

SYMPOSIUM ON MESSIANIC JUDAISM

*Presented in Memory of Mishael M. Caspi ז"ל**

Zev Garber

Los Angeles Valley College

The 2014 Annual Meeting of NAPH was held in San Diego, California, during the annual meeting of AAR-SBL, November 22–25. An NAPH session was devoted to recently published *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*. Panelists reflected on historical and contemporary concerns related to the biblical foundations and ecclesiastical context of the diverse and controversial Messianic Jewish movement. The volume's co-editors, Cambridge-trained David Rudolph (a Jew) and Joel Willitts (a Gentile), spoke on the makeup and intent of this pioneering work on the history, philosophy, sociology, and theology of Messianic Jews. Their post-supersessionist hermeneutical presentation suggested theological divisions within the movement. Mark S. Kinzer, a key theologian and pacesetter of the non-Evangelical Messianic Jewish involvement and outreach, projected the face of twenty-first century Evangelical and post-Evangelical Messianic Judaism. Isaac Oliver delved into the nexus of Messianic Judaism: early Jewish followers of Jesus. Yaakov Ariel, an Israeli scholar working in the United States, talked on the intellectual and theological coming of age of Messianic Judaism at the turn of the twenty-first century. Finally, convener Zev Garber offered alternate views on the legitimacy and acceptance of Messianic Judaism within a Torah-centered *halakically* observant Jewish community. He discussed how God, Torah, and Jesus talk are used, misused, and confused.

The sponsorship of a session on Messianic Judaism under the aegis of NAPH was accompanied by controversy—clearly understandable but baseless, in my opinion, at an academic conference committed to learning, discussion, varied opinions, openness, outreach, and fellowship. The well-attended

* Mishael M. Caspi, retired professor of Religion and Middle East Civilization at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, died on August 4, 2013 in Haifa, Israel at his home (see the obituary notice in *Iggeret* 85 [2013]: 25; online: http://www.naphhebrew.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/Iggeret-85-2013.pdg_.pdf). Personally speaking, Mishael was a dear professional friend who did not hesitate to converse with me in Hebrew about issues of mutual concern. A gifted poet, accomplished scholar, and wonderful teacher, he was actively involved in NAPH activities for decades (as President, presenter, and coordinator). He hosted my guest lectures at the University of California Santa Barbara and Bates College, and showed a keen interest in my public lectures and writings on interfaith dialogue, post-Shoah theology, and respect for cultural differences. His memory honors our discussion: the question of Jesus believers in Judaism.

session was impactful, “an exciting and meaningful learning experience.” Personally meaningful was the assistance of Messianic Rabbi Dr. David Rudolph in guiding me on the kashrut of an Indian vegetarian meal after our session. My final comment at the session was hypothetical and directed to David (and other Messianics) and the audience. What would you say and do if your child becomes observant the Jewish way and rejects partially or fully the Jesus connection, conveying that Jesuolatry is not the Jewish way? Reverse the role. What would an observant Jewish parent say or do if his or her child becomes a Jewish believer in Jesus? Gain or pain sparks memory in millennia. Let the symposium papers start the process.

INTRODUCTION TO MESSIANIC JUDAISM

David Rudolph

Messianic Jewish Theological Institute

This essay outlines the history of Messianic Judaism, describing how communities of Torah observant, Jesus-believing Jews existed in the first four centuries of the common era and then reappeared in the eighteenth century. A short synopsis of the recently published *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* is also provided.

When speaking of Messianic Judaism in antiquity and the modern era, we are referring to a religious tradition in which Jews have claimed to follow Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah of Israel while continuing to live within the orbit of Judaism.

During the New Testament period, Messianic Judaism existed in the land of Israel, Syria, and beyond. One example was the Jerusalem community. New Testament scholars have long held that this community, headed by Yaakov (James), was (1) primarily composed of Jesus-believing Jews who (2) remained within the bounds of Second Temple Judaism, and (3) strictly lived according to the Torah (Acts 15:4–5; 21:20–21). Michael Fuller, Richard Bauckham, and Darrell Bock are among the many Luke-Acts scholars who maintain that the Jerusalem congregation viewed itself as the nucleus of a restored Israel, led by twelve apostles representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Acts 1:6–7, 26; 3:19–21). Their mission, these scholars contend, was to spark a Jewish renewal movement for Jesus the Son of David *within* the house of Israel (Gal 2:7–10; Acts 21:17–26).

The Jerusalem congregation functioned as a center of halakic authority and its leaders, headed by James, resolved disputes for the international community of Jesus believers by issuing council decisions of the kind we see in Acts 15. Here Luke writes that the Jerusalem Council exempted Jesus-believing Gentiles from proselyte circumcision and full Torah observance. While the significance of the Jerusalem Council decision for Jesus-believing Gentiles has long been recognized in New Testament studies, the implications for Jesus-believing Jews have only recently come to the forefront of Acts scholarship. As F. Scott Spencer points out, “The representatives at the Jerusalem conference—including Paul—agreed only to release *Gentile* believers from the obligation of circumcision; the possibility of nullifying this covenantal

duty for Jewish disciples was never considered.”¹ If the Jerusalem leadership had viewed circumcision as optional for Jesus-believing Jews, there would have been no point in debating the question of exemption for Jesus-believing Gentiles or delivering a letter specifically addressed to these Gentiles. Michael Wyschogrod rightly notes that “both sides agreed that Jewish believers in Jesus remained obligated to circumcision and the Mosaic Law. The verdict of the first Jerusalem Council then is that the Church is to consist of two segments, united by their faith in Jesus.”²

A growing number of New Testament scholars now concur with Wyschogrod that an important implication of the Jerusalem Council decision is that Jesus-believing Jews were to remain practicing Jews. To put it another way, the Jerusalem Council validated Messianic Judaism as the normative way of life for Jewish followers of Jesus.

For centuries, scholars have taught that a decisive parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity took place during the New Testament period. The New Testament was uncritically read in light of this classic narrative, and first-century Jews who followed Jesus were thus viewed as “former Jews” who had converted to a new religion. Today such assumptions are widely disputed. In their book *The Ways That Never Parted*, Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed document the history of this reassessment and demonstrate that the evidence supports a “variety of different ‘Partings’ at different times in different places.”³ They concur with Daniel Boyarin, Paula Fredriksen, Judith Lieu, and a growing number of other scholars who have concluded, based on textual and archaeological evidence, that “the fourth century CE is a far more plausible candidate for a decisive turning point than any date in the earlier period.”⁴ The new understanding is strengthened by the recognition that communities of Jesus-believing Jews who practiced Judaism existed as late as 375 C.E. Epiphanius, the fourth-century Church father, describes the Messianic Judaism of his day in this way:

[They] did not call themselves Christians, but Nazarenes...they remained wholly Jewish and nothing else. For they use not only the New Testament but also the Old like the Jews.... [They] live according to the preaching of the Law as among the Jews.... They have a good mastery of the Hebrew language. For the entire Law and the Prophets and what is called the Scriptures, I mention the

¹ F. S. Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 159 (emphasis in the original).

² M. Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations* (ed. R. K. Soulen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 194.

³ A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), p. 22.

⁴ A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*, p. 23.

poetical books, Kings, Chronicles and Esther and all the others are read in Hebrew by them as that is the case with the Jews of course. Only in this respect they differ from the Jews and Christians: with the Jews they do not agree because of their belief in Christ, with the Christians because they are trained in the Law, in circumcision, the Sabbath and the other things.⁵

In his essay “Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries),” Philip Alexander notes that Messianic Jews who lived in the Galilee during the Tannaitic period remained within the orbit of Judaism. He writes:

They lived like other Jews. Their houses were indistinguishable from the houses of other Jews. They probably observed as much of the Torah as did other Jews (though they would doubtless have rejected, as many others did, the distinctively rabbinic interpretations of the *misvot*). They studied Torah and developed their own interpretations of it, and, following the practice of the Apostles, they continued to perform a ministry of healing in the name of Jesus.⁶

Direct evidence of Jews who practiced Messianic Judaism after the First Council of Nicaea is scanty. This is because the view that Jews could not become Christians while remaining Jewish was backed by canon law and Constantine’s sword. The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 was the first ecumenical council to ban Messianic Jews from the church. They were required to renounce all ties to Judaism through professions of faith like the one from the Church of Constantinople, which declared, “I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom.”⁷ From the fourth century until the modern period, millions of Jews converted to Christianity and left behind their Jewish identity. It was not until the eighteenth century—approximately 1400 years later—that Messianic Jewish communities reemerged in world history.

Introduction to Messianic Judaism is a portal into this modern movement that consists of more than 500 Messianic synagogues around the world.⁸ It provides a description of what the Messianic Jewish community looks like today at its center and on its margins. The book’s first section, written by Messianic Jewish scholars, includes thirteen essays that trace the ecclesial contours of the community, providing a socio-historical and theological snapshot of where it is presently and where it is heading. The second section, some

⁵ Epiphanius, *Pan* 29.

⁶ P. S. Alexander, “Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries),” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), pp. 686–687.

⁷ J. Parkes, “Appendix 3: Professions of Faith Extracted from Jews on Baptism,” in *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 397.

⁸ D. Rudolph and J. Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

of whose authors do not belong to Messianic Judaism, focuses on biblical and theological issues central to its identity and legitimacy.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MESSIANIC JUDAISM: EVANGELICAL AND POST-EVANGELICAL TRAJECTORIES

Mark S. Kinzer

Messianic Jewish Theological Institute

The 2013 volume of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, edited by David Rudolph and Joel Willitts, consists of two distinct sets of articles.¹ The first contains essays dealing with the contemporary Messianic Jewish movement and authored by leaders of that movement. The second set includes articles by Christian scholars on exegetical and theological topics related to Messianic Judaism. The pieces dealing with the twenty-first century reality of the Messianic Jewish movement are of special importance because they defy stereotypes which dominate not only popular opinion but also academic discourse. These essays reveal a diverse and dynamic movement whose relationship to traditional Judaism and evangelical Christianity is a matter of intense inner debate. While as a whole it continues to be shaped by evangelicalism, post-evangelical trajectories which identify with Jewish history and tradition appear to be ascendant.

In October 2012, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement approved (without a dissenting vote) a responsum on the halakic status of Messianic Jews. In its opening description of the Messianic Jewish movement, the document treats the missionary organization “Jews for Jesus” as the prototypical expression of Messianic Judaism and views the founder of that organization—Martin (Moishe) Rosen—as the seminal figure in the movement’s emergence:

This idea [i.e., Messianic Judaism] was originally promulgated by Martin Rosen in 1973. Rosen was born a Jew but converted to Christianity and became a Baptist minister. He led a mission to convert other Jews, but when he found that they were not responsive, he came up with the idea that the impediment to Jews accepting Jesus was their reluctance to give up their identity as Jews and become “Christians.” Jews for Jesus was his new tactic for converting Jews.²

The responsum acknowledges that “there are differences in *approach* among the various groups of ‘Messianic Jews,’” but the word “approach” implies that these differences are at the level of strategy and tactics and reflect

¹ D. Rudolph and J. Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

² K. Abelson and R. Hammer, “The Status of ‘Messianic Jews,’” *Yoreh Deah* 268 (2012): 3. Online: <http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/abelson-hammer-messianic-jews.pdf>

no diversity in the substantive goals which are pursued or the basic beliefs and values which give rise to those goals.³

This portrayal of the “essence” of Messianic Judaism and its origins has become an unquestioned assumption in most discussions of the movement in the wider Jewish world. Many Christians likewise employ the term “Jews for Jesus” as a synonym for “Messianic Jews” and suppose that Messianic Judaism is primarily or exclusively a missionary strategy for turning Jews into Christians. This deeply rooted viewpoint shapes discourse not only on the popular level but also in academia. In their short description of Messianic Judaism, the learned members of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement are merely adhering to a conventional narrative that they and other scholars of religion *know* to be true in advance of any encounter with the reality so described.

One of the great virtues of the recent volume edited by David Rudolph and Joel Willits is the way it challenges what all had “known to be true”—not by exposing and explicitly countering such assumptions, but instead by introducing its readers to a multi-dimensional reality that fails to conform to their expectations. The book contains thirteen articles about modern Messianic Judaism, all of them written by recognized leaders of the movement. In the process of describing it, the authors dispel the illusion that it constitutes a homogeneous and static subset of the evangelical world which takes paradigmatic form in the mission agency founded by Moishe Rosen.

David Rudolph’s opening chapter recounting the history of the Messianic Jewish movement complicates the picture from the outset. He begins by distinguishing between nineteenth-century Protestant missionary societies devoted to the evangelism of Jews and Messianic Judaism:

Jewish mission agencies did not promote Messianic Judaism. They facilitated Jewish evangelism and encouraged “converted Jews” to join Protestant churches, which assimilated these Jews into Gentile Christianity. Hebrew Christians who were employed by Jewish missionary societies did not typically live within the orbit of Judaism or identify as Torah-faithful Jews. Most were fully at home in the symbolic universe of Gentile Christianity.⁴

Rudolph then shows how the term “Messianic Judaism” emerged in the early twentieth century as a rejection of the Hebrew Christian model adopted by these mission agencies.

³ K. Abelson and R. Hammer, “The Status of ‘Messianic Jews,’” p. 4 (emphasis added).

⁴ D. Rudolph, “Messianic Judaism in Antiquity and in the Modern Era,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, p. 27.

In December 1910 the first volume of *The Messianic Jew* was published by Philip Cohen's organization, the Jewish Messianic Movement. The journal promoted the importance of Yeshua-believing Jews living within the orbit of Judaism and embracing a Torah-observant life.⁵

Seven years later the official journal of the leading institution of the Hebrew Christian movement denounced Messianic Judaism as a heresy.⁶ Thus, already in the early twentieth century we see a stark contrast between two opposing visions of the way in which Jewish disciples of Jesus should relate to the Jewish people and Jewish tradition. It is not merely a difference of strategic "approach" or practical methodology, but a fundamental disagreement about the significance of Jewish identity and of the ends Hebrew Christians—or Messianic Jews—should pursue.

Rudolph then shows how the resurgence of the Messianic Jewish vision in the 1970s obscured for outsiders the underlying tensions and disagreements that remained between these two opposing perspectives. The Hebrew Christian institution that in 1917 denounced Messianic Judaism as heresy reversed course in 1975 and changed its name from "The Hebrew Christian Alliance" to "The Messianic Jewish Alliance." The mission agencies, including Jews for Jesus, saw the practical benefits of the new terminology and eventually followed suit. The identity marker championed in the early twentieth century by Jesus-believing Jews who promoted loyalty to the Jewish people and Jewish tradition as ends rather than means had triumphed. However, the dominance of the new terminology did not reflect a consensus on vision and values. Instead, those associated with the evangelical mission agencies and their theological convictions continued to have deep-seated reservations about the Messianic Jewish congregational movement and those identified with the congregational movement returned the favor.

Stuart Dauermann's article on "Messianic Jewish Outreach" focuses attention on the difference between the Hebrew Christian missionary orientation and that embodied (ideally) in the Messianic Jewish congregational movement. He summarizes the "message" and "milieu" of Hebrew Christianity as follows: "The message was the gospel of individual salvation through faith in the work of Jesus Christ, the true faith (as opposed to Judaism), and the milieu where that faith was to be lived out was the church rather than the synagogue."⁷ By contrast, "the Messianic Jewish ethos affirms the importance of

⁵ D. Rudolph, "Messianic Judaism," p. 27.

⁶ D. Rudolph, "Messianic Judaism," p. 29.

⁷ S. Dauermann, "Messianic Jewish Outreach," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, p. 90.

ongoing covenantal participation with the Jewish people past, present, and future,” inspiring Messianic Jews to seek involvement with the Jewish community as their milieu and to embrace a vision of the “communal consummation of the Jewish people” as their goal and message.⁸

Mitch Glaser’s chapter provides a fascinating companion piece to the article by Dauermann. Glaser is the executive director of one of the oldest and largest mission agencies. Like Dauermann, he was one of the founding members of Jews for Jesus, but unlike his friend and sometimes theological sparring partner, he remains a major figure in the world of evangelical missions to the Jewish people. In his chapter, Glaser describes the most prominent national institutions which identify with the Messianic Jewish movement, differentiating between those he calls “Messianic Jewish national organizations” and “Jewish mission agencies.” In what insiders would recognize as a tactful understatement, he acknowledges the “tension” that has existed between the two sets of organizations:

Many who are part of the Messianic Jewish national organizations and the modern Messianic Jewish movement can trace their spiritual roots back to one or more of the Jewish mission agencies. However, there has also developed a certain tension between the modern Messianic Jewish movement...and the Jewish mission agencies.⁹

Glaser then states that the “lines between the Messianic Jewish national organizations and the Jewish mission agencies are blurring” and thus the tensions are abating.¹⁰ Why is this the case? He does not suggest anywhere that Messianic Jewish national organizations are modifying their views in the direction of the evangelical missions. The chapter does, however, assert that changes are occurring in the mission agencies that bring them closer to the views of the Messianic Jewish national organizations: “Admittedly, a significant number of Jewish mission agencies were not previously supportive of Jewish believers in Yeshua being Torah-observant. Yet this seems to be changing.”¹¹ Glaser emphasizes the commitment of the Jewish missions to the welfare of the Jewish people and to the preservation of Jewish identity. His article as a whole reflects an attempt by one of the world’s most prominent Jewish missionary leaders to think about the ethos of those missions in terms prescribed by their Messianic Jewish interlocutors.

⁸ S. Dauermann, “Messianic Jewish Outreach,” p. 92.

⁹ M. Glaser, “Messianic Jewish National Organizations,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, p. 121.

¹⁰ M. Glaser, “Messianic Jewish National Organizations,” p. 122.

¹¹ M. Glaser, “Messianic Jewish National Organizations,” p. 123.

My own article in the discussed volume demonstrates that this reduction in tension did not result from a gradual change in sensibility, but instead followed a decade of intense turmoil and debate.¹² Moreover, the debate was not merely between those associated with the Messianic Jewish congregational movement and their missionary colleagues, but divided the congregational movement itself. The article focuses on controversies within the Messianic Jewish movement in the first decade of the twenty-first century. These controversies stemmed from the thinking of a circle of Messianic Jewish leaders associated with an annual theological conference known as “the Hashivenu Forum.” It took as its starting point a set of core values which included the following:

- The Jewish people are “us,” not “them.”
- The richness of the rabbinic tradition is a valuable part of our heritage as Jewish people.
- Messianic Judaism is a Judaism and not a cosmetically altered “Jewish style” version of what is extant in the wider Christian community.

These core values were formulated as a challenge to the Messianic Jewish movement to become what it claimed to be—namely, an authentic expression of Judaism. Implicit in the challenge was a critical assessment of the movement’s Jewish integrity of the movement as it entered a new millennium.

Those who identified with the core values of Hashivenu contended that the Messianic Jewish congregational movement, while forsaking particular tenets of evangelical theology related to the Torah and the status of the Jewish people, was as wedded to an evangelical Protestant worldview as the mission agencies whose vision it ostensibly opposed. This worldview became evident in the movement’s commitment to biblical and soteriological exclusivism. The former rejected the authority of tradition in the interpretation of the Bible, while the latter denied entrance to the world to come to all who had not confessed faith in Jesus in this life. These twin convictions alienated Messianic Jews from their fellow Jews, making it difficult to enter into meaningful conversation or relationship. These convictions also confirmed the bond Messianic Jews felt with their evangelical Protestant friends and mentors who shared their distrust of tradition and who, like them, considered themselves among “the saved.”

¹² M. S. Kinzer, “Messianic Jews and the Jewish World,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 126–135.

The emergence of Hashivenu at the very end of the twentieth century ignited a firestorm in the Messianic Jewish world that encompassed the congregational movement as much as the mission agencies. As Glaser's article indicates, the flames of that conflict have largely subsided. The rest of the Rudolph and Willits volume shows that what remains is a diverse and changing movement in which post-evangelical trajectories have established their legitimacy beside evangelical rivals. The range of legitimate options has increased, and the center has shifted.

This trend toward broadening is also reflected in the new readiness of many Messianic Jews to form relationships and engage in dialogue with those outside the evangelical orbit. Daniel Juster—one of the founders of the Messianic Jewish congregational movement—tells in his article of initiatives that have brought its leaders into close contact with Roman Catholics.¹³ An informal dialogue between Catholics and Messianic Jews, launched by Cardinal Georges Cottier, Theologian of the Papal Household under John Paul II, has been conducted since the year 2000. Jennifer Rosner writes of the Helsinki Consultation on Jewish Continuity in the Body of the Messiah, which brings together Messianic Jewish leaders and Jews from the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.¹⁴ She also describes public lectures in a Messianic Jewish setting which featured respected mainstream Jewish scholars. Judging by the accounts of Juster and Rosner, Messianic Jews participate in these projects with a willingness to learn and change and not only with the intent of influencing their partners in conversation. This provides further evidence that segments of the Messianic Jewish world have burst the evangelical bubble which had encompassed the movement in virtually all of its twentieth-century manifestations.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in the discussed volume to the missionary paradigm of Hebrew Christianity and the exclusivist assumptions of twentieth-century Messianic Judaism is found in the article by Russell Resnik, longtime executive director of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations. As is the case for most of the volume's essays, the challenge is implicit rather than explicit. Resnik depicts Jewish ethics as the imperative of "reflecting God and his nature, fulfilling the assignment to bear the divine image."¹⁵ He then suggests that Messianic Jewish ethics are based on the premise that the

¹³ D. Juster, "Messianic Jews and the Gentile Christian World," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 136–143.

¹⁴ J. M. Rosner, "Messianic Jews and Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 145–155.

¹⁵ R. Resnik, "Messianic Jewish Ethics," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, p. 84.

divine image finds its perfect human expression in the life of Jesus. Resnik next draws two corollaries from this approach. First, he argues that Jesus showed radical loyalty and love for the Jewish people as well as for the Jewish tradition. Thus, Messianic Jews of the twenty-first century should do the same. Second, he shows how Jesus persevered in this loyalty and love despite the hostility of those who held power among his people. As Resnik puts it, Jesus “accepted his undeserved marginalization and transformed it into a position of service and prophetic testimony.”¹⁶ Again, contemporary Messianic Jews are to emulate this example.

Resnik then recounts an incident illustrating both corollaries. A Messianic Jewish leader attending a Shavuot service in a traditional synagogue turned out to be the only *kohen*—descendant of Aaron’s priestly family—in the room. Accordingly, he was invited to ascend the *bamah* to recite the blessing for the first portion read from the Torah (a privilege reserved for *kohanim*). As the man was coming forward, the rabbi recognized him and, waiving his finger, exclaimed, “No!” The gesture and the single word spoke volumes: no Messianic Jew would be allowed to approach the Torah in this rabbi’s synagogue.

However, according to the Jewish law, a non-priest cannot receive this Torah honor if a priest is present. This created a halakic dilemma in the midst of a festival liturgy. The Messianic Jewish leader could react to his public humiliation by storming out of the synagogue in protest. This would have resolved the legal dilemma for the rabbi, but it would also have symbolically highlighted his act of shaming a fellow Jew—a serious violation of Jewish ethics. Another possibility was to return to the pew and watch with a cynical smile as the rabbi struggled to resolve the halakic conundrum. But the Messianic Jew rejected both of these options. Instead, he voluntarily exited the room so that a non-priest could assume the Torah honor and afterward returned to his seat for the remainder of the holiday service.

Resnik then makes explicit the point of his story: “My friend was displaying ethics on the margins, which is the distinctive quality of Yeshua’s ethics—even though Yeshua is rejected by some of his people, he never rejects his people in turn.”¹⁷ Resnik continues by citing Stuart Dauermann: “Even in contexts where other Jews might seek to exclude us and discount us for our Yeshua faith, we must never be confused about our solidarity with them. We must continue to contribute to Jewish institutions, support Jewish causes, and

¹⁶ R. Resnik, “Messianic Jewish Ethics,” p. 86.

¹⁷ R. Resnik, “Messianic Jewish Ethics,” p. 87.

labor for the wellbeing of all Jews everywhere.”¹⁸ For Resnik, Dauermann, and the anonymous Messianic Jewish *kohen*, loyalty to the Jewish people and tradition is not an instrument for attaining an independent end (i.e., evangelism) but instead an intrinsic value to be embraced for its own sake and for the sake of Heaven.

The Messianic Judaism encountered in the articles assembled by Rudolph and Willitts stubbornly resists the pre-existing categories of its potential Jewish and Christian readers—categories which are well illustrated by the responsum of the Conservative Movement with which I began this paper. The articles do demonstrate the continued vigor of the evangelical missionary paradigm in circles that identify themselves as Messianic Jewish, but even more so they reveal the way in which many in this movement have turned away from that paradigm in their quest to live as faithful Jews. The volume also suggests that overall trends among Messianic Jews favor the post-evangelical trajectory. To equate twenty-first century Messianic Judaism with Jews for Jesus, or to hold up Moishe Rosen as the seminal figure in its origin, is to ignore the concrete reality of this diverse and dynamic religious movement.

Those who reject its validity may well retain their negative assessment after reading *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*. Those with religious authority in the wider Jewish world might still render the same halakic judgment concerning the status of Messianic Jews as that found in the 2012 responsum issued by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement. However, this judgment will be more worthy of the ethical values they espouse, for it will constitute a response to an existing reality rather than to an artificial construct generated by the polemics of previous generations. In opening to outsiders this window to a much maligned and misunderstood movement, Rudolph and Willitts have rendered a service deserving of our gratitude.

¹⁸ R. Resnik, “Messianic Jewish Ethics,” p. 87.

MESSIANIC JEWS AND THE EARLY JEWISH FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Isaac W. Oliver
Bradley University

The article critically assesses the historical and exegetical treatment of the New Testament in the second half of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pointing out some of its significant contributions to the ongoing reassessment of the Jewish texture of nascent Christianity.

Introduction to Messianic Judaism, edited by David Rudolph and Joel Willits and published in 2013, presents the Messianic Jewish movement in all of its facets.¹ The book is divided into two parts: the first mainly traces the history and theology of the community while the second covers various New Testament topics, intending to justify the legitimacy of Messianic Judaism. The essays in the first section of the book are penned by Messianic Jewish scholars and leaders; the second includes a number of chapters written by “Gentile Christians,” as they are called in the book, who specialize in New Testament studies. As a specialist in early Judaism and Christianity, I will focus here on the treatment of the New Testament in the second half of the book but also point to significant sections of the first part where New Testament passages are used.

The first chapter in the second half of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* opens with a treatment of the gospel of Matthew written by the late Roman Catholic scholar, Daniel J. Harrington.² It makes perfect sense to begin an assessment of Messianic Judaism and the New Testament by consulting Matthew, which has traditionally been viewed as the most “Jewish” of the gospels.³ Harrington maintained, as do the majority of Matthean scholars today, that as an interpreter of the Torah, the Jesus of Matthew does not render the “biblical commandments obsolete or useless.”⁴ Rather, Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah offers a “vantage point from which God’s will as it is revealed in the Law and the Prophets might be perceived and put into practice.”⁵ The scholarly consensus in question is evoked at the beginning of *Introduction*

¹ D. Rudolph and J. Willits, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

² D. J. Harrington, “Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 159–167.

³ D. J. Harrington, “Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community,” p. 159.

⁴ D. J. Harrington, “Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community,” p. 163.

⁵ D. J. Harrington, “Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community,” p. 163.

to *Messianic Judaism* in order to signal a growing Messianic Jewish attitude that embraces a Torah-observant lifestyle.⁶ In this context, passages such as Matt 5:17–20 (“Do not think I have come to abolish the law”) serve to promote Messianic Jewish reclamations of Torah observance for Jesus-believing Jews (see, for example, the statement by the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregation in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*).⁷

No chapter in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* deals with the gospel of Mark, or with the gospel of John for that matter. Perhaps the absence of any treatment of Mark stems from the tacit acknowledgment that the second gospel of the New Testament was penned primarily for a non-Jewish audience, though such scholars as David Rudolph, Daniel Boyarin, and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra have each argued that its texture is Jewish and that its author was probably a Jew.⁸

What proves remarkable is the usage and treatment of Luke-Acts throughout *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, the role that the Lukan corpus plays in promoting Torah observance among Messianic Jews as well as affirming Jewish eschatological hopes for Israel’s national restoration. I say “remarkable,” for mainstream Lukan studies, which have inevitably been dominated by non-Jewish Christian scholarship and set of interests, unsurprisingly posit for the most part that Luke-Acts is a Gentile Christian text, a Roman-friendly document disinterested in, if not hostile to, Judaism, one whose back is turned on Jerusalem and whose gaze is firmly set toward Rome. Yet, the second part of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* contains no less than two chapters devoted almost exclusively to Luke-Acts, while references to Acts abound in the first part of the book to defend what Messianic Jewish scholar Mark Kinzer has dubbed a “bilateral ecclesiology,” in which Gentile Christians and Messianic Jews maintain their distinctive identities without assimilating with each other.⁹ Thus, Richard Bauckham discusses the so-called Jerusalem

⁶ D. Rudolph and J. Willitts, *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 21–22.

⁷ D. Rudolph and J. Willitts, *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, p. 67.

⁸ D. Rudolph, “Yeshua and the Dietary Laws: A Reassessment of Mark 7:19b,” *EvQ* 74 (2002): 291–311; D. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012); D. Stökl Ben Ezra, “Markus-Evangelium,” *RAC* 24 (2010): 173–207.

⁹ Some significant references to Acts appear in D. Rudolph and J. Willitts, *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 22, 23–24, 49, 93, and especially pp. 139–142 that offer an intriguing report on the contemporary “Jerusalem Council II.” It affirmed, in the spirit of the “first Jerusalem Council” that welcomed a Gentile Christian branch without enforcing circumcision, the current existence of a Jewish segment within the body of believers in Jesus. On the notion of bilateral ecclesiology, see M. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

Council as per Acts.¹⁰ He correctly points out that this council does not entertain the idea that Jewish disciples of Jesus should give up observing Torah.¹¹ Likewise, and contrary to what has been traditionally assumed, Peter's vision and his subsequent encounter with Cornelius, as depicted in Acts, do not announce the abrogation of a Jewish diet for Jews—whether followers of Jesus or not—but wrestle with the ramifications of Gentile incorporation into the Jesus movement.

In the other chapter devoted to Luke-Acts, Darrel Bock convincingly argues that the hope for a national restoration of the Jewish people remains alive throughout Luke-Acts.¹² Scholars of Christian background have customarily rebuked the nationalist attitude voiced by the apostles in Acts 1:6 where they ask Jesus after his resurrection whether the time has finally come for the kingdom of Israel to be restored. Did the disciples of Jesus fail to get it? Were they not supposed to know by now that the kingdom Jesus preached was purely a spiritual reality, completely void of any political-national interests tied to the land of Israel and the Jewish people? The apostles' insistence on knowing whether the time had finally arrived for Israel's national renaissance has perplexed many a Lukan scholar, used to viewing Luke-Acts as particularly representative of a Gentile Christianity steeped in Greek culture and desperate to win approval in the eyes of the Roman Empire. Such scholars have consequently sought to uncover some kind of covert reprimand in Jesus' reply in Acts 1:7–8, claiming that Palestinian Jewish disciples should have known better, understanding the higher, loftier spiritual truth concerning God's kingdom in *heaven*. But Jesus, as quoted by Acts, does not rebuke the apostles for inquiring about their Jewish yearning for the liberation of the people of Israel who at the time Acts was composed lived under Roman rule. Bock provides an important corrective to this misunderstanding, highlighting passages throughout Luke-Acts that express hope for Israel's restoration and are couched in traditional Jewish nationalist terms. My main disagreement concerns Bock's early dating of Luke-Acts.¹³ I believe all the distinctive Lukan materials that allude to the restoration of Jerusalem make better sense in a post-70 C.E. context, as a unique Jewish response to the traumatic event of the destruction of the second temple by the Romans.

¹⁰ R. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Council Decision," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 178–186.

¹¹ R. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Council Decision," p. 180.

¹² D. Bock, "The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 168–176. I put forward similar arguments in a forthcoming book, tentatively titled "*Because His Face Was Set toward Jerusalem*": *Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Luke-Acts*.

¹³ D. Bock, "The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts," p. 168.

In a similar vein, an Israel-centric affirmation of Jewish eschatological expectations can be found in Revelation as Joel Willits brilliantly shows in his chapter.¹⁴ In contrast to the consensus view on this book, which assumes that “*in the new heavens and new earth, ethnic Israel’s distinctive function in God’s administration of creation is terminated*,” he points to the Jewish language in its last four chapters where “Israel’s history and Israel’s kingdom encompass the history and kingdoms of the new world.”¹⁵ According to Revelation, then, at the end of times, humanity will not simply return to some kind of primordial, Edenic *Urzeit* that matches the awaited *Endzeit* but rather will live in a Davidic city with twelve entrances named after the twelve tribes of Israel, “a political capital city where the throne of God *and* Messiah, the lamb, resides.”¹⁶ I would add, however, that the language in Revelation directed against its foes is far more violent than anything one finds in Luke-Acts.

In any case, these three short chapters bring to the surface the Jewish strata of Luke-Acts as well as Revelation that have been buried deep down under the “tel” of reception history ever since patristic times and all the way to Hans Conzelmann and beyond.¹⁷ Mainstream New Testament scholarship should take particular note of the intriguing appropriation by Messianic Jews of the supposedly least Jewish text of the New Testament—Luke-Acts—to defend their Torah-observant lifestyle and Israel-centric faith.

The next six chapters, written by the distinguished scholars Craig Keener, Scott J. Hafemann, William S. Campbell, Anders Runesson, Justin K. Hardin, and Todd A. Wilson, address various aspects of Paul’s writings. Space does not allow for a proper treatment of each individual contribution but in my opinion, two Pauline passages emerge as notable from some of these treatments. The letter to the Romans, particularly chapters 9–11, is the first and most obvious one. It is now widely accepted that Paul did not teach a replacement theology in which the Jewish people lost their divine election for rejecting Jesus as their Christ. Romans 11:28–29 is clear on this point: “As regards

¹⁴ J. Willits, “The Bride of Messiah and the Israel-ness of the New Heavens and New Earth,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 245–254.

¹⁵ J. Willits, “The Bride of Messiah,” pp. 246–247 (italics his).

¹⁶ J. Willits, “The Bride of Messiah,” p. 247 (italics his).

¹⁷ H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. G. Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1961). The Jewishness of Luke-Acts is treated in R. I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) similarly to Conzelmann. For a historical reading of Luke-Acts (and Matthew) as Jewish texts, see I. W. Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE: Reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as Jewish Texts* (WUNT 2.355; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

election they [i.e., the Jewish people] are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and calling of God are *irrevocable*” (emphasis mine). Both Keener and Campbell discuss some critical aspects of Romans 9–11 in their respective chapters.¹⁸ Keener’s piece especially addresses issues directly tied to Messianic Judaism. According to him, Paul did not teach that once the Gentiles became believers in Jesus, God was finished with the Jewish people. This was not the end of meaningful Jewish history for Paul.¹⁹ Salvation and restoration for Israel remained in the Pauline purview.²⁰

Particularly noticeable is Keener’s emphasis on Paul’s claim that a remnant composed of Jewish believers in Jesus faithful to their covenant remained within the people of Israel and did not constitute some kind of entity separate from the Jews, even after the incorporation of Gentile Christians into the Jewish commonwealth (Rom 11:1–5).²¹ For Paul, these Jews provided assurance that one day all of Israel would be saved (cf. Rom 11:26).²² However, due to a variety of known historical factors, the Jewish remnant eventually disappeared, and the Jesus movement became an exclusively Gentile Christian phenomenon. Keener titled a section of his chapter “The Remnant as a Bridge,” suggesting that present-day Messianic Judaism mirrors the first-century Jewish remnant Paul spoke of in Romans, which could potentially serve as an organic, ecumenical bridge between Judaism and Christianity as well as between Gentile Christians and Messianic Jews, challenging all to reconsider the current arbitrary dichotomy between Jewish identity and faith in Jesus.²³ This potential is also highlighted in the first part of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* where Jennifer M. Rosner suggests that Messianic Judaism could play a special role in the ongoing reconciliation between Jews and Christians, in healing the painful wounds and scars caused by the Jewish-Christian schism.²⁴

The other key Pauline passage that comes to the forefront is 1 Cor 7:7–14. Runesson devotes an entire chapter to this passage.²⁵ Similar to the implicit recognition in Acts 15 that a Torah-observant Jewish branch of the *ekklesia*

¹⁸ C. Keener, “Interdependence and Mutual Blessing in the Church,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 187–199; W. S. Campbell, “The Relationship between Israel and the Church,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 196–205.

¹⁹ C. Keener, “Interdependence and Mutual Blessing,” p. 191.

²⁰ C. Keener, “Interdependence and Mutual Blessing,” pp. 192–193.

²¹ C. Keener, “Interdependence and Mutual Blessing,” pp. 191–192.

²² C. Keener, “Interdependence and Mutual Blessing,” p. 192.

²³ C. Keener, “Interdependence and Mutual Blessing,” p. 193.

²⁴ J. M. Rosner, “Messianic Jews and Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 145–155.

²⁵ A. Runesson, “Paul’s Rule in All the *Ekklesia*,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 214–223.

should exist alongside a Gentile Christian one, it can be argued that by ruling in 1 Cor 7:7–14 that Jews and Gentiles alike should remain in the condition they were called in when joining the Jesus movement, “Paul maintained a two-category worldview consisting of Jews on the one hand and the rest of the world.”²⁶ Furthermore, as Runesson notes, if Paul were consistent in the application of his thought process, he would have followed the ruling he had prescribed, continuing to maintain his Jewish identity through faithful observance of the Torah, since he was circumcised before becoming a follower of Jesus (Phil 3:5).²⁷ First Corinthians 7:7–14 is cited elsewhere in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, embraced as a rule that calls for Messianic Jews to remain Jewish through their faithful abiding in the covenant made between God and the people of Israel rather than assimilating to their Gentile Christian surroundings.²⁸

A number of other chapters on the New Testament appear in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* whose findings unfortunately cannot be rehearsed here. I will instead offer some general comments. First, I have some “minor” quibbles with the historical treatment of certain issues related to early Judaism and Christianity. There is a tendency in the book to simplify and generalize, which is understandable since it aims to offer a concise and accessible presentation on Messianic Judaism to the general reader. The book does a great job in presenting the diversity of contemporary Messianic Jewish expression but tends to treat the early Jesus movement as a homogenous entity. For example, the first chapter, written by David Rudolph, addresses the phenomenon of early Jewish followers of Jesus under the generalizing (and somewhat anachronistic) rubric of “Messianic Judaism in the New Testament Period.”²⁹ Should there not be an understanding that there were “Messianic *Judaisms*” during the first four centuries of the Common Era? What about the so-called Ebionites, those Jewish followers of Jesus who were Torah observant and apparently did *not* believe in the divinity of Jesus? What about the disagreements and even confrontations between the three prominent Jewish followers of Jesus: Paul, Peter, and James? There is a tendency by some authors in

²⁶ A. Runesson, “Paul’s Rule,” p. 221.

²⁷ A. Runesson, “Paul’s Rule,” p. 222.

²⁸ D. Rudolph and J. Willits, *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 24, 27, 49, 214, 227.

²⁹ D. Rudolph, “Messianic Judaism in the New Testament Period,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 21–25.

Introduction to Messianic Judaism (e.g., Bauckham) to downplay the differences between these three and to assume the historicity of events reported in Acts.³⁰

Moreover, a number of passages from the New Testament that may pose problems for contemporary Messianic Jews who wish to affirm the perpetuity of Torah observance are not treated. Though some Pauline texts that have been traditionally understood as announcing the abrogation of the Torah, particularly those in Galatians, are addressed by Hardin and Wilson, others are not.³¹ These include the allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Gal 4:21–31 as well as 2 Corinthians 3, to name just two. It is often asserted in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* that Paul's letters primarily address Gentiles. The point is well made, but the imagery he occasionally applies to the covenant cut at Sinai is troubling even when bearing a Gentile audience in mind. For example, what does Paul mean when he claims that the glory on Moses' face the children of Israel witnessed is now set aside (2 Cor 3:7) because of the arrival of a much greater glory (2 Cor 3:10)? How does the statement in 2 Cor 3:14 apply to Gentile Christians when it asserts that a veil covers the minds of the people of Israel as they hear the reading of the old covenant?

Another entirely missing topic is Christology. This is striking, since the second part of the book includes various topics on the New Testament ranging from post-supersessionist hermeneutics to the possible practice of proselytism among Jews in the Second Temple period.³² One chapter written by Markus Bockmuehl highlights the Davidic messiahship affirmed by various books in the New Testament, illustrating how the messianic expectations of the early Jewish followers of Jesus were thoroughly Jewish.³³ Yet no chapter deals with the issue of Jesus' divinity, which Messianic Jews almost universally confess today. As noted earlier, no chapter in the book covers the gospel of John, assessing its "high christology." Many know of Daniel Boyarin's recent work on the canonical gospels and his argument that Jewish binitarianism preceded Christian trinitarianism.³⁴ A presentation along such lines, demonstrating how the belief in the existence of a highly exalted heavenly or divine being besides

³⁰ R. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Council Decision," pp. 180–181.

³¹ J. K. Hardin, "Equality in the Church," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 224–234; T. A. Wilson, "The Supersession and Superfluity of the Law? Another Look at Galatians," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 235–244.

³² R. K. Soulen, "The Standard Canonical Narrative and the Problem of Supersessionism," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 282–291; J. Dickson, "Mission-Commitment in Second Temple Judaism," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 255–263.

³³ M. Bockmuehl, "The Son of David and the Gospel," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, pp. 264–272.

³⁴ D. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, pp. 53–101.

the one God was part and parcel of certain Second Temple Jewish circles that preceded the rise of rabbinic Judaism, which later declared such a belief as heresy (known in rabbinic jargon as the belief in the “two powers”), would have only served to strengthen the Messianic Jewish position that their confession of Jesus as messiah and God’s divine son is also anchored in Jewish antiquity, including Jewish writings outside the New Testament canon.

In any case, I am sure Messianic Judaism will have or already has its answers to the many questions and issues raised above. As stated, many of the exegetical arguments, particularly those dealing with the Israel-centered vision of national eschatological restoration expressed in Luke-Acts and Revelation, I find to be compelling, although, on a personal note, I am concerned that these findings could be politically manipulated to promote certain religiously fueled ideological tendencies currently on the rise in Israel/Palestine.

In conclusion, it has become customary in our pluralistic age to accept varying interpretations of Scripture and to appreciate various religious and cultural expressions. As Runesson points out in relation to differing positions on key topics in Pauline studies, “We are now in a situation in which no clear consensus exists on these matters; Protestants, Catholics, Jews from different denominational backgrounds, including Messianic Jews, agnostics, and atheists, form new patterns of agreement and disagreement across confessional divides.”³⁵ This pluriform reality, which welcomes cultural diversity, is reflected in the multiplicity of endeavors hosted by SBL/AAR, which are devoted to such topics as “African Biblical Hermeneutics,” “African-American Biblical Hermeneutics,” “Asian and Asian-American Hermeneutics,” “Islands, Islanders, and Scriptures,” “Latino/a and Latin American Biblical Interpretation,” “LGBTI/Queer Hermeneutics,” “Minoritized Criticism and Biblical Interpretation,” “Postcolonial Studies and Biblical Studies,” “Feminist Hermeneutics of the Bible,” “Black Theology,” “Christian Zionism in Comparative Perspective,” and “Latter-day Saints and the Bible,” and include “Ethnic Chinese Biblical Colloquium,” “Adventist Society of Religious Studies,” and “Middle Eastern Christianity Group,” to name just a few. In such a context, it is especially striking that there has never been an SBL/AAR session dedicated to a book on Messianic Judaism with chapters written by Messianic Jewish scholars. Only in November of 2014 was such an event organized by the National Association of Professors of Hebrew (NAPH).

³⁵ A. Runesson, “Paul’s Rule,” p. 214.

It would seem that the liminal status of Messianic Judaism is still hard for many, whether secular or religious, to swallow, but the movement's presence reminds New Testament scholars of all stripes and colors about the primary role that early Jewish followers of Jesus played in the formation of the Jesus movement. As Joel Willits points out in his treatment of Revelation, readers approach the New Testament (or any other text for that matter) with certain presuppositions, which "are often the most determinative factor in an interpretation."³⁶ These include sets of questions and interests that exist even before a given text is encountered, prioritizing certain matters of inquiry above others and thus conditioning the reading process and its final interpretive outcome. Not surprisingly, when some "Gentile Christian" scholars studied such New Testament passages as Acts 15; 21:20–24 and 1 Cor 7:7–14, they overlooked what these passages might have meant or implied for Jewish followers of Jesus, focusing instead on the Gentile Christians addressed in these writings. Messianic Jews have naturally handled the same passages with other questions and priorities in mind, being interested, similarly to many of the Jews who wrote the documents now contained in the New Testament, in faithfully maintaining their identity as Jewish followers of Jesus. Their drawing attention to these neglected issues should be welcomed as a further contribution toward the ongoing endeavor of reassessing much of early Christianity as a thoroughly Jewish phenomenon whose Jewishness was more pervasive and lasting than previously thought.

³⁶ J. Willits, "The Bride of Messiah," p. 245.

THE *RE*-NEWED PERSPECTIVE: POST-SUPERSESSIONIST APPROACH TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Joel Willitts

North Park University

The essay describes the distinctive hermeneutical approach of the chapters in Part 2 of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* that is most usefully named post-supersessionist. This reading strategy is characterized by its intentionality in reading the New Testament in order to cultivate a *habitus* of the *ekklesia* of Messiah where Jewish ethnic identity is cultivated and not erased.

The second half of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* represents an emerging *post-supersessionist* approach to the New Testament.¹ The term “post-supersessionist” will no doubt have its supporters and detractors, but it remains the most useful way to identify the line taken by the exegetical and theological essays in the second part of the volume.

In the book’s conclusion, I characterized post-supersessionist reading of the New Testament by sketching its four key assumptions:

1. God’s covenant relationship with the Jewish people (Israel) is present and future.
2. Israel has a distinctive role and priority in God’s redemptive activity through Messiah Jesus.
3. By God’s design and calling, there is a continuing distinction between Jew and Gentile in the church today.
4. For Jews, distinction takes shape fundamentally through Torah observance as an expression of covenant faithfulness to the God of Israel and the Messiah Jesus.²

It would be inaccurate to draw the conclusion from this presentation, or from the discussed book, that the contributors of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* agree on questions of method and on the interpretation of the very assumptions I have listed—or even on all of these core assumptions; there is a continued dialogue, of course. That does not preclude, however, a unified “sensibility,” an “intuition” if you like, about the kind of conclusions that are

¹ D. Rudolph and J. Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

² J. Willitts, “Conclusion,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, p. 317.

satisfactorily valid from the historical, exegetical, and theological standpoints. This is important because, at the bottom, I really do not believe the debate is about the minutiae of exegesis—semantic, grammatical, or otherwise—for example, about the meaning of the ambiguous Pauline phrase *pistis christou* or the lexical study of “righteousness” which has dominated the debates between so-called traditional and New Perspective readings of Paul.

There are, of course, key questions of history that matter, not least those addressed by the rapidly developing area of Jewish studies that move very fast today, redefining the way we understand the nature of the Second Temple Judaism, which is the historical, cultural, and theological context of early Christianity. The developments in this separate discipline, perhaps precisely because it is seen as separate, are in many cases simply not sufficiently followed by New Testament scholars. What is more, they continue to take inadequate account of the concrete comportment, the “way-of-being-in-the-world” of Yeshua’s *ekklesia*. I think this is due, to a great extent, to the abiding Cartesian foundation of thought which works with a dualism that approaches evidence in a primary cognitivist or rationalist mode.

A post-supersessionist approach is an invitation to look differently at the material of the apostolic writings in light of their effects. It is unapologetic in its named—that is, consciously stated—“intentionality.” The French phenomenologists, particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty, noted back in the early twentieth century, that human animals relate to the world “intentionally”; there is always an intentionality involved when we think and perceive the world: we think about *something*; we think with a specific intention and that is whether we are conscious of it or not.³ A post-supersessionist approach reads the New Testament seeking to correct a deep-seated sin within the Christian tradition: the exclusion of a fundamental element of its basic definition. On any legitimate reading of the New Testament, one must conclude that the *ekklesia* of Yeshua the Messiah is a community of difference. And that difference, captured in the earliest literature of the New Testament, centered on the ethnicity. This emphasis is contextually situated, to be sure; it was the issue that emerged as the greatest challenge for the earliest circumcised and uncircumcised believers, but nevertheless it was, and is, a constitutive one. Neither Jesus, nor Paul, nor James, nor Peter, nor any of the writers of the apostolic documents envisaged a community that was anything less than this. It was this basic distinction, which was the key outcome of the Gospel, that

³ M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception, and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964); M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (trans. D. Landes; London: Routledge, 2014).

Paul named the “truth of the Gospel” in Galatians 2. I draw attention to the situation that necessitated the formulation in question. In both the case of Titus being compelled to be circumcised (2:5) and the so-called “Antioch Incident” where Peter’s withdrawal acted as a force for ethnic transformation (2:14), the “truth of the Gospel” was tied to the abiding presence of both circumcised and uncircumcised in the *ekklesia*.

So here is the key question: How do we read the New Testament so that the *ekklesia* of Yeshua the Messiah remains a community of the circumcised and uncircumcised? A post-supersessionist framework is necessary if we are to recapture and sustain the “truth of the Gospel.” It is also the basis of any talk of a multi-cultural *ekklesia*. A circumcised/uncircumcised *ekklesia* is the basis of a universal ecclesiology that celebrates diversity, fights cultural hegemony, and supports diverse ethnic expressions of faith in Jesus, whether they be Jewish or Gentile (belonging to one of over 16,000 distinctive ethnic groups that exist today according to some counts).⁴

This is of particular concern for Jewish believers in Jesus because Jewish ethnicity is wrapped up with God-given markers of identity like circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observance—practices that the Gentile Christian church, from the patristic period on, stigmatized due to the belief that they had been set aside with the coming of the Christ and replaced with a new Christian identity. By endowing this perspective on church teaching and practice with normativity, Gentile Christian leaders ensured that there would no longer be an ethnic representation of Jews in the body of Messiah, a most egregious irony since the Messiah lived as a Torah-observant Jew. The primarily Gentile Christian church cannot champion a message of ethnic diversity while at the same time maintaining a theological perspective that strips God-given, socially constructed ethnic boundary markers of identity from Jewish people who follow Jesus.

One contribution of *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* is the demonstration of New Testament hermeneutic that goes beyond the faulty modern intellectualist dualism of body and mind (and the related antinomic pairs of physical versus spiritual or objective versus subjective) that have exercised hegemony over biblical exegesis in the last two centuries. Furthermore, it transcends the 1700-year-old approach to the New Testament that, while not always excluding Jewish ethnicity outright, eliminated it from the church in practice.

⁴ Online: http://www.joshuaproject.net/global_statistics, 2016.

A post-supersessionist reading of the New Testament is rightly called a renewed perspective because it reclaims the essential diversity of the *ekklesia* at its earliest period of social praxis subsequent to, and consequent of, the advent of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel. This constituent ethnic diversity as an essential definition of way-of-being-in-the-world for the community of the Messiah was to be from start to finish. If a distinct Jewish presence in the *ekklesia* is to be vitally sustained, the circumcised side of the ethnic pairing within it requires an ethnically shaped social praxis.

Only New Testament interpretation from a post-supersessionist perspective—or whatever else it may be called—will cultivate Jewish ethnic identity by offering historically grounded and embodied (as opposed to purely cognitivist) readings. Such readings create the space in our contemporary moment for the cultivation of an embodied *habitus* consistent with the foundation story of the *ekklesia* of circumcised and uncircumcised.

THEOLOGICAL AND LITURGICAL COMING OF AGE: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MESSIANIC JUDAISM AND EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

Yaakov Ariel

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The essay highlights the meaning of recent trends in Messianic Judaism, especially as far as its position vis-à-vis evangelical Christianity is concerned, by offering a historical perspective and pointing to elements of continuity as well as departure from older paradigms.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Messianic Judaism, a religious-cultural movement active on the borderlines between evangelical Christianity and Judaism, is enjoying a period of growth and innovation. In the last decade, Messianic intellectuals have developed more independent understandings of their movement in relation to the Christian and Jewish traditions. Some of them have come up with declarations of independence from evangelical missionary patronage. In 2005, Mark Kinzer, a leader and theologian of Hashivenu, an avant-garde branch of Messianic Judaism that wishes to give more voice and space to traditional Jewish thought and lore, published a dramatic book, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*, which expressed the ideas and agendas of the new group.¹ Kinzer is not alone. A series of Messianic leaders and thinkers have come up with new, varied, and creative interpretations of Jewish-Christian identities and cultures.²

This essay comes to highlight the meaning of the new trends for the development of Messianic Judaism and its relation to evangelical Christianity by placing these trends in a historical perspective. It explores the latest developments in the light of the longer history of Hebrew Christian and Messianic Jewish relationship with the organizational, cultural, and theological premises of its evangelical sponsors as well as with the Jewish customs and identities to which its members have increasingly wished to get reconnected. Examination of the relationship between Messianic Judaism and evangelical Christianity as well as of the former's shift toward Judaism offers a

¹ M. S. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

² R. Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Studies in Messianic Jewish Theology; London: Paternoster, 2009).

means of understanding the nature of the movement, its different expressions, and the choices that its members have confronted. It also offers an insight into evangelical culture in the last generation and points to a growing plurality and willingness to accept groups such as Messianic Judaism in its midst.

2. FROM HEBREW CHRISTIANITY TO MESSIANIC JUDAISM

Messianic Jews and their Hebrew Christian predecessors have been an outcome of the special attitude of evangelical Christians toward Jews and their particular vision of that nation's role in God's designs for humanity. The extensive missionary networks that evangelicals have created to approach the Jews and influence their opinions and consequently their destiny resulted in some Jews adopting the evangelical Christian faith and, at times, creating borderline identities. Many converts with intellectual inclinations remained in touch with Jewish ideas and texts, frequently reflecting, in their writings, on the role of the Jewish people in the divine plan. Such converts often dedicated their literary careers to promoting knowledge of Christianity among Jews and writing about Jewish themes for the benefit of the Protestant community that sponsored their work.³ Many of them focused on translations of Christian scriptures and theological tracts into Jewish languages. Such endeavors demanded extensive knowledge, as well as a measure of creativity, but did not put the writers at risk of stepping out of line doctrinally.⁴

By the mid-nineteenth century, Pietist and evangelical missionary societies established a number of prayer meetings intended specifically for Jewish Christians. These assemblies practiced standard Protestant liturgies with minor variations; nonetheless, most converts chose to join regular non-Jewish congregations. Likewise, in Britain an association of Jewish converts was organized in 1865 to give voice to Jewish ministers, missionaries, and thinkers who wished to exchange ideas and promote their agenda in the larger Protestant community. In 1915, Hebrew Christians in North America formed a similar organization, the Hebrew Christian Alliance.⁵ The organizers of the group wished to keep the evangelization of the Jews high on the agenda of evangelical Christianity as well as to persuade Protestants in the historical

³ On such Christian Jews, see, for example, H. Einspruch, *The Man with the Book* (2nd ed.; Baltimore: The Lewis and Harriet Lederer Foundation, 1976).

⁴ See, for example, the list of publications of the first Pietist mission to the Jews, Institutum Judaicum in Halle, Johann Heinrich Callenberg, *Catalogus* 1739.

⁵ On the history of the group, see R. I. Winer, *The Calling: The History of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America 1915–1990* (Wynnewood: Messianic Jewish Alliance of America, 1990).

mission of the Jews and their special position in God's design for human redemption. These would continue to be major components of the Hebrew Christian messages to the Protestant community even with the organizations turning in the 1970s, in names and attitudes, into Messianic Jewish groups promoting a more assertive Jewish-Christian position.⁶

A number of Hebrew-Christian communities appeared on the scene in the 1920s and 1930s. Missionary leaders, including the directors of the Department of Jewish Evangelization of the Presbyterian Church, USA, decided to create Jewish-Christian churches both in response to cultural and social demands of Jewish converts and as a means of financing outposts of evangelism among the Jews.⁷ The new congregations were expected to be financially independent but only slightly more liturgically autonomous than missionary centers. Almost needless to say, the leadership of these congregations did not attempt to come up with theological modifications. Yet they have been among the oldest existing Hebrew Christian expressions and served, alongside organizations of Christian Jews, as forerunners of contemporary Messianic Judaism. Their liturgical innovations were limited, yet they introduced some Jewish symbols, especially in their publications, and experimented with celebration of Jewish holidays while bestowing Christian meanings upon them.⁸ Throughout the 1940s to the 1960s, a handful of additional Hebrew Christian congregations came on the scene, almost all of them sponsored by missionary societies.

Attempts at creating communities that would be independent of ecclesiastical and missionary control were both rare and short lived. In England, Hugh Schonfield tried to form a theologically, liturgically, and communally autonomous Christian Jewish movement amalgamating the Jewish tradition with the Christian faith but gave up relatively soon. In Palestine and Israel, a group of English and German speaking immigrants, centered in Zichron Ya'akov, made a similar bid in the 1930s–1950s. The group, like others of its kind, was

⁶ See, for example, Messianic Jewish books of the period that enthusiastically promoted the new attitudes: M. Evans, *Messianic Judaism? Young Lions of Judah* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1974); Z. Levitt, *Corned Beef, Knishes and Christ: The Story of a 20th Century Levite* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1975); S. Telchin, *Betrayed* (Lincoln: Chosen Books, 1981); B. Rubin, *You Bring the Bagels, I'll Bring the Gospel* (Old Tappan: Chosen Books, 1989).

⁷ Y. Ariel, "Eschatology, Evangelism and Dialogue: The Presbyterian Mission to the Jews, 1920–1960," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 75 (1997): 29–42.

⁸ Jewish-Christian hymnologies have appeared for quite a while but until the 1970s they were mostly general church hymns compiled for Hebrew Christian congregations. One example is *Psalms and Hymns Sung in the Episcopal Jews' Chapel, Palestine Place* (London: Jewish Converts Institution, 1863). Even A. Bar-David, ed., *הלל וזמרה יה* (Jerusalem: Karen Achra Meshihit, 1976) is mostly a collection of Protestant hymns translated into Hebrew.

small, well-educated, elitist, and independent of evangelical support. Analogously to Schonfield, its members wished to create something new, a more even amalgamation of Judaism and Christianity. Unacceptable to both Christians and Jews at the time, as well as to the larger milieu of Jewish converts to Christianity, these and other avant-garde experiments were unsuccessful in turning their communal, liturgical, and theological innovations into long-lasting and popular movements.

It was already at the turn of the twentieth century that the term “Messianic Judaism” came to designate those converts who wished to maintain some Jewish customs and rites, stirring controversy and, at times, negative reactions among fellow convert activists.⁹ However, the Israeli movement, which, for the most part, sided theologically and liturgically with the more missionary-dependent Hebrew Christians, came to be known as Messianic Judaism. Part of that choice resulted from the understandable reluctance of evangelical Christians in Israel to use the term “Christianity” when approaching Jews. In Modern Hebrew, the term *משיח*, literally “Messianic,” does not carry the same alien image for the Jews, highlighting instead the eschatological faith of Hebrew Christians, which many evangelicals in Israel have promoted. Here, the movement acquired a Hebrew Israeli character almost by default. Many of the congregations have conducted their services in Hebrew, although at times, other languages, especially English, and later on Russian and Amharic, have also been in use. The major meeting day has been Saturday, the indigenous Sabbath, and the cultural environment of Jewish believers in Jesus in Israel has been mostly Israeli, even though many congregations have also attracted foreigners and newly arrived immigrants who were not fully immersed in local culture. Until recently, almost all Israeli congregations were supported by missionary societies and in spite of the use of Hebrew, their theological premises conformed with evangelical norms in general and more specifically with those of the groups that sponsored the missions. Much of the hymnology, until the 1980s, consisted of translations, mostly from English.¹⁰

A more assertive movement of Christian Jews came on the scene in the United States in the early 1970s. Its proponents were American Hebrew Christian pastors and students who felt confident enough to carry the movement, its ideology, and its liturgy a step forward. Messianic Jews were

⁹ S. B. Rohold, “Messianic Judaism,” *Prayer and Work for Israel* 9 (January 1918): 8–11; D. Rausch, *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology and Polity* (New York: Mellen, 1982), pp. 32–43.

¹⁰ See, for example, G. Nerel, “Struggling for Identity: Jewish Believers in Yeshua in Eretz Israel (1850–1950)” (paper presented at the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism [LCJE], 5th International Conference, Jerusalem, June 1995), pp. 123–130.

strongly influenced by the countercultural trends, prevalent at the time among the young people who demanded greater freedoms and the right to explore and experiment, among other things in the spiritual and religious realms. To them, attempts to transcend old boundaries and combine Jewish identity and customs with the Christian evangelical faith seemed possible and legitimate. There were other hybrid evangelical movements around. Most evangelicals of the period took exception to hippie values and political stances, but a growing number of them embraced the countercultural styles in dress, music, and esthetics, utilizing all these in approaching younger people.¹¹ Some groups amalgamated countercultural styles with evangelical theology and morality. Such communities as the Calvary and Vineyard chains of churches were often charismatic, adhering to more expressive and spiritually stirring modes of worship and promoting non-formal attire and dress codes.¹² In addition, evangelicals became more open to ethnic expressions of their faith.¹³ Veteran Hebrew Christian leaders and missionaries, who at first feared that the rise of Messianic Judaism would taint their image among Christians, were surprised to discover that the evangelical world was, on the whole, willing to accept the new movement.

The Messianic groups were also encouraged by the new image of Jews and Israel in American society in general, and in evangelical circles in particular. The latter were highly impressed by the results of the 1967 war, in which Israel defeated three Arab armies within less than a week. The capture of the historical parts of Jerusalem stirred their messianic hopes and served to validate the conservative evangelical manner of reading the Bible and the evangelical premillennialist-dispensationalist philosophy of history.¹⁴ Conservative evangelicals became convinced that Israel and the Jewish people were about to play an important role in the events that would precede the arrival of the Messiah. The war worked to change the image of the Jews as individuals; for a while, they came to be seen as paragons of victorious heroism. This change worked in favor of a more positive attitude toward Jewish Israeli culture, allowing for the increased incorporation of Hebrew, the singing of Israeli songs, and in general for a greater pride in Jewish roots. While the evangelical community was on the whole willing to accept a Jewish-evangelical enclave

¹¹ R. H. Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 12–30.

¹² On the new evangelical chains of churches, see D. E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹³ On such communities, see E. H. Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals: New Models for Civic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ See, for example, H. Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

in its midst, Jewish leaders of almost all denominations distanced themselves from the new movement. They viewed it as totally Christian and, worse, as a Christian attempt to infiltrate the Jewish community under false pretenses.¹⁵

Missionaries, however, followed in the evangelical footsteps. While in the early 1970s they viewed the fledgling Messianic movement as a menace, within a few years came the realization that the tide had turned. The more assertive Messianic attitudes were on the rise, and the new movement was quickly gaining sympathy and recognition among evangelicals as well as establishing alternative venues for spreading the Christian message among Jews. The attitude of a number of missionary societies, such as Jews for Jesus, has remained ambivalent, but as a rule, missions moved from fighting Messianic Judaism to embracing its symbols, ideology, language, and tactics. In doing so, they took part in shaping its development. Such missionary organizations as the American Board of Missions to the Jews, which changed its name to the Chosen People Ministries, and denominational groups, such as the Assemblies of God and the Christian and Missionary Alliance, have begun, by the early 1980s, to establish Messianic congregations. Such congregations, the missions discovered, serve as centers of evangelism by just being there. They stir interest and curiosity, carrying less of a stigma in Jewish minds than missionary outposts, which have mostly been phased out. Messianic Jews have felt comfortable inviting friends and acquaintances to visit their centers, hear sermons, interact with members, and be impressed by the piety these centers radiate and the sense of community they offer. While the first Messianic congregations, such as Beth Yeshua in Philadelphia and Beth Messiah in Cincinnati, were established independent of missions' support, their second wave was largely backed by missionary societies. Such assemblies, even if called Messianic, have tended to be more in line with the older Hebrew Christian paradigm, although they too gradually expanded their usage of Messianic Hebrew terminology and opened themselves throughout the years to Messianic liturgy and hymnology.

The evangelical sponsorship also took physical forms. Many of the new congregations shared space with other evangelical assemblies, which, in their turn, have often represented specific ethnicities, such as Korean or Chinese. Messianic Jewish communities have also followed the divisions among evangelical Christians. The most salient of these has been until recently the split between Charismatics and non-Charismatics. This difference in the character

¹⁵ On Jewish reactions, see Y. Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880–2000* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

of the congregations, their liturgies, and style of worship has, at times, even affected the emergence of separate organizational bodies within the larger Messianic Jewish community.¹⁶

3. NEW TRENDS

While evangelicals approved of Jewish ethnic and cultural attributes, they also expected Messianic Jews to identify with evangelical ethics and social norms. Most of the latter have adopted conservative political and cultural positions, vehemently opposing abortions, for example. Messianic theology followed mainstream evangelicalism, with a special emphasis on eschatology and what Arnold Fruchtenbaum has called Israelology—an attempt to highlight the role of the Jewish people within the larger evangelical theological framework.¹⁷ Fruchtenbaum himself is a good example of the path taken by Hebrew Christian leaders with regard to Messianic styles, language, and ideas. Facing the first wave of independent Messianic congregations, he wrote, in the early 1970s, a book defending the older Hebrew Christian paradigm.¹⁸ In the following years, he cautiously shifted his views, with his extensive theological writings coming to reflect issues that concern Messianic Jews. Ariel Ministries, an outreach group which Fruchtenbaum founded and which enjoyed generous support from evangelical Christians, has established a number of Messianic Jewish congregations.¹⁹ The missionary and Messianic agendas remained entangled, even as the Messianic groups displayed more assertively their connection to Jewish Israeli culture. The general trends in evangelical society encouraged this direction. Following the 1967 war, conservative evangelicals became devoted to Israel and its causes. In addition to mustering political and financial support, they started, in growing numbers, to take tours of the country, discussing their impressions and displaying Israeli historical monuments and scenery in their journals and later on their websites. Many evangelical congregations began showing interest in celebrating Jewish holidays that originate in the Bible, especially the Passover Seder, and Messianic

¹⁶ On such bodies, see M. Glaser, “Messianic Jewish National Organizations,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (ed. D. J. Rudolph and J. Willitts; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), pp. 116–125.

¹⁷ A. G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin: Ariel Ministries, 1989).

¹⁸ A. G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History and Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974).

¹⁹ On Ariel Ministries, its various activities, and the views and beliefs it promotes, see online: www.ariel.org.

congregations and missionary groups have been busy producing original Jewish-Christian Haggadot.

By the 2000s, most Messianic congregations adopted at least some synagogue artifacts and rituals; today their sanctuaries feature a growing number of Arks of the Covenant and actual Torah scrolls. These extraordinary adaptations reflect not only independence of spirit on the part of Messianic congregations, but also changes within evangelical culture. Other ethnic evangelical groups have likewise given expression to their particular roots, heritage, rites, and symbols, at times giving voice to cultures and traditions that originated in non-Christian religions; evangelical Native Americans are one striking example of this trend. At evangelical rallies, both Jewish believers in Jesus and Native Americans are particularly noticeable, dressed in semi-traditional garb and displaying ethnocultural religious symbols such as shofars.

In spite of their growing tendency to adopt and re-interpret Jewish customs, until very recently Messianic Jewish communities mostly continued to rely on evangelical instruction, approval, and support. Their leaders were trained at evangelical theological seminaries and schools of higher learning. For the most part, their writings conformed to the basic premises of evangelical theology. It is therefore quite remarkable that in the 2000s–2010s, a new generation of Messianic thinkers have come out with a new set of theological understandings of who Messianic Jews are and where they should stand vis-à-vis Judaism and Christianity. For the first time, authors who remain within the Messianic Jewish and evangelical camps have attempted to combine traditional Protestant theologies with rabbinical lore and more independent interpretations of Jewish-Christian faith and heritage. Such authors have not challenged basic Christian dogmas or created a new canon of Christian sacred scriptures; Jesus remains in the center of their piety and soteriology. At the same time, they do not consider themselves bound anymore by classical Protestant doctrine.²⁰

The common denominator of the new Messianic theologians is that they have all completed doctoral degrees in prestigious secular universities in the United States, Britain, or Israel and focused in their research on Messianic historical, theological, or exegetical themes. The largest and most outgoing group is Hashivenu, which promotes the incorporation of post-biblical rabbinical wisdom into the Messianic Jewish messages and tradition. Borrowing from *Pirke Aboth*, the group declares at the home page of its website:

²⁰ R. Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*.

With the cry “Hashivenu” the Torah service concludes, imploring God to bring us back to himself. It is our conviction that HaShem brings Messianic Jews to a richer knowledge of himself through a modern day rediscovery of the paths of our ancestors—Avodah (liturgical worship), Torah (study of sacred texts), and Gemilut Chasadim (deeds of lovingkindness).²¹

Further perusal of the group’s principles points to more conventional evangelical-Jewish teachings. Composed of intellectuals and scholars who often serve as pastors of Messianic congregations, Hashivenu includes Mark Kinzer, David Rudolph, Elliot and Seth Klayman, Stuart Dauermann, and others. The new movement of theological and exegetical innovations also includes individuals that are not members of the group. Gershon Nerel, a historian of Jewish believers in Jesus in Palestine and Israel, has promoted the idea that the Bible is the only abiding source of authority. While holding to Western Christian dogma and sharing the evangelical premise of the need to accept Jesus as a personal savior, he sees theological and exegetical constructions of Protestant thinkers as mere suggestions. Tsvi Sadan, another Israeli scholar who holds a doctoral degree from the Hebrew University, was associated with Hashivenu but took a more avant-garde approach. For him, even the traditional understanding of the Trinity is opened to re-examination.

Sadan is an exception. For the most part, Messianic theological innovations have remained within boundaries still acceptable to the larger evangelical community. Likewise, Hashivenu activists, like almost all of Messianic Jewish rank and file, have upheld evangelical cultural and social values. Their congregational leaders are all men, to offer one example. And the movement almost unanimously refuses to view gay relationships as acceptable, although it has exercised a “don’t ask, don’t tell” attitude that allows gays and lesbians to join Messianic congregations and find their spiritual and communal homes there.

Amazingly, while the new theological trends have stirred debates as well as objections within the Messianic Jewish intellectual milieu, the movement as a whole did not ostracize the thinkers or their theological enterprises. Likewise, the broader evangelical circles have not reacted with alarm; in fact, they have paid little attention to the growing theological independence of this particular group of evangelical Jews. Messianic Jewish congregations have long been a part of the larger evangelical amalgam. An outstanding outcome of this reality is the growing number of women and men who were not raised Jewish but chose to join Messianic communities as viable spiritual and communal

²¹ Online: www.Hashivenu.org; compare *m. Avot* 1:2.

homes that offer good expressions of, and instruction in, the Christian faith. Such non-Jews find themselves in congregations that promote Jewish identity and heritage in addition to evangelical faith and morality, display Jewish symbols, sing Hebrew songs, and recite prayers that often resemble traditional Jewish liturgy. Moreover, such communities emphasize the role of the Jewish people in God's plans for humanity, are committed to the well-being of the State of Israel, and disseminate knowledge on Jewish and Israeli themes. Messianic congregations also call upon their members to disseminate the Christian gospel among their Jewish friends. While Messianic Jews have come to promote Christianity among the Jews, ultimately they have also promoted Judaism among Christians. No less ironically, just as Messianic thought and liturgy came to be more Jewish-oriented than ever before, members who are not Jewish, at least as far as their upbringing is concerned, came to be the majority in Messianic congregations.

4. CONCLUSION

Since their inception in the nineteenth century, most groups of Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews have existed within the larger rubric of evangelical Christianity. Even though many Messianic assemblies have not joined denominational bodies (thousands of evangelical congregations in the last generation have chosen to remain non-denominational), they have often depended on missionary and evangelical financial support to start their communities going. Messianic Jews also made use of evangelical schools of higher learning and publishing venues. They conformed to evangelical theological and moral demands, eventually allowing themselves a growing amount of freedom as the evangelical camp allowed for more plurality and innovations.

The evangelical-messianic relationship can be compared to a family dynamic in which the young wish to build their own lives yet still depend on their parents economically and morally. Like many families, this relationship has not remained static. As the movement developed and gained greater confidence, its members, like many Americans of the last generation, attempted to relate to the heritage, faith, and identity of their two spiritual parents in more equal ways. Messianic Jews, in varied manners and doses, reconfigured the triangular pattern, borrowing from Jewish cultures and identities more than before but, as a rule, not at the expense of evangelical approval and recognition. Remarkably and tellingly, the recent wave of theological creativity by a number of Messianic thinkers and groups did not diminish, in spite of the daring and at times provocative nature of their statements, the movement's

standing in evangelical circles. Tens of thousands of born-again non-Jews have joined Messianic congregations, viewing them as preferred evangelical settings. Such members have not been among the movement's avant-garde thinkers, but they have also witnessed the growing trend toward Jewish languages, symbols, celebrations, and foods. Acculturating into the Jewish-evangelical milieu, they have related to its atmosphere as a pious manifestation of the Christian-evangelical faith.

In sum, taken as a whole, the relationship between the evangelical movement and the still relatively young and small Messianic Jewish enclave in its midst is strong and supportive. The latter's tendency to be closer to its Jewish heritage and give it more room has not eroded this relationship although it has created more diverse and complex culture and intellectual life within the Messianic world and therefore also among the evangelicals at large.

PERPETUAL DILEMMA

Zev Garber

Los Angeles Valley College

My reasons for engaging in a scholarly discussion of the beliefs and practices of Messianic Judaism are straightforward and transforming: to learn what they teach before responding with approval and/or disapproval, recognize differences in religious sancta, and express acceptance or non-acceptance in a non-polemical and respectful way. As a practicing Jew who dialogues with Christians, I have learned to respect the covenantal role that Gentile Christians understand to be the way of the scriptural Jesus in their confessional lives. But I have serious difficulty in applying the same criteria to affirmed Jewish believers in Torah and Christ Jesus. Why so? They are not Gentiles but they are Trinitarians not Unitarians in their acceptance of ישוע המשיח, Jesus the Messiah—a serious ethnic Jewish (religious) problem which appears unresolvable until ימי משיח, the days of the Messiah.

1. FIRST ENCOUNTER

The Society of Biblical Literature, founded in 1880, is recognized in academia as the primary scholarly address for the study of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Certainly, its longevity is a telling sign of its mandate—to interpret the Holy Writ objectively, insightfully, critically, creatively, theologically, and respectfully—being successful. For better, not for worst, controversy permeates the rooms and conferences of the Society of Biblical Literature annual meetings (and its publications) as divergent positions and persuasions are Solomonicly argued. And for the most part harmony in diversity prevails under the tent of Sinai and Calvary.

In the summer of 2010, however, a tearing occurred. Professor Ronald S. Hendel (University of California, Berkeley) published an opinion piece where he critiqued the inability of the Society of Biblical Literature to separate effectively faith and reason with regard to its current direction and affiliate organizations and thus falling into “dissension and hypocrisy.”¹ The Society of Biblical Literature responded to this charge (and others, including covert proselytizing activity and supersessionist scholarship) that to the best of its knowledge and ability, it stimulates the critical investigation of biblical literature and encourages scholarly exegesis, inquiry, and discussion. Further,

¹ R. S. Hendel, “Farewell to SBL: Faith and Reason in Biblical Studies,” *BAR* 36 (July–August 2010): 28, 74.

it welcomes confession-based affiliates that endorse humanities-based research.²

For years, I have organized and coordinated the sessions of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew (NAPH) at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meetings. An affiliate of the Society of Biblical Literature, NAPH has not been affected by the society's *brew*. Revelation and Reason are not an issue. NAPH sessions at the Society of Biblical Literature focus on Biblical Hebrew linguistics and methodology. The meetings permeated by traditional exegesis benefit by encountering rationalist reasoning and modernist categories of thought. When biblical exegesis and rabbinic eisegesis meet Western cognitive modes, holistic learning transpires. And is that not what it is all about? Nonetheless, in the vineyard of NAPH, a fissure of geographical, seasonal, thematic, and human proportions is detected. For the most part, its fall annual meetings relate to Scriptures cum Rabbis, with American and European scholars presenting in English, while the spring NAPH Language and Literature Conference is primarily conducted in Hebrew, with many Israelis presenting and in attendance—a *He-brew* in the making?

Having attended annual and regional meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature (as well as those of American Academy of Religion and NAPH) for more than a biblical generation, I can frankly say that parochial ecclesiastical rules are broken at the annual meeting: it is not unusual to see the religious without their distinctive outward attire or faith attitude, walking into forbidden places, eating forbidden foods, and imbibing forbidden drinks. Party not prayer is the norm at the conference hotel. Of course, all this is done with *דָּרֵךְ אֲרָץ*, civility and respect. Is not social interaction, meeting old and new friends under relaxed conditions, an attraction—some would say, an axiom—at the conferences? Simply put, relax, dress down, schmooze and choose, and if this is not your cup of tea or brew (beer, liquor, smoke...), go forth to another crew or return to home campus, community, and church.

I am no prude nor am I an ostrich with its head in the sand. After all, colleagues across academia have titled the *Festschrift* in my honor, *Maven in Blue Jeans*.³ Under the aegis of the Society of Biblical Literature, sessions of scholarship are to live up to its mandate—academic presentations without limitations for the advancement of biblical knowledge and related disciplines.

² For the response and the discussion that followed, see “Discussing Faith and Reason in Biblical Studies” online: www.sbl-site.org/membership/farewell.aspx.

³ S. L. Jacobs, ed., *Maven in Blue Jeans: A Festschrift in Honor of Zev Garber* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009). See also “Symposium on the Work of Zev Garber: Reviews of *Maven in Blue Jeans*,” *HS* 51 (2010): 351–383.

I endorse this policy and I understand and accept the restrictions that are found at gatherings sponsored by universities and seminaries for affiliate alumnae and friends, publishing houses, and denominational groups: grace at church-sponsored breakfast sessions, lack of grace but kosher food at Jewish seminary evening receptions, and neither grace nor dietary supervision at the NAPH annual breakfast and business meeting. So why the shock, disappointment, and sadness at the “MJTI Center for Jewish-Christian Relations” reception at the Society of Biblical Literature 2010 annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia?

The invitation to attend in the Society of Biblical Literature program book reads:

The MJTI Center for Jewish-Christian Relations was established in 2009 to facilitate a Messianic Jewish contribution to Jewish-Christian relations. Our center seeks to (1) build relationships with scholars and leaders in the Jewish and Christian worlds, and (2) sponsor events that model a new conversation between Jews and Christians in which the Messianic Jewish presence plays a constructive role. Our SBL reception is an opportunity to learn more about the vision of the center and the activities we have planned for 2010–2011.

I lecture and write on matters of Christian Scriptures—for example, my chapters in *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, of which I am also the editor, have been reviewed favorably in *Review of Biblical Literature* and in other academic journals, and I participate actively in post-Shoah Christian-Jewish dialogue.⁴ Thus, I anxiously looked forward to attending the aforementioned Jewish-Christian reception. The confession-based Messianic Jewish sponsorship did not sink in until I *crossed* the threshold of the Hong Kong room at the Hyatt Regency. On a table at the entrance, I noticed books and other literature advocating Jewish life in Yeshua and advancing Messianic Judaism. Attendees and announced events promoted Messianic Jewish outreach and also projected dialogue encounter with practicing Christians and Jews. Indeed, the reception was enmeshed with Jewish messianic advocacy; however, given the virtual absence of the rabbinic Jews and conventional Christians, it was baffling how the dialogue would begin. After a while, I felt emotionally uncomfortable. Why so? I came to a reception at a scholarly conference looking for friendship and learning in a new place

⁴ W. Brueggemann, review of Z. Garber, ed., *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, *RBL* 2011. Online: https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7963_9101.pdf; J. E. Wright, review of Z. Garber, ed., *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, *RBL*, 2014. Online: https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7963_8708.pdf. See also my online interview on WBAA, Purdue University, NPR affiliate: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SAOF-4pFzE.

only to walk out disappointed and sad. In a converse way, I felt like Paul reverting to Saul, walking from the table of Messianic Jewish Christians in righteous conflict.

Overkill, underplay, backbiting, misrepresentation, polemics are, unfortunately, staples at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meetings. More than most of my Jewish colleagues, I can understand Messianic Jews attempting to gain a foothold at the society's gathering. And that is why the sponsors ought to be gravely concerned about the state of the empathetic visitor who felt like the stranger in their midst—Opportunity lost.

2. JEWISH ETHNICITY AND RELIGION: THE SAGA OF BLESSED EDITH STEIN⁵

Edith Stein was born in 1891 to a wealthy Jewish family in Breslau (Wroclaw, Poland). She studied philosophy at the University of Göttingen and earned a doctorate in 1916. She became an atheist, but in 1922, inspired by a biography of St. Teresa of Avila, received baptism as a Catholic and eleven years later, joined the Cologne convent as Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. In the same year, Stein started her autobiography entitled *Life in a Jewish Family*. In 1938, she wrote to the Pope, urging him to condemn the Nazis for the attacks on the synagogues and Jewish homes and businesses in what became known as *Kristallnacht*. Not long thereafter, her order sent her to Echt in the Netherlands where it was thought she would be safer than in Germany, but in May 1940 that country was occupied by the Nazis. Two years later, the Dutch Catholic Bishops protested the transportation of Jews to concentration camps in Eastern Europe. In reprisal, the Germans ruled that Jewish converts to Catholicism were to be seized and sent to the camps. On August 2, 1942, Stein was arrested at the Carmelite convent at Echt, along with her sister Rosa. A week later, they were both dead, gassed at Auschwitz.

Catholic authorities claim that Edith Stein “died as a daughter of Israel, ‘for the glorification of the most holy name (of God)’ and at the same time as Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.”⁶ There is no doubt about her being a Christian at death, but can a “baptized Jew” qualify as a Jew? Eugene J. Fisher, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs (Catholic-Jewish Relations) of the National Conference of

⁵ Part of this section is drawn from my review of J. R. Palmisano, *Beyond the Walls: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Edith Stein on the Significance of Empathy for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, *H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews*, June 2013. Online: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/shortrev.php?id=37386>.

⁶ E. J. Fisher, ed., *John Paul II on the Holocaust* (Washington: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1988), p. 8.

Catholic Bishops (NCCB), believes so; he points out that “there does exist Orthodox *halakhic* opinion that one who is born Jewish does not cease to be a Jew, albeit an apostate Jew, simply by conversion to another faith, even Christianity.”⁷ However, a careful reading of the Talmud suggests otherwise: “‘Israel has sinned’ [Josh 7:11]. Said R. Abbah b. Zabda, ‘Although *he had sinned*, he was still called an Israelite’” (*b. Sanh.* 44a; italics added). This applies in the case of forced converts who at heart are still loyal to God and accept the Torah; those baptized under the threat of death during the First Crusade (1096–1105) and during the period of persecutions in Spain qualify. Their historic experience, sooner or later, permitted them, some secretly and some openly, to renounce the vows imposed upon them by the Crusaders or the Inquisition. Upon return to Judaism, they were seen as Jews *who have sinned*, with conversion as past experience and not present reality. The decision of Edith Stein to leave Judaism cannot be considered forced renunciation of her ancestral faith. Her apostasy is one of essence, not accident; Pope John Paul II confirmed as much at the mass for her beatification in Cologne on May 1, 1987.

The six million, including thousands outside the pale of halakic recognition, are revered as the exemplar of the meaning and glory of קידוש השם, martyrdom. Fisher suggests that Edith Stein was “simply one more Jew to be murdered with bureaucratic efficiency”; her Catholic tradition was not able to save her.⁸ Thus, may her sin of apostasy be considered null and void in light of her victimization and martyrdom? Perhaps, but unfortunately this does not nullify her decision to abandon Judaism (by choosing Catholicism), an affront to the *locus classicus* of קידוש השם: “You shall keep my commandments and do them, I am the Lord. You shall not profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among their children of Israel; I am the Lord who hallows you” (Lev 22:31–32). Judaism’s regard for human life (פיקוח נפש) permits violation of most commandments (Sabbath ordinances, dietary laws, rites of passage, etc.) under the duress of pain or death. Under no circumstances, however, may the three cardinal sins be willingly entertained: idolatry (apostasy), unchastity (incest, adultery), and murder. It is precisely to avoid these cardinal transgressions against humans and God that Jewish tradition calls for martyrdom.

Some authorities permit forced apostasy in private, that is, less than ten Jews (male and/or female) in order to save one’s life. But Edith Stein’s choice of Christianity was not coerced nor did she celebrate her conversion privately.

⁷ E. Fisher, *Ecumenical Trends* (February 1988): 25.

⁸ E. Fisher, *Ecumenical Trends*, p. 25.

In a prayer, she confesses to her savior “that it is his cross, which now be imposed on the Jewish people.”⁹ Also, on the way to Auschwitz, she is reported to have said to her sister, a convert to Catholicism, “Let us go, we will go *for our people*” (italics added). The words of Edith Stein bear testimony to her Christian advocacy—expiatory sacrificial offering imitating his *heilig Blut* ‘holy blood’ for the atonement of the Jewish people. By the most lenient stretch of Jewish compassion, Edith Stein, an individual, is a martyred Jewish victim. Ironically, the Church’s beatification makes her a blessed symbol of the Cross, thereby declaring that she *was* (and not *is*) a Jew. Unlike living “baptized” Jews, who are potential returnees to Judaism, Sister Teresa’s faith as a Christian and fate as a martyr are sealed by Auschwitz and the Vatican.

3. MESSIANIC JUDAISM

Presentations by Willitts, Rudolph, and Kinzer suggest diverse opinions, trends, and separations in the greater Messianic Jewish movement. These cover a brief history of Messianic Judaism from the Second Temple period to the present, their self-definition, ethnic identity, and articles of religious belief, relationship between the Jewish believers and Gentile Christians, and finally, acceptance, participation, and recognition in the greater Jewish world. My response to the Messianic Torah, both written (*Introduction to Messianic Judaism*) and oral (session papers), is a respectful attempt to explain mainstream Jewish reaction to, and rejection (for the most part) of Messianic Judaism as an acceptable halakic movement.¹⁰

3.1. Rabbinic Halakah (The Path)

Contemporary Jews and denominational Judaism view Messianic Judaism at best as a farce and at worst a scam. They see Messianics as believers in Jesus who is venerated as God, Son of God, Holy Spirit, and Messiah all in one. This Christian belief, rooted in Christian Scriptures (Old and New), diametrically opposes Judaism’s basic faith in the one absolutely eternal and

⁹ *NC News Service*, May 4, 1987, p. 23, excerpted from the homily in German given by Pope John Paul II at the mass for Stein’s beatification in Cologne on May 1, 1987.

¹⁰ D. Rudolph and J. Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

singular **השם** who revealed the Torah (Written and Oral, the latter as an outline) to Moses and the Israelites at Mt. Sinai millennia ago.¹¹ Post-missionary Messianic Jews and the missionary Jews for Jesus often try to Judaicise Jesus to attract and convert Jews; so why legitimize their ideology at an NAPH session?

Messianic Jewish ideologues Kinzer and Rudolph as well as the leaders of the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute and Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations vociferously oppose the Jewish screed against their creed. Messianic Jews are undeniably committed to Yeshua (Jesus), the Messiah of Israel, foretold by the prophecies of the Tanak, as renewed and applied in the **ברית החדשה** ‘New Covenant’, which requires them to be Torah observant, remaining a part of the Jewish people and keeping loyalty to it. They affirm the historicity, and see themselves as a continuation, of a legitimate branch of Second Temple Judaism—the Jewish Jesus movement. That is to say, Messianic Jews are, according to their self-perception, Torah-oriented Jewish believers in Jesus who declares, “Think not that I came to abolish the law and the prophets: I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17). Further, they represent the Torah presence in Gentile Churches speaking against supersessionist replacement theology and its pivotal anti-Jewish view of the life and death of Jesus which was accepted in Christian Europe for centuries, fueling expulsions, crusades, Inquisition, pogroms, and ultimately, the Shoah. Finally, the preferred response of Messianic Jews to the issues of self-identity and mission is that they are doubly blessed. Their prophetic calling is to be “a light to the nations” (**אור לגוים**, Isa 42:6; 49:5; cf. Isa 60:3) as Jews and “the light of the world” (John 8:12) as followers of Yeshua, a sincere heartfelt prayer for the ingathering and redemption of the lost sheep of Israel into the bosom of Christ.

I accept and respect the commitment of Messianic Jewish scholars to tackle the danger involved when longstanding Christian theology replaces the historical Jew by the “hermeneutical Jew,” thus continuing the horrific *Adversus Judaeos* tradition. Subliminally, this may explain the desire of Hashivenu and other traditional Messianic Jews to separate from Christian Gentile churches that inadvertently is supported by the response of influential Israeli Sephardic Rabbis Hayyim David Halevi and Ovadia Yosef concerning the relationship between Jews and Christians related to issues of ideology, theology, and

¹¹ My view of revelation is expressed in Z. Garber, “Torah Thoughts, Rabbinic Mind, and Academic Freedom.” Online: <http://thetorah.com/torah-thoughts-and-academic-freedom>, 2016.

visitation to sacred spaces.¹² Joel Willitts believes that Gentile Christians ought to learn and respect scriptural Jewish obligation (circumcision, Shabbat, food laws, festivals, and so on) as necessary for the Jewish believer so that Jew and Gentile together can usher in the Messiah and the Kingdom of God (gospel). There are dividends in contemporary Jews and Christians repairing their faith in self and visions of the other. Attempt at interconnectedness between Messianic Jews and the Jewish people by way of the Tanak and tradition is a doable challenge, but the presumed completeness of the Jewish spirit in the Christology of New Testament and related Christian beliefs and rites, as well as the Shoah catastrophe in the murder fields of Christian Europe, raise major questions concerning the practicality and lasting impact of said interrelationship.

Also, there is the parallel confusion within halakah and the teaching of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches regarding compatibility of Messianic Jewish behavior with Christian belief. According to rabbinic law, a halakically defined Jew (by birth or by choice) is obligated to live as a Jew (rites of passage, core beliefs, observance, and practices) irrespective of that person's commitment, or lack thereof, to the tenets of Judaism. Nonetheless, knowingly the unobservant Jew cannot be counted by the synagogue for a prayer quorum, given a Torah honor, accepted as a prayer leader, asked to lead grace before meal, and so on. Likewise, Christian orthodoxy unquestionably teaches that Baptism and Communion/Eucharist are the exclusive way for Jew and Gentile to embrace Jesus the Christ in life, death, resurrection, and salvation. For the Messianic Jew, following the Jewish Jesus of history mandates covenantal Torah observance which can provide an alternative to, or rejection of, the Eucharist as the sole (soul?) means for the Lord's communion. Further, it enables the argument that Petrine and Pauline branches of the Jesus Movement intended to spread Judaism among the Gentiles. But if so, Gentiles should revert to Torah-observant lifestyle and exorcize Church doctrine from the Jewish New Testament. This would hardly be acceptable for any contemporary Christian denomination. A perplexing dilemma.

¹² See D. Ellenson, "Rabbi Hayim David Halevi on Christianity and Christians: An Analysis of Selected Legal Writings of an Israeli Authority," in *Transforming Relations: Essays on Jews and Christians throughout History in Honor of Michael A. Signer* (ed. F. T. Harkins; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 340–362.

3.2. בינוני and הנני

Where I stand on the current acceptance of Messianic Jews within contemporary Judaism is clearly stated in my above discussion on Edith Stein. The Jewish heritage of Messianic Judaism is *not* the issue nor are the elements in the Jewish Jesus movement of the Second Temple period that accepted Jesus as Teacher, King, Lord (Master), Messiah but *not* as God. As an observant Jew, I practice the faith of Jesus and do not profess faith in Jesus. I dance to David's harp (Bethlehem, Galilee, Jerusalem) and Jewish Christian believers to Pan's lyre (Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon). If Messianic Jews choose to live at all times and in all things under the authority of the Triune God proclaimed as the Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then עַמֶּךָ (God's people) is broken at the Crossroads. הנני, here I am, in the spirit of the Patriarch (Abraham at the Akedah, Genesis 22), Lawgiver (Moses beholding the burning bush, Exodus 3, and receiving the Decalogue, Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5), and Prophet (Isaiah 3, Micah 4, Zechariah 14, proclaiming end of days), bearing witness to Israelite religion in two stages: monolatry (the recognition of many gods for other nations but the exclusive worship of the One God for Israel) to monotheism (the same One God of Israel for all humankind). The inclusive testimony: God as God is God *not* God the Father made of none, whose Son is begotten, and whose Holy Spirit is proceeding. Take the recitation of the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Deut 6:4). A Messianic Jew hears three references to the deity, ergo the composite unity of the Godhead's three persons. I (following rabbinic Judaism) hear an inclusive unity of God ("the Lord is our God, the Lord is one") and I bear witness that there is no other.¹³ By choice and belief, Jewish Trinitarians are enshrined (ensnared by their opponents) in the dialectic of בינוני 'in-between', dangling between *synagoga* and *ekklesia*. A perpetual dilemma.

Messianics and Rabbinics, turn the page and begin your תשובה.

¹³ The letters *ayin* and *daleth* that conclude, respectively, the first and last words of the Shema, are traditionally made larger than the rest of the line; together, they form the word עֵד 'witness'.