

Fall Reading

First Fruits of Zion reviews three new books.

Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church

DAVID WOODS

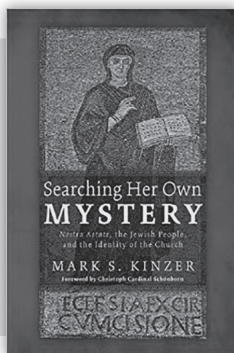
SEARCHING HER OWN MYSTERY: NOSTRA AETATE, THE JEWISH PEOPLE, AND THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

By: Mark S. Kinzer

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262 Pages



the development of his intricate bilateral ecclesiology, the groundwork of which was presented in his earlier work *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (Brazos Press, 2005).

In *Searching Her Own Mystery*, Kinzer attempts the seemingly impossible task of persuading two historically opposed audiences of the value of the other. These audiences are Roman Catholics

Mark Kinzer is a Messianic Jewish scholar deeply committed to Judaism and all the Jewish people and also to Messiah and Messiah's people from the nations. Kinzer thus adheres to Orthodox Judaism as much as possible within his Messianic faith. He devotes a whole chapter of *Searching Her Own Mystery* to describing his personal journey of faith and how that led to a close connection with the Catholic Church as he continually developed in his Messianic Jewish faith. His peculiar path was, he believes, providential for

and Messianic Jews. Kinzer also hopes to gain a hearing within mainstream (non-Messianic) Judaism as well as with Christians outside the Roman Catholic Church. This ambitious project is founded on a review of some key Catholic declarations made since the Shoah (the Holocaust) that refer to the church's relation to the Jewish people. Thereafter the study develops via Kinzer's own biblical exegesis to establish a number of theological points of contact between Jews and Catholics. The author uses great finesse to persuade his two primary audiences

that they have much more in common theologically than they generally recognize. He adopts largely Catholic terminology that may seem foreign to Messianic Jewish readers but will help Catholics. He also introduces new terminology such as “Israel-ecclesiology,” “Israel-Christology,” and “Torah-Christology,” which takes some time to get a sense of.

The book begins by introducing two documents from the Second Vatican Council, both published in the mid-1960s. The first is *Lumen Gentium* (“Light of the Nations”), which presents the church as “the People of God,” “the new Israel,” but also affirms that genealogical-Israel has irrevocable divine gifts and vocation. Seeking to understand this seeming contradiction and to clarify the relationship between the church and the Jewish people, Kinzer turns briefly to the Catholic Catechism and then to the second key Vatican II document in his analysis, *Nostra Aetate*. *Nostra Aetate* (“In Our Time”) expresses the relationship of the Catholic Church with non-Christian religions, especially Judaism. From it Kinzer distills four propositions that are foundational to Catholic orientation to Jews and opens a channel for building relations between these religious groups who *together* enjoy God’s blessing. Most significantly, *Nostra Aetate* states that the church is *spiritually bound* to the Jewish people, and Kinzer proposes that this connection is not merely historical and vocational but that it also points to “an intertwined identity and destiny.”

Kinzer also draws on statements by popes and cardinals that clarify the nature of this spiritual bond and further establish the claim that Judaism and the Jewish people are mysteriously intrinsic to the church. In fact, they both have covenantal significance for the church in spite of the corporate Jewish rejection of Jesus according to Catholic teaching. Being a Jew in flesh and blood, Christ himself binds the church to the Jewish people. Yet Christ is not only the head of the church; he is the head of

the Jewish people, “genealogical-Israel,” whose election endures and whose eschatological destiny is *already* ensured by the resurrection of their priest, prophet, and king.

Kinzer notes that the ancient Latin terms for “the church from the circumcision” and “the church from the Gentiles” are increasingly common in Catholic scholarship (especially in recognition of modern Messianic Judaism), thus confirming the twofold nature of God’s people. The unity of (Messianic) Jews

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and Gentiles in Christ speaks of the eschatological renewal of genealogical-Israel, not a replacement of it—a renewal that expands to incorporate the church from the Gentiles without discarding the vital Jewish essence of the church’s identity. From this foundation Kinzer moves into New Testament exegesis to test his proposed ecclesiology on the sacrament of Holy Orders (the Catholic view of apostolic succession to the present time). He argues that both the priestly and apostolic offices are integral to the election of the Jewish people and that Jewish followers of Jesus have a particular enduring role as priests, sanctifying genealogical-Israel through Jesus and thus the church of the Gentiles through Israel. Two other key sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist, are then examined to see whether Kinzer’s main ecclesiological thesis fits within Catholic doctrine.

Contrary to many biblical interpreters, Kinzer finds that new-covenant baptism does not mark a disjunction with the previous covenantal order but rather a point at which Israel’s

eschatological renewal begins in the present. Thus baptism affirms *both* the historical connection *and* the vital eschatological role of the Jewish people. For Jews, baptism confirms their covenantal status, while for Gentiles, it establishes their covenantal status for the first time, immediately placing them in an intimate relationship with genealogical-Israel. Together they present the future renewed and expanded commonwealth of Israel. Kinzer explains baptism in water, in the Spirit, and in fire in a way that transforms one's perception of both the meaning and significance of baptism.

holiness, and holiness (in rabbinical writing) is known by the term *kedushah*. Kinzer explores five elements of Jewish *kedushah*—genealogical-Israel, the Sabbath, the promised land and Jerusalem, Torah, and mitzvot (i.e., people, time, space, Word, and deeds)—and presents them as sacramental signs that are fulfilled (past and ongoing) in Jesus. He even presents them as fundamental to the church's identity.

In the last chapter, Kinzer moves his attention to practical ways of working out his theological treatise. “Mutual-indwelling” is the term he uses to describe Christ's relationship with his disciples and also with his Jewish family; Christ dwells among them and “carries” them in himself. Thus Jesus is the “spiritual bond” between “the people of the new covenant” and “the stock of Abraham,” to use the terminology of *Nostra Aetate*. Moreover, the fact of Jesus dwelling in both genealogical-Israel and the *ecclesia* means that these two corporate entities also dwell in each other. Jesus' permanent Jewish identity places the Jewish people in the center of the *ecclesia*, while the union of the *ecclesia* with Jesus through baptism sets it within the Jewish people. Jewish disciples of Jesus who live out the Jewish life are, for Kinzer, sacramental signs of this mutual indwelling of the Jewish people and the *ecclesia*. They testify to the messianic significance of their own people and also the need in the body of Christ of the Jews. Finally, Kinzer sketches a way forward for realization of “this ecclesiology of mutual-indwelling” for the Catholic Church, Catholic Jews, Messianic Jews, and, optimistically, the wider Jewish world in a way that honors and affirms each of their religious traditions.


The book has four appendices containing (1) the relevant part of *Nostra Aetate*, (2) annual statements of the Helsinki Consultation (a dialogue between Messianic Jewish and Roman Catholic scholars) from 2010–2014, (3) an insightful paper by Jean-Miguel Garrigues on the

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By virtue of its Jewish origin, the Last Supper connects the Eucharist—and its Gentile partakers—to the Jewish people. Thus a historical link is evident, but there is also a vital present and future orientation of the Eucharist: the Last Supper conveys Jewish character to the Eucharist and speaks of God's eschatological plan for the Jewish people. The Eucharist further presents challenges to both Christian and Jewish theology: there must be a connection, Kinzer argues, between Jewish religious life and church sacraments, so Jewish practice must somehow manifest Jesus' presence within it and reveal its future consummation in him. This is just what happens when Jews recite the *Amidah* and participate in Jewish feasts; doing so is essentially Eucharistic! Jewish religious life could even be called sacramental, because the sacraments indicate

importance of the Jewish identity of the apostles, and (4) Kinzer's penetrating previously published paper *Finding Our Way Through Nicaea*. This powerful article highlights what the Nicene creed does *not* say (anything about Israel, as per structural supersessionism), affirms what it does say (about the divinity of Jesus), and uses similar developments in Jewish and Christian theology to present the creed as developed by an approach not foreign to Jewish methods.

Searching Her Own Mystery is advanced reading but does not require an intricate acquaintance with Judaism or Catholic theology. The author restricts himself to a few key components of Catholic theology and does not

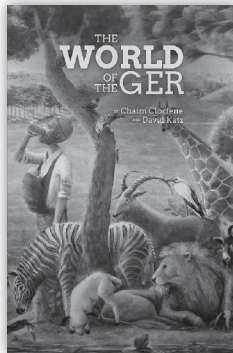
attempt to engage with more controversial aspects of it. Some readers will be disappointed that he does not tackle such topics, though he discreetly mentions that he does not affirm all the key claims of Catholic doctrine. He is not a Catholic Jew and does not seek to win converts for any particular religious tradition. He treats different religious traditions with great respect, hoping to improve dialogue between them. His positioning and skill in identifying and exploring the common ground between Judaism and Roman Catholicism through the lens of Messianic Judaism is unique, and he has used it for good. The book will raise public awareness of Catholic-Messianic Jewish dialogue and is sure to be a landmark in its furtherance. 

The World of the Ger

TOBY JANICKI

Over the past fifty years, the Noachide movement within Judaism has really taken off, and, in turn, a number of books have been written to help initiate Gentiles into the world of Torah for non-Jews. I have read quite a few of these books and, unfortunately, have found more than a few of them to be less than encouraging for my spiritual walk. In many of them, I have felt that the path suggested by the author would cause me to take a step back in my spirituality, Torah practice, and relationship with God. With a few exceptions, I would not recommend these books to others. But *The World of the Ger* by Rabbi Chaim Clorfene is a completely different story.

The title comes from the premise of the book, which explores the concept of a non-Jew coming to the God of Israel not just as a Noachide but as a *ger toshav* (resident alien).



THE WORLD OF THE GER

By: Chaim Clorfene with David Katz

Publisher: Chaim Clorfene, 2014

ISBN: N/A

239 Pages

The Torah gives instructions not only for Israelites but for the stranger (*ger*), sometimes referring to the convert (*ger tzedek*), sometimes to the resident alien (*ger toshav*), and sometimes to both. The *ger toshav* was a non-Jew who had publicly renounced idolatry and accepted the Torah's universal moral laws. He then lived in the land of Israel and received certain rights such as legal protection and charity when he was in need. Rabbi Clorfene seeks to