

# Spotlight on New Books You Should Know About

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Jews for Jesus

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You can also download the accompanying PowerPoint (as a PDF) at the LCJE-NA website, [www.lcje-na.org](http://www.lcje-na.org), with notes on most of the books provided.

Below is the list of books presented, followed by full-length reviews for many of them (these mostly appeared in *Mishkan* or the *LCJE Bulletin*; they are usually a lot longer than the notes in the PDF).

## List of Books

(\* = full review appended)

### History

- \* Kaufmann, Thomas. *Luther's Jews: a Journey into Anti-Semitism*. Tr. Lesley Sharpe and Jeremy Noakes. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- \* Harvey, Richard S. *Luther and the Jews: Putting Right the Lies*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.
- \* Gritsch, Eric W. *Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism: Against His Better Judgment*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2012.
- \* Lillevik, Raymond. *Apostates, Hybrids, or True Jews? Jewish Christians and Jewish Identity in Eastern Europe, 1860–1914*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014.

### Israel

- \* McDermott, Gerald R., ed. *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.

\* McDermott, Gerald R. *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently About the People and the Land*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017.

Brand, Chad O., ed. *Perspectives on Israel and the Church: 4 Views*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015.

\* Morris, Paul, ed. *The Gospel and Israel: The Edersheim Lectures*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014.

## **Jewish Evangelism**

Newman, Randy. *Engaging with Jewish People: Understanding Their World, Sharing Good News*. [Purcellville VA:] The Good Book Company, 2016.

Snyder, Avi. *Jews Don't Need Jesus & Other Misconceptions: Reflections of a Jewish Believer*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017.

## **Jews and Jesus**

\* Moffic, Evan. *What Every Christian Needs to Know about the Jewishness of Jesus: A New Way of Seeing the Most Influential Rabbi in History*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017.

Zaslow, David. *Jesus: First-Century Rabbi*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2014.

Mishkin, David. *Jewish Scholarship on the Resurrection of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017.

## **Jews and the New Testament**

\* Levine, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd ed, revised and expanded. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. [First edition was 2011; reviewed below]

Levine, Amy-Jill. *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*. HarperOne, 2014.

## **Jews and the Gospel of John**

\* Azar, Michael G. *Exegeting the Jews: the Early Reception of the Johannine "Jews"*. The Bible in Ancient Christianity 10. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016.

\* Cronin, Sonya Shetty. *Raymond Brown, 'The Jews', and The Gospel of John: from Apologia to Apology*. Library of New Testament Studies 504. London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015.

\* Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, Eli. *The Jewish Gospel of John: Discovering Jesus, King of All Israel*. Tel Aviv: Jewish Studies for Christians, 2015. (Review by Sam Rood)

## **Jews and Paul**

Bird, Michael F. *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015.

Nanos, Mark D. and Magnus Zetterholm, eds. *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015.

## **Life Stories**

Jurik, Christiane, ed. *What We Have Seen and Heard: Twenty-Three Jews Speak about Their Faith in Messiah*. Second ed. San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2015.

\* Volman, Ben. *More Than Miracles: Elaine Zeidman Markovic and the Story of the Scott Mission*. Brechin, Ontario: Castle Quay Books, 2015

Caplin, Alan. *Blind: One Man's Journey of Thought*. Privately published, 2014.

Barron, Andrew and Lindsey Gallant. *Dared to Believe: The Story of Maisie Pillemer, a South African Jew for Jesus*. South Africa: Viking Publishing, 2014.

Turnil, Josué, ed. *Ils ont découvert leur Messie: des Juifs témoignent*. Romanel-sur-Lausanne, France: Ourania, 2014.

## Holidays

Van Loon, Michelle. *Moments & Days: How Our Holy Celebrations Shape Our Faith*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2016.

Moffic, Evan. *What Every Christian Needs to Know about Passover: What It Means and Why It Matters*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014.

## Messianic Judaism

Rudolph, David and Joel Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

\* Dauermann, Stuart. *Converging Destinies: Jews, Christians, and the Mission of God*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.

## “Manifestos”

\* Maghen, Ze’ev. *John Lennon and the Jews: A Philosophical Rampage*. New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2014.

## Personalities

\* Hier, Marvin. *Meant to Be: A Memoir*. New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2015.

## Fun

\*Merwin, Ted. *Pastrami on Rye: An Overstuffed History of the Jewish Deli*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.

Handwerker, Lloyd and Gil Reavill. *Famous Nathan: A Family Saga of Coney Island, the American Dream, and the Search for the Perfect Hot Dog*. New York: Flatiron Books, 2016.

Wishnia, Kenneth, ed. *Jewish Noir: Contemporary Tales of Crime and Other Dark Deeds*. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2015.

Tidhar, Lavie and Rebecca Levene, eds. *Jews Versus Aliens*. Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press, 2016.

Krakoff, Jere. *Something Is Rotten in Fetting: A Satire*. Hephzibah, GA: Anaphora Literary Press, 2016.

Isenberg, Barbara. *Tradition! the Highly Improbable, Ultimately Triumphant Broadway-to-Hollywood Story of Fiddler on the Roof, the World's Most Beloved Musical*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014.

Portnoy, Eddy. *Bad Rabbi: and Other Strange but True Stories from the Yiddish Press*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017.

## FULL REVIEWS

**Kaufmann, Thomas. *Luther's Jews: a Journey into Anti-Semitism*. Tr. Lesley Sharpe and Jeremy Noakes. Oxford University Press, 2017.**

**Harvey, Richard S. *Luther and the Jews: Putting Right the Lies*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.**

**Gritsch, Eric W. *Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism: Against His Better Judgment*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2012.**

As I write, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation will soon be upon us. Among the plethora of volumes devoted to various Reformation topics, three books—two recent, a third a few years older—do an outstanding job of exploring the subject of Luther and the Jews. The cover art of Kaufmann's and Harvey's books draw from the same classic portrait of Luther, and both share similar titles, so it's easy to mistake one for the other at first glance. However, *Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism* comes from the pen of Thomas Kaufmann, on the Faculty of Theology at the Georg-August-Universität at Göttingen, while *Luther and the Jews: Putting Right the Lies* is written by Richard S. Harvey, one of two Senior Researchers on the staff of the mission agency Jews for Jesus (disclosure: this reviewer is the other one), as well as Associate Lecturer at All Nations Christian College. The late Eric W. Gritsch, originally from Austria, was an American Lutheran theologian and educator.

Looking at Kaufmann's volume first, *Luther's Jews* is a scholarly account of the relation of Luther and the Jewish people, or at least his *conception* of them—for he knew few personally. The title underscores the lack of objectivity in Luther's outlook: "Luther's Jews are a conglomerate of ill-defined fears, calculated publishing projects, and targeted use of biblical traditions, and also of resentment, cultural traditions, and sheer fantasy—in other words, a phantom" (Kindle edition, location 256). They are therefore *his* Jews, not *the* Jews—a distinction with lasting repercussions.

Six chapters successively treat the Jews as they lived on the "fringes" of medieval German society; Luther's early theological views regarding Jews; his role in changing societal attitudes for the better towards Jews (though "better" is clearly a relative term in this context!); followed by further changes in the 1520s and '30s which sent the pendulum in the other direction; and his "vicious" writings, particularly *On the Jews and Their Lies*. The important final sixth chapter treats the reception history of Luther's Jewish writings—how people read Luther and acted on their

reading—from the 16th to the 20th centuries. A conclusion follows with notes, sources, bibliography and index; 15 illustrations are also included.

There are several takeaways. One is the continuity or lack of it between Luther's earlier writings about Jews and his later ones, among the latter of which *On the Jews and Their Lies* has become Exhibit A of Luther's attitudes. A typical modern understanding of Luther runs something like this: he started out friendly to the Jews, hopeful for their conversion. But when his hopes failed to materialize, he became bitter and resentful, and unleashed unheard-of fury against the Jews. So: a friendly, early Luther, and an anti-Semitic, later Luther, with various explanations as to the reasons for the change. However, the reality is not so cut-and-dried. As Kaufmann shows, Luther was a product of his age, harboring the same deeply corrosive views of Jews as did others: they were an obstinate people, they deliberately refused faith in Christ, they were unable to understand their own Scriptures, they were devious and harmful to Christian society, they wished the destruction of Christians, and on and on.

What *is* true is that Luther shifted his position from a certain toleration of Jews—though assuredly not in the modern sense of *tolerance*—to writing a programmatic manifesto calling for burning synagogues, expelling Jews from Christian countries, and much more. His early position stemmed in part from his criticism of the Catholic Church: a relatively positive view of Jews and others added force to Luther's polemic against the Catholic Church, for (among other things) it was the latter's failure that prevented the conversion of the Jews. Yet even in his earlier work *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* “we cannot escape the impression that even this text was read as a rule as an exegetical tract directed against the Jews” (Kindle 2272). And crucially, Luther argued for a policy of relative lenience “until I can see what effect I have had” (Kindle 1114). His early “openness” was a social experiment, one influenced by others such as Justus Jonas, and underlying it was a poisoned view of the Jewish people that only became fully explicit later on. Interestingly, *On the Jews and Their Lies* turned out to be “the least successful of all Luther's Jewish writing” (Kindle 2191). It made little impact on practical policy towards the Jews.

A second takeaway concerns whether Luther was anti-*Judaism* or anti-*Semitic*. But for the medieval world, that distinction was a non-starter. Kaufmann notes that religion was not separable from other aspects of medieval life: and “[Luther's outlook] was undoubtedly rooted in a religiously motivated anti-Judaism, but insofar as it attributed particular negative characteristics such as deviousness, the lust to kill, and love of money to Jews as Jews it went beyond anti-Judaism” (Kindle 676).

A third important takeaway concerns the “reception” of Luther's views on the Jews. Sixteenth-century Lutheran theologians such as Johannes

Mathesius highlighted continuity between the earlier and later Luther, while Nikolaus Selnecker's writings "presupposed an anti-Semitic, proto-racist view of the Jews based on the 'immutability' of their 'essential nature' " (Kindle 2310). In that connection, he was also one of those who believed the harsher, later writings of Luther had been suppressed: "Selnecker, however, made loyalty to Luther's and Melanchthon's hostility to the Jews a defining element in the construction of Lutheran identity" (Kindle 2318). But with the coming of Pietism, it is the earlier Luther than came to the fore, and "[i]n line with changing social and cultural needs, the early Luther was turned into a father of modern toleration towards the Jews" (Kindle 2418), and this continued throughout the 18th and part of the 19th centuries. Even Jewish scholars such as Ludwig Geiger or Samuel Krauss made moves towards a kind of Jewish reclamation of Luther, though simultaneously keeping the anti-Jewish Luther in mind. At length the Nazi movement adopted Luther as an advocate for anti-Semitism and racial purity, entirely neglecting the theological underpinnings of Luther's thought. Like Jesus himself, Luther has at times been molded into the exemplar *du jour* for whatever cultural currents happen to be running.

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Richard Harvey's *Luther and the Jews* is part primer, part personal journey and part call to action. The author is a Jewish believer in Yeshua who is situated in Europe, with all that entails. He is no stranger to reflection on reconciliation, having been active at conferences between Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews; at forums bringing together Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox Jewish believers in Yeshua; and having written several papers on these subjects. Hence coming at this 500th anniversary of the Reformation, he has also turned his attention to Jewish-German relationships in light of Martin Luther's views.

The first chapter describes Luther's life, providing a compact introduction to the contours of his biography. Chapter two gives a corresponding history of the Jewish people, and includes a personal account of the author's own family story during the time of the Holocaust. A history of Messianic Jews is provided.

Chapter three is entitled, "Luther's Lies about the Jews," though this chapter is really background to that subject. Similarly to Kaufmann, the author discounts any real distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism; he also discusses the question of anti-Semitism in the New Testament; and tours us briefly through church history vis-à-vis supersessionism and the Jewish people, setting the historical context for understanding Luther. While the latter eventually ended up writing *On the*



*Jews and Their Lies*, the author here turns that on its head to note the “lies about the Jews” that Luther subscribed to.

In chapter four we get to Luther’s actual writings about Jews. As throughout much of the book, the author’s personal response to his subject is deliberately interwoven. He does not think any mitigating factors tell against Luther’s responsibility for his writings, and with Kaufmann notes that Luther’s literary handling of the Jews went hand in hand with his polemic against Rome. Four of Luther’s works are considered: *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*, *Against the Sabbatarians*, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, and *The Last Words of David*. Of importance is the fact that *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*, often popularly thought of as evidence of an alleged early philo-Semitic stance, is neither pro-Jewish nor representative of a position about which Luther would later change his mind. Despite his recommendation of kind actions towards the Jews, Luther’s contempt of them shows how deeply he was embedded in the worldview of his day. *Against the Sabbatarians* refers multiple times to the “1,500 years of exile” which to Luther’s mind demonstrates that God has been judging the Jews; and he blames Jews, without evidence, for influencing Christians towards Sabbath observance. Coming to *On the Jews and Their Lies*, the author expresses his personal perplexity and anguish over the content of that work. We find that Luther opines that Jews should live “where there are no Christians,” not an uncommon opinion in an age when expulsion of Jews could be on the table; but then he says, “Let them think of their fatherland; then they need no longer wail and lie before God against us that we are holding them captive” (Kindle 1458). In an ironic way, and for all the wrong reasons, Luther momentarily reads like a proto-Zionist! The chapter ends by summarizing five “lies” of Luther’s concerning the Jews, and includes a Jewish prayer of forgiveness as a reminder that the book will also be speaking about healing the wounds of the past.

On exactly that subject, chapter five concerns proposals—more suggestive than programmatic—for overcoming the past via a path of reconciliation. Repentance, righting past wrongs, and making appropriate reparations and restitution must, the author urges, form part of reconciliation. In this connection, he seeks to find what good Luther has done: he has given a deeper understanding of Jesus and God’s purposes; shown how Christ fulfills the Old Testament promises; and instructed Christians through his catechisms. But at the end of the day, we must evaluate Luther negatively vis-à-vis the Jewish people. “Lies” Luther told about Jews are again repeated, with a longer list than in chapter four. Positive Lutheran responses are described and quoted in detail.

And then, as a very specific proposal, the author advocates for the removal of the *Judensau*, the “Jew-Pig” sculpture which remains to this day on the façade of the Wittenberg church and depicts a rabbi inspecting beneath the

tail of a sow (=studying the Talmud) and Jews as suckling piglets. He includes a copy of his petition for the removal. Importantly, he notes that exactly what one does with such a statue is a matter of debate even among those who deplore its meaning and exhibition, for some think it better to keep it in place as a historical testimony of sorts, suitably annotated, in order to form a “culture of remembrance” (Kindle 1866). (Tellingly, as I write a similar debate is happening in the United States over what ought to be done with statues of notable historical figures of the Confederacy).

Finally, chapter six offers a number of counter-histories imagining what might have been if Luther had written otherwise than he did. For, the author writes, “I would like to see a future based on the imagined past” (Kindle 2088). A conclusion is followed by a list of further reading and resources, and—an unexpected creative touch—the author’s own impassioned poetic lamentation over the *Judensau*, which has been set to music and is now available for listening online.

In short, *Luther and the Jews* provides a much-needed voice: that of a Messianic Jew.

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Eric Gritsch’s *Martin Luther’s Anti-Semitism* deals in three chapters respectively with the nature of anti-Semitism; then, using many primary quotes, with the evidence of Luther’s anti-Semitism; and finally with the “after-effects” of Luther’s writings. The chapter on anti-Semitism is particularly helpful. While some of the rehearsal of Christian anti-Semitism will be familiar ground, Gritsch places it in the wider context of the very nature of anti-Semitism itself. He notes also that Romans 11:25-27, for example, “stumped” Luther because given his anti-Semitism, he failed to grasp Paul’s view of Jewish-Christian relations—according to Gritsch, against his “better judgment.” At times Luther took a more and at other times a less pastoral attitude towards the Jewish people despite his underlay of anti-Semitic attitudes. In this Gritsch seems more inclined to attribute Luther’s changing attitudes to failed attempts at evangelization rather than to Kaufmann’s idea that Luther’s early openness was a “social experiment.”

Again, so says Gritsch, Luther failed to heed his own principles. For instance, Luther advocated against any speculation concerning the “hidden God,” that is, what Paul designated a “mystery” in Romans 11:25. Therefore Luther should have not pronounced upon the meaning of the anti-Semitism that was prevalent in his day. Instead, though, he decided that it reflected God’s own hatred of the Jews, thereby violating his own principle—“against his better judgment.”

As to the “after-effects” of Luther’s anti-Semitism, they were at first quite minimal among Christians. In fact, early on it was Muslims rather than Jews who took center place as enemies of Christ. But from the late 16th century on, Luther’s hard anti-Semitism found new life. Yet by the 18th century, things again changed as Pietists ignored Luther’s anti-Semitic attitudes and painted the picture of a pro-Jewish Luther. Then during the Enlightenment, when at least after its beginning stages pro-Jewish attitudes were on the rise, Luther’s anti-Semitic writings were not even discussed. Eventually, a picture emerged—rejected by all three authors reviewed here—of a young, friendly, philo-Semitic Luther and the later version. This chapter is particularly helpful by offering extended discussions of how Luther’s anti-Semitism was “received” by two scholars: Lutheran Walther Bienert, and the Dutch Reformed Heiko Oberman. Bienert attempted to give an *apologia* for Luther, while Oberman considered the Jews to be, in Luther’s thought, God’s “measuring instrument” that showed the extent of evil between Christ’s first and second comings: namely that Jews, in their self-righteousness, mirror the same sin found among Christians.

Gritsch’s book is a counterpart to Kaufmann’s. Gritsch includes many more primary quotes; sometimes for someone not well-versed in Luther’s thought, they may feel as though they are losing the forest for the trees. Luther’s thought is not simple; he reveals himself to be a complex person, embedded in his own times, yet unmistakably his own person. While Kaufmann delineates the nature of Luther’s anti-Semitism in a more synthetic fashion, Gritsch will be useful for seeing what Luther himself had to say, as well as for his excellent historical treatment of anti-Semitism. In this connection, readers may wish to decide if Luther’s anti-Semitism was indeed “against his better judgment,” or whether it was more thoroughly embedded in his life and theology than the phrase would seem to indicate.

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These three authors do not much interact with one another. Kaufmann does not mention Gritsch, and Gritsch only includes Kaufmann in his bibliography. Harvey mentions both bibliographically, adding regarding Gritsch that it offers “a defence of Luther’s anti-Judaism (in my view unsuccessful).” I’m not sure that Gritsch is actually *defending* Luther’s views as much as saying that they *contradict* some of his own expressed principles—but that is certainly one of the points in question. It would have been most useful if all three authors could have participated in a panel discussion on the subject.

If you are “new” to Martin Luther and the question of his anti-Semitism, pick up Richard Harvey first. His book shows the author’s heart and his

desire for concrete steps to be taken—for, though he does not explicitly remind us of this verse, “faith [and can we not add, “words”?] without works is dead.” Then turn to Thomas Kaufmann, who leads you deeper into the question of Luther, his anti-Semitism, and the effects of his views on future generations. Gritsch will serve as a counterpart to Kaufmann. Kaufmann, Gritsch and Harvey each raising a number of points of history that the others do not, and are complementary: two of them forming Lutheran scholars’ historical assessment of the past, the other a personal yet scholarly response from a Messianic Jew that is ultimately oriented toward the present and the future. But also if you are new to Luther, recognize that the anti-Semitism question is hardly the whole Luther story—so pick up a general biography as well.

**Lillevik, Raymond . *Apostates, Hybrids, or True Jews? Jewish Christians and Jewish Identity in Eastern Europe, 1860–1914*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014.**

George Santayana’s oft-quoted saying, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” seems perennially applicable to the messianic Jewish movement. Or more apropos of the Bible, “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Either way, Raymond Lillevik’s new book gives 21st-century Yeshua-followers plenty to remember and plenty to learn from.

This 453-page book (I used the non-paginated Kindle version) revises Lillevik’s Ph.D. dissertation at the Norwegian School of Theology. Two of his professors, Reidar Hvalvik and Oskar Skarsaune, will be well-known to readers of *Mishkan* (the latter wrote the foreword). In the same stream of judicious Scandinavian scholarship, Lillevik provides a balanced, thought-provoking and often lively look at three late nineteenth-early twentieth century Jewish followers of Jesus, and the identity issues that surrounded their faith.

The three subjects are all Central or Eastern European Jews: Chaim (Rudolf Hermann) Gurland, Chaim Jedidjah Pollak (aka Christian Theophilus Lucky), and Isaac Lichtenstein. We not get not only a fascinating outline of their quite different lives but an in-depth look at how they and others viewed their identities as Jews who had come to embrace Jesus. The choice to look at these three in particular stems from their time period, when many of the issues of the modern Messianic movement began to take shape, as well as from the significant amount of written material surrounding them. Then too, they all had contact in one way or another with Norwegian and Danish mission societies, and so relevant to the author’s own milieu.

Before the biographies, Lillevik gives us a chapter on methodology and previous research. It is standard to do this sort of thing in dissertations, but those who would rather bypass the first chapter will still be well served by the rest of the book. Lillevik is well abreast of the contemporary scholarship on identity issues both individual and social. He interacts with many names in the field (Erik Erikson, Fredrik Barth, Benedict Andersson, Peter Wagner, Foucault, Strozier, etc.) as well as Jewish authors such as Cohn-Sherbok, Feher, Harris-Shapiro, and Boyarin. Ultimately, he adapts Sergio DellaPergola’s framework for studying Jewish identity. In addition to DellaPergola’s categories of particularist and national-community, Lillevik focuses on the three subjects vis-à-vis “the relationship to Christian tradition and doctrine ... the relationship to

Christian community . . . [and] the relationship to contemporary Jewish (Hebrew) Christian groups and individuals.”

Chapter 2 surveys the eastern European Jewish world vis-à-vis Christian missions during the years 1860–1914. Four detailed maps are included, along with a sketch of the various Jewish missions operating at the time in this part of the world. This background is not just “color,” but it important for understanding what shaped the three subjects, their journeys to faith, and their interactions with others.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed biography of the three subjects, along with a photo of each. All three identified as Jewish, at a time when Jewish identity was already taking various forms in connection with the larger culture. Each in their own way, they navigated their identities, their relationship to the Jewish community, and their stance regarding Jewish missions.

Gurland lived in a world influenced by both traditional Judaism and the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, and found himself gravitating away from Talmud and tradition and his “claustrophobic” upbringing (Gurland’s own word). Just as there are social costs for Jews who follow Jesus, there was a cost for turning from Orthodox Judaism. Gurland’s two marriages were each in turn annulled by family members; his third wife became a believer, only to have her children removed by her traditionally Jewish family. (After her death, Gurland married for a fourth time.) Gurland was very involved with missions to the Jews, serving as a missionary himself as well as a pastor, and “apparently followed the traditional pattern for converted Jews, leaving behind all connection to his Jewish background, and none of his descendants cultivated any connection to their Jewish origins.” But that picture is too simplistic and must be nuanced, as Lillevik shows.

Pollak/Lucky grew up in Galicia, where Hasidism was influential. There are four (!) different versions of how he came to faith. He soon emigrated to the U.S. and studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York, a prominent Presbyterian institution. He received ordination from a Lutheran church body but seems also to have had an affiliation with the Seventh-Day Baptists. He was a harsh critic of Jewish mission work and an advocate that Jewish believers should remain within their own Jewish people and observe the traditions. One of his contributions was the production of periodicals directed at non-Jesus-believing Jews, which he published in both English and in Hebrew.

Lichtenstein publicly professed his faith in Jesus while still a rabbi in Hungary, and continued to remain in his pulpit due to a variety of social and religious factors that Lillevik analyzes. He would not involve himself

with the Jewish mission societies; and he was never baptized into any particular church body, but baptized himself in a *mikveh*! In some ways he acted as a free-floating missionary to the Jewish people.

Chapter Four takes the biographical material and analyzes it in terms of how the three related to Judaism and to the Christian community, as well as to the community of Jewish believers. I cannot summarize the wealth of material here, except to give a relevant quote or two regarding each subject:

Gurland: “The question is whether Gurland was arguing as a traditional Jewish-Christian apostate, or if his views were an echo of the internal Jewish debate following the modernization of the Jewish society.” . . . “In spite of Gurland’s antipathy towards Talmud and his marriage to a non-Jew, there are also factors in Gurland’s life that show he did not want to turn away from either the Jewish people or his national background as such.”

Lucky: “Lucky’s most characteristic feature was his loyalty to the Jewish tradition combined with his faith in Jesus.” . . . “for Lucky the New Testament was not only the fulfillment of the Tanak, but also confirmed the main teachings of the rabbinic tradition.” . . . “This of course raises the question of whether Jewish Christians are obliged to observe the Talmud; Lucky thinks they should. However, this should not be as a result of coercion, but only in freedom and voluntarily.”

Lichtenstein: “Lichtenstein’s fear of being cut off from his people made him avoid a public baptism his whole life.” . . . “Like Lucky, Lichtenstein claims to hold Jewish tradition, first of all the Hebrew Bible and Talmud, in high esteem.” . . . “not only is Jesus in continuity with the Jewish tradition, but he has also accomplished the mission of Israel in the world.” . . . “Lichtenstein was not interested in issues of law observance as such, but rather the right motivation for this observance.”

All these issues are placed in the complex context of 19th-century European Jewish life, which came to expression in different ways in different locations. The matters of *Haskalah*, Hasidism, reform of Judaism, state church requirements and local laws, anti-Semitism, and much more all interacted to produce unique environments for Gurland, for Lucky, and for Lichtenstein.

It should be evident that the discussions in today’s messianic Jewish community echo some of the same issues faced by an earlier generation. However, as Lillevik warns us, we cannot too quickly use our current context in order to understand the past. The issues of Torah observance and the authority of Jewish tradition are still on the table among messianic

Jews. But the context, the motivating factors, and the argumentation is quite different from what it was in 19th-century Galicia or Hungary. Moreover, as pointed out in the Introduction, there are similarities between the roads that Lucky and Lichtenstein took and those today who seek to combine Muslim or Hindu cultural and faith practices with expression of Christianity, e.g. the so-called Insider Movements. In other words, there is much to reflect on that can help us navigate our own situation. But the application of Lillevik's book will be another project for another day.



**McDermott, Gerald R., ed. *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016.**

**McDermott, Gerald R.. *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently About the People and the Land*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017.**

We have here a pair of timely books, both featuring the name Gerald McDermott, Anglican Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School. The edited volume is a collection of scholarly essays; the authored one is a popular and personal statement. Both make the case that the people of Israel as well as the land of Israel need to be seriously reckoned with in Christian theology, and that such a reckoning cannot be confined to dispensationalism.

To the academic work first. *The New Christian Zionism* is an important argument both for the very existence of the State of Israel and for the theological place of that state in God’s plan. Its importance lies in large measure in going beyond the scholarly “near obsession with dispensationalism” (Kindle edition, location 650) when it comes to discussions of Israel and Zionism. As stated in the Introduction, “the purpose of these prudential arguments—political and legal and moral—is to undergird a new *theological* argument for the twenty-first century” (ibid., location 88; emphasis original).

In the Introduction, McDermott, an Anglican, lays out what the New Christian Zionism (NCZ) is not and what it is. As emphasized several times throughout the book, NCZ is not connected with traditional dispensationalism. This is stressed not to denigrate dispensationalism but to give a fresh start to the discussion in which the point at issue runs counter to the views of many non-Zionists. The argument is that *both* the people *and* the land of Israel are central in the biblical narrative. Ultimately, any prudential arguments—and the book will offer several—are a foundation for the theological arguments to be made.

The Introduction also highlights what NCZ is *not*. It is not dispensationalism, as stated earlier; nor is it an outgrowth of nineteenth-century nationalisms (in which case it would merely be a recent and political movement). Nor is it something propounded only by Christians as opposed to Jews, nor is it the theft of Arab land, nor is it racism/apartheid as many have suggested, nor is it a call for a theocracy. The chapter ends with two striking images: NCZ is put in opposition to a “geographical-docetic” view, and in fact anti-Zionism is called “ecclesiology and

eschatology without incarnation” (ibid., location 380). The rest of the book will unpack these remarkable assertions.

The book then divides into several parts. **Part One is historical**, comprising two chapters by McDermott. Chapter 1 gives a history of supersessionism, beginning with an overview of the centrality of Israel in various strands of the New Testament, then continuing on to the changes beginning in the second century and onwards, including the period of the medieval Reformers. This history is well known by many, but some will be surprised to learn that 17th–18th century deists also espoused negative views of Judaism and influenced thinkers such as Voltaire, Kant and Schleiermacher. Recent work on Paul and the historical Jesus has led to a re-embracing of the place of Jewish people in God’s purposes—yet, interestingly, without reference to the land.

In this first chapter, McDermott almost in passing mentions some key differences between the Old Christian Zionism (OCZ) and NCZ: that Israel is essential to not only eschatology (OCZ) but to soteriology (NCZ) — and not just to *where* Christians will be (OCZ) but to what they *are* (NCZ). I would have liked to have seen this placed in the introductory chapter where the distinctives of the NCZ were presented.

From here we move in chapter 2 to a history of Christian Zionism (CZ). The big message here is that CZ predates dispensationalism by centuries. Well-known critics of (Christian) Zionism—Gary Burge, Stephen Sizer, and Timothy P. Weber—come in for critique, and to an extent so does Robert O. Smith, while the work of Donald Lewis is cited in contrast. Useful charts correlate the occurrences of “covenant” and “land” in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Then comes the chronological history: the New Testament period, early and medieval Christianity up until a major change with Origen, Augustine and later on Luther and Calvin, though exceptions continue in this period as well.

Starting in the 16th century, a confluence of social factors led to Great Britain’s embrace of what ultimately became Zionism, not least because English Christians held to a sense of their own election, making it possible to segue into seeing a role for elected Israel within history.

The 17th century saw the rise of Puritanism; a number of Puritan authors saw literal references in the Bible to the return of the Jews to Zion. Increase Mather, incidentally, was one of the first to put the restoration to the land *before* a national conversion took place.

Postmillennialists of the 18th century, including Jonathan Edwards, continued to argue for a literal return of Jews to the land; their 19th century counterparts followed suit. Even Karl Barth was sympathetic. All

this evidence is well marshaled against the “near obsession” with dispensationalism that modern critics of CZ share.

**Part Two considers relevant biblical material**, with chapters on methodology; Matthew; Luke-Acts; and Paul. Craig Blaising’s contribution is on biblical hermeneutics. He develops four criteria by which hermeneutical systems can be evaluated: comprehensiveness, congruency, consistency and coherence. Readings of a narrative are generated from textual clues, and Blaising addresses texts used by supersessionists and the latter’s points of failure, then addresses NT texts that explicitly relate Israel and its covenant promises to the NT narrative, particularly in Luke-Acts and Romans 9–11. Finally, Blaising addresses the preconsummate nature of the current return to the Land, which is of a piece with previous non-consummate returns, all of which are part of God’s particular providence for Israel, rather than a general providence. The development of a holistic narrative approach to the canon is in stark contrast with old-school dispensational arguments which often argued merely (and many would say, naively), for a “literal” reading of the texts.

Joel Willitts next examines Zionism in Matthew, presenting a persuasive case for seeing the land as a continuing concern in Matthew’s theology. He builds his case through seven facets: (1) Matthew’s Jewish (i.e. OT and Second Temple) context; (2) the geographical orientation revealed in Matthew’s narrative structure; (3) his Davidic messianism, which is a “controlling figure” in Matthew; (4) Matthew’s “turfed” kingdom, including arguments for translating *ge* as *land* (of Israel) rather than *earth*; (5) Matthew’s positive posture towards Jerusalem and the Temple; (6) Matthew’s atonement theology (drawing on Catherine Sider Hamilton and for me the most fascinating aspect of this chapter: the idea that innocent blood shed in the land, running as a theme in Matthew and other Jewish literature, leads to both judgment of exile and restoration); and (7) Matthew’s eschatology. Throughout, Matthew’s theology of restoration presupposes Gentile inclusion as well.

Mark Kinzer addresses the question vis-à-vis Luke-Acts. Contra Gary Burge (who is cited several times in the chapter), numerous textual clues show us that Luke-Acts is centered on Jerusalem, particularly the dual aspect of its impending judgment yet eventual restoration. Kinzer offers a closely argued textual analysis which includes an assessment of features that are unique to Luke’s gospel, an analysis of structural elements in Luke-Acts, as well as mutually reinforcing intertextual clues among various passages. Paul’s three-fold “going to the Gentiles” is shown to indicate a time when Israel has not collectively said “yes” to Jesus and hence only a partial fulfillment of salvation for “Israel and the nations” will take place. But ultimately, Israel will also return to faith and bring about the full prophetic fulfillment in a physical restoration of the

kingdom centered in Jerusalem. This reading also takes account of the ending of Acts in its final chapter at Rome.

David Rudolph tackles the place of the land in Paul. First, he handles arguments against particularity in Paul: that the land has been universalized in Christ; that Jewish identity is a matter of indifference in Christ; and that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Then—using the acronym GUCCI, which brought a much-needed smile to my face in the course of a book full of close arguments—Rudolph handles the arguments in favor of particularity, namely, the **g**ifts, **u**niqueness, and **c**alling of Israel; the **c**onfirmation of promises to Israel; and the **i**rrevocability of Israel’s election. Much time is spent in Romans, as well as other passages. Of particular interest to me were remarks on Romans 4:13 (which may well refer to Abraham inheriting the people, not the land), and the comparison with Second Temple Jewish texts, which in this connection move in a similar circle of thought as Paul and expressly include a future place for the land even alongside their universalism.

**Part Three treats of theology** and the implications that flow from that. In four chapters we hear about theology and the churches (Mark Tooley); theology and politics (Robert Benne); theology and law (Robert Nicholson); and theology and morality (Shadi Khalloul).

Tooley gives a needed “tour” of the responses of mainline Protestant to Zionism and CZ. Largely, this ends up being the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA and its predecessors), with some attention paid to the UCC, Methodists, and other denominations. “Preserving a robust Christian Zionism among evangelicals and others requires understanding what killed it in institutional mainline Protestantism” (ibid., location 3128). This is a very useful survey, done chronologically, and gives an idea of the sea changes that took place in those denominations from being pro-Israel to guardedly “balanced” or anti, though some of these bodies also defeated BDS measures proposed for their denomination. The influence of liberation theology is usefully explained as is the difference between harder (mainline) and softer (evangelical) critiques of Zionism. In this chapter, I found some of the subheadings confusing: for instance, “Christian Realism” is used without explaining that the term is attached to Reinhold Niebuhr. While the final section is headed “Avoiding the Mainline Protestant Trajectory,” it is more descriptive and suggestive than programmatic; I had hoped for a more vigorous explanation of what evangelicals can actually do to avoid going the mainline route. Nevertheless, the history presented in this chapter is vital “raw material” for moving forward.

Benne’s chapter on Reinhold Niebuhr is outstanding. Niebuhr is not necessarily a familiar figure to North American evangelicals, but he is

critical in the story of CZ. Benne, deciding that he is in agreement with Niebuhr and that the latter says things best, lets Niebuhr speak for himself before adding his own thoughts. We are introduced to Niebuhr's record of support for Zionism, and his arguments which reflect both a philosophy of "realism"—that is, in the political realm—and a Christian undergirding, hence "Christian realism." This philosophy is related to Israel, particularly in its manifestation as a democracy. Benne then complements Niebuhr's thought with a theological justification for CZ, which Niebuhr only ambiguously embraced, and which, Benne thinks, Niebuhr might agree with had he encountered a CZ such as discussed in this book rather than its liberal or dispensational forms. This is a fine introduction to Niebuhr in the context of Zionism and Israel.

Nicholson's chapter is excellent and orients readers who may not know much about the ins and outs of international law to the subject. The special nature of international law, often misunderstood by those who make reference to it, is followed by an analysis of the Palestinian territories. The U.N. resolutions are addressed, e.g., the famous Resolution 242. This chapter provides a much needed perspective.

Khalloul gives a personal perspective as "an Israeli Christian of Aramean descent" (*ibid.*, location 4592). He gives a history of Arameans inside and outside the Bible, offers theological reasons why Arameans support Israel, and argues positively and vigorously that Israel's civil rights record with respect to its minorities is "remarkable" (*ibid.*, location 4780).

**Part Four is really the "so what" of the book.** Darrell Bock summarizes each of the book's contributions before offering some points for future direction. The latter include the need for CZ to strive for balance in its position; a call for better theological work moving forward; a recognition that CZ is not as nationalistic as some proponents claim and some others perceive; an imperative to speak more of the hope of reconciliation and "nondiscriminatory" justice; and the importance of articulating the "international and legal right" of Israel to the land and to nationhood. Of special interest is Bock's encouragement for digital and visual advocacy of CZ, recognizing the shift in society away from reading mode. In addition, he notes, public conferences and private discussions will be necessary to further the cause of NCZ.

McDermott's concluding chapter argues that the NCZ will (or should) change translation and exegesis; alter our understanding of historical theology, e.g. the influence of supersession on past theology; challenge systematic theology to make a place for Israel and the land; help us in reflecting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and affect the nature of Jewish-Christian dialogue—each point unpacked at length. McDermott then offers "five propositions," which I cite verbatim: Israel shows us who

we are and who God is; sacred history is not over; eschatological fulfillment is both revealed and hidden; this fulfillment is not in its final stage; Israel and the church are integrally joined.

This book is vital reading and a measured and crucial contribution to a discussion which is too often marked by the proverbial heat rather than light. I close by making a few observations. First, at least from my North American vantage point, the church has lost the context of the larger narrative of Scripture, as several contributors point out. A typical church service today, particularly among newer congregations, tends to give sermons on topical issues, ignoring a more holistic biblical education or perhaps leaving it to small groups—a dicey proposition. As a result, the Jewish people and Israel are off the radar in many cases, and theological attention paid to Jews and to Israel in God’s plan therefore comes out of left field for many. Somehow the church needs to be encouraged to embrace the larger narrative. This lack is ironic given the postmodern emphasis on story and narrative (granted that in non-Christian circles, this usually means personal or community narrative, for there is no overarching metanarrative).

For churches that still retain a strong denominational identity, recognition of the past involvement by their denomination in Jewish missions could be a starting place. Support for Jewish evangelization is not the same as support for modern Israel, but can provide a context in which the latter can take root as well. Similarly, interest could be built in urban areas where many Christians have Jewish friends and coworkers.

A second observation. It would be important to include non-North American viewpoints in future discussions; only one to my knowledge was represented in this collection (Khalloul).

InterVarsity Press should be commended for publishing this book. Having previously published not one but two books by Stephen Sizer, whose position is critiqued in chapter two of this book, IVP has now restored some balance to the conversation.

\* \* \*

Following on the publication of *The New Christian Zionism*, McDermott has given us a shorter, accessible book that is part personal chronicle and part popular-level argument for the recovery of a non-dispensational Christian Zionism.

The Introduction takes us on the author’s own journey, on which he invites the reader to join him, from replacement theology to Christian Zionism. Much of the rest of the book is a briefer recap of material treated

in greater depth in *The New Christian Zionism*. Chapter 1 traces the supersessionist majority viewpoint down through church history, while Chapter 2 asks whether the New Testament in fact teaches that the church is the New Israel and delivers a negative verdict. Chapter 3—provocatively titled, “Those Who Got It Right”—tracks the opposing minority viewpoint through the church’s many centuries. Chapters 4 and 5 look respectively at the Old and New Testament to build a positive case for what they say about Israel the people and Israel the land, with a focus on God’s covenant with the Jewish people. Chapter 6 and 7 next deal in turn with political (issues of the Palestinians and international law) and theological objections. It should be noted that the latter chapter specifically deals with a portion of the NT missing from the larger academic work, namely, a look at the book of Hebrews. Lastly, chapter 8 is the “so what” chapter. Using his senior pastor Mark Graham’s own journey as the framework, McDermott suggests how a renewed understanding of Christian Zionism can affect our reading of the Bible and of history, how we approach theology, and how we view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—matters dealt with at more length in the larger volume. In the concluding chapter 9, McDermott offers six proposals for how this new understanding can shape Christian faith, five of which he handled in a chapter in the earlier book for which he was the author. The sixth new proposal here is that “the history of the Jews shows us the mystery of iniquity,” that is, the history of anti-Semitism shows us the depth of human sin without our ever being able to quite explain it.

Since McDermott is the sole author of *Israel Matters*, we catch glimpses of his exegesis and theology not evident in the earlier book. Of particular interest, chapter 2: the “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16 is neither the church nor (as some have argued) Jewish believers in Jesus, but the totality of (largely) nonbelieving Israel, or Israel including Gentiles as “associate members” (i.e., the God-fearers). Chapter 5: Neither Jesus nor Paul set aside but rather affirmed and observed the Law. (It is unclear whether McDermott would say that it is incumbent upon Jewish believers today to keep the Law, however that may be defined.) Ch. 7: the “new” covenant is a “renewal” of the existing covenant. Ch. 9: McDermott wonders if Christian anti-Semitism prevented Jews from seeing Christ, and if so, could he have in some way yet revealed himself to them such that they “confessed with their lips and believed in their hearts”?

*Israel Matters* provides a good lay-level introduction to (non-dispensational) Christian Zionism in the context of the author’s personal discoveries. I don’t know that its briefer format will help change the thinking those who do not share (or are not open to) McDermott’s viewpoint. For them, *The New Christian Zionism* will be the go-to book, going as it does into much more depth, with more voices heard, and with an ultimately more convincing case. At the least, though, *Israel Matters*

should provoke a healthy conversation and will function as an entrée into the more academic book. Read them both!



**Morris, Paul, ed. *The Gospel and Israel: The Edersheim Lectures*, ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock). Kindle edition reviewed.**

This book compiles nine stimulating lectures given at the annual Edersheim Lecture established by Christian Witness to Israel, the U.K.-headquartered mission agency (CWI).

(The acknowledgements mention Robert J. Landberg as the editor of the first six lectures in the book out of a total of nine. Several lectures are versions of previously published articles.)

Not all the authors would agree on all matters surrounding the theological significance of the Jewish people and their future in God's plan (as one example, we have several views on Gal. 6:16, "the Israel of God"). But they all reflect a broadly Reformed theological outlook, one that is supportive of Jewish evangelism and that generally affirms a positive theological significance to the Jewish people (though not always in the identical way!). The emphases in this book need to be heard among Reformed churches. In North America, for example, where I am writing, many Reformed churches have adopted a replacement theology that the present authors do not find in Scripture. A number of the names will be familiar as those of recognized scholars in theological and biblical studies — so their views are welcome and needed.

Because of the varied nature of a collection of essays, I will briefly summarize each contribution — but I cannot do justice to each author in such a small space. The unequal space I have given to each is indicative of thoughts that arose in the course of reading rather than reflecting the value of the essay!

Paul Barnett offers "Jews and Gentiles and the Gospel of Christ." Exploring Jewish history in the Roman period, he then moves on to the "firstness" of Israel in Jesus and Paul, and ends with a call to Jewish evangelism. It is a good summation of some basic foundations and lays the groundwork for many of the other contributions.

Ian Pennicook contributes "The Place of Israel in Systematic Theology." "Israel" as a theological topic belongs within salvation history; it is not a standalone subject; it is proper to treat of Israel in the OT and as fulfilled in the NT; not necessarily beyond. Israel today is of interest (Pennicook seems to indicate) because Jewish people still need redemption in Jesus. His position is to me not entirely clear. "Israel had a significant role in the history of salvation, but that role is both complete and, by many within Israel, rejected," he writes. But later: "And, by the abounding grace of Israel's Messiah, it is the place of a people who, having been provoked to

jealousy for their inheritance through the preaching of the gospel, are now standing as heirs of God, fellow heirs of Christ and with all those who are in him. The bride of Christ is wonderfully, gloriously multi-ethnic.”

“How Jewish Is Israel in the New Testament” asks Stephen Voorwinde. Taking a linguistic tour of the term “Israel” within the New Testament texts, he concludes that it always refers to the ethnic nation, and never a metaphor for the church. “These Christian Gentiles are not the new Israel. They have not replaced Israel. Rather they are now included in citizenship in Israel,” he writes. And colorfully: “Israel in the New Testament is somewhat like an ornamental snowman made of white stone. It never melts into metaphor.” Voorwinde opts for an “grafting theology” rather than a “replacement theology.”

I found Mark Thompson’s lecture on “Luther and the Jews” one of the most helpful for its explication of the context of Luther’s well-known anti-Semitic remarks. Surveying his writings on Jews from earliest mentions to his later, bitter works, Thompson marks out the contours of Luther’s thinking. “But Luther began to hear how some Jewish apologists interpreted this [demonstrations of Christian love] as weakness. Reports began to reach him of evangelistic efforts in the opposite direction: Jews seeking to turn Christians from Christ and towards the Jewish law.” Thus he “began to re-evaluate his strategy for bringing them to repentance and faith.” The death of his daughter in 1542 perhaps also affected him temperamentally at that time (*On the Jews and Their Lies* was published a year later.) His proposals for burning synagogues and much more apparently was, in Luther’s mind, a way to show a “sharp mercy” and so bring some Jews to faith even if most remained opposed to the gospel! If we cannot excuse Luther, we can at least begin to understand him.

Peter Barnes’ essay is on “Calvin and the Jews.” “Being a faithful expositor of Scripture, Calvin saw the Jews as a privileged people whom God had chosen.” Barnes also takes issue with Jewish historian Salo Baron: “Salo Baron says, ‘But, as a rule, Calvin emphasised the anti-Jewish and toned down the pro-Jewish statements in the New Testament.’ That is demonstrably inaccurate.” At times harsh, at times warm, Calvin thus has a “double-sided” and complex view of the Jewish people. While generally held to *not* affirm an end-time turning of Jews to Jesus, there is room for doubt on that score.

“Christian Mission to the Jews, 1550–1850” is by Rowland S. Ward, who discusses the historical underpinnings of modern Jewish missions in terms of millennial positions and other factors. He argues against premillennialism and suggests that messianic congregations (I presume this is what he means by “the organisation of Jewish believers into distinct

churches,” even though many are not majority-Jewish) are only a “temporary expedient.”

Martin Pakula, a Jewish believer in Jesus, writes on “The Israel/Palestine Conflict.” After a historical overview, he argues that the New Testament requires that “the theme of land has been transformed,” and chastises both Christian Zionists and the anti-Christian Zionists for lacking good biblical theology. Thus he affirms the ongoing place of the Jewish *people* but not the *land* for today. Finally, he concludes with balanced remarks on the “key” issues of the settlements, the refugees (both Jewish and Palestinian), and justice.

David Starling’s article is “The Yes to All God’s Promises: Jesus, Israel, and the Promises of God in Paul’s Letters.” In this he seeks to do justice to Paul’s writings while arguing against dual-covenant and “post-missionary” theologies. Specifically, Starling investigates how the coming of Jesus impacts the theology of inheritance and fulfillment of God’s promises. Paul’s “yes” reflects a partial fulfillment of God’s promises in Christ now and a guarantee of what is yet to come. Ranging through a variety of Pauline texts, Starling concludes that unbelieving Israel still has theological significance in the purposes of God. Furthermore, “a strong case can be made for the importance of a humble, persevering, gracious partnership of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ in making known the gospel of Jesus the Messiah to the people of Israel—in other words, for Christian witness to Israel.”

Mike Moore, general secretary of CWI, concludes with “Pentecost and the Plan of God.” In an engaging five-part sermon, Moore explicates how Pentecost fulfilled a promise [of the Spirit], a psalm [Ps 104], a pattern [for God’s people], a plan [to redeem the world], and Pentecost itself [sic—that is, the NT fulfillment of the OT festival]. Pentecost thus encourages us to pursue missions.

This collection is warmly welcomed. It ought to be read especially by Reformed pastors and mission leaders. It is hoped that future Edersheim Lectures will also appear in book form.

**Moffic, Evan. *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Jewishness of Jesus: A New Way of Seeing the Most Influential Rabbi in History*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015.**

**Hier, Marvin. *Meant to Be: A Memoir*. New Milford, CT; London: The Toby Press, 2015.**

**Maghen, Ze'ev. *John Lennon and the Jews: A Philosophical Rampage*. New Milford, CT; London: The Toby Press, 2014.**

How do we keep a finger on the pulse of the contemporary Jewish community? One important way is through reading what the people of the book are writing about. I have therefore chosen three books that reflect the disparate nature of this community and offer three varying perspectives on what it means to be Jewish and engaged in today's world. (Italics in all quotes are original.)

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First off, we have Reform rabbi Evan Moffic's *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Jewishness of Jesus: A New Way of Seeing the Most Influential Rabbi in History*. This is his second book, his first having been on the subject of Passover. Moffic is the thirty-something rabbi of Congregation Solel in Highland Park, IL. On his web site at rabbimoffic.com, he provides us with a sort of mission statement: "I show the way Jewish wisdom make our lives richer and happier. In particular, I help Jews appreciate their heritage and Christians uncover the Jewish roots of their faith." In addition to his duties as a pulpit rabbi, he has spoken to churches and Christian groups where he has found appreciative audiences. Judging from his latest book, that is because he is both a skilled communicator and has a genuine zeal for communicating the Jewishness of the New Testament.

Moffic covers the life of Jesus in roughly chronological order. One particular strength is that he does not focus on whether or not certain events recounted in the New Testament actually happened. Rather, he takes the text at face value and points to how the story of Jesus echoes the Hebrew Bible, linking the two together. Basing himself on the rabbinic interpretive maxim that there are no unnecessary details in the Bible, Moffic concludes that all the particulars surrounding Jesus' birth are intended to draw a parallel with the birth of Moses. These details further connects him with King David (in his birthplace of Bethlehem), as well as with the announcement to Abraham and Sarah concerning the birth of Isaac (which is likewise miraculous). Both Abraham as well as Joseph and Mary actively invited God into their lives, reflecting the fact that Judaism

is “an active faith.” All three showed hospitality, their way of opening themselves up to the miraculous births about to occur.

Moffic’s contribution here is not only in the textual parallels, but in the way he incorporates Jewish ethical lessons into the New Testament accounts. Some will find those lessons a bit abstracted from the text itself, though one could make the case that they are the kinds of midrashic conclusions widely found in Jewish sources: “The difference between [two new sets of parents that Moffic encountered] is not what they experienced. It is the way they experienced it. One saw fact. The other felt faith. The Bible—whether we see it as literal fact or metaphorical truth—urges us to embrace the second perspective . . . Who are the angels we need to welcome into our tents [as Abraham did]? What are the gifts we need to give and receive?”

When it comes to Jesus’ circumcision, Moffic reads Paul in Romans 3:30-31 as redefining Jewishness—but thereby fitting into “Prophetic Judaism” as found in, say, Jeremiah 9:25-26. It’s true that Paul, according to Moffic, went further than Jeremiah, but he nevertheless fits a Jewish pattern.

Again, Moffic focuses on the text, not on the historical events behind the text. New Testament Joseph parallels the Joseph of Genesis; New Testament Mary shares affinities with Moses’ sister Miriam; Herod’s slaughter of the children parallels Pharaoh’s murder of the newborn Israelites. Moreover, Jesus and Moses form parallels, as do Jesus and the Joseph of Genesis (as to the latter, both begin their “life-saving work” at age thirty, both initially face the disapprobation of their own peers; both use their gifts in the service of feeding others; both resist temptation). And Moffic draws lessons from the life of Joseph on reconciliation and living in two cultures at once.

According to Moffic, Jesus’ visit to the Temple at age twelve may have been the time he became bar mitzvah. To be sure, this is an anachronism, and even more so when Moffic implies that the education “Jesus would likely have received” included Mishnah and Talmud! Of course Moffic knows his chronology, but these are for him useful pedagogical pegs to underscore the Jewish background of the New Testament. An interesting and related section notes that it is okay to call Jesus a “rabbi” as a cultural, not an official, position—even though the rabbinate did not actually being until later on. In occasionally conflating modern and ancient versions of Judaism, Moffic is looking for a way to build bridges—not unlike those who portray Jesus’ Last Supper in the context of the modern, and much more developed, seder.

And so on: Jesus’ baptism is based in Jewish practice; Jesus’ sonship echoes Israel’s sonship in the book of Exodus; the divine voice at his

baptism parallels God's speaking at the Creation in Genesis; and key episodes of Jewish history have happened around water. Jesus' temptations echo Jewish personages and history; his frequent quotes from Deuteronomy reflect a "more modern and universalist" kind of Judaism; Satan and angels find a home in first-century Judaism; the calling of the disciples was part and parcel of first-century Jewish culture. (He has a nice quote here: "A disciple is more than a student. *A disciple is a link between the past, present, and future.* Without disciples we do not live on.")

Moffic moves on to Jesus' teaching style, use of parables, and miracles. As to the latter, Moffic reflects his Reform perspective: "I think Jewish tradition and wisdom provide us a third authentic way. Miracles do not depend on either a blind leap of faith or a subjective change in perspective. They flow from what Abraham Joshua Heschel called a 'leap of action.' We demonstrate God's power by behaving in godly ways."

Nor did Jesus "depart significantly" from rabbinic views on kashrut, nor did he replace the Torah or the Talmud [sic!] with love and grace. He was more like Hillel than Shammai. In extended chapters, Moffic reflects on Jesus' use of the Shema, finding it is consonant with Jewish views on the Shema's meaning, going as far as to say that "Jesus fulfills the meaning of the Shema for Christians [but not for Jews]." The Lord's Prayer likewise comes in for an extended meditation and analysis.

Last but not least, Jesus' death was Jewish. His final words spoken as he was being crucified are "a Jewish affirmation of faith." The cry of dereliction, as "Why have you forsaken me?" is sometimes known, is "*a question emerging out of intimate love.* It fits squarely within the Jewish biblical tradition." Like David in Psalm 22, the cry affirms that God will answer. And the resurrection reflects Jewish faith as well.

In response to the frequent question as to what Jews believe about Jesus, Moffic rounds out the book with a presentation of what five rabbis have said. We have Shmuley Boteach (Jesus as "a Jewish national hero"); Yitz Greenberg ("the first Messiah"); Zalman Schachter-Shalomi ("a righteous leader," a tzaddik); and Reform rabbi Emil Hirsch ("a liberal rabbi"). I wasn't clear on who the fifth rabbi is, but these perspectives, Moffic writes, "are five I find most persuasive and compelling."

What is unique about Moffic's approach is his textual approach that highlights the intimate Old and New Testament connections both thematically and in his reading of the ethics that emerge out of both. As well, he seeks to be generous and open-minded even about Paul, on whom blame is often put by those who view Jesus in a far better light: "We can view Jesus as a Jewish national hero without descending into a biting critique of Paul and dismissal of the religion that emerged from his

writings.” Moffic seeks to build bridges and to affirm the texts of both faith traditions without pronouncing on “whether it really happened.” One can perhaps guess at his views, as a Reform rabbi, on the latter; but perhaps not.

My sense is that Moffic is of a generation that is looking more to what unites than what divides. Compare the title of the 1943 treatise by Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, *Judaism and Christianity: The Differences*, or even Hebrew Union College’s Michael Cook (also Reform), whose recent volume was titled, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament: Enhancing Jewish Well-Being in a Christian Environment*. That book sought to show, as a great deal of modern scholarship has, why the New Testament reflects the beliefs of the later church rather than of Jesus himself; its protective subtitle suggests a Jewish community ill at ease among Christians. Moffic, from a different point of view, wants to open doors of understanding for Christians and Jews alike. When the dust has settled, the perennial question will remain: Who is Jesus? Here is one rabbi’s answer.

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From a young Reform rabbi at a suburban congregation, we move to an Orthodox Jewish rabbi of another generation, Marvin Hier, now 77 years old. Part warm memoir, part publicity piece, his *Meant to Be: A Memoir*, can be engaging, especially in its first parts. Hier is Dean of the world-famous Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, and his book offers a window onto the often fast and furious activities of an influential mainstream American Jewish organization.

The best parts come early on. With warmth and honesty, Hier recounts his Orthodox upbringing in New York’s Lower East Side, often told via entertaining anecdotes—such as the time his mother was charged US \$21.00 for tea at a hotel, and amazed at the high price, decided it must include the teapot—which she then packed up and brought home!

As he relates his early days in yeshiva and his first appointment as rabbi of Congregation Schara Tzedek in Vancouver, Canada, Hier shows his chops as a savvy organizer (he raises funds for Martin Luther King Jr.’s widow Coretta and heads up a bit of political theater on behalf of Soviet Jewry) as well as a *heimische* guy with a good sense of humor. There is real humanity in this part as we get to meet some real characters connected with his congregation, such as “the inimitable Abrash Wosk”—you’ll have to read about him for yourself.

It’s when Hier and his wife Malkie move to Los Angeles that his life work begins to take shape. He founds a yeshiva modeled on the “Torah u’*madda*” philosophy of Modern Orthodoxy—that is, Torah plus secular

knowledge. With ambitious energy, he conceives the idea of an American Holocaust education center, and finds Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal to lend a prestigious name, with the Simon Wiesenthal Center opening in 1977. More than just an education center, the SWC prioritizes finding and prosecuting former Nazi war criminals, including Josef Mengele (he died before the SWC could find him). Many of these accounts make for compelling and enlightening reading.

Broadening to the larger fight against anti-Semitism, the memoir spans the globe, including up-to-date material on the anti-Semitic French comedian Dieudonné, as well as recent events in Germany and Hungary. As for America, there is no love lost between Rabbi Hier and Jimmy Carter over the latter's 2006 book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*; there is also a good accounting of the BDS movement, a kerfuffle with UNESCO, and Islamic extremism. It all makes for a good and informative read.

The scope of the SWC widens again to include "goodwill" visits to what was then the Soviet Union (and SWC's involvement in freeing Soviet Jewry), King Hussein of Jordan (good relations ensue), as well as visits to China and the United Arab Emirates. A chapter is devoted to the attitudes of recent popes toward the Jews and contacts with the Vatican.

As if education, politics, and foreign relations were not enough, Hier embarks on the world of documentary filmmaking with his Moriah Films venture, working with celebrities to give heft to his films' narrations and ensure crowd appeal. Some of the films, such as *Genocide*, garner a few Academy Awards along the way. This foray into filmmaking, allowing SWC to reach ordinary people as well as heads of state, would not have even happened had Hier not heard the advice to forget about using slide projectors and turn to film instead!

Yet again widening the scope of SWC's activities, a Museum of Tolerance is established that is intended to go beyond the bounds of just the Jewish community. Unfortunately, by this point the book has left Hier the person behind; we hear very little about his hopes and struggles, or his inner life. The memoir, such as it is, increasingly becomes a chronicle of activities, almost as though the SWC has gone on autopilot with its numerous programs and institutions. By the end it has turned into a version of *People* magazine for Jews. Numerous celebrities appear in support of the SWC's work or obliquely, as a foil to highlight that work. We meet up with Jerry Seinfeld, Tommy Lasorda, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Angelina Jolie, Marlon Brando (who knew Yiddish!), Will Smith, Mike Tyson, Michael Jackson, Mel Gibson, Steven Spielberg, Jane Fonda, and Tom Cruise. Memoir has given way to publicity. Finally, the last part of the book concerns plans for a Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem, in which, apparently running out of anecdotes at this point, Hier recites a long list of



acknowledgements as a dizzying list of people, contributors, and supporters parade before the reader.

Rabbi Hier has built an institution that has become an influential and respected voice on behalf of the worldwide Jewish community. Like any establishment organization, the SWC has not been without its critics, including those from within the Jewish community. One might have hoped that the memoir would at least mention some of these along with Hier's response (e.g., criticism that the SWC overplays the Holocaust card to fundraise; concerns over Hier's salary; questions surrounding Simon Wiesenthal himself. One 2011 article in *The Atlantic* by Jewish author Jeffrey Goldberg was memorably titled, "Oh, Cut the Crap, Simon Wiesenthal Center!") However, *Meant to Be* is not intended as an evenhanded evaluation but as Hier's own chronicle of his legacy, and for all the criticism, that legacy is extensive. For those who do not know much about the SWC, this book serves as a useful and often engaging introduction, full of many insights into modern anti-Semitism. It is too bad that as the story progresses, we hear less and less about Rabbi Hier and more and more about programs and supporters.

Given the broad stated intentions of all of Hier's projects, what I found strangely missing in *Meant to Be* was a sense of depth or gravitas. The running line throughout the book, hence its title, is "*Alles in leben iz barshert*" — everything in life is meant to be. "From *yeshiva bocher* to rabbi, political activist, film producer and museum founder, I realize that I have always held firm to that deceptively simple idea." I take it that he means it was his destiny to found the SWC and the ensuing projects. Yet in the context of the Holocaust and Nazi atrocities, the high goals of the SWC and the sometimes breezy tone Rabbi Hier adopts don't easily mesh. Nevertheless, I ended up enjoying the book and learning much along the way and it's worth the read. A large selection of photos is included.

\* \* \*

Finally, we have Ze'ev Maghren's idiosyncratic, always engaging and sometimes enraging *John Lennon and the Jews: A Philosophical Rampage*, in which the question is raised, "Why on earth be a Jew in the (post) Modern world?" Maghren teaches Arabic Literature and Islamic History at Bar-Ilan University, where he chairs the Department of Middle East Studies.

It is almost impossible to describe this book. Sometimes it reads like an underground college newspaper written at 3 a.m., with both Norman Mailer and Allen Ginsburg on the staff. Throughout, it is a volcano of words, seriously angry and at other times incredibly funny.

In answering his stated question, Maghren embarks on a three-part rant using as a springboard the responses of three Israeli Jewish Hare Krishna devotees whom he encounters at the Los Angeles airport. Shira, Doron and Ofer each advocate for their beliefs with different rationales, providing the framework for Maghren to explore his question.

The first section criticizes the ideal of universal love in favor of what Maghren calls “preferential love.” John Lennon’s song *Imagine* serves as the take-off point. Lennon’s seemingly beautiful and hopeful lyrics are for Maghren a “death-march.” He writes, “I don’t want John’s vision to be fulfilled speedily and in our days. I don’t want it to be fulfilled . . . *ever*. My objection to his program is not that it is overly idealistic — but rather that *there is nothing at all ideal about it*.” This leads, via some vigorous prose over several chapters, into what Maghren objects to about Christianity: it is universalist, but you simply can’t love everyone equally anymore than you can tell your wife that you love other women just as much. “In short, ‘universal love’ isn’t love at all. *Because love means preference*.” In this Maghren places Rabbi Akiba and Judaism in stark contrast with “Peter, Paul, Mary, John, George, Ringo and Jesus.” John Lennon’s vision in *Imagine* of “no religions, no nations, no countries” was actually realized, according to Maghren, by Stalin and Mao.

To the contrary, the God of Israel loves “preferentially” (look no further than the book of Deuteronomy), whereas the God of the New Testament is far more universal, though Maghren is willing to attribute Christianity’s outlook to a focus on particular strands in Judaism. Nevertheless, he rants against love of one’s enemy:

I don’t know about you, dear reader, but my love is worth a whole *hell* of a lot — to me myself, and hopefully to whomever is on the receiving end. My love is *real*, and it’s *valuable*, dammit, it is the single most valuable thing I have! Do you think I can afford to just throw it away indiscriminately and without reflection on every Tom, Dick and Saddam Sonofabitch Hussein who happens across my path or tries to nerve-gas my family?

He ends this section:

The world of preferential love and distinct socio-cultural and political entities certainly need not, then, be one of hatred and interminable warfare. What is Isaiah’s vision? “*Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore*” (2:4). It may, in fact, be the *only* system available to the human race that will ever have a chance of breeding genuine global empathy and tolerance.

But having laid out the case for group-belonging and preferential love, one might still ask, why connect oneself with the Jews? “I’ll tell you (in the immortal words of *Fiddler on the Roof*’s Tevya the milkman): . . . . .  
 . . . . . *I don’t know*. Because here we stand on the threshold of things that are not really rational: they are emotional.” An extended discourse describes the intangibles of being part of the Jewish experience, an advocacy based not on one’s birth, the truth of Judaism, or the need to ensure Jewish survival but on something that is deep and visceral.

The second part of the “rampage” addresses the issue of rationalism—the objection that in the modern world, Judaism makes no sense. In fact, Maghen agrees: Judaism *is* nonsense, as borne out by an extended section, absolutely the funniest in the book, about his adventures in matzah baking in Israel. Fears of contamination, impurity, and who-knows-what-else lead to descriptions of manic activity and *reductios ad absurdum*: his hosts for Passover refuse to have matzah ball soup lest the matzah be contaminated by contact with liquid (“a particular Passover stringency that was all the rage of late in their neck of the woods. This supererogatory strictness is referred to in the professional literature as ‘*shruya*’ or ‘*gebrochts*’”). This is among other oddities that he runs across. “That mighty and unsurpassed rabbinic rationality — in its various versions from the pre-talmudic period all the way down to the pilpulistic study methods in the yeshivas of today — has always been pressed, willy-nilly, into the service of the most incorrigible *irrationality*.” Even the rational elements of Judaism (for instance, the morality) is not unique to Judaism; only the irrational is. And even if God said to do these things . . . what is the reason for obeying him? For one thing, even Moses challenged God’s authority. And the fact that God *created* us — how does it follow that we are obligated to *obey* him?

In the end, being Jewish and Judaism are two different things. (He puts in a rampaging word here about Messianic Jews: “Which is why, by the way, the name of the worldwide missionary organization known as ‘Jews for Jesus’ is not, technically speaking, a contradiction in terms — a fact that should in no way discourage you from physically assaulting these devious sons-of-bitches if they ever get within a kilometer of your kids.”) One cannot stop being Jewish. And being Jewish is even more irrational than Judaism—that is, continuing to identify with, to “be” Jewish—given the history of pogroms and persecution. And identifying with a group whose only commonality is a common ancestor—“now *that* is nuts.” Yet we share a common history and destiny — we are a family. Kinship is a reason to care about some people more than others — and that’s irrational. So — why be Jewish? Maghen invokes “perhaps the single most poisonous and lethal lie ever told to anyone anywhere at any time. And that lie is . . . . . *that making sense is the most important thing*.” The modern historical period has rationalized human life, including religion. It

has become axiomatic that we need to live rationally. Yet the freedom of the human self is not rational; we cannot relate to the world in a consistently rational way; nor does Truth tell us how to live and act in the world. We act on knowledge because of emotional desires. Rules and organization are useful “when they coalesce over time *as a product* of demands made by genuine feelings.”

And that is really the end-all and be-all for Maghren. You could string a pearl necklace from Brooklyn to Jerusalem with quotes like these: “Almost everything about being Jewish today requires a conscious or subconscious *subjection of the head to the heart* . . . Love is a better motivation than Truth (this book’s thesis in seven words). . . . These things I do, more than for any other reason, because *I love my people so incredibly damn much that I want them to be around forever*. . . . The Jewish phenomenon in history and today is not primarily a religion or an ideology, but an affection-based tribal affinity. . . . In this writer’s mind, at least, being a Jew is not so much an idealistic act as it is an emotional state: the state of loving your extended national clan like the dickens.”

Finally, part three is short and to the point. It deals with the challenge of “inertia,” that is, going with the flow. If divisions among people are disappearing, why not just accept it and move on? Here Maghren includes a discussion of entropy—and pegs both rationalism and universalism as the “twin children” of “Papa Entropy” who aid and abet the alleged inevitability of everything moving towards a state of uniformity. In the face of giving in to inertia, we must assert our agency and freedom. Nothing is inevitable, nothing is consigned to fate. It’s a call to activism regarding Jewishness, not passivity.

Maghren’s highly individual manifesto has to be experienced, not just summarized. If Evan Moffic represents a new generation of institutional Judaism and Marvin Hier an older one, then Ze’ev Maghren is an exemplar of a creative, individual expression of Jewishness that is nevertheless deeply connected to community.

**Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. (Reviewed for *LCJE Bulletin* 108, May 2012.)**

The main significance of *The Jewish Annotated New Testament (JANT)* is that it exists at all. There have been other books by Jewish writers about Jesus and the New Testament, but this is the first time the entire New Testament has been presented by mainstream Jewish scholars to Jews and Christians as something that both communities need to read and understand. Its reception by the Jewish community has been both welcoming and critical, even sometimes hostile, as the two editors shared at last fall's meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Francisco.

### **The intentions of JANT**

The introduction highlights what makes this a "Jewish" compilation: it is designed to enrich understanding of the NT; to compare the NT and its ideas with other Jewish literature; and to address for Jewish and Christian readers the problematic NT passages that have been used in anti-Jewish ways. The intentions of the volume vis-à-vis Jewish readers are spelled out in this way:

Many Jews are unfamiliar with, or even afraid of reading, the New Testament. Its content and genres are foreign, and they need notes to guide their reading. Other Jews may think that the New Testament writings are irrelevant to their lives, or that any annotated New Testament is aimed at persuasion, if not conversion. This volume, edited and written by Jewish scholars, should not raise that suspicion. Our intention is not to convert, whether to convert Jews to Christianity, or to convert Christians away from their own churches. Rather, this book is designed to allow all readers to understand what the texts of the New Testament meant within their own social, historical, and religious context; some of the essays then describe the impact that the New Testament has had on Jewish-Christian relations (page xii).

To accomplish this, some 50 contributors were assembled from the top tiers of Jewish scholars: Daniel Boyarin, Shaye J. D. Cohen, and Geza Vermes, to name just three. Besides the annotations to the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version), numerous sidebars are scattered throughout. At the end come over 80 pages of background essays in small type, which could well have been a separate book under a title such as *What Are Contemporary Jewish Scholars Saying about the New Testament?*

Each annotator introduces his or her book with matters of authorship, date, setting, relationship to Judaism, and so on. The conclusions are generally from a moderately critical standpoint, though there is no uniformity of agreement among the contributors or editors, and the Mishnaic tractate *Avot* 5:20 is quoted in regard to “disputes for the sake of divine service.”

### **Examples from *JANT***

To pick a few examples: the section on “Matthew and Judaism” highlights the commonalities with rabbinic methods of scriptural exegesis, but also interprets various Matthean passages to “suggest strained if not broken relationship between Matthew’s intended readers and the synagogue.” The introduction to Mark notes that “the ‘Gentile focus’ of Mark is not as certain as it was once held to be.” John’s Gospel “reflects deep and broad knowledge of Jerusalem, Jewish practice, and methods of biblical interpretation.” Discussing the usage of the phrase “the Jews” in John, although its meaning “varies according to its literary context,” that is not enough, since “more important than the referent of each usage is the overall rhetorical effect of the relentless repetition of the words *hoi Ioudaioi*. The Gospel’s use of the term serves two important functions: it blurs the boundaries among various Jewish groups, and it employs the term to designate the forces that are hostile to Jesus.” Importantly, though, “the Gospel is not anti-Semitic in a racial sense, as it is not one’s origins that are decisive but one’s beliefs. Nevertheless, it has been used to promote anti-Semitism.”

To take an example from the Pauline corpus, namely Galatians, “negative assessment of the Torah and those who follow it is striking: he [Paul] insists that the Torah does not come from God (3.19–20); no longer has a salvific role, and perhaps never did (3.21–22); and its observance is akin to the worship of the Greek gods (4.9–10).” Nevertheless, many today recognize that the audience is Gentile, and “nowhere in his letters, either in Galatians or elsewhere, does Paul attempt to convince Jews to abandon the Torah.”

The annotations themselves are brief, usually highlighting the Jewish background through citing Old Testament, intertestamental, and rabbinic literature or noting similar ideas/practices in Judaism. The average Jewish reader, unless he or she has some familiarity with Jewish texts, may well be lost in the annotations without the aid of a teacher. Christian readers who come from a tradition emphasizing Bible study will not be quite as much at sea with the biblical references in the annotations, but again will need guidance for much else.

***JANT* – a landmark work**

The general level of the essays too will be rather sophisticated for many lay readers without further guidance, depending on their familiarity with the topic at hand. Of great value are the introductory essays by the editors: Amy-Jill Levine's "Bearing False Witness: Common Errors Made about Early Judaism" and Marc Zvi Brettler's "The New Testament between the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) and Rabbinic Literature." Other essays cover historical and social backgrounds, literature, and theological ideas. Mark Nanos covers "Paul and Judaism," Joshua Garroway handles the term "*Ioudaios*," and five essays cover "Jewish Responses to the New Testament." Several tables, a glossary, and an index round out the volume.

*JANT* is indeed a landmark work, one that would have been unthinkable a hundred years ago. Yes, Jewish scholars wrote about Jesus and portions of the New Testament, but never this comprehensively and with such intention to speak with clearly delineated goals to two faith communities.

If *JANT* can acquaint Christians and Jews with the Jewishness of the New Testament, it will have served its purpose. The editors and contributors undoubtedly hope that Jews will become better Jews as a result; readers of this *Bulletin* will hope for the recognition, among some at least, that becoming better Jews involves no less than faith in Yeshua.





**Azar, Michael G. *Exegeting the Jews: the Early Reception of the Johannine “Jews”*. The Bible in Ancient Christianity 10. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016.**

“Reception history”—or as this book refers to it by its German term, *Wirkungsgeschichte*—is the study of how biblical texts were understood and applied in post-biblical history. How did those understandings influence later readers? What effects did their interpretation have for good or for ill?

Perhaps no biblical subject is more fraught with implications for Jewish-Christian relations than the Fourth Gospel’s usage of the term *Ioudaioi*, most often translated as “Jews.” In this revision of his doctoral dissertation, we have an important exploration of the topic from Michael G. Azar, Assistant Professor in the Department of Theology & Religious Studies at the University of Scranton (Pennsylvania), a Jesuit school.

The basic thesis is this: the reception history of John’s “Jews” has been portrayed by scholars, particularly from the 1960s on, as entirely anti-Jewish. That is, the church fathers and those who followed them are said to have uniformly read the “Jews” in an anti-Semitic fashion, using the Fourth Gospel in the service of hostility against the Jewish people (regardless of its original intentions).

However, that proves to not be the case. Without minimizing actual anti-Jewishness on the part of the church fathers, Azar examines three documents from the third to fifth centuries CE and finds a much less clear-cut and uniform reception history. Here is Azar’s thesis in his own words:

Rather than appropriate the Gospel’s unsympathetic portrayal simply against their Jewish contemporaries, these writers primarily employ John’s narrative typologically in the service of their theological and pastoral concerns, shaping the situation in the Fourth Gospel into a type of their own ecclesial struggles and those “Jews” who resist Jesus into a type of their opponents. To assume that the tension between Jesus and “the Jews” was received and interpreted, simply and without variation, in an anti-Judaic manner by the patristic writers unnecessarily totalizes the Gospel’s *Wirkungsgeschichte*, applies later medieval situations and sensibilities anachronistically, and underestimates the multivalent nature and goals of patristic exegesis. (from the Abstract)

Azar examines the following documents: the *Commentary on John* by Origen (third c.), the *Homilies on John* by Chrysostom (fourth c.), and lastly the *Commentary on John* by Cyril of Alexandria (fifth c.) The

conclusion is that their references to the “Jews” in the context of the Fourth Gospel were not for the purpose of providing ammunition for anti-Semitism but rather to provide a framework for fighting their own contemporary theological battles. The “Jews” become typological exemplars of current-day opponents against whom these church fathers are fighting. In other words, the “Jews” are portrayed as Christian opponents!

“While exhibiting varied emphases,” says Azar, “these three writers reveal remarkably similar approaches to John’s Gospel and specifically its ‘Jews’ that stem not from hostility toward contemporary Jews, but from both the allegorical modes of reading in which they were trained and their paraenetic [that is, urging to action] concerns for their own, ecclesial communities” (p. 7). And again, “The analysis that follows will suggest that the apparent hostility of the Fourth Gospel toward ‘the Jews’ did not function for Origen, Chrysostom, and Cyril primarily as grounds for anti-Judaic sentiment, but rather as a scriptural resource for the spiritual formation and delineation of their Christian communities” (p. 51).

Chapter 1 is “The Modern Reception of the Ancient Reception of John’s ‘Jews’”. How have modern scholars of Jewish-Christian relations understood the early church’s reception of John’s “Jews”? Azar treats five writers: James Parkes, Jules Isaac, Fadiev Lovsky, Gregory Baum and Rosemary Ruether. He then moves on to New Testament scholarship with discussions of J. Louis Martyn, Urban C. von Wahlde the Leuven Conference of 2000 on “Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel,” and more. Here he deals with historical, literary, and ethical concerns surrounding the “Jews” in John.

The following three chapters respectively cover each of the three patristic authors. A detailed discussion of the relevant writings is given in order to illustrate Azar’s thesis. A summarizing chapter follows. Azar discovers that each writer used the “Jews” in the service of somewhat different though not mutually exclusive aims: “...Origen was drawn to employ John’s portrayal of the Jews in his resistance toward overly literal approaches to Christ and Scripture, Chrysostom toward more moralizing dimensions, and Cyril toward more doctrinal points” (p. 205). (These three aims are unpacked in chapters 2–4.) Their underlying similarity, however, lies in “a common core: a typological reading motivated by coinciding and remarkably consistent paraenetic concerns that lie well outside ostensibly anti-Jewish or antisemitic motivations” (p. 205). Besides their interest in employing the “Jews” in the service of “spiritual formation,” they also end up drawing boundaries around their own church communities in the face of competing options.

So despite the real presence of anti-Jewishness in the early church, one *cannot* say that the church father’s understanding of John’s “Jews” led in a

straight line to medieval anti-Semitism and modern Nazi propaganda. This is an crucial corrective when talking about the history of Jewish-Christian relations.

Something else emerges from Azar's study, though he himself does not explore it. The three church fathers' typological understanding of the "Jews" also has counterparts in the contemporary church's reading of Scripture. It is not unusual to find that informed listeners to sermons on the Fourth Gospel will make a mental distinction between John's "Jews" and Jewish people that they personally know. For them, the "Jews" function as historical referent and/or as an example of hostility to Jesus that is to be avoided. While not exactly typology, there are points of comparison with such a reading. At any event, for such churchgoers, their understanding of the "Jews" does not lead to anti-Semitism, though it can be argued that it nevertheless leads to a skewed or unfair understanding of Jewish people, with the consequences that ensue. It would be most interesting to devise a well-constructed survey of modern Christians both mainstream and evangelical, to see what they understand by John's "Jews"—and how it influences their understanding of Jewish people. What then is the *modern* reception history of John's "Jews"?

I recommend this important book. Be advised that it contains Greek, though generally translated except in some footnotes. An extensive and useful bibliography is at the end.

**Cronin, Shonya Shetty. *Raymond Brown, ‘The Jews’, and The Gospel of John: from Apologia to Apology. Library of New Testament Studies 504. London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015.***

Those of a certain theological age—who attended seminary back in the 1970s—will remember Roman Catholic scholar’s Raymond Brown’s two-volume commentary on John’s Gospel as being a must-have on any seminarian’s shelf.<sup>1</sup> As a more technical commentary, it still garners respect some decades after its publication. Less known outside of Catholic circles are his other writings, many of which touched on the interpretation of *hoi Ioudaioi*—traditionally rendered as “the Jews”—in John’s Gospel.

The portrayal of *hoi Ioudaioi* in the Gospel of John has of course been a linchpin in the argument that John is steeped, if not in anti-Semitism, then certainly in an anti-Judaism that led to persecution against the Jewish people culminating in the Holocaust. According to this viewpoint, if John is not the only New Testament writer who has gathered kindling wood for anti-Semitic fires, he is certainly the most egregious example, reflecting the situation of his own day in which animosity governed the relations between Christians and the synagogue.

It is therefore both timely and salutary to read Sonya Shetty Cronin’s treatment of Raymond Brown’s evolving views. The author is Lecturer at Florida State University, and this book is based on her Ph.D. dissertation. Cronin not only provides a window onto one particular scholar’s journey of interpretation, but additionally offers a useful view of the issues at play in trying to understand exactly what we should make of John’s *hoi Ioudaioi*, and the uses to which that phrase has been put.

Chapter 1 provides background for the rest of the book. It includes a biography of Brown, an overview of Catholic-Jewish relations in the 20th century, a précis of the place of biblical criticism within the Catholic church, and several sections devoted to Brown’s general approaches and influences on his interpretation.

The following chapters follow Brown’s relevant publications divided by time period. Chapter 2 covers 1960–1970; chapter 3 spans 1971–1988; chapter 4 concerns 1988–1998, and chapter 5 covers his posthumously published material, so that “he being dead yet speaketh.” The title refers to the change in Brown’s views over the years, asking “how in thirty-eight years had Brown gone from *apologia*, a defense of the Fourth Gospel, to a genuine heart-felt apology on behalf of it?” (p. 13).

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1966–70.

The concluding chapter sets Brown in the context of other works on Johannine literature vis-à-vis John's "Jews" and the problem of anti-Judaism. A bibliography and indexes round out the volume.

The value of this book is several-fold. First, anytime one can see the person behind the scholar, the better one is able to appreciate their viewpoints, whether in agreement or not, and the better one can also gauge the factors that have gone into the making of one's own "interpretive space." This is not a full biography, but an advance beyond thinking of Brown only as "the guy who wrote that two-volume commentary for the Anchor Bible"—which was pretty much the summation of many of my fellow classmates at the time it was published.

Second, it shows how the sea change in Catholic-Jewish relations during the 20th century has affected scholarship. The increasing awareness of the impact that John has had in shaping negative attitudes towards the Jewish people has led to a variety of strategies to mitigate those attitudes—some of which Brown followed, some of which others took in hand and with whom Brown disagreed. All of this can be helpful for anyone in both understanding *and* teaching John.

Third, the book indicates areas in which work is still to be done. In wrestling with the question of John's *Ioudaioi*, and in an effort to subvert using John in an anti-Judaic way, some have focused on the linguistic and historical (that is, historical to Jesus' own time) issues. So, the *Ioudaioi* are the Judeans, or the leadership, or another subset of the entire people. Many will argue, however, that the answer cannot simply rest there. Such an approach fails to deal with two additional issues: the *literary* function of *hoi Ioudaioi* in John, i.e., the fact that there seems to be a "totalizing" function whereby *hoi Ioudaioi* are representative of Jesus' opponents on a cosmic scale (yet not to be identified with "the world"). Second, there is the matter of what *hoi Ioudaioi* meant for John's readers, apart from any meaning it would have had for Jesus' listeners. Both these concerns need to move us beyond a simple lexical approach. (The reception of John's *Ioudaioi* in *post*-biblical literature is another question, and the subject of another recent book.<sup>2</sup>)

I therefore urge anyone involved in biblical, especially Johannine, studies and/or Jewish-Christian relations to read this book and to profit from it.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael G. Azar, *Exegeting the Jews: The Early Reception of the Johannine "Jews."* Boston; Leiden: Brill, 2016.

**Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, Eli. *The Jewish Gospel of John: Discovering Jesus, King of All Israel*. Tel Aviv: Jewish Studies for Christians, 2015. (Review by Sam Rood)**

Much has been written regarding the apparent anti-Judaism or even anti-Semitism (the difference being that the former is strictly a theological/religious polemic while the latter is a broader cultural/national one) in the Gospel of John. The question is what to do with the repeated hostile statements regarding “The Jews” (5:18; 7:1-10; 8:1-22; 8:40; 8:44; 10:29-33; 11:8; 18:14; 18:28). The issue has obvious application to the task of bringing the gospel to Jewish people today. Of all of the books of the New Testament, the Gospel of John seems to most frequently and most viciously single out the Jewish people. Most New Testament Scholars, including some Evangelicals, have accepted that the Gospel of John indeed contains anti-Judaic views. Because of this, not many resources are readily available to pastors who teach the gospel of John to their congregations that can help them sensitively and clearly deal with this vexing issue in a way that faithfully communicates the message of John *and* deals fairly with contemporary Jewish people.

I’ve heard many sermons containing these harsh-sounding statements from the lips of Jesus. Sometimes the preacher would dismiss the difficulty completely by stating that the people Jesus was speaking about were not the Jews but Judeans—it was a geographical people group. Another common approach was to immediately universalize the statement to include all people apart from Christ. That way it isn’t “just Jews” that these things are true of, and therefore isn’t anti-Semitic. Most of the time, these difficult statements went unexplained—or worse. I haven’t found any of these explanations satisfying.

In ministering to Jewish people I’ve found that many who have very little familiarity with the New Testament nonetheless possess the opinion that the New Testament is anti-Jewish and teaches that the Jewish people are no longer the people of God but are under his condemnation for rejecting Jesus. The misconception that the New Testament, and especially the gospel of John, is hostile to Jewish people is one of the major barriers to Jewish people being able to explore the Messianic claims of Jesus. That is why I am grateful for Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg’s learned yet accessible treatment of the Gospel of John, *The Jewish Gospel of John: Discovering Jesus, King of All Israel*. In the preface, Dr. Lizorkin-Eyzenberg admits that the gospel of John has bothered him for years. How could such a well-loved gospel contain such apparently hateful language toward the Jewish people? As a Jewish believer in Jesus myself I resonate with this question.

Dr. Lizorkin-Eyzenberg's proposal is that the Jewish context of the gospel of John needs to be fully taken into account. Clearly, John was Jewish as were the vast majority of the people described in his gospel, obviously and preeminently Jesus himself. So, Jesus' statements shouldn't be read as targeting all Jews from a non-Jewish perspective, but the gospel should be understood as a Jewish document addressing an intra-Israelite debate. None of this is new or unique to the scholarly discussion of the Gospel of John, although of the four gospels it has often (and unfairly) been singled out as the least Jewish. What sets *The Jewish Gospel of John* apart is the way Lizorkin-Eyzenberg applies that insight to the interpretation of the message of the gospel as a whole.

In particular, Lizorkin-Eyzenberg believes that the meaning of "the Jews" in the gospel of John is unique and very different from its meaning today. The original readers would not have understood these statements to apply to all Jewish people, but only to a particular group within the people of Israel. So, rather than reading "the Jews" as "all Jewish people" we should read "the *Ioudaioi*"—the formal Jerusalemite authorities and those in Judea, greater Israel and in the diaspora who recognized their authority. The gospel of John was trying to persuade the *Ioudaioi* as well as other Israelite groups, particularly the Samaritans, to believe in Jesus and reject the authority of the official Jerusalem officials. So, when we read "the Jews" in this sense we shouldn't imagine "all Jews" or apply these statements directly to Jewish people today but understand that the original and primary reference was to this specific group and their followers.

A large part of Lizorkin-Eisenberg's argument is that the gospel of John appears to be contextualized to the sensitivities of Samaritan Israelites. He notes that there is a great amount of interaction with the Book of Ezekiel and the Prophets vision of a reunification between Judah (i.e. the *Ioudaioi*) and Israel/Ephraim (i.e. the Samaritans—see Ezek. 37:15-28). The gospel of John also speaks very positively of the Samaritans compared to the synoptic gospels (John 4, especially verses 39-42; compare with Matt. 10:5; Luke 9:51-53). In addition, many of the arguments for the truth of Jesus' Messianic claims appealed to the Torah rather than to the Prophets or Writings (i.e. the other 34 books of the Old Testament), possibly because the Samaritans did not consider these books canonical. Further, the Messianic title "Son of David" is not attributed to Jesus in this gospel, even when it would seem obviously beneficial to do so (e.g. John 7:41-42).

The Gospel of John, then, is a trial in which evidence is presented and witnesses are called. Jesus is the Good Shepherd sent by the God of Israel to regather his sheep—in other words, unify the scattered people of Israel. The *Ioudaioi* are wicked shepherds who don't care for the people but care for their own power. That is why they opposed Jesus, because he wouldn't

submit to their authority. According to *The Jewish Gospel of John* the argument of the gospel in its original context comes down to this: “Jesus is the Messiah, the King of Israel who has the right to regather the people of Israel into God’s flock. As Israelites, we should not follow the *Ioudaioi*, the wicked shepherds who have rejected God’s Messiah and therefore the God of Israel, but the Good Shepherd, Jesus the Messiah.”

Not every part of Dr. Lizorkin-Eyzenberg’s argument was entirely convincing. Much of his interpretation comes down to his (learned and compelling) historical reconstruction of the original context of the Gospel of John. As interesting as that reconstruction is, it simply can’t be proved. For example, I’m not sure that a Samaritan audience is as much in view as Lizorkin-Eyzenberg argues, though the theory is compelling. While these doubts prevent me from accepting every one of his conclusions, the value I see in *The Jewish Gospel of John* is that he consistently interprets every passage in the gospel as a Jewish (Israelite) message. By carefully attending to the original audience Lizorkin-Eyzenberg helps us to read not only the difficult “anti-Judaic” statements in a first-century *Jewish* context (and therefore not anti-Semitic or Judaic), but he takes that same approach to the rest of the narrative. He helps the reader to slowly re-read the beloved gospel and consider it as a Jewish message before moving onto the universal applications. For those of us who desire to see Jewish people come to know and love Jesus, this is essential.

I commend this book not only to those actively involved in ministry to Jewish people but to all of those who want to lovingly communicate the gospel to Jewish people. Along with standard commentaries and studies, I also suggest that preachers teaching through the Gospel of John read this book as a guide to sensitively but accurately interpreting and teaching the gospel of John so that any Jewish people present hear the gospel and not anti-Semitism.



**Ben Volman, Ben. *More Than Miracles: Elaine Zeidman Markovic and the Story of The Scott Mission*. Brechin, Ontario: Castle Quay Book, 2015.**

Here's what I like about *More Than Miracles: Elaine Zeidman Markovic and the Story of The Scott Mission*. It's so *relevant*. Not in some trendy, hip way. The relevance is rather this. At a time when so many churches are rediscovering the place of *tikkun olam*—as it's used today, meaning acts of social compassion—in their life and witness, here we have the story of a man, and his family, and his organization, who dedicated their lives to *tikkun olam* before it was fashionable to call it that. At the same time, they also maintained an evangelistic witness, never forced, never required in order to receive compassionate attention, but strong and enduring.

For those unfamiliar with the Toronto-based Scott Mission—I knew it by name, little about its long history—Ben Volman's well-written treatment will be eye-opening. (Volman works with Chosen People Ministries in Toronto and is Messianic Rabbi of Kehillat Eytz Chaim/Tree of Life Congregation.)

The story begins with Ben Rohold, a messianic Jew working with a Presbyterian mission to the Jews in Toronto in the early twentieth century. The Scott Mission, though not starting out under that rubric, was eventually named for Rev. John McPherson Scott, who was asked to begin a mission to that city's Jewish community. Under Rohold, the mission opened as a storefront in 1908, spawning a congregation, numerous programs, and a free dispensary and medical clinic. The latter proved to presage the direction the mission would take in future years.

Enter Morris Zeidman—Polish, Jewish, from the town of Czestochowa, and born on Shavuot—who came to faith through the Rohold at age 17, met Scott and eventually came to lead the Scott Institute (as it was then called) in charge of the Jewish Mission.

Yet Zeidman's ministry ended up not being chiefly about Jewish evangelism. The book tours us briefly through the social situation in Canada in the Great Depression years, the context for Zeidman's desire to use the Institute for relief purposes, largely meaning food and clothing distribution. With his Scottish wife Annie, Morris operated the Institute as a charitable faith work, relying on contributions, donations, and no guarantee of receiving funds. As Volman explains, "their determination needs to be seen against the backdrop of an era when government relief was minimal and average people felt overwhelmed." Although the Jewish mission aspect continued, the larger social needs of Toronto increasingly

shaped the direction of the work; the opportunities found the Zeidmans more than the other way round.

Zeidman's relief work impacted both Jewish and non-Jewish families, and received favorable—and frequent—write-ups in the press. But as Morris' ministry expanded on other fronts, some of his radio messages were rather controversial—and included hard words for those who did not oppose anti-Semitism. Tension grew with his Presbyterian sponsors over that and other matters, leading to his resignation from that denomination. From then on, Morris would operate independently, renaming the work the Scott Mission. Over the years, the Mission would become Toronto's premiere faith-based charity, garnering respect and admiration even, cautiously, from the Jewish community. The Scott Mission remains in operation to this day.

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The subtitle of *More Than Miracles* signals that much of it is told through the memories of Morris and Annie Zeidman's daughter Elaine. Over the years, the Mission remained largely a family affair, as most of the children and then grandchildren took part in the work of the Mission, some on a permanent basis. In fact, after Morris stepped down, his son Alex became director, the latter's tenure cut sadly and tragically short by his untimely death.

And as told through Elaine's eyes and those of others, this emerges as a warm portrait of the Zeidman family. Among other things, they were talented in the arts; Elaine played piano and was a schoolmate of Glenn Gould; daughter Margaret specialized in opera, and Margaret's daughter Jae is today an art therapist. When Elaine came to work for the Mission, she developed a reputation as a people person, to the extent that, reflecting on the time after Alex's passing, Elaine's husband Mica remarked that "Elaine was the thread that held the Mission together after Alex's death."

And there was much to hold together; this book is not a hagiography. In its later chapters, we are told of the effect on Elaine and others of family deaths; the succession of non-family directors of the Mission; and the day-to-day problems of working in a compassionate and spiritual way with indigent people and suffering families. We glimpse personal issues, depression, medical problems, inner and outer conflicts. Of special note is the struggle the family felt when, under certain directors, the Mission began moving in a more secular direction. But it thankfully recovered its spiritual focus, and Zeidman family members, such as Elaine's daughters Sera and Lois, remain part and parcel of the mission to this day. Also noteworthy is that though the family never lost touch with their Jewish

heritage, Alex's son Andrew took a special interest in recovering his identity as a Messianic Jew.

This simple overview cannot convey the humanity in *More Than Miracles*. Based on interviews as well as written materials, this may be the closest to an oral history of the Zeidman family that we have (I have not read Alex Zeidman's earlier book *Good and Faithful Servant: The Biography of Morris Zeidman*). Read *More Than Miracles*. Get to know the Zeidman family with all their personalities (pastoral son Alex; business-minded son David), struggles, and successes. If you are in Christian ministry, pray that you can emulate their dedication and sacrificial lives. Consider the Mission's unsullied reputation that led to countless newspaper articles, a good many reproduced here. Savor the poems by Annie and Elaine that end every chapter. Let the family come alive through the two sections of photographs.

Today many churches wrestle with balancing social action with proclaiming the gospel. Ahead of their time, the Scott Mission showed that it is not a matter of either/or, but both/and. Seamlessly, though not without bumps along the way, they blended acts of *tikkun olam* with sharing the Good News of the Messiah. I am thankful to Ben Volman for his hard work in interviewing the principals in this story, and for making the Zeidman/Scott story available to the reading public!

**Dauermann, Stuart. *Converging Destinies: Jews, Christians, and the Mission of God*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.**

Stuart Dauermann's *Converging Destinies* is representative of the serious kind of theologizing currently taking place among Messianic Jewish scholars and others who have added their voices to the dialogue. The book is impacted by the author's personal history as well as his interaction with Christian and Jewish scholarship, including evangelical, post-Holocaust, and postliberal voices. It succeeds very well in its goal of "raising questions and suggesting directions" (Kindle, location 448) for future conversations. The book in effect serves as the author's manifesto. Some of the chapters have been adapted from papers given elsewhere.

The key questions here surround the nature of Israel and the Church and especially the mission of each. The hope is that a new post-supersessionist paradigm of mission will in time come to replace the current one.

#### EXTENDED SUMMARY

*Converging Destinies* divides into three parts. There is a lot packed into it, and it may help to summarize it at length before commenting on its strengths and weaknesses.

Part One is "What Is Our Starting Point?" It consists of a single chapter, "God's Everlasting Love for Israel." This deals with the election of Israel, which is described as particularistic in contrast to the post-Enlightenment stress on the universal rather than the particular.<sup>3</sup> It is a personal election based on God's free and loving choice. And it is "promised and covenanted," under which is included some discussion of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants as well as their unilateral or bilateral nature. An impressive array of authors is cited in this chapter (as is true throughout the book). This foundational chapter also addresses Kendall Soulen's taxonomy of three kinds of supersessionism, and engages with N.T. Wright and Douglas Harink.

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<sup>3</sup> In Christian theology, this is also one characteristic of the so-called "Beyond the New Perspective" of Paul, see e.g. J. Brian Tucker, *"Remain in Your Calling": Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), Kindle edition location 264. On the Jewish side, see Ze'ev Maghen, *John Lennon and the Jews: A Philosophical Rampage* (New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2014, orig. 2011), the entire part "Shira: The Challenge of Universalism"; this is a vigorous and idiosyncratic book which I have reviewed in *Mishkan* 75 (2016). Maghen's may be one of the best treatments you will read of particularism in election and in love; it is certainly the most forceful.

Part Two is “Where Have We Been?” which covers the current state of theology as the author sees it vis-à-vis Israel and the Church. Chapter 2 is “Do You See What I See? Western Theologizing as a Skewed Tradition.” The author finds that Christian theology portrays a different Jesus, a different *ekklesia*, and a different consummation than he finds in Scripture.

Chapter 3 speaks of “Jewish Missiological Perspectives and the Christian Other” in which it is affirmed that Jews do in fact proselytize, and that Jews and Christians have complementary missions both *with* and *to* one another. The author draws on Alan Brill to discuss three ways in which Judaism has related to the “Christian other”: exclusivism, universal pluralism, and inclusivism. The author emphasizes the complementary and “converging” destinies of the Jewish and Christian communities, drawing on Sholem Asch, David Novak, and Irving Greenberg (on the Jewish side) and Lev Gillet and Sister Mary Boys (on the Christian side) in conversation with his thesis. The complementarian model is a fourth position alongside the three traditional ones described by Brill.

Having laid a groundwork in election and having described his views of the current theological landscape insofar as it relates to Israel and the Church, Part Three—the largest section of the book—looks to the future: “Where Are We Going?” Chapter 4 is “The Mission of God and the Mission of Protestant Churches in Relation to that of Israel.” Here the author first talks about the concept of *missio dei* and the way in which the idea of mission has broadened in certain circles.<sup>4</sup> This chapter deals primarily with the World Council of Churches (WCC; and its forerunner the International Missionary Council or IMC) and the Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelization (LCWE), the former reflecting a “world-centered” view of mission, the latter a “church-centered” approach. Through tracing a history of both organizations’ conferences and statements, both the WCC and the LCWE—which both diverge widely in other areas—are found to ultimately share a similar viewpoint in theologizing about the Jewish people and the state of Israel: namely, supersessionist, the differences “more a matter of style than substance” (Kindle 2541). Because of their supersessionist assumptions, both the WCC and the LCWE have actually failed to articulate a theology of the Jewish people, whether from inability or lack of will.

Chapter 5 focuses on “The Mission of God and the Mission of the Roman Catholic Church in Relation to that of Israel.” In contrast with the Protestant world, the Catholic Church has in recent times vigorously theologized about the Jewish people, rethinking many of its past assumptions. Not least, three factors have contributed to this sea change: the document *Nostra Aetate*, the work of Pope John II, and the Catechism

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<sup>4</sup> For an evangelical view of broad parameters of “mission,” see John Stott’s *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, originally published in 1975 and now updated and expanded.

of the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, the story is not one of continual progress; the statement *Lumen Gentium*, for instance, is deemed problematic in its approach to Judaism and the Jewish people. The final part of this chapter addresses the roadblocks for any theologizing regarding the Jewish people: supersessionism and the “cryptosupersessionism” of even conservative Christians who have a positive theological outlook on the Jewish people. The author concludes by sketching out what “progress” (a word frequently used in the book) looks like in this area, and “procedural safeguards” that should be implemented to ensure that progress happens. These two chapters might have better been placed in Part Two, dealing as they do largely with matters of history.

Chapter 6 is “Paths and Detours on the Journey toward Synerjoy [sic!].” The author offers a taxonomy of six models by which Jews and Christians view themselves, one another, and the mission of God, and here the author’s thesis comes into focus. These models are described as Divergent, Intersecting, Parallel, Merging, Overlapping, Complementarian, and the author’s own preferred model, Converging.

The Divergent model is one in which there are “winners” and “losers” and in which “the winners also tend to see the spiritual tradition of the losers as neither revelatory nor salvific.” The author maintains that this is the view of most involved in Jewish missions. The Intersecting Model finds room for both communities to work in areas of mutual concern while keeping matters of “final destinies” off the table. The Parallel Model is the author’s term for two-covenant theology, in which positive final outcomes emerge through the Torah for Jews and the New Covenant for Christians: a “winners/winners” model. The Merging Model finds commonality in ethics and culture, avoids talking about differences, but can become a “generic feel-good/do-good spirituality.” The Overlapping Model is similar to the Intersecting Model but focuses more on continued affiliation rather than only short-term ad hoc coalitions. David Novak is placed under this rubric. The Complementarian Model derives from Kendall Soulen, and is driven by the same questions that lead us finally to the Converging Model. This view “posits a divinely ordained distinction between the Christian and Jewish historical streams within an underlying unity” in which we find “one great people currently living in a state of schism destined to be healed” (Kindle 3281). Drawing in part on Soulen, this model goes further in speaking about the consummation and “implications of a revelation of Yeshua’s identity to both the church and the Jewish people” (ibid.). Until the end, we find “both communities living in faithfulness to their own religious commitments” (Kindle 3311). The author coins the term *synerjoy* for the idea that both Jewish and Christian communities work together until the consummation in which there is

fullness of joy for the universe. Jews and Christians are meantime on a journey together along their own particular paths.

Chapter 7 is a lengthy one but important to understanding the author's thinking. He asks, "What Is the Gospel We Should Be Commending to All Israel?" First we have "matters of context." The current context find us (1) living in a time of eschatological transition in which the focus is shifting from gathering in the fullness of the Gentiles to gathering in the fullness of Israel. In addition to matters surrounding the founding of Israel and subsequent geopolitical events, this eschatological context also includes a new concern for "Messianic Jewish covenant faithfulness"; (2) living in a time of new paradigms (following David Bosch and Thomas Kuhn), which always brings resistance and political maneuvering in its wake; (3) living in a setting in which the gospel has not been presented as good news for Israel, but rather bad news according to which only a "small minority" of Jews benefit. Partly to blame for this is a focus on individual salvation, whereas the Scripture holds out a much more corporate hope; (4) living in the context of a long-standing category mistake which wrongly sees Judaism negatively, as no different from any other religion, and wrongly views Jews who do not believe in Yeshua as no different from non-Jews; (5) living in a context in which even biblical Zionists and non-supersessionists are actually "cryptosupersessionists," denying the "dignity of Jewish religion and identity" by "jettisoning" the Torah; (6) living in a context of individualism; and finally (7) living in a context that overspiritualizes the final eschatological state into a disembodied final destiny, in contrast to the "new creation eschatology" advocated by Craig Blaising.

All this falls under "context" in Chapter 7; we next have "matters of content." The gospel is a wondrous report which we received and pass along, not to be simply slotted into a place in systematic theology. Though Scripture describes it as a report, as news of joy for Israel, and as a message to be delivered, it is nevertheless not susceptible of easy definition. Therefore theological modesty is becoming whenever we speak of it.

Finally, Chapter 7 addresses "matters of controversy" as the author discerns them. One is the emphasis in Christian circles on avoiding hell and finding heaven, a motivation found to be lacking in the preaching of the apostles. Two is the fear that minimizing this motivation will destroy the "engine" driving Jewish missions. Rather, following the rubrics of the Lord's Prayer, our driving factors should be sharing our relationship with God, glorifying the Lord, hastening the consummation (through the remnant of Israel), and obedience to the Lord (who commands us to speak to our own people about Yeshua). Third is the idea that the Law of Moses is now inoperative, being replaced by the "Law of Christ/Messiah." And

fourth, the concern that the author's position embraces the "wider hope." Rather, he argues "against the wider ego," arguing for theological humility. Scriptures asks us to "warn" about final destinies but never to "deliver a verdict," as the author remarks later in the chapter. In the next section on "Cumulative Conclusions," the author clarifies what he is *not* saying: that he is not implying the salvation of every Jewish person who has ever lived; nor that bringing Jews to faith in Yeshua is superfluous; nor that he is unconcerned about the salvation of the nations. In "Integrational Thoughts," he offers first, that missions have held to a "sub-biblical" notion of repentance, which for Jews "foundationally consist of our failure to live in covenant faithfulness with our God." Repentance means returning not simply to God but to "covenant-faithfulness," by which the author has in mind the covenant with Moses. Second, there has been an overfocus on the *truth* of the gospel under the influence of Enlightenment rationalism, which cannot lead Jews to Yeshua as long as what the author elsewhere calls a "bad-news gospel" remains in play. Third, a point made several times elsewhere in the book, we have been overfocused on individual salvation and individual response. And fourth, we have been overfocused in the gospel as merely atonement, failing to grasp its wider implications. A six-point description of the gospel as it relates to the Jewish people follows, along with additional implications. These include the notion that "missionaries" come from outside a community; we should rather be "prophets" coming from inside.

Chapter 8 is "Bilateral Ecclesiology and Postsupersessionist Missiology as Inseparable Jewels." Here the author commends Mark Kinzer's paradigm of bilateral ecclesiology (as propounded in his *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*<sup>5</sup>) but notes that Kinzer does not really address missiology; yet the two are interdependent. First the author addresses the "benefits" of Kinzer's ecclesiology, but finds the "flaw" in Kinzer's "jewel" (Kindle 4340) to be a failure to explore postsupersessionist missiology. This, along with Kinzer's affinities with Karl Barth, have led some to criticize Kinzer's views. Some partial precedents for Kinzer's position are found in Joseph Rabinowitz, Ignatz Lichtenstein, and Paul Levertoff along with Lev Gillet. In the final analysis, Kinzer's "muted and diffident" (Kindle 4456) approach to missiology, along with terming his viewpoint "postmissionary," has created unnecessary anxiety, for it is not Kinzer's content but his flawed presentation that has led some to believe he is opposed to mission. For the sake of space, I will not summarize the rest of the chapter, other than to note that for the author, a postsupersessionist missiology incorporates both Kinzer's bilateral ecclesiology and his own Converging Destinies paradigm which affirms that the Church and the Jewish people both have missions with and to one another in the present time, a situation in which each community should be encouraged their

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<sup>5</sup> Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005)



own mission even while the message of Yeshua is extended (“the Converging Destinies paradigm encourages partisans from both communities to hold firm to their own convictions” [Kindle 4635]).

Chapter 9, the final one, revises a paper previously given and is entitled, “Seeds, Weeds, and Walking the High Wire: The Role of the Messianic Jewish Remnant.” Here the theme includes mission as “inreach” rather than “outreach” and means proclaiming Jesus’ name rather than “the neediness of Jews.” Then follows the kinds of “seeds” that must be planted to ensure that the remnant carries out its responsibility. Namely, the life of the remnant must include *prolepsis*, living for the idealized future; and *zikkaron* or *anamnesis*, remembering the holy past in such a way as to encourage obedience (including observing the sacred calendar occasions) and relating in a living way to that past. Then the author cites four “weeds” which inhibit the work to be done: antinomianism, anti-Judaism, anti-rabbinism, and “illusory, culturally neutral biblicism.” All these “seeds” and “weeds” are related in some way to the issue of (covenant) obedience.

Then comes a section on the messianic Jewish remnant which (following Dan Johnson) exists in two “modalities”: survivors of judgment, and a seed for realizing God’s future purposes. Texts such as Romans 9:27-29, generally viewed in terms of the former, actually embody the latter modality and function as a “sign of hope” for the entire Jewish people. This segues into a critique of the evangelical “paradigm” and a hope for a replacement paradigm of messianic Jewish inreach, defined as “the Messianic Jewish remnant being what it should be, and doing what it should do with respect to God’s consummating purposes for the descendants of Jacob.” Much else follows in this final chapter, all of which serves to further unpack the author’s thesis.

So much for an extended summary. Let me now summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

## STRENGTHS

**1. The author situates his views within his personal journey.** This is a strength for the simple reasons that no scholar is unembedded in his personal life, and no conclusions are reached in complete objectivity. Yet few seek to embed their scholarly work in the context of their life. So I appreciate that the author portrays the book as “something of a missiological biography,” the fruit of his encounters with various paradigms he has encountered within the missions and Messianic Jewish worlds. His journey has been “not simply back to [God] himself, which is the standard evangelical concern, nor simply back to myself, which is the

standard postmodern concern, but also guiding me back to the Jewish people as the locus of my selfhood.” The “not simply but also” is important—not the Jewish people in place of God himself, but both. How those two intersect is one of the ongoing concerns of the book.

**2. The author interacts with a wide range of authors, postliberal and post-Holocaust, Jewish and non-Jewish, supersessionist and non-supersessionist.** Here we find Michael Wyschogrod, Joel Kaminsky, Will Herberg, Christopher Wright, David Novak, Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, Markus Barth, Jonathan Sacks, Jon Levenson, Terence Fretheim, Kendall Soulen, N.T. Wright, Douglas Harink—and this all in chapter 1. On a topic such as this, it can only help the conversation to engage with a wide variety of thinkers, and this the author does succeeds in doing very well.

**3. The author is very good on supersessionism and the Protestant / Catholic approaches to a theology of the Jewish people, and on other theological matters.** The histories of the WCC and the LCWE in terms of their engagement with the issue of Israel and the Jewish people is very helpful and helps explain the drive towards the development of new paradigms. The discussion of *prolepsis* and *anamnesis* is very helpful, as is much of the material on the remnant.

**4. The author clarifies a number of questions that may have been raised by his earlier writings.** So he makes clear his view of Mark Kinzer’s *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* and his own stance on ultimate destinies (see summary above). The discussion of these issues has often been clouded in messianic Jewish discourse, at times with more questions raised than answers received (which is sometimes considered a value in Jewish studies, but not necessarily in this case!). Clarity can only help the conversation along.

## WEAKNESSES

**1. The author’s paradigm of “converging destinies” is not sufficiently undergirded by exegetical treatment of the biblical text, nor are its practical ramifications made sufficiently clear.** If I have understood him rightly, both the Jewish and Christian communities are meant to continue in the mission(s) which God has given to each, until at the eschaton both communities will “converge” in Yeshua who is the “vanishing point,” an image taken from perspective in painting. While he marshals many voices in support and often eloquently states his view, there is no thorough exegetical discussion given in support. Although various relevant texts in Romans and elsewhere are often cited, I wanted to see a more detailed unpacking of the text in order to sustain the thesis concerning the missions of both communities. Perhaps this means that it is easier to argue against supersessionism than to build an alternative; but then again, much more

ink has been spilled in overturning the supersessionist paradigm than in constructing new “paradigms.” Because of this, the book often has the feel of a manifesto rather than a biblical-theological study.

In this connection, many of the author’s points made in e.g., Chapter Six, could, without further elaboration, be broadly accepted by many. However, the author desires to translate his thesis into practical action, and what that looks like is hinted at but never fully developed. One such hint was mentioned above: “the Converging Destinies paradigm encourages partisans from both communities to hold firm to their own convictions” (Kindle 4635). I *think* I have an idea of what this might entail, but I am not clear on the day-to-day outworking. And it is in the outworking that we learn how the author reads his own thesis.

**2. Those who hold different positions are frequently caricatured.** Thus, for traditional evangelicals, only “a small minority of enlightened, lucky, or spiritually elite Jews” (Kindle 3486) find salvation. This is termed a “winners/losers” (Kindle 3195) model. Missionaries and Messianic Jews “beat up” (Kindle 3384) on the Jewish people. The implications are conceived in terms of a scenario in which Jews “the year before Yeshua died and rose again” only needed to live according to the Torah, while the next day “all of these Jews were fundamentally lost, unless and until they accepted as their savior a crucified Jew whose ministry flourished for three and half [sic] short years” (Kindle 3493). Jews who come to faith in Yeshua through the traditional paradigm have to reckon that “fifty generations (two thousand years) of his or her family, including the brightest and the best who died in Nazi camps and ovens, are of theological necessity irretrievably lost, in fact, burning forever in the lake of fire” (Kindle 3521).

Caricatured positions do not good conversation partners make. I know of no theologians in the traditional missions model who would characterize followers of Yeshua as “elite” or “the lucky enlightened ones.” Nor would they agree that the traditional kind of gospel presentation implies such things. And they simply would not find the implication of the coming of Yeshua to be that one year Jews were saved, and then suddenly lost. I know of no one as callous as to say that all Jews save an enlightened few for the past two thousand years are “burning forever.” The author’s objections at this point sound unsettlingly similar to those of atheists who argue in similar terms against any belief in God at all. And the author’s tone simply comes across often as one of anger, which again gives it the feel of a manifesto. It would be of far more value to, say, investigate exegetically how the apostles in the book of Acts addressed Israel in light of Yeshua’s coming and how they viewed the nature of Israel’s relationship to God as that point.

There is also the occasional innuendo. At one point the author gives the motive for Jews for Jesus' encouraging Jewish believers to attend churches as "for the purpose of reassuring the mailing list of conservative and fundamentalist Christians that underneath it all, the Jews for Jesus were bonafide Christians worthy of the missionary dollar" (Kindle 340. Full disclosure: I have served on the staff of Jews for Jesus since 1978.) This is in contrast to bringing new believers into messianic congregations. But this not only attributes a financial rather than pastoral motive to Jews for Jesus, but also ignores the fact that over the years Jews for Jesus has both planted messianic congregations, partnered with many more, and encouraged attendance at many of them.

**3. The author tends to overemphasize one aspect of Scriptural teaching to the neglect of another aspect, thus leading to an either-or approach rather than a both-and.** There is an overemphasis on corporate over individual salvation, the latter of which undergirds the author's diagnosis of the wrong-headedness of much evangelism. While it is true that Western theology has often tended to neglect the corporate dimension, that does not minimize the corresponding emphasis in Scripture on individuals and their own relationship to God. Scripture is replete with God's concern and care for individuals as individuals—witness the stories of the barren women of the Bible who bore children, or the Psalms that function as prayers of the king as the representative of Israel even as they offer uniquely personal perspectives; or the highly individualized callings of the prophets. Similar phenomena can be cited for the New Testament. I'm sure the author would agree about this, but he has swung the pendulum too far in the opposite direction. The corporate destiny of Israel needs to be more tightly held alongside the imperative of individual destinies.

Similarly there is a one-sided view taken as to the nature of Jewish believers' identity as part of the Jewish community. In the New Testament we have *both* the fact that the apostles attended synagogue and were invited to speak, *and also* the exhortation to join Yeshua "outside the camp" (and I say this even while I am aware that the contexts of Acts and Hebrews are different); we have the Corinthians' ongoing participation in civic life even as they were despised as fools for their faith. One can likewise find both aspects in the lives of the prophets of Israel. The author wants to come as a "prophet" from "inside" the Jewish community engaging in "inreach" in distinction from "missionaries" who come from "outside" and engage in "outreach." In response, (1) it seems to me that this is an odd definition of "missionary," which like "apostle" simply implies being sent in the service of someone or something—even Chabad has its *shlichim*, perhaps best rendered in English as *missionaries*. (2) There is always a dual nature of coming from inside and from outside. The nature of one's social identity is highly complex. (For an up to date

discussion of social identities in the New Testament, and from a point in much agreement with messianic Jewish scholars such as David Rudolph, see J. Brian Tucker, *“Remain in Your Calling”*<sup>6</sup>.)

Similarly, the author pits proclaiming the name of Jesus *instead* of the “neediness of Jews” (Kindle 3838), or advocates that the factors in the “engine” driving Jewish missions should be A, B, and C *and not* X, Y and Z. To my mind, these stark dichotomies do not reflect the nuance we find in Scripture—nor for that matter the realities of living in the world.

To be fair, I “get” the author’s desire to speak from the standpoint of someone within and alongside the Jewish community. I do not, however, think his “reading” of the past history of Jewish believers in Yeshua nor of Jewish missions is always as he describes it. And that past reading informs much of his search for a new “paradigm.”

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In addition to the above, much further discussion needs to ensue on the nature of the (covenant) obligations incumbent on Jewish believers; the attitude to and nature of Torah; and the role and place of rabbinic Judaism within God’s purposes and vis-à-vis the lives of Jewish followers of Jesus. This book, however, is more about paradigms of mission, and so these matters, though integrally related to mission, must await another time.

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If I may be permitted a few words in closing. The author calls me out (Kindle 3627) for referencing the idea of Christians as a “third race.” While I undoubtedly would not phrase things the same way some years after my article cited, I wholeheartedly agree that Jewish and non-Jewish identities are not obliterated in a new entity. And whatever supersessionist overtones adhere to the term “third race,” I do not subscribe to. But heuristically, from the grid not of Jews/Gentiles but of those in Messiah/those not in Messiah, one can imagine the usefulness of the term in pointing to the transformative nature of the gospel for our collective humanity. I am not quite ready to consign “third race” to the junk heap of supersessionist teaching.

Regarding the author’s history of the Hebrew Christian/Messianic Jewish movement in the Prologue. The author sees this history through a lens in which “advances” happen with each step. That is, I suppose, one valid way of doing the history, though of course it all depends on what one sees as an advance, or whether history should be read in terms of “advances” at

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<sup>6</sup> J. Brian Tucker, *“Remain in Your Calling”*: *Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

all. But it is also possible to see it simply as part of the larger Jewish history in which it is embedded. To give an example: the Hebrew Christians are said to have had a Jewish past but a Christian (i.e. church) present. From the standpoint of the author's thesis, this is not a very good thing. Yet how do these Hebrew Christians look when placed alongside the Jewish history of their times, measured against secular Jewish immigrants who embraced socialism but not Judaism; viewed against others for whom Jewishness was a nationality, not a religion; seen against a backdrop when questions like "Which is the better religion, Judaism or Christianity?" made sense to the crowds that attended such lectures? It may be that a different picture emerges of Messianic Jewish history other than that of advancement (presumably to the position that the author's organization Hashivenu embraces)—a picture of a kind of Jewish life that "worked" amid the plethora of isms and options that 19th and 20th century American life offered to Jews. (In that context, even assimilation was an option sought more by certain segments of American Jewry than by Hebrew Christians.) There is more than one way to read this history *Jewishly* that, however short it falls of the ideal God intended for his people, is better situated in its Jewish world.

Lastly, regarding the five core values of Hashivenu. Having read these afresh after some time, it strikes me that as stated, many Jewish believers and mission agencies would agree with them, certainly in part. Many Messianic Jews would concur with the bare statement that Messianic Judaism is a Judaism; those who don't would nevertheless argue that whatever their lifestyle, it is not a "cosmetically altered" version of anything. Point 2, that God's relationship with Israel is expressed uniquely in the Torah (I paraphrase slightly) is a simple theological statement that without addition could be signed off on by many. Nor would few object to points 3 or 4, that Yeshua is the fullness of the Torah, and that the Jewish people are "us" not "them." As far as the final point goes about the rich heritage of the rabbinic tradition, plenty of Messianic Jews would also find themselves in agreement. But what Hashivenu means by these statements goes beyond where some others would find themselves. Perhaps the Hashivenu distinctives need to be more strongly embedded in the value statement. Similarly to the statements in Chapter Six of the book, the author means more than the bare affirmations would suggest.

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*Converging Destinies* is an important book for those engaged in missions, and Jewish-Christian dialogue. The weaknesses I have pointed out (at more length than the strengths!) indicate the difficulty in developing a position and attempting to change paradigms. I look forward to the author continuing to clarify and develop his thesis—with hopefully a more robust

exegetical underpinning and a clearer statement of how it all works out in practice.

**Merwin, Ted. *Pastrami on Rye: An Overstuffed History of the Jewish Deli*. New York: New York University Press, 2015. (Reviewed on Goodreads, [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com))**

Growing up in the Canarsie neighborhood of Brooklyn during the 1960s, I would often be taken by my parents to Grabstein's Delicatessen at the corner of Rockaway Parkway and Avenue M. Oh, the pickles! Oh, the Romanian tenderloin steaks! Oh, the Formica! Somewhere in this nostalgia trip is the image of Mrs. Hillman, my second-grade teacher, always dressed in blue, waiting in line at the front counter for corned beef, or maybe kasha, or perhaps some stuffed derma.

Those who missed out on that era may not appreciate Ted Merwin's *Pastrami on Rye* as much as I did, and not only because Grabstein's merits a mention or two. This history — though there have been other books on the Jewish deli written from other vantage points, this is said by the author to be the first history of this kind — begins with the earliest delicatessens in Eastern Europe as well as in the U.S. The place of pickled meat in the European Jewish diet is explored, then the migration from Europe to the New World, the culture of eating out, the beginnings of kosher sausage companies (including, of course, Hebrew National), the transition from store to restaurant, the fight against the negative image of the Jewish deli, another fight against the Sunday “blue laws,” and the scandals of selling non-kosher meat as kosher — and all this only in the first part! No wonder the subtitle is *An Overstuffed History of the Jewish Deli*.

The delis flourished most in the period between the two world wars. Merwin shows how Jews' self-perceptions shaped the rise of the Jewish deli restaurant. By this point in time serving as a community gathering place instead of the synagogue, for the up-and-coming Jewish American (American Jew?), who was beginning to fit more and more comfortably into modern American life, the deli reflected a show-business ambience that mirrored the presence of Jews in that field. Or, for those who had not yet arrived socially, “this was the mirror that the delicatessen reflected to its largely lower-middle-class Jewish customers; it showed them not as they were but as they desperately, urgently desired to be.” For both wanna-bes and really-weres, the deli was there to stay—or so it seemed. Certainly many of the waiters were there to stay, at least for several decades to come: loud, deliberately insulting as only family can be, each a Don Rickles with a bowl of borscht and a platter of pastrami.

Sadly, the post-WWII era saw the slow but steady decline of the traditional meat-heavy deli. An increasingly cosmopolitan society and a Jewish population less in touch with its Eastern European cultural roots (note though, Sephardic food gets mentioned too) meant that the deli was



transmogrified, sometimes into upscale kosher restaurants, sometimes into something more generic that appealed to non-Jews and to tourists, yet allowed even the most unaffiliated Jew the chance to recapture an era that, some might say, would always find a place in their soul.

A few random quotes and I'm done:

“It was not the immigrants but their children who made the delicatessen their own.”

“Delicatessens were thus prime venues for both Jewish and non-Jewish candidates to campaign for political office.”

“Pastrami, as mentioned earlier, was a Romanian specialty; it originated in Turkey and then came to Romania through Turkish conquests of southeastern Europe.” (Who knew?!)

“More than 150 owners banded together in 1895 into a formal association of delicatessen dealers to prevail upon the city to allow them to remain open on Sundays [vis-à-vis the blue laws mentioned above]. Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt informed them that they could sell their products until ten o'clock in the morning—when church services typically began—and could fill deliveries throughout the day if they had been received before that hour.” (Bully!)

This is a book to savor, perhaps even over a Reuben sandwich (named, it seems, after deli owner Arnold Reuben, perhaps some time in the 1930s) and a seltzer water. There are a good number of pictures, too — appropriate enough, since so many delis crowded their own walls with photographs of visitors, family member, Hollywood stars, and their own food. Enjoy, already!