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Mark S. Kinzer

*Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 320 pp.

Reviewed by R. Kendall Soulen, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC

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Good books, though rare enough, are more common than important books. Mark Kinzer, a third-generation messianic Jew and an ordained rabbi of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), has written a good and important book, and a provocative one as well. Despite its title, the book is not just about Messianic Judaism. In recent decades, many churches have officially rejected the ancient Christian teaching that the church has replaced the Jewish people as God's elect community. Kinzer's book is a thorough effort to work out the ecclesiological implications of this historic development. No one who finishes the book will doubt that Kinzer's proposal raises issues of lasting importance not only about the significance of Messianic Judaism, but about the nature of the church's identity and its relation to the Jewish people.

Kinzer summarizes his ecclesiological proposal in five principles. Lightly paraphrased, they are the following: (1) the perpetual validity of God's covenant with the Jewish people; (2) the perpetual validity of "the Jewish way of life" rooted in the written Torah as the enduring "sign and instrument" of that covenant; (3) the validity of Jewish religious tradition (oral Torah) as the historical embodiment of the Jewish way of life rooted in the written Torah; (4) the "bilateral constitution" of the church, consisting of distinct but united Jewish and Gentile expressions of faith in Jesus Christ; and (5) the church's "ecumenical imperative," by which Kinzer understands the church's task to bring the redeemed nations of the world into solidarity with the people of

- (2 and 3) *The perpetual validity of the Jewish way of life rooted in Torah and embodied in the oral law.* Does "the Jewish way of life" simply mean obedience to written and oral Torah, or something else, and, if so, what? Furthermore, what modification does Jewish Torah obedience undergo in response to Jesus as teacher/embodiment of Torah? Or, to put it another way, to what degree are disciples from the nations and messianic Jews united by a common obligation to interpret all ethical and religious norms in light of Jesus's messianic authority?
- (4) *The bilateral constitution of the church.* Acts 15 gives convincing expression to the church's bilateral constitution, but other texts just as forcefully articulate a mandate for visible unity. Indeed, Eph 2 articulates this unity so forcefully that it seems to place the bilateral constitution of the church under extreme pressure, *pace* the valiant but finally unpersuasive exegetical efforts of Kinzer following Markus Barth. Rather than attempt to force this passage to fit the mold of Acts 15, would it not be better to take up the passage's challenge by addressing how a bilateral church could order its common life to give visible expression to the vision of unity so powerfully expressed in Ephesians and elsewhere?
- (5) *The ecclesia as bridge of solidarity between the redeemed nations and the people of Israel as a sign of future confirmation.* If I understand Dr. Kinzer correctly, this principle assumes that messianic Jews will identify Judaism as their primary religious "home," for only so do they form a genuine bridge between Gentile Christians and non-messianic Jews. But when there is a potential conflict between the visible unity of the ecclesia (comprising Jews and Gentiles) and the visible unity of the Jewish people (including messianic Jews), how are such conflicts to be adjudicated? What authority takes precedence on which issues and why?

As I hope these questions indicate, Mark Kinzer's proposal is an important one that deserves to be taken seriously by everyone concerned with thinking about the nature of a "postsupersessionist" ecclesiology.

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Jens Zimmermann

*Recovering Theological Hermeneutics: An Incarnational-Trinitarian Theory of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 345 pp.

Reviewed by Lois Malcolm, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

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This book addresses a central hermeneutical concern stemming from John Calvin's theology: how our self-knowledge is linked with the knowledge of God. It seeks to establish a theological hermeneutics that counters two