joseph's Misfortune

Of course Rabinowitz's theological viewpoints should be understood primarily from his creeds, his theological writings, and his sermons. But Rabinowitz's "soul" and the heart of what he stood for are found in some of the stories for which he was so well known in his time. Here is an example:

The misfortune of my people has always been on my heart. I have also tried various remedies to relieve it, but all has been in vain.

When a doctor comes to a patient, he first has to question the patient closely before he can prescribe a remedy for the disease. He feels the pulse, presses here and there, asking all the time: "Does it hurt here?" "Is there pressure there?" "Have you pain here?" But not until the doctor touches the tender spot, does a really clear answer come from the patient. The pain squeezes the words from him, "Don't press so hard, it hurts!"

That was my experience when I concerned myself with my people's sufferings. I have in vain pressed various places. As I was not striking the tender spot, there was hardly any answer.

If I said, "The Talmud and all rabbinical extraneous matter do not come, as is claimed, from Sinai, but they are human matters full of wisdom and unwisdom," then these words made little impression upon my people.

If I said, "Nor does the Tanakh (the Old Testament) contain anything other than human words, unproven stories, and unbelievable miracles," then all the time I remained the respected Rabinowitz; that did not cause my people any pain either.

My people remained calm when I placed Moses on an equal footing with the conjurors of our day; it did not hurt them when I called the same Moses an impostor. Indeed, I might even deny God without my people uttering a single sound of pain.

But when I returned from the Holy Land with the glad news: Jesus is our brother, then I struck the tender spot. A scream of pain could be heard and resounded from all sides, "Do not press, do not touch that, it hurts!" Well, it does hurt: But you must know, my people, that that is indeed your illness; you lack nothing but your brother Jesus. Your illness consists precisely in your not having him. Receive him and you will be healed of all your sufferings.

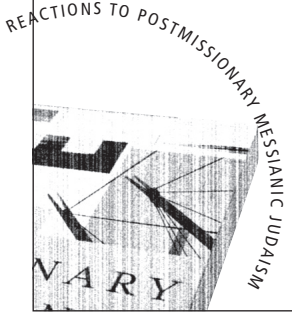
**Reactions to and Interaction with**
***Postmissionary Messianic Judaism***

For this issue of *Mishkan* we have asked three people to review Mark Kinzer's book *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism.*

Two of them, Rich Robinson and Richard Harvey, are themselves part of the Messianic movement and are, so to speak, commenting from within the movement. Eckhard Schnabel is a New Testament scholar and was asked to take a closer look specifically at the chapters where Mark Kinzer deals with the New Testament, as well as at the missiological implications of his exegesis. In his response, Mark Kinzer interacts with these three authors and their comments on his book.

Four other people were asked, not for a review of the whole book, but for a brief comment on it or on a specific aspect thereof. Mark Kinzer has not seen these four essays, and therefore does not interact with them in this issue. These brief essays underscore different aspects of the book and take different approaches to it.

We are well aware that there are other viewpoints and that other comments could be made. We therefore invite our readers to continue the discussion by submitting their comments on Mark Kinzer's book for consideration for the next issue of *Mishkan.* Essays should be no longer than 500 words, and may be edited for clarity. Submissions may be emailed to MishkanEdit@caspari.com; the deadline is November 1, 2006.




# Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: A Review Essay

By **Rich Robinson**

## Introduction

In his new book, Mark Kinzer embarks on a theological project that is certain to greatly enliven discussions in the Messianic movement and beyond. He is concerned to develop an alternative to supersessionism and engages this task at the level of hermeneutics, exegesis, and theological construction. It must be said that it is one of the more sophisticated and ambitious theological treatments to come out of the Messianic movement, as well as being well-focused and clearly written, and takes the discussion beyond the usual concerns. In some regards it offers some excel-

lent and much-needed treatments of the Jewishness of the gospel, all the while pushing some very necessary and often neglected questions to the front burner of the theological agenda. On the other hand, it raises serious concerns of its own that call into question the viability of his project for responding to the question of supersessionism – at least for anyone who wishes to address the question from a more conservative/evangelical viewpoint.

By way of orientation, let me say a few things that will help put Kinzer's project in perspective.

**First, let me articulate** what I understand to be the driving questions behind Kinzer's project. Kinzer is not only asking about alternatives to supersessionism. Dispensationalism and varieties of premillennial theologies have offered alternatives to supersessionism for years. Reformed voices have been raised against at least those kinds of supersessionism that have led to anti-Semitism.[1] But those solutions haven't sufficiently engaged the questions at the heart of Kinzer's project. Essentially, Kinzer is asking the following questions, and is particularly asking them of Jews who profess faith in Jesus and rightly say that they are still Jews:

*Question One:* What does it mean to *be Jewish* – not only of what promises are the Jewish people the recipients, but what if any covenantal *obligations* devolve on them by virtue of their being Jews? Kinzer is right to raise the question. The Messianic movement and standard theologies that are positive toward the place of the Jewish people in God's plan speak extensively of God's promises. Whether there are corresponding obligations devolving on the Jewish people does not receive the same kind of consideration.[2]

*Question Two:* In what way can it be claimed that the Jewish people remain a distinct people, if there is not some way in which that distinctiveness can be lived out and passed on to future generations? Perhaps this is a subset of the first question, posing the issue of whether and in what way being distinct remains an obligation for Jewish people. However, the emphasis in this question is on Jewish *continuity*, not merely *personal Jewish identity*. The corporate aspect of Jewishness comes into play in this question.

*Question Three:* Granted that the Jewish people are still a *people* and not just a collection of individual Jews, how can or should that corporate expression of peoplehood be realized?

These three things – obligations, distinctiveness, and community – are

1 R. Kendall Soulen helpfully outlines three kinds of supersessionism, which he labels punitive, economic (that is, related to particular economies, dispensations, or moments in redemptive history), and structural. See his *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 1996).

2 It is interesting that while some kinds of supersessionism see the promises as now devolving on the Church, leaving the covenant curses for Israel, pro-Israel theologies see the promises as remaining for Israel, but do not speak of corresponding obligations. In both cases, a fully coherent theology of covenants is not carried through.

all interrelated. The question is whether, to what extent, and in what way these issues demand a response from Jews who follow Jesus.

These are important questions, and Kinzer is asking them in a new way through a framework quite different from the usual ones. We can recognize that his solution, though ultimately fraught with more problems than it solves, is nevertheless a good heuristic device (i.e. a teaching method that gets us thinking), as well as a timely challenge to the Messianic movement *and* to traditional theologies.

**The second point of orientation** is to take note of the theological sphere in which the author moves. Almost all of Kinzer's interactions are with what are now termed "postliberal" authors, both Jewish (post-Holocaust theologians) and non-Jewish; there is virtually no interaction with evangelical viewpoints other than to characterize them as traditional. His citations tend to be from a limited circle of recent scholars working in the area of Christianity and Judaism. There is a history behind this; Kinzer's project fits into the theological trajectory of the past quarter-century. His book, and the so-called "mature Messianic Judaism" being promoted in the Hashivenu[3] circles, are in fact a direct outgrowth of developments from the "New Perspective on Paul" (NPP) and onwards.[4] With a vocabulary laced with phrases like "Jewish space" and "irreducible dyads," these are no longer the same discussions of the HCAA of 1905. And so a word on this background is in order.

To over-simplify, about a quarter century ago, E. P. Sanders wrote his famous treatise on *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* – and the world of New Testament studies was never the same. To be sure, Sanders was one in a chain of Pauline scholars, but his work in particular, and the NPP that followed, moved the center of Paul's thought away from issues of personal salvation and toward issues of covenant and community boundaries. Paul, as we have been repeatedly told by well-known scholars such as N.T. Wright, had been misread as though Martin Luther's medieval concerns had been Paul's first-century concerns. In reality, Paul was not dealing with Luther's issues at all (which revolved around Roman Catholic legalism) but with issues of how one enters and stays in covenant with God. Paul was dealing primarily with the place of Gentiles within the covenantal scheme. This is not to say that NPP was completely unconcerned with salvation issues, but the pendulum started swinging much more toward ecclesiological concerns: the nature of the community, who's in, who's out, and why.

Now, twenty-five years out from Sanders, the evaluative pendulum has begun to swing the other way, and some scholars are beginning to advocate for a kind of balance. On the other hand, there is also a degree of

3 See www.hashivenu.org.

4 See Kinzer's explicit statements on p. 259.

polarization in some regards, as can be seen from the strongly pro- and anti-NPP blogs and websites.

The relevance of the legacy of Sanders and the NPP to the Messianic movement is that the newer discussions (e.g. Kinzer) are focusing greatly on issues of community – already a critical topic among Jewish believers for over 100 years, but now given theological fuel – to the exclusion of salvation issues. In addition to the NPP, there is the impetus (catalyzed by the ecumenical/dialogue movements as well as postmodern trends) to do whatever we can in biblical studies to improve Jewish-Christian relations. This helps explain why ecclesiology, specifically the relationship of the Jewish and Christian communities of faith, is a central concern of Kinzer's book.

Besides the NPP's influence on biblical studies, there is of course the swing of thought in general to a postmodern mode. It is enough here to note that issues of pluralism and soteriology have been given a certain shape by the postmodern climate, though in fact, as we will see, Kinzer's soteriology – his doctrine of salvation – has influences as far back as Franz Rosenzweig and Karl Rahner.

The fact that Kinzer is moving in non-evangelical, postliberal spheres of thought means that the kinds of issues evangelicals would look for in solving the problem of supersessionism are not really dealt with by Kinzer. In trying to convey something other than supersessionism, traditional evangelical theology has considered the matters of biblical covenants, issues of continuity and discontinuity, and what newness Jesus brought versus what remains. These are all issues evangelicals are used to discussing. Kinzer's world of discourse is quite different, and so it is not surprising that he is able to come to other conclusions.

**Third, Kinzer's hermeneutical concerns.** This is the burden of Kinzer's initial chapter. Its title, "Ecclesiology and Biblical Interpretation," shows the tilt toward community issues, that this will, for all intents and purposes, be a book about Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Here Kinzer lays out several interpretive factors that influence biblical exegesis, with a view to showing us why we should read the New Testament as he does, when, as he says, other interpretations are also "reasonable."

First, by way of introduction, he cites Charles Cosgrove (to whom he is also indebted for framing the question about "reasonable" interpretations), saying that all texts are "irreducibly ambiguous." No one reading can be established as the intention of the author. It is true that since E. D. Hirsch, discussions of meaning and authorial intent have been far ranging, and Hirsch is no longer the last word – though he is a foundational and important one.[5] Nevertheless, the idea of an "irreducibly ambiguous" text is certainly open to debate. For evangelicals, the well-

5 For a more recent discussion, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Zondervan, 1998).

known models of interpretation – such as the "hermeneutical spiral" or the "fusing of horizons" – are more helpful in viewing the nature of the hermeneutical enterprise, and in fact, a strong philosophical defense can be mounted in favor of the author and the certainty of authorial meaning.

Then come the three hermeneutical principles. The first is to note the difference in "social location" between the New Testament and later readers. The particular point here is that modern readers see Christianity and the Christian community as totally distinct from Judaism and the Jewish community – whereas in the first century, there was no such division, the two communities not yet having become distinct. But the tendency today is for Bible readers to view the Jewish apostles as though they had joined a new religion of Christianity. Well, fair enough. But Kinzer tends to develop this in a direction most evangelicals would not take. The basic division between human beings, he says, is not Christian and non-Christian (or even male and female) but Jew and Gentile.[6]

The second principle is a "hermeneutics of ethical accountability." That is, theological positions come with ethical consequences. For example, the theology of supersessionism has led to anti-Semitism. We know a wrong interpretation when it leads to troubling ethical results. This principle is particularly problematic, since we need a basis to decide what is ethical in the first place. Charles Cosgrove, we learn, rejected a supersessionist interpretation of Romans 9–11 because it was less "respectful" and "humane" toward Jewish people. This, of course, immediately raises questions about the meaning of love and respect. We are reminded not a little of the 1960s "situation theology" of Joseph Fletcher.

**To be sure, there is an interplay between ethics and interpretation ... but this criterion can too quickly be applied in such a way that it falls victim to the changing fashions of ethics.**

In fact, there is a hermeneutical spiral not only in exegesis but in ethics as well. How do we know what is ethical? From God's word. How do we decide among interpretations of God's word? One factor is the ethical implications. It would be instructive to see how the criterion of "ethical accountability" would have functioned in interpreting God's commandment to kill brother Levites or the Canaanites. To be sure, there is an interplay between ethics and interpretation that has been recognized since the days of the early church,[7] but this criterion can too quickly be applied in such a way that it falls victim to the changing fashions of ethics.

6 So also Rich Nichol, moving in the same "mature Messianic Jewish" circles, who maintains that the "irreducible dyad" of human existence is Jew and Gentile. This quote may be found in "Defining Messianic Judaism," UMJC Theology Committee, Summer 2002. Commentary by Russ Resnik is available at http://www.umjc.org/main/faq/definition/ResnikCommentary.pdf.

7 So Augustine: "choose the interpretation that most fosters the love of God and neighbor" (cited in Vanhoozer, p. 32).

The third principle is to recognize that God is Lord of history and works within history. We must take the risk of seeing God's hand at work in preservation and judgment. Maimonides and other Jewish thinkers saw God's hand in the rise of Christianity, which religion led to the spread of Jewish knowledge among the nations of the world. Therefore, any view of Judaism should take into account God's working in the historical process. For Kinzer, history is *not* revelatory (contra e.g. Irving Greenberg, who saw the Holocaust as an event of divine revelation). Nevertheless, God's action within history helps us shape our exegesis of the biblical texts. In particular, what will be important for Kinzer is the survival, and more than that, the flourishing, of the Jewish people over the past 2,000 years. To be sure, we can affirm that God has preserved and caused the Jewish people to flourish. Indeed, we see God's hand in the fulfillment of his promises. But Kinzer will use the principle to conclude that there is a "validity" to rabbinic Judaism that is part of God's plan.

These principles are not worked out in a point-by-point way throughout the book, nor does he take them to the extremes some might. In fact, Kinzer engages in much historical-grammatical exegesis, and it seems to me that despite spending a chapter articulating hermeneutical principles, his most far-reaching conclusions come from basic underlying presuppositions rather than from any particular application of these principles. To justify what Kinzer and Cosgrove would term a "reasonable" reading, we must see the presuppositions from which Kinzer is working. I would lay out some of his more important guiding presuppositions as these:[8]

- The apostolic lifestyle is the lifestyle for Jewish believers today.
- Not observing Torah leads to loss of Jewish distinctiveness and the end of the Jewish people.
- The ongoing divine covenant with Israel means that modern Judaism has "validity."
- The divine preservation of the Jewish people through Judaism means that we should "affirm" Judaism.

It is of course impossible for anyone to begin without presuppositions. As far as I can see, Kinzer has not so much defended his presuppositions as assumed them, entering the discussion in a place common to those involved in Jewish-Christian relations and post-Holocaust discussions. He ends up with a theology quite consistent at most points, but if he hopes to engage the evangelical church and the current community of Jewish believers in Jesus, he needs to start further back. Part of the problem with

8 I suggest these guiding presuppositions based on the fact that some of Kinzer's more far-reaching conclusions appear to depend on these as a control on his hermeneutic, as well as from some explicit affirmations, stated rather than defended, such as "The abolition of the dietary laws is in effect an abolition of the Jewish people itself" (p. 58) – a conclusion he attributes to following his three hermeneutical principles, but which, I suggest, functions more as a foundational starting place.

some of these affirmations is that they work from (what we can argue are) false dichotomies: *either* Jews observe Torah, *or else* they lose their distinctiveness; *either* modern Judaism has "validity," *or else* we cannot affirm God's ongoing divine covenant.

## Overview of the Content

Chapters 2 and 3 are respectively titled, "The New Testament and Jewish Practice" and "The New Testament and the Jewish People." They are intended to demonstrate that the New Testament affirms continued Jewish practice on the part of the apostles and the early believers (with special attention to circumcision, Sabbath/holidays, and kashrut), as well as the ongoing place of the Jewish people in God's purposes. While the specific interpretation of individual passages can be questioned, Kinzer is stimulating (e.g. on Mark 7:19b), and on the whole paints a correct picture of the New Testament as a book that is positive toward the Jewish people. The New Testament "neither rejects nor transcends the observance of Torah." Notably, Kinzer makes a sharp distinction here between observances related to the Temple and Jerusalem and those that are more universal. We cannot, he advises, extrapolate from the Temple-related practices to other practices. This argument, if valid, would have implications for modern-day Torah observance by Jewish believers even in the absence of the Temple and priesthood. (Kinzer notes that Torah observance is not required for non-Jews.) Kinzer here invokes "the Pauline syllogism" – simply put, all who are circumcised should remain so; all who are circumcised are obligated to observe the Torah; conclusion: all born Jews are obligated to observe the Torah.

However, there is one guiding presupposition that influences much else: the assumption that the practices of the apostles should remain normative for us today, and that those who question this are supersessionist in their thinking (again, a false dichotomy). *"The abolition of the dietary laws is in effect an abolition of the Jewish people itself"* (emphasis Kinzer's). There is no room left for, and no exploration of, other alternatives.

It is in chapter 3 that Kinzer begins to make his particular creative contribution. He shows us that Paul and the other NT writers were in "solidarity" with their own Jewish people. Of particular interest is the discussion of the "hardening" that has come "in part" on Israel, referring to the Jewish response to the gospel that is not punitive in nature, but divinely sent to accomplish the purpose of gathering in the Gentiles. Then, following Mark Nanos[9] on the literary unity of Romans 9–11 and the rest of Romans, Kinzer suggests the question, *Is Israel's temporary unbelief a participation in Christ's vicarious and redemptive suffering?* If both Jesus and non-believing Israel suffer redemptively, then Paul's mys-

9 Mark Nanos is a biblically self-taught former businessman and has made a major entrance into the discussion. He is Jewish, not a believer in Jesus, and particularly concerned with issues of Jewish-Christian relations.

tery in Romans 11:25–29 is not just the salvation of all Israel, but also that non-remnant Israel participates at present "in the Messiah whom she does not yet consciously acknowledge." This theme is dealt with at length in chapter 6, but the exegetical underpinnings begin here. It is an unusual and stimulating discussion, but whether it entails the conclusions eventually reached is another question. It is possible to affirm with Kinzer that Israel's hardening is redemptive and not punitive, and to affirm Paul's linkage of the redemptive suffering of Christ and the redemptive hardening of Israel, without ending up where he does.

So far, the Jewishness of the New Testament has been underscored, not just as "background" but as a response to supersessionism. According to Kinzer, to fulfill its vocation the remnant must live as Israel, i.e., "be exemplary in observing those traditional Jewish practices that identify the Jewish people as a distinct community chosen and loved by God." Now, in chapter 4, what Kinzer calls a "bilateral ecclesiology"[10] is made explicit. For this vocation to be fulfilled, there are three implications:

- First, the structure of the *ekklesia* must allow for both Jewish communal practice and for Gentiles to worship without becoming Jews. This necessitates "only one structural arrangement," namely, that there must be "two corporate subcommunities with their own governmental and communal structures."
- Second, "the Jewish branch of the *ekklesia* must identify with the Jewish people as a whole and participate actively in its communal life."
- Third, "the Gentile *ekklesia* can share in Israel's life and blessings without becoming supersessionist."

Kinzer then seeks to support bilateral ecclesiology in terms of New Testament ecclesiological teaching and practice. His excursion through James, Acts 15, Paul, Mark and Revelation certainly underscores the distinctiveness of Jews within the larger body. He paints a plausible picture of the first-century *ekklesia* as having a generally bilateral nature, though he delineates it in terms of a sharp demarcation that carries serious practical implications, a delineation few would see as consistent with the overall thrust of Scripture. As with Torah observance, he draws a straight line from "then" to "now," because he believes the only other alternative is assimilation/supersessionism.

Chapter 5, "The Christian No to Israel," is a valuable survey of supersessionism particularly as it impacted the question of Jewish practices. For considerations of space I will not say more on it here; the case that supersessionism has been a hallmark of much of church history is clear. Then, of key importance, is chapter 6, "Jewish Tradition and the Christological

10 In a previous work, Kinzer called this "binitarian ecclesiology"; see Mark Kinzer, *The Nature of Messianic Judaism: Judaism as Genus, Messianic as Species* (West Hartford, CT: Hashivenu Archives, no date [1990s?]).

Test." I confess to finding the arguments here full of leaps and non sequiturs. First, Kinzer repeatedly remarks that the Jewish "no" to Jesus is only "apparent." Second, he says that since the New Testament affirms Jewish practice as a sign of the covenant and a means of preserving the Jewish people, then "the New Testament affirms what we would today call Judaism." Why? Because "its crucial role in what is evidently a divinely appointed task points to its inherent value" (p. 215). Third, since Y'shua is so integral to the gospel and cannot be bypassed, we must conclude that "Yeshua abides in the midst of the Jewish people and its religious tradition, despite that tradition's apparent refusal to accept his claims." Fourth, any "Judaism" must connect to the historical experiences of the Jewish people.

Surely these are leaps of mammoth proportions. Kinzer is for the most part internally consistent (not always – see below on missions) in developing his theology. But it is his overall starting points and dichotomies that are open to question. Having said that, there are some key questions to ask of chapter 6, which I compress for the sake of space: first of all, whether God has ever preserved the Jewish people in spite of, not because of, the particular kind of faith exemplified at a particular time, and whether the divine presence must always rest on Israel; second, whether divine providence in preservation entails approval as its concomitant in any sphere; third, whether there is not a great ambiguity in the phrase "abides in the midst of" along with similar expressions in the book regarding Judaism as possessing "validity" – what exactly is being said here?; fourth, whether we are not really playing word games when we speak of the "apparent" no to Y'shua; fifth, whether these conclusions do not owe more to "anonymous Christian" theories articulated by Karl Rahner and afterwards, and to the desire for better Jewish-Christian relations (at the expense of giving up what should not be given up), than to the example and teaching of the New Testament authors; sixth, whether the author has sufficiently appreciated the reality of sin in the shaping of religious systems, Jewish or otherwise; seventh, whether acceptance of the ongoing covenant status of the Jewish people does not entail thinking about the obligations of that covenant, including following God's requirements, which may entail faith in Y'shua far more, or instead of, rabbinic halakhic requirements, and which also entails thinking about the meaning of covenant curses (without supersessionist implications); eighth, whether it is not possible to "connect" to the Jewish experience without embracing the systemic nature of rabbinic Judaism as a system. I have deliberately phrased these questions in a stark way; in fact there is much to be admired, practiced, followed, and learned from in rabbinic tradition, both as a way of "connection" and in its own right, along with much that is less helpful, and

**Kinzer is for the most part internally consistent in developing his theology. But it is his overall starting points and dichotomies that are open to question.**

sometimes (as in the case of Kabbalistic varieties) positively not. But Kinzer is of course trying to say much more than that.

So, for instance, I can affirm with Kinzer that Y'shua is portrayed as a "one-man Israel" in parts of the New Testament, but I cannot see that if one accepts the ongoing covenant status of the Jewish people, as I do, that this entails the conclusions Kinzer reaches – conclusions which, again, are based on a presupposition open to discussion and debate, e.g. that the ongoing covenant status means we must embrace the Judaism of the past 2000 years. Further, Kinzer finds that Israel's *no* to Y'shua is a *yes* to God – for what was being rejected was the (distorted) message of the second-century church. One can surely fruitfully discuss what it means to hear and reject a distorted message. Kinzer, however, in a "creative" maneuver, refers us again to the parallels in his chapter three between Jesus' redemptive suffering and the redemptive partial hardening of Israel, and concludes that if Y'shua's obedience unto death was a realization of Israel's covenant fidelity, then the Jewish rejection of the church's message was a "hidden participation in the obedience of Yeshua" (p. 225). Creative, yes; but surely we are forgiven if we see a theological sleight-of-hand in that argument. And we can see a sleight-of-hand even while agreeing about the terrible legacy of Christian anti-Semitism, agreeing about Jesus as a one-man Israel and Israel's hardening as redemptive, agreeing that when Jews were persecuted in the name of Christ, their persecutors were in some way persecuting the Messiah himself. One can affirm all these, affirm them more, affirm them less, but still insist that in calling a *no* a *yes,* some fundamental aspect of the biblical message has been turned upside down!

Chapter 7, "Jewish Tradition and the Biblical Test," argues for the legitimacy of an oral tradition, particularly through a discussion of the Old Testament judicial system and Matthew's passages on the Pharisees, but finding "other grounds" besides that of the New Testament – especially the conclusion that the Jewish people "as a whole" are the agent of conferring halakhic authority. Thus we are left with the unworkable conclusion that the majority rules, and that whatever is, is right. This, at any rate, appears to be the conclusion to which the affirmation of the agency of the entire Jewish people leads.

Chapter 8 is "From Missionary to Postmissionary Messianic Judaism." The history of modern missions to the Jews is evaluated on a scale delineating to what extent they uphold five ecclesiological principles: the irrevocable covenant; the ongoing validity of Jewish practice; the validity of rabbinic tradition; the bilateral *ekklesia*; and solidarity with the Jewish people. In this chapter it is suggested that traditional missions come from "outside" the people of Israel. The practical ramifications of what it means to be "postmissionary" are summed up in chapter 9, "Healing the Schism." First, the church needs to "foster respect" for Judaism, which means seeing Judaism along the lines of Kinzer's chapter 6. Second, Gentile Christians should urge Jewish believers among them to live according to Torah and

Jewish tradition. Third, the church should dialogue with Jewish believers and encourage them to move in a postmissionary direction.

## Conclusion

It is clear from the end of the book that we are no longer moving in traditional or evangelical circles of discussion. "What advantage, then, is there in reading Kinzer, or what value is there in his proposals? Much in every way." First of all, Kinzer's strength is that his book is heuristically helpful: what would it look like to see the early church as "bilateral" in Kinzer's sense? As Torah-observant among Jewish believers? Does that picture make more sense of the scriptural and historical data than a different picture would?

Secondly, Kinzer brings to the fore the questions, for Jewish believers in Jesus, of Jewish obligations, distinctiveness, and community. The second of these has received the most attention in traditional approaches, the third somewhat less, and the first even less. We can be grateful for Kinzer's hard pushing of the questions onto the agenda in a new way.

Third, Kinzer properly underscores the Jewishness of the New Testament, the place of Israel, and the unfortunate effects that have attended much supersessionist theology. There is a great deal in the way of exegetical discussions that are not often heard in evangelical circles, but which have a good deal of value and should not be neglected. (I think of his handling of the redemptive suffering of Messiah in parallel with the hardening of Israel – rich food for thought even if one does not accept that the texts lead to his conclusions.)

"What then shall we say? That Mark Kinzer, who pursued a new Messianic theology, has not attained it. For he is zealous for God, but his zeal is not according to knowledge." The weaknesses of the book are such that Kinzer's conclusions ultimately outrun the biblical evidence. First, as a general criticism, he interacts largely with postliberal/post-Holocaust scholars and does not seriously engage previous attempts to address supersessionism or the distinctiveness of Jews within the larger *ekklesia*. Also foundational, hermeneutically, is that if the Bible is the Word of God, then the question "Has the church misread the Bible?"[11] must be asked historically and theologically with respect to the development of supersessionism and the need for theological reform at all times in the church.

Second, while painting a generally positive and historically true picture of the early Jewish believers, Kinzer does not consider alternatives to drawing a straight line from apostolic practice of the first-century to the practice of Jewish believers today. Questions of the nature of covenants and their relationship to redemptive history, as handled in evangelical

11 The actual title of a book: Moises Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

theology, are not dealt with, nor is the newness that the arrival of the Messiah might mean. In my opinion, the post-70 reality and the changing nature of the Jewish community are not dealt with either.

Third, Kinzer's conclusions ignore large swaths of biblical material, including the following. This is another way of saying that Kinzer's conclusions do not, in fact, make the best sense of all the scriptural data.

(a) The nature and effect of sin, especially on religious systems – including Judaism.
(b) Following on the first point, the prophetic aspect within the Old Testament itself, challenging a religiously corrupt society to repentance and reform. In regard to these two points, it would be a good heuristic exercise to apply the "grid" of prophetic challenge within the Old Testament itself. One wants to know if Kinzer thinks that the Northern Kingdom's *no* to the divinely ordained worship in Jerusalem somehow reflected Yahweh's *yes* to that kingdom as he remained "hidden" in their midst.
(c) The missionary activity of Paul and the other apostles, not only among Gentiles but also among Jews. There is a curious inconsistency here, one of the few within a generally self-consistent theological proposal: if Kinzer believes that the apostolic practice of observantly keeping the Law is normative for all time, why does he not believe the same for the apostolic practice of mission? Undoubtedly he would argue that apostolic mission was from the "inside," in contrast to modern missions which come "from outside" – though surely the prophets brought an "outside" word from God to a rebellious nation? Nor is it *prima facie* clear that modern Jewish mission, conducted by Jews, is coming "from outside."

Fourth, and most seriously, while Kinzer's ecclesiology is biblically defensible up to a point, his soteriology is not. In his ecclesiology, Kinzer underscores Jewish believers' obligation to live in Jewish community and engage in Jewish practices. Given that there is such an obligation, Kinzer's exegesis attempts to give a life setting to that obligation. It can be noted, however, that if Kinzer is going to argue from Hebrews that only the cult is abolished and not such distinctive practices as Shabbat, circumcision, and kashrut, then the necessity of a bilateral ecclesiology is that much weakened. Could not Jewish believers have been in a congregation with Gentile believers and kept Shabbat, kashrut, and circumcision, if considerations of cult and priesthood did not come into play? Is it necessary to conclude that there had to be distinct corporate structures in order for this to take place?

Kinzer's most creative contribution in the book is also its most glaring weakness. Having developed his bilateral ecclesiology, he then draws parallels between the redemptive suffering of Jesus and of Israel – and then by suggestion, draws his soteriological conclusions. To reach his soteriology, he must do two things. One is to effectively read between the lines.

It is one thing to say that Romans shows Christ and Israel to be in a kind of parallel situation of suffering redemptively (though surely in quite different ways). It is another to then suggest from this that somehow Christ is "hidden" within Israel, including in the past 2000 years of Judaism. As already remarked, Kinzer's view resembles Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christian" theology, to which he is at least indirectly indebted, Rahner's theology and variants having become more and more a part of the theological landscape. Further, in invoking the Abrahamic Covenant he shares a resonance with Franz Rosenzweig's two-covenant theology, particularly in speaking, as many modern theologians do, of *the* covenant with Israel, not allowing room for distinctions between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

In fact, it is the guiding presuppositions, more than the three foundational hermeneutical principles enunciated at the start of the book, that control his conclusions. After all, none of his hermeneutical principles necessitate his conclusions, and the Scripture can be read in quite other ways while still recognizing our social locations, the ethical implications of exegesis, and God's providential work in the history of the Jewish people.

Fifth, a final word on the appeal of Kinzer's proposal and, indeed, the whole "mature Messianic Judaism." I strongly encourage readers to find online Ligon Duncan's well-written and judicious article, "The Attractions of the New Perspective(s) on Paul."[12] Much of what he says by way of describing the NPP and its attractions for young evangelical scholars can be said of those who are ready to quickly embrace the new "Messianic" theology. In particular, four of Duncan's areas of attraction have distinct parallels to our situation:

*"The new perspective has a seeming exegetical superiority and historical-contextual superiority to traditional exegesis."* If one starts from Kinzer's presuppositions and accepts the dichotomies he works from – which is to say, if one starts from the consensus of post-Holocaust theologians, NPP theologians, Jewish-Christian relations scholars, etc. – then his exegetical conclusions certainly seem superior.

*"The NPP is attractive to young evangelicals because of their general historical-theological ignorance, as well as that of so many pro-NPP New Testament specialists."* This problem afflicts the Messianic movement particularly in that so many seem unaware of the discussions that have gone on in recent and not-so-recent times regarding the place of Israel, the nature of redemptive history, and so on. I am speaking here of those who will find themselves attracted to these kinds of theologies; presumably the articulate leaders and writers of the "mature Messianic Judaism" are themselves aware of these discussions, even though they may reject them. Past approaches to the problems may or may not prove

12 A simple search on Google for "Ligon Duncan" and "Attractions" (use the quotes) will bring up the article.

**Author info:**
Rich Robinson is a Jewish believer serving with Jews for Jesus as Web Site Administrator, Research Librarian, and in the Multimedia department. His Ph.D. is from Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, PA.
jfj@jewsforjesus.org

to be adequate, but one can hardly remain uninformed about them and expect to develop a "mature Messianic Judaism."

*"The new perspective offers a diminished view of sin and the issue of sin in the New Testament."* I have spoken briefly on this above, especially with regard to the effect of sin on religious systems, those of the Jewish people included.

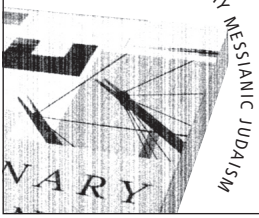
*"The new perspective seems to offer a solution to the Protestant-Catholic conflict."* Here if we read the Church-Israel conflict, or supersessionism, we see the attractiveness of a new way of looking at the texts that appears to offer a way to overcome these conflicts.

Duncan's entire article is worth pondering as it helps set the current ferment in the Messianic movement in a larger historical and social context.

In conclusion, Mark Kinzer has presented us with a timely, well-written, and (working from his set of presuppositions) largely self-consistent theology, given additional impetus by his hermeneutical principles. The author proves helpful in understanding not only his own viewpoints but also some important trends in New Testament theology, as reflected particularly among recent non-evangelical interpreters.

Yet without the driving presuppositions, Kinzer's ecclesiological, missiological, and particularly soteriological conclusions do not invariably follow from the text or from historical and theological concerns. Indeed, as Kinzer says, they are "reasonable" interpretations which are *an* alternative to supersessionism. However, to the extent that his starting presuppositions and dichotomies can be challenged, his hermeneutical principles can be nuanced in a different direction. One can thereby arrive at quite other conclusions, particularly if one factors in consideration of other alternatives to supersessionism and the meaning of God's abiding covenant with Israel. And then there is the question of the creative leaps that, it seems to me, are demanded of the text only if one is inclined to find certain conclusions.

*Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* is required reading for leaders in the Messianic movement, and helps force necessary questions to the front of the agenda.



# Shaping the Aims and Aspirations of Jewish Believers

By **Richard Harvey**

*Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* is a groundbreaking and significant book. While it will be condemned as heretical in some circles, others will welcome it as an important and programmatic statement for the future direction of the Messianic movement.[1] As a Messianic Jewish theologian, Mark Kinzer now joins the ranks of David Stern, Daniel Juster, and earlier Hebrew Christians such as Jacob Jocz, Joseph Rabinowitz, and Paul Levertoff.[2] Each in their time helped to shape the aims and aspirations of Jewish believers in Jesus, articulating their views in the context of Church and Synagogue. Like them, he will be seen as both seminal and controversial. It will only be in the light of further discussion, reflection, and practical implementation that his contribution will be fully assessed.

Kinzer's work focuses on three areas. It brings a new reading of passages in the New Testament that deal with the teaching of Jesus and the apostles on Jewish practice and how Jewish believers should see themselves as continuing to be part of Israel. It challenges the Church to recast its relationship to the Jewish people in a non-supersessionist and non-evangelistic (or at least non-evangelical) mode. And it calls on Messianic Jews to engage with the Jewish people in a "postmissionary" form of Messianic Judaism.

Kinzer has not written the book primarily as a systematic theology of Messianic Judaism, but as an overview and reinterpretation of New Testament teaching that leads to a fresh understanding of the relationship between the Church and Israel. This results in a call to Messianic Jews to live out a new postmissionary response of primary identification with Judaism rather than with Christianity. But the book amounts to a significant contribution to Messianic Jewish theology, and should be assessed accordingly. By building his argument around the nature of ecclesiology and his repeated call for a "bilateral ecclesiology in solidarity with Israel," Kinzer makes implicit but important theological statements on

1 The Hashivenu Forum (www.hashivenu.org) recently devoted its annual conference to discussion of the book, and a forthcoming edition of *Kesher,* the Journal of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, is given to reviews and responses to the book.

2 See David Rudolph, "Messianic Jews and Christian Theology: Restoring an Historical Voice to the Contemporary Discussion" in *Pro Ecclesia* (Winter 2005) Volume XIV, Number 1, pp. 58–84 for a recent review of the contributions of Messianic Jews to theology.

several other questions – such as the nature of election and salvation, the uniqueness and significance of Jesus, and the meaning of Torah in the light of the coming of the Messiah. The book does not develop discussion on all these issues, and we will have to wait for Kinzer's next volume(s) to see what position he takes on them. The assumptions behind Kinzer's argument will need to be fleshed out to gain an overall picture of how he understands the wider theological implications of his position.

There are many questions that can be raised about the book: Kinzer's brand of biblical scholarship will not appeal to those of a more conservative evangelical tradition, coming as he does with a more ecumenical, post-liberal and post-critical perspective than is commonly found in evangelical or LCJE circles.[3] His reading of Jewishness, Jewish identity and what it means to be Jewish in the light of belief in Jesus will strike chords with diaspora Jews from a Conservative synagogal background, but not with Israeli believers who define themselves without such religious categories, or others from different religious traditions and non-religious backgrounds; his reliance or favoring of some New Testament scholars (such as Douglas Harink and Mark Nanos) over others will be seen as special pleading; he may be reading too much into the views of Jewish thinkers such as Michael Wyschogrod[4] and David Novak in seeking a welcome

3 There are considerable philosophical and theological differences between the two approaches. See "What Can Evangelicals and Postliberals Learn from Each Other? The Carl Henry/Hans Frei Exchange Reconsidered" in George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), ch. 15, 338–360. Hunsinger suggests that the disagreements between Evangelicals and post-liberals on the nature and authority of scripture should not prevent them from learning from each other's criticisms, and affirming the many points they hold in common. A useful guide to post-liberal reading is Douglas Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Brazos/Baker, 2003), to which much of Kinzer's discussion refers. For an evangelical critique of post-liberalism, see Alister E. McGrath*, A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (IVP, 1996), chapter 3.

4 Kinzer cites Michael Wyschogrod as sympathetic to Torah-observant Messianic Jews, as if approving of their belief in Jesus. But an alternative reading of Wyschogrod would still see Messianic Jews as practicing false worship (*Avodah Zarah)* if they continue to believe in Jesus. See "Letter to a Friend," and "Response to Respondents," in "Symposium on 'Jewish-Christians and the Torah,'" *Modern Theology*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (April, 1995) and David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, *Jews and 'Jewish Christianity'* (New York: Ktav, 1978). A recent interview with Wyschogrod suggests this latter view:

> In his article "Can a Jew be a Christian?" (May 3), Jason Byassee characterizes me as an "orthodox Jewish theologian ... who has written with surprising sympathy about Messianic Judaism."
>
> I have written elsewhere that "from the Jewish point of view accepting trinitarian Christianity is not a good thing to do. In fact, it is so bad that a Christian Jew loses all sorts of privileges in the community of Israel." What she does not lose, however, is her standing as a Jew. Once one is born of a Jewish mother or properly converted, one remains a Jew no matter how many of the Torah's commandments are obeyed or violated.
>
> Therefore it is not correct to assert that I am "willing to accept Messianic Jews' claim that they are still Jews as long as they act like Jews by obeying the Torah, keeping kosher, observing the holidays, circumcising their sons, and so on." If born to a Jewish mother or properly converted, I am willing to accept all Jews as Jews – though perhaps not as good Jews – whether or not they do any of the things enumerated.

(http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_13_122/ai_n14710841)

for his position within the Jewish community; he may be interpreting the emphasis of formative thinkers of Hebrew Christianity such as Levertoff and Lev Gillet too much in the light of his own concerns. The raising of such questions is not surprising, as the book raises many important issues about the assumptions, method, sources, and content of a theology of Messianic Judaism, and to take it seriously the reader must engage with the book at several levels, and with a finely sharpened pencil.

There is much of value in the book, and it should be required reading for all who have an interest in Jewish evangelism and Jewish believers in Jesus. While welcoming the book as an important contribution to the development of Messianic Judaism and the formation of an intelligent and coherent theological tradition of which Messianic Jews are greatly in need, I have three main concerns. These are the nature of ecclesiology according to Kinzer (the *ekklesia* is the very thing that the book is about); the programmatic statement on how Jewish Christianity/Messianic Judaism is to be understood in New Testament times and the present; and the sounding of the "death-knell" for Jewish evangelism and mission as we know it today.

Kinzer's ecclesiology focuses on three related questions: within the one *ekklesia,* how do its two constituent parts relate to each other? How "torah-observant" should the Jewish part be? And how should this "bilateral ecclesiology in solidarity with Israel" affirm Israel's covenant, Torah, and religious tradition? These are all immensely complex questions. Kinzer deals with these questions through a review of New Testament scholarship, an overview of Jewish-Christian relations throughout history, and with theological reflections on the Church and Israel. But the book's structure is somewhat unwieldy, and its central concept, "bilateral ecclesiology in solidarity with Israel," needs further examination. What exactly does this mean, as a theological statement?[5] Other aspects of ecclesiology are largely ignored, as the focus is on the relationship between Israel and the Church. It seems to me that ecclesiology alone, as a branch of systematic theology, can not bear the weight of such discussion, especially in light of the further issues raised concerning the nature of Jesus as God incarnate, the place of the Law, the meaning of salvation, and the nature of the gospel for both Israel and the nations. Kinzer's bilateral ecclesiology runs the risk of producing a "bilateral Christology" and a "bilateral soteriology" in its wake.

**Kinzer's bilateral ecclesiology runs the risk of producing a "bilateral Christology" and a "bilateral soteriology" in its wake.**

5 See the discussion in Stephen R. Haynes, *Prospects for Post-Holocaust Theology* (Scholars Press/OUP, 1991), chapter 1, for a number of models available for describing the nature of the relationship between the Church and Israel. The phrase "in solidarity with" can be variously interpreted to allow for the inclusion of Israel within the Church, the inclusion of the Church within Israel, and parallel co-existences of the two in partnership, complementarity, or even antagonism.

Kinzer's reading of Barth and his interpreters articulates for the first time in a Messianic Jewish context the fruits of a non-supersessionist, post-Holocaust theology, which argues for a new soteriology. The unacknowledged and unrecognized Christ is hidden within the Jewish people, incarnate with and within them already, and the Jewish *no* to Jesus is in fact, in the light of Christian anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, in accord with divine will. Direct proclamation of the messianic claims of Yeshua, unless by a Torah observant Messianic community which is not a "threat from outside" but a "voice from within," is unhelpful and counterproductive, continuing the trend of assimilation that results in the loss of Jewish grandchildren.

**The Jewish *no* to Jesus is in fact, in the light of Christian anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, in accord with divine will.**

If I have summarized Kinzer's argument correctly, there are a number of problems. Barth's ecclesiology is both compelling, suggestive, and influential here, and Kinzer's reading of Barth is carefully nuanced by positive and negative assessments of the theologian by Sonderegge,[6] Busch,[7] Haynes, and Soulen.[8] Barth wrote in the light of "the Jewish question" in pre- and post-war Europe, and his work has paved the way for the Christian reclamation of Judaism and the Jewish reclamation of Jesus. While he had contacts with Hans Joachim Schoeps, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig, his views on Israel and the Jewish people can be read both positively and negatively, and will be questioned by many. His ecclesiology (according to Sonderegge, but not according to Busch) maintains the double-predestination of Israel as both rejecter and rejected, the "hearer" of God's revelation but not the "believer," and this leads to a continuing role for Israel as part of the "community of God" despite their unbelief. Israel is still negatively assessed as the characteristic representative of unredeemed humanity. Barth's bilateralism is not of two confessing *ecclesiae* but of one community composed of the believing Church (including Jewish Christians) and unbelieving Israel. For Barth it is not so much the Jewish Christians who are "the bridge" between the Church and Israel, so much as Christ himself, including within his being both those who accept and those who reject him. Barth's christological election (with its suggestive overtones of universalism) leaves room for the inclusion of unbelieving Israel "in solidarity with the Church" though they deny what the Church affirms. If this

6 Katherine Sonderegge, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew: Karl Barth's "Doctrine of Israel"* (Penn State University Press, 1992) sees continuing elements of supersessionism and anti-Judaism.

7 Eberhard Busch, "The Covenant of Grace Fulfilled in Christ as the Foundation of the Indissoluble Solidarity of the Church with Israel: Barth's Position on the Jews During the Hitler Era," in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1999), 476– 503. Busch has a more sympathetic view of Barth's position.

8 R. Kendal Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), chapter 4; "Karl Barth and the Future of the God of Israel," *Pro Ecclesia* 6:4 (Fall 1997): 413-428.

is a correct reading of Barth, Kinzer appears to have adopted the same logic, and a "bilateral Christology and soteriology" emerges, following Rosenzweig and Palikowski.

Kinzer's understanding of Torah and the role of Jewish tradition follows from this reading, and is consistent with his own personal orientation and practice as a Messianic Jew. Kinzer is reluctant to indulge what he sees as the Christian (primarily Protestant) theological approach to the meaning of the Torah, which focuses on its purpose and principles but leads to an unsympathetic criticism and rejection of what is a positive and God-given heritage of the Jewish people. Kinzer opts rather for a Jewish "operational" understanding of what Torah involves in practice, emphasizing the observance of Sabbath, kashrut, and circumcision as the identity markers of the Jewish community. This approach to Torah reflects Kinzer's desire to promote Torah-observant Messianic Judaism, but the presuppositions and assumptions behind such an approach are open to question. In the light of Jesus' reinterpretation of the Torah (as explored by a brand of scholarship Kinzer generally rejects) and the post-biblical developments of Torah within Jewish history and tradition (which Kinzer is reluctant to critique), this interpretation of Torah and its place in Messianic Judaism will not be universally accepted and will need more careful justification.

The final concern I have is with Kinzer's desire for a "postmissionary" form of Messianic Judaism. It is clear but unfortunate that Kinzer uses the term "postmissionary" for rhetorical effect, speaking over the heads of his immediate readers (concerned Christians) to an unconvinced and wary Jewish community who react instinctively against the term "mission." Kinzer denies any positive sense for the term "mission" in the light of this misperception, which is filtered through the experiences of Christian anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism, and the Jewish community's opposition. Perhaps it is because of the North American context in which Kinzer and his "opponents" operate that he feels the need for "clear blue water" between himself and mission agencies of the type that promote "direct evangelism," whether on the streets, in the media, by person-to-person visitation, or in the planting of Messianic congregations as part of an evangelistic strategy. Kinzer strongly reacts against the "religious and cultural 'Christianization' of other Jews." But his choice of title indicates a "missionary purpose" of his own, to reclaim the Messianic movement as a movement with its primary focus of identity within Jewish "social space" rather than in the world of culturally non-Jewish Christianity.

**His choice of title indicates a "missionary purpose" of his own, to reclaim the Messianic movement as a movement with its primary focus of identity within Jewish "social space."**

Just as, in my view, the distinction between "Hebrew Christianity" and "Messianic Judaism" was a regrettable oversimplification and false dichotomy which plagued the early Messianic Movement of the 1970s and

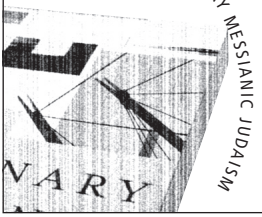
**Author info:**
Richard Harvey teaches Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies at All Nations Christian College, Ware, UK.
r.harvey@allnations.ac.uk



1980s, and led to an immature and unnecessary hostility, so the distinction between "missionary" and "postmissionary" forms of Messianic Judaism also plays into the hands of those who would not affirm any form of Messianic Judaism which advocates in an overt way the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. Kinzer's use of the term "missionary" is to be understood in light of the "anti-missionary" response of the Jewish community. But this should not be allowed to obscure the original meaning of "mission" in Scripture and theology, which the modern missionary movement, at its best, seeks to fulfill as the divine commission to both the Church and Israel. True mission comes from the heart of God himself, expressed in his love for his creation through the sending of his Son. This *missio dei*[9] is expressed in both the calling of Israel to be a light to the nations, and in the coming of Jesus as incarnate Son of God to gather his *ekklesia* from Israel and the nations into a renewed and extended people of God. If the Messianic movement is truly to be a part of that divine mission, it should not renounce its missionary nature, whatever the problems with terminology.

While Kinzer understands his work as "postmissionary"' in its orientation, I would argue that his position represents an important development of an existing missiological approach to the Jewish people, that of contextualization and the construction of an "ethnotheology." Ironically, this may result in both increased missionary effectiveness and in greater opposition, accompanied by the usual accusations of deceptive and underhanded tactics that Kinzer is at pains to deny. As long as Kinzer continues to affirm the uniqueness of Christ, the nature of the Triune God, and the saving effect of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, then despite the promotion of Torah-observance, the reframing of the biblical narrative to include the election of Israel, and the rereading of the New Testament in the light of a repudiation of supersessionism, Kinzer's work will stand within, not outside, the tradition of mission theory and practice. Within the continuum of contemporary approaches in mission and Messianic Judaism, Kinzer argues for a position on one end of the spectrum, which others more conservative and evangelical will be quick to oppose. But he has done the Messianic and missionary movements, and those concerned with Jesus and his people, a service, by identifying key questions and showing one way in which they might be addressed.

9 See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991) for this important understanding of missions as a form of participation in the mission of God.



# The Identity and the Mission of Believers in Jesus Messiah

By **Eckhard J. Schnabel**

Confessing Christians will wholeheartedly agree with many of the assertions which Mark Kinzer makes in his book *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People*.[1] He emphasizes that the Bible is "sacred and canonical" and that "God speaks in and through the biblical text" (33). Over against claims that the New Testament does not have a coherent view of the relationship between the church and Israel he searches for a unifying vision (29). He rejects the suggestion that the Holocaust and the rebirth of the State of Israel have revelatory significance, as "this way of looking at history and revelation fails to acknowledge the unique position of the central revelatory events recounted in the biblical narrative" (41). He recognizes that the Holocaust was not caused by Christians or in the name of the Christian church but by the Nazis whose "hatred of Jews was linked to their hatred of all forms of traditional Christianity" (45). His emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus, and on the foundational significance of Israel and the synagogues for the early church, while not new, is an important reminder for students of the New Testament and of earliest church history.

At the same time, both general procedures and specific explanations in Kinzer's book are cause for concern. Before we address matters that arise out of his treatment of the New Testament, two broader issues must be raised. First, Kinzer has decided to mainly cite authors whose work supports his own thinking (25). The reason that Kinzer gives for this decision is not entirely convincing: nobody ever answers "all possible objections" or discusses "every alternative theory." It is fair enough, of course, to "present a constructive proposal that covers the data and addresses the crucial questions" (25). And it is certainly an acceptable strategy to essentially dispense with alternative explanations of the "data." However, how is one to respond to a partisan manifesto if one detects good reasons to criticize one of his arguments? Will Kinzer simply dismiss dissent by labeling it an "alternative theory" which one may legitimately ignore? Since

1 Mark Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005). Page numbers in the text refer to Kinzer's book.

Kinzer wants to convince his readers of the necessity of a "substantial revision of traditional ecclesiology" (27), a consistent interaction with the views of scholars who argue for different exegetical, historical, theological, and ecclesiological explanations seems to be necessary.[2] For example, it is a pity that he fails to interact with, or even mention, the magisterial work of Mark Elliott, who demonstrated that many Jewish authors of the Second Temple period did not support the conventional nationalistic view of election theology which assumed the salvation of the entire Jewish people on Judgment Day; rather, messianic expectations in all their different manifestations "consistently produced a view of the messiah best characterized as a messiah-for-the-elect, not a nationalistic messiah," coupled with hopes "for the vindication of the saved community" only.[3]

Second, Kinzer carefully defines terms such as "Yeshua-faith" (used instead of "Christianity"), "Yeshua-believers" (replacing "Christians"), and "*ekklesia*" (for "church") (22), yet he does not define "religion" or "mission." As Kinzer believes that it is time "to challenge the notion that Christianity and Judaism are two separate religions" (21), one would think that he should clarify the nature of "religion" and discuss Karl Barth's understanding of religion, as he quotes Barth approvingly (21). When he asserts that "postmissionary" Messianic Judaism "discovers God and Messiah" (14), he contradicts Barth's understanding of authentic biblical revelatory faith. Similarly, Kinzer asserts that "postmissionary" Messianic Judaism "embraces the Jewish people and its religious tradition" (14), that it "serves the (Gentile) Christian church by linking it to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (15), and that it "represents the Jewish people to the church" (15). When he states that "a missionary-oriented Messianic Judaism has been a significant obstacle in the relationship between the church and the Jewish people" (15), the problem of a lack of clear definitions surfaces again. Is his "postmissionary Messianic Judaism" a non-missionary or a missionary community? Do they strive to convince non-Jews of the truth of the message of Jesus, Messiah and Savior and Lord? Do "postmissionary Messianic Jews" endeavor to lead their fellow Jews to faith in Jesus Messiah? Is all missionary activity accompanied by "a colonial mentality" and "a condescending patriarchal orientation" (13)?

Kinzer assures his readers that his book is "not an attack on the missionary endeavor in general and in every context" (13). But he fails to specify what "bearing witness to Yeshua within the people of Israel" (304) means if it is indeed true that the Messiah is "already present in Israel's midst" (304) and if "Yeshua our Brother" "rules over the Gentiles while provid-

2 Kinzer's claims are, on occasion, more far-reaching than he seems to realize. Does he really believe that "the church's understanding of its own identity stands or falls" on how it responds to the "apologia" which he presents in his book (25)? Perhaps Kinzer explains such somewhat bombastic language with the fact that he wrote the book "quickly, easily, happily, passionately" (16).

3 Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), see the summary on pp. 639–640.

ing for the welfare of his own family who do not recognize him" (305). Further, if Gentile believers in Jesus Messiah adopt Kinzer's program and accept the suggested new identity as "a multinational extension of the Jewish people" (16), do they become "postmissionary Messianic Jewish Gentiles"? If Gentile believers in Jesus Messiah belong to the Gentile *ekklesia*, and if Jewish believers belong to the Jewish *ekklesia* which has stronger ties to the wider Jewish world than to the (Gentile) church (304–305), how is this supposed to heal the "schism" between Gentile believers and the Jewish people?

While Kinzer defines "Gentiles" as "all non-Jews, including non-Jewish Christians" (22), he fails to define the term "Jew" or "Jewish." It appears that, for Kinzer, "Jewish" involves at least two elements: being a member of an ethnic group, and adhering to a specific religion with specific beliefs and with specific observances (specifically circumcision, Sabbath and holiday observance, and dietary laws). However, millions of Jews in the ethnic sense do not share the traditional Jewish faith, living their lives as confessing or practicing atheists, without following the traditional Jewish observances – are they still "Jews"? On the other hand, if Gentiles, perhaps Gentile believers, accept the traditional Jewish beliefs and adopt the Jewish observances, would they qualify as "Jews" in the religious sense?[4] When he suggests that the Jewish Yeshua-believers would "participate as full members of the synagogue" and that Gentile Yeshua-believers "would likewise share in the life of the wider Jewish community, though without full membership" (165), he evidently wants to keep Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians apart, although he presumably would resent the suggestion that he seeks to turn Gentile Christians into second-class believers.

## Lost in Interpretation

In contemporary modern and postmodern hermeneutical endeavors, the author, subject matter, or truth is often lost in interpretation.[5] Kinzer's hermeneutic presents a problem. As he rejects any form of supersessionism,[6] he automatically dismisses any argument which he can label "su-

4 According to Arthur Koestler in *The Thirteenth Tribe* (Chicago: Research Associates School Times Publications, 1997), a large percentage of modern Jews – ca. 10.5 million Ashkenazim – are descended from the Khazars, a Turkic people in the northern Caucasus and in the Ukraine who embraced Judaism ca. AD 740. See also Henri Blocher, "The Willowbank Declaration and Its Present-Day Relevance – Some Reflections after 12 Years," *Mishkan* 36 (2002), 100–15, here 107 (see www.caspari.com/mishkan).

5 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics," *JETS* 48 (2005), 89–114, here 90–91.

6 Kinzer follows R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 29–32, who distinguishes punitive, economic, and structural supersessionism, and argues that many Christians have renounced punitive and economic supersessionism but not structural supersessionism in their theological framework. For Kinzer's rejection of supersessionism see Kinzer, 181–212.

persessionist."[7] While he recognizes that his exegetical arguments "have their limits" as "other reasonable interpretations exist," he posits that his proposal should be accepted on account of "several nontextual factors" (27). This stance is troubling. If the biblical text does not unequivocally endorse a departure from traditional views concerning the identity and the mission of the believers in Jesus Christ, and if at the same time Kinzer regards the adoption of a "bilateral *ekklesia*" and the restoration of a "Jewish *ekklesia*" as necessary for authentic biblical faith and practice, the suspicion arises that he engages in special pleading. Kinzer follows Charles Cosgrove, who argues that the historical-grammatical approach to biblical interpretation can rule out certain readings of the text, but that the "irreducible ambiguity" of the text results in the fact that it is never possible to "enthrone" one particular reading as the definitive "meaning originally intended by the author."[8]

Kinzer thus suggests that three nontextual factors must be brought into play, factors that "will dispose us to go in certain directions" (30) in the process of interpretation: 1) the Jewish nature of the New Testament texts; 2) the possibility that "the divine intention for the text may transcend the limited understanding of those who composed and edited it," which is particularly the case in contexts in which "practical or functional criteria" are equally important for determining theological truth as "abstract and theoretical criteria" (33); and 3) the relevance of God's actions in post-biblical history, in particular the loss of a visible Jewish presence in the *ekklesia*, the survival and flourishing of the Jewish people and Judaism, the emergence of violent anti-Judaism in the Christian tradition, the Holocaust, the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, and the emergence of the Messianic Jewish movement.

**The second factor opens the way for prejudiced and subjective interpretations that the interpreter may freely impose on a text whose proposition or implication he finds unacceptable.**

Kinzer's second and third nontextual factors are especially problematic. The second factor opens the way for prejudiced and subjective interpretations that the interpreter may freely impose on a text whose proposition or implication he finds unacceptable, with the rather arrogant claim to be able to understand the author better than he understood himself. Kinzer's third factor is equally subjective. If, for example, the interpretation of Romans 9–11 is controlled by the "nontextual" perspective of the history of Christian anti-Semitism, or by the influence of "the traditional

7 Note Kinzer's "critique" of N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), 246–257. He rejects Wright because he interprets Romans 11 "in a supersessionist manner," while he accepts Soulen's interpretation because he "reads Romans 11 in a non-supersessionist manner" (222).

8 Charles H. Cosgrove, *Elusive Israel: The Puzzle of Election in Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), xi–xii. See Kinzer, 27–29.

Christian supersessionist theology of Israel and the church" (36), or by any other hermeneutical "perspective" or historical concern or cultural location, the results of exegetical work are fixed before the exegete allows Paul to say what he wants to say. Kinzer comes close to calling interpretations of Romans 9–11 that differ from his own interpretation "sins" (36). If past history in which Christians persecuted Jews "for ostensibly Christian reasons" has an inherent theological significance (44) that helps decide exegetical ambiguities, the exegetical results are again predetermined. This is especially true if the question of the theological significance of Jews persecuting Christians – examples from the first and from the 20th century are not difficult to find – is left unexplored. As all anti-Jewish interpretations which blame Jesus' death on all Jews of all times must be rejected as historically incorrect and as ethically rotten, interpretations which are biased against all Gentile Christians of all times must be rejected as equally prejudiced.

**Kinzer comes close to calling interpretations of Romans 9–11 that differ from his own interpretation "sins."**

As regards the insistence that theological truth can be discovered by employing "practical or functional criteria," as Jewish theologians do (33–35), the question must be raised whether the locus of truth is indeed in the biblical text as God's revelation, or whether truth is primarily and decisively found in the consciousness of the interpreter and in his values and praxis. Henri Blocher cites rabbi-philosopher Marc-Alain Ouaknin,[9] who argued that the way in which Jews handle the sacred text of the Bible converges with "postmodern" readings: the Talmud demonstrates that the text may be interpreted in many different ways, with the only criterion being fecundity, not rightness, as there is no one single meaning. It is telling in this context that Kinzer accepts the Jewish rabbinic premise that the written Torah is insufficient and that it requires a living tradition of interpretation and application (236), and that he argues that authority is vested not in the biblical text (alone) but "in the people of Israel as a whole" (242). If there are indeed all kinds of truth – abstract and practical, theological and functional, biblical and historical – and if it is the modern interpreter who decides which "truth" to favor, then there is no truth. Ouaknin readily admits this when he asserts that the aim is to silence the voice of the Bible, "to erase [its] mastery."[10] Kevin Vanhoozer's critique is to the point: "Truth is lost when there are no facts, only historically located interpretations."[11]

A few examples of Kinzer's hermeneutical procedure must suffice. Interpreting the evangelist's commentary on Jesus' teaching regarding

9 Blocher, 112–113, with reference to Marc-Alain Ouaknin, *Le livre brulé. Philosophie du Talmud* (Paris: Seuil/Lieu commun, 1993), translated as *The Burnt Book: Reading the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

10 Ouaknin, *Le livre brulé*, 137, quotation ibid. 16; cf. Blocher, 114.

11 Vanhoozer, 91.

Jewish practices in the area of defilement in Mark 7:19b ("Thus he declared all foods clean"), Kinzer acknowledges that "according to almost all commentators" this parenthetical remark "constitutes an explicit abrogation of the biblical dietary laws" (54). While Kinzer often accepts the "dominant" or "majority" view of scholars as decisive (e.g. 31, 259), here he looks for "any way to understand this assertion that leaves the dietary laws intact" (54). He finds a story about Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai in *Pesiqta deRab Kahana* 4:7 helpful, unperturbed by the late date of this rabbinic document which is traced to the fifth century AD – a fact which he regards as irrelevant as "the story demonstrates that a denial of ontological impurity is compatible with adherence to the biblical laws dealing with impurity" (56, note 12).

**If there are indeed all kinds of truth – abstract and practical, theological and functional, biblical and historical – and if it is the modern interpreter who decides which "truth" to favor, then there is no truth.**

Kinzer argues that the Gospel of Mark is directed to a non-Jewish audience, and that the author of the "final version" of the book "interprets the tradition" in the context of his desire to provide an exemption from Jewish dietary laws for his Gentile readers, emphasizing that "this exemption did not relegate them to a secondary status of purity in relation to Jewish Yeshua-believers" (57). The concerns that we voiced in our previous comments on Kinzer's hermeneutics are confirmed: Kinzer is fiercely determined to avoid any interpretation of this text that would involve an endorsement of an abrogation of the Jewish dietary laws. In order to accomplish this with regard to Mark 7:19, he employs a fourfold strategy. 1) He introduces from later rabbinical texts the distinction between the objective ontological status of ritual purity and the Jewish practices that relate to ritual impurity, a distinction that is not present in Mark 7 nor implied in the context.[12] 2) He rejects the possibility that Jesus himself "denied the objective ontological status of ritual impurity" (57) without stating what Jesus denied instead; he leaves unexplained whether he thinks that Mark misunderstood Jesus, or that it is perhaps Jesus' statement which is "irreducibly ambiguous." 3) He chastises "Christian readers" (57), i.e. Gentile believers in Jesus Christ, for not considering such an interpretation. Critics of Kinzer's interpretation do not get a fair hearing, as he relegates them into the camp of Gentile Christian readers who have not yet overcome supersessionist prejudices. 4) Kinzer advances larger contextual reasons which allow him to reject the consensus interpretation of Mark 7:19. He appeals to the observation that the Gospel of Mark "as a whole" presents Jesus as an observant Jew "who never undercuts accepted Jewish practice" (57); he appeals to the other synoptic gospels which

12 Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 457: "in Mark's view Jesus' saying about purity in 7:15 is a performative pronouncement, one that *accomplishes* the purification it announces … actually *changing things* by his apocalyptic pronouncement that all foods are (now) clean."

do not describe Jesus as abolishing the Jewish food laws; and he appeals to the Book of Acts and to Paul's letters, where eating with Gentiles was a major hurdle for Jewish believers.

Kinzer's rhetorical question, why Jesus' Jewish followers required special divine intervention before they would sit at table with non-Jews (such as Peter in Acts 10) if Jesus abolished the Jewish dietary laws (58), is not a rhetorical question at all. All four gospels describe Jesus predicting both his death and his resurrection, and they describe Jesus' disciples as not understanding these predictions. If Jesus indeed announced the abrogation, or at least the thoroughgoing revision, of the dietary laws of Jewish tradition for the community of his followers, without repeatedly elaborating on and clarifying what he meant (which Mark does not say Jesus did, in contrast to Jesus' repeated predictions of his death), it is entirely plausible to answer Kinzer's question thus: Peter needed a special divine intervention before he was willing to have table fellowship with a Roman military officer because he had failed to grasp the import of Jesus' statement. Kinzer's hermeneutical strategy becomes apparent in his stipulation that "we should favor plausible readings of the New Testament that support the ongoing validity and spiritual significance of the Jewish people and its distinctive way of life" (58), which means that Jesus cannot have abrogated the dietary laws since "the abolition of the dietary laws is in effect an abolition of the Jewish people itself" (58). This *a priori* stipulation explains why Kinzer considers it plausible that the parenthetical statement of Mark 7:19b might be "an addition to the original text of the Gospel made by an early editor,"[13] and that "the human author of those words" might have had a different view than "the original author of the book." He deflects the importance of establishing the authentic meaning of the original text with a dismissive "regardless," insisting that this is not primarily a historical question but a theological question. This is precisely the problem: because the historical meaning of the text unambiguously addresses the abolition of the dietary laws for Jesus' followers, Kinzer has to "define" the issue in non-historical terms in order to salvage his theological position, which requires the continued validity of Jewish dietary practices for Jewish believers in Jesus.

**Because the historical meaning of the text unambiguously addresses the abolition of the dietary laws for Jesus' followers, Kinzer has to "define" the issue in non-historical terms in order to salvage his theological position.**

A second example is Kinzer's interpretation of Peter's vision and visit to Caesarea, which Luke recounts in Acts 10:1–11:18. It is certainly correct to assert that the text suggests repeatedly that "Peter's vision calls for radical rethinking of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles" (71).

13 Here Kinzer follows Peter J. Tomson, *"If this be from Heaven…": Jesus and the New Testament Authors in their Relationship to Judaism* (Biblical Seminar 76; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 260–63.

It begs the question, however, when Kinzer asserts that the vision "does not call for an abolition of the dietary laws for Jews." This position can be maintained only if the vision is interpreted *only* in a symbolic manner, with the clean and unclean animals symbolizing Jews and Gentiles, and if the corollary of 10:48b ("Then they invited him to stay for several days") is disregarded. Since, however, the subject of the verb is Cornelius and his friends, the locality in which Peter "stayed" for several days is evidently the house of Cornelius, with the unavoidable implication that Peter regarded both Cornelius and the food that he was served in Cornelius' house as "clean." This is confirmed by the protest of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem when they hear of Peter's actions in Caesarea: "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" (11:3). Peter's interpretive explanation (11:4–17) of his vision of clean and unclean animals and of the heavenly voice which told him to "kill and eat" all the animals explains not only why he visited uncircumcised Gentiles, but also why he stayed in their house for several days and ate their food. There can be little doubt that the protest of his Jewish Christian friends in 11:3 and his exposition of the newly revealed will of the Lord indeed signal the fact that Peter took the vision at face value. This interpretation can only be avoided if it is not allowed for reasons external to the text.

A third example is Kinzer's treatment of Galatians 2:11–14. He recognizes that "it has usually been assumed that Peter was eating nonkosher food with the Gentile Yeshua-believers in Antioch" (83). But Kinzer is determined to "avoid such a conclusion" (84), as he wants to preserve the validity of "the Pauline syllogism" which he has constructed from 1 Corinthians 7:17–20 ("Major premise: All those who are circumcised should remain circumcised"), Galatians 5:3 ("Minor premise: All who are circumcised are obligated to observe the Torah"), and Galatians 5:11 ("Necessary conclusion: All those who are born as Jews are obligated to live as Jews") (72–73). Kinzer argues that Galatians 2:12 does not specify *what* Peter eats, that the people from James criticize Peter not for eating nonkosher food but for eating with Gentile Yeshua-believers, and that the phrase "live like a Gentile" is the language of the critics of Paul and Peter which Paul uses in order to shame Peter into recognizing that his behavior sent the wrong message: that Gentile believers must convert to Judaism (83–85). Kinzer again avoids acknowledging the plain meaning of the text. The context of Paul's reminder that Peter, "though a Jew, live[s] like a Gentile and not like a Jew," as well as the fact that the Law did not prohibit eating in the company of Gentiles, but rather prohibited eating certain foods that the Gentiles ate, clarify the meaning of the phrase "to eat with the Gentiles": when Peter shared meals with Gentile Christians, he did not observe the Law.[14]

The suggestion of James Dunn, whom Kinzer follows, that Peter's

14 Representative are J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 232, 235; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 31; Dallas: Word, 1990), 73, 78.

"living like a Gentile" only meant that he practiced the Jewish dietary laws albeit in a less strict manner than the men from James expected him to do,[15] is hardly convincing. Ben Witherington cogently argues that "if the problem had merely been an insufficient attention to the food law details, the solution would surely have been not 'withdrawal' from table fellowship with Gentiles but more restrictions on or more rigor in the already accepted practice of basically following Jewish dietary laws. Withdrawal is what the men from James precipitated on charges of living like a Gentile. This charge surely meant being non-observant of Kosher requirements."[16] Kinzer's "Pauline syllogism" breaks down, as his "minor premise" is wrong: Galatians 5:3 ("Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law") does not stipulate for Jewish Christians that they are obligated to observe the Torah. Rather, it is a warning to Gentile Christians that once they are circumcised they cannot pick and choose which commandments of the Law they want to obey.[17] Kinzer's interpretation of Galatians 5:11 ("But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed") does not hold up to exegetical scrutiny: the text does not say by any stretch of the imagination that "Paul urged Jewish Yeshua-believers to live as faithful Jews" and be circumcised (73). Kinzer cites James Dunn when it suits his proposal,[18] but fails to interact with his exegesis when it runs counter to his own viewpoint.[19] What is more serious is the fact that he fails to comment on the second part of Galatians 5:11, on which Dunn comments on the offense of the cross which consists, among other things, in "marking the end of a clear dividing line between covenant Jew and outlaw Gentile"; more specifically, for the Jewish Christian traditionalists the offense of the cross meant that while they could accept "the redefinition of Messiah which Jesus' death and resurrection made necessary," "they could not accept

**Kinzer cites James Dunn when it suits his proposal, but fails to interact with his exegesis when it runs counter to his own viewpoint.**

15 James D. G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1993), 127–128.

16 Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia. A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh/Grand Rapids: T & T Clark/Eerdmans, 1998), 153, note 199.

17 Representative is James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 99: "to accept circumcision … would involve adopting the whole Jewish way of life."

18 Kinzer cites Dunn, *Galatians*, 279: "Paul was accused by the other missionaries of being inconsistent: that although he preached a circumcision-free gospel to the Galatians, he continued to 'preach circumcision' among Jews."

19 Dunn, *Galatians*, 279 actually formulates the sentence which Kinzer cites as a question, representing the sixth interpretive option for Galatians 5:11a; he does regard this as the most plausible explanation, but points out that the formulation "*preach* circumcision" may be the Jewish Christian traditionalists' elaboration of Paul's position (ibid. 280). Dunn correctly points out that Paul "does not stop to discuss or explain his policy regarding circumcision (of Jews like Timothy), or his larger principle of accommodation."

that a further redefinition of relationships between Jew and Gentile was also necessary."[20] The logic of Paul's argument can thus be summarized as follows: "if he indeed preached circumcision, he would after all be reinforcing the distinction and barrier between covenant Jew and outlaw Gentile, and thus removing or abolishing … the offense which his gospel of the cross caused for the more traditional Jewish understanding of God's covenant and promise."

Another hermeneutical problem is presented by Kinzer's decision to exclude the teaching of the New Testament regarding the temple, its sacrificial rites and its purity requirements (51–52). It is certainly true that circumcision, Sabbath and holiday observances, and dietary restrictions are universal forms of Jewish practice, both in the Holy Land and in the Jewish communities in the diaspora; the Jerusalem temple is not. However, the fundamental significance of the temple for the Jewish Commonwealth before AD 70, and the significance of Jesus' statements regarding the temple, render it critically important for exegetes and theologians to understand the position of Jesus and of the earliest community of his followers concerning the temple.

## The Identity of Believers in Jesus Messiah

Kinzer argues that postmissionary Messianic Judaism "discovers God and Yeshua within the Jewish people and its tradition" and thus "feels at home in the Jewish world" (15). He criticizes those Messianic Jews who find their "primary home in the Christian church" and "feel away from home when among the Jewish people who do not accept Yeshua" (15). He posits that postmissionary Messianic Jews can and should feel "at home" among the Jewish people because of "Yeshua's mysterious presence throughout Jewish history" (16), and because "Yeshua is still at home with those who are literally his family" (22). Since Israel's covenant endures, "Yeshua remains the Messiah and Lord for both Jews and Gentiles" (16). This position raises a crucial question: is the identity of believers in Jesus Messiah, at its core, controlled by faith in Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, or by one's ethnic identity and by the practice of the Jewish traditions?

When we read Paul's Epistle to the Romans as an exposition of the identity of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus, the authentic identity of "Yeshua-believers," as Kinzer calls believers in Jesus Christ, is fundamentally tied to the *euangelion*, the good news of Jesus Messiah and Lord in which God reveals and actualizes his power "for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom 1:16). In Romans 1:18–3:20 Paul establishes the truth that "everyone" needs salvation because "all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin" (3:9). As regards the Jewish people, Paul argues in Romans 2 that

20 Dunn, *Galatians*, 281; the following quotation ibid.

neither the law nor circumcision lead to the righteousness that God requires, now that God provides righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (3:21–22). This argument contradicts Kinzer's view that circumcision continues to have "spiritual significance" for Jews (74). Kinzer does not discuss Romans 2:25–29, which is unfortunate because here it is not possible to argue that a statement such as "circumcision is nothing" (1 Cor 7:19) means, simply, that "circumcision and Jewish identity do not elevate the Jew above the Gentile before God" (74). Circumcision is "nothing" since it does not provide Jewish people with a status that involves a right relationship with God, now that the Messiah has come and died for the sins of the people. While the interpretation of Peter Tomson, whom Kinzer follows, focuses on the phrase "but keeping God's commandments" in 1 Corinthians 7:19, his comments do not adequately explain the statement "circumcision is nothing": since circumcision is one of the commandments of the Law, it remains a mystery how Tomson (and Kinzer) can assert that Paul implies that "whether or not one is a Jew does not matter before God, but whether one performs the commandments incumbent upon one does: Jews the Jewish Law, and gentiles the Noachian code."[21] Jews who obey the stipulations of the Jewish Law cannot say that "circumcision is nothing" unless circumcision no longer achieves what Jewish tradition expected it to achieve, viz. providing the descendants of Abraham with the righteousness and the holiness that is required for acquiring the status of being God's people.

This is precisely the argument of Romans 4, a chapter on which Kinzer does not comment.[22] Paul asserts that it was Abraham's faith that was credited to him as righteousness before he was circumcised (4:10–11a). He emphasizes that in the present reality of the messianic era, Abraham has become "the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them" (4:11b). When Gentiles believe in Jesus, the crucified and risen Son of God, they are children of Abraham. On the other hand, Abraham is the "father of the circumcised" only if and when Jews "also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised," i.e. if they believe God's promise, specifically if they "believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (4:24–25).

The enumeration of Israel's historical and spiritual privileges in Romans 9:4–5 indeed reflects Paul's "consciousness of Israel's continued dignity as God's chosen covenant partner," as Kinzer asserts (124). What he fails to see is that the list of Jewish privileges summarizes precisely the basic

21 Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostles to the Gentiles* (CRINT III.1; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 272.

22 Kinzer also fails to address John 8:31–47, where Jesus asserts that love for the Son whom God has sent defines who are the "children of Abraham," rather than mere ethnic descent from Abraham.

categories of Jewish self-definition for which Paul has demonstrated in Romans 1–8 that they have been transferred to Jesus Messiah, who is the "representative" of God's people, and that these privileges now apply to all those who are "in Jesus Messiah" (*en Iesou Christo*)[23] – all who are believers in Jesus as Messiah and Savior, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, have sonship,[24] glory,[25] covenants,[26] law,[27] worship,[28] promises,[29] and patriarchs.[30]

**What he fails to see is that the list of Jewish privileges summarizes precisely the basic categories of Jewish self-definition for which Paul has demonstrated in Romans 1–8 that they have been transferred to Jesus Messiah.**

One should also note that not all elements of the list in Romans 9:4–5 are programmatic for the argument in Romans 9–11; the decisive statement is the last element: "and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen" (Rom 9:5b). The phrase "over all" (*epi panton*) highlights the salvation-historical priority of Jesus Messiah over both Jews and Gentiles. Paul develops in the next section his conviction that if Jews cling to their inherited traditional privileges while at the same time rejecting Jesus Messiah, they are excluded from God's eschatological universal salvation as they place themselves in opposition to God's promise to Abraham that "in him" all nations will be blessed. The people who will "never be put to shame" before God are (only) those who do not stumble over the stone which God has laid in Zion, but who accept that stone as the cornerstone of the eschatological temple that God is building in the last days (Rom 9:33). This applies to both Gentiles and Jews (Rom 9:30–31).

Kinzer fails to recognize the import of Paul's statement in Romans 9:6b: "For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel." He claims that here Paul "honestly" faces "his people's spiritual limitations," that Paul uses the biblical term "the remnant" in Romans 11:5 to describe the elect core within the elect nation, and that Paul's thinking becomes "clear" in Romans 11:16 where he describes the Jewish remnant "as contributing to the sanctification (and salvation) of all Israel, so that it is now truly holy – despite its serious spiritual limitations" (124, 125). This interpretation is possible only because Kinzer does not take into account Romans 9:7–33. In Romans 9:7a Paul asserts that "not all of Abraham's children are his seed," meaning that to be a descendant of Abraham in a physical sense does not necessarily mean to be his descendant in a spiritual sense, i.e.

23 Cf. Wright, 237.
24 Romans 8:14, 23; 9:25–26; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5.
25 Romans 3:23–24; 8:17, 21; cf. 6:4.
26 Romans 4:16.
27 Romans 8:4.
28 Romans 5:1–2; 12:1–2.
29 Romans 4:16; 15:8.
30 Romans 4:16.

"salvation is not a Jewish birthright."[31] This means, according to Romans 9:8, that "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants." And the children of promise are those whom God has called, "not from the Jews [*ex Ioudaion*] only but also from the Gentiles [*ex ethnon*]" (Rom 9:24), in fulfillment of Hosea 2:23, Hosea 1:10, and Isaiah 10:22–23, passages which Paul quotes in Romans 9:25–29. Paul's statement in Romans 11:16 ("If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy") must not be interpreted in a manner that destroys his argument in Romans 9:6–10:21: Paul does not assert the salvation of every Israelite of his generation or of future generations but the continuing special identity of the people of Israel as people who are "holy," i.e. who are "set apart" by God for special attention as recipients and transmitters of the promises of God.[32] Paul asserts in Romans 11:17, 20, 21 that *some* branches that have been growing from the root have been "cut off," and in 11:23 he insists that these "branches" of Israel that have been cut off will be grafted in only "if they do not persist in unbelief," knowing that not all but only "some of them" will be saved (11:14).[33]

Kinzer correctly points out that Romans 9–11 must not be read in isolation but in connection with "what comes before" (129). However, he restricts the "context" of these chapters to Romans 8. Had Kinzer placed Romans 9–11 in the context of the first two major sections in Romans, i.e. in the context of Romans 1:18–5:11, he would not be able to say that Paul hints "that Israel's temporary unbelief in Yeshua is itself, paradoxically, a participation in Yeshua's vicarious, redemptive suffering" (133). Nor would he be able to assume that for Paul the "mystery" of Romans 11:25–29 "includes non-remnant Israel's present participation in the Messiah whom she does not yet consciously acknowledge" (136). Nor could he state that "Israel thus has a rightful claim upon the Messiah" despite her unbelief (139). Paul argues emphatically in Romans 1:18–3:20 that status does not provide an escape from the wrath of God – neither for the Gentiles who have been created in God's image (1:18–32), nor

31 Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 575. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 560: "Physical descent alone does not insure inheritance, for Abraham had many offspring" – Ishmael born of Hagar, Isaac born of Sarah, and six children born of Keturah: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (Gen 16:15; 21:2; 25:2).

32 Cf. Moo, 700–701. Cf. Dunn, *Romans* (WBC 38A-B; Dallas: Word, 1988), 2:660, 672: "Paul certainly would not want to frame a doctrine of transmission of holiness in strict genetic terms (9:6–8) … The holiness of the end-time saints is dependent both on their continuity with the original Israel and on the word of faith which constitutes the remnant and the gentile mission."

33 Kinzer thinks it is important that even though Paul speaks of "the absence of Yeshua-faith" among the Jewish people, "it is noteworthy that Paul does *not* speak of non-Yeshua-believing Jews as unbelievers" (141). This is linguistic nonsense. If the people of Israel "persist in unbelief" (Rom 11:23; cf. 11:20), it does not matter whether the lack of faith is described with a dative clause (*te apistia*) or with a noun phrase.

for the Jews who have the law and circumcision (2:1–29). Despite the advantage which being Jewish conveys (3:1–2), Paul insists on the truth that God does not show favoritism (2:11): what counts in the last judgment is not status but obedience to the will of God. In view of the disobedience of the Gentiles to God's will and in view of Israel's rejection of Jesus Messiah, God insists "that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (3:9). The message that Paul preaches – both in synagogues before Jewish audiences and in marketplaces before Gentile audiences – emphasizes that God's righteousness is now made known "apart from law" (3:21), i.e. apart from the Torah and its stipulations which regulated the generation and the maintenance of righteousness and holiness. Righteousness and holiness come only "through faith in Jesus Christ" (3:22). This reality applies "to all who believe" (3:22), without any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (3:23–24). In Romans 4 Paul argues that it is not ethnic descent from Abraham which justifies before God, but faith in God's promise – faith in Jesus Christ. Peace with God, access to God's grace, the hope of sharing in God's glory, the presence of God's Spirit, salvation, and reconciliation come only through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1–5). Paul's argument in Romans 9–11 is thoroughly misunderstood if it is taken to predicate salvation for Israel apart from faith in the crucified Messiah, a view which contradicts Romans 1–5.

It is telling that Kinzer does not discuss Romans 2, nor Romans 3:9–20, nor Romans 3:21–31. In Kinzer's postmissionary Messianic Jewish theology, the cross is no longer central. The heading "Israel, first and last" (137) suggests that in Kinzer's theology, Israel is central. Paul accuses the Jewish Christian teachers who want to impose circumcision and the dietary laws on the Gentile Christians in Galatia of preaching "a different gospel" (Gal 1:6–8). To assert that Jews do not need to believe in Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah from Nazareth, in order to have a right relationship with God empties the cross of its effective reality, as this view assumes that Jews simply need to be good Jews in order to have salvation. Kinzer also omits from his discussion a consideration of several passages from Galatians which are of central importance for his subject matter. When Paul tells Gentile Christians in Galatians 5:2 that "if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you," it is difficult to see why the circumcision of the Jewish people should have any salvific benefit. Paul's statements in Galatians 5:6 and 6:15 leave no room for doubt: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything … Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!"

It is difficult to understand why Kinzer never addresses Acts 4:10–12, where Peter declares before the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem: "Let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus the

stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."[34] While there may be mitigating factors such as ignorance (113, with reference to Acts 3:17), nothing mitigates lack of faith in Jesus Messiah: As Peter and the other apostles preach the news of the death, resurrection, and vindication of Jesus Messiah whom God has placed as a new foundation stone in Zion, the Jewish people can no longer plead ignorance. From now on, salvation is no longer found in the temple and its sacrifices, nor in any other stipulations of the Law, but exclusively in Jesus.

For Paul, the identity of the fellowship of believers in Jesus is the "church of God" (*ekklesia tou theou*) which consists of people "who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" and who "call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:2). This *ekklesia* consists of both Jewish believers and Gentile believers. Most of the problems that Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians were caused by Gentile believers, while the presence of Jewish believers is attested by 16:15 and 1:14.[35] In the Corinthian *ekklesia*, Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians worshipped and learnt together. The identity of both Jewish and Gentile Christians is bound up with "the grace that has been given you in the Messiah Jesus" (1:4). Paul declares in 1:22–24: "Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." This emphatic statement confirms on the one hand that the *ekklesia* which consists of "those who are called" (cf. 1:2!) consists of "both Jews and Greeks." And it insists on the other hand that neither Jews nor Greeks possess the hermeneutical capability of understanding God's revelation in the crucified Messiah, and that it is the power of God alone that brings both Jews and Gentiles to faith in the crucified Messiah (cf. 2:1–5). Thus God is "the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1:30). This means that outside of a believing

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34 C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994–98), 1:231 interprets Acts 4:12 in the context of 2:40 and comments: "The primary meaning of salvation is detachment from the world of the unbelieving and disobedient and attachment to the true people of God of the last days, the ἐκκλησία, the community which is constituted on the one hand by its loyalty to Jesus, and on the other by his gift of the Spirit, which makes possible a new life confirmed to the new loyalty and in other ways too."

35 Stephanas and his family were "the first converts in Achaia," and as Paul began his missionary work in the city of Corinth in the synagogue (Acts 18:4), this was a Jewish family; Crispus was the president of the Corinthian synagogue who had become a believer (Acts 18:8).

relationship to Jesus Messiah, there is no righteousness, no sanctification, and no redemption. And this is true both for Gentiles and for Jews.[36]

It is disconcerting that Kinzer does not discuss 1 Corinthians 1–4, a foundational text for understanding the nature of the church. As the church in Corinth is composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers, Paul's insistence that divisions in the church contradict the gospel of the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus is a fundamental proposition. Paul does not tolerate believers who appeal for their identity to Peter, or to Apollos, or to himself. When Paul emphasizes the unity of the church in 1 Corinthians 12 in the context of a discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, he presupposes that all believers in Jesus Christ meet together as one body in the local assembly of believers. If the gifts of God's Spirit cannot be allowed to create divisions, then different ethnic backgrounds cannot be allowed to be the basis for disunity either.

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Kinzer's case for a "bilateral ecclesiology" in Paul's view of and approach to organizing the Jewish and the Gentile believers (160–165) is seriously flawed. He disputes what he acknowledges is the "common view" that "Paul considered a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles to be the ideal expression of the *ekklesia* in any given location, and sought to found such communities. In these groups, Jewish members would be permitted to maintain Jewish practice but only insofar as such practice did not conflict with unrestricted community relationships with their Gentile brothers and sisters" (160–61).[37] We have seen that Kinzer's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:19 and Galatians 2:11–14 is problematic, and we have seen that Kinzer conveniently omits from his discussion Pauline texts which contradict his view. His treatment of Romans 14–15 is equally problematic. He follows Mark Nanos, who argues that the "weak" are not Jewish Christians who insist on keeping the dietary laws, but non-Christian Jews.[38] Considering Paul's repeated use of the term "brother" (Rom 14:10a, 10b, 13, 15, 21), which is used by Paul to designate fellow-Christians 130 times,[39] this interpretation is unconvinc-

36 Note that in 1 Corinthians 1:20, Paul mentions Jewish scribes and Greek-Roman philosophers as representatives of the wisdom of the world; cf. Stephen M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBLDS 134; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 153–56; Markus Lautenschlager, "Abschied vom Disputierer. Zur Bedeutung von συζητητης in 1 Kor 1,20," *ZNW* 83 (1992): 276–85.

37 Kinzer refers to and cites Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 265; and E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 177–78.

38 Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 85–165.

39 Cf. H. von Soden, Art. *adelphos*, in: G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 1:145. The one exception is Romans 9:3, where the context makes it unambiguously clear that Paul uses the term *adelphos* to refer to his Jewish compatriots.

ing.[40] Kinzer asserts that the "resistance" of scholars to adopting Nanos' interpretation (76) comes close to being an insult to exegetes who seek to interpret the text without prejudices, but it is precisely an unbiased exegesis of Romans 14 which makes the view of Nanos unconvincing, not a certain view of "Paul and Yeshua-faith in general." To state that "the reading of Romans 14–15 by Mark Nanos conforms to the Pauline syllogism" (76) suggests, rather, that it is Kinzer who works with preconceived ideas of what Paul can and cannot say. What James Dunn says concerning the position of what he calls "the more traditionalist Christian Jews" applies to Kinzer as well: "The danger he [i.e. Paul] clearly saw was that they were letting their own convictions shape their idea of God instead of vice versa."[41]

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Kinzer refuses to acknowledge the clear meaning of texts such as Romans 14:3–4 ("Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand"), Romans 14:5–6 ("Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God"),[42] and Romans 14:14, 17 ("I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean . . . For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"). Speculative theories about an "ontologically objective ritual impurity" (80; cf. above) aside, Paul advocates individual freedom in these matters, both for Jewish believers and for Gentile believers. Paul's statement in Romans 14:14 is not about theories concerning the origins of ritual impurity (which Paul does not address in the context), but about actual behavior in the assemblies of the church in which the believers share meals.

40 Note the arguments against Nanos' interpretation in James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 684, with note 59; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT 6; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 707, note 8, who further refers to 1 Corinthians 8:11, 12, 13 for the term "brothers" referring to the "weak."

41 Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 687.

42 Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 687: "Again clearly implied is the right before God to decide what is appropriate conduct for oneself, even in regard to some cherished but controverted traditions governing social behavior." Cf. Colossians 2:16–17: "Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." This is another passage that Kinzer fails to discuss.

When it comes to dietary matters and the observance of special days, Paul leaves the behavior of the believers up to the individual and his or her conscience. This applies to the Jewish Christians as well: each believer has the right to make his own decisions at least with regard to the dietary laws and the observance of the Sabbath and Jewish festivals.

Kinzer thinks that Paul continued to participate in diaspora Jewish life as he traveled, that he hoped that the Jewish Yeshua-believers would "participate as full members of the synagogue" and Gentile Yeshua-believers "would likewise share in the life of the wider Jewish community, though without full membership," and that there would be "supplementary gatherings of the Jewish and Gentile Yeshua-believers, either separately or together" (165). He laments the fact that "unfortunately, in many places it was not practically feasible" (ibid.). In other words, he accuses Paul of being unrealistic. This implicit charge is absurd. When Paul wrote his letters to the Roman and Corinthian Christians in AD 54–56, he had been working as a missionary for over twenty years. Paul was neither inexperienced nor naive. If he indeed believed that Jewish Christians should observe Jewish Law, including the dietary laws and Sabbath observance, and if he indeed believed that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians do not have to have *koinonia* in the same community, he would have said so. He never does, not even implicitly. On the contrary, we find Paul again and again emphasizing the unity of the believers in Jesus whom he describes as "saints" belonging to one and the same family as brothers and sisters. There is no room here for the possibility that Jewish Christians are "members" and Gentile Christians are "half-members" in the community which worships the God of Abraham who sent Jesus Messiah to die on the cross and to rise on the third day. Paul's Jewish Christian opponents who advocated circumcision for all believers seem to have had more sympathy for Gentile Christians than Kinzer does: they at least wished that they would become full members in "Israel," a process for which they demanded circumcision and the observance of Jewish practices beyond, or in addition to, faith in Israel's God and Israel's Messiah. Kinzer admits Gentile believers to the synagogues, but he refuses them "full membership."

There is no indication whatsoever in the Book of Acts or in any of the letters in the New Testament for the view that Jewish Christians met separately from Gentile Christians. Paul's statement in Romans 15:5–9 unambiguously argues for a local community of believers in Jesus in which Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians live together: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy."

Another passage that we need to consider is Ephesians 2:14–16: "For

he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it." Kinzer believers that Markus Barth has effectively challenged what he calls the "traditional reading" of this passage, arguing that Barth shows that "the *categories* of Jew and Gentile are not transcended but only the hostility between the two" (167). Kinzer has seriously misunderstood Barth,[43] who interprets the "law" that is abolished according to 2:15 as the law which "has created and demonstrated a separation of the Jews from the Gentiles,"[44] i.e. "the formerly divisive effect of the law is terminated," meaning that "the law has lost its validity as a barrier between insiders and outsiders and as a sentence of death … The obnoxious use made of the law by self-righteous braggers of Jewish origin and by their imitators among the Gentiles is declared invalid by the same stroke." Barth summarizes that "in Ephesians the community of Jews and Gentiles created by the Messiah is described as a temple, not a tent. Solidly founded and expected to stand as long as the world exists, neither the saints nor God are transient guests in it. Because God will 'dwell' in his house, the saints are at home in the same house."[45] And these "saints" are the believers in the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus, both Jewish believers and Gentile believers. Kinzer never explains what Paul means to say in Ephesians 2:14–16. There can be no doubt that the "dividing wall" between Jews and Gentiles is the Mosaic Law with its detailed holiness code[46]; as Ernest Best puts it, "the actual regulations of the Law which showed up the differences between Jews and Gentiles and created hostility."[47] Paul affirms that the law is no longer a means of salvation (for Jews), and that it can no longer be used to enforce the traditional separation of Jews and Gentiles. This means that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians can have fellowship

43 For Kinzer's interaction with Markus Barth see 167–170. He extracts sentences from Barth's commentary that seem to support his view – statements that assert (correctly) the salvation-historical role of Israel – and omits statements that support the "traditional" interpretation of Ephesians 2:14–16. Barth does not envision the kind of "bilateral ecclesiology" that Kinzer argues for.

44 Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (AB 34; New York: Doubleday, 1974), 1:290; the following quotations ibid. 306, 307.

45 Barth, 1:322.

46 Note *Epistle of Aristeas* 139, 142: "In his wisdom the legislator, in a comprehensive survey of each particular part, and being endowed by God for the knowledge of universal truths, surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other peoples in any matter, being thus kept pure in body and soul, preserved from false beliefs, and worshiping the only God omnipotent over all creation … So, to prevent our being perverted by contact with others or by mixing with bad influences, he hedged us in on all sides with strict observances connected with meat and drink and touch and hearing and sight, after the manner of the Law."

47 Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 260; cf. ibid. 261 for the following comment.

in the new "humanity" that God is creating through Jesus' death and resurrection.

When Paul adds in Ephesians 2:18–19, "for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God," he clearly assumes a local assembly in which Gentile Christians, together with Jewish Christians, worship the one true God on account of Jesus' death on the cross (2:16). There is no room here for an apartheid of Jewish Christians with "full membership" and Gentile Christians with less than full membership. They are *together* members of the household of God. Paul emphasizes in Ephesians 4:3 the need for unity within the Christian community, exhorting the believers to make "every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Either Paul is naive, or Kinzer is wrong.

Identity is bound up with expectations for the future. Does Luke have "a firm hope for Israel's future" (121), as Kinzer asserts? Kinzer assesses the evidence of the third gospel and of the Book of Acts correctly when he states that while Luke treats the negative response of Jews to Jesus Messiah "as a tragic failure of Israel's ongoing history, he does not sever the tie that binds the Yeshua movement to its Jewish communal matrix" (121). Historically, this is seen in the fact that Gentile believers in Jesus Messiah were regarded as somehow part of the Jewish community (note the Gallio episode in the city of Corinth, Acts 18:12–16). While Kinzer overstates his case when he asserts that "Luke emphatically rejects a hard distinction between Jews and Yeshua-believers" (116) – Luke comments neither directly nor explicitly on this matter – it is certainly correct that Luke sees the movement of believers in Jesus "as a Jewish reality, led by Jews and adhered to by many Jews" (116). There are several passages, however, that cast doubt on the view that Luke "never loses sight of the importance of Israel's coming national redemption" (111).

When Jesus, after his death and resurrection, announces to his disciples the imminent granting of the gift of the Holy Spirit, an event that Israel's prophets had promised for the last days, the disciples respond with the question, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Kinzer argues that Jesus "refuses to answer their question" but that "he does not correct them for asking it" (109), pointing them to their immediate task without providing details concerning the time when the restoration of Israel's national hopes would become a reality. It is more plausible, however, to interpret Jesus' response in Acts 1:7–8 ("It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth") in its entirety as an answer to their question. While many English translations mark verses 7 and 8 as two separate sentences, in the original Greek they form a single sentence; the conjunction *alla* which introduces verse 8 clearly introduces a measure of contrast to the statement in verse 7. This means that verse

8 is the second part of Jesus' answer to the disciples' question: Jesus first rejects speculation about eschatological timetables as futile because only God the Father knows the chronological progress of salvation-history; second, Jesus emphasizes that the restoration of Israel, which was traditionally expected for the last days, is now beginning in the present, viz. in and through the disciples' missionary activity starting in Jerusalem and extending to the ends of the earth, fulfilling the expectation of the conversion of the nations. In other words, Jesus combines three expectations into one single reality: the beginning of the time of salvation for Jerusalem, the restoration of Israel, and the inclusion of the Gentile nations in the people of God.[48]

## The Mission of Believers in Jesus Messiah

Kinzer follows Jacob Jervell's interpretation of James' argument at the apostles' council in Jerusalem in Acts 15:13–21. According to Jervell, "James asserts that two groups exist within the church."[49] As an interpretation of James' exegesis of Amos 9:11–12 with the help of Hosea 3:5, Jeremiah 12:15, and Isaiah 45:21, this view is absurd. James' point is not the argument that the *ekklesia* of Jesus Messiah consists of Jewish believers and of Gentile believers. Rather, James argues that the Gentiles are integrated into the eschatological people of God – interpreted as the "tent of David," i.e. the messianic temple, the community of the believers in Jesus the Messiah – *as Gentiles*, without having to become Jews.[50] François Bovon comments that "Luke saw in the primitive church both the legitimate continuity with the people of Israel and a new creation of God in the midst of the fallen people."[51] Kinzer does not take note of Jervell's argument that the proof from Scripture aims at Jewish and Gentile believers living together in community.[52] Kinzer reads his position into the text when he asserts that "the controversy in Acts 15 makes sense only if all parties assumed that this Jewish group is obligated to live according to

48 Cf. David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (WUNT 2/130; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000), 91–95; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1:391.

49 Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1972), 190; he speaks of a "division of the church into two groups … It is presupposed that Jewish Christians keep the law … Gentile Christians need not keep the law in its entirety."

50 Cf. Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting,* vol. 4, ed. R. Bauckham (Exeter: Paternoster, 1995), 415–480, here 453–458. Kinzer refers to Bauckham's essay (159, note 16), but he does not take note of his interpretation.

51 François Bovon, *Lukas in neuer Sicht. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Biblisch-Theologische Studien 8; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1985), 350.

52 Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 395–396. As far as James is concerned, Kinzer seems to have missed Jervell's view that the proof from Scripture in Acts 15:15–19 is inauthentic and that Paul rejected the stipulations of the apostles' decree (ibid. 405–407). These are views that Kinzer probably does not hold; this means, however, that he cannot follow Jervell's reconstruction of early Christian history and practice at this point.

the Torah" (159). It is indeed correct that the controversy of Acts 15 presupposes that Jewish believers in Jesus continued to practice Torah. But Acts 15 at no point asserts, or implies, that the apostles or elders believed that Jewish believers are "obligated" to do so.

The apostles' council was attended by Peter, who recounts the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 15:7–11), and by Paul and Barnabas who report on their missionary work (Acts 15:12, referring to Acts 13:1–14:28). Peter as well as Paul and Barnabas speak about their missionary outreach to Gentiles and about the conversion of Gentiles. There is no indication whatsoever of "two distinct missions," or of "two distinct networks of communities," or of "two distinct leadership structures."[53] The controversy of the apostles' council was prompted by a controversy in the church in Antioch (Acts 15:1–3a) – a church whose beginnings were connected with the missionary work of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem and with the extended and consolidating missionary work of Barnabas and of Paul (Acts 11:19–26). The members of the church in Antioch were of both Jewish and Gentile origin (Acts 11:20), and formed one unified community of believers.[54] The letter with the apostles' and elders' decree is sent "to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia" (15:23, NRSV). This does not prove, however, that the Gentile believers formed distinct communities. The letter was addressed specifically to "the brothers of Gentile origin" (*adelphoi hoi ex ethnon*), as the stipulations of the decree concern the behavior of Gentile Christians, but it was read to the whole assembled company (*plethos*) of Christians in Antioch (15:30).

On a minor but not unimportant note: Kinzer asserts that "it is James who issues the authoritative decree. James does not merely persuade, he judges. Thus Luke underlines the unique authority of James as the leader and embodiment of the Jerusalem congregation" (159). This interpretation is incorrect. It is certainly true that in comparison with the contributions of Peter (Acts 15:7–11) and Paul and Barnabas (15:12) in the discussion, James' contribution is the longest and comes last (15:13–21); this indeed suggests that Luke regarded it as decisive. However, despite the fact that Luke reports James as saying, "Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them" (15:19–20a), James certainly does not issue the decree in terms of a lone decision. After James announces his decision (15:19–21), the assembled apostles, the elders, and the Jerusalem church evidently decided that James' formulation of the decision should be adopted: it is not James, but "the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church" (15:22) who "decided" to choose Judas Barsabbas and Silas from Jerusalem to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch; the

53 Kinzer, 163, with regard to the consultation in Jerusalem on which Paul comments in Galatians 2:7–10.

54 Cf. Acts 11:23: *panta*; 11:26: *he ekklesia*; 13:1: *en Antiocheia … ekklesia*; 14:27: *he ekklesia*; 15:30: *to plethos*.

letter is not sent by James but by "the brothers, both the apostles and the elders" (15:23).

The text of Galatians 2:7–10 is notoriously difficult. Some understand the agreement between Peter and Paul in terms of a division of the areas of missionary responsibility along geographical lines: Peter engages in missionary work in Jewish regions, Paul in Gentile regions.[55] Others interpret the agreement in terms of a division of missionary work along ethnic lines: Peter preaches among Jews, Paul among Gentiles.[56] Both alternatives have problems. Scholars who support the ethnic interpretation argue that the term *ta ethne* refers in Paul nearly always to Gentiles in contrast to Jews, and that we find Peter not only in Judea but in "Gentile" regions as well: according to Galatians 2:11–14 he was in Antioch, and according to 1 Corinthians 9:5 Peter and his wife were engaged in missionary journeys, presumably outside of Judea. A strict interpretation in terms of two distinct missions, i.e. a "Jewish mission" and a "Gentile mission," excludes Paul from preaching in synagogues and bars Peter from preaching before Gentiles. This scenario contradicts the existing evidence at least with regard to Paul's missionary practice: according to 1 Corinthians 9:19–20 Paul preaches among Jews regularly and with the same intensity as he preaches to Gentiles. Luke's account of Paul's missionary work in the Book of Acts confirms and illustrates this practice. A division of the areas of missionary responsibility along geographical lines would have been impractical. Jewish communities existed in all larger cities of the eastern Mediterranean region; Paul would not exclude them from hearing the good news of Jesus Messiah. And Peter would have encountered in his missionary work in synagogues outside of Judea/Galilee not only Jews but also Gentile God-fearers, i.e. *ethne* whom he surely would not want to exclude from hearing his preaching and teaching. It appears that scholars who accept the historical reliability of the Book of Acts seem to prefer the geographical interpretation (Luke regularly portrays Paul as preaching to Jews), while scholars who are skeptical concerning Luke's account seem to prefer the ethnic interpretation.[57]

I have discussed what is in my view the most plausible interpretation elsewhere.[58] A brief summary of the major arguments must suffice. First, Galatians 2:1–10 does not describe a "division" or "separation" but a

55 See James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Early Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (reprint, 2002; WUNT 84; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995), 151–157. Scott seeks to connect the "geography" of the agreement with "Japhet" in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10.

56 Cf. H. D. Betz, *Galatians. A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 352; Martyn, *Galatians*, 202, 211–216; Wolfgang Reinbold, *Propaganda und Mission im ältesten Christentum. Eine Untersuchung zu den Modalitäten der Ausbreitung der frühen Kirche* (FRLANT 188; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 168–172.

57 Cf. Lucien Legrand, "Gal 2.9 and the Missionary Strategy of the Early Church," in *Bible, Hermeneutics, Mission. A Contribution to the Contextual Study of Holy Scripture* (Missio 10; Uppsala: Swedish Institute for Missionary Research, 1995), 21–83, here 35.

58 Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2:992–1000.

*koinonia,* i.e. a "close association involving mutual interests and sharing."[59] The subject of the consultation was not whether there should be two distinct "missions" – a mission to the Jews for which Peter and other Jerusalem apostles are responsible, and a mission to the Gentiles for which Paul is responsible. Nor did they discuss the question of whether the missionary work of the early church should be organized in a unified manner with a unified authority. The Book of Acts suggests that Peter and other Jewish Christians were preaching to both Jewish and Gentile audiences, which is exactly what Paul was doing, all emphasizing the exclusive significance of Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, for the forgiveness of sins. This common emphasis does not exclude the possibility, indeed the likelihood, that questions regarding the behavior of Christians in everyday life were answered in different ways, depending on the cultural and social contexts of Jerusalem and Judea, of Caesarea and Antioch, of Rome and of Corinth or Ephesus. Josef Hainz comments that "the *fellowship* that was confirmed by a handshake is specifically defined in terms of being established on the mutual *recognition of the different expressions of the one gospel* and in terms of being realized in the collection that had been agreed upon."[60] Second, Paul's statement in 2:8 indicates that the issue was not areas of missionary work but the effectiveness of the missionary work among Jews and Gentiles, which in both cases is completely dependent upon God. In 2:7 the comparative particle *kathos* ("just as") does not express a contrast between Peter and Paul but a complementary relationship; the statement in 2:8 does not describe Paul and Peter as opponents, nor does it describe the relative status of the two apostles. The emphasis that both apostolic missions depend on the power of God confirms that the participants in the consultation of AD 44 acknowledged both the basic theological unity and the practical, specific unity of the early Christian mission. Third, Paul clearly speaks of his own concerns (2:2), but he does not register any stipulations of the Jerusalem apostles, with the exception of financial support for the poor (Jewish) Christians in Jerusalem and Judea. The behavior of the "pillars" is described as follows: "they added nothing … they saw … they recognized … they gave" (2:6, 7, 9). Fourth, the development of Paul's argument in 2:6–9 indicates that the Jerusalem apostles committed themselves not to interfere in the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas and not to make (or support) any demands, with the exception that they should remember the poor believers in the Judean churches. This confirms that the issue was not the division of spheres of missionary influence but the recognition of the "independent" mission of Paul, who had worked for eleven years after his conversion without direct

59 Walter Bauer, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Third Edition, revised and edited by F. W. Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v.

60 Josef Hainz, *Koinonia. "Kirche" als Gemeinschaft bei Paulus* (BU 16; Regensburg: Pustet, 1982), 134 (emphasis mine); see also also Legrand, "Missionary Strategy," 59–61.

contact with the Jerusalem apostles and who was in the process of planning missionary outreach with Barnabas to Cyprus and to Galatia.

Kinzer believes that Paul, as a missionary, "had a certain amount of halakhic flexibility," but that he continued to observe basic Jewish practice such as eating kosher food and observing the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays (88). This suggestion cannot adequately explain 1 Corinthians 9:21: "To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law." If a Jewish Christian missionary seeks to win Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ and insists on keeping the Jewish dietary laws and Sabbath observance, there are not many areas in which he could actually "become as one outside the law." The "halakhic flexibility" that Kinzer seems to envisage (but does not specify) would be so minimal that it is difficult to see why Paul uses his "flexible" behavior as an argument to move Gentile believers in Corinth *not* to insist on their perceived rights.

Further, Kinzer's theory cannot explain Paul's reputation both in Judea and in Asia Minor. Luke relates that when Paul arrives in Jerusalem, James and the elders tell Paul, "You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs" (Acts 21:20–21). Jews from Asia who recognize Paul in the temple shout, "Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place" (21:28). If Paul had told Jewish converts to faith in Jesus Messiah that they should continue to follow all the stipulations of the Torah, and if he personally had obeyed the Law, including the dietary and Sabbath stipulations, this reputation would have no basis in reality. Statements such as Romans 14:3–4, 5–6, 14, 17, and Colossians 2:16–17 (see above) help explain his reputation as a traveling missionary, a reputation which was the cause for his arrest in Jerusalem. The reason why Paul kept coming back to the synagogues, despite being punished repeatedly with the forty lashes minus one (2 Cor 11:24), was not that "Paul himself continued to be committed to Judaism and the Jewish community," as Kinzer alleges (164), but that he continued to preach in synagogues the news that the crucified and risen Jesus is the Messiah.

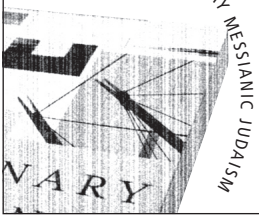
Kinzer's view of "mission" is strange, to say the least. It suggests that "postmissionary Messianic Judaism" has an "inner mission," which consists of "bearing witness to Yeshua's presence within the Jewish people," and an "outer mission," which is directed to the Gentile church "before whom it testifies to God's enduring love for the family chosen in the beginning to be God's covenant partner" (15). This "inner mission" is understood by Kinzer in terms of the "unveiling of the messianic mystery underlying Jewish historical existence and religious tradition" throughout Jewish history, and not "in a traditional missionary sense, as the conveying of

**Author info:**
Eckhard J. Schnabel (Ph.D., Aberdeen University) is Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School at Deerfield, Illinois.
eschnabel@tiu.edu

a saving message – derived from an external source – that is discontinuous with the religious tradition of postbiblical Judaism" (301). The "traditional sense" of "mission" which Kinzer rejects is the "tradition" and praxis of Jesus and the apostles. For Kinzer, followers of Jesus are no longer "fishers of people" (Mark 1:17), but fish who swim among the other fish. For Kinzer, Jewish Christians do not preach as Peter preached on Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). It seems that, for Kinzer, Jewish Christians do not even seek to lead Gentiles to saving faith in Jesus Messiah. Kinzer advises his readers *not* to do what Paul and the other (Jewish) apostles did as "ambassadors" of Jesus Messiah: they were conscious of their calling – that God presented through them an appeal to Jews and Gentiles alike, imploring them on behalf of Jesus Christ, "Be reconciled to God" – because they were convinced that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:20–21). Kinzer's "postmissionary" believers do not go anywhere, they stay where they are; they do not preach the good news of the crucified and risen Jesus, the Messiah, Savior, and Lord, rather they share views of a mysterious presence in Jewish history; they do not call people to repentance, they dialogue; they do not make disciples, they are friendly associates. They are not ambassadors, they are home secretaries.

Admittedly, Kinzer's book is on "ecclesiology," not on Christology or on soteriology. However, New Testament ecclesiology without a consideration of Jesus' death on the cross and of his resurrection is meaningless. The last sentence of Kinzer's book is revealing: "The church must come home to Israel, if it would again breathe freely and deeply" (310). Jesus called Israel, the Jewish people of the first century, "home" to the God who forgives sinners returning from the pigsty with ritual impurity (Luke 15:11–32). Paul called the church "home" to authentic faith in Jesus Messiah, Savior and Lord. Kinzer's "postmissionary Messianic Judaism" is neither missionary nor Messianic. It is not gospel, but law.





# Response to Mishkan Reviewers of My Book

By **Mark S. Kinzer**

I am grateful to the editors of *Mishkan* for the attention they are giving to *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (*PMJ*), and for the opportunity to respond to the reviews they have solicited. This conversation is, in my view, long overdue. Hopefully the present exchange will begin, rather than end, the discussion.

I will be brief in my comments on Richard Harvey's review, as it is the shortest and the least polemical. Harvey is already looking forward to my "next volume(s)," and challenging me to elaborate and defend my views on Christology, soteriology, missiology, and Torah. I recognize that *PMJ* raises as many questions as it answers, and I hope to address many of these questions in coming years. At the same time, I believe that *PMJ* is sufficiently developed and self-contained to call for an immediate, if preliminary, theological and practical response.

I appreciate Harvey's focus on "Barth and his interpreters." He correctly perceives the influence of Barth on my ecclesiology, and the ways I diverge from him. I view that divergence as the continuation of a trajectory of theological reflection initiated by figures such as Markus Barth (the son of the Swiss theologian) and Thomas Torrance (Karl Barth's student and English editor).

My only correction of Harvey's review concerns his treatment of the term "postmissionary." He complains that I use the term "for rhetorical effect, speaking over the heads of his immediate readers (concerned Christians) to an unconvinced and wary Jewish community who react instinctively against the term 'mission.'" I cannot deny that I chose the term in part "for rhetorical effect." However, the primary audience I had in mind was Christian, not Jewish. I was convinced that both evangelicals and mainline Christians associated "Messianic Judaism" with either Christian missions to the Jews or with fringe Sabbatarian Christian sects. I was looking for a term, and a title, that would communicate from the outset the different vantage point from which this book was written. While the title has caused some misunderstanding, it has accomplished the purpose for which it was chosen.

Harvey argues that Jewish reaction to the term "missionary" "should not be allowed to obscure the original meaning of 'mission' in Scripture

and theology." He also suggests that my own work stands "within, not outside, the tradition of mission theory and practice." Once again, the issue for me is not "Jewish reaction." I am more concerned with the ecclesiological confusion experienced by ordinary Christians when they consider the Jewish people as a "mission target," i.e., members of a religious community and bearers of a religious tradition entirely *external* to the *ekklesia*. Nevertheless, I agree wholeheartedly with Harvey's affirmation of "the original meaning of 'mission' in Scripture and theology," and even with his positioning of my work "within, not outside, the tradition of mission theory and practice." Like Lev Gillet, I have no objection to the idea of mission, nor even to the idea of a "mission of the Christian Church to Israel," so long as we recognize that "there is also a Mission of Israel to the Christian Church" (*PMJ,* 282).

**I have no objection to the idea of mission, nor even to the idea of a "mission of the Christian Church to Israel," so long as we recognize that "there is also a Mission of Israel to the Christian Church."**

Rich Robinson has written a more critical review, but one that raises a number of important issues and provides much opportunity for fruitful dialogue. Robinson begins by formulating what he sees as the "driving questions behind Kinzer's project." His three questions (What covenantal obligations exist for Jews? How is Jewish distinctiveness maintained? How is Jewish peoplehood expressed?) accurately reflect some of my key concerns. However, I would reverse the order of the questions, with distinctiveness following peoplehood, and individual covenantal obligation deriving from the other two. This way of arranging the questions better expresses my emphasis on community. Perhaps Robinson's way of arranging the questions, even as he is attempting to capture my thinking, expresses his own evangelical focus on the individual.

Robinson is less successful in the next section of his review, as he attempts to place my thinking within the context of recent intellectual history. He asserts that *PMJ* is "a direct outgrowth of developments from the 'New Perspective on Paul' (NPP) and onwards." Apparently Robinson failed to notice that my exegetical argument is based primarily on Matthew, Luke, and Acts, and only secondarily on the Pauline letters. He also failed to pay close attention to the Introduction of *PMJ,* in which I describe my experience of living in an interdenominational charismatic community founded by Roman Catholics. I did not discover the importance of communal life and radical faith-based ecumenism from the New Perspective on Paul; I had been living in an intentional community for several years before the publication of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism.*[1]

1 In footnote 4 Robinson points the reader to "explicit statements on p. 259," which supposedly support his contention that my work is "directly an outgrowth" of the New Perspective on Paul. A careful examination of those "explicit statements" will show that I am there dealing with the effect of Sanders' portrayal of rabbinic Judaism, not with his interpretation of Paul.

Robinson's view of the significance of the New Perspective on Paul is puzzling. The "NPP" reflects a broader shift of perspective and concerns, both within western society as a whole and within the Christian churches; it is not a decisive shaper of these perspectives and concerns, but instead a minor expression of them. Many now distrust the radical individualism and lack of historical consciousness that are endemic to western culture and religion. Thus, we see among evangelical scholars a new appreciation for the pre-Reformation church, as witnessed by the recent publication and embrace of patristic commentaries on Scripture. Is this trend also to be explained as resulting from the New Perspective on Paul?

Robinson's attempt to put my thinking in historical context fares no better when he cites the influence of Karl Rahner on my view of Yeshua's ongoing relationship to the Jewish people (a point he states three times, for emphasis). There is a superficial similarity between my affirmation of Yeshua's hidden presence among the Jewish people and Rahner's "anonymous Christianity." However, a profound difference becomes visible as soon as one probes beyond the surface. Rahner argues for a universal connection between Christ and all human beings, based on the incarnation. The incarnation may establish some sort of mysterious ontological connection between Yeshua and all human beings, but that connection lacks any historical specificity. Such notions posit a vague generic humanity, emptied of concrete historical content, related to a universalized Christ, likewise emptied of concrete historical content. In contrast, I am speaking of the relationship between the promised Messiah and the people to whom he was promised; between the King of Israel and the people of Israel; between Yeshua, the son of Miriam, and his flesh and blood relatives; between he who was a Torah-observant Jew and the people whose history has been defined by that same Torah. I am merely asserting that he who was, according to the Apostles, mysteriously present with Israel even before the incarnation (John 8:56; 12:41; 1 Cor 10:4; Eph 1:12; 2:12), whose incarnation itself consisted of assuming not a generic humanity but a specific Jewish identity, is likewise present with Israel after his resurrection. As Richard Harvey perceptively recognizes, the true affinity in this construction is with Barth, not Rahner.

**I am merely asserting that he who was, according to the Apostles, mysteriously present with Israel even before the incarnation … is likewise present with Israel after his resurrection.**

In his flawed attempt to establish a historical context for my work, Robinson's underlying point seems to be negative rather than positive: the chief influences on Kinzer's thought are *not* evangelical. This is fair enough, if one views such figures as Barth and Torrance as outside the evangelical fold. At the beginning of the review Robinson appears to recognize my reasons for largely ignoring evangelical discussions that address some aspect of the classic supersessionist model:

> Dispensationalism and varieties of premillennial theologies have offered alternatives to supersessionism for years. Reformed voices have been raised against at least those kinds of supersessionism that have led to anti-Semitism. But those solutions haven't sufficiently engaged the questions at the heart of Kinzer's project.

Robinson is right: the reason I do not interact seriously with these traditional evangelical positions is that they fail to engage the questions I am asking. However, in the process of describing the historical context of my thinking, my lack of attention to these evangelical positions begins to sound like a fault. By the end of the review, Robinson explicitly turns the observation into a criticism:

> First, as a general criticism, he interacts largely with postliberal/post-Holocaust scholars and does not seriously engage previous attempts to address supersessionism or the distinctiveness of Jews within the larger *ekklesia*.

I presume that Robinson refers here to evangelical discussions of the sort he has mentioned elsewhere in his review (though he provides no names of particular authors or books with which I should have been in conversation). If so, he has already provided a positive explanation for why I do this: these works fail to engage the questions I am asking. Earlier Robinson had also accepted the importance of these "driving questions," and approved of my raising them, even if he did not approve of my answers. In light of this, I find Robinson's criticism confusing, to say the least.

Robinson proceeds to a discussion of my hermeneutics. He seems to be especially troubled by the "hermeneutics of ethical accountability": "This principle is particularly problematic, since we need a basis to decide what is ethical in the first place." He fails to note that the discussion in *PMJ* relates this principle to the teaching of Yeshua, namely, his presentation of the two great commandments. He also fails to observe that I only employ this principle when the ethical standards in question are not matters of widespread debate. Are there any sincere Christian readers of this journal who would venture an ethical defense of forced baptisms, inquisitorial executions, crusader massacres, or holy week pogroms?[2]

Robinson continues by identifying a set of unstated presuppositions that allegedly shape my argument more than my explicitly formulated hermeneutical principles. On one count I find his analysis persuasive: my presupposition is that "not observing Torah leads to loss of Jewish distinctiveness and the end of the Jewish people." Robinson is correct in his contention that I largely presuppose rather than argue this point, and that

2 At the end of the day, Robinson acknowledges, "there is an interplay between ethics and interpretation that has been recognized since the days of the early church." In the footnote to this concession, Robinson approvingly cites Vanhoozer's quotation from Augustine. The same quotation is found in PMJ (34–35, note 10).

*PMJ* would have been a better book if I had addressed this matter more directly and completely. In fact, I do not believe that communal failure to observe Torah leads inevitably and in all cases to the loss of Jewish distinctiveness and the end of the Jewish people. Historical precedent demonstrates that it is possible to sustain Jewish community and continuity without Torah observance when the surrounding Gentile environment is suspicious or hostile toward Jews (as in the first half of twentieth century America). However, this only means that negative external pressure can compensate for the impoverishment of positive internal sources of Jewish solidarity. In the absence of entrenched and widespread anti-Semitism, or some other form of enforced ghettoization, I would agree with Elliott Abrams, who argues that only distinctive religious observance can secure Jewish communal survival.[3]

**In the absence of entrenched and widespread anti-Semitism … I would agree with Elliott Abrams, who argues that only distinctive religious observance can secure Jewish communal survival.**

In contrast, the other alleged "presuppositions" reveal little about my thought process, and much about Robinson's difficulty in understanding my argument. Let us look at each of the "presuppositions" in turn. First: "The ongoing divine covenant with Israel means that modern Judaism has 'validity.'" This is neither a presupposition of mine, nor a logical implication that I find compelling. One can get from the first half of the equation to the second only through a process of argumentation that is not presupposed but explicitly articulated in *PMJ.* The argument runs as follows: 1) God has made an eternal covenant with the Jewish people; 2) That covenant entails obligations that are confirmed rather than annulled by the death and resurrection of the Messiah; 3) To be lived out in practice, those obligations require a living communal tradition; 4) Only one living communal tradition of Jewish practice exists; 5) That living tradition, in its diversity and flexibility, should be honored by Jews as a valid authority.

The next alleged presupposition is as follows: "The divine preservation of the Jewish people through Judaism means that we should 'affirm' Judaism." Once again, this is not a presupposition of mine, nor a logical implication that can stand in this bald form. Instead, the "divine preservation of the Jewish people through Judaism" is a supportive premise that I would insert between points four and five in the five-fold line of argumentation articulated above: 5) God has used that one living communal tradition to preserve the Jewish people; 6) That living tradition, in its diversity and flexibility, should be honored by Jews as a valid authority.

Finally, Robinson identifies a presupposition concerning the apostolic way of life: "The apostolic lifestyle is the lifestyle for Jewish believers today." Once again, this is not a presupposition of mine, nor even a posi-

3 Elliott Abrams, *Faith or Fear* (New York: The Free Press, 1997).

tion that I would endorse. It is not the apostolic observance of the Torah that is decisive, but the apostles' evident conviction that this observance is a matter of obedience to a divine commandment. That the apostles held such a conviction is not my "presupposition," but one of the central arguments of *PMJ.*[4]

Robinson's lack of careful attention to my argumentation reappears in his analysis of Chapter 6. He states: "I confess to finding the arguments here full of leaps and non sequiturs." As he attempts to summarize the argument, however, it becomes clear that the "leaps" and "non sequiturs" derive not from the argument but from his failure to understand it. "First, Kinzer repeatedly remarks that the Jewish 'no' to Jesus is only 'apparent.'" In fact, I do not just "remark" that the Jewish "no" to Yeshua is only apparent; instead, I explain what I mean and why the term is helpful.[5] I also do not use the term "only." In some ways the Jewish "no" is a reality; in other ways, however, it is not a reality, or at least not the reality that it is generally assumed to be. I employ the term "apparent" in reference to the Jewish "no" to preserve this ambiguity. Robinson continues: "Second, he says that since the New Testament affirms Jewish practice as a sign of the covenant and a means of preserving the Jewish people, then 'the New Testament affirms what we would today call Judaism.'" Robinson appears to understand this last clause to mean "the New Testament affirms 21st century Judaism." If that were the case, the argument would indeed involve a "leap" and "non sequitur." However, that is not the meaning of the clause. Instead, it is commenting on contemporary terminology: the communal way of life founded on Jewish covenantal practice which the New Testament affirms is called by 21st century people "Judaism" – even if that is not the term that first century Jewish Yeshua-believers would have used for it.

**In some ways the Jewish "no" is a reality; in other ways, however, it is not a reality, or at least not the reality that it is generally assumed to be.**

As part of his conclusion Robinson questions the consistency of my belief that "the apostolic practice of observantly keeping the Law is normative for all time," while denying the same for the "apostolic practice of mission." In fact, I accept Robinson's analogy between the two, and find it helpful for illustrating my understanding of both Torah observance and mission. There are many in the Messianic Jewish movement who think that 21st century Yeshua-believers should seek to replicate the particular manner of Torah observance practiced by Yeshua and his followers. If Yeshua did not separate meat and dairy dishes, we should not separate them. If Yeshua did not wash his hands ritually before eating, we should not do so. As should be clear from Chapter 7 of *PMJ,* I do not endorse this position. It is not the particular manner of Torah observance practiced by

4 It is also a point I have developed in "Rejoinder to Responses to Postmissionary Messianic Judaism," Kesher 20: Winter/Spring 2006, 58–62.

5 See pages 213–14, and especially footnote 1.

Yeshua and his followers that is authoritative for us, but *the fact* that they saw the basics of such practice as a divinely mandated covenantal duty, and *the way* they engaged with the various attempts to embody such practice that had developed among the Jews of their time. Like them, we should accept basic Jewish practice as a divinely mandated covenantal duty, and we should engage constructively with the attempts to embody that practice that have developed over the past twenty centuries.

Similarly, there are many in the world of Christian missions who think that 21st century Yeshua-believers should seek to replicate the particular manner of mission practiced by Yeshua and his followers. They preached boldly in places where Jews gathered, and we should do the same. They called Jews to repentance for the nation's sin, and we should do the same. Once again, I cannot endorse such a position. It is not the particular manner in which the apostles conducted their mission that is authoritative for us, nor the particular way they applied the message of Messiah to their audience and setting. Instead, what is decisive is the fact that they understood public witness to Yeshua, *undertaken in the context of an affirmation of the enduring validity of Israel's covenant and its distinctive practices,* as a divinely mandated duty. What is decisive is also the way they adapted their message to the particular historical circumstances faced by the Jewish people at the time, i.e., the imminent judgment of 70 CE. We likewise are summoned to bear witness to Yeshua as practicing Jews living in solidarity with the Jewish people, in a manner adapted to the particular historical circumstances of the Jewish people of our day, i.e., in light of the sad history of Jewish-Christian relations described in *PMJ,* and in light of God's healing and restorative purpose for that relationship and for the Jewish people as a whole.

**They understood public witness to Yeshua, undertaken in the context of an affirmation of the enduring validity of Israel's covenant and its distinctive practices, as a divinely mandated duty.**

I will now turn to the review of Eckhard Schnabel. Having studied intently his lengthy and detailed article, I have concluded that Professor Schnabel does not like my book. In fact, he seems to dislike it very much. Of course, I am not surprised at such a response. I am arguing for a controversial thesis, and challenging many long-held views. However, what does surprise me is the way Schnabel's lack of sympathy for my ideas impedes his comprehension of them, and results in rhetorical excess.

One misunderstood passage from *PMJ* appears to have especially irked Schnabel. The passage is as follows:

> This bilateral picture of Pauline ecclesiology draws further support from the work of Mark Nanos, who argues that the Gentile *ekklesiai* that Paul addresses in Romans and Galatians are attached to Jewish communities in their cities. According to Nanos, Paul preferred to form such a connection between his fledgling congregations and the established Jewish world … the local synagogue would have

> provided a framework in which an incipient bilateral ecclesiology could have been expressed. The Jewish Yeshua-believers would participate as full members of the synagogue, which gave them a support system for their life as Jews. The Gentile Yeshua-believers would likewise share in the life of the wider Jewish community, though without full membership. In addition, there would be supplementary gatherings of the Jewish and Gentile Yeshua-believers, either separately or together. (164–165)

What incenses Schnabel is the phrase "without full membership." He thinks that I am presenting this as the Pauline ideal: "Kinzer thinks that Paul … hoped that the Jewish Yeshua-believers would 'participate as full members of the synagogue' and Gentile Yeshua-believers 'would likewise share in the life of the wider Jewish community, though without full membership…'" Such a view rightfully provokes Schnabel:

> There is no room here for the possibility that Jewish Christians are "members" and Gentile Christians are "half-members" in the community which worships the God of Abraham who sent Jesus Messiah to die on the cross and to rise on the third day. Paul's Jewish Christian opponents who advocated circumcision for all believers seem to have had more sympathy for Gentile Christians than Kinzer does: they at least wished that they would become full members in "Israel," a process for which they demanded circumcision and the observance of Jewish practices beyond, or in addition to, faith in Israel's God and Israel's Messiah. Kinzer admits Gentile believers to the synagogues, but he refuses them "full membership." … There is no room here for an apartheid of Jewish Christians with "full membership" and Gentile Christians with less than full membership.

If I were saying what Schnabel thinks I am saying, I would denounce myself with similar vehemence. However, neither Mark Nanos nor I suggest that Paul saw the lack of full membership in the synagogue as an ideal. In fact, Nanos argues that it was Paul's insistence on the full membership and equal status of Gentile Yeshua-believers that stimulated opposition and hostility within the wider Jewish world. The phrase "without full membership" refers to the reality that obtained, not Paul's (or my) goal. In the above-cited passage from *PMJ,* I am merely suggesting that this situation, while imperfect (since the wider Jewish community had not yet accepted the Messiahship of Yeshua or the equal status of Gentile Yeshua-believers), was nonetheless adequate for expressing an incipient form of bilateral ecclesiology in solidarity with Israel. While Gentile Yeshua-believers were not allotted full membership in the wider Jewish community, their equal status was recognized in the twofold Messianic *ekklesia*.

Schnabel's misreading of *PMJ* is even more acute in his response to my exegesis of Romans 14–15. He characterizes that exegesis in this way: "His treatment of Romans 14–15 is equally problematic. He follows Mark

Nanos, who argues that the 'weak' are not Jewish Christians who insist on keeping the dietary laws, but non-Christian Jews." He then attacks the interpretation of Nanos, thinking that he has thereby answered me. Evidently he did not pay close attention to my argument. I introduce it as follows: "While I find his [Nanos'] interpretation persuasive, it is not the only way to bring these chapters into line with the syllogism. Let us now look at Romans 14–15, assuming – contrary to Nanos but in accord with the scholarly consensus – that the 'weak' are Yeshua believers" (76). I proceed to offer an interpretation of Romans 14–15 that Schnabel completely ignores.

A final example of Schnabel's misreading (and consequent misrepresentation) of my position is his discussion of my hermeneutics. He begins by characterizing my hermeneutical position as follows: "While he recognizes that his exegetical arguments 'have their limits' as 'other reasonable interpretations exist,' he posits that his proposal should be accepted on account of 'several nontextual factors.'" Do I really believe that my proposal should be accepted merely on such grounds? What I actually say is this: "I will present several nontextual factors that add considerable weight to my proposed reading of the New Testament and contemporary application of its teaching" (27). I see these nontextual factors as adding "weight" to an exegetical proposal that must first be assessed on its own merits. Schnabel continues:

> This stance is troubling. If the biblical text does not unequivocally endorse a departure from traditional views concerning the identity and the mission of the believers in Jesus Christ, and if at the same time Kinzer regards the adoption of a 'bilateral *ekklesia*' and the restoration of a 'Jewish *ekklesia*' as necessary for authentic Biblical faith and practice, the suspicion arises that he engages in special pleading.

This is an odd critique of my introduction of "nontextual factors" into the interpretive process. It is based on Schnabel's subtle insertion of a different nontextual factor: "traditional views concerning the identity and the mission of the believers in Jesus Christ." I acknowledge in *PMJ* that the nontextual factor of Church tradition should ordinarily influence our interpretation of the text: "In deciding which principle of coherence deserves our allegiance, it is appropriate to give respectful consideration to ecclesial traditions of interpretation" (28). My point in Chapter 1 is that, in the matter of Christian teaching about the Jewish people, certain historical nontextual factors should outweigh the nontextual factor of Christian tradition in determining where the burden of proof lies in exegetical argument. In other words, I am contending, on the basis of these factors, that "if the biblical text does not unequivocally endorse" a supersessionist theology, then such a theology should be rejected. In effect, Schnabel asserts that the nontextual factor of Church tradition should trump the nontextual factors I propose. He asserts this, but does

not offer reasons to support the assertion. This is the key hermeneutical question that we should debate: which nontextual factors in this case should be given most weight?

Schnabel proceeds to further caricature my hermeneutical approach: "If, for example, the interpretation of Romans 9–11 is controlled by the 'nontextual' perspective of the history of Christian anti-Semitism … the results of exegetical work are fixed before the exegete allows Paul to say what he wants to say." Where do I suggest that interpretation of any text should be "controlled" by a nontextual perspective? I only argue that interpretation must be *informed* by such factors, not *controlled* by them. From his statement cited above, I presume that Schnabel would assign the same role to the nontextual factor of Christian tradition. Once again, it is not a question of the text versus nontextual factors, but of which nontextual factors should receive most weight in the interpretive process.

**This is the key hermeneutical question that we should debate: which nontextual factors in this case should be given most weight?**

Schnabel demolishes another hermeneutical straw man in the following:

> As regards the insistence that theological truth can be discovered by employing 'practical or functional criteria,' as Jewish theologians do (33–35), the question must be raised whether the locus of truth is indeed in the biblical text as God's revelation, or whether truth is primarily and decisively found in the consciousness of the interpreter and in his values and praxis.

Does Schnabel believe that I am elevating practical and functional criteria above the literary reading of Scripture in its canonical and theological context? Unfortunately, he pays no attention to what I *actually say* about these criteria: "we must not only employ abstract and theoretical criteria for evaluating theological claims; we must also have recourse to practical or functional criteria for determining theological truth" (33). It is not a matter of "discovering theological truth" through these criteria, but of employing them, as a supplement to normal exegesis and theoretical analysis, in "evaluating theological claims." He also ignores what I *actually do* in *PMJ,* a book largely devoted to literary and historical exegesis of the biblical text.

Though at times he misunderstands and misrepresents my position, Schnabel understands me well enough to disagree with me. The actual disagreement becomes clear as soon as Schnabel begins to comment on specific biblical texts. The nature and depth of the disagreement, however, is also expressed in his selection of texts to examine. The overwhelming majority of exegetical comments offered by Schnabel deal with the Pauline writings. One would never know from his review that interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew plays an important role in my argument.

Nor would one know that Luke and Acts are more central to my thesis than the letters of Paul. Like many Christian theologians, Schnabel evidently believes that the self-identified "apostle to the Gentiles" – whose audience, when explicitly noted, consists primarily of Gentiles – serves as the central reference point for interpreting the New Testament teaching about the Torah and the Jewish people, rather than the New Testament writers whose audience was Jewish (as in the case of Matthew) or both Jewish and Gentile (as with Luke). This is an unstated hermeneutical principle that I would challenge.

When he does refer to crucial texts in the Acts of the Apostles, Schnabel's exegesis limps badly. He has this to say about the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:

> Kinzer reads his position into the text when he asserts that "the controversy in Acts 15 makes sense only if all parties assumed that this Jewish group is obligated to live according to the Torah" (159). It is indeed correct that the controversy of Acts 15 presupposes that Jewish believers in Jesus continued to practice Torah. But Acts 15 at no point asserts, or implies, that the apostles or elders believed that Jewish believers are "obligated" to do so.

To the contrary: Acts 15 clearly does imply this, and ex cathedra pronouncements denying the fact are no substitute for reasoned argument. If Torah observance were not a covenantal duty for *Jews,* would James, Peter, and the other apostles have summoned a solemn council to determine if such observance were a covenantal duty for *Gentiles?* If Torah observance were not a covenantal duty for Jews, would James, Peter, and the other apostles have taken with deadly seriousness the position of those who were seeking to impose this duty upon Gentiles, rather than simply correcting them and exposing their ignorance? If Torah observance were not a covenantal duty for Jews, would not the apostles have declared this principle as the fitting conclusion of the Jerusalem council, as the decisive argument against Torah observance being a covenantal duty for Gentiles? Just because Christian exegetes have traditionally ignored this implication of Acts 15 does not mean that it is not there.

Schnabel fares no better with Acts 21:20–26:

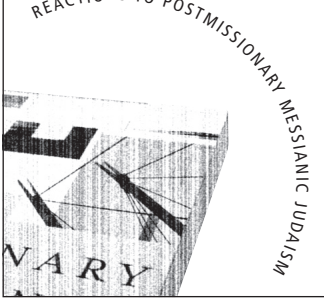
> Kinzer's theory cannot explain Paul's reputation both in Judea and in Asia Minor. … If Paul had told Jewish converts to faith in Jesus Messiah that they should continue to follow all the stipulations of the Torah, and if he personally had obeyed the Law, including the dietary and Sabbath stipulations, this reputation would have no basis in reality.

Is it really so difficult to imagine why rumors circulated about Paul, saying that he taught "all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses" (Acts 21:21)? First, Paul did not deal with many Jewish "converts" – the

congregations he founded consisted mainly of Gentiles. Second, in his preaching, teaching, and writing Paul spoke forcefully against Gentiles converting to Judaism and observing the Torah. His vehement arguments in defense of this position could easily be misinterpreted (as they have been through the centuries) as rejection of Jewish Torah observance. Third, Paul faced fierce opposition to his views, within both the *ekklesia* and the wider Jewish world. His adversaries would eagerly seize any pretext that would undermine his credibility. Thus, the rumor can easily be explained. What is far more difficult to conceive is how Schnabel's reading of this text explains James' assertion that "there is nothing in what they have been told about you but that you yourself live in observance of the Torah" (Acts 21:24), or Paul's action in compliance with James' advice (Acts 21:26), undertaken for the explicit purpose of confirming James' assertion.

**Author info:**
Mark S. Kinzer (Ph.D., University of Michigan) is president of Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, the center for theological studies of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations.
mkbenben@comcast.net

Due to space constraints, I am prevented from responding to the multitude of exegetical comments and arguments contained in Schnabel's extensive review. I can only hope that the flaws I have pointed out in Schnabel's analysis will cast doubt on the overall credibility of his perspective and analysis, so that readers who lack firsthand knowledge of *PMJ* will be undeterred by his impassioned critique and examine the book for themselves.




# Four Comments on *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*

## Mark Kinzer and the *Corpus Mysticum Christi*

By **Akiva Cohen**[1]

The appearance of Mark Kinzer's book *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* marks a transitional stage between the growth pangs of the reborn Messianic Jewish community and its coming of age. Whereas the pre-Holocaust era witnessed Hebrew-Christian scholars of notable erudition, much recent writing by Messianic Jews has lacked the quality and deserved respect that merits serious engagement and peer review by the academic community.

Kinzer's book came into my hands at the same time as did an article by David Rudolph, "Messianic Jews and Christian Theology: Restoring an Historical Voice to the Contemporary Discussion," in *ProEccl* 14 (2005), pages 58-84. Kinzer's book is an example of such a voice that demands engagement from scholars who labor in the arena of interfaith dialogue between Christianity and Judaism.

The context of Kinzer's book needs to be seen within that of the Messianic Jewish movement, which has seen shifting tensions in its own ranks. Within the UMJC (Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, www.umjc.net) alone, there exists an inner dialogue between the Hashivenu group (www.hashivenu.org) – to which Kinzer belongs – and the *Dayenu* group, a voice currently being raised by those in the UMJC who are seeking to define some central core values in relation to the theological explorations of the Hashivenu group. Hashivenu is a think tank exploring diverse ideas to mature the Messianic movement and strengthen its authenticity as a Jewish movement. Kinzer is also the president of the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute (www.mjti.org), now officially adopted as the UMJC's institute for training its leaders, so the stakes are high for the UMJC's future direction and leadership.

Kinzer's well-written book demonstrates a mature theological reflection

1 Akiva Cohen is currently a doctoral candidate; his dissertation is a phenomenological comparison between the Gospel according to Matthew and the Mishnah. akiva.cohen@gmail.com

on the issues under discussion. The main issue that begs to be addressed is Kinzer's hermeneutic, or theological orientation, which he defines as a *postmissionary approach.* Kinzer takes into serious consideration the social location of the biblical authors and their first readers, the ethical implications of traditional interpretations of Scripture in light of history's witness, and theological reflection upon the significant historical developments of the Jewish people vis-à-vis the church. Here Kinzer's work may be squarely located within the wider trend in biblical scholarship to approach the Scripture from a postcolonial perspective. There is no question – in the mind of this reviewer – that there is much positive fruit in perspectives that work toward recovering the voice of the *other,* meaning those who have historically been ignored and/or exploited by those who held the institutional power to promote their view as the only legitimate approach to the text.

All such approaches to biblical interpretation involve coming to terms with the fact that the community to which one belongs will inevitably determine – to a large extent – the way in which one views and understands the text of Scripture. Kinzer's task here is a perilous one, because the danger exists that in correcting misreadings of Scripture by the dominant institutional voice, the *correction,* if taken too far, can itself become a misreading. Having noted that caveat, Kinzer's general premise – that any interpretation of Scripture that would require a Jewish believer in Yeshua to abandon his or her faithfulness to God's covenant with the Jewish people must be a wrong interpretation – has much to commend it, as does his application of that principle to the Biblical texts he examines.

Kinzer does not argue in the direction of Rosenzweig's *Two Covenant* approach, specifically the latter's rejoinder to the claims of Jesus that "no one comes to the Father except through me," which maintains that Jews *already are* with the Father. Kinzer argues that Jews do need to come to a saving faith through Yeshua. However (and this is the big hermeneutical *however*), Kinzer argues that this process takes place in a *hidden* or *mysterious* way – namely, that Yeshua is mysteriously present in the Jewish community through their *no* to the Christian Jesus. That *no* has historically been a refusal to abandon their covenant faithfulness to the God of Israel in order to believe in *that* Jesus, which means that they are thereby demonstrating their covenant faithfulness to the God of Israel, and hence their *yes* to [the actual Jewish Torah-observant] Yeshua!

This brief comment on Kinzer's book cannot possibly do justice to the response it deserves. I trust that the reviews submitted to this edition of *Mishkan* accomplish that. I have simply sought to note my respect for Kinzer's mature and sensitive theological reflection and my concerns for the weighty implications resulting from his brave hermeneutical approach. The further challenge to the Messianic Jewish movement seems to remain: How do Messianic Jews remain faithful to the covenant as Jews without compromising their commitment to Yeshua?

On the one hand, I agree with Kinzer that if the expression of that covenant faithfulness means something that Kinzer's more assimilated

Messianic Jewish critics argue for, there would be no abiding Messianic Jewish remnant in two, or at most three, generations. On the other hand, if the expression of such faith remains a hidden mystery, viz., the *hidden* presence of Messianic Jews within the Jewish community and the *mysterious* abiding of Yeshua within the Jewish community's *no* to the de-Judaized Jesus, then, alas, Paul endured much needless suffering for his understanding of his *yes* to Yeshua. Whether one agrees with Kinzer's views or not, he has surely challenged the Messianic Jewish movement to give serious consideration to the issues he raises, and he makes a reasoned plea to the church to reflect upon her theology in light of its tragic historical consequences for the Jewish people.

## Envisioning Postmissionary Messianic Judaism

By **Derek Leman**[2]

Throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, Reformed Judaism experienced a trend toward increased tradition in practice and theology. In a similar way, observance of Torah and halakhah among Messianic Jews has been increasing in a virtual continuum since the 1970s. There is no sign of this trend reversing.

To those on the outside, this increased observance may seem bewildering. The older paradigms of Christian theology seem sufficient. The law is obsolete and Messianic Judaism is simply contextualized Christianity for Jews. The goal of the church's mission to the Jews is simply to bring them to faith in Jesus. If there is any sense of responsibility toward the Torah or Jewish practice, it is only for the sake of missionary expediency.

The problems with this are many. Not least is that the Bible's stance on the Torah can be seen as more enduring. Arguments that God abolished the Torah for Jews are not as water-tight as many proponents believe. Further, the Jewish community's charge that Messianic Judaism is a matter of bait-and-switch has a great deal of validity. The Jewish sense of calling to maintain covenant fidelity to Mt. Sinai is not negotiable to faithful Jews. Finally, there is the matter of the experience of Messianic Jews.

To those who practice Torah and tradition, even if missionary expediency was the initial motive for the practice, the prayers and traditions of Israel become a vital part of spiritual life. To those who have a Torah service in the synagogue, with an ark, a scroll, and the traditional blessings and readings, such a service quickly becomes part of the worship life and spirituality of the synagogue. It becomes indispensable for those who grow to love it. If all Israel were to be saved, and missionary expediency were no longer an issue, we would still desire to keep the tradition which has become beloved.

2 Derek Leman is the leader of Hope of David Messianic Congregation in Atlanta, Georgia, and is a member of the International Coordinating Committee of the LCJE. derek4messiah@yahoo.com

To be sure, Dr. Kinzer's book contains interpretations and theological directions that many will reject. I am not advocating the soteriological implications that show through in this work (for example, on page 125, Dr. Kinzer writes, "Therefore, Paul sees the Jewish remnant as contributing to the sanctification (and salvation) of all Israel, so that it is now truly holy – despite its serious spiritual limitations"). Nor do I advocate ceasing the proclamation of Jesus to Jewish people. What many readers may miss is that Dr. Kinzer does not advocate such cessation either. It is rather the method and content of that proclamation throughout history that he opposes. He believes the Jewish people very much need Jesus.

It is really, however, the core of the book that I am advocating. The historical stance of churches against Jewish fidelity to the Torah deserves to be challenged biblically and theologically. The old paradigm is fading. There will always be Jews open to assimilation – either through marriage or enculturation – but the future of Judaism and Messianic Judaism is greater observance, not lesser.

Yet it is more than pragmatism that should drive churches and Jewish missions to rethink years of anti-Torah and anti-Israel stances. Many, like myself, see God's hand in these times, bringing church leaders to realize that Jews don't have to become Gentiles to follow Jesus. At last, the converse of Galatians is being realized.

## A Response to Kinzer's book: The Grounds and the Consequences

By **Baruch Maoz**[3]

Mr. Kinzer has provided us with a fascinating, engaging and well written book with many attractive insights. His overview of the relevant history is, however tendentious, well informed and as persuasively presented as is his central argument.

My response will be restricted to two major issues: the grounds of Mr. Kinzer's proposal, and its consequences.

In all fairness, Mr. Kinzer's alarming title is not intended to connote a discontinuation of the church's witness to the Jewish people. It is, however, intended to suggest a significant change in that witness, which would include: 1) viewing rabbinic Judaism as a valid understanding of biblical revelation; 2) viewing the practice of that Judaism as the binding duty of Jews who believe in Jesus; 3) viewing individual Jews as being in covenant with God; 4) recognizing the need for a distinct Jewish identity alongside (or within?) the church; and 5) viewing Jews as being in some way "in Christ" and Christ as in some way in them; all this without modifying the saving role of Jesus, or the place of faith in salvation.

3 Baruch Maoz is pastor of Grace and Truth Christian Congregation in Rishon LeTsion, Israel.
bmaoz22@attglobal.net

*The Grounds*

In spite of Mr. Kinzer's best intentions, an affirmation of the canonical role of Scripture as the ground and measure of saving faith is not evidenced in his book. Moreover, the radical theological transformation he calls for is based on flimsy exegetical grounds. I have described Mr. Kinzer's argument as "persuasively presented." Here I must add, "persuasive, but unconvincing."

The only ground on which such a call ought to be based is a thoroughgoing exegesis of Scripture. Mr. Kinzer's brief exegetical argument is neither extensive nor persuasive. Instead, he assumes that it is sufficient to show that the New Testament does not rule out his proposed interpretation. Not so, dear friend. Our duty is not to read between the lines of Scripture, but to heed the inspired lines themselves. A fascinating presentation of history and extensive quotes from primarily liberal scholars can carry no weight in comparison to the word of God. This is disconcerting, to say the least.

No less disconcerting is the view of Judaism espoused by Mr. Kinzer, which completely ignores central tenets in Judaism that define the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity: acceptance with and closeness to God on the basis of human effort, a rejection of Jesus, and a wholly different view of the way the Godhead is to be seen, and of the nature of the people of God.

*The Consequences*

If Mr. Kinzer's platform were to be adopted, the biblical faith of Jesus would be destroyed among both Jews and Gentiles. One cannot have one's cake and eat it: either Judaism is true to the Bible or it is not, and if it is, then its rejection of Jesus as Messiah, as divine, and as the only savior must be adopted.

Who would not desire to have more of God than he presently has? If Mr. Kinzer's platform were to be adopted, in an effort to "again breathe freely and deeply" (p. 310), the church would be incorporated into Israel, adopting its assumptions, its practices, and its convictions.

The nature of the Godhead, the person and saving role of Jesus, his primacy in the body of Christ, man's approach to and acceptance with God on the basis of Messiah's atoning sacrifice, the place of repentance and faith in salvation, the nature of the people of God – these and many other important issues are at stake, threatened by Mr. Kinzer's proposals, which are therefore to be rejected.

Nevertheless, Mark Kinzer's clarion calls – for the church to rid itself of still-remaining residues of anti-Semitism and for Jewish Christians to maintain and be allowed to maintain their national identity – ought to be widely heeded.

I commend this book as an important contribution to the ongoing discussion on the relationship between Jesus, God the Son, Messiah of Israel and of all mankind, and the covenant people of God.

## An Alternative Ecclesiological Model

By **David H. Stern**[4]

Mark Kinzer's somewhat obliquely titled book *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* repudiates "replacement theology" by presenting what, so far as I know, is the first ecclesiology that gives place in the people of God to all three of the groups mentioned in the olive tree analogy of Romans 11:17–24: Messianic Jews, Messianic Gentiles, and non-Messianic Jews. The first two are the two equal branches of what he calls the "bilateral *ekklesia*," while the third group – the non-Messianic Jews – remains part of the people of God despite rejecting Yeshua as the Messiah. This is an important contribution to theology.

Kinzer calls on Messianic Jews to center their lives within the Jewish people and Jewish culture – as the first-century Messianic Jews did – rather than within "church culture." Therefore they should live a lifestyle that respects the Torah; in this regard he singles out observing Shabbat, the holidays, circumcision, and kashrut, but does not specify precisely what "observing" means. In this way Messianic Jews will become a bridge between non-Messianic Jews and Messianic Gentiles. This too is an important contribution to theology and a challenge to the Messianic Jewish community.

This ecclesiology does not merely repudiate supersessionism, but presents an alternative model: the Gentile branch of the *ekklesia* has not *replaced* but has been *joined,* through faith in Yeshua, to "the commonwealth of Israel" – the Jewish people, who remain the people of God. This model reflects the truth of Ephesians 2:11–13 and 3:6. Traditionally Christians have not acknowledged being joined to the commonwealth (or "national life") of the Jewish people, but have wanted to skip over this step of the Ephesians 2 sequence to the covenants, the promises, the hope, and the God of Israel. But it doesn't work that way. Ruth understood this a thousand years earlier, when she said, "*Amekh ammi ve'elohaikh elohai* (Your people are my people and your God is my God)." Kinzer in effect proposes that only an ecclesiology that demands of Gentile Christians that they recognize their "solidarity" (Kinzer's term) with the Jewish people adequately spells out the implications of rejecting supersessionism. Such identification with the Jewish people implies that Christian identity itself is different from what Christians have hitherto been taught. This is a third important contribution to theology.

Kinzer proposes that Yeshua is mysteriously present among the Jewish people, even if they are unaware of it and reject him as the Messiah. This is an interesting concept, which could easily be misused to suggest that Jews do not need to be evangelized. However, I don't think Kinzer

4 David Stern is the author of *Messianic Jewish Manifesto, Jewish New Testament,* and *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. He lives in Jerusalem.
dhstern@netvision.net.il

believes that. At the most recent Hashivenu conference, he himself stated that it was not his purpose in this book to develop a nuanced soteriology that would work together with his ecclesiology. In other words, it remains for him (or someone else) to describe what aspects of the gospel must be presented to Jews if Yeshua is understood to be with them in a hidden way.

I am sure that Kinzer will not assert what Two-Covenant theology asserts, namely, that Jews, by being already with God through the Abrahamic covenant, do not need Yeshua. This is the way I see it: Jews do need Yeshua for *individual* salvation, even though they are *communally* God's people already through the covenant with Abraham. They may have the advantage of already knowing many aspects of God's truth and life (Romans 9:4–5), yet they need to acknowledge Yeshua's atoning death to be assured of salvation (Romans 11:23–24). Working out the details of such a soteriology and its implications for evangelism is the first priority in applying Kinzer's ecclesiology. If this is not done soon, criticism of Kinzer's apparent waffling about Jewish evangelism will overwhelm and vitiate his book's ecclesiological breakthrough.

# First "Organized" Bible-work in 19th Century Jerusalem (1816-1831)

## *Part IV: Procopius, Parsons, and Tschoudy (1821)*

By **Kai Kjær-Hansen**

In the third article in this series it was shown that in the spring of 1820 James Connor, the second Bible-man to visit Jerusalem in the 19th century, managed to arrange for Procopius to take charge of a Bible depot and of Bible distribution in Jerusalem.[1]

Even if this did not mean that a Bible "Society" had been established in Jerusalem, it was nevertheless an agreement about an "organized" Bible work in Jerusalem. On his return journey to Constantinople, Connor was, however, able to ascertain that not all agreements with ecclesiastics elsewhere in the Levant had been kept. What happened to the arrangement with Procopius?[2]

In this article we will try to answer this and to cover the next two Bible-men, namely the American Levi Parsons and the Swiss Melchior Tschoudy, who visited Jerusalem in 1821.

### Who was Procopius?

This is not the place to write Procopius' vita; it may however be appropriate to supply a little information about the person who was to become the first Agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) *in Jerusalem*. Contemporary (Protestant) sources gave Procopius full credit for his work for the Bible cause in Jerusalem. Such recognition is sometimes missing in modern (Protestant) descriptions of the early history of the Bible Society in Jerusalem.

It appears from Chrysostomos Papadopoulos' *History of the Church of Jerusalem*[3] that Procopius was Greek, and a member of the Brotherhood

1 See *Mishkan,* no. 44 (2005), 62–75.

2 The arrangement is rendered *in toto* in *Mishkan,* no. 44 (2005), 70–71.

3 *Historia tes Ekklisias Hierosolymon* (Jerusalem et Alexandrie, 1910); 2. ed. Athens, 1970. I am grateful to Dr. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen and librarian Daniel Attinger, both in Jerusalem, for information concerning Procopius from this work, which I have not been able to consult myself.

of the Holy Sepulchre.[4] His full name was Procopios Nazìanzìnos.[5] He is referred to as "Araboglous" – presumably because he mastered the Arabic language. Among the Greeks and the Armenians he served as assistant translator and was also responsible for the Greek Patriarchate's library.

Procopius was in Jerusalem a*fter* the fire at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in October 1808, and is mentioned by Papadopoulos in connection with the subsequent restoration of the church in the years 1809–1810. Did Procopius himself experience the fire?

This seems to be the case. A long poem by Procopius, in which he describes the fire itself, has been preserved; it bears the stamp of something personally experienced and he uses the first person plural.[6]

Neophytos of Cyprus, who was contemporary with Procopius – and like him a member of the Brotherhood – also mentions Procopius.[7] In an entry for the year 1821 Neophytos refers to Procopius as "The Locum Tenens of the Patriarch in Jerusalem," i.e. the Patriarch's representative in Jerusalem.[8] There is no doubt that BFBS's first Agent in Jerusalem was a significant person, centrally placed in the Greek Orthodox leadership in the holy city.

## Procopius and Easter 1821

The year 1821 is of particular interest for the objective we are pursuing. The American Bible-man Levi Parsons comes to Jerusalem and makes personal contact with Procopius. At Easter it is not just the distribution of Bibles that occupies Procopius' thoughts, however. He is to ensure that the recently arrived Greek pilgrims get out of Jerusalem fast – and alive – after news of the Greek War of Independence reaches Jerusalem.[9]

4 This Brotherhood was "a monastic society which had for several centuries administered the patriarchate," cf. Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen, *The Holy Land Christians* (Jerusalem: Private Publication, 2003), 56–57.

5 This may not be consistent, but I shall continue to write "Procopius," as did the Bible-men of that time.

6 Printed in excerpts, in German, by Friedrich Heyer, *Kirchengeschichte des Heiligen Landes* (Stutgartt – Berlin – Köln – Mainz, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1984), 169–170.

7 The Monk Neophytos came to Jerusalem from Cyprus in 1801; his *Annals of Palestine 1821–1841* have been translated into English and summarized in Hebrew by S. N. Spyridon in *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* (1938), 63–132; reissued as *Extracts from Annals of Palestine, 1821–1841* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1979). It is surprising that Spyridon did not translate that third of Neophytos' work which, among other things, deals with the Brotherhood's relations with other religious communities – including the Protestant missionaries. A few sections have been printed in German by Friedrich Heyer, 1984, p. 173 and 175, but without a historical critical analysis of Neophytos' statements; more about this in part V in this series.

8 The Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, Polycarp, resided in Constantinople and never visited Jerusalem; see *Mishkan,* no. 41 (2004), 25.

9 The number of pilgrims in Jerusalem at Easter 1821 is, according to Parsons: 1200 Greeks, 1400 Armenians, 70 Copts, 20 Syrians, 15 Catholics, one Abyssinian; a total of 2,706. Parsons says that "a priest of distinction," after having read these statements, has declared them to be "correct"; cf. *Missionary Herald,* 1822, 43.

On that occasion Neophytos of Cyprus writes:

> That was a great and a holy day, the sixth of April,[10] when news arrived of the rebellion of the Greeks from the yoke of slavery! The Locum Tenens of the Patriarch in Jerusalem, Procopios, with the Bishops in the Synod, tried by all means to keep the news from getting abroad, but, on Good Friday, the *Mufti* and the notables of Jerusalem got word by letter from Jaffa of the rebellion. These we persuaded by entreaties and presents to keep quiet and not to disclose the news until after Easter, lest the Turks already seeking an excuse, might be perturbed and cause trouble, whence some untoward accident might befall the pilgrims.[11]

The uncertain situation in Jerusalem due to the Greek revolt also influences Levi Parsons' plans; he decides to leave the city (see below). But there is no doubt that Procopius continued to serve as Agent for BFBS. In the spring of 1822 he supplies Joseph Wolff with Bibles, as we shall see in the next article in this series. Procopius was active as Agent for BFBS until his death. The question is when this occurred.

## The Duration of Procopius' Work as Agent for BFBS in Jerusalem

Procopius began as Agent for BFBS during James Connor's visit to Jerusalem in the spring of 1820.[12] According to information I have received (cf. note 3), Procopius died in 1823 and was buried on July 8 on Mount Zion. I am, however, doubtful about the year 1823.

It is certain that Procopius is alive in June 1822, when Joseph Wolff concludes his first visit to Jerusalem. Wolff's second visit to Jerusalem takes place from April 25 to July 17, 1823. As far as I can see, there is no mention of Procopius' death in Wolff's published journals from the 1823 visit. If Procopius died while Wolff was in Jerusalem, it seems unthinkable that he should not have mentioned it.

Add to this what William Jowett writes on December 2, 1823, after a visit to the Monastery of the Holy Cross, Jerusalem, where "considerable expense has very recently been bestowed, in suitably furnishing iron railings, and other accommodations." And Jowett continues: "This was the work of the late Procopius, Superintendent of this Patriarchate. He was a man of great ability and spirit; and he flourished at a time when prosperity filled the Greek Coffers with opulent resources. His death, about

10 Neophytos' dates are according to the Julian calendar, i.e. April 6 = April 18 on the Gregorian (and Parsons') calendar. In 1821 Good Friday fell on April 20 and Easter Sunday on April 22, according to the Gregorian calendar.

11 Neophytos, in *The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* (1938), 66. Cf. also 66–71 about the political pressure and the economic extortion of the Greeks in Jerusalem as a consequence of the Greek revolt.

12 See *Mishkan,* no. 44 (2005), 68–72.

two years ago, was a serious loss to the Bible Society, whose cause he had heartily espoused."[13]

Against this background I venture the guess that Procopius did indeed die in July, not in 1823 but in 1822, which is also the year that Isaac Bird mentions.[14] This means that he functioned as Agent for BFSB for a little more that two years. If he was particularly active in the period leading up to Easter of 1821, and less active in the time after Easter of 1821, it may be connected with the Greek War of Independence and its consequences for the Greeks in Jerusalem. In the following years, no Greek pilgrims came from abroad to Jerusalem.

## Procopius in the Period Between Connor's and Parsons' Visits

Connor left Jerusalem on April 19, 1820. Levi Parsons visited Jerusalem from February 17 to May 8, 1821. Here are a few quotes, on the basis of which it may be deduced that Procopius was an *active* Agent for BFSB in Jerusalem; active meaning that he made things happen.

In the spring of 1820 Procopius received, from Connor, a "considerable portion of the Scriptures" which the latter had brought "for sale or distribution among the Pilgrims and others." Connor gives the precise figures: "83 Arabic Psalters, 2 Arabic Bibles, 3 Arabic Testaments, 34 Greek Testaments: all these he has sold. I gave him also a large quantity of Greek Tracts; these he has distributed."[15]

A few weeks after Connor left Jerusalem, he found, in Beirut, eight cases of Scriptures sent by William Jowett from Alexandria. Some of these are sent to Saide, others to Latichea, and others to Jerusalem.[16]

In 1820 the BFBS is in a position to announce that the Patriarch of Jerusalem (residing in Constantinople, and with whom Dr. Pinkerton had an interesting interview)[17] "has received the 1000 Testaments in Modern Greek, 500 in Ancient and Modern, and 500 Arabic Psalters*,[18] which the Patriarch proposes to distribute among the pilgrims who annually visit the Holy Sepulchre."[19]

Such shipments did not collect dust with Procopius, a fact to which Parsons testifies in connection with a stock-taking of his own Bible distribution (see below):

13 W. Jowett, *Christian Researches in Syria and the Holy Land* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1825), 225–226.

14 Isaac Bird, *Bible Work in Bible Lands* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1872), 339.

15 Connor in Jowett 1825, 430. Cf. *Mishkan,* no. 44 (2005), 68.

16 Connor in Jowett 1825, 447. Cf. *Mishkan,* no. 44 (2005), 72.

17 See *Mishkan,* no. 41 (2004), 27.

18 The asterisk refers to the following note: "The Arabic New Testament, now printing, not being completed, and former editions being out of print, the Society could not for the moment send any thing but the Psalms."

19 BFBS *Sixteenth Report,* 1820, lxix–lxx.

"It will be remembered that, before my arrival, Bibles and Testaments were deposited in the respective monasteries by Procopius. How many have been sold I am not able to say. Procopius has not had time to prepare the account."[20]

Parsons also testifies that in March 1821 Procopius is in contact with Benjamin Barker, the general agent of BFBS in Aleppo. On March 5 Parsons writes: "Procopius, not being able perfectly to understand the Italian, requested me to make a translation. The design of the letter was to aid, by every laudable effort, the distribution of the Holy Scriptures."[21]

In the next article in this series, we shall return to the cooperation between Procopius and Joseph Wolff. But here it is appropriate to mention Wolff's words of appreciation, dated Jerusalem, March 12: "I called on the amiable and zealous Christian, the Rev. – Procopius, undoubtedly the most *active*, most *sincere,* and most *disinterested* promoter of the cause of the British and Foreign Bible Society in this part of the world."[22]

## Levi Parsons and Procopius, Spring 1821

Levi Parsons arrives in Jerusalem on February 17, 1821, beginning an almost three-month long visit.[23] Like other Bible-men, he spends much time on excursions inside and outside Jerusalem. In this article I refrain from dealing with these and with Parsons' descriptions of the various churches' ceremonies.

On his arrival in Jerusalem, Parsons shows his letters of recommendation to Procopius – among them the one he had received from Connor.[24] "Conversation was directed to the exertions which the Protestants are making to promote the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures." The reply he receives is: "We believe the Protestants to be our friends." He is immediately allocated a room: "It is near the Holy Sepulchre, and contains many convenient apartments" [33].[25] The room was probably located in the Greek Patriarchate: "Within 100 feet of my room reside five bishops; viz. of Petra, of Nazareth, of Gaza, of Lydda, of Philadelphia" [37].

20 *Missionary Herald,* 1822, 43; see below.

21 *Missionary Herald*, 1822, 36.

22 Joseph Wolff, *Missionary Journal and Memoir of the Rev. Joseph Wolff, Missionary to the Jews: Comprising His First Visit to Palestine in the Years 1821 & 1822; Edited and Revised by John Bayford, Esq., F.S.A. Second Edition* (London 1827: Macintosh Printer, 1827), 252.

23 Levi Parsons, born July 18, 1792, came to the Levant in January 1820 together with his friend and missionary colleague, Pliny Fisk, sent out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Unfortunately Daniel Oliver Morton, *Memoir of Rev. Levi Parsons*, 1824, has not been available to me. A large amount of the missionaries' journals and letters, or extracts from these, were published in *Missionary Herald.* In order to avoid a large number of notes I have inserted the page references from *Missionary Herald,* volume 1822, in square brackets in my text.

24 See *Mishkan,* no. 44 (2005), 75.

25 The Russian consul in Jaffa, George Mostras, had offered Parsons a room, "which he has under his own direction, in a monastery at Jerusalem"; cf. *Missionary Herald,* 1821, 302.

Parsons' close contact with Procopius is evident in the following overview:

> *February 18:* "After breakfast, Procopius called upon me, repeated his willingness to aid me to the extent of his power, and bade me welcome to all the privileges of the monastery" [33].
> *February 20:* "I presented to Procopius an excellent copy of the Persian Testament, translated by the much lamented Henry Martyn. He read portions of it with fluency, and thanked me for the donation" [33].
> *March 3:* "Gave to Procopius 100 tracts, to be distributed among the priests and pilgrims" [36].
> *March 5:* Parsons translates, as already mentioned, a letter from Benjamin Barker to Procopius [36].
> *March 17:* "Procopius gave me permission to enter the church of the Holy Sepulchre, for the purpose of quietly observing the different apartments while the pilgrims were absent" [37].
> *March 19:* "Visited Procopius. He gave it as his opinion, that there are in Jerusalem 10,000 Jews and 2,000 Christians" [37].
> *March 30:* "... obtained permission from Procopius to visit all the Greek monasteries in Jerusalem, and to supply the pilgrims with tracts. A Greek priest was my guide" [38].
> *April 18:* "Attended to the subject of establishing a school at Jerusalem. I proposed to Procopius, that if he would obtain a suitable instructor, I would defray the expense of the school. He replied: 'there is now no person in Jerusalem qualified to instruct such a school as we need'. But he engaged to write to the Patriarch; and afterwards give me more particular information on the subject" [40].

Whether or not Procopius did actually write this letter, I dare not say. What is April 18, 1821 for Parsons is April 6, 1821 for Procopius – the day that brought the news of the Greek rebellion (see above). Procopius now has to involve himself in political issues of international importance, and he has to take measures to ensure that Greek pilgrims in Jerusalem can get out safe and sound.

## Parsons' Work in Jerusalem

On his arrival in Jerusalem, Parsons is pleased to find that his "trunks had arrived in safety" [33].[26] The sources make it clear that he was able to communicate in modern Greek, Italian, and in English, of course. English was used to communicate with Englishmen visiting Jerusalem and with the interpreters he needs for his work. He travels in Turkish dress [44].

From the overview above, it appears that Parsons cultivates and nur-

26 Joseph Wolff arrived in Jerusalem in 1822, as we shall show in part V, with very few Bibles in his luggage.

tures his relationship to Procopius and establishes good contacts with Greek Orthodox priests. Before taking any steps, he consistently obtains permission from Procopius. The same strategy is used in his dealings with the Armenians. An example of this is when Parsons, having talked to the Armenian Patriarch on February 20, leaves with permission to sell Testaments to Armenian pilgrims and even hires a pilgrim to assist him with this [34]. During a visit to the Armenian convent he "left three Testaments for sale" [37]. In the library of the Syriac church he sees "a few Syrian printed Testaments, deposited there by the Rev. Mr. Connor" [38].

In connection with his visit in the Catholic convent on March 12, he cautiously takes care not to annoy the Superior: "I did not take with me Testaments, as I knew the Catholics were decidedly hostile to the distribution of the Holy Scriptures among pilgrims" [37].

This caution pays off, for on April 2 he can introduce himself "for the president of the convent in Bethlehem" with a letter "from the Latin convent in Jerusalem." "At dinner, the subject of distributing the Scriptures was introduced." He [the Superior] replied, "the Arabic Psalters, which the English have sent here, is a correct translation, word for word. Also, the Italian Testament, translated by Antonio Martini, cannot be censured. But the Arabic Bibles sent here, we Catholics do not approve of" [38–39].[27]

On April 10 Parsons gives a preliminary account of his visits in Jerusalem: "Have now visited thirteen Greek monasteries, one Catholic, one Armenian, one Syrian, and one Coptic, within the walls of Jerusalem. Distributed in all, including the Church of St. Constantine, 1,000 tracts" [40].[28] The primary purpose of these visits is to distribute tracts.

*Distribution of Religious Tracts*

Few Bibles or Testaments are placed in the visited monasteries, which house the pilgrims. Parsons is very explicit about the main purpose of these visits: all who can read should be offered these tracts [39].[29] He thinks they have achieved the goal concerning the distribution of *Greek* tracts, but adds: "I hope that we shall be able to afford the same kind of instruction to Russians, Armenians, and Copts, which we have now done to Greeks" [39]. He emphasizes that these tracts have been sent in every direction from Jerusalem and will have an impact wherever they go: "In every instance, the tracts have been received not only without hesitation, but with a smile of gratitude. Bishops have aided their circulation. All have rejoiced to carry so sacred a present to their friends" [43].

27 The Bibles which the Protestant Bible-men distributed did not include the Old Testament apocrypha.

28 The visits to the Greek monasteries are done in two days: the first six take place on March 30 [38]; the last seven on April 10 [39–40].

29 The main part of these tracts were probably "Reading the Scriptures," with passages "from the work of Chrysostom," adapted to modern Greek by Parsons and Fisk and printed in 5,000 copies. Similarly they had translated "The End of Time" by Dr. Watts; cf. *Missionary Herald,* 1821, 67.

On the outward as well as the homeward voyage Parsons distributed tracts among his fellow passengers and wherever the boat put in.[30]

*Distribution of Holy Scriptures*

As a Bible-man it is, naturally, Parsons' task to sell and distribute Bibles and New Testaments. But not unreservedly. When it comes to giving a Testament *gratis,* Parsons is the cautious one among the Bible-men of his time. On the outward journey, the English consul at Limassol, Cyprus, made a request "in behalf of some poor Christians in the vicinity for two Greek Testaments." Parsons gives them, but with conditions which give us a good indication of Parsons' general attitude:

> I mentioned to him that it was not agreeable to the wishes of the members of the Bible Society, that Testaments should be permitted to remain useless, but that they should be constantly read. He [the consul] assured me, that he would accompany the Testaments with a letter, and the wishes of the donors would be strictly regarded.[31]

Neither does Parsons throw Bibles or Bible parts about in Jerusalem. This can be deduced from the following:

1. On March 13, 1821, Parsons writes to his friend and missionary colleague Pliny Fisk: "I have sold two Greek Testaments, one Persian, one Italian, and one Armenian in Jerusalem" [302]. Not exactly impressive sales figures after almost a month in Jerusalem.

2. On May 5, 1821 – three days before his departure from Jerusalem – Parsons makes the following statement:

| | |
|---|---|
| Since my arrival in Jerusalem, | |
| I have sold Arabic Psalters | 99 copies |
| Sold Greek Testaments since leaving Syria | 41 copies |
| - Persian Testaments, (quarto). | 2 copies |
| - Armenian Testaments, | 7 copies |
| - Italian Testament, | 1 copy |
| Gave away, where there was a prospect of | |
| usefulness, Greek, | 11 copies |
| French, Italian, Persian, Armenian, | 9 copies |

An account is made of a total of 170 copies [43].

The account is not as precise as one could wish. On his voyage from Smyrna to Jaffa, at least 12 Greek Testaments are sold or given as presents.[32]

30 *Missionary Herald,* 1821, 300–303; 1822, 214–219. So on his departure from Jerusalem, Parsons still has tracts in his luggage, but hardly Scriptures for sale or distribution.

31 *Missionary Herald,* 1821, 302.

32 *Missionary Herald,* 1821, 300–303.

Concerning distribution in Jaffa, on February 12, 1821, Parsons writes that he had "an opportunity to distribute books in the Greek monastery and to dispose of several Greek Testaments" [18]. At least a handful of copies are given as presents in Jerusalem. A rough calculation shows that in Jerusalem, Parsons sold or gave away 50–55 Testaments in non-Arabic languages and 99 Arabic Psalters *at the maximum*.

The distribution of Armenian Testaments is mainly done through an Armenian pilgrim, and Parsons cannot meet the demand. "Repeated, and earnest applications were made for Armenian Testaments; but it was not in my power to procure them" [43]. He may have used local Greek Orthodox priests as middlemen when selling Greek and Arabic Bible parts. When Bibles and Testaments are not distributed to the Greek monasteries, the reason is that Procopius has already done so (see above). Parsons does not seem to have obtained Bibles from Procopius, perhaps because Procopius at that time has none left.

Parsons is, however, not completely satisfied with his own work. On May 7, the day before his departure from Jerusalem, he writes, "If I had been better furnished with Bibles and tracts, I might, by the divine blessing, have greatly extended my usefulness" [19]. But the number of sold Bibles is not Parsons' only success criterion for his work as a Bible-man in Jerusalem. He attaches more importance to the fact that he has been able to read and study the Scriptures with local priests and with pilgrims.

*Reading the Scriptures*

Parsons undoubtedly finds great gratification in being a Bible-reading Bible-man. Those he reads and studies with are local Greek Orthodox priests and pilgrims. In his journal there are numerous references to such Bible-reading. Already on February 24, 1821, it is reported: "A priest came to my room to read with me the Holy Scriptures" [35]. And on March 22 he writes: "In the morning, one of the pilgrims, with whom I read the Scriptures almost every day …" [37].

Parsons also makes himself available when a Greek priest requests help in studying the English language. He makes no secret of the fact that he may also benefit from this: "This will give me opportunity to institute many important inquiries, and to obtain valuable information" [35]. The New Testament is, of course, the textbook when two ecclesiastics ask him to instruct them in Italian. "They read with me in the Italian Testament" [37]. The following entry from March 22 indicates the importance Parsons attaches to such reading:

> Four persons have been at my room to read the Scriptures today. The priests encourage me in this employment. If, then, a missionary can reside here with no other employment than to read the Scriptures with pilgrims, not uttering a word respecting Catholics, Greeks, or Turks, a great work might be accomplished; – a work, which would impart infinite joy to the friends of this mission, and guide many

> souls to eternal life. From the observations I have made, I am led to believe, that reading the Scriptures is one of the most effectual methods to diffuse the spirit of piety; – a method to which God has often added a peculiar blessing. [37]

On his outward voyage, he had read Acts chapter 20 aloud to his fellow passengers on the ship while they passed between Samos and ancient Melitus, and when they were passing Patmos, the epistles to the seven churches.[33] And he had given an Armenian a New Testament: "He began to read it aloud to those who could understand, and during several days this was his constant employment" [17]. During the voyage back from Palestine, Parsons writes:

> A voyage to and from Jerusalem, in company with pilgrims, is attended with many things unpleasant; but, without doubt, affords the best advantages for giving instruction, and for gaining an extensive influence … The reading of the Scriptures is, perhaps, the most effectual method of doing good at Jerusalem. In this respect, the time from Christmas to the Passover, is invaluable. Multitudes, and among them men of influence and literature, from almost every part of the world, are literally assembled in one place; and the information they receive will be communicated to thousands of souls. This station I view as one of the most important that can be selected, and one, which cannot be relinquished, without criminality on the part of the Christian community. [215–216]

## Melchior Tschoudy – The "Fourth" Bible-man in Jerusalem

While Parsons is in Jerusalem, the next Protestant Bible-man turns up. On April 6 Parsons writes:

"A Swiss clergyman arrived with Bibles and Testaments. He informed me, that he has disposed of many Testaments, and with prospects of usefulness. He designs, after the Passover, to go to Aleppo" [39].

Parsons does not give the name of this – in our reckoning – fourth Protestant Bible-man visiting Jerusalem. Is it possible to identify him? Yes! Without doubt it must be Melchior Tschoudy.[34]

In May 1820 Tschoudy had been sent out as the London Jews' Society's (LJS) first representative in the Levant. His task was to report on the local situation and to distribute Bibles to Jews. He does not take up much place in LJS's annals.[35] In the London committee's eyes he was a disappointment. He did not report often enough, and when he did, the committee

33 *Missionary Herald,* 1821, 300–301.

34 In contemporary sources the name also appears with the spelling Tschudy, Tschudi, or Tschoudi.

35 See e.g. W. T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, From 1809 to 1908* (London: 1908), 118.

felt it to be insufficient. In addition, some of his monetary transactions in Malta and Alexandria had made the committee in London suspicious.[36]

But Parsons' information helps to throw light on Tschoudy's activities in Palestine, and it contradicts Sherman Lieber's statement that Tschoudy visited Jerusalem while Parsons was not there.[37] But not only that: however Tschoudy's activities are to be assessed in the light of history, Parsons confirms that Tschoudy at least *tried* to carry out his task, namely to meet Jews and offer them the New Testament.

On April 7, 1821, Parsons and Tschoudy visit the Jewish synagogues "situated a little west of the site of Solomon's temple." Parsons writes:

> A few Jews were present performing evening service. There are four synagogues in the same enclosure; and others in other parts. We made inquiries with regard to the number of Jews in Jerusalem. Some replied 3,000; others said, "No, there are not three thousand," "But why" they replied, "do you ask us this question?" Because, we wish to gain particular information with regard to Christians, Jews, and Turks, in every place. We showed them a Testament in Hebrew. They examined it; but dared not purchase it, without the consent of the Rabbins [sic]. We left a few tracts, which they examined; but not without hesitation. They treated us with respect; and invited us to come again. [39]

Whether or not Tschoudy and/or Parsons later accepted this invitation is an open question. Sherman Lieber's assertion that Tschoudy "distributed Bibles to [Jerusalem's] Jewish residents" gives the impression that Tschoudy had a certain success among the Jews of Jerusalem. But the assertion is not supported with references to sources and must be taken with a grain of salt.

But Tschoudy's and Parsons' visits to synagogues are relevant for the question of Parsons' contact – or lack thereof– with the Jews of Jerusalem.

## Parsons and the Jews of Jerusalem

Apart from this visit to a synagogue, Parsons' published journals in *Missionary Herald* only mention that he attended a Jewish burial on April 17; they contain no information about work among the Jews of Jerusalem. In striking contrast to this are Procopius' words about Parsons,

36 It is my hope that, in another context, I may be able to return to Tschoudy, his activities in the Levant, and the tense relationship between him and LJS, which ended with LJS breaking off their cooperation with him. Was Tschoudy "a crook," as Yaron Perry claims with reference to Joseph Wolff, in *British Mission to the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Palestine* (London – Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 2003), 17? For the moment I will leave the question open.

37 Sherman Lieber writes: "While 'brothers' Parsons and Fisk were in Smyrna, Melchior Tschoudi, a Swiss pastor affiliated with the LJS, toured Jerusalem and distributed Bibles to its Jewish residents"; *Mystics and Missionaries: The Jews in Palestine 1799–1840* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 160.

conveyed by Joseph Wolff in 1822: "he [Procopius] spoke with high regard of Levi Parsons, and told me that that gentleman went every day among the Jews until he left Jerusalem."[38]

Such a description of Parsons' activities among Jerusalem's Jews cannot, however, be deduced from his published journals. That he may have had more contact with them than his journals indicate is possible, but it requires closer examination. In Parsons' list of distributed Scriptures in Jerusalem there is no mention of *Hebrew* Scriptures.[39] The sources make it clear that Parsons saw himself as a Bible-man among "the heathen," and that he hoped to make Jerusalem his base for this work [111].

## Departure from Jerusalem

Taking stock of his time in Jerusalem, Parsons writes on May 7, 1821 – the day before his departure: "My health I think was never better for three months in succession," and he looks forward to returning [19].

On his arrival in Jerusalem, it had been his plan "to pass the heat of the summer on Mount Lebanon," a plan which had to be abandoned in "consequence of civil commotions, which had commenced there." Next he had planned to spend the summer in Bethlehem, a plan which also had to be given up because of the breakout of the Greek War of Independence. He decides to travel to Smyrna, and together with Pliny Fisk to prepare tracts in different languages for distribution to pilgrims, "who shall attend the next annual celebration" in Jerusalem [44]. On the return journey he is working on a tract for pilgrims, to be called "The Holy Week" [217].

The journey from Jerusalem to Jaffa normally took two days, but due to the political situation the journey is made in haste, in only one day. A few hours before Parsons' arrival in Jaffa, on May 8, the Russian Consul "fled secretly from the city, and set sail for Constantinople." On May 9, Parsons leaves Jaffa in a boat with, among others, "the residing priest of the church at Gethsemane, and a multitude of pilgrims" [214]. During the voyage the war is experienced at close quarters. On June 18 he is informed "that sixty pilgrims had been beheaded at the port of Rhodes," which inspires this comment: "Very probably, among them were some, to whom I have read the holy Scriptures, and who are, in this awful manner, called to give an account" [216].

On June 30, 1821, he arrives at Syra, a small island about 100 miles south of Smyrna [44]. "Syra is under the special protection of the French flag, and affords a safe retreat from the noise and alarms of the present war" [216]. On August 20 he writes: "If things should remain as they now are, I think I shall return to Palestine by the first favorable opportunity, after the heat of the season is a little past. I cannot think of being absent from so

38 Wolff, 1827, 256.

39 Sherman Lieber, 1992, 161, notes that Parsons lacked "a common language with the Jews." This is undoubtedly true, and therefore Lieber should ascribe a more important role to the unidentified "Swiss clergyman" than he does at the above-mentioned synagogue visit, in which he describes Parsons as the principal character.

interesting a field, longer than is absolutely necessary. From Christmas to the Passover there may be opportunities of doing much good" [44].

But this was not to be. At Syra he lies critically ill from September 5 to October 1, 1821. On November 7 he writes: "I have no correct recollection of any thing which was administered for my recovery." But in spite of this, Jerusalem is still on his mind. He writes on that very day: "I am not without a strong hope of arriving at Jerusalem before Christmas" [111].

But this was not to be either. On December 3, 1821, Parsons is reunited with Pliny Fisk in Smyrna – almost a year after they had taken leave of each other [218].

**Author info:**
Kai Kjær-Hansen (D.D., Lund University) is General Editor of Mishkan and serves as International Coordinator of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE).
lcje-kai@post4.tele.dk

## Parsons' Last Journey

Parsons does not regain his health in Smyrna. On January 8, 1822, Parsons and Fisk, on the recommendation of the doctors, set out for Alexandria in the hope that a sea voyage and a milder climate may encourage healing. They have been informed that Joseph Wolff is on his way to Jerusalem, and that he hopes that one of them may join him "as soon as possible, in order to be at Jerusalem together" [178].

When the ship arrives at Alexandria on January 15, 1822, two men have to carry the sick Parsons ashore in his chair. His condition deteriorates, and he dies and is buried on February 10, 1822 – before reaching the age of 30 [218–219].

## Concluding Remarks

Procopius occupies a central place in the first "organized" Bible-work in Jerusalem. As we shall see in the next article, he also assisted Joseph Wolff in 1822. No matter how Melchior Tschoudy's work as a Bible-man is assessed, he is nevertheless one of those who *tried* to make contact with the Jews of Jerusalem.

Levi Parsons was the first Protestant Bible-man who intended to make Jerusalem the base for his work among the heathen. He further developed the good relationship to Procopius and the local Greek Orthodox priests, something succeeding Protestant missionaries benefited from. As a Bible-man he experienced his greatest joy when he read the Scriptures with people. According to the published journals, he does not seem to have had any noteworthy contact with Jerusalem's Jews, but this is a matter that requires further examination.

Joseph Wolff's arrival in Jerusalem in March 1822 brought much change; this will be explored in the next article in this series.