

Karl Barth on Mark Kinzer's "Non-supersessionist and Post-Missionary Ecclesiology": Yes! and No!

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Introduction

In August 2008, an international task force of the World Evangelical Alliance met in Berlin “to consider how [evangelicals] might express genuine love for the Jewish people, especially in Europe.”¹ The resulting document dubbed the “Berlin Declaration” deeply laments the historical record of European Christian history that included “the ‘teaching of contempt,’ intolerance toward Jewish people and Judaism, abhorrent acts of coercion, [and] anti-Semitism in attitude, word and deed.” Consequently, in past decades there has been a “tendency to replace direct gospel outreach with Jewish Christian dialogue.” The Declaration calls evangelicals to “invite Jewish people and all others to consider the claims of Jesus” even while continuing to “stand in solidarity with the Jewish people, opposing anti-Semitism, prejudice and discrimination.” It should also be noted that the Declaration affirms “the right of Jewish believers in Jesus to practice those traditions that affirm their identity, reflect God’s faithfulness to his people and uphold the Messiahship of Jesus.”

Not surprisingly, some Jewish spokespersons and groups have found the WEA statement to be a serious affront to their Jewishness, seeing it as one more item to add to the already long history of Western anti-Semitism. We could probably have a healthy discussion here and now about whether the Berlin Declaration may legitimately be labeled “anti-semitic,” but that is not on my agenda. Rather, I cite the Berlin Declaration to demonstrate that however carefully worded and affirming of Jews a theological statement on Jewish-Christian relations may be, it is bound to create dispute not only between Jews and Christians, but even amongst evangelical Christians, most of whom since at least the 1950’s could have been counted upon unequivocally to support every effort at Jewish evangelism. In short, the WEA document illustrates that “the Jewish question” (as it was called in the WWII era) continues to divide Christians, and even evangelicals, into the twenty-first century.

It is against this backdrop that I introduce the central focus of this paper: the theologically remarkable proposal found in Mark S. Kinzer’s book entitled, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, with the tantalizing subtitle of “Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People.” Kinzer’s book is noteworthy for at least three reasons: 1) Kinzer writes as an ordained Rabbi and Messianic Jew—a “Jewish Yeshua” believer, as he would put it; 2) he

¹ The full text of the Berlin declaration is available online at: <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/berlin.htm>. All subsequent citations to the Berlin statement are from this webpage. Notable participants in the workgroup included theologian Henri Blocher (France) and NT scholar Darrell Bock (USA). The Berlin statement is a follow-up to an earlier statement coming out of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism entitled, “The Willowbank Declaration” available at: <http://www.lcje.net/willowbank.html>. In this regard, article IV.23 is paramount: “WE AFFIRM THAT it is unchristian, unloving, and discriminatory, to propose a moratorium on the evangelising of any part of the human race, and that failure to preach the gospel to the Jewish people would be a form of anti-Semitism, depriving this particular community of its right to hear the gospel.”

writes to challenge the “supersessionism” that he feels has been characteristic of Christian tradition’s engagement with the Jews ever since at least the second century; and 3) CETA’s own Doug Harink says that Kinzer’s work “interrupts the conversation of contemporary theology with the voice of Messianic Judaism” and that “we are left with no option but to engage it.”² Thus, in what follows, I take up what Doug calls us to do: To engage Kinzer’s proposal. But I unabashedly warn you in advance: Since I am by no means an expert in the realm of Jewish-Christian relations, I felt that my ability to engage Kinzer came most naturally through an avenue that I feel more at ease with, mainly, through juxtaposing Kinzer with Karl Barth, whom Kinzer cites approvingly as partial support for his own Jewish-Christian ecclesiology.

Mark Kinzer’s *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*

Kinzer, president of Messianic Jewish Theological Institute and adjunct professor of Jewish Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, aims his book primarily at Protestant Christians, whether mainline or evangelical, to outline an ecclesiological vision of Messianic Judaism that can fit together with a distinct, but not separate, Gentile ecclesiology. He is convinced that we are in an era where such an ecclesiological theory is possible in ways that perhaps even a half-century ago we were not. So what has changed? According to Kinzer, there are three major pieces of the puzzle that have now fallen in place that makes the timing for such a proposal appropriate.

First, he notes, twenty-first century Christians are convinced more than ever that Yeshua (Jesus) is the sole mediator of all of God’s redemptive work amongst both Jews and Gentiles. Second, the church increasingly understands itself as participating through Yeshua in Israel’s covenantal privileges; even 50 or 60 years ago this would have sounded utterly foreign. And third, many Christians in the post-Holocaust era are ready to repudiate a supersessionist manner of reading Scripture in which the church is viewed as the new and spiritual Israel, replacing the space in God’s redemptive program formerly occupied by ‘carnal’ Israel.³ However, despite the fact that these important puzzle pieces are falling into place, Kinzer argues that Christians have not yet seriously considered the ecclesiological implications of the convergence of these three pieces. Thus, Kinzer is convinced that even though Gentile believers are theoretically moving toward a “non-supersessionist” reading of the Bible, they have yet to elucidate what the practical implications of said ecclesiology means for how Christians and Jews relate, particularly on the question of “Jewish evangelism.”

Kinzer seeks to provide a unifying “fourth piece” to the puzzle, mainly, a theory of Messianic Judaism which is *non-supersessionist*, which acknowledges a “*bilateral Jewish-Gentile ecclesiology*” and which is “*postmissionary*” in outlook. So what does each of these three important qualifiers mean for Kinzer?

Non-Supersessionist

From the start, Kinzer argues vigorously for the need to overcome the dominant supersessionist perspective which has characterized the Christian tradition from at least the

² Blurb on back of Kinzer’s book.

³ Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 12.

second century. Now, in one sense, Kinzer's theory is not novel here. In fact, Kinzer acknowledges that the historical development of evangelical dispensationalism "did more than any other movement to foster a positive attitude toward Jews among conservative Christians,"⁴ even if in the end most non-supersessionists would be hesitant to admit it! More today prefer to root their thinking in the non-supersessionist theology of theologians like Karl Barth. Whatever the case, Kinzer's non-supersessionism is in fact distinct from dispensationalism and closer to Barth in his refusal to isolate the role of Israel and the Church on the historical plane. Whereas classic dispensationalism saw Israel and Church as instruments of God in an historically *consecutive* manner, Kinzer argues that Israel and the Church are *simultaneously* used by God for his redemptive purposes. Indeed, Jewish Yeshua believers (i.e., which Kinzer identifies with the Pauline concept of "remnant") neither are synonymous with the "multinational ekklesia" of Jews and Gentiles, nor a replacement of Israel itself; rather, Messianic Judaism "represents and sanctifies Israel" and "serves a priestly function on behalf of the entire nation."⁵

I obviously cannot fill out the entire shape of Kinzer's non-supersessionist position at this point. However, Kinzer's adamantly insists that a truly non-supersessionist position derived from NT exegesis will show itself most fully when one concludes that the New Testament authors consider Jewish practice (i.e., dietary laws, Sabbath and festival observance, but excluding temple rituals) *obligatory for Jews*, even while equally acknowledging that such practices were not required for Gentiles in the early church, nor for today. As he puts it, Jewish Yeshua believers, in the NT and today, "are not elevated above Gentile Yeshua-believers, but they are distinguished from them [by their practices]." That is to say, Jewish Yeshua believers do not stop being Jewish upon their confession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Bilateral Ecclesiology

Once a plausible non-supersessionist reading of the NT texts concerning Jewish practice and the Jewish people is established, the theological consequent is the delineation of a "bilateral ecclesiology" in solidarity with Israel.⁶ What does he mean by this? Kinzer observes that from the earliest stages of the church—or as he consistently calls it, the ekklesia—the Yeshua-believing movement understood itself as a "transnational reality" which would nevertheless "be expressed within the broad framework of Israel's messianic faith." Though the movement quickly extended transnationally, it was clearly the case that Jewish members held all positions of authority in the early decades. Consequently, Jewish leaders had to think carefully through how to welcome Gentiles into the movement without exerting undue pressure upon them to become Jews.⁷ Thus, the NT records of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and the book of Galatians, for example, are early canonical evidence into this early Jewish leadership question of how *practically*⁸ (and not just theoretically) to develop

⁴ Ibid., 268.

⁵ Ibid., 125.

⁶ This is the concern of the bulk of chapter 4, "Bilateral Ecclesiology in Solidarity with Israel," 151-179.

⁷ Ibid., 152

⁸ Kinzer makes a methodological distinction between how Gentile and Jewish theologians seek to discover theological truth. In contradistinction from Gentiles who seek practical implications subsequent to exposition of a theoretical doctrine, Kinzer insists that the practical application of a text is inherent to the assessment of its truth. Thus, Gentile interpreters have tended to look for a coherent ecclesiology arising out of the biblical texts,

ecclesial structures which could reasonably accommodate both Jewish and Gentile practices, but also without creating a two-tier system in which the Jewish leadership lorded it over the Gentile new-comers. The problem, Kinzer argues, is that supersessionist readings of the NT have all too easily assumed that the early church quickly moved to unification of practice applicable to all involved, whether Jew and Gentile. Even if this is historically how it eventually worked out, Kinzer is not convinced that this is how it ought to be, nor what was thought or practiced in the years immediately following Pentecost. On the contrary, Kinzer seeks to show how the NT authors work with “bilateral ecclesiological” assumptions:

Only one structural arrangement would allow for distinctive Jewish communal life within the context of a transnational community of Jews and Gentiles: the one ekklesia must consist of two corporate subcommunities, each with its own formal or informal governmental and communal structures. . . one reality subsisting in two forms.⁹

After seeking to make the case for such a bilateral ecclesiology in the NT, Kinzer goes on to appeal specifically to the work of Karl Barth as a modern supporter of this view. In fact, Kinzer laments, though there are some historians and biblical scholars who have taken the bilateral ecclesiology of the NT seriously, Barth is “an exception to the rule” amongst the theologians. As Kinzer explains, “while Barth links Israel to the Old Testament and the church to the New [which, by the way, isn’t the whole story for Barth!], he also states explicitly that Israel continues to exist as the elect people within the one community of God after the coming of Yeshua (*post Christum natum*).”¹⁰ Or as Barth (in one of his uncharacteristically short statements!) says, “The community, too, is as Israel and as the Church indissolubly one. It, too, as the one is ineffaceably these two, Israel and the Church.”¹¹ Thus, even though Kinzer suspects Barth’s approach to the relationship of Israel and the Church is still too purely theoretical,¹² he nevertheless sees Barth’s ecclesiology as providing a highly significant *practical* opening for exploring how such a bilateral ecclesiology could be worked out in the real ecclesial life of Messianic Jewish/Christian relations.

Post-Missionary

Kinzer’s third qualifier, and in many respects, the most important and provocative, is *post-missionary*. In his introduction to the book, Kinzer explains that he intends to capture at least three aspects of an “integrated, faithful, non-supersessionist ecclesiology.”

First, the term “post-missionary” “*summons Messianic Jews to live an observant Jewish life as an act of covenant fidelity rather than missionary expediency.*”¹³ In other words, in distinction from a number of Jewish believers in the history of the Messianic Jewish movement, Kinzer insists that living in accordance to the expectations of Torah is an

while the Jewish method “ascrib[es] great weight to practical criteria in assessing of theological claims” (33). In Kinzer’s mind, supersessionist readings of the NT

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 175-6

¹¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II.2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957, 198.

¹² Ibid., 174

¹³ Ibid., 13 Italics original.

obligation of all faithful Jews, and not merely a matter of practical expedience to reduce offence or build bridges to non-Yeshua believing Jews. To be sure, Kinzer does not argue that such observance has some kind of salvific merit, any more than obedience to Christ's commands are a means of salvific merit for Gentiles. Post-missionary in this sense simply means that Jewish Yeshua believers live in accordance to Torah for its own sake, and not for the missionary-utilitarian sake of reaching other Jews.

In addition to this, Kinzer adds two more qualifications: “*postmissionary Messianic Judaism embraces the Jewish people and its religious tradition, and discovers God and Messiah in the midst of Israel.*”¹⁴ And, “*postmissionary Messianic Judaism serves the (Gentile) Christian church by linking it to the physical descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thereby confirming its identity as a multinational extension of the people of Israel.*”¹⁵ I will not expand on these last two at the moment, as they will be better dealt with later in the paper, but suffice it to say that Kinzer identifies these two aspects of postmissionary Messianic Judaism's “inner” and “outer” mission respectively.

Barth and Kinzer in Dialogue

At this point, I move now to offer a brief analysis of Kinzer's main ecclesiological planks mediated by an analysis of a crucial section of the fourth volume Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, “The doctrine of Reconciliation.” This, of course, begs the question of why Barth? My quick and dirty answer is that Kinzer appeals to Barth in support of a non-supersessionist, bilateral ecclesiology, so the dialogue is already invited by Kinzer.

To begin with, I admit that I find much of Kinzer's argument compelling, even if not entirely convincing at every point. Where I am not convinced, I suspect that Kinzer's argument, particularly his definition of what he means by “postmissionary” Messianic Judaism, is in fact built, ironically, upon what I perceive to be a common misreading of the significance of Barth's hesitancy to speak of a “mission to the Jews.” Nevertheless, I believe that the portion of Kinzer's argument which remains unconvincing could in fact be corrected and strengthened by a closer reading of what Barth is really getting at when he sounds his warning. But I am getting ahead of myself, and so need to back up and comment on Kinzer's first two qualifiers (non-supersessionism and bilateral ecclesiology) through Barth's perspective on expounded in “the ministry of the community” as found in *CD IV/3.2*.

Barth on Kinzer's Non-supersessionist, Bilateral Ecclesiology: Yes, with Minor qualification

I find Kinzer's argument in favour of a non-supersessionist bilateral account of Jewish/Gentile ecclesiology to be rather compelling, both Scripturally and theologically, and I suspect Barth would also give a “Yes”, albeit with some minor qualifications. Though this is not the place to expand on Kinzer's post-critical “practical” hermeneutic, suffice it to say that he explicitly states¹⁶ that the history of biblical interpretation has led to the place where every interpretation of the biblical text must come to terms with the text's “irreducible

¹⁴ Ibid. Italics original.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15 Italics original

¹⁶ Kinzer here follows the lead of Charles H. Cosgrove. See Charles H. Cosgrove, *Elusive Israel: The Puzzle of Election in Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

ambiguity,” i.e., no one reading can be assured to be identical to the originally intention of the biblical author.¹⁷ Under these circumstances, Kinzer asks only that his proposal be judged as whether it is *plausible* rather than a *definitive* non-supersessionist interpretation of the NT texts. And while we should dispute Kinzer at the level of exegetical detail, I, for one, have to agree that Kinzer does provide a *plausible* reading of the NT which suggests that the transnational ekklesia was *not* meant to displace/replace Israel (non-supersessionist) but that Jewish believers continued to practice their distinct traditions as grounded in Torah.

Despite the plausibility of Kinzer’s reading, I am uncomfortable with his overall desire to see a continuity of a distinct Jewish identity within the ekklesia favours too deeply the protological root of God’s election of Israel through Abraham, rather than the christological centre toward which the covenant promise to Abraham finds its covenantal fulfillment. One senses that Kinzer understands Israel’s perpetual continuity consists *primarily* due to God’s faithfulness to the original promise to Abraham as transmitted in “the Jewish spiritual tradition.”¹⁸ Of course, this belief is not necessarily inherently false, as much as it is theologically incomplete. For the faithfulness of God consists not simply in the abstract reiteration of a past promise to a dead patriarch, but in the concrete fulfillment of God’s promise shown to Israel through Jesus Christ. Thus, here, I think, Kinzer favours the chronological priority of God’s election of Israel in the history of salvation over theological priority of God’s election of Jesus Christ as the ground and culmination of the covenant.

In this regard, Kinzer could strengthen his case for a non-supersessionist, bilateral ecclesiology through an even closer attention (i.e., closer than he already gives) to the christological centre and ordering of Barth’s doctrine of election elucidated in *CD II/2*. You will recall that there Barth argues that God’s perpetual covenant with Israel is not grounded in Abraham as the ethnic progenitor of the Jews as such, but in Jesus Christ who is the electing God of Abraham, testified to in Jesus’ own words: “Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). Barth’s distinctive attention to proper ordering moves him to insist that the two-fold community of God flows out from the antecedent twofoldness of Jesus Christ himself as both electing God and elected man. As Barth puts it,

In [the community’s] twofold . . . form of existence there is *reflected and repeated* the twofold determination of Jesus Christ himself. The community, too, is as Israel and as the Church is indissolubly one. It, too, as the one is ineffably these two, Israel and the Church. . . This is the ecclesiological form of what [was] previously described in christological terms.¹⁹

In summary, then, I see Kinzer’s non-supersessionist, bilateral ecclesiology as a plausible extension of the theoretical framework of Barth’s doctrine of election, though I think he needs cautiously to re-examine the theological grounding for Israel’s continued existence and role.

Barth on Kinzer’s “Postmissionary Messianic Judaism”: No!--with qualification

¹⁷ Ibid., 27ff.

¹⁸ Ibid., 97

¹⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 198. (Emphasis mine).

The final point of my engagement with Kinzer pertains to the most important aspect of Kinzer's proposal, mainly, his insistence that Messianic Judaism needs to move from taking a "missionary" to a "postmissionary" outlook. Here I see a much greater challenge facing Kinzer, for at least two reasons. First, at a semantic level, I suspect that, like so many of the other "post-" terms in vogue today, "postmissionary" may serve better to confuse than to clarify. To suggest that one of the main qualifiers of an emerging Messianic Judaism in solidarity with the Gentile Church is supposed to be "post-missionary" introduces an additional enigma to what is already a baffling theological puzzle. Granted, Kinzer is not arguing *generally* for a postmissionary ecclesiology—one can hardly imagine that anyone would. He does *not* say that the transnational ekklesia must be postmissionary—only the Jewish side. But this begs the question: How can one speak of a unified—even if bilateral—Jewish-Gentile ecclesiology that is simultaneously "missionary" and "postmissionary"? Here I actually hope that Kinzer may find better terminology in the future for the substance of what he is arguing.

Second, and along much more substantial lines than the semantics "postmissionary," is the material theological implications of how many theologians today, including Kinzer, interpret and build upon Barth's hesitancy to speak of a "mission to the Jews" (especially expounded in *CD IV/3.2*). This has led commonly amongst many theologians and missiologists to call for the Church to "cease and desist" in its attempts to develop Christian missions to Jews, or to engage in Jewish evangelism.²⁰

At one level, it is easy to see a formal correspondence between Kinzer and Barth on this point. Kinzer no doubt would enthusiastically affirm Barth when he wrote,

It is thus unfortunate to speak of Jewish missions. The Jew who is conscious of his Judaism and takes it seriously can only think that he is misunderstood and insulted when he hears this term. And the community has to see that materially he is right. Mission is not the witness which it owes to Israel.²¹

The problem, however, is that Kinzer is in danger of extending Barth's (and others') caution about mission to the Jews to a denial of Messianic Judaism's own mission. Indeed, it is evident that Kinzer does not believe that Jewish Yeshua believers have no "mission" *per se*. Rather, he speaks of Yeshua-believing Jews being obliged to carry out an "inner mission" of "bearing witness to Yeshua's continued presence among his people," along with an "outer mission" which 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."²² This way of putting it is confusing, to say the least: postmissionary, but with inner and outer missions?! Thus, on the one hand, postmissionary Messianic Jews must witness to the "wider Jewish world"²³ concerning the reality of Yeshua already in their presence as the fulfillment of the covenant. On the other hand, postmissionary Messianic

²⁰ There are innumerable examples of this view in the literature today, but for one of the more recent accounts, see Mark R. Lindsay, *Barth, Israel and Jesus: Karl Barth's Theology of Israel* (Barth Studies; Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007).

²¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/3.2, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), 877.

²² *Ibid.*, 16

²³ *Ibid.*, 304

Judaism will understand its role as a link in the chain between the Gentile church and the wider Jewish world, of “bringing the church to Israel rather than bringing Israel to the Church. Yet by bringing the church to Israel, it also brings Israel to the church.”²⁴

My response to this is that a more careful reading (and not simple reiteration of the standard interpretation of Barth on Jewish mission) could actually help to clarify and strengthen Kinzer’s argument.

First, I argue that despite Barth’s apparent “reservations about the Jewish mission,”²⁵ Barth would likely materially oppose Kinzer’s “postmissionary” designation for Messianic Jews. This is because it is one thing for Barth to have expressed theological reservation about the Gentile church’s mission to the Jewish people, but it is quite another to express theological reservation of a mission of Jewish Yeshua believers to the world beyond the Jewish people and the Gentile church. Indeed, just a few lines after expressing his reservations about a “Jewish mission,” Barth goes on to say, “[The Jews] are the people of God loved by Him in free grace, elected and called to His service, and originally sent into the world as His witnesses.” This is at least a significant part, Barth insists, of what St. John means when he says, “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22) and what St. Paul means in Rom 11:29 when he claims that their calling is “irrevocable and unrevoked.”²⁶ In other words, Barth says, despite the fact that the “Synagogue” has failed to recognize her Messiah whom has already come, this does not revoke the irrevocable calling and mission of Israel to bear witness to the Messiah both to herself and to the nations. Her failures do not abrogate her of her responsibility. How much more so, then, should Yeshua believing Jews seek precisely to carry out her missionary responsibilities to the nations, and not only to other Jews?

Second, it is fascinating that what Kinzer describes as the “inner mission” of “postmissionary Messianic Judaism” corresponds rather closely to what Barth actually defines as “evangelization.” Unlike the community’s ministry of “mission” which pertains to “the sending out to the nations to attest the Gospel,”²⁷ evangelization is the ministry of “sound[ing] out the Gospel on [the] shifting frontier between true and merely nominal Christians”; evangelization, in other words, “serves to “awaken [the] sleeping Church.”²⁸ Barth argues that this understanding of evangelization best aligns with the Synoptic use of the term εὐαγγελίζεσθαι.²⁹ But listen especially to how Barth describes the positive function of ministry of “evangelization” for the present day community:

In evangelization the concern must be . . . to disclose positively that both neighbours without and those within are indeed at this place as seen by God in Jesus Christ, that the love and salvation is assured and *present* to them, and that on this basis they are invited, not to pass by this reality in their blindness and deafness, but to accept it from their hearts and with all its

²⁴ Ibid. Cf. Barth: “It is as the Church indeed that it is Israel and as Israel indeed that it is the Church.” *CD II/2*, 215.

²⁵ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 236.

²⁶ *CD IV/3.2*, 877.

²⁷ *CD IV/3.2*, 874.

²⁸ *CD IV/3.2*, 873.

²⁹ *CD IV/3.2*, 872.

consequences, in other words to believe and to obey . . . and becoming in practice what they already are, not just in theory, but according to the resolve of God.³⁰

The parallel to Kinzer's notion of Messianic Judaism's "inner mission" is striking. Listen now to Kinzer who describes it as follows:

[T]he Jewish ekklesia bears witness to the One *already present* in Israel's midst. It does not need to make him present; it only needs to point other Jews to his intimate proximity. The Jewish ekklesia bears witness to the One who sums up Israel's true identity and destiny, who lives within Israel and directs its way, who constitutes the hidden center of its tradition and way of life.³¹

My contention here is that Kinzer's language describes the positive function of what the Bible calls "preaching Christ Jesus as Lord" (cf. 2 Cor 4:5) and what Barth has defined as "evangelization." One just wonders why Kinzer so carefully sidesteps the terminology of "evangelism to the Jews."

Now, I realize that there may well be good reason that Kinzer's is minding his language when it he seems to be overly cautious about speaking of "Jewish evangelism," especially given the post-colonialist, post-Holocaust, politically charged weight the word "evangelism" carries as a result. However, without at all seeking to claim to understand Kinzer's motivation for speaking of "postmissionary Messianic Judaism" and its "inner mission" to the Jewish people, might it be that Kinzer—and we—simply need to be reminded that in the end to preach Christ crucified was, is and always will be "a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks," (1 Cor 1:23), no matter whether we call it "evangelism" or "mission" or "inner mission" or even "postmissionary Messianic Judaism"? By all means, we must seek to minimize unnecessary offense. But may we never forget that just as Barth was nearly run out of the a Bonn sanctuary in 1933 when he mentioned that Jesus was a Jew, so, too, the mention of Yeshua the Messiah as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant to Jews will continue to offend many Jews who continue to reject him.

Returning to Barth, I also want to suggest that greater caution and more careful attention needs to be given to what Barth is actually saying when in his misgivings about Jewish mission. For at the end of Barth's oft-cited cautionary note in *CD IV/3.2*, he says the Church must not seek false alleviation of "the penetrating pain of [the schism between Israel and the Church]." This is because, "The recurrent Jewish question is the question of Christ and the Church which has not been *and cannot be answered by any of its ministries*. It stands as an unresolved problem, and therefore as the shadow behind and above all its activity in foreign missions."³² Barth, in other words, may well be paraphrased to be saying, in typical dialectical fashion, "We Gentiles believers have no mission to the Jews, for salvation is really from them to us. Nevertheless, against their rejection of their own salvation, we are called to *provoke* them to jealousy precisely by witnessing to them of the Christ in our presence, and indeed, in theirs." But in the end, the "problem" and offense of Jewish evangelism can neither be solved by renaming it, or by pulling back from it. *It is a problem that we cannot*

³⁰ *CD IV/3.2*, 873. Emphasis mine.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 305

³² *CD IV/3.2*, 878. Emphasis mine.

solve. Indeed, only God will be able to solve it on the last day. But the insolubility of the problem gives both Gentile and Jewish Yeshua believer no less responsibility to carry out the “determination [*Bestimmung*] of the elect”³³ to be witnesses to Jesus Christ, to all the nations, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

This leads me to my last substantial point which I believe Kinzer would do well to hear from Barth more clearly. As noted above, Kinzer has a vision of Messianic Judaism serving as a link between the Gentile Church and Israel at large. It is here that I think Kinzer, in seeking a postmissionary role for Messianic Judaism, has potentially opened a theological space where the sole mediation of Christ may be potentially and dangerously displaced. This is in contrast to Barth’s christologically centred ecclesiology which prevents him from seeing the connection between Jews and Gentiles in any other way than in Jesus Christ. As Eberhard Busch so ably explains it, for Barth “there is only an indissoluble connectedness between the church and Israel when it is based on the *center* of the Christian faith, which is that Jesus is the *Christ*.”³⁴

With this in mind, I have difficulty in accepting Kinzer’s insistence that Yeshua believing Jews serve as a link between Israel and the wider Gentile world. Indeed, I cannot but see that Kinzer here needs Barth’s, and indeed, St. Paul’s christological-ecclesiological corrective in Ephesians. So it is with Paul that I close:

- 11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)--
- 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.
- 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.
- 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,
- 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,
- 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.
- 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.
- 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (NRSV)

³³ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 410ff.

³⁴ 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,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52, no. 4 (1999): 486