

MESSIANIC JEWS AND
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:
REFLECTIONS ON THE ECCLESIOLOGY
OF MARK S. KINZER

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“If the Church were to reject Israel, she would be
guilty of rejecting her own mother.”



1. THE FUNDAMENTAL MESSAGE OF THE WORK

Perhaps the best kept secret within the ecumenical activity of the Catholic Church is her relationship with Messianic Jews. The cause for silence on the subject seems obvious: the Vatican does not want to risk the promising process of growing cooperation and even friendship between the Catholic Church and what we would like to call mainline Judaism. For this reason, every contact with Messianic Jews is unofficial, yet there has been an informal relationship and discussion going on for many years.

For most of her history, Israel has existed in the buffer zone of competing empires, and was constantly threatened by subjugation and destruction. Since the end of the fourth century up to the creation of the sovereign state of Israel, she endured

discrimination and persecution by Christians and an attempted annihilation by the neo-pagan Nazi regimes of Germany and its allies. We should not be surprised, then, that many current Jewish religious leaders suspect that Messianic Judaism is a veiled attempt to weaken and compromise Jewish identity and culture. As a conservative rabbi endowed with unassailable ecumenical credentials wrote some years ago, “We have no antagonism against Christians since they openly acknowledge their defining differences from Judaism, but the Messianic Jews are wolves in sheep’s clothing.” Their claim to be Jews is only a cover, a mask to hide their Christian identity from prospective “converts.” Evidently, the Messianic Jews deny these allegations, and point to their rekindled zeal for keeping the Torah.

This sad conflict may explain why, so far, the Holy See has not established any official committee for dialogue between Catholics and Messianic Jews, and was satisfied with establishing an informal conversation with the representatives of Messianic Judaism.¹ In this unofficial dialogue, the recently published book by Rabbi Dr. Mark S. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* is, to my knowledge, the first work which deals in depth with the convergence of Catholic theology and Messianic Judaism.² Kinzer has been closely involved with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal group in Ann Arbor, Michigan for about twenty years, and wrote his dissertation on a theme treating Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament. He knows both the Jewish and Catholic minds from the inside, and is able to hold the dialogue on a precise theological level. His book is not only a treatise, but also a passionate story of his own existential quest for reconciliation between Judaism and the Catholic Church.

Kinzer carefully traces the stages and teachings of what he calls a “theological revolution” in the relationship of the Catholic Church toward Judaism. He begins with analyzing the text on Judaism in the conciliar decree *Nostra aetate*, and then explains the statements and actions of popes John Paul II and

1. Recently, the Holy See relaxed its stand on secrecy, and no longer objects to openly discussing the topic.

2. Mark S. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015).

Benedict XVI. He also draws on the theology of the late Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Aaron Lustiger, a Jewish convert who always identified himself as a “fulfilled Jew.”

Kinzer’s book may be described as an extended commentary on John Paul II’s statement in his speech at the Great Synagogue of Rome:

[T]he Church of Christ discovers her “bond” with Judaism by “searching into her own mystery.” The Jewish religion is not “extrinsic” to us, but in a certain way “intrinsic” to our own religion.³

If this is true, Kinzer argues, we need to do more than simply admit that Jesus was a Jewish individual with a Jewish ancestry and culture. Rather, his Jewishness must be shown to be an essential characteristic of his person, mission, and teaching, as well as an essential quality of his Church. Therefore, Kinzer advocates a Christ-centered Israel-Church ecclesiology rooted in an Israel-Christology. For instance, Jesus is king of the world as the crucified and resurrected Messiah-King of Israel; he is the Savior of the world as the Savior of Israel.

Kinzer sees the intrinsic link between the mystery of Israel and the Church in the living person of Jesus: “Jesus is as much the mystery hidden in the depth of the Jewish people and the Jewish way of life as he is the mystery of the *ecclesia*” (174). The rest of his ecclesiology derives from this insight. It follows that the Jewish faith and the Jewish way of life are directed toward Christ, even though mainline Jews without faith in Jesus do not recognize the christic dimension of their existence. Therefore, just as Israel remains wounded as long as she does not recognize her eschatological renewal in Jesus, *so is the Church wounded without Israel*. As a remedy, Kinzer recommends a reconciliation of the two communities in the one body of the Messiah, as the *ecclesia ex circumcisione* and the *ecclesia ex gentibus*, attested to in a fresco of the ancient Roman basilica Santa Sabina. Although Kinzer uses the term “the one body of Christ” to include both Jewish and Gentile believers, he prefers to write about the two “being in one another,” after the analogy of the mutual indwell-

3. John Paul II, *Spiritual Pilgrimage: Texts on Jews and Judaism*, ed. Eugene J. Fischer and Leon Klenicki (New York: Crossroads, 1995), 63.

ing (*perichoresis*) of the divine Persons (172–89). At times, however, the phrase *ecclesia ex circumcisione* in Kinzer’s work does not refer to Messianic Jews, but to genealogical Israel who has not yet recognized her own christological mystery.⁴ Yet they are in one another, just as Jesus is present in both (174–75). The role of the body of Christ in this context of Messianic Israel is to be the visible-tangible sacramental sign of this mutual indwelling of the two peoples.

Kinzer also reflects on the “sacramental signs” of genealogical Israel. These are analogous to the sacraments of the Catholic Church, in that they are external signs of a mediating contact with God. He lists five: Holy People/genealogical Israel; Holy Time/the Sabbath; Holy Place/the Land of Promise and the City of the Great King; Holy Deeds/the *mitzvot*; and Holy Word/the Torah.

Kinzer also analyzes the meaning of type, a favorite Christian way of relating the Old Testament to Christ:

The limitation [of typology] arises because typology normally concerns two distinct realities—type and antitype—whose relationship is unidirectional rather than reciprocal. Displaying a pattern that derives from its antitype, the type draws its essential import and power from that which it anticipates or embodies; in contrast, the antitype has its import and power independent of the type. Thus Joshua, as the one who leads his people to its messianic inheritance. Joshua is like Jesus, and one might even say that the pre-incarnate Jesus was himself active in Joshua, but we would not say that Joshua was active in and through Jesus. (164)

Kinzer faults the “unidirectionality” of the relationship between the type and the antitype, as if the traditional doctrine would discard the type once it had shed light on the antitype it foreshadows. He does not, however, clarify what he means by the enduring presence of the type in the antitype; to take the above example, it is not clear how he thinks Joshua can be active through Jesus.

At the end, I must admit to the reader that the work is so much more detailed and contains many more insights than I am able to explain in this brief summary of its fundamental issues.

4. I use “mainline Jews” and “genealogical Israel” as synonyms.

2. INVITATION TO DIALOGUE

Most Catholic theologians, I assume, will receive Kinzer's work with as much appreciation as Cardinal Schönborn has shown in his foreword to the book. It is a great joy that a competent Messianic Jewish theologian who knows and values the Catholic tradition would like to work toward communion with us, a communion which acknowledges and integrates the unique contribution Messianic Israel brings to our understanding of Christ and the Church. With John Paul II, we need to recognize that Israel's mystery is "intrinsic" to the mystery of the Church; with Hans Urs von Balthasar, we must acknowledge that Israel's non-acceptance of the Gospel is an inherent birth defect of the Church; and with Mark Kinzer, we must realize that the Church remains wounded without Israel.

In areas of full agreement, such as the biblical foundations, I will add some more corroborating evidence. Where I disagree to a certain extent, such as the history of Jewish-Christian relations, I will attempt to present my reasons. In areas in which Kinzer's formulations admit a variety of conclusions, such as the relationship between Old and New Testaments and the notions of Israel-Christology and Israel-Ecclesiology, I will offer interpretations of my own. Finally, I will offer some tentative proposals for further discussion.

2.1. Israel's destiny according to the New Testament

a) St. Paul

In Romans 9–11, Paul outlines the complex relationship between Israel and the Church, as well as Israel's past, present, and future in the light of his christocentric view of history. Even though "a hardening has come upon Israel in part" on account of their unbelief, this will last only "until the full number of the Gentiles comes in, and then all Israel will be saved" (11:25–26). In the meantime, Israel is both an enemy of the Christians with respect to the Gospel and "beloved" by God "because of the patriarchs" (11:28). The Israel of the Old Testament is the "noble olive tree" and the Gentile Christians are the "wild olive shoots" who are grafted onto it, nourished by the rich sap of the root which sup-

ports them (11:17–24). Even the branches that were broken off on account of their unbelief may be grafted on again if they do not remain in unbelief (11:20, 23). Paul seals his affirmation of God’s enduring love for Israel by stating that “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (11:29).

The apostle to the Gentiles, however, is not the only New Testament author who illustrates the enduring importance and final “acceptance” and salvation of “all Israel” (Rom 11:15, 26).⁵

b) The four gospels

The four gospels affirm or at least imply, each in its own way, the enduring presence of Israel and its ultimate salvation at the end of history. Matthew, written for Jewish Christians, draws a stark picture of Israel’s unbelieving *elite* by presenting the parable of the wicked tenants of the vineyard and denouncing the sins of the scribes and Pharisees in a passionate discourse on the terrible judgment awaiting them and the Temple (21:33–45; 23:1–36). Yet after his sevenfold woe of condemnation, Jesus finishes his address by announcing, “I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (23:39). In Matthew, unlike in Luke, this prophecy cannot refer to Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem, since he has already entered the city. Placed before the eschatological discourse in Matthew, it must mean his coming at the end of this age.

Moreover, the angel’s message to Joseph before the birth of Jesus, “[Y]ou are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (1:21), is a divine promise that must ultimately be fulfilled. God’s design to save Israel is irrevocable. In fact, his saving plan for Israel is revealed paradoxically by the shouting of the “whole people” before Pilate: “His blood upon us and upon our children” (27:25).⁶ The bloodthirsty crowd, of

5. It is not clear what “acceptance” (*proslēmpsis*) means in the text: acceptance into the Kingdom of God, into the Church, or Israel’s acceptance of the Gospel?

6. The offer of salvation to Jews first is emphasized by the fact that Pilate hypocritically washes his hands “from the blood of this man” (27:24) while “the whole people” of Israel acknowledge responsibility for Jesus’ death. At the same time, if some of them reject this extraordinary offer of divine love, the punishment will be also extraordinarily severe. Cf. T. C. Cargal, “His Blood Be upon Us and upon Our Children’: A Matthean Double Entendre,” *New Testament Studies* (January 1991): 101–12.

course, is unaware that the blood of Jesus cries out not for vengeance, but for mercy and forgiveness. The saving power of his blood had been already manifested by Jesus to the disciples at the Last Supper, when he pronounced the words over the chalice: “For this is my blood of the covenant which is to be poured out for many unto the remission of sins” (26:28). In the “for many,” all humankind is included; yet prior to the Gentiles, Jesus’ saving blood is offered to, and falls upon, Israel.⁷

As seen above, in Matthew’s gospel Jesus predicts that Jerusalem will accept Jesus as her Messiah at the end. Matthew, however, suggests even more: in harmony with the early *kerygma* (preaching), the evangelist sees in Jesus the embodiment of the final, eschatological Israel. This needs some explanation. The Servant in the four Songs of Isaiah points to an individual and also to collective Israel (Is 49:3). The Son of Man in Daniel 7 also designates both an individual heavenly being who accedes to the throne of the Ancient of Days (7:13–14) and the “holy ones of the Most High” (7:18, 21–22), the collective Israel of the end times. This does not create any confusion in Hebrew thought, since those who represent the people, such as ancestors, kings, and prophets, can naturally be identified with the people; they embody Israel in themselves, as it were. If, then, Jesus is the Servant who through his suffering has become the glorious Son of Man, he is not merely one of the Israelites but also the new, eschatological Israel. Hence we can understand from a new perspective that, through being called back from Egypt (Hos 11:1, interpreted by Mt 2:15), his temptations, and also his public ministry, Jesus re-lives the historic experience of Israel. This identification of Jesus with Israel is already prepared in the ancient *kerygma*, quoted by Paul in 1 Cor 15:3–7. In this perspective, far from being contrived, the application of Hos 6:1–3 to the resurrection of Jesus on the third day (Hos 6:4) sheds light on the mysterious link between the destiny of Israel and that of Jesus: God becomes man as the eschatological Israel, and the resurrection of Christ

7. Paul also respects this *heilsgeschichtliche* priority which follows from God’s plan: “[The Gospel] is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then the Greek” (Rom 1:16). The same priority of Israel is expressed by Paul’s way of acting in Acts: he visits first the synagogue in every city, and goes over to the Gentiles only after the Jews refuse to listen to him.

is the resurrection of Israel of which the prophet Hosea speaks.⁸

Even though addressed to a Hellenistic audience, the first two chapters of Luke's gospel represent a traditional Jewish perspective: Mary's son will sit on the throne of his father David and rule over the house of Jacob forever (1:32–33).⁹ Only the prophecy of Simeon opens up a universal perspective. The child is destined to be revealed to the Gentiles, but he remains the glory of God's people, Israel (2:32).

Although by the end of Luke–Acts the center of the Church is transferred from Jerusalem to Rome (after the persecutions in Jerusalem caused Peter's departure and Paul's imprisonment), the divine promise, delivered by Gabriel and alluded to in Simeon's prophecy, was never revoked. In fact, when the apostles ask Jesus before his Ascension, "Lord, is it at this time that you are going to restore the kingship to Israel?," Jesus does not reprimand them for their naïve question, but simply refuses to reveal the time of this *apokatastasis* (restoration): "It is not for you to know the time or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority" (Acts 1:6–7). Thus not even the universalistic Jesus of Luke excludes the kingship of Israel from the end stage of salvation history.

The fourth gospel has long been accused of an anti-Jewish tendency, as it frequently equates the enemies of Jesus with the "Jews." The frequent identification is indeed a fact, and it reflects the situation around the end of the first century, when Christians were everywhere excommunicated from the synagogues and Christianity was treated as a dangerous heresy. Nevertheless, the gospel of John, like all the New Testament documents (and even more forcefully than some of them), insists that everything Jesus did and suffered fulfills the Scriptures of Israel: Abraham rejoiced when he saw his day (8:56–57), Moses wrote about him (5:45–46), and Isaiah saw his glory (12:41). His last word on the Cross, *tetelestai*, "it has been completed" or "achieved," means in context that he has fulfilled not only the will of his Father,

8. C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (New York: Fontana Books, 1965), 103; Roch Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: The Fundamentals of Christology*, new ed. (Staten Island: Alba House, 2002), 157–58.

9. Marcion was so disturbed by the Jewish character of the infancy narratives that he cut out the first two chapters of Luke's gospel.

but also the Scriptures.¹⁰ Even though the Jews are often characterized as enemies, Jesus expresses the greatest praise found in all four gospels for a Jew, calling Nathanael “a true Israelite in whom there is no guile”(1:47). Moreover, Jesus counts himself among the Jews when he tells the Samaritan woman, “You worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand,” and he gives the cause for this knowledge by saying what no other gospel does: “because salvation is from the Jews” (4:22).

A most surprising but often overlooked feature of this gospel concerns the kingship of Jesus. At a superficial glance, it appears that Jesus’ kingdom is completely different from the Davidic kingship because it is not of this world. In fact, Jesus is not, anywhere in John, labeled “son of David,” nor is his kingdom that of David. Yet the evangelist uses the device of inclusion to emphasize that Jesus, as Son of God and Son of Man, is the messianic king of Israel. The exclamation of Nathanael, the guileless Israelite, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel,” is echoed and intensified by the shouts of a “big crowd” which greets Jesus when he solemnly enters Jerusalem as the king prophesied by Zechariah: “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel” (1:49; 12:13). Of course, Nathanael and the crowd do not understand the nature of Jesus’ kingship, which is gradually revealed in Jesus’ trial, Passion, and Resurrection. The hearing before Pilate centers on the question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Aware that Jesus has no political ambition, Pilate and the soldiers nonetheless mock his kingly claim not only when they dress him in a purple cloak and place a crown of thorns on his head (something which is also described in the Synoptics), but also when Pilate seats Jesus on his own bench of judgment and declares, “Behold your king!”¹¹ The title fixed above his head on the Cross, written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, reads “Jesus the Nazorean, the king of the Jews.” When the chief priests protest the wording, Pilate remains firm: “What I have written, I have written” (19:19–22). This presentation is

10. Recall John 19:28, which interprets Jesus’ last cry: “After this Jesus, aware that all had been fulfilled (*tetelestai*), so that the Scripture might be fulfilled (*teleiothe*), said, ‘I thirst.’”

11. The Jerusalem Bible and the New American Bible translate *ekathisen* as transitive.

a fascinating example of what exegetes call “Johannine irony.” On the level of what this world can understand, Jesus is seated on Pilate’s bench and enthroned upon the Cross out of mockery. Those who contemplate the scene with the eyes of faith, however, know that Pilate and the soldiers, unknowing and unwilling, are carrying out God’s design: Jesus is truly enthroned on the Cross as the king of Israel. At the same time, the inscription in the three languages (which, from a contemporary Jewish viewpoint, encompassed the entire world) proclaims to all peoples the universal kingship of Jesus. The essential point here is that Jesus is made universal king *as* king of Israel. Having fulfilled God’s will to the end, Jesus is enthroned on the Cross to rule over all creation. In a similar way as is depicted in Matthew’s gospel, the universal king of Israel embodies in himself the eschatological Israel, since in John as well Jesus is the mysterious Son of Man who in Daniel represents “the saints of the most high.” Thus also in the gospel of John, the mission of Israel is fulfilled in Jesus, the messianic king and Son of Man, to whom is given “dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him” (Dn 7:14, 18).

Regarding the New Testament’s appraisal of Israel, we may conclude that her mission culminates in Jesus. The unbelief of “official” Israel is experienced as a “great sorrow and constant anguish” by Paul, and lamented over by Jesus (Rom 9:2; Mt 23:37–38), yet none of the New Testament writings consider her unbelief definitive. Moreover, her survival to the end of time is not just one of many possible historical scenarios; it becomes, rather, a necessary part of God’s providential plan of mercy. In this sense, then, Israel has a mission according to the New Testament. God wills Israel’s existence so that after the full number of the Gentiles enters the Church, all Israel may be saved. Briefly, if supersessionism means that God’s promises and covenant were revoked from Israel, the New Testament evidence clearly opposes it.

2.2. Jewish-Christian relations in the history of Christianity

Regarding the history of Jewish–Christian relations, I agree with Kinzer that Vatican II initiated a revolutionary change. This revolution, however, has not imported external elements to the

Christian faith, but rather discovered what had been either forgotten, neglected, or misunderstood within her deposit of revelation.

For the study of the history of Jewish-Christian relations, I propose a joint research project which would attempt to eliminate polemical unilateralism and explore the roots of the mutual hostility whose bitterness, I suspect, derives from its character of a family feud. It is a well-known fact that the closer blood relatives are to each other, the more passionate their fight may become. What I plan here is not a psychological analysis of this bitterness; rather, as a Catholic theologian whose family roots reach back to genealogical Israel, I will attempt to show in what ways “the new age of Jewish-Christian relations” was the providential unfolding in our times of what has always been a more or less latent part of Catholic faith and life.

Resolutely opposing Marcion’s attempt to reject the entire Old Testament, the Church preserved and venerated the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God without which Jesus Christ cannot be understood. While every book of the Old Testament has its own message, the Fathers and medieval theologians were convinced that the ultimate God-intended meaning of the entire Old Testament centers on Jesus Christ. With a more nuanced methodology, contemporary theological exegesis tends in the same direction. What is revealed in the New Testament, the entire mystery of Christ, has already been hidden in the Old. Without the Old Testament, the meaning of the New becomes necessarily distorted when, as history has shown, it is squeezed into a priori categories of individuals and cultures.

The Mass as the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover, the Psalter, which is the bulk of the Church’s official daily prayer, the constantly recurring Hebrew words *Amen* and *Alleluia*: all of these elements of the Jewish faith and tradition keep us firmly rooted in the liturgy of Israel. The liturgical readings and prayers of our most sacred night, the Paschal Vigil, review the history of the world with Israel as an integral part of the Paschal Mystery. The ancient prayer after the fourth reading is perhaps the most eloquent testimony of the anti-supersessionist perspective of the Catholic liturgy; only the Latin original expresses precisely the meaning: *Praesta, ut in Abrahae filios et in israeliticam dignitatem totius mundi transeat multitudo* (Grant that the human beings of the entire world may become the children of Abraham and share in the dignity of Israel).

The Fathers and scholastic theologians have taught that Jewish sacramental rites such as circumcision and sacrifice, if performed in faith in the coming Messiah and redeemer, obtain salvation—not in virtue of the rite itself, but in virtue of the participant's faith in the coming Messiah, expressed in the rite.¹²

At the same time, they were convinced that after the Gospel had been spread through the entire known world, the Jewish rites lost their saving "value," since those who did not recognize in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, must have been motivated by bad faith. The evidence for Jesus' divinity was so overwhelming for the medieval Christian that anyone who denied it could not do so without committing a grave sin. Thus, Christians believed that unbelieving Jews of their age continued what their ancestors had done to Jesus; by rejecting him, they identified themselves with the sins of their fathers. Jews, on the other hand, viewed Christians as willfully rejecting the one God, thereby falling back into polytheism. Anyone who believes that Jesus is God, according to the Jewish mindset, cannot be a monotheist.

Contrary to what most Catholics believe, Mary was not acknowledged as Mother of the Church until the High Middle Ages. It was in fact the Synagogue that had been called the Church's mother in the patristic age. This title shows better than anything else how closely, or rather, intimately, Christians claim to be linked to Israel. The sharp conflict between them takes place, so to speak, within the same family, and family feuds tend to be more acrimonious than conflicts between strangers. Three texts (which stand for many others) show the Church's faithful love and commitment to the salvation of Israel up to the end of the world. The first is from Gregory the Great:

The Synagogue was the Church's mother, for she had her holy evangelists from her; she received from them the word of truth by which she was reborn in faith. Therefore the Church holds fast to her Bridegroom until she will introduce him into the house of her mother (see Sg 8:2). For she does not give up her faith and love [of her Bridegroom] until she leads the Jews to faith.¹³

12. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II, q. 103, a. 2.

13. Gregorius Magnus, *Super Cantica Cant. Expositio* 3:5. Cf. *ibid.*, 5:8.

In a text of Bishop Bruno of Segni (1047–1123), the eschatological salvation of the Synagogue is presented through an allegory of Peter's sick mother-in-law representing the Synagogue, since Peter's wife is the Church, the daughter of the Synagogue:

She lies sick and feverish in Peter's house since, up to this very day, the sick Synagogue stays and lives among Christians. . . . Around the end of the world the Lord will touch her hand and then, once the fever has disappeared, she will rise and serve the Lord (Mt 8:14–15). Touching her hand means that he [the Lord] will approve her works.¹⁴

In Sermon 79 of his *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, Bernard explains the relationship between Synagogue and Church as that of root to branch, mother and daughter:

The branches should not be ungrateful to the root, nor daughters to their mother. The branches should not envy the root since they have drawn [the sap] from the root, nor daughters be envious toward their mother since they sucked her breast.

Just like Gregory the Great, Bernard interprets the words of the bride in Song of Songs 8:2 as the words of the Bride, the Church, to Christ her bridegroom: "I have held on to him and will not let him go until I introduce him into my mother's house and into the bedroom of the one who bore me." Thus, according to Bernard, the Church-Bride is not at all envious of her estranged mother, the Synagogue, but wants to introduce her bridegroom to her:

How could this be that she gives away her spouse, or rather desires her spouse for another? No, this is not the case. Indeed, as a good daughter she desires Him for her mother, but this is not the same as giving Him to her, but rather sharing Him. One [Groom] suffices for both; they, however, will no longer be two but one in Him. He is our peace who makes the two into one, so that there will be one bride and one Bridegroom who is Jesus Christ our Lord.¹⁵

14. Bruno Astensis, Hom. 44, Feria V post Dominicam III Quadragesimae.

15. Bernard, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* LXXIX, 5–6. We also need to acknowledge that there was much friendly contact between certain Chris-

Bernard here (and elsewhere) expresses in a new and passionate way a general patristic belief: Israel is the object of a special providence and will exist until the end of history, when all Israel will be saved. Moreover, Bernard advises Pope Eugene III about the inopportunity of trying to convert the Jews at this time: “For them a determined time has been fixed, which cannot be anticipated.”¹⁶

These beliefs of theologians and Church hierarchy have not prevented Christian mobs from organizing pogroms, lynchings, and murders of Jews. Yet the popes often condemned these abuses. According to rabbi and professor David Dalin, the only state that never expelled the Jews is the Papal States.¹⁷ Pope Gregory X officially states that he offers the Jews “the shield of his protection” following, as he writes, “in the footsteps of our predecessors . . . Callixtus, Eugene, Alexander, Clement, Celestine, Innocent, and Honorius.” Gregory also condemns those Christians “who falsely claim that Jews have secretly and furtively carried away [Christian] children and killed them.”¹⁸ Thus, according to Jewish scholar Robert Chazan, the official policy of the Catholic Church was “moderate toleration.”¹⁹

tians and Jews throughout ancient and medieval history. Many popes had Jewish physicians as their personal doctors. St. Jerome learned Hebrew from the Old Testament. In the Middle Ages, Blessed Stephen Harding, one of the founding abbots of the Cistercian Order, amended the Vulgate translation of his Bible by asking Jewish rabbis for help. Thomas Aquinas studied and used the works of the great Jewish philosopher Maimonides. Thomas himself teaches that after all the pagans chosen for salvation have embraced the faith, all Jews in general (not every individual) will be saved (see *Super Epistolam ad Romanos* II.2).

16. Bernard, *De Consideratione* III 1.2, in *Jesus of Nazareth*, by Benedict XVI (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 2:44.

17. David Dalin, *The Myth of Hitler's Pope* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2005), 18–19.

18. Gregory X, *Letter Against the Blood Libel*, October 7, 1272. Even though the popes consistently defended the Jews from persecution, we must acknowledge that they did insist on discriminatory measures: the Jews had to live in a ghetto, wear special clothing, and were barred from public office and the military. They were free, however, to engage in trade, banking, and medicine.

19. Robert Chazan, “Christian-Jewish Interactions over the Ages,” in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. Tikva Frymer-Kensy et al. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 7–24.

On the other hand, the protection of the Jews by the Church hierarchy coexisted with Church support of repressive measures. For example, the Fourth Lateran Council ruled that Jews could not hold public office, must wear distinctive dress, and could not appear among Christians during the Easter holidays.²⁰

We must mention also the official declaration of the Church in the sixteenth century regarding Jewish guilt, found in the Roman catechism and composed after the Council of Trent:

The guilt in us seems more enormous than in the Jews, since according to the testimony of the same Apostle, “If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8); while we, on the contrary, professing to know him, yet denying him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands on him.²¹

Three false beliefs have justified the Church’s approval and even promotion of unjust laws against the Jewish people. Throughout the centuries, the Church has acted out of the conviction that the Jews are collectively responsible for the execution of Jesus; the Jews of today, according to this logic, are the descendants of those who condemned the Son of God, and thus they share in their forefathers’ guilt. The second misunderstanding was the belief that the truth of Christianity is so evident to everyone that the Jews’ refusal to believe in Christ manifested their bad faith and, therefore, made their rejection of Jesus inexcusable. The third reason was fear: the pastors of souls were afraid that “Jewish error” might compromise the faith of their flock.

In light of this history, Vatican II’s *Nostra aetate* and the words and actions of popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis do not appear unfounded in Catholic thought. Even though supersessionism, which claims the definitive rejection of Israel and its replacement by the Gentile Church of the New Covenant, had been throughout history the prevailing belief of Catholics at large, the Fathers of the Church and her best medi-

20. Fourth Lateran Council, 68–69, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:266–67.

21. *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests* (New York: J. F. Wagner, 1923), 50–61 and 362–65.

eval theologians, as well as the popes, have never succumbed to it. They could not do so, since they all read, and accepted the teachings of, the New Testament and the many testimonies of the Catholic tradition, all of which exclude such a position.

If Israel were definitively replaced, God's promises in the Old Testament, confirmed and perfected in the New, would prove false. Moreover, if the Church were to reject Israel, she would be guilty of rejecting her own mother.

2.3. Israel-Christology

Kinzer reminds us that the notion of corporate personality plays an important role in Hebrew thinking. The people of Israel is not only represented by its leaders or prophets, but in some real sense these individual persons embody the people in themselves. With this background in mind, we can understand that God punishes or rewards the entire nation for the sins or merits of the king. Such corporate personalities include the prophetic figures of the Son of Man in Ezekiel and the Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah. In Jesus' self-understanding, the two figures coalesce into one: he is the Son of Man who has to suffer and give his life as a ransom for many in order to enter into his glory. In addition, the ancient kerygma included in 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 asserts that Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day "according to the Scriptures," which can only refer to Hosea 6:2, in which context it means the resurrection of Israel. In a similar vein, Jesus embodies all of Israel in Matthew, since Matthew applies Hosea 11:1, which points primarily to Israel's exodus from Egypt to the child Jesus' return from Egypt. Just like Israel, Jesus also stays in the desert for forty days and undergoes the temptations of Israel. Thus, there is a typological relationship between Israel and Jesus: Israel's history provides the pattern for Jesus' life. But where Israel fails and succumbs to the temptations of power, wealth, and glory, Jesus triumphs and suffers innocently for the sins of Israel. As we have seen in the first part of this article, Kinzer considers such typological interpretation only limitedly useful, and wishes to go beyond it. Yet he does not elaborate on what he means by a reciprocal relationship between type and antitype. He says that not only was the pre-incarnate Jesus active in and through

Joshua, but that Joshua was also active in and through Jesus (164). Somewhat later, however, he formulates the same relationship of type-antitype in a more cautious way (164–65):

Jesus and the Torah are not two separate realities, one of which points to the other. They are so bound together that wherever Jesus is, there is also the Torah. Israel and the Torah are ordered in relation to Jesus—he is the master of the Torah and the King of Israel, just as he is the Lord of the Sabbath. But he is never apart from Torah, Israel, and the Sabbath.

Returning to Kinzer's example of Joshua-Jesus, Jesus-Joshua typology, I propose the following interpretation of the reciprocal relationship between type and antitype: Joshua antedates and prefigures Jesus in introducing Israel into the Promised Land. But Joshua is also present and active in Jesus, insofar as Jesus introduces the eschatologically renewed and expanded Israel into their definitive heavenly homeland. Without referring Jesus to Joshua, we would not fully understand Jesus within God's plan of salvation. We would not grasp God's "pedagogy" (to use a notion first employed by Irenaeus): how patiently and gradually God taught his people to trust him in their finding an earthly home so that they would believe his Son when he announces that his "Kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 19:36). A gap would appear in the coherence of God's plan, and a powerful sign of his faithfulness would be missing. In general, we can understand a person by his words and actions. We can perceive a Father's love and wisdom if we are able to follow a long sequence of his actions towards his children. Thus, without the Old Testament and especially its types, we would necessarily distort the image of the Father and the meaning of the Incarnation.

We could also explain the relationship between historic Israel and Jesus in an analogous way. Israel prefigures Jesus by her exodus from Egypt, her forty years of wandering in the desert, her sufferings, and her "resurrection" from destruction. In Jesus, God has fulfilled his promises on a level that surpasses even the most exorbitant hopes of Israel's prophets. In him, God takes upon himself all the chastisements deserved by his people, and in Jesus' Resurrection all Israel is raised up in hope. By accepting Jesus in faith, believing Israelites and believing Gentiles enter

into the body of Jesus, the eternal Israel. Thus Israel prefigures Jesus, but Jesus becomes the “eternal Israel,” the everlasting sign of God’s fidelity to his promises.

Kinzer is right in pointing out that Jesus’ human nature loses its reality without its essential link to Israel. Yet we must also emphasize that as son of Abraham and as son of David, Jesus is also the son of Adam, the new eschatological Human Being. The eschatological Israel in Dn 7:13–27, called both “Son of Man” and “the holy ones of the Most High,” is also the universal Son of Man whom every human being encounters in his or her need (see Mt 25:31–46). As the Servant of God carrying the burdens and sins of Israel (Is 52:13–53:12), Jesus carries also the burdens and sins of all humankind. With his Resurrection and Ascension, all humankind is raised (potentially) to a new life and placed on heavenly thrones. Through praying the Psalms of Israel and through his constant spontaneous dialogue with his heavenly Father, he pleads for and prays with all humankind.

2.4. *Israel-Ecclesia*

Thomas Aquinas continues the patristic tradition in declaring that not only is Israel’s faith fundamentally identical with the faith of the Church, since the object of both is Jesus Christ, but Israel and the New Testament Church for this very reason belong to the same “body of the Church.”²² This goes beyond saying that Israel prepared the Church and her structure is analogous to it, since she is also an assembly called together by God’s initiative (*q’hal YHWH*) to listen to his Word and to worship him in word and sacrifice. Jesus’ words intimate that she is the same wayward Bride of God who, through Jesus’ death, will be raised to a new life. By his response to the hostile question regarding why his disciples do not fast, Jesus implies that he is Israel’s bridegroom and that the messianic wedding feast has begun with his arrival.²³

22. “Observing the sacraments of the Law, [the Ancient Fathers] were brought to Christ by the same faith and love by which we are being brought to him. Therefore, the Ancient Fathers belonged to the same body of the church to which we belong,” (*Summa Theologica* III, q. 3, a. 8 ad 3). Cf. *Nostra aetate*, 4.

23. “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast” (Mk 2:19).

At the beginning he explicitly restricts his ministry to Israel: in sending out the disciples on their first mission, he enjoins on them not to go into pagan territory or Samaritan towns, but only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:5). Seeing the faith of the centurion and the Canaanite woman, however, Jesus goes to the Gentile area of the Decapolis, and there he continues his teaching and healing ministry. But even the mixed crowd of Jews and Gentiles to whom he ministers recognizes that salvation comes to them from Israel, since “they glorified the God of Israel” (Mt 15:31). The twelve disciples who represent the messianic Israel will judge the twelve tribes of Israel in the “new age” (Mt 19:28). This saying shows that in Jesus’ mind the eschatological community is an enlarged Israel of the twelve tribes. Thus, no matter how much larger Jesus’ Church grows by the addition of Gentiles, they will all gain their identity from the twelve eschatological tribes of Israel. Perhaps the term “the Israel of God” at the end of Galatians also refers to the entire Church of both Jews and Gentiles. In addition, the phrases “twelve tribes in the dispersion” (Jas 1:1) and “the chosen sojourners of the dispersion” (1 Pt 1:1) most likely designate the entire pilgrim Church dispersed among the pagans.

Gentile and Jewish Christians are one (radically one, denoted by the masculine form of the Greek word *heis*) because Christ

broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the Law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two. (Eph 2:12–14; see also Gal 3:28)

While the above texts show the radical union between Gentile and Jewish Christians, those below express both union and relative distinction between the two groups. For instance, Paul’s letter to the Romans presents Israel as the noble olive tree into which the wild olive branches are inserted. The root supports the branches, not the branches the root, and provides for them a rich sap (Rom 11:17–24). All form one tree, but are also distinct as root and branches. In the same letter, Paul, the apostle for the Gentiles, spells out the priority of Jewish Christians over those of Gentile origin: “[The Gospel] is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, for the Jew *first*, then the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

Kinzer obviously agrees with all of the above, but he also uses other ways of relating the two groups, such as the *ecclesia ex circumcissione* (after a very ancient fresco of Santa Sabina in Rome, as was already mentioned) and *ecclesia ex gentibus*. But Kinzer's interest focuses primarily on the former's relationship to what he calls the "genealogical Israel," all the Jews united by blood-kinship. The *ecclesia ex circumcissione* is crucially important for the *ecclesia ex gentibus* because the former functions as the sacramental sign for (genealogical) Israel by revealing the hidden presence of the mystery of Christ within that people. On the one hand, without the Jewish believers in Jesus, the entire Jewish people's essential orientation toward the Messiah would remain unattested to the non-believing Jews. On the other hand, the entire *ecclesia* would lack an actual link to her Jewish origins in Jesus and the apostles. Hence he formulates his thesis: "Jesus is as much the mystery in the depth of the Jewish people and in the Jewish way of life as he is the mystery of the *ecclesia*."²⁴ Kinzer proposes to express this relationship between the Jewish people and the entire *ecclesia* by the trinitarian notion of being in one another.²⁵

Since the Messianic Jews have this unique, crucially important vocation in God's plan of salvation, Kinzer recommends that the Catholic Church create a structure for her Jewish members in order for them to become visible and united in such a way that their vital link both to the *ecclesia ex gentibus* and to the Jewish people may become manifest. This would entail, among other things, some autonomous ecclesial organization in complete union with the *ecclesia ex gentibus*, but possessing its own Hebrew-Jewish liturgy, feasts, and ordinances.

2.5. *Points to promote a further convergence of views*

Finally, I would like to spell out some proposals which might promote convergence, even agreement, on certain points of theologies and practices, as well as further discussion.

a) Just as Greek, Armenian, Coptic, and other Catholic rites have developed different liturgies, laws, feasts, and customs,

24. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery*, 174.

25. *Ibid.*, 172–78.

Messianic Jews could also develop a Jewish or Hebrew liturgy in which not only the language would be Hebrew, but ceremonies, rules, feasts, and customs would be more organically connected with the Old Testament. Even now the seven sacraments, while preserving the same essential elements, exist in a rich variety of different liturgies. It would be helpful if Messianic Jews themselves consulted with each other about all these issues and proposed plans to the Holy See for further study.²⁶

b) There does not seem to be any valid theological reason in the Catholic Church for prohibiting Messianic Jews from observing the Torah, as long as they make it clear that they are justified not by works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ. Ambiguity on this point was, I believe, the reason for past ecclesial condemnations. In fact, observing the Torah might become a powerful way for the Jewish people to bear witness to Adonai's faithful love, which has saved them time and again from extinction and has preserved them in spite of 1700 years of harassment and persecution. Even their own sins and crimes could not induce Adonai to abandon them. I recommend this theocentric motivation of bearing witness and giving thanks to God by keeping the Torah, and thereby offering atonement for those Jews, past and present, who have abandoned their faith.

c) The Catholic Church, however, cannot accept the belief that a Jew who no longer keeps the dietary and ceremonial prescriptions of the Law but observes its moral code commits a sin. Paul could not be more emphatic when he declares that "we" (himself, the Jews, and the Gentile Galatians) are no longer under the discipline, that is, under the Law (Gal 3:25). He himself acknowledges that he does not always keep the Torah, since he has become not only a Jew with the Jews, but a Gentile with the Gentiles in order to save some from both groups (1 Cor 9:20–22). Paul reprimands Peter who himself lived as a Gentile but wanted to force the Gentiles to live like Jews (Gal 2:14).

26. As Kinzer has shown (106–26), the ancient Jewish prayers have a profound eucharistic undertone, just as the earliest eucharistic prayers of the Church have grown out of the Psalms used in the Jewish *toda* sacrifice. See Hartmut Gese, "The Origin of the Lord's Supper," in *Essays on Biblical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), 117–40. This so-called "new" Hebrew liturgy then would have a strong anchoring in Jewish and Christian liturgical traditions.

d) As we face up to the Christian attitude towards Jews, beginning with Theodosius's edict in 380 which made the Catholic faith the state religion and merely tolerated the existence of synagogues, we must acknowledge that the discriminatory measures of the official Church and Christian states were unjust, and that the pogroms, murders, and looting by Christian mobs were crimes directed in a special way against God, to whom the Jewish people were consecrated.

e) While we Christians should ask for forgiveness from our Jewish brothers and sisters and purge our consciousness from any trace of anti-Jewish prejudice, we ask for the same on their part. If we believe the Acts of the Apostles and some second century documents, the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem persecuted the first disciples of Jesus; later, diaspora Jews eagerly joined the Roman persecutors. Of course, their motivation is quite understandable. For the Jews, the worship of the man Yeshua transgressed their most sacred commandment, which prohibits idol worship in any form whatsoever. A practical reason added further incentive to their hostility: the Roman state made Judaism a *religio licita*, a "licit religion," so that Jews were dispensed from worshipping the state gods. The Empire could afford such an exception for a relatively small group of people, but not for the rapidly spreading, worldwide Christian movement. So the Jewish diaspora had special reasons to demonstrate their loyalty to the Empire by joining the Roman persecutors.²⁷

f) I understand that in his book Kinzer does not intend to provide an integral Christology and ecclesiology, but rather to focus upon the mystery of Israel within the mysteries of Christ and the Church. I suggest, however, that the deeper we penetrate the integral mystery of Christ and the Church, the deeper we also reach into the mystery of Israel. Here I can only ask a few questions and propose considerations, some of which Kinzer might find nearly identical with his own.

i. Regarding the New Testament Church, what does

27. See, for instance, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 13:1, where the author describes the zeal of the Jews to gather firewood for the pyre upon which Polycarp was to be burned: "These things then happened with so great speed, quicker than words could tell; the crowds immediately collected timber and sticks from the workshops and baths, and the Jews more especially assisted in this with zeal, as is their custom." See also Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 17.

Kinzer mean by the phrase “the eschatologically renewed Israel”? Is she simply the continuation of the Old Testament Israel, with the addition of the discovery that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Gentiles are invited to join the people of Israel? Is the body of Christ simply the social body of converted Jews and Christians? Or is she the one and unique *ecclesia*, consisting indivisibly of the *ecclesia ex circumcisione* and the *ecclesia ex gentibus*, the extension on earth and perfection in heaven of the personal, risen body of the Messiah, true God and true man? Is the one body of the one *ecclesia* animated by the Holy Spirit in whom Christ is acting and suffering today and up to the end of history? I know Kinzer believes that Jesus is God and man in one being, but does he draw these consequences *from that belief*? If he does, then he must believe that the “eschatologically renewed Israel” is indeed a social body of people, but infinitely more than that: the one eschatological Temple, the Holy of Holies, the heavenly Jerusalem in the process of descending from heaven. Then the glorified Messiah is present within those who love him and gradually, especially in Holy Communion, conforms us to his dying and rising to eternal life. Then believing Israel along with the believing Gentiles has been already brought to the threshold of the “world to come,” whose first building block is the glorified body of the Messiah.

ii. I believe with Kinzer that the sacramental signs of ancient Israel are not abolished with the arrival of the Messiah. As the two-thousand-year history of the Holy Land after Christ testifies, these signs have had a most powerful influence on millions of Jewish and Gentile believers. The sacred signs Kinzer describes—the presence of the absence of Adonai at the Western Wall, the praying, singing, and wailing holy people at its foot, the Torah (but also the *Nebi'im* and *Ketubim*), even the dust on the streets of the Holy City of the Great King, the peace and joy of the *Shabbat* in Israel and the life of the pious Jew as an unceasing divine liturgy, the *mitzvot*—all of these remain valid until the end of history. Without these “footprints” of “Jesus according to the flesh,” his concrete figure could easily disappear into an abstract idea, a target of our prayers, or an empty cypher of a Christianity reduced to mere ideology.

iii. Since Jesus has broken down the dividing wall of enmity between Jews and Gentiles in his own flesh so that he

“might create one new person (*eis hena antropon*) in place of the two” (Eph 2:15), and since both the *ecclesia ex circumcissione* and the *ecclesia ex gentibus* form the one body of Jesus and in each (spiritually) living member one and the same Spirit is actively present, then the phrase “mutual indwelling” of the one group in the other, according to the analogy of trinitarian *perichoresis*, seems to be an adequate description of this radical unity. Not only do the two groups exist in one another, but every saved individual will in this same way be united with each other.

iv. I agree with Kinzer also on the fact that this supernatural unity does not suppress but rather promotes the flourishing of individuals and safeguards differences in the one body. Thus Paul himself acknowledges a certain distinction of priority between Jewish and Gentile Christians: “[The Gospel] is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew, and then Greek” (Rom 2:16).

For Paul, all Christians are “saints” (*hagioi*) in the sense that God has set them apart from the world and consecrated them to his service. Yet Kinzer is right in that the Jewish Christians are “saints” in a special way, since they have always been near to God.²⁸

We must also keep in mind the warning Paul addresses to the Gentile Christians:

[I]f some of the branches [of Israel] were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place and have come to share in the rich sap of the olive tree, do not boast against the [cut off] branches. If you do boast, consider that you do not support the root; the root supports you. (Rom 9:17–18)

The Jews who came to believe in Jesus have the vocation of keeping the Gentile-Christian branches firmly grafted to its roots and providing the rich sap for their growth (Rom 11:17–18). Without its Jewish roots, the tree would soon wither away, and the Incarnation would appear as a *Deus ex machina*: unprepared, misunderstood, and eventually falsified.

v. On the one hand, the Old Testament displays God’s

28. See Eph 2:17. The special use of “the saints” for Jewish Christians is most obvious in the texts which refer to the collection of money from the Gentile Christians for the “saints” in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 9:1).

patient “pedagogy,” his gradual formation of wild nomadic tribes into his own people, and a home for his incarnate Son; on the other hand, it registers Israel’s continued blindness and resistance so that only a small remnant remains faithful enough to be ready for the arrival of the Messiah. To this remnant, God made even more dazzling promises (Is 60–66; Dn 2:36–45, 7:1–9:27; Zec 12:1–14:21), the fulfillment of which transcended the most grandiose prophecies since in Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us, has been given to Israel in the most radical and most upsetting way possible. Thus, Messianic Jews can testify firsthand to God’s faithfulness that has always proved greater than Israel’s infidelity. They are uniquely the most credible witnesses to convince the world that the entire Jewish history is the drama of Adonai’s invincible love for Israel and, through Israel, to all humankind.

vi. This “always greater than promised” (and at times disconcerting) fulfillment of God’s promises leads us to the heart of the matter, the two-thousand-year-old denial of Jesus’ divine claim by genealogical Israel. Messianic Jews now accept his claim, and I would like to expand on its existential importance for an “Israel-Christology.” Kinzer shows how the repeated manifestations of Adonai in audible and/or visible forms throughout Israel’s history prepare for his permanent active presence in the man Jesus. I propose a complementary consideration which requires a short excursus on the Jewish theology of history. Israel was unable to accept that God would stand aloof from and unaffected by the sufferings of his people. In response, some of the rabbis developed the conviction that Adonai had always suffered with his people, gone with them into exile, and carried Israel’s burdens. The most extreme belief in the “codependence” of God and Israel is expressed in the medieval Spanish-Jewish mystic work *Zohar*. It claims that by obedience to the *mitzvot* (commandments), the Jews can raise the *Shekinah* (God’s glory, his female aspect according to the *Zohar*) from the dust of exile and reunite Her with God himself. On the one hand, such doctrine obviously contradicts the clear witness of the entire Old Testament regarding God’s absolute sovereignty; God’s infinite majesty and power are incompatible with God’s suffering and death. Would he suffer or die, he would cease to be who he is: “I AM,” the infinite fullness of being.²⁹

29. See Ex 3:14. In spite of its unbiblical character, belief in the teaching

vii. On the other hand, Messianic Jews could discover for themselves and for genealogical Israel that the doctrine of the Incarnation responds to this deep intuition of rabbinic Judaism: God has become the man Yeshua in order to suffer with his people in his human nature. This suffering does not compromise God's absolute fullness of being: it rather reveals that his almighty power is at the service of his love. Only God the Son could take upon himself a full human nature without compromising his divinity, so that by carrying all the burdens of human existence, he may turn them into the blessing of a new life. In Christ, Psalm 68:20 has been fulfilled: "God bears our burdens." He bears Israel's burdens directly and the burdens of all human beings through Israel, the representative of all humankind.³⁰ In the *Zohar*, God's divine being is split into two by Adam's sin; in the Christian belief, God's transcendence is safeguarded while his utter solidarity with his people is revealed. We Christians and Messianic Jews can confess together that in Jesus of Nazareth, in our Paschal Lamb, in our Isaac, God himself has chosen to become the sacrifice of atonement and thanksgiving in order to fulfill and surpass all his promises. Moreover, he became not simply a Jew and a son of David but, if we take seriously both the corporate and individual dimensions of the figure of the Suffering Servant and the Son of God prophecies, he became the embodiment of Israel, the Israel of God, so that in him Israel might become God's beloved Son in the full sense of the word.³¹ Thus, we cannot exalt Jesus without exalting Israel, and we cannot cel-

of the *Zohar* does not exclude one from Judaism, yet believing in the Incarnation does, according to mainline Judaism. See D. C. Matt, "The Mystic and the *Mizwot*," in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 13:387.

30. The theme of "Israel as God's burden" deserves a more thorough treatment: see Is 1:14; 43:24; 46:1-4; 63:9.

31. As stated above, the statement of 1 Cor 15:4 that Jesus "was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" makes sense only as a reference to Hos 6:2, where the prophet speaks in the name of the remnant of Israel: "On the third day He will raise us up, to live in his presence." Jesus is that new Israel God has raised up. The representative embodiment of a whole people in one person is foreign to modern thinking, but standard practice in ancient Jewish literature. Thus, the understanding of Jesus as the embodiment of the eschatological Israel goes back to the earliest pre-Pauline kerygma.

celebrate God's fidelity to humankind without celebrating God's fidelity to Israel.



I finish with a suggestion: the adventures of their history and their permanent struggle with the God of Jacob eminently qualify Messianic Israel for a uniquely theocentric spirituality. Instead of focusing on themselves, let them follow the great tradition of their prophets and fill the world with their joyous discovery: "We have found the Messiah (see John 1:41). God himself has become our Messiah. He is the Son of David, the Suffering Servant of God in Isaiah, *and* the glorious Son of Man in Daniel. Come and worship him with us, for God has raised you up with us to become his sons and daughters. Our very existence, our joy and love, testify to this." □

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