Porter, Stanley E., and Alan E. Kurschner, eds. *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism*. McMaster Biblical Studies Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2023. 396pp. + 20pp. (front matter) + 32pp. (back matter).

Volume 10 in the McMaster Biblical Studies Series is a collection of twenty-one essays from a rather eclectic assortment of scholars who, despite whatever other differences may divide them, agree on the title issue. The contributors are by no means uniformly dispensational. The list of authors includes the more predictable (Bock, Chisholm, Glaser, Hultberg, Kaiser, Saucy, Vanlaningham) along with an intriguing range of other specialists. Most of the essays are categorized under four headings: The Covenants and Israel's Future, The Nations and Israel's Future, Paul and Israel's Future, and Jesus and Israel's Future. These are capped off by a brace of essays on the historical and evangelistic impact of supersessionism.

Porter and Kurschner explain in their introductory essay that although the English term *supersessionism* is only a couple of centuries old, the concept dates to the second century and finds its "definitive statement" in Augustine. The concept has historically been fueled by varying motivations, from a desire to see Israel judged for its rejection of Messiah (*punitive* supersessionism) to a belief that Christ entirely fulfilled Jewish prophecy and law (*economic* supersessionism). This volume aims to rebut any "view that denies any future divine promise and blessing to national Israel"—including the position that admits a future revival of individual Jews but rejects any restoration of Israel as a national entity (5). The editors present a concise history of supersessionist theology, from its punitive expressions among the church fathers, to the Reformation's inheritance of its Augustinian expression, to its "ugly theological turn . . . in the early nineteenth century" (8). The introduction concludes with a helpfully succinct, one-paragraph summary of each of the remaining twenty essays. It is impossible in the allotted space to overview every essay, so this review will necessarily be selective.

Walter Kaiser ("The Christian Church: Built on the Foundation of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants") expresses amazement that within the span of a mere century, the early church could have "changed so dramatically from what the Jewish Apostle Paul had taught" in Romans 11 about the partiality and temporality of the Jews' fall from grace and the irrevocability of God's promises to the fathers, to the confident assertions of Justin Martyr, Cyprian, and others that God had altogether abandoned the Jews and redirected all their promises to the mostly Gentile Christian church (38–39). Kaiser traces this early error "to an incorrect conclusion about the subjects, contents, and duration of the Abrahamic covenant" (41), and he emphasizes the implication of Genesis 15:17 regarding the absolute "unconditional, unilateral" eternality of that covenant including the land promises that are reiterated throughout Scripture (43)—while effectively countering the misreadings of Gary Burge, Chris Wright (42–43), and N. T. Wright (46). Israel's restoration to the land has nothing to do with Israel's deservedness and everything to do with the integrity and glory of the God who promised (50).

Michael Vanlaningham ("A Response to Progressive Covenantalists' [and Others'] View of the Land Promises for Israel") rebuts a series of five key assertions from Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum that undergird the progressive-covenantal perspective. For Vanlaningham, the bottom line is that this

view relies on "overly-subtle, perhaps even surreptitious caveats" folded into God's land promises that would seem to imply that "God lacks integrity in keeping his promises" (83).[1]

Darrell Bock ("Israel's Future as a Nation and Reconciliation") surveys a series of prophetic passages (both OT and NT) that particularly highlight Israel's central role of international blessing and reconciliation. Like Vanlaningham, Bock argues that at stake in this debate is "the character of God and his revelation. . . . The veracity of God and the clarity of his communication are both in play," for "he stakes his reputation upon completing this promise" of Israel's future restoration as a nation (102–3). This does not imply, of course, that non-restorationists reject or devalue God's veracity; but it does imply that such a view undermines the clarity of God's communication, resulting in a redefinition of God's veracity.[2]

Mark Saucy posits the intriguing assertion that having a national identity "is an intrinsic dimension of what it means to be human according to the image of God." Consequently, "without a re-born nation [of Israel] and the global, culture-level restoration it represents *for this earth*, messianic soteriology does not claim the fullness of human life that Jesus intended when he stated, 'salvation is of the Jews'" (126, emphasis original). Saucy explores the theocratic role of Israel both against the backdrop of the concept of national identity established in Genesis, and in the light of the NT's eschatological "soteriological narrative" of the "salvation of our nationed humanity in Christ" (ibid.). From the historically programmatic Psalm 2 with its portrayal of the *nations* raging against Yahweh until his Anointed inherits the *nations* and rules over them, to Daniel's depiction of Messiah's eternal dominion over "every people, *nation*, and language," to Jesus' call to disciple the *nations*, to "John's Apocalypse . . . with its narrative-controlling place at the end of Scripture's story and deep roots in the Old Testament" (137), which declares Christ as "the ruler of the *kings* of the earth" (1:5) who comes to "strike the *nations*" (19:15–16) and in whose light the *nations* (not merely a mass of regenerated individuals) will walk (21:23–24) and experience healing as *nations* (22:2)—the soteriological metanarrative of Scripture never devolves into individualism but maintains its focus on humans as *nations*. In that regard, the *national* restoration of a regenerated Israel under the New Covenant is essential; "in its future role on the world's stage, national Israel will lead the way . . . as the exemplar of the greatness of God's name in salvation" (139).

Alan Kurschner ("Should the 144,000 in Revelation 7:3–8 Be Identified as the Great Multitude in 7:9–17: A Response to Gregory K. Beale") offers a thorough, multi-faceted, and exegetically grounded defense of the 144,000 as consisting specifically of ethnic Jews. His core argument is that "the narrative logic depicts . . . the appearance of the great multitude in 7:9–17" as "*concurrent*" with "the sealing in 7:3–8"—rather than a "*recapitulation*"—indicating that these are "two distinct groups

[1] For a thorough treatment of this subject see Wade Loring Kuhlewind Jr., "'I Will Plant Them in This Land': An Analysis and Critique of Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum's *Kingdom through Covenant* with Special Attention to the Progressive Covenantal Land-Promise View" (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 2018).

[2] If even this language sounds unfair or extreme, consider P. E. Satterthwaite: In view of the OT's linkage between resurrection and national restoration (e.g., Ezek 37; Dan 12), the fact that Jesus' resurrection did not trigger Israel's national restoration was "a startling development which entailed *a radically revised understanding of God's faithfulness to His promises,* particularly in respect to the nation of Israel." "Biblical History," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander, et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 49 (emphasis added).

and not two different perspectives of the same [international] group" (143–44, emphasis original). His rebuttal of Beale addresses the latter's illegitimate-totality-transfer fallacy in his understanding of *doulos* in 7:3, clarifies the purpose of the sealing, distinguishes between the wrath of the beast and the wrath of God, explores the import of *meta touto* in 7:1, and refutes Beale's conflation of the "four winds" in 7:1 with the four horsemen in 6:1–8.

Stanley Porter ("Romans 9–11 and Especially Romans 11:26 in the Context of Paul's Argument in Romans") summarizes four major views regarding Romans 11:26 ("and so/thus all Israel shall be saved"). (1) The Ecclesiastical View—the standard, historical supersessionist view held by Calvin, Harnack, Barth, N. T. Wright, Richard Hays, *et al.*—interprets the phrase as a reference to the international church, which has replaced Israel itself as the people of God. (2) The Eschatological View (Bruce, Cranfield, Dunn, Stuhlmacher, Moo, Schreiner, *et al.*) sees the phrase as an expressly "ethnic designation" denoting "a mass-conversion of Jews at or just prior to the Parousia" (220). (3) The Remnant View ("relatively unpopular") also sees "Israel" as an ethnic designation but interprets it as the salvation of the Jewish remnant throughout time. (4) The Two-Covenants View (followed by adherents of the "Radical New Perspective") implies two covenantal means of security or salvation (a curious feature, given the long-lived demonizations of old-line dispensationalism for that very accusation). Having suggested both strengths and (especially) weaknesses in each of these views, Porter then propounds his own argument for seeing "all Israel" in 11:26 as referring to "the new Israel as an extension and reconstituted ethnic Israel based upon ethnic Israel as its root or base and including Gentiles, all of whom have attained salvation by the same means" (228)—by virtue of Paul's all-important olive tree analogy, which organically connects both Jews and Gentiles to the patriarchal root. Porter differentiates this view from replacement theology and from the purely technically ethnic view. There are some explanatory quirks: in 11:1 *mē genoito* means "Indeed not," but in 11:11 the same expression means "Indeed *or probably* not" (225, emphasis added); in 11:26 "Paul says, there is an expectation that 'all Israel' *can* be saved" (227, emphasis added). Porter also resorts to what seems an astonishing example of question-begging: "Paul by referring to the 'new Israel' makes clear that this is an Israel newly reconstituted" (228). Perhaps it is the implication of the quotation marks that makes the statement seem more egregious than intended, but Paul does not, in fact, refer to a "new Israel" at all, but to "all Israel." While the essay does counter supersessionism, it makes no definitive contribution to titular focus of the book (*The Future Restoration of Israel*).

Michael Brown ("The 'Seed' as Christ in Galatians 3:16 and the Wrong Deductions of Replacement Theology") focuses his attention on a specific interpretation of a specific text by a specific (and more recent) species of supersessionism. The specific species of supersessionism is known variously as *fulfillment theology*, *inclusion theology*, or *transference theology*—though adherents (Brown identifies, e.g., Storms, Lehrer, Gordon, Burge, Blume, N. T. Wright) often expressly disavow any connection to replacement theology (278–79). The specific text is, of course, Galatians 3:16. And the specific interpretation claims (a) that Christ (as the new and consummate Israel) is the true recipient of the Abrahamic Covenant land promise *instead of* the biological descendants of Abraham so that the original terms and recipients of the covenant become obsolete and irrelevant; or (b) that Christ himself *is* the land (with the same results); or (c) both! While other passages are marshaled for additional

support (e.g., John 15), "the locus classicus" for this view is Galatians 3:16 (280). Brown notes that such an interpretation contradicts not merely the Abrahamic Covenant passages but a whole swath of OT Scriptures that perpetuate the land promises, as well as Paul's express argument in Romans 11:28–29. (I would suggest that, even more significantly, it also contradicts the express reiteration of the land promises within the very context of the New Covenant itself—Jer 32:37, 41; Ezek 36:33; 37:25; 38:28; Isa 60:21.)

What was missing, however, from Brown's arguments (indeed, from most arguments surrounding Gal 3:16) is the astonishing specificity of Paul's citation. The apostle does not argue for the phrase "to thy seed" but "*and* to thy seed." The "and" is odd, unnecessary, and superfluous . . . unless Paul has a particular point and passage (or passages) from the LXX in mind. The specific phrase that he cites (*kai tō spermati sou*) appears in only four Abrahamic Covenant passages (Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7; 48:4), and in every case, the phrase explicitly has the eternal land-promise component of the covenant in view. That Paul has the land promise in view is obvious when he refers to "the inheritance" in 3:17–18. For fulfillment-inclusion-transference theologians to conclude from Galatians 3:16 that Christ *himself* is the land is exegetically and theologically bizarre; likewise (as Brown rightly asserts), their claim that Christ becomes the *sole inheritor* of the land promise to the exclusion of all the rest of Abraham's seed bristles with complications as well. Their view that Christ, as both biologically the Seed of Abraham and theologically the Son of God, is the *consummate* Heir of the Abrahamic land promise is, indeed, a thorny problem, but it is a problem for fulfillment theologians themselves. They have claimed much more than they realize. One could hardly posit a more potent guarantee of a coming earthly kingdom where Christ will rule over a restored Israel than to argue that Christ will *personally* inherit the land promises of the Abrahamic Covenant—and then, as Son of Man, share that inheritance and reign with "the saints of the Most High" (Dan 7).

This review has only scratched the surface selectively, but it has attempted to scratch a bit deeper here and there. Thanks to the scope of its essays, the depth of their arguments, and the theological breadth of its contributors, *The Future Restoration of Israel* repays an attentive reading.

Layton Talbert
Professor of Theology | BJU Seminary