



AQUINAS AND SUPERSESSIONISM ONE MORE TIME: A RESPONSE TO MATTHEW A. TAPIE'S *AQUINAS ON ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH*

Matthew Levering

In his *Aquinas on Israel and the Church: The Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, Matthew Tapie examines my work first in a section on pages 30–38, then in an excursus on pages 41–47, and finally in a section on 158–163.¹ Indeed, his book functions in large part as a critique of my writings on the topic of Thomas Aquinas and supersessionism. Among other things, he suggests that I “only . . . pay lip service to the call for the renunciation of harsh Christian supersessionism.”² Given the

Matthew Levering, James N. and Mary D. Perry Jr. Chair of Theology, Mundelein Seminary, 1000 E. Maple Avenue, Mundelein IL 60060. E-mail: mlevering@usml.edu.

1. See Matthew A. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church: The Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, with a Foreword by Pim Valkenberg (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014 / Cambridge, MA: James Clarke & Co, 2015). I gave a version of this essay at a session of the 2016 International Congress on Medieval Studies, and Tapie responded to it there. I take his oral response into account in the present version.

2. *Ibid.*, 37 fn 42. In his oral response, Tapie fully rescinded this charge as inaccurate, though (if I understand him correctly) he does think that I remain an “economic supersessionist” due to my rejection of the view that the Church must require Jewish Christians to observe Torah according to its original mode. The phrase “harsh supersessionism” comes from my engagement with David Novak’s theology in chapter 1 of my *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom: Engagements with the Theology of David Novak* (London: Continuum, 2010). In my chapter, I differentiate between a “harsh” and a “mild” supersessionism, but this way of describing it is my own (not Novak’s). “Harsh” supersessionism, as I use the term in my chapter, means a supersessionism that renders Judaism (ongoing Jewish observance of the ceremonial law) obsolete by denying that it has spiritual value or is willed by God today. “Mild” supersessionism, by contrast, involves the claim that Israel’s Messiah has come and refigured Torah around himself for all who believe in him. Novak accepts the latter form as impossible for Christians to avoid. Novak remarks: “Supersessionism is the subject of deep theological debate today. Many Jews have seen it as the core of Christian anti-Judaism. Many Christians are embarrassed by it, seeing it as part of the anti-Judaism that was

significance of the topic, it seems appropriate for me to engage his criticisms, especially since this engagement provides a chance to clarify, rectify, and extend my long-standing interest in Aquinas and supersessionism. In addition to underscoring my firm “renunciation of harsh Christian supersessionism,” the present essay argues for the importance of Aquinas’s commentary on Gal. 5:3 for understanding the full contours of Aquinas’s theology of the Jewish people. Although in the body of the essay I focus upon Tapie’s concerns, and therefore do not discuss Messianic Judaism (which was in the foreground of my earlier engagements with Aquinas and supersessionism), I clarify and further develop my position on Messianic Judaism in the footnotes of the essay. Thanks in significant part to the efforts of Mark S. Kinzer, with whom I have been in dialogue for a number of years and who kindly read and criticized a draft of the present essay,

so easily appropriated by modern anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, Christian supersessionism need not denigrate Judaism. It can look to the Jewish origins of Christianity happily and still learn of those origins from living Jews, those whom Pope John Paul II likes to call ‘our elder brothers.’ And Christian supersessionism can still affirm that God has not annulled His everlasting covenant with the Jewish people, neither past nor present nor future. But Jews cannot expect any more than that from Christians, and Christians cannot expect any more than that from yourselves. If Christianity does not regard itself as going beyond Judaism, why should Christians not become Jews? It is always a ready possibility. Where else could you possibly find the Lord God of Israel? And, conversely, any Jew who believes Christianity supersedes Judaism can only become a Christian in good faith—like Edith Stein” (Novak, “What Does Edith Stein Mean for Jews?,” in Novak, *Talking with Christians: Musings of a Jewish Theologian* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005], 146–66, at 164). Regarding the supersessionism that Novak thinks is inevitable for Christians (which I term “mild” supersessionism), Novak rightly points out, “The New Testament does not *follow* the Old Testament and the Church does not *follow* the Jewish people in a necessary logical sequence, neither as replacement nor as an emergence. Instead, the prime locus of authoritative revelation is in the New Testament [namely, Jesus Christ]. When that is fully established, Christians are then to look back to the Old Testament, not as the source or ground of that Christological revelation [since if it were, then Jews could not be Jews without the New Testament] but rather as the set of conditions that made acceptance of the Christological revelation possible The Old Testament’s ‘oldness’ is not that of either potentiality or causality; rather, it is the ‘oldness’ or historical priority (as in the German *Anfang*) of a necessary precondition, but one whose necessity is not known until after the fact of the truly original revelation. Looking at the relation of Old and New Testaments in this way enables one to see ‘old’ as meaning neither ‘passé’ nor ‘sufficient’” (Novak, “From Supersessionism to Parallelism in Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *Talking with Christians*, 8–25, at 22). Novak describes what I term “harsh” supersessionism as the view that Christians have replaced Jews (and Judaism) since “God has rejected the Jews and replaced them with the Church” (ibid., 9): on this view the Church is simply a better covenant partner for God according to the “truly original revelation” (which on this view would be the Old Testament). To my mind, such “harsh” supersessionism is rooted not in a fundamentally positive view of fulfillment (eschatological Messianic reconfiguration) but in a fundamentally negative view of fulfillment (rejection of the Jewish people unless they believe in Jesus). I accept the former (Messianic reconfiguration) but deny the latter (rejection or replacement of the Jewish people). I do not deny the truth of Jesus’s eschatological warnings and prophecies about Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (see Luke 13:31–35; Matt. 23–24)—since I affirm that Jesus is indeed Israel’s Messiah—but these warnings and prophecies pertain to their context and should be carefully interpreted in light of such texts as Rom. 2–3, Rom. 11, and 1 Cor. 2:8.

Messianic Judaism has become an increasingly important topic in recent years within the Catholic Church.³

Tapie focuses on two of my books: *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple and Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*.⁴ I discuss "supersessionism" in discussing Aquinas on the Old and New Laws in chapter 1 of *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, where I respond to Michael Wyschogrod's concern that Christian Jews no longer observe Torah, despite God's commandment that they do so. From the same perspective, but this time in dialogue with David Novak and with the concerns and proposed solutions set forth by Mark Kinzer's *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People*, I discuss "supersessionism" in chapter 1 of *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*.⁵ In neither

3. In addition to Kinzer's *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), see also Kinzer's notable and eloquent recent study, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church*, with a Foreword by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, O.P. and an Afterword by Jean-Miguel Garrigues, O.P. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015). In his oral response, Tapie made clear that he agrees with Kinzer (and Michael Wyschogrod) that Jewish Christians must observe Torah according to its original mode.

4. See Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); Levering, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*. In offering his critique, Tapie does not discuss the main theological and philosophical arguments of the two books, which, respectively, explore the contours of Christian theology of salvation and engage David Novak's theology from a Thomistic perspective. As is appropriate given his topic, he discusses only what I have to say about Christian supersessionism.

5. For Michael Wyschogrod's essay, see Wyschogrod, "Letter to a Friend," *Modern Theology* 11 (1995): 165–71. It will be clear that questions regarding Messianic Judaism are at the heart of my two treatments of supersessionism, although Tapie does not address this issue directly. Both Wyschogrod and Kinzer advocate Messianic Judaism—Christian Jews being strongly encouraged or, better, required by the Church to observe Torah—as the only way to overcome Christian supersessionism. In e-mail conversation about the present essay, Gavin D'Costa suggested to me that it would be helpful to clarify further my position on Messianic Judaism. He asked if I would agree to the following proposition: "If Jews who follow Jesus carry out the ceremonial law, this is not deadly if it keeps intact the following conditions: (a) these acts celebrate the coming of the messiah in Jesus—and are not purely and exclusively forward looking; (b) these acts are thus Christological and cannot be seen to be identical to the same acts being practiced by a non-Jesus-following Jew—who sees them as forward looking; (c) these acts provide a witness to Israel without Jesus, that their own destiny regard the messiah, who Christians and Jewish Christians identify as Jesus; (d) they enact these ceremonial laws only in so much as they are not a totally separate ecclesia, but through these laws, they join with the wider ecclesia in giving worship to Jesus, Father and Spirit under the Petrine sign of unity." In response, I accept the validity of Christian Jews carrying out the ceremonial law according to conditions (a), (b), (c), and (d), with two further conditions: (e) observance of the ceremonial law must not be seen as obligatory or covenantally required of Christian Jews and (f) there must not arise a "Gentile ecclesia" distinct in location or in hierarchical offices from a "Jewish ecclesia." The danger is that by means of a ritual division (with its attendant consequences for Christian congregations), it could come to seem that Gentile Christians are not fully united with Jewish Christians in one Church, one "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). Speaking as a Gentile Christian, I would be dismayed to learn that rather than being fully "grafted in" (Rom. 11:17) to the "olive tree" of Israel, I was merely part of a Gentile branch of the Church. In fact, the phrase "Gentile ecclesia" is

book is the question of supersessionism at the center of the book as a whole. However, in both books I make clear that I aim to avoid harsh supersessionism—namely, positions that imply that the practice of Judaism is obsolete after Christ—and I also make clear that I do not think it possible for Christian theologians to engage systematic topics from a perspective that treats the covenants given to Israel as merely a thing of the past, as though they had now been revoked. Here I have Friedrich Schleiermacher and classical liberal theology prominently in view.

Especially in two areas, Tapie finds my two chapters on supersessionism to be wanting. First, he argues that in making my argument that Aquinas should not count as a “supersessionist” and in seeking on my own terms to avoid “supersessionism” (in its harsh form), I do not adequately define “supersessionism.” Tapie draws upon the work of Kendall Soulen for his definition of “supersessionism.” I agree that I should have paid more explicit attention to Soulen’s work in my two chapters on this topic, not least because Soulen strongly agrees with Wyschogrod that Messianic Judaism is the only path for overcoming supersessionism. But I think that my understanding of supersessionism—focused on the question of whether the Torah is “obsolete” due to the supposed “obsolescence” of

seriously misleading, since there never was a strictly “Gentile ecclesia”; Jewish Christians were always part of the first churches in which Gentile Christians worshiped. Ensuring that this remained the case was fundamental to Paul’s ministry. Granted the validity in my view of Jewish Christians carrying out the ceremonial law according to its original mode on the six conditions named above, the Church still must be careful not to reestablish the “dividing wall” (Eph. 2:14) between Jews and Gentiles, or to suppose that Jews who observe Torah as messianically reconfigured (rather than in its original mode) have thereby relinquished the promises made by God to them as Jews, since incorporation into the Messiah (with Gentiles) is the eschatological fulfillment of precisely those promises. D’Costa is aware of my view that Christian Jews and Gentiles now observe the Mosaic law by participating sacramentally in Christ’s perfect obedience/enactment of the Torah on the Cross (a Torah reconfigured around the Messiah), but D’Costa is concerned that this position logically leads to the end of a visibly distinct Jewish identity both within the Church and outside it. I do not see New Testament evidence of God’s call to preserve a visibly distinct Jewish identity within the Church (other, that is, than the divinely enabled Jewish identity of all Gentiles and Jews who, with Christ as their head, are the Body of Christ), whereas I see ample evidence of the “dividing wall” being broken down in every way, as Gentile Christians are fully integrated with Jewish Christians in the rituals of the eschatological people of God: Torah reconfigured sacramentally around the Passover of the Messiah, the New Temple. I am not denying that Jesus, along with Paul, Peter, and other Jewish Christians, practiced Torah according to its original mode, but I am arguing that Jesus’s eschatological Passover changed things in this regard. See, for example, the following biblical passages (and others that I discuss in the first chapter of *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*, although more work on this topic must be done): “But when I [Paul] saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’” (Gal. 2:14); “And he [Jesus] said to them, ‘Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?’ (Thus he declared all foods clean.)” (Mk 7:18–19); “But Peter said, ‘No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.’ And the voice came to him again a second time, ‘What God has cleansed, you must not call common’” (Acts 10:14–15).

“carnal Israel”⁶—is in fact largely the same as Soulen’s. Showing that the Torah must not be understood by Christians as “obsolete” is at the heart of my two chapters on supersessionism, although my focus is on *Christian Jews* and my central argument is that a Messianically transformed Torah is not an “obsolete” Torah. Indebted to Soulen and to a seminal earlier author, Jules Isaac (who helped in a decisive way to inspire *Nostra Aetate*), Tapie defines “supersessionism” in a manner with which I agree: “*Supersessionism is the Christian claim that with the advent of Christ, Jewish Law is fulfilled and obsolete, with the result that God replaces Israel with the Church.*”⁷

Second, Tapie observes that when I was writing my chapters, I did not realize that for Aquinas, *all* Jews who after Christ’s coming continue to observe the Torah are thereby in mortal sin.⁸ In chapter 1 of *Christ Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, I argue that in *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 103, a. 4, Aquinas should not be read as holding that non-Christian Jews after Christ’s coming commit mortal sin by observing Torah. I also suggest that after Christ’s coming the Jewish people can still possess implicit faith in the Messiah. On this basis, I then focus upon the question of whether *Christian Jews* must still observe the Torah, given that God has commanded

6. See R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 29. As Kinzer emphasized to me in e-mail conversation, Soulen raises the broader question of whether God’s enduring covenant with the Jewish people remains central to how Christians construe their own faith. Thus, for Soulen, the issue of supersessionism cannot be restricted to questions dealing with matters such as temple, sacrifice, and Sabbath, but must take account of the theological significance of the Jewish people in history, and what this means for how Christians understand the core of their faith. I agree with Soulen here (against Schleiermacher), and I have tried to include such broader reflection in my theological writings on Christian doctrine. For Soulen, supersessionism involves a “double movement of fulfillment and cancellation,” so that “[t]he Old Covenant is fulfilled by the New Covenant according to its inner christological substance but superseded and displaced according to its outer carnal form” (*The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, 47). Drawing upon Wyschogrod’s proposals, Soulen argues for Messianic Judaism as the solution to Christian supersessionism at various points of his book, including 169–71. In *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, I suggest that the “outer carnal form” (to use Soulen’s phrase) of Israel includes the bodily form of Jesus, and that Christians literally share, in the Eucharist, in Jesus’s perfect embodied fulfillment/observance of Torah (and thus in a Jewish “outer carnal form”), without thereby rendering the Judaism of the Jewish people who do not believe in Jesus “obsolete.” See also Soulen’s important *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity*, vol. 1: *Distinguishing the Voices* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), and my response to one aspect of this book: “The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church,” *Pro Ecclesia* 23 (2014): 33–45.

7. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church*, 23–24 (Emphasis in original).

8. See *ibid.*, 33fn29, 131, 162–63. In *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, I argue that when Aquinas speaks of Jews being in mortal sin due to observing the Torah, “Aquinas specifically has in mind the ‘Jewish converts to Christianity,’ and he makes clear that he is referring to those who have made ‘a profession of faith.’ In this crucial discussion, Aquinas does not state that Jews, who have not accepted Christ, sin by continuing to observe the Torah’s ceremonial precepts. . . . Aquinas does not condemn the observance of Torah by Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ, but *neither* does he condone not believing in Jesus Christ. Only by faith in Christ (implicit or explicit) are human beings healed of mortal sin, for reasons that will be explored more fully in the following chapters” (*ibid.*, 161n64).

the Jewish people to observe Torah in perpetuity. I argue that for Aquinas Christian Jews must indeed continue to observe the Torah, but they must now do so sacramentally by sharing (Eucharistically and literally) in the Paschal sacrifice of Christ, in which Christ fulfilled and reconfigured Torah around himself (III, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1).⁹

Admittedly, however, my interpretation of I–II, q. 103, a. 4—regarding whether all Jews after Christ’s coming commit mortal sin by observing Torah—is built upon a mistake. In Tapie’s analysis of Aquinas’s biblical commentaries with respect to the question of whether all Jews after Christ’s coming commit mortal sin by observing the ceremonial precepts of the Torah, he finds at least one text that confirms that my interpretation of I–II, q. 103, a. 4 is erroneous: namely, Aquinas’s comments on Gal. 5:2.¹⁰ Drawing upon Augustine’s *Epistle 19*, where Augustine outlines his theory of why it was acceptable for the apostles to observe the Torah for a limited time after Christ’s death and Resurrection, Aquinas remarks on Gal. 5:2: “To observe the legal ceremonies after grace had been preached is a mortal sin for the Jews. But during the interim, i.e., before the preaching of grace, they could be observed without sin even by those who had been converted from Judaism, provided they set no hope on them. However, those converted from paganism could not observe them without sin.”¹¹ I will say a bit more about this text later (especially in connection with Aquinas’s comments on Gal. 5:3, which Tapie does not discuss), but in this text on Gal. 5:2 Aquinas is obviously speaking about all Jews. In interpreting I–II, q. 103, a. 4 in *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, I held that Aquinas “does not condemn the observance of Torah by Jews who do not believe in Christ.”¹² Although I still think that I–II, q. 103, a. 4 can by itself be read in a charitable manner that avoids the conclusion that Aquinas has all Jews in view, it is clear to me that Aquinas’s commentary on Gal. 5:2 can only be read as condemning Torah observance according to its original form by any and all Jews after Christ’s coming (with the exception of the apostolic period, when, for reasons that Aquinas draws from Augustine, Jewish Christians were permitted to observe the Torah).

9. See Levering, *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, 23–24, 29–30, 160–61n64 (an endnote to page 29).

10. For a similar correction of my approach, though without reference to Galatians, see Holly Taylor Coolman’s “Romans 9–11: Rereading Aquinas on the Jews,” in *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 101–12. At the 2009 conference that I co-organized in which Coolman delivered her paper, both Coolman and Bruce Marshall indicated to me that my reading of I–II, q. 103, a. 4 was mistaken, and so I have long been prepared to agree with Tapie. See also Bruce D. Marshall’s “*Quasi in Figura*: A Brief Reflection on Jewish Election, after Thomas Aquinas,” *Nova et Vetera* 7 (2009): 477–84.

11. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians*, trans. F. R. Larcher, O. P., in *Aquinas, Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, ed. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), ch. 5, lect. 1, § 278, 124.

12. Levering, *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, 161.

Since in *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* I hold that Aquinas condemns *only* the observance of Torah by *Jewish converts* to Christianity, I do not spend time in that book considering whether Christ's fulfillment makes the Torah obsolete for *all Jews*—other than to say explicitly *that it does not*, and that Jews who do not believe in Jesus continue to observe Torah without thereby sinning. The key question of my chapter in *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* is the following: By condemning the practice of Torah for Jewish converts, has Aquinas made the Torah “obsolete” for Jews who are Christians? If so, I argue, then Aquinas's understanding of Christ's fulfillment of Torah would indeed be a supersessionist one. I draw upon Michael Wyschogrod because his article about Aquinas and the Mosaic Law challenges the Church to overcome supersessionism by requiring *Jewish Christians* to fulfill their Jewish obligation of observing Torah.

My chapter agrees with Wyschogrod that Jews who are Christians must indeed continue to fulfill their Jewish obligation of observing Torah. However, according to my proposal, which I arrive at through a reading of Aquinas's theology of the Cross (and of the Eucharist), Jewish Christians now fulfill their Torah obligation by participating in Christ's Paschal mystery. In *Summa theologiae* III, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1, Aquinas states that Christ on the Cross fulfills the Torah through his love (fulfilling the moral precepts of the Torah), his sacrifice (fulfilling the ceremonial precepts), and his redemptive suffering (fulfilling the judicial precepts). Through faith and the sacraments, and preeminently in Eucharistic worship which unites believers to Christ's Cross, all Christians—including Jewish Christians—observe and fulfill Torah in the Jewish body of Christ. Far from making Torah obsolete, therefore, Christ opens up Torah to the Gentiles. This is crucial, because it means that Gentiles have truly been “grafted in” (Rom. 11:23) so as “to share the richness of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:17). Through the Messiah, Gentiles have thus received the extraordinary privilege of coming to share in the blessings of God's covenant with his people Israel, as Isaiah prophesied (see Isa. 19:16–25; 66:18–21) and as numerous Psalms also bear witness. In a transformed mode in Christ, God's Torah is observed by the Messianic community, which is the inaugurated (but certainly not consummated) Kingdom of God.

My goal in the chapter, therefore, is to show that the Torah *has not been made obsolete for Jewish Christians*, even if they do not practice it according to its original mode, let alone made obsolete for Jews who do not believe in Jesus and who certainly should continue to observe it according to its original mode. I also comment in the chapter on the way in which Aquinas understands history not merely as a “linear” set of moments but also as involving participation (in the present moment) in earlier and later events, due to the power and providence of God who knows all history in his eternal presence. People who do not explicitly know of or believe in Jesus can participate in him by implicit faith, even before Jesus is born. Regarding Gentiles who lived before Christ was born or was preached in

their territories, Aquinas argues that they could be saved through having “implicit faith through believing in divine providence, since they believed that God would deliver mankind in whatever way was pleasing to Him.”¹³ One historical epoch is not cut off from another (whether later or earlier); nor need the claim that Jesus Christ is the center of history mean that among people today only Christians are united to Jesus. The barriers that commonly are thought to exist between historical epochs or between the visible Church and other religious bodies do not take into account Aquinas’s theology of faith and history. For Christians (including Jews who are Christians), the observance of the Torah in its original mode does cease, but it does so—if Aquinas is correct—only because the Torah *continues* to be observed by sacramental and charitable participation in Christ’s Pasch, with the result that the Torah cannot be said to be “obsolete” for any Christian.

As Tapie has shown, however, Aquinas’s commentary on Gal. 5:2 states that the Torah is now deadly for *all* Jews: its observance “after grace had been preached is a mortal sin for the Jews.” I am grateful to Tapie for pointing this out, and I would add that attention needs also to be paid to how Aquinas’s commentary on Gal. 5 proceeds. Commenting on Gal. 5:3, Aquinas remarks that “if one is convinced that he would sin mortally unless he were circumcised, then, having become circumcised, if the same conviction remains, he would sin mortally were he not to observe the matters of the law.”¹⁴ This statement shows that despite the fact that observing the “legal ceremonies after grace had been preached is a mortal sin for the Jews,” it is *also* a mortal sin for the Jews “not to observe the matters of the law.” Aquinas makes clear that if a person (or, I would add, a people) holds that “something must be done” because “it would be against God’s will not to do it,” and if that person fails to do it (in this case, observe Torah in its original mode), “he would sin mortally, not by reason of the work done but by reason of his conscience.”¹⁵ As Aquinas explains, “The reason for this is that the conviction that something must be done is nothing else but a judgment that it would be against God’s will not to do it.”¹⁶ If Jewish parents, knowing that God commanded the Jewish people to circumcise their sons (and not knowing that the Messiah has transformed

13. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 2, a. 7, ad 3, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981).

14. Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, ch. 5, lect. 1, §282, 126.

15. *Ibid.* Contemporary readers can be thrown off by the mention of “conscience,” since we tend to think of conscience as a competitor with God for moral authority. Aquinas, of course, has a much different view of conscience: conscience hears and receives God’s commands. The key point for Aquinas is that the Jewish person who knows God’s explicit commandment but refuses to perform it (while not knowing that the commandment has been transformed by the Messiah) has thereby committed a sin that cuts him or her off from God.

16. *Ibid.*

that command), refused to circumcise their son, they would be rejecting the express will of God and thereby cutting themselves off from God.

This text, which Tapie does not cite, exhibits the complexity of Aquinas's position on Jews obeying Torah after the coming of Christ. Ultimately, the problem turns out to be not Aquinas's view of the observance of the Torah per se, but rather Aquinas's views of the efficacy of preaching. Aquinas assumes that "after grace had been preached" means after the Holy Spirit has *efficaciously revealed*, through the mediation of the apostles and their successors, the truth of the gospel in a manner that commands the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26). To read his commentary on Gal. 5:2 without keeping in view his particular understanding of the power of preaching is to distort his perspective. Thus, when Aquinas states with regard to the ongoing observance of the Torah that "unless he did what his convictions dictate, he would sin mortally," he does not thereby find the Jewish people to be without the sin of unbelief. Their sin is not the practice of the Torah per se, but rather is the sin of unbelief. Aquinas explains that "if he does it [namely, observes the Torah], he sins, because ignorance of this kind does not excuse him, since he is ignorant of a precept. Nevertheless, he is not absolutely perplexed, but only in a qualified sense, because it is within his power to correct his erroneous conscience."¹⁷ For Aquinas, ongoing Judaism is in a state of mortal sin not because of observing the Torah—which in fact the Jewish people must do on pain of incurring mortal sin, since it is God's command—but because of an erroneous conscience that could be corrected, since the gospel has now been proclaimed in such a way that they are at fault for not believing and obeying it. In *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 10, a. 6, Aquinas compares the unbelief of heretics, pagans, and Jews. He holds that since all Jews "accepted the figure of that faith in the Old Law, which they corrupt by their false interpretations, their unbelief is a more grievous sin than that of the heathens."¹⁸

The problem, therefore, consists fundamentally in Aquinas's *theology of preaching, non-culpable ignorance, and the sin of unbelief*. Aquinas does not want to deny that the gospel has been truly proclaimed or to suggest that the gospel (like the Torah at Sinai) does not efficaciously command the obedience of faith to all who hear it proclaimed. Unfortunately, however, Aquinas does not give sufficient room for ongoing implicit faith in the Messiah, due to invincible ignorance arising from non-culpable factors, including but hardly limited to the scandal caused by bad Christians. Once implicit faith (which Aquinas fully allows for in other contexts) is inserted into the equation, then the sting can be largely removed from Aquinas's comment on Gal. 5:2 that "to observe the legal ceremonies after grace had been preached is a mortal sin for the Jews," because Aquinas's comment here depends on a strong view of what the preaching of the

17. Ibid.

18. *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 10, a. 6.

gospel *should* accomplish. Once that strong view of the efficacy of preaching is rejected, then non-Christian Jews' ongoing observance of Torah will appear as obedient and praiseworthy, given Aquinas's own position that the Jews must obey Torah on pain of mortal sin.¹⁹ In my view, it is no wonder that Aquinas does not elsewhere say explicitly what he says in his commentary on Gal. 5:2, because he knows that the key point is not Torah observance but the moral status of nonbelief in Jesus (that is, whether all nonbelief is necessarily subjectively culpable).

Recall that the central claim of my chapter on supersessionism in *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, in light of Wyschogrod's insistence that the Church should command Jewish Christians to observe Torah (as all Jews must do), is simply that Jews who are Christians *do not cease* to observe Torah.²⁰ As Tapie notes, among the most important concerns that my position raises are whether God wills that there still exist Jews (distinguishable from Christians) who observe the Torah according to its original mode, and whether "authentic Jewish identity, at the end of the day, is Christian identity."²¹ It may seem from my focus in *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* that I think that the true Jews are the ones who convert, and that all other Jews are either on the way to conversion or else are now extraneous to salvation history. Even supposing that I have not made Torah observance "obsolete," it may appear that I have radically

19. In e-mail conversation with me, Kinzer pointed out at this juncture that for Aquinas Jewish ongoing observance of the Torah (in its original mode) is praiseworthy only because the Jews mistakenly think that it is required from them, and because it is praiseworthy to act in accordance with such dictates of conscience (even when they are mistaken); but the actual observance is not intrinsically praiseworthy. I think the observance of the Torah is always intrinsically praiseworthy for Aquinas, but the question is whether it should be observed in its original mode or in its Messianic reconfiguration. Given the possibility for Jews today of implicit faith in the (unknown) Messiah, it would be intrinsically praiseworthy for Jews who do not believe in Jesus to observe the Torah in its original mode, as Aquinas makes clear by stating that it would be a mortal sin for Jews not to obey God's precepts. In e-mail conversation, Gavin D'Costa suggested that my position here involves a "mild" supersessionism of the kind accepted by David Novak, since I hold that the Messiah has reconfigured the Torah around himself and therefore, for those who believe in the Messiah, the original mode of Torah observance has been superseded (without thereby the Torah losing any of its dignity or any of its necessity). Since Tapie's book is focused elsewhere, he does not take up these issues.

20. I recognize that this would not satisfy Wyschogrod. My point was that Wyschogrod, by framing the matter in terms of *either* the Church must require Jewish Christians to observe Torah *or* the Church holds that the Torah is obsolete, does not allow for a third option of a Messianically reconfigured Torah that Jewish and Gentile Christians must observe. For Wyschogrod (and Tapie), if Jewish Christians are not required to observe Torah according to its original mode, then the Church is holding that the Torah is obsolete, since by "Torah" Wyschogrod means solely "Torah according to its original mode." My view is that it is important to note two things: the Church does not hold that Torah is obsolete for Jews who do not believe in Jesus, and the Church should be able to propose a Messianically reconfigured Torah without thereby rendering Torah "obsolete" (i.e., Wyschogrod has no grounds for holding that the Messiah *could not* reconfigure—without rendering obsolete—Torah around himself).

21. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church*, 34.

relativized Torah observance according to its original mode, so that those who practice Judaism are barely Jews at all, with the result that the Church has obviously replaced the Jewish people.

In response to these serious concerns, which I wish I had answered more fully in my chapter in *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, I should first note that I affirm that Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews as well as the Messiah of the Gentiles. I also affirm that the Church is the body of Christ, and that Gentile Christians make one fully integrated body with Jewish Christians, with Christ as the center and head. In the Church, I do not think that the visible distinction of Jews and Gentiles needs to endure, since the key point for me is that Gentiles have been elevated (or grafted) into true unity with Jews in the Jewish Messiah—although Jews retain forever the distinctive privilege of being Jews as Jesus is, and although (as I discuss more fully above in footnote 5) I grant the validity of Jewish Christians continuing to conserve their Jewish identity as a charism in the Church, so long as Jewish Christians do not consider themselves to be *required* observe the ceremonial law in its original mode.²² In any case, I think that Christian Jews do not cease to observe Torah because Christian Jews and Gentiles together observe Torah as fulfilled and reconfigured by Christ. In addition, I consider that the teaching of Hebrews and Galatians is true, since these letters are inspired Scripture that faithfully hand on the gospel. It would not do for a Christian to set these epistles in opposition to Romans in any fundamental way, although there are obviously significant differences. As I argue in the first chapter of *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*, I think that Hebrews and Galatians (or, for that matter, the Gospels and Acts) cannot be squared with the view that Jews who are Christians have an obligation to observe Torah according to its original mode.

However, I deny that these claims entail the corollary that the Jewish people who observe the Torah according to its original mode are lesser or inauthentic Jews, or that the Jewish people today have lost the covenantal privileges belonging to the elect people of God or have been replaced by the Church. In chapter 1 of *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, although my focus is on Jewish *Christians* in accord with what I understood to be the challenge set forth by Wyschogrod, I reject “the view that the fulfillment of Israel’s covenants means that they are now *revoked*” or obsolete for any Jews.²³ In chapter 1 of *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*, although my focus is again on Jewish *Christians*, I reject any position that

22. See Lawrence Feingold, “The Mission and Glories of the Chosen People,” in *You Shall Be My Witnesses: Hebrew Catholics and the Mission of the Church* (St. Louis, MO: Association of Hebrew Catholics, 2012), 5–6.

23. Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple*, 9. My present position is thus fundamentally unchanged from what it was then, although in the present essay, given Aquinas’s comments on Galatians 5:2, I can no longer hold that Aquinas allows for the continuing observance of Torah by Jews, and therefore I now have to criticize Aquinas on this point.

would “denigrate Judaism” and I make clear my opposition to the view that “God has absolutely no covenantal relationship with those Jews who do not affirm Jesus to be the Messiah.”²⁴ In light of Tapie’s book, I wish now that I had left no room whatsoever for misunderstanding, and so let me clarify my position further here.

The Jews today, whether they believe in Jesus or not, are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they are as fully Jewish as the patriarchs or King David or the Maccabean martyrs. Far from being “lesser” Jews or inauthentically Jewish, they are fully and authentically Jews, and full bearers of the promises and the covenantal obligation of observing Torah. They are the elect people of God, beloved today of God, and their obedience to God by observing Torah according to its original mode gives God glory.²⁵ Faith in Jesus as the Messiah does not transform Jews from lesser and inauthentic Jews to real and authentic Jews. What the Messiah does, among other things, is enable Jews and Gentiles to fulfill Torah (reconfigured around the Messiah) and to obtain the privileges of eschatological Israel. In fulfilling the covenants, the Messiah salvifically bears the sins of his people (Jews first, and also Gentiles), but he does not make the people of Israel authentically Jewish, because they are already authentically Jewish. Far from having no possible access to the eschatological salvation brought by Jesus, non-Christian Jews today can be united to this salvation through the observance of Torah and faith in the coming Messiah.²⁶ This can be said without negating the wondrous good news of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father to pour out blessings upon the whole world, and without muting

24. Levering, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*, 18, 45.

25. In e-mail conversation, Kinzer reiterated here his concern that it is hard to see how, according to my reading, Jews outside the Church—Judaism as a whole (which involves the observance of Torah “according to its original mode”)—are not in some way objectively deficient in their way of life, even though they are not culpable. Objectively speaking, I think that the Messiah has come. It seems to me that the technical meaning of the objective deficiency of non-Christian religions (see *Dominus Iesus* §22) can be allowed to stand as signifying the (inaugurated but not consummated) eschatological status of the Messianic community, given that I do not suppose that Jews who do not believe in Jesus are thereby in a state of sin.

26. Kinzer noted here that he does not see how, according to what I have said so far, “non-Christian Jews today can be united to this salvation *through the observance of Torah*.” My answer is that in my view—and I follow Aquinas in this respect (though he does not share my extension of implicit faith to post-biblical Judaism)—the observance of Torah according to its original mode both offers holy worship to the living God and nourishes faith in the Messiah who is to come (Jesus). Aquinas states, “No man ever had the grace of the Holy Spirit except through faith in Christ either explicit or implicit: and by faith in Christ man belongs to the New Testament”—even if the man (or woman) lived before Jesus Christ and never believed explicitly in him (I–II, q. 106, a. 1, ad 3; cf. I–II, q. 98, a. 2, ad 4; I–II, q. 102, a. 3 and ad 1; and many other such texts). For development of Catholic doctrine on the issue of how non-Christians are united to the salvation won by Jesus without believing explicitly in Jesus, see *Lumen Gentium* §16.

the importance of the apostles' proclamation of the gospel of Christ "to the uncircumcised" and "to the circumcised" (Gal. 2:7).

If all Jews became followers of Jesus, they would still be Jews, even if they now observed Torah as fulfilled by and reconfigured around Jesus Christ.²⁷ In actual fact, however, God has not willed that all Jews become Christians. This caused Paul "great sorrow and unceasing anguish" (Rom. 9:2), but Paul nonetheless insists that "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew" (Rom. 11:2) and denies that "they stumbled so as to fall" (Rom. 11:11). If God willed that all Jews convert to faith in Christ, then God could efficaciously accomplish this, as Paul makes clear. God has chosen not to do so, for good reasons that God knows—and that certainly cannot and must not be reduced to human culpability (the sin of unbelief), since these reasons belong to the wise plan that "God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets" (Acts 3:18). In the Book of Acts, Peter already takes pains to remove the sting of his words by assuring his hearers that "you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:17). The point is that for positive reasons, rooted in the "wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 11:33), God has willed that Judaism continue. I assume that God wills for Judaism to continue because it is highly positive and important in itself and for its theological contribution to the salvation of the world.²⁸

It might seem, however, that if I hold that eschatologically the Jews will embrace Jesus as the Messiah and be united to Christians in his Church, and if I hold that there are appropriate ways of inviting Jews to become Christian even now, then ultimately I do not really want there to exist

27. Kinzer pointed out that the issue is not just whether God wills that there still exist Jews distinguishable from Christians, but whether God wills that there still exist Jews distinguishable from Gentiles (i.e., whether outside or within the Church). To my mind, it is clear that God providentially wills that there still exist Jews distinguishable from Gentiles. In the Church itself, however, I do not see the need (given the New Testament's teachings) for an ongoing visible distinction between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, even though the distinction remains in God's sight. Kinzer asked me to consider the following problem: if Jewish disciples of Jesus "retain forever the distinctive privilege of being Jews" (as I think they do), is it not then crucial that this distinctive privilege find some form of ecclesial expression? Is there not something problematic in the children and grandchildren of such Jews forfeiting this "distinctive privilege"? In answer to the first question, I think that the distinctive privilege consists in sharing in Jesus's Jewishness. Jesus's Jewishness should always be central to the Church, in all its practices; thus for example the Eucharist is unintelligible outside the context of the Passover and the eschatological restoration of Israel. In answer to the second question, I do not think that within the Church, Jewish Christians marrying other Jewish Christians (or other Jews) is necessary so as to preserve for their descendants the privilege of Jewishness. Yet, as I note above (footnote 5), I can still support Jewish Christians in seeking ways of preserving Jewish identity within the Church, without implying any particular legal obligations.

28. Here Kinzer strongly agreed, but he pointed out that he sees little in my theological perspective that can explain what this contribution is. For my part, I have tried to indicate the content of some of this contribution (as well as my gratitude for it) by drawing extensively upon the Jewish theology of Jon D. Levenson, David Novak, Peter Ochs, Franz Rosenzweig, and others in my theological writings.

any distinguishably Jewish people. In response, I note that *ultimately*, God calls all humans to the state of glory, which is neither the same as Judaism nor the same as Christianity, though it fulfills both (and though there will be Jews and Gentiles in the state of glory, since Jews do not lose the privilege of being Jews). The focus on what will happen “ultimately,” therefore, is a red herring, requiring the assumption that the entire Jewish people are going to embrace Jesus as the Messiah prior to the eschatological consummation of all things. We should instead stick with the actual fact of the matter regarding the present situation: in his infinite wisdom, God has sustained the Jewish people and has also built up the Church.²⁹ Once we eschew imputing the sin of unbelief to all who are not converted by the proclamation of the gospel, we find (in Aquinas too) grounds for insisting upon the goodness and spiritual benefit unto salvation of Jewish observance of the Torah within Judaism.³⁰

Indeed, once insistence upon a strong view of the sin of unbelief is set to the side, the positive affirmations made by Aquinas in his commentary

29. I consider that the telos of Judaism is toward the eschatological Kingdom of God, and thus toward its Messiah, but I do not hold that Judaism has teleological value only if and when Jews recognize that Jesus is the Messiah. The right worship of God practiced by Jews, and their yearning for the Messiah and the coming kingdom, have teleological value without recognition that Jesus is Messiah. As a Christian, I affirm that all salvation comes through Jesus, who is the Savior of the whole human race. I affirm, too, that Catholic Christianity is given by God for all men and women for the purpose of worshiping God properly and fulfilling the human telos. But, again, I do not think that God has willed that all salvation be through *explicit* faith in Jesus Christ or through *visible* union with the Catholic Church. Put more technically, in the “objective” order, God has willed the salvation of all through Jesus Christ and in his Church, but in the “subjective” order, God ensures that there are ways of being united with Christ and the Church other than through explicit and visible union. In e-mail conversation, Kinzer suggested that I consider Fr. Elias Friedman’s argument that the reason God has refused to allow large numbers of Jews to enter the Church is because they would lose their Jewish identity in the Church. For Friedman, this is not a matter of “Providence,” but of the Church’s failure to make a way for Jewish identity to survive in her precincts. Friedman thus envisions a failure on the Church’s part to be faithful to the gospel, but in my view the New Testament does not bear witness to a divine call to make a place for Jewish Christians to continue to possess a distinctively and visibly Jewish identity. On the contrary, the New Testament seems to me to move firmly in the opposite direction, as I argue in chapter 1 of *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom* (an argument that could and should be expanded). Furthermore, I do not see the continuation of Judaism outside the Church to be a failure on the Church’s part, since I hold that God has willed this continuation for his own good reasons (reasons that include the gift of Novak’s theological work).

30. Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, ch. 5, lect. 1, §282, 126. In Kinzer’s view, as already noted, my interpretation is mistaken because Aquinas is not thinking of the “good of Jewish observance of the Torah,” but only of the good of obeying one’s conscience. I disagree with Kinzer, because Aquinas explicitly confirms that the Jews have received a covenantal command to observe Torah and they must obey it. It is not simply a matter of conscience; it is a matter of covenantal obligation. Again, I am prescinding here from Aquinas’s view of the efficacy of preaching and of unbelief. Even if the Messiah has reconfigured Torah around himself, and even if all people are now called to observe Torah in the Messiah, it still stands that the observance of Torah by Jews who do not believe in Jesus is a good thing because God commanded that the Jewish people observe Torah and it is good to obey God.

on Rom. 3:2–3 can be seen to square with the negative statements that he makes in his commentaries on Galatians and Hebrews. Commenting on Rom. 3:3, he remarks that “if the Jews’ prerogative were taken away on account of the unbelief of some, it would follow that man’s unbelief would nullify God’s faithfulness—which is an unacceptable conclusion.”³¹ The prerogatives of the Jews remain fully in force, and so does their obligation to observe Torah. In my view, these prerogatives are also taken up in the Messianic community insofar as all participate in the Jewish Messiah.

In his extensive critique of my two chapters that engage the topic of supersessionism—chapter 1 of *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* and chapter 1 of *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*—Tapie charges me with the following errors: (1) that what I mean by “supersessionism” is not its real meaning and does not address its real difficulty; (2) that I claim that “the covenant continues but through the Church” not through Israel/Judaism; (3) that I do not leave room for Jews to remain “distinguishably Jewish in any sense of the word,” and so I imply that “authentic Jewish identity, at the end of the day, is Christian identity”; (4) that I think that “Christ’s fulfillment of the ceremonial law renders it obsolete,” leaving myself with the unanswered problem of “how the covenant *with* the Jews can be ‘ongoing’ if Jewish identity is abrogated”; (5) that I hold that “Aquinas’s claim that the ceremonial Mosaic Law is deadly after the Passion of Christ is an accurate expression of New Testament theology”; (6) that I argue that “Jews in fact, do have ‘a place’ in the world” and that place is the Church, where “Jewish observances are now practiced”; (7) that I advocate a “replacement theology” and “only . . . pay lip service to the call for the renunciation of harsh Christian supersessionism” because I believe that “the Church and the sacraments are the new place for the Jewish people”; (8) that I believe that Jews should “become ‘full Jews’ by fulfilling” Torah in Christ and in the Church; (9) that I argue in favor of a “form of teleological logic of harsh Christian supersessionism . . . that is ‘acceptable’”; (10) that I ultimately can say “nothing positive about Israel [i.e., contemporary Judaism]” but only say positive things about “biblical Israel”; and (11) that I bypass “the paramount question of supersessionism,” namely “whether God intends carnal Israel to exist or be replaced by the Church.”³²

Tapie recognizes that “Levering . . . thinks Aquinas’s teaching that the observance of the ceremonial law is a mortal sin after the passion applies only to baptized Jews. For Levering, Aquinas does not condemn Jewish observance of the Law.”³³ However, when making his criticisms, Tapie seems to bracket or ignore this position of mine. Otherwise, he should have

31. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P., ed. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), ch. 3, lect. 1, § 253, 87.

32. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church*, 34–47.

33. *Ibid.*, 131.

understood the reason that my treatment of supersessionism focuses upon why Jewish *Christians* do not continue to observe Torah despite the fact that as Jews they must do so (#1 above). When I speak of Jewish *Christians*, his critique assumes—against my own words, quoted by him—that I mean *all* Jews. Given that I state that non-Christian Jews rightly continue to observe Torah in its original mode and that God’s covenant with the Jews is not revoked, I am surprised that he suggests that in my view the covenant continues only through the Church (#2 above). Since I state that Jews and Judaism rightly continue to observe Torah, I think that his conclusion that for me “Jewish identity is abrogated” and that the ceremonial law is now simply “obsolete” for Jews (#4 above) depends both upon his assumption that I mean *all Jews* when I am speaking about Jewish *Christians* and (equally important) upon his rejecting, without discussion, my view that the Messiah can reconfigure the Torah around himself without thereby abrogating either Torah or “Jewish identity.” The same points must hold for his claims that I think that the Mosaic Law is simply deadly for Jews after Christ’s Passion (#5 above), that I consider that the only place for Jews and valid Torah practice today is in the Church (#6 above), and that I advocate a harshly supersessionist “replacement theology” (#7 above). If I did hold these repugnant views, then my positive view of Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ would not make sense.

As for #3 and #8 above, namely, that insist that real Jewish identity must be Christian and that Jews are only “full Jews” in the Church, my viewpoint is the very opposite. In my view, Jewish identity is not measured by whether Jews are Christians. Jews who do not believe in Jesus and who therefore observe Torah according to its original mode are simply doing what God commanded them to do, and their Judaism and Torah observance are not any less good even if, as I believe, the Messiah has come (so long as one does not impugn them with a necessary sin of unbelief). Jews who do not believe in Jesus and who therefore obediently observe Torah according to its original mode (looking forward in faith to the coming Messiah) are not second-class Jews, because they are obeying God. I hold that *Christian* Jews who do not observe Torah according to its original mode are also obeying God, since they observe Torah in Christ by sacramental signs. To deny Christ the power to reconfigure Torah and Temple around himself would be biblically unjustifiable. Again, my arguments in my two chapters do not apply to non-Christian Jews, who continue to practice Torah in non-Christian communities, and do so commendably and in obedience to the covenantal privileges that God has irrevocably given the Jews.

I do not wish to downplay the preeminence that, as a Christian, I accord to Jesus. He is most fully a Jew both by birth and by obedience, in a way that no mere sinner (whether Jew, Christian, or Jewish Christian) can be. To participate in his Passover is salvific; he is the Savior of all humans, and the gospel is offered to everyone in search of divine healing and love.

As noted above, I hold—in accord with Aquinas’s theology of history and implicit faith, though not in accord with Aquinas’s account of unbelief—that Jews can participate in his Passover without explicitly believing in him, and that they can do so simply by observing Torah in expectation of the coming Messiah.³⁴ My perspective does not make them any less Jews, nor does it devalue Judaism, since Judaism looks toward the (as yet unknown) Messiah and manifests holy worship of the one God.

In chapter 1 of *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom*, I use the phrase “mechanical teleology” as part of trying to understand David Novak’s simultaneous rejection of a teleological account of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity and his acceptance that believers in Christ have to hold to a “mild supersessionism.” By criticizing “mechanical teleology,” I mean to distinguish between teleology that recognizes only efficient causes and teleology that has a more nuanced understanding of the historical relationship of causes. If, as in the modern period, only *efficient causality* is recognized, then once an efficient cause has mechanistically borne its fruit, the efficient cause or mechanism is no longer needed and can be discarded and destroyed. I try to show that a more nuanced understanding of history could allow for a teleology that grants that the original community (the people of Israel) is ordered toward the Messiah but that denies that this ordering is like that of a mechanism, as though the New Testament simply emerged from or was caused by the Old Testament without need of the radical inbreaking of the Messiah. Since it is the Messiah who reveals the ordering (which could not have been otherwise anticipated), the Jewish people who do not recognize him are not thereby

34. In a recent essay, the distinguished theologian Bruce D. Marshall observes: “It cannot be the case that the Jewish people, precisely by the practice of Judaism, fail to worship, and indeed reject, the God who chose them and their descendants forever. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, among other important magisterial interventions, evidently supposes that this cannot be the case. The Jewish people and the Church aim at the same goal—not simply at the one true God, but at the advent of his Messiah. In any case, it seems hard to reconcile Thomas’s thought that the Jewish religion has become a mode of infidelity with his own commitment to the permanence of Israel’s election. Surely, the Jewish religion, now as before, must be the divinely given means to the right and just worship of God for his elect people, and so a genuine alternative to the sacramental life of the Church as a way to intimacy with God. So we must suppose, if we believe in the election of Israel. But if we believe in the Incarnation and the redemption, there can be no such alternative. I do not know how to solve this problem, or even whether it has a solution short of the last day. I do, however, think it is a perplexity to which we need to face up, even—indeed especially—if that means acknowledging our own impotence to untie this knot” (Marshall, “Religion and Election: Aquinas on Natural Law, Judaism, and Salvation in Christ,” *Nova et Vetera* 14 [2016]: 61–125, at 125). See also Bruce D. Marshall, “Christ and Israel: An Unsolved Problem in Catholic Theology,” in *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson*, ed. Gary A. Anderson and Joel S. Kaminsky (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 330–50. I strongly agree with Marshall that “[i]t cannot be the case that the Jewish people, precisely by the practice of Judaism, fail to worship, and indeed reject, the God who chose them and their descendants forever.” To my mind, the knot to which Marshall refers can be solved by the Christian doctrine of the participation in the Messiah made possible by implicit faith.

cast aside as though they had lost touch with their own covenants. They still retain a distinctive purpose and mission as God's covenantal people. I admit that my argument in the chapter is too dense, but I still think that the theology of history is one of the more promising ways of addressing Jewish-Christian relations.

I never argue *in favor of* a "form of teleological logic of harsh Christian supersessionism . . . that is 'acceptable'" (#9 above). Harsh supersessionism in the sense of abrogating Jewish identity or making Judaism dead and deadly is now and never has been acceptable to me; there is no "form of teleological logic" that could make it acceptable. Since in the two chapters in the two books I am primarily addressing the question of whether the problem of Christian supersessionism could be solved by requiring Christian Jews to observe Torah in its original mode, my two chapters do not offer a theology of contemporary Judaism. Nonetheless, I clearly indicate my appreciation for contemporary Judaism and deny that the covenantal privileges of the Jewish people have been revoked. In both books, I cite and affirm the teaching of *Nostra Aetate* on the Jewish people, and I hold that the Jewish people's election and covenants are irrevocable (see #10 and #11 above)—magisterial Catholic teachings to which I am committed.

The very fact that Tapie has criticized my work, even if at times by distorting it, puts me in his debt for the opportunity to make my views clearer and to state explicitly that the repugnant positions that he contests are not in fact ones that I hold, except insofar as his position implies that affirming the integrity of Judaism requires also affirming (against what seems to me to be the express will of the Messiah as well as the teaching of the Church over the centuries) that Jewish Christians *must* observe Torah according to its original mode.³⁵ I am grateful, then, to Tapie for this opportunity to clarify matters, and I thank him for correcting me by discovering Aquinas's unfortunate comments on Gal. 5:2.³⁶

35. Tapie does not treat this latter point in his book, but he suggested that this is his view—and that it informed his reaction to my books—in his oral response to my essay at the International Congress on Medieval Studies.

36. Many thanks to Gavin D'Costa for tremendously improving this essay by means of his careful criticisms of an early draft. For D'Costa's magisterial work on Jewish-Christian relations, see his *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), as well as his essay on the reception of *Nostra Aetate* in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). I am indebted to Mark Kinzer and Lawrence Feingold for deeply helpful comments and criticisms on later drafts of this essay.