

assessment that Israel has stumbled but not fallen, that some branches have been broken off but can be regrafted onto the olive tree, the people of God.

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare's Shylock the Jew represents the fearful "other" over against which Christians in his day defined themselves. His Othello, a Moor, functioned in a similar manner, signaling the inferiority of dark skin. Jennings observes that the theological distortion evident in European colonialism, "was the replacement of Israel, or, in its proper theological term, supersessionism ... [wherein] the church replaces Israel in the mind and heart of God."⁵⁶ Jennings argues that Europeans reimagined Israel's election, replacing the visual markers of its election with a racial marker, the white body. Jennings explains that, in this view, "salvation in black bodies is doubtful, as it was in (Christian) Jews and Moors."⁵⁷ Jennings's astute and heartbreaking analysis exposes the tragic failure to listen to and be transformed by the gospel message. Paul reinterpreted the Mosaic covenant such that it no longer functioned to divide Jewish and gentile believers in Christ. Said another way, gentiles need not become proselytes to enjoy full fellowship with Jewish believers; together, the two have become one new humanity (Eph 2:14–15). The conversation about supersessionism today should take account of new studies about identity and embodiment as they relate to forming relationships between individuals and groups. The questions about obeying the law in Paul can be framed by stressing identity in Christ, and within this identity celebrating the distinct tribe, language, tongue, and nation of each believer.

56. Jennings, *Christian Imagination*, 32; my thanks to my teaching assistant, Sam Cho, for alerting me to this connection.

57. Jennings, *Christian Imagination*, 35.

A MESSIANIC JEWISH RESPONSE

DAVID J. RUDOLPH

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! ... As regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.¹

—*Romans 11:1, 28–29*

In 2019 I had the pleasure of attending a public debate between N. T. Wright and Mark Kinzer, a Messianic Jew, that focused on two questions: (1) Are non-Messianic Jews members of God's covenanted people? And (2) if so, do they as a people have a unique covenantal calling that distinguishes their calling from that of every other society or nation?² Sitting among the audience of eight hundred people at Samford University, I looked forward to hearing Wright's response. He is known for his depth of insight and clarity. However, in my experience, he is often silent when it comes to the election of the Jewish people after the coming of the Messiah. The debate at

1. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

2. Samford University, "A Debate on the Meaning of Israel featuring N. T. Wright and Mark Kinzer," Provost Distinguished Lecture Series bulletin, 11 September 2019, 2. Samford's recording of the debate is available on YouTube.

Samford provided an opportunity for Wright to clarify his views on this matter and set the record straight about whether he believes the Jewish people remain God's chosen people today.

In his opening comments, Kinzer underscored God's fidelity to Israel: "God remains faithful to the genealogical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even when Israel is unfaithful. And this eternal fidelity grounds the church's assurance that she and the world will not be abandoned despite their own infidelity."³ In support of this view, Kinzer pointed to Romans 11:16: "If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy [Messianic Jews], then the whole batch is holy [the Jewish people]; if the root [Messiah and/or the patriarchs] is holy, then the branches are holy [all Israel]."⁴ For Kinzer, Jewish people who do not believe in Jesus continue to be members of God's people, and they retain a unique covenantal calling that sets them apart from the nations.

Wright's opening statement was eloquent, and he cited more than a dozen biblical texts related to the meaning of Israel.⁵ When it came to the two questions, however, his words became markedly ambiguous. To the first question, Wright said that Jewish people who do not believe in Jesus are beloved for the sake of the fathers and that Paul argues "against the idea that the Jews who do not currently believe are automatically excluded. Rather, they remain among those who in some sense or other are to be explored." I wasn't sure what that meant. To the second question, he said:

I don't see that [covenantal] calling as such in Scripture. I see a possibility, and with that possibility I see something whose analog, I think, is sacred space [such as the Western Wall in Jerusalem]. ... As with sacred space, so with chosen people. There is a memory, there is a holiness, there is something

3. Quotations are from the recording of the debate (see note 2).

4. Kinzer's translation. He also referenced Luke 13:34-35; Acts 1:6; 3:19-21; Rom 9:4-6; 11:11-12, 15, 28.

5. Gen 15; 2 Sam 7; Ps 2; 87; Isa 11; 49; Rom 2:25-29; 4:16; 8-10; 11:23; 15; 1 Cor 7; Gal 3, 4; Phil 3; Heb 11-12; Rev 21.

which as Christians we respect and which we honor and we long to see coming to whatever fulfillment God has.

Again, I wasn't clear on what he meant exactly. However, the implications of his prevaricating seemed to be that the Jewish people no longer remained in covenant relationship with God.⁶ Wright's "sacred space" perspective on the Jewish people reminded me of Augustine's view of Jewish customs in the apostolic period:

For now, after the coming of the faith which had been prefigured in those observances and revealed after the death and resurrection of the Lord, these rituals had lost, as it were, their vital role. They had to be treated rather like the bodies of dead relatives which must be carried out for burial not as a matter of form but with true reverence.⁷

The Wright-Kinzer debate came to mind as I read the essays in this volume. Like Wright's equivocating, Scot McKnight, Mike Bird, and Ben Witherington do not clearly state whether they believe the Jewish people continue to be in a unique covenant relationship with God. It seems to me there is a lot of beating around the bush in the essays when it comes to this issue. Occasional statements are made that refer to God's faithfulness to the Jewish people, but such comments are often in passing, few and far between, and typically preceded by descriptions of the church as the "Israel of God" or the "one people of God." Also, there is a difference between saying that God remains faithful to the Jewish people (which could refer to Messianic Jews only) and saying that God continues to be in a covenant relationship with the Jewish people whether or not they are believers in

6. Gerald McDermott, Anglican Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, who moderated the event, arrived at the same conclusion: "Sadly ... [Wright] revealed that he does not believe that covenant is ongoing" (Deborah Pardo-Kaplan, "N. T. Wright and Mark Kinzer Meet at Samford University," *Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 37 (2020): 4.

7. Augustine, *Ep.* 82.

the Messiah. Similarly, saying that Jewish people can be saved or that God has a future plan for the Jewish people is not the same as saying there remains a unique covenant relationship.

I hope the present book's "Concluding Reflections" will address this matter by answering the two questions raised in the Wright-Kinzer debate: (1) Are non-Messianic Jews members of God's covenanted people? And (2) if so, do they as a people have a unique covenantal calling that distinguishes their calling from that of every other society or nation? If the authors of Part 1 cannot affirm either, it would be helpful to understand why they think God withdrew his election of the Jewish people. It is important to hear their perspective on these questions, so the reader can understand the kind of theology being advocated and its ethical implications in relation to the Jewish people as a whole.

Another reason I mention the Wright-Kinzer debate is that the first two authors of this volume lift up Wright as a trailblazer of the kind of theology they are promoting when it comes to a Christian view of Israel, and their cases build on Wright's four decades of work in this area. For this reason, I think it is important to take a closer look at Wright's theology of Israel and understand what is at stake in following this direction and how it impacts the local church's view of the Jewish people and Jewish life.

WRIGHT'S "REDEFINED ISRAEL"

In Wright's ecclesial vision, the unique calling, responsibilities, and privileges of the Jewish people have been expropriated by God and given to the church (the redefined Israel) through the Messiah's death and resurrection. Wright's earliest formulation of this transference theology can be found in his 1980 Oxford thesis:

In Rom. 5–8 Paul develops the picture of the church in terms belonging to Israel. This *transfer* is achieved in two stages. First, Israel's calling, responsibilities and privileges have been taken over by the Messiah himself, alone: second, what is true of the

Messiah is reckoned to be true of his people. ... In him all believers, without distinction of race, *inherit all that was Israel's*. ... Paul, in line with Old Testament prophecy, claims that God's glory has been *taken away from Israel according to the flesh and given to the community of the new covenant*. ... *The Christian is the true Jew*. ... The first five verses of the chapter [Rom 5:1–5] thus set out the grounds of assurance in terms of the *transfer* of Israel's privileges to the church. ... What Israel should have done, the Messiah has done alone. Having therefore taken Israel's task, he (and hence his people) *inherit Israel's privileges*. ... We have seen that Paul explicitly and consciously *transfers* blessings from Israel according to the flesh to the Messiah, and thence to the church. ... In the same way, Gal. 2–4 argues precisely that the worldwide believing church is the true family of Abraham, and that those who remain as "Israel according to the flesh" are in fact the theological descendants of Hagar and Ishmael, *with no title to the promises*. ... It is not therefore without a touch of bitter irony, reminiscent of Phil. 3.2ff., that he [Paul] *transfers* the name "Israel" to the church.⁸

Wright has consistently maintained this "transfer of privilege" perspective in his writings. For example, in *The Climax of the Covenant*, he writes that God "has systematically *transferred* the privileges and attributes of 'Israel' to the Messiah and his people. It is therefore greatly preferable to take 'all Israel' in v. 26 [of Rom 11] as a typically Pauline polemical redefinition, as in Galatians 6.16 ... and in line also with Philippians 3.2ff., where the church is described as 'the circumcision.'"⁹ Wright often emphasizes the positive side of transfer (i.e., what the church has received according to his paradigm) while

8. N. T. Wright, "The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans" (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1980), 135–37, 139–40, 193, 196 (italics mine).

9. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 250 (italics mine).

deemphasizing or remaining silent about the flip side (what Jews have lost).

It is beyond the scope of this response to offer a detailed critique of Wright's transference theology. Joel Kaminsky and Mark Reasoner, among others, have done an excellent job of this.¹⁰ Having read both sides, I am convinced that when the smoke and mirrors are removed, Wright's "redefined Israel" view is ultimately a form of traditional supersessionism that is in continuity with the tradition of Justin Martyr's transference theology.¹¹ At the end of the day, Wright seems to maintain that the election and covenantal particularity of the Jewish people expired after the coming of the Messiah, the very error that Paul warned his gentile readers to avoid in Romans 11.

In the following two sections, I will take up the question of how Wright's expiration theology impacts a Christian view of Jews and Jewish life, particularly within the local church.

10. Joel Kaminsky and Mark Reasoner, "The Meaning and Telos of Israel's Election: An Interfaith Response to N. T. Wright's Reading of Paul," *Harvard Theological Review* 112:4 (2019): 421–46; Michael F. Bird, "N. T. Wright and Paul's Supersessionism: A Response to Kaminsky and Reasoner," *Harvard Theological Review* 113:4 (2020): 498–512; Joel Kaminsky and Mark Reasoner, "In Quest of a Coherent Portrait of Paul: A Rejoinder to Michael Bird," *Harvard Theological Review* 113:4 (2020): 513–27; Gregory Tatum, "Law and Covenant in Paul and the Faithfulness of God," in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N. T. Wright*, ed. Christoph Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt and Michael F. Bird (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 318–19; Paula Fredriksen, review of *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, by N. T. Wright, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77 (2015): 387–91; Larry Hurtado, review of *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, by N. T. Wright, *Theology* 117 (2014): 361–65; Michael G. Vanlaningham, "An Evaluation of N. T. Wright's View of Israel in Romans 11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 170 (2013): 179–93; A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 236–45; Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 24–27; Douglas Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), 151–84.

11. "And hence you [Trypho] ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us" (Justin, *Dial.* 82).

A PERNICIOUS KIND OF SUPERSESSIONISM

Some kinds of supersessionism are benign¹² and others contain within their DNA a kind of cancer cell that harms the body of Messiah. I would say that Wright's brand of supersessionism is the more pernicious kind, because it leads to the erasure of Jewish identity and thereby calls into question the character of the God of Jesus the Messiah. Since the body of Messiah, according to Paul, is made up of Jews and gentiles (Eph 2:15),¹³ any attempt to erase the Jewish part of the body is a serious offense against a covenant partner and a major concern of Messianic Jewish leaders.¹⁴ Joel Willitts identifies this mutation in Wright's theology and describes it as Wright's (unintentional) tendency toward fostering the erasure of Jews within the church:

But still prevalent today, and perhaps more insidious because of its unconsciousness, is the *unintentional* interpretation of the NT that over time *fosters* the erasure *again* of Jewish ethnic presence within the church. These readings, while able to dodge accusations of overt supersessionism with great bluster (I have in mind N. T. Wright's recent work on Paul), effect the exact same outcome as their more overt sibling.¹⁵

12. E.g., McKnight suggests that "claiming religious truth" is a kind of supersessionism (page 16 of the present volume).

13. The body of Messiah represents "one new man out of two" (NET), not "one new man in place of the two" (ESV). See Lionel J. Windsor, *Reading Ephesians & Colossians after Supersessionism: Christ's Mission through Israel to the Nations* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 143–46.

14. Stuart Dauermann, *Converging Destinies: Jews, Christians, and the Mission of God* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 37–44, 48; Pardo-Kaplan, "N. T. Wright and Mark Kinzer," 7–8.

15. Joel Willitts, "Jewish Fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) in Post-supersessionist Water: Messianic Judaism within a Post-supersessionistic Paradigm," *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 72.4 (2016): 3.

Wright's variety of supersessionism also has negative implications for Jews outside the church. It naturally leads to the view among Christians that Jews are no longer needed in the world and ideally should be phased out. Orthodox Jewish theologian Michael Wyschogrod explains this dynamic that has repeated itself throughout history:

In the past ... Jews who became Catholics were supposed to act like all other Catholics. The fact that they had once been Jews had no current significance. The Church was guided by the words of Paul (Gal. 3:28): "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In Christ, all distinctions fall away and the obligations of Christians who had been Jews are no different than the obligations of Christians who had been gentiles. In fact, throughout the centuries, Jews who entered the Church very quickly lost their Jewish identity. Within several generations they intermarried and the Jewish traces disappeared. The only exceptions to this rule were Jewish converts in Spain and Portugal, the sincerity of whose conversions was questioned and who retained a Catholic identity tinged with some Jewish elements. But this was never sanctioned by the Church. In short, if all Jews in past ages had followed the advice of the Church to become Christians, there would be no more Jews in the world today. The question we must ask is: *Does the Church really want a world without Jews? Does the Church believe that such a world is in accordance with the will of God? Or does the Church believe that it is God's will, even after the coming of Jesus, that there be a Jewish people in the world? As I have already said, the answer of the old theology to this question was clear. The Church was the new Israel and there was no further need for the old Israel. If the old Israel insisted on surviving, it was only because it did not recognize its redeemer and continued to wait for him who had already appeared. Were all Jews to*

*recognize the truth, they would cease their stubborn insistence on continuing to exist as an identifiable people and become an integral part of the new Israel—the Church—which is God's new covenant partner in the world. The disappearance of the Jews from the world would be no theological loss because their place would have been taken by the new people of God.*¹⁶

From a Jewish-Christian relations perspective, Wright's decision to openly embrace a form of supersessionism that views most Jews as former members of the people of God, and to promote this widely within the church in popular and academic settings, sets a dangerous precedent. Kendall Soulen puts it this way:

Christians have attempted to address the problem of economic supersessionism in a variety of ways. One possibility is simply to embrace it more or less openly as a necessary feature of Christian faith, as N. T. Wright has espoused. ... A difficulty with this option is that it seems too continuous with historic patterns of thought whose catastrophic consequences occasioned the church's self-examination with respect to the Jews in the first place. As Franklin Littell warned, "To teach that a people's mission in God's providence is finished, that they have been relegated to the limbo of history, has murderous implications, which murders will in time spell out."¹⁷

Since McKnight lifts up Wright as "the most significant New Testament scholar in the world today" (26¹⁸), I think it is important

16. Michael Wyschogrod, "A Letter to Cardinal Lustiger," in *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. R. Kendall Soulen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 207–08 (italics mine).

17. R. Kendall Soulen, "Supersessionism," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish-Christian Relations Online*, ed. Walter Homolka et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020). Soulen cites N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 810; Franklin Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 2.

18. Page numbers in parentheses refer to the essays in Part 1 of the present volume.

to understand exactly how his brand of supersessionism fosters the erasure of Jews in the local church.

A THEOLOGY OF JEWISH ERASURE

Wright claims that the church is composed of Jews and gentiles in Messiah. However, his ultimate vision of the church is that it is a *tertium genus* (third race). Wright explains:

Qumran itself held an embryonic 'third entity' view of itself, marked out against the wicked world of paganism but also, necessarily, against the majority of Jews. I submit, therefore, that though Paul himself does not use the phrase 'third race,' and though we have to be careful to anchor 'race' to its ancient rather than its modern use and connotations, something like that idea is not only Pauline but retains a quintessential, if characteristically paradoxical, Jewish character and flavour.¹⁹

The classic idea of a third race is that Christians leave behind their respective Jewish/gentile identities and become part of a new corporate entity. In Wright's model, the third entity is the Israel of

19. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1448. Wright describes his theology of Israel as "sectarian supersessionism," similar to Qumran's (Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 809). However, a major difference between Wright's view and the DSS community is that Wright's supersessionism leads to the deterritorialization of Jewish identity and the erasure of Jews. As Tucker notes, "Wright's fulfillment reworking leaves nothing of Israel's covenantal identity in its wake. ... Wright's claim in regards to Qumran also omits attention to the restoration in the land. For Qumran, restoration to the land is still expected once the temple has been cleansed. Thus, the land promise is only in a holding pattern. For Wright, the promise for restoration in the land has been swept away with the arrival of Jesus. While Wright thinks his approach does not amount to supersessionism since it is similar to Qumran's, it is not actually as similar as he maintains" (J. Brian Tucker, *Reading Romans after Supersessionism: The Continuation of Jewish Covenantal Identity* [Eugene: Cascade, 2018], 135n90).

God, in which everyone becomes a spiritual Jew and ethnic Jews are expected to check their normative Jewish life and identity at the door.²⁰

Wright's third-race theology does not merely reflect a lack of commitment to preserving a distinctive Jewish identity for the genealogical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It also undermines Jewish presence in the church. We can see this reflected in Wright's vision for the expropriation, spiritualization, stigmatization, and deterritorialization of Jewish identity. I will give examples of each.

Expropriation. In Wright's dictionary, "fulfillment" means that non-Messianic Jews are the once-but-no-longer chosen folk. They have been disinherited from God's people, and their blessings have been transferred to the church: "In Romans 5–8 Paul argues that all of Israel's privileges have now been transferred, via the Messiah, to the worldwide people of God, the true family of Abraham."²¹ Israel is now made up of Jews and gentiles who follow Jesus. Jews in the church are thus supposed to regard their Jewish family members and the wider Jewish community as faux Israel and former members of the people of God. Wright's teaching in this way divides *klal Yisrael* (all Israel) and alienates Jesus-believing Jews from their people. This destabilizes Jewish identity in the church.

Spiritualization. Wright maintains that all the privileges of Israel have been transferred to the church and that Christians are de facto Jews. As Wright puts it:

For Paul anyone who was 'in the Messiah' and indwelt by the spirit could be called *Ioudaios* [Jew].²²

20. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1443–44. There are no gentiles in Wright's third entity: "The Corinthians used to be 'gentiles' but are now no longer (12:2)" (1446).

21. N. T. Wright, "Justification: Its Relevance for Contemporary Evangelicalism (1980)," in *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 32. Cf. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 250; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 367–68. Expropriation in Wright's schema leaves room for the possibility that Jews can rejoin Israel through faith in Jesus and be saved.

22. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1444.

Those in the Messiah and indwelt by the spirit form the people to whom Paul gives the word 'the Jew', 'the circumcision' and even—if that reading is correct—'the Israel of God.'²³

When this transference theology is embraced, Messiah-confessing Jews cannot assert their Jewish identity without someone from a non-Jewish background saying, "We are all Jews in the house of the Lord!" Wright's theology thus creates an environment in which Jewish followers of Jesus are excluded from having a unique covenantal identity in the church. This naturally results in assimilation and the loss of Jewish presence.

Stigmatization. Wright's theology of Israel holds that Jews who believe in Jesus are "weak" in faith if they observe Israel's dietary laws, while eating *treif* (nonkosher food) is a sign of Christian "maturity."²⁴ As Wright puts it, "it would appear not only that Paul was advising gentile Christians in Corinth to eat nonkosher food but that he was happy to see other 'Jewish Christians' following this pattern."²⁵ Wright also describes keeping the Sabbath and Jewish festivals as "irrelevant" and "a matter of 'indifference'" to Paul.²⁶ Circumcision is also repudiated: "Paul is indicating a messianic identity and way of life which he sees as genuine worship of the God of Israel—only without circumcision and Torah-badges."²⁷

Having served as a Messianic Jewish rabbi for over thirty years, and having met many Christian pastors and Jews in churches, I can

23. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1107; cf. 539–41, 1147–48.

24. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1429, 1442. For a post-supersessionist interpretation of Rom 14, see David J. Rudolph, "Paul and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Romans 14:14, 20," in *Paul the Jew: A Conversation between Pauline and Second Temple Scholars*, ed. Carlos A. Segovia and Gabriele Boccaccini (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 151–81; Tucker, *Reading Romans after Supersessionism*, 197–20.

25. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1429. Cf. 359.

26. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 363–64, 1428.

27. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 985–86, 1430.

attest that this indifference to Jewish difference is what is taught in churches and Bible studies where Wright's theology is embraced. But it goes beyond this. Wright maintains that Paul opposed the perpetuation of all boundary markers of Jewish identity:

It was vital to Paul to see the Messiah's cross *blocking the way to any perpetuation of the world of Torah-observance* in which he had grown up and been active.²⁸

Paul is saying, as strongly as possible, that these identity-markers no longer matter.²⁹

If Jewish boundary markers of identity no longer matter in God's kingdom, the implication is that God no longer desires Jews to live as Jews. Jewish life has been superseded.³⁰ How do Jews in churches respond to this message? The evidence of more than fifteen centuries of church history indicates that when the church stigmatizes normative Jewish practice, Jews assimilate rather than perpetuate Jewish identity. From Wright's perspective, there is nothing wrong with this since Paul himself assimilated:

And at this point some today might say, as some of [Paul's] contemporaries certainly did, that he had stopped being a 'Jew' altogether. He had abandoned the most basic markers of Jewish identity. So is that how he saw himself, too? Once more there are signals pointing in that direction.³¹

Given Wright's less-than-positive view of Jewish life, is it any wonder that his theology of Israel fosters the erasure of Jews in the body of Messiah? Pastors and churches that embrace this way of

28. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1433 (italics mine).

29. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1429n66; cf. 1430.

30. See David J. Rudolph, "The Science of Worship: Astronomy, Intercalation, and the Church's Dependence on the Jewish People," *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* 4.1 (2017): 41–46.

31. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1429.

thinking end up stigmatizing Jewish believers in Jesus who want to continue living out their Jewish identity. Wright's theology also implicitly encourages Jews in churches not to pass on Jewish identity to their children.

Deterritorialization. The land of Israel is central to Jewish identity (Gen 12:1-7).³² In Wright's theology, however, God has universalized his promise to Abraham and the land of Israel is no longer a unique covenantal inheritance of the Jewish people. Wright explains:

In Romans 4:13 Paul says, startlingly, "The promise to Abraham and his seed, that they should inherit the world." Surely the promises of inheritance were that Abraham's family would inherit the land of Israel, not the world? Paul's horizon, however, is bigger. The Land, like the Torah, was a temporary stage in the long purpose of the God of Abraham. *It was not a bad thing now done away with, but a good and necessary thing now fulfilled in Christ and the Spirit.* ... The Temple had been superseded by the Church. If this is so for the Temple, and in Romans 4 for the Land, then it must *a fortiori* be the case for Jerusalem. ... Jesus' whole claim is to do and be what the city and the temple were and did. As a result, both claims, the claim of Jesus and the claim of "holy land," can never be sustained simultaneously. ... The attempt to "carry over" some Old Testament promises about Jerusalem, the Land or the Temple for fulfillment in our own day has the same theological shape as the attempt in pre-Reformation Catholicism to think of Christ as being recrucified in every Mass. ... *The attempt to say that there are some parts of the Old Testament (relating to Jerusalem, Land or Temple) which have not yet been "fulfilled" and so need a historical and literal "fulfillment" now, or at some other time, is an explicit attempt to take something away from the achievement*

32. See Eugene Korn, *The Jewish Connection to Israel, the Promised Land: A Brief Introduction for Christians* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2008), 3-11.

*of Christ in his death and resurrection, and to reserve it for the work of human beings in a different time and place. The work of Christ is once again "incomplete." ... The only appropriate attitude in subsequent generations towards Jews, the Temple, the Land or Jerusalem must be one of sorrow or pity.*³³

Pastors who embrace Wright's fulfillment theology instruct Jewish members of their churches to view the land of Israel as no longer important to their identity, since it has been "fulfilled in Christ and the Spirit." This attempt to separate Jews from their land (deterritorialization) is one more way that Wright's theology of Israel undermines the Jewish identity of Jesus-believing Jews.

Wright regularly uses three terms to describe how the Messiah's mission impacted Israel and Jewish identity: *reworked*, *redefined*, and *fulfilled*. It is important to recognize that when Wright uses these words, as nice as they may sound to some Christian ears, he is implying expropriation, spiritualization, stigmatization, and deterritorialization of Jewish identity—all of which contribute to the erasure of Jews in the church. As Father Gregory Tatum puts it, "[Wright's

33. N. T. Wright, "Jerusalem in the New Testament," in *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, ed. P. W. L. Walker (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1992), 67, 70, 73-74 (italics mine); cf. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 366-67. For a post-supersessionist interpretation of Rom 4:13, see David J. Rudolph, "Zionism in Pauline Literature: Does Paul Eliminate Particularity for Israel and the Land in His Portrayal of Salvation Available for All the World?" in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land*, ed. Gerald McDermott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 167-94. For a post-supersessionist approach to the land of Israel in New Testament theology more generally, see Mark S. Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen: The Resurrected Messiah, the Jewish People, and the Land of Promise* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018). Wright's argument assumes that, in Paul's thought, when something takes on new or additional meaning in Messiah, the fulfillment cancels out the validity of the prior practice or institution. However, Paul never puts forward this principle, and a number of texts call this criterion into question—e.g., marriage points to the relationship between Messiah and the church, yet marriage is not invalidated through the coming of Messiah (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-33). There is much in Paul's letters that envisions the universal and particular coexisting in God's kingdom, a view consistent with the eschatology of Israel's Scriptures.

eradication of Torah and his reinterpretation of Israel in which Israel-according-to-the-flesh ceases to be Israel in any meaningful sense] is not only an intellectual mistake, but from my perspective, morally unacceptable.”³⁴ In sum, Wright’s theology, when followed to its logical conclusion, leads to the erasure of the Jewish wing of the body of Messiah.

This brings us to the question of the degree to which this current book provides a platform for Wright’s theology of Israel. In the next section I will aim to show how various elements of Wright’s model that foster the erasure of Jews in the church show up in the essays by McKnight, Bird, and Witherington.

AN EVALUATION OF “PAULINE SUPERSESSIONISM”

More than a quarter of McKnight’s essay is devoted to giving props to Wright’s theology of Israel. McKnight describes Israel as “freshly reworked” (Wright’s term), and he says that the best Christian scholarship uses the term “true” Israel to describe the “new” Israel (27). McKnight refers to “the one people of God, the church that is Israel expanded” (43), which seems to imply that non-Messianic Jews are not part of the people of God.

McKnight, who is not only a New Testament scholar but also a canon theologian in the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), describes Messianic Jews as, “quite clearly in my judgment, resurrecting the debate Paul had with the Galatians and siding with the Judaizers to form two separate ‘churches’ in the one body of Christ” (15).³⁵ Here McKnight stigmatizes Messianic Jews because they want

34. Tatum, “Law and Covenant in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*,” 319 n. 15.

35. For a post-supersessionist interpretation of Gal 2:11–14, see David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 46–53; Magnus Zetterholm, “The Paul within Judaism Perspective,” in *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views*, ed. Scot McKnight and B. J. Oropeza (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 180–82.

to retain Jewish communal life and practice³⁶ and insinuates that Messianic Jews promote judaizing.³⁷ Would a Jew in an ACNA church feel encouraged to retain Jewish identity given this kind of messaging?

36. Messianic Jewish communal life and identity is normative in the New Testament (Acts 15; 21:17–26; Matt 5:17–20; 1 Cor 7:17–24). See David J. Rudolph, “Messianic Judaism in Antiquity and in the Modern Era,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*, ed. David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 21–36; Edwin K. Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus: Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 80–160; David J. Rudolph, “Paul’s ‘Rule in All the Churches’ (1 Cor 7:17–24) and Torah-Defined Ecclesiological Variegation,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 5 (2010): 1–23; David J. Rudolph, “Luke’s Portrait of Paul in Acts 21:17–26,” in *The Early Reception of Paul the Second Temple Jew: Text, Narrative and Reception History*, ed. Isaac W. Oliver and Gabriele Boccaccini with Joshua Scott (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 192–205; David J. Rudolph, “Was Paul Championing a New Freedom from—or End to—Jewish Law?” in *Understanding the Jewish Roots of Christianity: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Essays on the Relationship Between Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Gerald McDermott (Bellingham: Lexham, 2021); Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels’ Portrayal of Ritual Impurity Within First-Century Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 177–95; Daniel Boyarin, “Jesus Kept Kosher,” in *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012), 102–28; David J. Rudolph, “Jesus and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Mark 7:19b,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 74.4 (2002): 291–311. For a window into contemporary Messianic synagogue life, see 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 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 1:146–50; David J. Rudolph and Elliot Klayman, “Messianic Synagogues,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 37–50; Seth N. Klayman, “Messianic Jewish Worship and Prayer,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 51–60.

37. In the opening essay of the present book, McKnight also writes that “post-supersessionist messianic Jewish thinkers ... both resurrect the so-called judaizing wing of the letter of Paul to the Galatians and creates a massive fissure in the one people of God, the church that is Israel expanded” (43). For a more accurate view of Messianic Jews, see Daniel C. Juster, “Messianic Jews and the Gentile Christian World,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 136–44; Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 151–79; Mark S. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 1–24, 40–60. For scholarship on Messianic Jews and Messianic Judaism, see <https://www.messianicstudies.com>.

McKnight also portrays Messianic Jews as people who “are forming separate, segregated churches” (43),³⁸ even though one would experience more table fellowship between Jews and gentiles in a Messianic synagogue than in the average ACNA church.³⁹

In another comment, McKnight goes further and argues that the Messianic Jewish congregational movement should be shut down and Messianic Jews should join local churches that reflect *third-race* fellowships:

Wright sees a “third race” in the church, while Kinzer finds two kinds of church. I am closest, then, to Wright. I see the church as Israel expanded (and fulfilled, and therefore a new people with deep dimensions of continuity) in which Jewish believers will remain sometimes Torah-observant and gentile believers not Torah-observant except in general, but that they will form one fellowship—and I mean one local church that worships, teaches, and eats together—and will share the table together (kosher folks eating with non-kosher folks, and

38. It is not clear if McKnight also opposes Black churches, Hispanic churches, Korean churches, etc.

39. Gentile believers typically comprise more than half of the membership of Messianic congregations. Kinzer’s bilateral ecclesiology is more of a theoretical model that reflects Jewish covenantal and communal realities than the normative demographic experience of Messianic synagogues. Kinzer makes room in his ecclesial vision for Jews in Christian churches when they adopt a progressive, pragmatic, and personal approach to Torah practice. See Mark S. Kinzer, “The Torah and Jews in the Christian Church—Covenant Calling and Pragmatic Practice” (paper presented at the Helsinki Consultation on Jewish Continuity in the Body of Messiah, Berlin, 2012), 1–13. From Kinzer’s perspective, Messianic synagogues and Jews in churches are not either/or but both/and. Kinzer and I are actively involved in *Yachad BeYeshua* (Together in Jesus), an international fellowship of Jewish disciples of Jesus that includes Messianic Jews and Jewish members of Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and independent churches. See www.yachad-beyeshua.org. These Jewish Christians relate firsthand how difficult it is to identify as Jews, live out Jewish life, and pass on Jewish identity to their children when their churches promote a type of supersessionism similar to what Wright and the primary essayists of this book are advocating.

sometimes kosher folks not eating kosher). Thus, I agree with Wright that Jews and gentiles will *sit in mixed table fellowship* and so transcend difference in a new-creation kind of unity through the power of the Spirit. I agree, too, with Wright that “fulfillment in Christ” marks the new identity more than anything else. That there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ means those ethnic identities will lead not to separation but to ethnicity-transcending *koinonia* at the table. (40)⁴⁰

McKnight remarks later that “gentile believers have no right to diminish Israel (or Jews)” (42). However, is McKnight being respectful of Messianic Jews when he suggests that they should leave their synagogues, join predominantly gentile churches, eat nonkosher food, and not make a fuss when they can’t keep all of their Jewish customs in the local church?⁴¹

Turning to Bird, he quotes Wright six times, uses the expression “Israel is redefined” (e.g., 46), and in various ways promotes a Pauline vision for the erasure of Jewish identity, such as when he approvingly cites Daniel Harlow as saying, “For Paul: *only those in Christ are in the covenant and among the elect. In his vision of a new humanity destined for a new creation, ethnicity—so essential to Jewish identity—disappears. If this theology implies no wholesale rejection or supersession of Israel, it does imply a new definition of ‘Israel.’*”⁴²

40. McKnight unpacks his case for a third-race view in Scot McKnight, “Saints Re-formed: The Extension and Expansion of *hagios* in Paul,” in *One God, One People, One Future: Essays in Honor of N. T. Wright* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 211–13.

41. The Toward Jerusalem Council II Seven Affirmations (www.tjcii.org) represent an alternative way of viewing Messianic synagogues and Jews in churches that is more in line with respect for Jew-gentile diversity in the body of Messiah.

42. Daniel C. Harlow, “Early Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 405 (italics mine). For Bird’s citation in the present volume, see 50n13.

Bird advocates for a third-race ecclesiology when he writes that Paul's "Christ-believing groups are neither Jews nor pagans but rather the 'assembly of God,' a prestigious group with a privileged relationship with Israel's God through Christ (1 Cor 10:32)" (58).⁴³ In a footnote, Bird cites his own work, *An Anomalous Jew*, in which he says that "it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul conceived of Christ-believers as a τρίτον γένος, or *tertium genus*: a third race."⁴⁴ Bird clarifies that his view is not a replacement theology. However, any ecclesial theology that fosters the erasure of Jews, especially when driven by a third-race vision, will ipso facto lead to a de facto all-gentile church. This has been the case for more than fifteen hundred years.⁴⁵

Consistent with this trajectory, Bird concurs with Wright that Paul repudiated circumcision as a sign of God's covenant relationship with the Jewish people and universalized its meaning: "Circumcision is nullified (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15) and reinterpreted (Rom 2:25–29; Phil 3:3) as a marker of belonging to God's people" (58).⁴⁶ Like

43. For a post-supersessionist interpretation of 1 Cor 10:32, see Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews*, 33–35; J. Brian Tucker, "Gentiles Identifying with Moses and Israel's Story in 1 Cor 10:1–13: Evaluating Aspects of the Wright-Hays Interpretive Framework," in *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism*, ed. František Ábe (Lanham: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2020), 224–25.

44. Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 54. For this discussion in Bird's essay, see 46n44, where he also points to Wright's extended discussion of the third-race schema in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1443–49.

45. Jews in churches today tend to assimilate and not pass on Jewish identity to their children when their churches promote third-race theology. See Jonathan Allen, *A Profile of Jewish Believers in the UK Church* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 211–31; Antoine Lévy, *Jewish Church: A Catholic Approach to Messianic Judaism* (Lanham: Lexington, 2021). As an example of a church that is not third-race-oriented and is theologically committed to Jewish continuity, see Gateway Church (www.gateway-people.com) and the Gateway Center for Israel (www.centerforisrael.com).

46. For a post-supersessionist interpretation of 1 Cor 7:19, Gal 5:6, 6:15, Rom 2:25–29 and Phil 3:2–11, see Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews*, 28–30, 44–46, 73–74; Tucker, *Reading Romans after Supersessionism*, 45–57; Christopher Zoccali, *Reading Philippians after Supersessionism: Jews, Gentiles, and Covenant Identity* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017),

Wright, Bird regards gentile Christians as spiritual Jews who take on the identity of Israel:

For Paul, "Israel" is a prestige label for the superordinate group comprised of Christ-believing Jews and gentiles, who can be described elsewhere as an "inward Jew" (Rom 2:29), "children of the living God" (Rom 9:26), the "circumcision" (Phil 3:3), and the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). (59)⁴⁷

In his conclusion, Bird writes, "Paul's messianic eschatology leads to viewing Israel as not replaced but expanded to include Christ-believing gentiles, so that Paul can simultaneously affirm that the distinction between Jews and gentiles is negated even as he retains a place for ethnic Israel in God's purposes" (63). From my perspective, the weak link in Bird's theology of Israel is that Jews and gentiles cease to be Jews and gentiles in any meaningful sense. He does not seem to view the church fundamentally as a table fellowship of Jews and gentiles in Messiah who are called to affirm one another

86–108, 131–36; Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Polemic in Philippians 3 as Jewish-Subgroup Vilification of Local Non-Jewish Cultic and Philosophical Alternatives," in *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*, vol. 4 of *Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 142–91.

47. Bird overstates the evidence for Paul including gentile believers in the term "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). Of the seventy-seven times that "Israel" appears in the New Testament, seventy-six times it contextually refers to the Jewish people or land of Israel. Setting aside Wright's strained interpretation of Rom 11:26, there is only one instance where the meaning of Israel is in doubt—Gal 6:16. Here "Israel of God" may refer to *klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people), the faithful Jewish remnant, a subgroup of Jewish Christ-followers from Jerusalem, or Israel (without expropriation) and its eschatologically extended commonwealth. See Ralph J. Korner, *The Origin and Meaning of Ekklesia in the Early Jesus Movement* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 221–29; Gerald R. McDermott, *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017), 26–28; Susan G. Eastman, "Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6:16 and Romans 9–11," *New Testament Studies* 56.3 (2010): 367–95; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 323; Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 82–83.

in their respective identities as Jews and gentiles and relate to each other in a spirit of interdependence, mutual blessing, and mutual humbling (Rom 11, 15; Eph 2).⁴⁸ Bird's third-race theology effectively undermines this Pauline vision. Bird offers no indication that Jewish believers in Jesus are called to remain practicing Jews in third-race communities that appropriate Israelite identity. The thrust of his essay is in line with Wright's redefined Israel and the various ways that it fosters the erasure of Jews in the church through expropriation and spiritualization of Jewish identity.

Witherington is the only author in the volume who does not follow the lead of Wright's model. Contrary to Wright, Witherington argues that when Paul uses the term "Israel" he means Jewish people. At the same time, Witherington seems to promote expropriation. As he puts it, "Furthermore, at any one moment in human history since the Christ event, there was only one people of God, with Jew and gentile united in Christ" (77). The implication is that Jewish people who do not believe in Jesus are no longer part of the people of God, though he believes they can return.

Like McKnight, Witherington draws on Galatians to stigmatize Messianic Jews. He describes Jesus-believing Jews who keep God's commandments specific to Israel (e.g., circumcision, Israel's festivals, dietary laws, etc.) as "tantamount to submitting again to bondage and renouncing the gospel of Christ and the new covenant he instituted" (74).⁴⁹ This negative Jewish messaging communicates to Jews

48. The author of Ephesians uses nuanced language to describe the relationship of gentile believers to Israel (*politeias tou Israel* ["commonwealth of Israel"], *amphoterōi* ["both"], *sun-/sum-/sus-* ["co-" prefixes], and the second-person plural pronoun and verb to identify gentiles in contrast to Jews); see Eph 2:11-22; 3:1, 5-6. The author thereby avoids giving the impression that the church is coterminous with Israel or that Jewish identity is erased or expropriated.

49. For a post-supersessionist interpretation of Gal 4:9-10, see Neil Martin, *Regression in Galatians: Paul and the Gentile Response to Jewish Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); Kathy Ehrensperger, "Trouble in Galatia: What Should be Cut? (On Gal 5:12)," in *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism*, 180; Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

in churches that they should assimilate. In Witherington's theological vision, all of Jewish life is superfluous in Christ, including boundary markers of Jewish identity. The Torah had a "temporal and temporary function" (71) and has been "fulfilled" (i.e., "its day and time had come and gone"; 73).

Several times Witherington comments that in Paul's view Jesus-believing Jews can practice Jewish customs if the purpose is "to reach more Jews for Christ" (71). But wouldn't this make Messianic Jews inauthentic, chameleon-like, and deceptive?⁵⁰ Doesn't it also imply that Jews are simpletons who cannot see through this pretense? There are alternative post-supersessionist ways of understanding Paul's principle of flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 that are more ethical and halakic in approach, but Witherington does not engage them.⁵¹ In the end, Witherington falls in line with Wright, McKnight, and Bird in advocating for a kind of supersessionism that fosters the erasure of Jews in the church.

POST-SUPERSESSIONIST THEOLOGY

McKnight claims that post-supersessionist theology is rooted in religious pluralism and a lack of critical scholarship. This is wide of the mark in my opinion and is itself suggestive of McKnight's uncritical acceptance of a tendentious tradition and his lack of engagement

2016), 156; Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-Century Social Context of Paul's Letter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 116-47; Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 267-71.

50. See Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews*, 12-13, 67-73; Mark D. Nanos, "Was Paul a 'Liar' for the Gospel? The Case for a New Interpretation of Paul's 'Becoming Everything to Everyone' in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23," in *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*, 93-108.

51. For a post-supersessionist interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19-23 that is more in line with the context of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, see Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews*, 173-212; Matthew V. Novenson, "Did Paul Abandon Either Judaism or Monotheism?" in *The New Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 245.

with opposing scholarship.⁵² The Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology (www.spotst.org) defines its mission as follows:

The Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology exists in order to promote research and discussion that advances post-supersessionist thought. The Society understands post-supersessionism as a family of theological perspectives that affirms God's irrevocable covenant with the Jewish people as a central and coherent part of ecclesial teaching. It seeks to overcome understandings of the New Covenant that entail the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people, of the Torah as a demarcator of Jewish communal identity, or of the Jewish people themselves.

The Society welcomes participation from all who seek to advance post-supersessionist theology. It especially seeks to promote perspectives that remain faithful to core Christological convictions; that affirm the ecclesia's identity as a table fellowship of Jews and gentiles united in the Messiah; and that engage with Jewish thought and tradition as an expression of ecclesial partnership with the Jewish people as a whole.

The founding members of the society include R. Kendall Soulen, Mark Kinzer, David Rudolph, Holly Taylor Coolman, Gerald McDermott, William Abraham, Gary Anderson, Craig Blaising, Jeroen Bol, Ellen Charry, Gavin D'Costa, Tommy Givens, Justin Hardin, Douglas Harink, Stanley Hauerwas, Kevin Hughes, George Hunsinger, Willie Jennings, Craig Keener, Joseph Mangina, Ephraim Radner, Anders Runesson, Katherine Sonderegger, J. Brian Tucker, Pim Valkenberg, Tom Weinandy, and Joel Willitts. This diverse group of gentile Christian and Messianic Jewish scholars is reflective of the membership as a whole.

52. See www.post-supersessionism.com for the breadth of critical (including confessional) scholarship being published in this field.

Similarly, the New Testament after Supersessionism series, published by Cascade, reflects a high level of discourse among confessional scholars who are faithful to core christological convictions. Its editorial board includes two gentile Christians and a Messianic Jew. Among Paul-within-Judaism scholars in Society of Biblical Literature circles, the diversity extends to traditional Jews and those who are secular. Relatively few of the leading Paul-within-Judaism scholars in my experience hold a *Sonderweg* reading of Paul.⁵³

CONCLUSION

There are various kinds of supersessionism. Some are benign and others harm the body of Messiah. Wright's version of supersessionism—the third-race theology promoted in this book—is the more pernicious kind because of its vision for the expropriation, spiritualization, stigmatization, and deterritorialization of Jewish identity, which leads to the erasure of Jews in the church. All three essays in this volume include elements of this assimilationist messaging found in Wright's theology of Israel.

While supersessionism has different meanings today and the term can be misused,⁵⁴ there is a place for recognizing what it originally

53. *Sonderweg* here refers to a special path of salvation for the Jewish people. I find religious pluralism more prevalent in Jewish-Christian relations settings, ironically a place where Messianic Jews are often excluded (e.g., the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations). See 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, "To the Jew First: Paul's Vision for the Priority of Israel in the Life of the Church," *Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 37 (2020): 11–25; Jennifer M. Rosner, "Messianic Jews and Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, 145–55; Jennifer M. Rosner, *Healing the Schism: Barth, Rosenzweig, and the New Jewish-Christian Encounter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 293–300. For a discussion of Messianic Jewish soteriology, see Daniel C. Juster, "The Narrow Wider Hope," *Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 22 (2008): 14–41; Mark S. Kinzer, "Final Destinies: Qualifications for Receiving an Eschatological Inheritance," *Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 22 (2008): 87–119.

54. None of this justifies subverting the term "supersessionism" through logocide or semanticide as the essays in Part 1 of the present volume do. See John Wesley Young,

meant before it sprouted so many variations. In his monograph *Aquinas on Israel and the Church*, Matthew Tapie surveys the history of the term and articulates the heart of its meaning in Christianity's traditional theology of the Jewish people. He concludes, "Supersessionism is the Christian claim that with the advent of Christ, Jewish Law is fulfilled and obsolete, with the result that God replaces Israel with the Church."⁵⁵

What is so striking to me about Tapie's definition of classical supersessionism is how closely it fits the bill of what Wright argues for, which explains why Paula Fredriksen dubs Wright's view "classic, indeed deeply traditional supersessionism."⁵⁶ McKnight and Bird attempt to rebrand Wright's theology of Israel and contend that it is not a replacement theology. However, at the end of the day, what happens to Jewish people in third-race churches? Are they not assimilated into a community that is no longer Jew or Greek? As the saying goes, "If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck!"

What difference does it make whether this book promotes traditional supersessionism or not? It makes *all* the difference, because we empirically know the devastating impact this theology has had on the Jewish people over the last eighteen hundred years. With anti-Semitism on the rise around the world, it is more important than ever that the church learn from its past and not repeat the errors of yesterday. We need to know the kind of theology that stokes the flames of anti-Semitism in the church and nip it in the bud rather than normalize it.

Totalitarian Language: Orwell's Newspeak and Its Nazi and Communist Antecedents (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 104-14.

55. Matthew A. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church: The Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2014), 23-24 (italics original). Cf. Matthew Tapie, "Christ, Torah, and the Faithfulness of God: The Concept of Supersessionism in 'The Gifts and the Calling,'" *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12.1 (2017): 1-18.

56. Fredriksen, review of *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (by Wright), 389.

In many ways, Messianic Jews serve as the proverbial canary in the coal mine when it comes to detecting forms of supersessionism that are harmful. As Father Peter Hocken, a Catholic charismatic priest and one of the founders of Toward Jerusalem Council II,⁵⁷ puts it, "Encountering Messianic Jews is a challenging experience for any gentile Christian. We may be aware that much of the Christian world has begun to move away from the view that the church has replaced Israel as God's covenanted people. ... But often this remains a rather theoretical consideration remote from the burning theological issues of the day. Meeting Messianic Jews confronts gentile Christians with Jewish believers in Jesus who refuse to be 'replaced.' It faces Christians not just with a different theology but with an incarnate reality."⁵⁸

57. See www.tjcii.org.

58. Peter Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 16. In a more recent article, Hocken writes: "For centuries converted Jews were simply assimilated into a Christian church, whether the Catholic, the Orthodox, or one of the Protestant churches. The distinctions that remained or arose within the church world did not include that between Jew and gentile. Thus the appearance of Messianic Jews who claim a distinct identity as Jewish disciples of Jesus, presents a huge challenge to all Christian theologies of church. The challenge is not just to find a place for the Messianic Jews, a slot into which the churches can fit them. The challenge to the gentiles is first to undo all the consequences of replacement thinking that either replaced Israel by the church or subsumed Israel into the church; the challenge is to restore the corporate Jewish witness to Yeshua to its rightful and foundational place within the body of Christ-Messiah. This can be the only authentic way to the healing of our divisions and to the manifestation of the unity of the one body. I see all of us gentile believers as beginners and learners in responding to the challenges raised by the Messianic Jews" (Peter Hocken, "Continuity and Discontinuity in the Relation of the Church to Israel," in *Azusa, Rome, and Zion: Pentecostal Faith, Catholic Reform, and Jewish Roots* [Eugene: Pickwick, 2016], 133-34).

GOD'S ISRAEL
AND THE
ISRAEL OF GOD

**PAUL AND
SUPERSESSIONISM**

EDITED BY
MICHAEL F. BIRD
& SCOT MCKNIGHT



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