

Jesus-Believing Jews and *Kol Yisrael*: Rethinking Long-Held Assumptions

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This is an exciting time to be in New Testament studies. For over 1500 years, supersessionist interpretations of the New Testament have been normative and rarely challenged. Layers upon layers of scholarship have been constructed around a single premise—that the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity took place during the New Testament period and that the New Testament writers viewed the church as having replaced or displaced the Jewish people as the people of God.¹

In the late 20th century, in the decades following the Holocaust, senior New Testament scholars began to question this long-held assumption. Studies began to appear on key New Testament texts that challenged this supersessionist framework. Nodal points were pressed and tested. Standard canonical narratives were identified and called into question. Little by little, pressure has been mounting, to the point that New Testament scholars in 2010 sometimes feel that they are on the defensive, and have to preface their remarks by responding to the growing chorus of voices that would label their view as supersessionist.² To put it another way, there are signs that a reconfiguration is taking place in the field of New Testament studies with the emergence of post-supersessionist critiques and interpretations. I want to be careful not to overstate the reality, but there is no question in my mind that something of a breaking of the ice has taken place and that we are feeling the reverberations of this with each new SBL conference. I might add that some of the leading people who have been chipping away at the ice over the last decade are from the Midwest region.³

My aim in this paper is to discuss recent trends in post-supersessionist interpretation of New Testament texts—the assumptions being reexamined, the emerging paradigms, and the

¹ R. Kendall Soulen identifies three kinds of supersessionism, “In sum, I distinguish three kinds of supersessionism in the standard canonical narrative: economic, punitive, and structural. The first two designate explicit doctrinal perspectives, i.e., that carnal Israel’s history is providentially ordered from the outset to be taken up into the spiritual church (economic supersessionism), and that God has rejected carnal Israel on account of its failure to join the church (punitive supersessionism). Structural supersessionism, in contrast, refers not to an explicit doctrinal perspective but rather to a formal feature of the standard canonical narrative as a whole. Structural supersessionism refers to the narrative logic of the standard model whereby it renders the Hebrew Scriptures largely indecisive for shaping Christian convictions about how God’s works as Consummator and Redeemer engage humankind in universal and enduring ways” (R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 181 n. 6).

² E.g. David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 15-19.

³ E.g. Mark Nanos, Mark Kinzer, Joel Willitts, Todd Wilson.

implications for better understanding the social identity of Jesus-believing Jews, specifically how they understood themselves in relation to other Jews of their day. I will focus on three areas where major reassessments are taking place in New Testament studies: The parting of the ways, communities of Jesus-believing Jews, and ecclesiastical/halakhic rules.

1. The Parting of the Ways

For centuries, scholars have taught that a decisive parting of the ways took place between Jews and Christians during the New Testament period. The New Testament was consequently 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 faith and joined a new religious community.

Today this classic narrative is widely disputed. In their book *The Ways That Never Parted*, Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed document the history of this reassessment and show that the evidence supports a “variety of different ‘Partings’ at different times in different places.”⁴ Becker and Reed concur with Daniel Boyarin, Philip Alexander, John Gager, John Howard Yoder and a growing number of 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.”⁵ What are the implications of this historical counter-narrative for how we view Jesus-believing Jews during the New Testament period? The reassessment suggests that first-century Jewish believers in Jesus did not necessarily have to make a decision between being “in *kol Yisrael*” (all Israel) and being “in Christ.” Generally speaking, they remained a part of

⁴ Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds. *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003), 22.

⁵ Becker and Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted*, 23. Daniel Boyarin, “Semantic Differences; or, ‘Judaism’/‘Christianity,’” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 65-85; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Philip S. Alexander, “‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Jews and Christians: the parting of the ways A.D. 70 to 135* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); See John G. Gager, “Did Jewish Christians See the Rise of Islam?” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 361-72; Anders Runesson, *Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I*, in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (ed. Bengt Holmberg; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 59-91; John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited* (eds. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). As an example of archaeological evidence, “In the mosaic of the Church of St. Sabina in Rome, made under Pope Celestine (422-432), at the sides of the great historical inscription there are two female figures, the ‘Ecclesia ex circumcissione’ on the left and the ‘Ecclesia ex gentibus’ on the right. Each has a book in her hand. Over the former is St. Peter, in the act of receiving the law from God’s hand; over the latter is St. Paul. Evidently as a basis of the composition is the saying of St. Paul to the Galatians (2.7): ‘to me was committed the gospel for the uncircumcised, as to Peter that for the circumcised.’ In the mosaic of the Roman church dedicated to Pudentiana, anterior to that of St. Sabina, there is represented in the centre, at the foot of Calvary, Our Lord, at the sides of the Apostles, and on either side two women who hold a crow. From these and from other like compositions we can conclude that, in the minds of the mosaicists, the two churches, represented the female forms, were equal both in teaching and in future recompense” (Bellarmo Begatti, *The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Judaeo-Christians* [trans. Eugene Hoade; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1984], 1). See also Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

both ecclesial communities because at that time being a faithful Jew and a believer in Jesus were not mutually exclusive categories.⁶

Since the publication of E. P. Sanders's seminal work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), a massive reassessment of the New Testament writers' view of Jews and Judaism has occurred and this reevaluation continues unabated. There is no question that this new scholarship has resulted in a sea change in how the field of New Testament studies views Second Temple Judaism. It is now commonly recognized that first-century Judaism was diverse, even to the extent that Jacob Neusner and others can speak of *Judaisms*. This reassessment of Judaism during the New Testament period makes room for the possibility that the earliest Jesus-believing Jews lived out their Christological convictions fully within the socio-religious context of pluriform Second Temple Judaism.

The now widespread recognition that the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity was a later development than previously thought has raised the question of how we should refer to first-century Jews who followed Jesus, and how we should classify the Judaism of these Jews. It is notable that the SBL Jewish Christianity/Christian Judaism Section has been focusing on this question since 2005. Some of the terms increasingly used for these first-century Jews are "Jesus-believing Jews," "Christ-believing Jews," "Christian Jews," "Messianic Jews" (Yoder, Gager, Bauckham), "Jewish followers of Jesus," "Jewish disciples of Jesus," "Jewish believers in Jesus" (Skarsaune) and "Jewish believers in Christ" (Deines) rather than the terms "Jewish Christians" or simply "Christians," terms which many scholars now consider anachronistic and misleading. With respect to describing the Judaism of these Jews, it is becoming more common for scholars to use the terms "Christian Judaism" (Saldarini, Boyarin) "Messianic Judaism" (Yoder, W. D. Davies), "Christ-believing Judaism," "New Testament Judaism" (Chilton and Neusner) and "Apostolic Judaism" (Nanos and Runesson) in place of the older term "Jewish Christianity" or simply "Christianity."⁷ Again, this is due to the broad recognition that the "-ity" was a later development.

2. Communities of Jesus-Believing Jews

During the New Testament period, communities of Jewish believers in Jesus existed in the Land of Israel, Syria and beyond. They were diverse communities that in many ways represented a microcosm of the wider Jewish world. In 2007, Oskar Skarsaune and Matt Jackson-McCabe

⁶ "We have learned that instead of thinking of "Christianity" and "Judaism" as systems, existing primordially in a "normative" form, and instead of thinking of "Christians" and "Jews" in the early centuries as separate bodies existing over against each other, we must think of two initially largely overlapping circles. The circle "Church" and the circle "Jewry" overlapped for generations, in the persons whom we may call either messianic Jews or Jewish Christians, who for over a century at least stood in fellowship with both wider circles" (Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, 69).

⁷ Matt Jackson-McCabe, "What's in a Name? The Problem of 'Jewish Christianity,'" in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 30-32. See Oskar Skarsaune, "Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity—Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. Oskar Skarsaune; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 3-21; James Carleton Paget, "The Definition of the Terms Jewish Christian and Jewish Christianity in the History of Research," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 22-52. Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or, 'Judaism'/'Christianity,'" in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 65-85.

published edited volumes that surveyed these communities and raised new questions about their social identity.⁸ In this paper, I would like to discuss two of these communities that have been the focus of much post-supersessionist reevaluation—Matthew’s community and the Jerusalem community.⁹

In his published dissertation *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew’s Gospel*, Paul Foster describes an emerging “new consensus” in New Testament studies concerning the social identity of Matthew’s community.¹⁰ An increasing number of scholars are now identifying Matthew’s community as a “deviant movement operating within the orbit of Judaism.”¹¹ The case for this view is made by Anthony Saldarini, J. Andrew Overman, Daniel Harrington, Joel Willitts, Anders Runesson, Phillip Sigal, among others.¹² Roland Deines, who disagrees with this perspective, nonetheless acknowledges the existence of a new consensus emerging over 3 points:

⁸ Skarsaune, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*; Jackson-McCabe, *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*.

⁹ There is broad consensus that Matthew’s gospel was written to a specific community or set of communities. This notwithstanding, room needs to be made for the possibility that Matthew had a wider audience in mind. See Richard Bauckham, “For Whom Were Gospels Written?” in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 9-48. For a discussion of the provenance of John’s gospel and the Didache, see David Rensberger, “Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of John,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels* (ed. William R. Farmer; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 120-157, with responses by Mark Goodwin and Thomas Lea on pp. 158-175; Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Mary B. Spaulding, *Commemorative Identities: Jewish Social Memory and the Johannine Feast of Booths* (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen K. Zanberg, eds., *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in their Jewish and Christian Settings* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008); Huub van de Sandt, “Matthew and the Didache,” in *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries* (eds. David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 123-138; Huub van de Sandt, ed., *Matthew and the Didache: Two Documents from the Same Jewish-Christian Milieu?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); Marcello Del Verme, *Didache and Judaism: Jewish Roots of an Ancient Christian-Jewish Work* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

¹⁰ Paul Foster, *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew’s Gospel* (WUNT 2/177; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 78, 253. “In contemporary sociology, ‘deviance’ highlights relationships and tensions between groups within a society when a majority group tries to impose normative practices and values and another group decides not to conform, instead embracing alternative values” (Warren Carter, “Matthew’s Gospel: Jewish Christianity, Christian Judaism, or Neither?” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 165).

¹¹ Foster, *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew’s Gospel*, 77.

¹² Anthony J. Saldarini, “The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict,” in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 37-61; Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Sacra Pagina 1; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991); J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996); Joel Willitts, *Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of ‘The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel’* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007); Anders Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127:1 (2008): 95-132; “From Where? To What? Common Judaism, Pharisees, and the Changing Socioreligious Location of the Matthean Community,” in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism* (eds. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 97-113; Phillip Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). See also Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History* (Lewiston-Queenstown: Mellen, 1988); David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism*

1. The Matthean community in the last third of the first century CE is composed of mainly Jewish believers in Christ.
2. These Christian Jews see no reason to break with their mother religion just because they believe that Jesus is the Messiah, although they are experiencing some pressure in this direction from mainstream Judaism.
3. These Christian Jews live according to the Law of Moses and its valid halakhic interpretations of their time, with some alterations, softenings or modifications based on the teachings of Jesus. Jesus is seen as a Law-observant Jew, who offered his own individual points of view on some matters and gave his specific interpretations of disputed halakhic rules, but they remained – as Markus Bockmuehl points out – “conversant with contemporary Jewish legal debate and readily accommodated on the spectrum of ‘mainstream’ first-century Jewish opinion.” The Law-critical aspects in the Jesus tradition have to be interpreted within this frame.¹³

I had the privilege of studying under Anthony Saldarini before he passed away and I remember him emphasizing, as many scholars now do, that Matthew viewed his community as a reformist Messianic movement *within kol Yisrael*. Saldarini notes in his book *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* that the writer of the gospel uses the term “Israel” to refer to all Jews and never refers to his group as “new” or “true” Israel. In Matthew’s gospel, “members of the Jewish community who reject Jesus, especially the leaders, are excoriated in the prophetic mode as unfaithful members of Israel, but members nonetheless. Israel is the concrete community of Jews from which Matthew has been banned, but to which he still thinks he belongs.”¹⁴

Similarly, New Testament scholars have long held that the Jerusalem community headed by Ya’akov/James was (1) primarily composed of Jewish believers in Jesus who (2) remained within the symbolic universe of Second Temple Judaism,¹⁵ and (3) strictly lived according to the

(FRLANT 189; Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Warren Carter, “Matthew’s Gospel: Jewish Christianity, Christian Judaism, or Neither?” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts*, 155-179; Frederick J. Murphy, “The Jewishness of Matthew: Another Look,” in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini* (vol. 2; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 377-403; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (vol. 3; Edinburgh, 1988-1997), 692-704.

¹³ Roland Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew – an Ongoing Debate,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (eds. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 54-55.

¹⁴ Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 7-8. In his chapter on “Matthew’s Torah” (p. 124), Saldarini adds, “Matthew’s treatment of law fits comfortably within the context of first-century Judaism in Israel. The topics discussed, the positions affirmed and rejected, the sectarian apologetic and polemical stances, the competition for power and recognition, the maintenance of boundaries, and the creation of a world view and group identity are all similar to the agendas of numerous Jewish works found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the apocalyptic writings, the pseudepigrapha, Josephus, and early layers of the Mishnah. Any attempt to portray Matthew as outside the Jewish discussion of how Jews ought to live ignores both Matthew’s teaching of law and his presentation of Jesus.”

¹⁵ Craig Evans concludes that “if we drew three circles to represent the Judaisms of Qumran, the Rabbis, and James, the circles would overlap. But the centers of these circles, centers which represent the essence of the respective Judaisms, would not. We would have three overlapping circles, but three distinct, separate centers. The Judaism of Qumran is focused on the renewal of the covenant, with great emphasis on cultic reform. The Judaism of the Rabbis is focused on studying and obeying the Torah, the key to life in this world and in the world to come. The Judaism of James is focused on faith and piety centered on Messiah Jesus” (Craig A. Evans, “Comparing Judaisms: Qumranic,

Torah, with some members observing Pharisaic halakhah (Acts 15:4-5; 21:20-21). However, going back as far as Jerome, exegetes and ecclesial leaders have evaluated the Jerusalem congregation negatively because it retained its social identity within Judaism. As Craig Hill puts it:

In the first instance, the Jerusalem church is regarded as having been too Christian to be Jewish; in the second, it is thought too Jewish to be Christian. *The assumption in either case is that one could have been truly Christian only to the extent that one was not authentically Jewish.* On a popular level, it is the first approach that dominates. Christians such as James and Peter, both leaders of the Jerusalem church, are thought to have thrown off the shackles of their Jewish past. It is not difficult to see this view as an uncritical retrojection of modern Gentile Christianity onto the primitive church. Issues more characteristic of Judaism, such as the restoration of Israel (a concern repeatedly mentioned in the description of the Jerusalem church in Acts 1-3), are therefore ignored. The opposite approach, more common in scholarly circles, is to regard figures such as Peter and, especially, James as *too* Jewish, and therefore sub- or pre- Christian. Christianity instead is the product of the Hellenistic church (ironically, those who did not have the benefit—or, apparently, the distraction—of having known Jesus), especially the apostle Paul. Hence, “Jewish Christianity” becomes secondary, problematic, and largely dismissible—except, that is, as a foil, the source of whatever one finds distasteful in early Christianity.¹⁶

Craig Hill, Darrell Bock, Robert Tannehill, John Miller, Hilary Le Cornu, Michael Fuller and Jacob Jervell are among the growing number of New Testament scholars who have rejected the popular view and the traditional scholarly approach.¹⁷ They maintain instead that the Jerusalem congregation represented the nucleus of the ekklesia, even as it viewed itself as the nucleus of a restored Israel, led by twelve apostles representing the twelve tribes of *kol Yisrael* (Acts 1:6-7,

Rabbinic, and Jacobean Judaisms Compared,” in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* [eds. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 182). Evans, 161-163, adopts Neusner’s standard that a Judaism has four essential elements: “(1) the privileging of ancient Israelite Scripture; (2) the identification of that community with the ‘Israel’ of which Scripture speaks; (3) the insistence upon the priority of that system over all competing accounts of an ‘Israel’ in context; (4) the certainty that all who adhere to that community, and live by that system of practice and proposition, constitute ‘Israelites.’” See Jacob Neusner, “What is Judaism?” in *The Brother of Jesus*, 1-8. By contrast, Dunn identifies “the four pillars of Second Temple Judaism” as (1) Monotheism: God is one; (2) Election – a covenant people, a promised land; (3) Covenant focused in Torah; and (4) Land focused in Temple (James D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* [London: SCM, 1991], 18-36).

¹⁶ Craig C. Hill, “The Jerusalem Church,” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 41-42. Italics mine.

¹⁷ Craig C. Hill, “The Jerusalem Church,” 39-56; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (vol. 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Shape of Luke’s Story: Essays on Luke-Acts* (Eugene: Cascade, 2005); John W. Miller, *How the Bible Came to Be: Exploring the Narrative and Message* (New York: Paulist, 2004), Hilary Le Cornu with Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Academon, 2003); Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972).

26; 3:19-21).¹⁸ Their mission, these scholars maintain, 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).

This *intra muros* social identity is reflected in Luke's account of Peter's speech in Acts 2 to diaspora Jews in Jerusalem. Peter addresses them as "Men of Israel... Brothers" (Acts 2:22, 29) and concludes by referring to them as representative of *kol Yisrael*. He says, "Therefore let *the whole house of Israel* (πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραήλ, the Septuagint equivalent of כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל)¹⁹ know beyond doubt that God has made him [Jesus] both Lord and Messiah..." (Acts 2:36).²⁰

Something of a literary parallel to Peter's address is found in the encyclical letter that James, the Jerusalem congregation's *nasi*, writes to "the Twelve Tribes in the Diaspora" (Jas 1:1). Richard Bauckham, Dale Allison, Peter Davids, Darian Lockett, Luke Cheung and a long list of commentators now believe that James wrote to Jesus-believing Jews in the diaspora.²¹ Douglas Moo describes this as the present "scholarly consensus."²² Why does James use language that does not specifically refer to Jesus-believing Jews? Richard Bauckham suggests that James sees the worldwide community of Jewish believers in Jesus as a kind of prolepsis of *kol Yisrael*. He writes:

Those Jews who acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah are the twelve tribes of Israel, not in an exclusive sense so as to deny other Israelites this title, but with a kind of representative inclusiveness. What James addresses in practice to those Jews who already confess the Messiah Jesus, he addresses in principle to *all Israel*.²³

¹⁸ On the restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts, see Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); Richard Bauckham, "The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts," in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (ed. James M. Scott; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 435-487; Craig C. Hill, "Restoring the Kingdom to Israel: Luke-Acts and Christian Supersessionism," in *Shadow of Glory: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (ed. Tod Linafelt; New York: Routledge, 2002), 185-200.

¹⁹ LXX πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραήλ = כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל in Num 20:29; 1 Sam 7:2-3; Jer 9:25[26]; Ezek 5:4; 12:10; 20:40; 36:10; 37:11; 45:6.

²⁰ It is significant that Peter did not view the burgeoning Jewish Messianic movement he served as replacing or displacing the wider Jewish world as Israel. While affirming their covenantal status as Israel, he calls his people to repent and believe in Jesus, Israel's Messiah, who sat on David's throne (Acts 2:30, 38; 3:17-26).

²¹ Richard Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, disciple of Jesus the sage* (London: Routledge, 1999), 25-28; Scot McKnight, "Jesus and James on Israel and Purity," in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 111-113; Dale C. Allison, "The Fiction of James and its *Sitz im Leben*," *Revue Biblique* 108 (2001): 529-570; Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (NIGNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 64; Darian Lockett, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 70-76; Luke L. Cheung, *The Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of the Epistle of James* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), 240-245. Also Donald J. Verseput, "Wisdom, 4Q185, and the Epistle of James," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 691-707. Donald J. Verseput, "Genre and Story: The Community Setting of the Epistle of James," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62 (2000): 96-110; Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco: Word, 1988), 8-10; Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "James in the Minds of the Recipients: A Letter from Jerusalem," in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* (eds. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 46.

²² Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Pillar; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 23.

²³ Richard Bauckham, "James, 1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter," in *A Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology in Honour of J. P. M. Sweet* (eds. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael B. Thompson; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 154. Bauckham adds, "The description of the addressees as 'the twelve tribes in the diaspora,' as well as referring to their actual tribal membership and geographical situation, would probably also evoke the lively first-century Jewish hope of the return of the exiles of all twelve tribes to the land of Israel. It incorporates the addressees

Bauckham also argues that the community “adopted into its own self-understanding the unique significance that the city of Jerusalem had for Jews throughout the world.”²⁴ Stated differently, the community understood its social identity in relation to its social location at the “literal and symbolic center of the Jewish world,” where the temple stood.²⁵

3. Ecclesiastical/Halakhic Rules

An interesting question that informs our understanding of the social identity of Jesus-believing Jews in the New Testament period is whether the Jerusalem congregation under James functioned as a kind of centralized authority structure in the ekklesia and resolved disputes on occasion by issuing council decisions of the kind we see in Acts 15. If Luke’s account is reliable here, it suggests that Jesus-believing Jews in the diaspora (the communities to whom James addresses his letter) were expected to remain Torah observant. Luke writes that the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 exempted Jesus-believing Gentiles from proselyte circumcision and full Torah observance. Acts 21 indicates that this ecclesiastical/halakhic rule applied to Jesus-believing Gentiles universally, and patristic evidence suggests that the apostolic decree (as it came to be called) was widely observed in the early catholic church.²⁶ Bauckham notes that “observance of the four prohibitions in the apostolic decree was widespread in Christianity down to the third century, a fact very hard to explain unless they were issued, as Acts 15 represents it, by a council of the mother church in Jerusalem with the unrivaled authority of James at its head.”²⁷

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 has 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.”²⁸ If the Jerusalem leadership had viewed

in the messianic programme of redemption which Jesus had initiated by appointing twelve apostles.” Cf. Versepunt, “Wisdom, 4Q185, and the Epistle of James,” 702; William Horbury, “The Twelve and the Phylarchs,” in *Messianism Among Jews and Christians: Twelve Biblical and Historical Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 157-188.

²⁴ Richard Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Community,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 56.

²⁵ Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Community,” 56. According to Luke, the members of the Jerusalem community closely associated themselves with the temple: these Jesus-believing Jews met and prayed in the temple courts (Acts 2:46; 3:1-10; 5:12, 17-26, 42); some served as priests (Acts 6:7); others took Nazirite vows and shaved their heads as an expression of zeal for the Torah (Acts 21:20, 24). The Jerusalem congregation’s “devout participation in the temple cult maintained its place within common Judaism” (Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Community,” 61). Luke notes that the congregation “enjoyed the goodwill of all the people” and that “the people held them in high esteem” (Luke 2:47; 5:13).

²⁶ Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1995), 464; Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 178.

²⁷ Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Community,” 74-75.

²⁸ F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 159. I interpret Acts 15:10-11 to mean that Jews experience soteriological blessing “through the grace of the Lord Jesus” and not by Torah observance

circumcision as optional for Jesus-believing Jews, there would have been no point 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.”²⁹

An increasing number of scholars – including Wyschogrod, Jacob Jervell, R. Kendall Soulen, Scot McKnight, Richard Bauckham, Bruce Chilton, Jacob Neusner and Mark Kinzer – now view the Jerusalem Council as having attempted to institute a bilateral ecclesiology among the first-century community of Jesus’ followers.³⁰

But what of the Pauline churches? Certainly Paul would have rejected this ecclesiastical rule! Strikingly, even this assumption is being reassessed in New Testament studies. A growing number of senior scholars, including Markus Bockmuehl, Peter Tomson, Douglas Harink, Mark Nanos, Anders Runesson, Magnus Zetterholm and William Campbell³¹ are now characterizing

according to the standards of Pharisaic halakhah (note the Pharisaic context of the demands in Acts 15:5). It does not follow from this statement that Peter considered Jesus-believing Jews exempt from the responsibilities of Jewish covenantal life stipulated in the Torah or that he considered these responsibilities necessary for salvation. He may have viewed them as commandments of God for Jews, the observance of which did not have a direct bearing on salvation. Similarly, the apostolic decree lists a number of ritual “requirements” (ἐπιτάγαι) for Jesus-believing Gentiles (Acts 15:28-29) but there is no indication that they are necessary for salvation.

²⁹ Michael Wyschogrod, “Letter to a Friend,” *Modern Theology* 2 (1995): 170-171; Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham’s Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 194.

³⁰ Jervell, *Luke and the People of God*, 190; R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 170-171; McKnight, “Jesus and James on Israel and Purity,” 110; Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Community,” 75; Bruce D. Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practice and Beliefs* (London: Routledge, 1995), 108; Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 66-67, 158-160. Cf. Mark D. Nanos, “The Apostolic Decree and the ‘Obedience of Faith,’” in *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 166-238.

³¹ “The apostle himself in 1 Corinthians 7:17-20 makes clear that his ‘rule for all the churches’ is for Jews to keep the Torah (indeed Gal 5:3, too, may mean they are obliged to do so) and for Gentiles to keep what pertains to them – and only that. In either case, what matters are the applicable commandments of God” (Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* [Edinburgh: T & T, 2000], 170-171); “Both are justified by faith only—therefore non-Jews must not start observing the law and Jews must not stop doing so. Such is the message of Paul’s ‘ecclesiastical rule’ in 1 Corinthians (7:17-20)” (Peter J. Tomson, “Halakhah in the New Testament: A Research Overview,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, eds. Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt and Peter J. Tomson [SJSJ 136; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 204-205); Peter J. Tomson, “Paul’s Jewish Background in View of His Law Teaching in 1 Cor 7,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 267-268; “Paul nowhere suggests that Jews should reject their Torah observance, and in fact seems to assume that they would and should remain committed to it (1 Cor 7:17-20; cf. Gal 5:3; Acts 21:17-24)” (Douglas Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003], 219); Mark D. Nanos, “The Myth of the ‘Law-Free’ Paul Standing Between Christians and Jews,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4 (2009): 3-4; Anders Runesson, “Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2008), 80-81; Magnus Zetterholm, “Paul and the Missing Messiah,” in *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Magnus Zetterholm; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 49-50; William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 91-92; “Saul expected those of his converts who were Judahists to continue to practice Judahism and to

Paul's rule in all the churches in 1 Corinthians 7:18-20 as a kind of Pauline restatement of the Apostolic Decree, in which Jesus-believing Jews were expected to remain fully Torah observant.³²

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7, "This is the rule I lay down in all the congregations. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised... Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him." New Testament scholars are increasingly making the argument that Paul's metonymic statement in 1 Cor 7:18 – *μὴ ἐπισπᾶσθω* ("do not put on foreskin") – required Jesus-believing Jews in his churches to continue to live the circumcised life as a matter of *calling* and not to assimilate into Gentile lifestyle.

This interpretation of Paul's rule in all the churches, which Augustine defended,³³ remains a minority view in New Testament studies. However, my observation is that it is beginning to move from the margins to the center in the discussion over Paul's perspective on the relationship between Jesus-believing Jews and Torah.³⁴

respect its laws (1 Cor 7:19) and he expected the same of himself. Anything else would have been hypocritical: it was only the Gentile followers of Yeshua to whom the finite rules of Torah did not apply, at least not fully" (Donald H. Akenson, *Saint Saul: A Skeleton Key to the Historical Jesus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 252); Joel Willits, "Weighing the Words of Paul: How do we understand Paul's instructions today?" *The Covenant Companion* 3 (2009): 28-30; David J. Rudolph, "Paul's 'Rule in All the Churches' (1 Cor 7:17-24) and Torah-Defined Ecclesiological Variegation," a paper presented at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) conference, Christian Systematic Theology section, November 3, 2008.

³² Paul's direct involvement in delivering the apostolic decree to the churches (Acts 15:22 – 16:5) would furthermore suggest from a canonical perspective that these two rules are really two apostolic expressions of the same rule in principle. See Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 126 n. 12. Marcel Simon considers 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 to "represent a sort of commentary on the Decree" ("The Apostolic Decree and its Setting in the Ancient Church," in *Le Christianisme Antique et son contexte religieux: Scripta Varia II* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981], 429-430). Notably, this is not a recent view. The early church fathers read Paul "in light of the Decree, which was assumed to have the full authority of the apostles" (John C. Brunt, "Rejected, Ignored, or Misunderstood? The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Food Offered to Idols in Early Christianity," *New Testament Studies* 31 [1985]: 113-124).

³³ "Was one called having been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised [1 Cor 7:18]," *that is, let him not live as if he had not been circumcised* . . . Because of the view which he expressed in the words: "Was one called having been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was one called being uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised [1 Cor 7:18]," *he actually conformed to obligations* (Augustine, *Op. mon.* 11 [12]; italics mine).

³⁴ E.g. Nanos writes in *Codex Pauli*, a high profile ecumenical work published in celebration of the Jubilee Year to the Apostle Paul declared by Pope Benedict XVI, "Note that in 1Cor 7,17-24, Paul says his 'rule' in all his assemblies is for everyone to remain in the state they were in when called, whether circumcised or not, nevertheless that all must 'obey the commandments of God.' When this rule is coupled with Paul's attestation that anyone in a circumcised state is obliged to observe the whole Torah, in Gal 5,3, it becomes evident that Paul worked from a propositional logic that required all Jewish Christ-believers to remain faithful to their Jewish covenant identity by the observance of Torah" (Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism," in *Codex Pauli* [Rome: Società San Paolo, 2009], 54). Nanos adds, "It is widely agreed that Paul was born and raised a Jew, and observed Judaism according to Pharisaic standards (Rm 9,1-5; 11,1; 2Cor 11,22; Gal 1,13-16; Phil 3,4-6; cfr. Acts 9; 21-26). The challenging question to pose is this: Following his encounter with Christ, did Paul continue to practice Judaism, albeit Christ-believing Judaism, rather than converting from Judaism to a new religion that no longer represented Jewish communal norms, including Torah? If he continued to be a part of Judaism, a reformer from within, in keeping with prophetic tradition, rather than a critic from outside, then what are the implications for interpreting Paul's letters that follow from this insight? There are many indications that Paul's way of living continued to be highly observant of Torah, similar to the representation of James and Peter in the *Acts of the Apostles*. In addition to constant appeals to

But what of the many Pauline texts that seem to point in a different direction?—"You are not under law but under grace" (Rom 6:14)... "There is no longer Jew or Greek... for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28)... "To the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews" (1 Cor 9:20)—to name just a few. We are now witnessing a steady flow of post-supersessionist interpretations of these texts in books, articles, dissertations and conference papers each year. As one who specializes in Pauline studies, I do my best to keep track of these critical reassessments, but it's becoming more and more difficult because there are so many. To mention just a few gems that came out in 2009, Mark Nanos wrote three thought-provoking articles: "Paul and Judaism" that was published in *Codex Pauli*; "The Myth of the 'Law-Free' Paul Standing Between Christians and Jews," and "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?" Fortress published Magnus Zetterholm's new book *Approaches to Paul: a student's guide to recent scholarship* in which he introduces this new school of thought that has emerged in Pauline studies. And HarperOne published Pamela Eisenbaum's book *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*.³⁵

These scholars argue that Paul continued to view himself as part of *kol Yisrael*, that he remained a Torah observant Jew after becoming a believer in Jesus, not merely for missiological reasons but on the basis of covenant and calling, even as he writes in Romans 9, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Messiah for the sake of *my own people, my brothers according to the flesh. They are* [present active indicative] *Israelites*, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, *the covenants...*" (Rom 9:3-4).³⁶ Luke provides a similar portrait of Paul in Acts 26 when says to King Agrippa, "...according to the strictest party of our religion *I have lived* [aorist active indicative] as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to *our fathers*, to which *our twelve tribes* hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day" (Acts 26:5-7).

In conclusion, New Testament scholarship is in the process of rethinking long-held assumptions about the relationship between Jesus-believing Jews and *kol Yisrael*. Are these new trends a blip in history or will they continue to gain momentum? I predict that more and more scholars will

the authority of Torah to make and prove his positions throughout all of his letters, Paul is portrayed introducing the Apostolic Decree, with its Torah-based norms for the guidance of Christ-believing non-Jews associating with the synagogue communities (Acts 15-16), undertaking a Nazarite vow in the Jerusalem Temple to dispel rumors that he was teaching against Torah for Jews, which included a burnt offering (Acts 21), claiming to live blamelessly according to Pharisaic interpretation of Torah, by whose standards he legitimated his own belief in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 23,6; 24,14-21; Phil 3,5-6), and planning his travel around Jewish festivals, including Shavuot/Pentecost, which celebrates Israel's receipt of Torah at mount Sinai as a gift from God (Acts 20,6.16; 1Cor 16,8). It is interesting to note that Augustine appealed to Paul's continued observance of Torah in his interpretation of the conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch (Gal 2,11-15; Augustine, *Letter* 40,3-6, to Jerome), although Jerome took exception to the ideological risk of any Christian, much less an apostle, practicing Torah, an objection which has guided the prevailing views ever since (*Letter* 112,5-18)."

³⁵ Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: a student's guide to recent scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

³⁶ Paul identifies Jesus-believing Jews as the "remnant" of Israel that proleptically points to the salvation of *kol Yisrael* (Rom 11:5, 26-27). The remnant does not displace the wider Jewish world as Israel because the "gifts and call of God" to Israel are "irrevocable" (Rom 11:1, 29).

pursue biblical and theological inquiry in this area: (1) These trends arise out of a wider reassessment of Second Temple Judaism and early Christian origins, a reassessment that is cross-disciplinary and shows no signs of weakening; (2) After 1900 years of reading the New Testament through a supersessionist lens, there are enough avenues of post-supersessionist inquiry to keep Ph.D. students and scholars busy for the next 100 years at least. SBL is presently considering a proposal to form a consultation on Post-Supersessionist Interpretation of the New Testament that would draw together much of this research at the annual conference. Another development that will no doubt contribute to significant activity is the writing of post-supersessionist New Testament commentaries, theologies and introductions that will enable scholars, leaders and lay people to read the New Testament outside of a “parting of the ways” framework. Mark Nanos is currently writing a full-scale commentary on Romans; others are in the pipeline. Finally, (3) The reemergence of modern-day communities of Jesus-believing Jews that remain Torah observant, and see themselves as part of *kol Yisrael*, understandably moves scholarship in the direction of reassessment.³⁷ By their existence, these communities call the “parting of the ways” narrative into question. They also make an important hermeneutical contribution to the scholarly discussion. It is commonly accepted that the capacity to be able to see things in the text is conditioned by the social situation of those doing the reading. For centuries, many theological questions went unasked because Messianic Jews were not there to ask them. Similarly, many supersessionist readings of the New Testament stood unchallenged because supersessionism conveniently eliminated the church of the circumcision. Speaking as a Messianic Jew who grew up in a Messianic synagogue and teaches New Testament at a Messianic Jewish theological school in Los Angeles, I am confident that Messianic Jewish scholars and theologians in the coming years will be making significant contributions to the question of how the New Testament writers viewed the relationship between Jesus-believing Jews and *kol Yisrael*.

As I said at the beginning of this paper, it is an exciting time to be in New Testament studies.

³⁷ David J. Rudolph, “Messianic Jews and Christian Theology: Restoring an Historical Voice to the Contemporary Discussion,” *Pro Ecclesia* 14:1 (2005): 58-84; David J. Rudolph, “Contemporary Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora,” in *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, ed. M. Avrum Ehrlich (vol. 1; Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 146-150; David J. Rudolph, “History of Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora,” in *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, ed. M. Avrum Ehrlich (vol. 1; Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 136-139; Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*.