Christian Zionism and Supersessionism in the Twenty First Century: A Historical, Theological and Political Investigation

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Abstract

This thesis examines the evolving dynamics of Christian Zionism and supersessionism in the twenty-first century, historically contextualising both theological movements while exploring their contemporary expressions. Christian Zionism traditionally emphasises the theological and eschatological significance of Israel and the Jewish people, rooted in the biblical covenants and has been influential in American politics, particularly through dispensationalist frameworks. Supersessionism, conversely, asserts that the Christian Church has replaced Israel as the primary recipient of God's promises, a view that has long influenced Christian theology, particularly in its relationship with Judaism. This thesis demonstrates that in recent decades, global geo-political shifts, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have catalysed significant changes within these movements. A "New Supersessionism" has emerged, blending classical supersessionist theology with Palestinian nationalism and liberation theology. This synthesis incorporates contemporary ideologies such as critical theory and decolonial theory, framing the Palestinian struggle as one of liberation from a colonial power. These new theological constructs challenge traditional Christian support for Israel, positioning Palestine as central to a narrative of justice and resistance against oppression. Simultaneously, Christian Zionism has undergone a transformation. The "New Christian Zionism" distances itself from popularist and often politically charged dispensationalist interpretations. This movement emphasises a less dogmatic and more nuanced theological support for Israel, seeking to avoid the overt politicisation that characterised earlier expressions. It focuses more on a Christological fulfilment understanding of Israel and the covenantal promises, distancing itself from apocalyptic or hyper-nationalist rhetoric. The thesis concludes that both movements—new supersessionism and new Christian Zionism—represent significant departures from their traditional forms, driven by theological innovation and responses to modern geopolitical realities. These developments contain enough novel content to warrant their classification as distinct contemporary theological movements and this thesis provides a new critical analysis of both these movements filling a gap in the academic literature on this subject.

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Introduction

If you were to bring up the subject of Israel – her history, her land, her people – in a social setting it would most likely invoke a number of highly polarised and passionate responses. This would be true in almost any social setting in which the topic arises. In the secular world debates about Israel and the Palestinians are frequent and often heated, revolving around issues of justice, human rights, and politics. The former Israeli ambassador Yaacov Herzog has said that "no other conflict has stirred the conscience of humanity as the problem of Israel in its land".[1] The situation in the theological world is no different. As Fred Wright observes "as soon as the Land of Israel is mentioned an emotive force is released. There are few people, especially in the Christian church who hold a neutral view".[2]

Yet, debates around the subject of Israel and the church predate the establishment of the modern state of Israel. The question of Israel has been a highly contentious one for nearly two thousand years. Theologians have debated not only her identity but also her future role: does "Israel" refer only to ethnic Jews, or does the term now apply to all who have believed and become children of Abraham by faith? Does she retain a unique place among the purposes and plan of God, or has she served her purpose and now given way to the larger reality of God's universal purpose for mankind? These questions have been the subject of voluminous writing and debate throughout church history and the answers remain as polarised as ever.

The word "church" can be difficult to define and needs qualifying as to how it shall be employed in this thesis. In its broadest sense the church is defined as the assembly of believers who follow Jesus Christ. This would apply to anyone who affirms the Christian belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This world-wide group of believers make up the "universal church". The New Testament speaks of Christ being the "head" of this group and the believers as "His Body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). This is the theological definition, and it includes people from any geographic location and time since the first century. However, the New Testament also designates specific local congregations with the

[1] Yaacov Herzog, *A People That Dwells Alone* (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1975), p. 127.
[2] Fred Wright, *Words from the Scroll of Fire* (Jerusalem: Four Corners Publishing,1994), p. 9.

title “church”. It talks about the “church in Corinth” (1 Corinthians 1:2) or the “church in Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1). This use of the term is speaking to a group of believers who make up a congregation is a specific location, i.e. a “local church”. So even within the New Testament itself we see the term used to speak of the universal church and the local church.

Over the course of history as the church grew and spread across the globe these designations multiplied. It became normative to speak of the “Western Church” or the “Eastern Church”. In addition, as groups split from one another into other groups, it became necessary to add qualifiers to the term to differentiate the doctrinal distinctives of each group. Terms such as the Protestant Church, Catholic Church or Eastern Orthodox Church began to be used. It often requires one of these qualifying terms to identify the specific strand of the universal church that is being referred to.

In this thesis the term church shall be used according to the New Testament “universal” concept when it is spoken of without any qualifying identifier. If the term church is being used to speak of a specific movement and location, I will add a qualifying term to the title to provide clarity on how this term is being used. The most frequent context of the use of the term, and the perspective from which this thesis is written concerns the Western protestant tradition. Much of the discussion pertaining to the debate between supersessionism and Christian Zionism has come from the evangelical wing of the Western church.

Throughout history the theological world has vacillated between a number of perspectives on the question of Israel. There is a broad spectrum of belief, ranging from total rejection and repudiation to complete acceptance and affirmation of the continued place for Israel in the outworking of redemption. Although there are various nuances that separate these different perspectives, theologians have broadly categorised them under the headings of supersessionism and Christian Zionism. This thesis will provide an in-depth examination of both of these positions by analysing them as individual multifaceted movements, as well as demonstrating how they are interconnected, showing that they are in a symbiotic relationship with one another. The particular focus will be upon the most contemporary expressions that have emerged from these movements. They are respectively called the “New Supersessionism” and the “New Christian Zionism”. I will examine the particular nuances that they employ and how they differ from the older movements whilst

maintaining continuity with them. A specific aim will be to establish whether or not they can justify using the qualifier “new” for themselves.

This thesis will adopt a position broadly aligned with the parameters of Christian Zionism and historic restorationism, while critically engaging with and arguing against the theological conclusions advanced by the supersessionist movement. However, it will not offer an uncritical endorsement of the Christian Zionist tradition; rather, it will apply an internal critique, identifying areas of weakness and theological vulnerability within the movement. By examining the most contemporary expressions of both Christian Zionism and Supersessionism, this thesis aims to provide a thorough and balanced analysis of the respective strengths and weaknesses of each.

The critique will be interdisciplinary in nature, drawing upon the fields of history, theology, and politics, recognizing that both movements are deeply intertwined with all three disciplines. Historically, the parameters of the analysis will be to contextualize each movement from its inception through to its development, with particular focus on their present-day expressions. Theologically, attention will be given to how each perspective interprets the significance of the land of Israel as a geographical and theological entity, as well as how each movement conceptualises the nation of Israel in its doctrinal framework. Politically, the study will trace how and when theological arguments intersect with political discourse, particularly in ways that shape support for or opposition to the positions held by each movement. This thesis will be written from within the framework of Western Christianity, particularly from the perspective of Western Evangelicalism, and will therefore not engage in depth with perspectives from outside such as the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Supersessionism in its broadest sense is the view that the New Testament church has forever superseded national Israel as the people of God. The term ‘replacement theology’ is sometimes used to designate this same belief. In this work I will use the terms interchangeably. In the supersessionist system there is no longer any ongoing purpose for national Israel as a unique entity in God’s redemptive plan. The church is identified as the “new or spiritual Israel” and all biblical conclusions flow from this presupposition providing a hermeneutical lens for the Bible. Theologian Michael Vlach provides a comprehensive description of classical supersessionism as follows:

> "Supersessionism, therefore, appears to be based on two core beliefs: (1) the nation of Israel has somehow completed or forfeited its status as the people of God and will never again possess a unique role or function apart from the church, and (2) the church is now the true Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God. In the context of Israel and the church, supersessionism is the view that the NT church is the new and/or true Israel that has forever superseded the nation Israel as the people of God."[3]

Supersessionist Loraine Boettner provides a clear and rather forthright expression of Supersessionism: "it may seem harsh to say that 'God is done with the Jews.' But the fact of the matter is that He is through with them as a unified national group having anything more to do with the evangelization of the world. That mission has been taken from them and given to the Christian church (Matt.21:43)".[4]

There are those that interpret the supersessionist language with a slightly different shade of meaning. For example, Marvin Wilson does not so much focus upon strictly theological definitions (i.e., that the body called the church is a spiritual Israel) but applies the term more broadly in terms of different religions. He uses it to emphasise a displacement of Judaism by the newly emerging Christian movement. He focuses on the etymology of the word "supersede". It derives from two Latin words (*super* and *sedre*), literally "to sit upon" or "sit over". Wilson comments that "one religion, Christianity, permanently displaces the other, Judaism. By sitting in the place of the other, supersessionism absolutizes the superseding religion, raising it to the level of ultimacy".[5]

Illustrative of the ongoing controversy surrounding the subject of Israel and the doctrine of supersessionism is the reality that even the terms themselves elicit fierce debate in theological circles. At a popular level, supersessionism is often referred to using the label mentioned earlier, "replacement theology". Typically, it is set against the opposing view of dispensationalism which advocates strongly against supersessionist readings of scripture and for a distinct future for the nation of Israel. It is the term "replacement theology" that saturates much of the popular literature dealing with the subject. Some modern proponents have recently taken offence at the terms "replacement theology" and "supersessionism"

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[3] Michael J Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), p.12.
[4] Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed 1957), pp. 89-90.
[5] Marvin R. Wilson, *Exploring our Hebraic Heritage: A Christian Theology of Roots and Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2014), p. 246.

arguing that they do not accurately represent their view. Stephen Sizer is typical, calling such terminology a "red herring" and seeing the need to refute what he calls "some of the most unhelpful, pejorative terms" that potentially misrepresent actual beliefs.[6] Sizer objects that those who use the pejorative term "replacement theology" about positions such as his "do not know their New Testament". He recounts the claim that it has been held accountable for "all manner of evil, including the crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, Soviet pogroms, the Nazi holocaust, as well as contemporary antisemitism."[7] Sizer dismisses such arguments without engaging them, to claim that "the Church has not replaced Israel!".[8] His objection to such language is based upon his theological view of the people of God and interpretation of biblical texts that address these questions. For Sizer, "the church is not the 'New Israel' – it is Israel. The remnant of Israel are one and the same."[9] He goes on to claim that those who understand this differently and allow for some continued significance for the Jews and Zionism are, "no different from white South Africans who still try to justify apartheid on biblical grounds. Zionism is just another form of racism."[10] Such associations form a large part of the narrative in the arguments of the New Supersessionism and I will explore this in greater depth in this thesis.

Some go even further making the claim that, "dispensationalists have coined the phrase 'replacement theology' as the ultimate silencer".[11] Such a charge can only be sustained in populist literature, in which views are reduced to a simple binary between either pro-Israel dispensationalists or non-dispensational covenant theologians[12] (who hold to a form of supersessionism). This polarising dichotomy is unhelpful and has hindered fruitful discourse pertaining to Israel and biblical theology. As Diprose reminds us, many Christians have not wanted to engage in theological conversation about Israel for fear:

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[6] Stephen Sizer, 'Where is the Promised Land? A Covenantal Perspective', in *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Context,* Ed. Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012) p. 306.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid. p. 307.
[11] Hank Hanegraaff, 'Response to National Liberty Journal article on the Apocalypse Code' Christian Research Institute, 12 June 2009. Accessed February 2019 at https://www.equip.org/hank_speaks_out/article-by-thomas-ice/
[12] A predominately reformed hermeneutical framework that explains the bible according to its covenantal construction.

> "that any attempt to take Israel seriously runs the risk of being labelled 'dispensationalist'. While it is true that Israel occupies an important place in dispensational theology, it is also true that the reflection concerning the place of Israel in God's plan predates this school of thought by many centuries".[13]

This is why it is important to ensure we do not solely view this topic through the interpretative lens of twenty-first century theological disputes and provide a proper historical context for understanding these issues. Diprose adds, "it is helpful to remember that replacement theology was an accepted position of a majority within Christendom from postapostolic times until the middle of the nineteenth century".[14]

The most recent controversy regarding terminology comes from proponents of the New Supersessionism themselves. Rejecting the associations and negative connotations usually associated with the direct language of replacement, advocates instead have proposed the term "fulfilment theology". Such language avoids the obvious redundancy that will be attributed to the party who have been "replaced", for a softer more nuanced motif of "fulfilment". Proponents of fulfilment theology deny that they believe in any sort of replacement or superseding doctrines. Popular author and supersessionist Hank Hanegraaff is typical of this denial:

> "I have never argued for replacement theology…Indeed, the precise terminology used to describe the children of Israel in the Old Testament is ascribed to the church in the New Testament. Peter calls them 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Peter 2:9). Ultimately, they are the one chosen people of God, not by virtue of their genealogical relationship to Abraham, but by virtue of their genuine relationship to 'the living Stone—rejected by men, but chosen by God' (1 Peter 2:4). As such, the true church is true Israel, and true Israel is truly the church—one cannot replace what it already is".[15]

Elsewhere he also argues that the land promises are fulfilled in Christ:

> "Furthermore, the land promises were fulfilled in the far future through Jesus, who provides true Israel with permanent rest from their wanderings in sin…The land

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[13] Ronald D. Diprose, *Israel in the development of Christian thought*. (Rome: Instituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano 2000), p. 3.
[14] Ibid. p. 32
[15] Hank Hanegraaff, 'Response to National Liberty Journal article on the Apocalypse Code' Christian Research Institute, 12 June 2009. Accessed February 2019 at https://www.equip.org/hank_speaks_out/article-by-thomas-ice/

> provided temporal rest for the *physical* descendants of Abraham, but the Lord provides eternal rest for his *spiritual* descendants. The land was never the focus of our Lord; instead, our Lord is forever the locus of the land."[16]

In this view all the Old Testament covenantal promises made to Israel, including those focusing on the land itself, as well as those that can offer validity to the notion of an eschatological Israel-centric Kingdom, are completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ or spiritually fulfilled in the church. Sizer's previously quoted view is a good example of this type of argument. In this view adherents can disavow belief in traditional supersessionism that the church has replaced Israel. Instead, they adopt the more rhetorically pleasing understanding that it is actually Christ who has replaced Israel by transferring the promises to himself and in this process spiritualising any physical content from these promises.

This position has been aptly summarised by one amillennial scholar who says that the promises to Israel "vanish in Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled them".[17] Clearly, supersessionism is a multifaceted belief system, and many variants can be found sheltering under its roof. Yet, this thesis will argue that even after these are taken into consideration, the destination is the same, even if the journey is a little different. Israel as a national entity has been disinherited from the promises and no longer retains a unique purpose in the future redemptive plan of God. The land of Israel has been universalised and completely separated from the Jewish people. Ultimately "Israel's calling is superseded and done away with, leaving no biblical justification for her existence today",[18] albeit one may still present humanitarian and moral justifications for her existence without grounding it in biblical theology.

Historically the implications of these discussions have not just been academic. The way the church has previously understood these issues has meant that unfortunately there is a long and tragic history of antisemitism within it. This has been linked to the view of supersessionism that the Jewish nation has been rejected and cast aside and replaced by the new entity known as the church. The prevalence of antisemitism emanating from the

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[16] Hank Hanegraaff, 'Have the Land Promises God Made to Abraham Been Fulfilled?' Christian Research Institute, March 8th, 2023.

[17] Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), pp. 68-80

[18] Sandra Teplinsky, *Why Still Care About Israel?* (Bloomington: Chosen Books, 2013), p. 210

supersessionist position will be demonstrated historically. Smith notes that there has been an emergence of a "new expression of supersessionism" which he describes as being "militant, strongly political, polemic and pejorative" and "deeply critical of Israel".[19] This criticism is no longer just theological as was the case with classical supersessionism, it is overtly political in nature and often masquerades under the banner of anti-Zionism. I will demonstrate that the line between antisemitism and anti-Zionism is frequently crossed in the literature of the New Supersessionism. However, even this dichotomy requires qualifying as there also exists a smaller segment within Judaism that itself is anti-Zionist. There are ultra-orthodox groups such as the *Neturei Karta* who reject Zionism and the modern state of Israel because they hold to the view that the establishment of the state of Israel can only be accomplished by the Messiah, thus they see the current state as a secularist state in opposition to their faith. Then, there are more secular progressive Jewish groups like the American based group *Jewish Voice for Peace* who see the State of Israel as a settler colonial entity that goes against the ideals of justice, equality and freedom for all people. The thesis will not address these groups directly but will engage with similar arguments in the analysis.

As Goldman has said about Christian Zionism, and I would add by association supersessionism, they are best understood "as a kind of elective affinity among theological, historical, and political themes."[20] For this reason I have chosen to conduct my analysis using a tri-fold division of history, theology, and politics. By utilising approaches drawn from these disciplines I will offer a unique and comprehensive analysis of what the New Supersessionism is, noting its likely trajectory for the future and offering sustained critique along the way. It is clear that the New Supersessionism is not a monolithic and unified movement. It is a broad categorisation that allows for much diversity as demonstrated by the wide-ranging agreement on these issues by those from very different theological traditions. It is a mixture of Palestinian nationalism and liberation theology. The movement is held together by an aversion to the state of Israel, theologically and politically. Any other differences, theological or political, are laid aside in light of this. The thesis will clearly

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[19] Calvin Smith, "Introduction: A New Supersessionism?" In *The Jews, Modern Israel and the New Supersessionism*, second ed., ed. Calvin Smith (ed.) (Broadstairs: Kings Divinity Press, 2013), p. 5.
[20] Samuel Goldman, *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), p. 9.

identify what it is that unites the New Supersessionism, what precipitating factors have contributed to the formation of this movement and how it has developed from the classical perspective over the years.

The other movement that this thesis will examine is that known as Christian Zionism. There are numerous definitions of Christian Zionism. This is to be expected when so many perspectives weigh in on the subject. Political and theological interpretations both exert influence on one's particular view of Christian Zionism. It is also worth noting that this particular issue also suffers from the problem of anachronism. Zionism itself as a distinct movement and concept only appears in the late nineteenth century, so that historians face inherent problems when applying it to anything before that time. Donald Lewis in his authoritative work on the origins of Christian Zionism defines it as "the belief that the Jewish people were destined by God to have a national homeland in Palestine and that Christians were obliged to use means to enable this to take place."[21] A more comprehensive definition is provided by Schmidt:

> "Christian Zionism is a religious belief among some gentiles of the Christian faith that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and the restoration of a physical Israel is in accordance with biblical prophecy. Furthermore, Christian Zionism is motivated by a biblically based religious conviction that the Jewish people are still God's chosen people and are entitled to possess the land of Israel for all time. This belief is based on a specific interpretation of scripture."[22]

Such a belief was of course affirmed in the minds of many when the state of Israel was established in 1948. However, it is a mistake to conclude that this was a cause, or even an initial impetus for the Christian Zionist movement. Christians who were waiting for a return of the Jews to the land of Israel existed long before 1948 and even before the Zionist movement of Theodor Herzl. The actual term Christian Zionism only appeared in the late nineteenth century, yet before this those who advocated for a return of the Jews to Israel and a continuing covenantal significance were called Christian Restorationists. This group "pre-dated modern political Zionism, and when political Zionism arose within the Jewish

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[21] Donald M. Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 5.
[22] David Schmidt, *Partners Together in this Great Enterprise: The Role of Christian Zionism in the Foreign Policy of Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (United States: Xulon Press, 2011), p. 20.

community in the late nineteenth century, many Christian restorationists gave it their enthusiastic support."[23] This is an important historical development to be aware of as often definitions of Christian Zionism consider it to be a recent American fundamentalist phenomenon primarily associated with Darbyite dispensationalism that developed in the nineteenth century.[24] This is seen from both detractors and proponents of dispensationalism. There are also those who come from the dispensational perspective who have so narrowly defined Christian Zionism as to make it synonymous with dispensationalism. Paul Wilkinson gives the following definition of Christian Zionism that includes specifics of dispensational eschatology:

1. A clear, biblical distinction between Israel and the Church
2. The any moment, pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church
3. The return of the Jews to the land
4. The rebuilding of the Temple
5. The rise of the Antichrist
6. A seven-year period known as the Great Tribulation
7. The national salvation of the Jews
8. The return of Christ to Jerusalem
9. The thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth[25]

Although this may be the most dominant expression of Christian Zionism in America it is only one part of the story. Crome, whose work focuses on Christian Zionism and English identity is particularly sensitive to this association and thus prefers the terms "Judeo-centric" and "restorationist" to "Christian Zionist" when discussing pre-twentieth century beliefs. To move away from descriptors that are attached to contemporary expressions, Crome uses a minimal definition which is as follows:

> "I define Christian Zionism as a theologically motivated belief that the Jewish people have, by divine grant, the right to possess and inhabit the land promised to them in

[23] The Faith and Order Commission, *God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian-Jewish Relations* (London: Church House Publishing, 2019), p. 79.
[24] Munther Isaac, "Reading the Old Testament in the Palestinian Church Today", in *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Context* Ed. Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden (eds.), (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012).
[25] Paul Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the role of John Nelson* Darby (Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2007), p. 13.

the Hebrew Bible and that it is therefore the duty of Christians to support this claim."[26]

As even this brief survey of definitions shows there is quite a broad range of meaning associated with the term "Christian Zionism". However, concepts of Zionism such as the continued election of Israel, the covenantal land promises, and the restoration of Israel can rightly be identified in earlier beliefs yet often with different names. It is a tradition with more historical pedigree than is often acknowledged by its critics. Admittedly, the many convulsions that the Middle East has experienced in the last century has brought with it a resurgence of interest in the importance of the land of Israel according to biblical prophecy. This can explain the renewed interest in this subject in the twentieth century. There is a definite link with politics in the outworking of these beliefs too as illustrated by the works of Sizer, Goldman, and Hummel. [27]

The thesis will seek to show that these movements do not grow and adapt in a vacuum, rather they are reactive responses to each other. Since 1948 and the establishment of the modern state of Israel there has been a strong strand of Christian Zionism present – particularly in the United States. This movement has been wed to American politics through figures such as Jerry Falwell and John Hagee. Supersessionists argued that this fundamentalist, popularist theology was being used to influence politics and provide backing for Israel that was "divinely sanctioned" and thus translated to uncritical support for the Israeli government. Yaakov Ariel writes that supersessionists' view "evangelical-premillennial groups as offering one-sided support for Israel" and also that this political support is "unjust".[28] This is what gave birth to the strongly anti-Zionist direction present in the New Supersessionism. This thesis will seek to show how these two movements developed their theology, politics, and activism in relation to each other.

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[26] Andrew Crome, *Christian Zionism and English National Identity, 1600-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 8.

[27] Daniel G. Hummel, *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019; Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004); Samuel Goldman, *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

[28] Yaakov, Ariel, 'Israel in Contemporary Evangelical Christian Millennial Thought.' *Numen*, vol. 59, no. 5/6, 2012, p. 456–85.

Too often Christian Zionism has been analysed through a singular lens – primarily politics. However, such an analysis is insufficient, as Shaprio comments, "focusing overly much on the political does a disservice to the complex and powerful motives and implications of this world view"[29]. Thus, this thesis will seek to examine Christian Zionism using the same three-fold division applied to supersessionism. Again, special focus will be placed on examining the most recent expressions of Christian Zionism. As McDermott states, "Christian Zionism today is an ever-widening stream and is expanding rapidly in many directions; it is a river that has burst its banks and is flooding new territory."[30] One of these is the movement put forward by McDermott himself – known as "The New Christian Zionism". This thesis will seek to critically assess the movement to see how it originated and what differentiates it from older forms of Christian Zionism. The New Christian Zionism seeks to respond to the recent challenges put forward by the New Supersessionism. This means that it engages with the most recent political developments as well as interacting with the contemporary influences that have impacted theology and hermeneutics in recent years. Thus, by engaging this position the thesis will lay the groundwork for ongoing critical examinations of these movements.

One particular issue that is incontrovertibly wrapped up with any discussion of supersessionism and Christian Zionism is the status of the land of Israel. This specific piece of territory is often the focus of heated disagreement. In the theological world, both viewpoints would admit that it has served as the staging ground for the most theologically significant events in the Christian faith tradition. However, the question about the land's position today is not so simple to answer. To many, the Jewish people and the land are linked together- this link being confirmed by the history of the Bible. Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion argued: "In our two thousand years of exile, we have not totally lost our creativity, but the sheen of the Bible dulled in exile, as did the sheen of the Jewish people. Only with the renewal of the homeland and Hebrew independence have we been able to reassess the Bible in its true, full light."[31] Shapira says that for nearly "a century, the

[29] Faydra Shapiro, *Christian Zionism: Navigating the Jewish-Christian Border* (Eugene: Cascade, 2015), p. 44
[30] Gerald McDermott, "Introduction" in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land,* by Gerald McDermott (Ed) (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016), p. 8.
[31] Anita Shapira, "The Bible and Israeli Identity", *AJS Review, 28*(1), (2004), pp. 11-41.

Bible was the identity-defining text of the Jewish society emerging in the Land of Israel."[32] Twentieth-century Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik argues that "Jewish destiny is linked with this land; we have no other. Only in this land, our sages say, does the shekinah dwell and only there does prophecy flourish."[33]

Christian Zionists have been the most forthright in their pronouncements, considering the establishment of the modern state as a "regathering" that was foretold in the Bible and in fulfilment of the biblical promises given to national Israel. Such thinking stands behind justifications of the "right to the land promised to it."[34] Yet on the other side of the theological aisle the supersessionist confidently asserts that such readings are in error and that from a biblical perspective since the coming of Christ "the promise of territorial land no longer has any significance."[35] The issue has been further complicated by the introduction of Palestinian Liberation Theology and the narrative of Palestinian nationalism. The Palestinian narrative views the state of Israel as a catastrophe and Israel as a perpetrator of human rights abuses against the Palestinian people who are seen to be the indigenous inhabitants of the land. In contemporary supersessionism, Palestinian Liberation Theology has provided a key element of the new supersessionist approach. This means that not only must an examination of the land be conducted theologically, but the claims that impact history and politics must also be addressed. That is one of the aims of this thesis – to examine how much the current political narrative has influenced the ideology and development of the New Supersessionism as a historical and theological movement. The same aim also applies to the examination of the New Christian Zionism – which in many ways seeks to counter the political arguments with its own historical and political arguments as well as refuting the theological component. One significant advantage to this approach will be to have the two movements examined side by side using the same criteria. This will ensure a thorough analysis that is equitable in its critique and approach yet also broadens the theological,

[32] Ibid. p. 11
[33] Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham R. Besdin, *Reflections on the Rav: Lessons in Jewish Thought Adapted from Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Jerusalem: Department of Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora of the World Zionist Organization in Jerusalem, 1979), p. 120.
[34] J. Randall Price, *What Should We Think About Israel: Separating Fact from Fiction in the Middle East Conflict* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2019), p. 80.
[35] Manfred Waldemar Khol, "Towards a Theology of Land" in, *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Context* ed. By Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), p. 273.

historical and contextual background that is often missing in the academic literature on the subject.

Aims and Objectives

This thesis approaches these issues using historical methodology, focusing on close readings of representative texts in dialogue with relevant secondary literature. The thesis will provide an in-depth examination of both movements. As will be demonstrated, neither supersessionism nor Christian Zionism are monolithic – there is considerable variation of belief within both. This is truer with supersessionism, and I will examine the various different nuances that are found within it. In particular, I aim to demonstrate how this movement has evolved over time, but especially in its latest expression which is known as the "New Supersessionism". I am especially concerned with looking at the influences and ideologies that have been incorporated into the New Supersessionism that have caused this progression from a largely theological position (as throughout most of church history), into what is now a movement actively involved in the contemporary political scene. The thesis will examine the external factors that have helped precipitate this shift – such as the birth of the modern state of Israel and the presence of a robust Christian Zionism that followed this event. In addition, the rise of Palestinian nationalism has also played a key part in the formation of the New Supersessionism. The thesis will seek to clearly identify just how much influence the Palestinian narrative has exerted over this movement. The key element is the combining of a secular political national identity movement with the theological worldview of Palestinian Christians and the addition of the liberation theology so prevalent outside of the Western world. This novel blending of supersessionism, Palestinian nationalism and liberation theology has led to the rise of Palestinian Liberation Theology in the New Supersessionism.

This is a critical component of the New Supersessionism that the thesis will critically engage with. The roots of liberation theology will be analysed and their adaptation to fit the specific Palestinian context examined. This thesis emphasises the impact that this has had on the methodology used in interpreting the Bible within the New Supersessionism. Parts of the New Supersessionism are motivated by humanitarian issues and a search for justice as defined by liberation theology. These motivations are drawn from a particular

understanding of Middle Eastern history. This social justice concern is then used to guide the interpretation of scripture in new ways. For example, Naim Ateek's work *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (1989), sets out how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an issue of social justice. In this view, Israel is the oppressor, inflicting injustice and suffering upon others. Ateek was deeply moved by the events of the first intifada and in his work, he seeks to set Palestinian Liberation Theology "in the context of other liberation theologies from around the world."[36]

This has also shifted the hermeneutics of the movement. Classical supersessionism was mainly concerned with the theological identity of the people of God, especially demonstrating that the church now occupied the place formerly inhabited by Israel. Due to this the people of Israel no longer retained a unique identity in the plan of God. As a result, their land also no longer contained any special significance except for historical/nostalgic purposes. The New Supersessionism applies these arguments when polemically useful but have additionally argued that the land remains significant – expect the Palestinians are the indigenous people rather than the Jews. This would seem to present an internal contradiction between traditional replacement theology and one that has been influenced heavily by Palestinian Liberation Theology. My thesis will explore this tension and show it as a weakness to the internal consistency of the movement.

One of the main developments that manifests in the new supersessionist movement is the incorporation of decolonial hermeneutical methods into their system. These liberationist themes are common in the literature of the New Supersessionism. One author in which this is clearly seen is Rosemary Reuther. Reuther began as a fierce critic of Christian antisemitism as expressed in her volume *Faith and Fratricide* (1974). However, through an engagement with liberation theology she shifted her perspective as seen in *The Wrath of Jonah* (2nd ed. 2002). In this she takes the tenets of liberation theology and applies them to the Israeli-Palestinian context. The inclusion of liberationist themes continued as the movement progressed. Liberationist Eleazor Fernandez writes in a volume entitled *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation: Towards a new hermeneutic of liberation* (2012) that, "We may call the global hegemonic power-knowledge nexus that re-inscribes on

[36] *Sabeel Newsletter* Issue 1: Spring 1994.http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev19/files/Issue%201.pdf p. 5. [Accessed 6th October 2024].

bodies, texts, and practices as empire…empire expresses its hegemony in terms of 'network power'."[37] The thesis will also spend considerable time examining the impact and ideology of the Kairos Palestine document (2009) which functions like a manifesto for Palestinian Liberation Theology. The document was drafted by thirteen Palestinian Christians and promoted by the World Council of Churches. The overtly political nature of the New Supersessionism is seen through this document as it openly advocates for Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions (BDS) against the state of Israel. Among other things the intention of the BDS movement is to end the occupation and support the Palestinian right of return. If the New Supersessionism acts in accordance with the aims of the BDS movement then the New Supersessionism is interested in supporting activities that could damage the Jewish state. This is not mere rhetoric; the thesis will demonstrate that there is a direct connection between these two things. That they are found in an increasingly popular religious movement is concerning.

Aside from this type of political posturing that is present within the literature of the New Supersessionism, the thesis will also pay attention to the theological side of the question. This will mean looking at how the movement answers the questions relating to Israel and the Jewish people put forward by their critics. These questions will be: does national Israel have a continued purpose and presence in the plan of God? Or does national ethnic Israel no longer serve an important role as a theological construct and thus should not be an abiding concern for Christians today? The answers to these questions serve to summarise the theological differences between supersessionism and Christian Zionism.

One additional facet of the New Supersessionism that the thesis will examine is the support that it receives from Western academics. Although the New Supersessionism is strongly attached to the Palestinian narrative and often employs the techniques and methodology of liberation theology, it also utilises the exegetical methods of more classical supersessionism. As support for such methods many Palestinian theologians look to Anglican academics such as N.T Wright, Stephen Sizer, and Colin Chapman. All of them, to varying degrees, display a hostility to Zionism and advocate a hermeneutical methodology marked by universalisation.

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[37] Eleazar S. Fernandez, '(Home) Land, Diaspora, Identity, and the Bible in Imperial Geopolitics: What does the Asia-pacific Region have to do with Israel-Palestine?' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation,* by Mitri Raheb (ed.) (Diyar, Bethlehem, 2012), p. 124.

That is, their work demonstrates a way to take the particular promises made to Israel and universalise them. This provides a way to deny any future for a national Israel especially as the promises relate to a specific geographic location in the Middle East. The thesis will highlight how these two strands – the Western and the native, although different in some areas, support each other and have been a factor in the acceptance of Palestinian Liberation Theology in the Western world.

The thesis will argue that the emergence of the New Supersessionism did not appear overnight – there were many different influences and causal events that brought it to its current form. The bringing together of contemporary critical theory, social justice, along with the novel interpretive worldview of decolonial hermeneutics, an active call for BDS, strong aversion to Christian Zionism and the state of Israel, along with the foundation of Palestinian Liberation Theology has produced a brand-new expression of supersessionism that needs its own assessment and critique. This thesis will lay a foundation for such a critique.

As with supersessionism, the thesis will historically contextualise the beliefs of Christian Zionism. Although this movement is more unified in thought than the New Supersessionism, it also shelters a broad spectrum of beliefs among those who identify with this term. The thesis will engage with a range of researchers who write on Christian Zionism. This includes theologians who identify with the term such as Stanley Porter and Alan Kurschner who edited the 2023 volume *The Future Restoration of Israel*, Gerald McDermott and Darrell Bock who both contributed to the 2016 volume *The New Christian Zionism*. It will also examine historians and political theorists who produce scholarship on the subject without identifying with the term such as Donald Lewis who published *A Short History of Christian Zionism* in 2021, and political theorist Samuel Goldman who wrote *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* in 2018. The thesis will first detail the long theological history of Christians who believe that there remains a future for the nation of Israel. Historically they were referred to as restorationists, though eventually they came to be called Christian Zionists. The thesis will show that both supersessionism and Christian Zionism have been wed to politics and exerted considerable influence at various times. An emphasis will be given to the golden age of British Christian Zionism during the early twentieth century that led to the Balfour Declaration and the support for a Jewish state that came from the British

government. Many within the cabinet at the time held to Christian Zionist beliefs. The thesis will also show how dominant Christian Zionism became in American Christianity through the spread and acceptance of dispensational teaching. This led to a highly politicised and partisan environment where right leaning politics and the cause of Israel were often considered to be one and the same. This produced an extremely polarised discussion in the Christian church in the West, where political affiliations were often just as instrumental in shaping opinions as biblical concerns were. The thesis will demonstrate how Christian Zionism has progressed through a number of different stages, especially in the US, and how this has impacted the movement as it became as much associated with political positions as it was with theological ones.

The latest expression of Christian Zionism, which has been labelled the "New Christian Zionism", will be a particular focus. I will argue that this particular development of Christian Zionism is a responsive movement that has sought to specifically engage the arguments and popularity of the New Supersessionism and the increasing acceptance of the Palestinian narrative of the Middle East amongst Christians. It exists largely as a Western response to the New Supersessionism and aims to relocate the perception of Christian Zionism from being a largely right-leaning political perspective that offers only a popular level theology drawn from writing like the *Left Behind* novels,[38] and Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) to a serious academically supportable viewpoint.[39] The New Christian Zionism seeks to bring together a diverse group of theologians, historians, and leading academics from various disciplines to present a robust case for a biblical Christian Zionism that has eschewed much of the overtly political rhetoric it has been associated with for the past few decades. There is a focus not only on exegesis and theology but also on more contemporary concerns such as the legal, moral, and ethical issues raised by events within the state of Israel today. The movement is keen to distance itself from dispensationalism and popularist eschatology as a whole. I will examine how they have achieved this and whether it has been a successful project. One key area to explore is the growth of Christian Zionism in the Global South and questions this raises of the trajectory of the New Christian Zionist movement.

[38] A series of bestselling Christian fiction books that present an end-time scenario in line with dispensational eschatology.
[39] Amy J. Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Should we expect to see two divergent streams of Christian Zionism going forward? It will also be interesting to examine how and why Christian Zionism is growing in an area that is typically a stronghold for liberation theology. These issues will be important for future analysis of the Christian Zionist movement.[40]

There has been a resurgence of interest in Christian Zionism recently. Whilst a direct cause is hard to pinpoint, the changing landscape of the Middle East most likely played some part in this, along with the boost that American Evangelicals felt during the Trump era, which was seen to be more favourable towards Israel than the previous administrations. A slew of recent books from a wide range of authors can testify to this interest. Historian Donald M. Lewis wrote *A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First century* 2021 in which he traces the development of Christian Zionism from biblical sources through the reformation and into contemporary movements today. He shows how Christian Zionism has interacted with the wider culture especially eschatological and political discourse. Political theorist Samuel Goldman published *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* in 2018 which examines the influence of Christian Zionism in relation to American politics and culture from the puritans to today, looking at the specific reasons for its longevity and influence., This was followed in 2019 by historian Daniel G Hummel's volume *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and the U.S.-Israeli Relations*. There were also volumes from traditional dispensational Zionist authors. Thomas Ice's book *The Case for Zionism: Why Christians should Support Israel* came out in 2017 and J. Randall Price released *What Should We Think About Israel: Separating Fact from Fiction in the Middle East* in 2019. Theologians from a non-dispensational persuasion also contributed new works on Christian Zionism. Barry Horner's second volume on Israel entitled *Eternal Israel: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Studies that Uphold the Eternal Distinctive Destiny of Israel* in 2018 and Gerald McDermott's volume *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* was published in 2016.

The current status of studies in Christian Zionism and supersessionism is facing a challenge. The development of supersessionism is moving rapidly towards a new liberationist perspective incorporating many novel hermeneutical methods and influences. A 2023 work

[40] Cynthia Rich, *Christian Zionism in Africa* (Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2020).

edited by Mitri Raheb and Mark A Lamport, *Emerging Theologies from the Global South*, is indicative of the shift that is occurring. This volume has a section on major paradigmatic themes from emerging theologies listing subjects such as the Postcolonial/decolonial option in theology, migration theology, and Palestinian Contextual Theology. This new development is changing the landscape considerably and any emerging theology needs to be analysed and questions asked. Emerging from what? And what is it emerging into? So far, although there is a lot of research and literature coming from the Christian Zionist position which seeks to critique supersessionism, it does not really deal with the emergence of decolonial hermeneutics and how it is influencing the ongoing development of this tradition. The connection between these emerging theologies and the way that they have been utilised to promote the Palestinian context and formulate a theology that opposes any future role for national Israel has not been given enough attention. This thesis will seek to thoroughly analyse the use of decolonial hermeneutics and Palestinian Liberation Theology within the movement of the New Supersessionism. It will also seek to show that the use of such methodologies has inseparably wed the movement to a political perspective. The thesis will look to show just how much the relationship between politics and theology is pivotal to the movement. The new supersession is in many ways a brand-new expression of a political theology that has incorporated the latest ideologies and responds to current events in Israel and Palestine. The movement also spends great effort in seeking to draw support from the wider Christian church in the West particularly in the former strongholds of Christian Zionism such as the US. The thesis will look at how successful this has been and assess whether it is likely to continue. The New Christian Zionism on the other hand has first tried to distance itself from previous political associations and partisan perspectives by concentrating again on theological arguments. However, as the New Supersessionism is based upon its narrative and political positions, the New Christian Zionism has responded to them and in so doing attempted to counteract the growing influence and popularity of this movement. How successful they have been in doing this is a question I will examine in this thesis.

All of these issues clearly present a new concept that requires different forms of analysis from earlier types of supersessionism. The old assumptions were primarily rooted in Western-centric theologies and hermeneutics but have been adapted by the changing

political and theological conditions brought about by Palestinian nationalism and approaches such as critical theory and decolonial hermeneutics, which in turn necessitates a new examination. Therefore, a thorough-going analysis is largely absent in the academic literature on the subject and this thesis will provide the entry point for such research.

Although the body of contemporary literature existing on Christian Zionism is larger than that on the New Supersessionism, it has failed to notice the way that the two movements are interconnected and, in many ways, rely on each other for their existence. The new supersessionists arose as a response to the dominant Christian Zionism present in America that they believed was causing people to blindly support the state of Israel, in particular the ongoing development within disputed territories. They then pushed back with a promotion of the Palestinian narrative and a hard anti-Zionist stance. The New Christian Zionism is a response to this and seeks to answer many of the challenges put forward by the New Supersessionism. Thus, a work that examines both these movements side by side will be invaluable. This involves looking at them historically, theologically, and politically. So far existing works have not done this to an adequate degree and my thesis will contribute to filling the gap in the literature on this subject.

Thesis Outline

In the first chapter, I will outline the historical development of supersessionism. The purpose of this is to contextualise the movement and its development before examining the contemporary expression of it. In order to clearly identify whether there has been enough significant change to warrant a new classification there must be a good understanding of previous expressions. This chapter will also show where and when the history of supersessionism really begins and what factors led to its growth and development. This will provide a contextual backdrop to show how historical factors played a role in its development – just as contemporary factors have influenced the development of the New Supersessionism. This historical section of the thesis will survey the doctrine of supersessionism through five separate eras: the Apostolic (CE 33-100), Patristic (CE 100-400), Medieval (CE 400-1500), Reformation (CE 1500-1700), and the Modern (CE 1700-present). These categorisations are intentionally broad for the purpose of this survey as the intent is not to provide a full chronological survey of church history but to show the

development of supersessionism through each of these historical eras. Therefore, only material that is related to this purpose has been included. The survey will detail how historical events that occurred in the twenty-first century led to a period of re-evaluation of supersessionist doctrines. However, contemporary political events have facilitated a new surge in supersessionism which will be the focus of our examination.

The second part of this chapter will build upon the historical survey by identifying the different variations that have existed within supersessionism throughout church history. The purpose of this section is to detail the reality that supersessionism has multiple approaches in its methodology in reaching the conclusion that Israel no longer retains a unique role in the plan of God. This is an important part of understanding supersessionism as a whole because these elements are present to varying degrees in the New Supersessionism. It is also significant to understand that certain variations of supersessionism have implications when it comes to influencing negative attitudes towards the Jewish people. I initially build upon the distinctions suggested by R. Kendall Soulen's *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* in which he provides three variations of supersessionism: (1) punitive, (2) economic and (3) structural. The chapter emphasises how these methods differ in their approach especially in regard to hermeneutics. This will be critical in understanding the methods of the New Supersessionism and examining whether significant development has taken place and, if so, when. This section will also examine the way influential contemporary theologians like N.T. Wright, Gary Burge, and Stephen Sizer frame supersessionism and whether they are sufficient to overturn existing understandings.

The background and issues covered in this chapter will provide the relevant contextual information needed for the continued analysis that will be given in the next chapter concerning the New Supersessionism. The reader will now possess a clear understanding of how supersessionism has developed over the course of church history up until the present time. They will also understand the different variations found within this movement and what factors differentiate them from one another.

The second chapter will explore the New Supersessionism in considerable detail. The aim in this chapter will be to provide the reader with a complete overview of this new movement and its main proponents, emphasising what separates it from previous manifestations of

supersessionism. The investigation will look at the different nuances found within the New Supersessionism, through both theological and political vantage points. This chapter will provide a detailed examination of the various events and influences that have shaped it. The critical point of this chapter is to clearly delineate the ideological influences that have shaped this new movement. These are specifically Palestinian nationalism and liberation theology. This chapter will show how the political situation has developed since 1948, particularly within the Palestinian context which views this date as a catastrophe. It will detail how this narrative has impacted the New Supersessionism. Primarily, this will be demonstrated by looking at the theological and hermeneutical developments in the movement. How do new supersessionists interpret the biblical passages that speak of the land and the promises to Israel? One area that will be emphasised is the use of liberation theology as a hermeneutical grid for the Bible through the Palestinian context. This factor alone is completely novel and not present in older variations of supersessionism so requires an in-depth analysis. This will include exploring the roots of liberation theology in other disciplines such as critical theory and novel interpretive methods such as decolonial hermeneutics. Having laid this foundation, the chapter will then highlight how this political-theological system is opposed to all forms of Christian Zionism. With the contextual and political background now firmly established it will be easier for the reader to identify why this is the case. The chapter will survey the major groups that promote this distinctive theology today such as the Sabeel international network and the Bethlehem Bible College "Christ at the Checkpoint" conferences. This provides a sense of how the movement is positioning itself with the larger theological world. It will also demonstrate how the movement is dependent on a particular perspective of the Middle East. Attention will also be given to the Kairos Palestine Document that was issued by the proponents of the New Supersessionism, providing insight into the aims and motivations of the movement and their intentions moving forward. This will also expose the close connection to strong political activism as found in the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement. It is important to highlight this connection because (as will be demonstrated) the motivations behind the BDS movement often cross the line into antisemitism. Just as traditional supersessionism historically strayed into the murky waters of antisemitism, the New Supersessionism still manifests a similar problem within its own twenty-first-century context.

The third chapter will begin the section of the thesis that focuses on Christian Zionism. The investigation will follow the same pattern that was used for the study of supersessionism. This chapter will contextualise the movement and provide the historical background necessary to understand the progressive development and emergence of the New Christian Zionism. There will be a brief discussion of Zionism in the Jewish world in order to show that Zionism and Christian Zionism share a measure of continuity and, as the historical information will show, Christians played a significant role in the early Zionist movement. This chapter will detail periods when Christian Zionism was prominent and how it influenced political decisions. Particular attention will be given to the Balfour Declaration - not only because it came during the golden age of Christian Zionism in Britain, but also because it serves to show the continued effect this document still has on both Christian Zionists and supersessionists today. Thus, it will help the reader gain a broad perspective of how the two movements interpret the political events of the twentieth century in line with their theological understanding.

The hermeneutics of Christian Zionism will also be examined to show clearly how it differs with the approach of supersessionism. The secondary literature on Christian Zionism is vast and I will only be selecting works of representative contributors to demonstrate the main distinctives of Christian Zionist hermeneutics. A major feature of this chapter will also be to demonstrate the progression of Christian Zionism in America with the rise of dispensationalism. American Christian Zionism became the dominant expression in the twentieth century and became associated with the political right in the US. This association still influences the debate today and understanding this will be important to recognising the way in which the New Christian Zionism has responded to this association within their own movement.

The fourth chapter will focus on the “New Christian Zionism”. It will analyse the way in which it has attempted to respond to the challenges from the New Supersessionism and from the dominant association of Christian Zionism with the political right. It will show how the movement positions itself within the ongoing trajectory of Christian Zionism which is not a static tradition. The chapter will demonstrate why the movement believes it needs to reclassify in order to distance itself from previous understandings of Christian Zionism – and whether or not they have successfully achieved this. The aim will be to show how the

movement has engaged with overtly political arguments and challenges that the new supersessionists have raised regarding situations in modern Israel, without themselves becoming a partisan political project. The New Christian Zionism does not place the same focus on eschatological events associated with dispensationalists, but instead chooses to identify the movement in line with its puritan roots and research in historical Jesus studies, acknowledging the Jewish character and background to the New Testament. This will also involve looking at how the New Christian Zionism views the modern state of Israel. This is important as much of the current debate between supersessionism and Christian Zionism centres around positions on the state and whether it still retains any special significance in the plan of God. This chapter will show how the New Christian Zionism differs from previous expressions as well as providing a clear understanding of the premise of its arguments.

The fifth chapter will seek to highlight some of the ambiguities and potential difficulties raised by both the New Supersessionism and the New Christian Zionism. This chapter will bring to the fore the issues that have been raised throughout this analysis providing a completely new body of research to contribute to this field. It will show that both movements, to some degree, are seeking to present themselves as robust academic theologies to the Western world. The New Supersessionism is perhaps more difficult to discuss as a coherent whole as it has more variants within it. I will also highlight the tension between the Western academics who support it and theologically argue that there is no continuing relevance to the land – and the more native Palestinian strand to whom the land is of vital importance, and who have utilised the tenets of Liberation theology in their political and theological systems. Many have not thought through the full implications of this as it relates to activism, antisemitism, and prospects for reconciliation. The New Supersessionism must engage with the irony that they charge Christian Zionism with influencing government policy with their theology, yet their own responsive theology is built upon even more political engagement and activism than the other side. It will also be pointed out that the historical aversion to supersessionism was in large part a response to the presence of antisemitism in the movement and equally the New Supersessionism must contend with the continued presence of antisemitism within its own movement through a strong anti-Zionism and BDS supporting party, as well as the issue of increasing cases of Palestinian terrorism.

Another significant trend that will be explored in this chapter is the rise of Christian Zionism in the Global South, particularly in Latin America. This is something that both movements have to contend with. Firstly, the New Christian Zionism is primarily a Western-led academic movement that is not connected to Pentecostal forms of Christian Zionism – yet it is the Pentecostal churches in Latin America that will be the new face of Christian Zionism in the coming years at the current growth rate. I will examine what this means for the New Christian Zionism and determine whether it has a future as a movement or is a failed rebranding project. This fact must also be acknowledged by the new supersessionists as they accuse Christian Zionism of being an oppressive colonial exercise and the tenets of Liberation Theology they embrace teach that the oppressed should side with them. Latin America is the birthplace of liberation theology and the same Christians who now espouse Christian Zionism have been historically classed as an oppressed people group compared to Israel and the West.[41] Although this would suggest a receptive audience for the New Supersessionism, we are witnessing the opposite: a steady growth of Christian Zionism among them. I will seek to offer some analysis and reasons for this and what it means for the New Supersessionism.

The study will conclude by bringing together and summarising the key findings from the thesis and show how these themes have been developed throughout. This will again highlight the unique contribution to the topics that this thesis has offered and how the new insights fit into the existing body of knowledge on the subject. The conclusion will make suggestions for how this thesis will aid future research and what areas will require continued and further research as they develop, for example, contemporary evangelicalism's view of Israel and the future face of Christian Zionism. This will also be beneficial to an emerging focus on post-supersessionist theology within the Christian world and the ever-present danger of theological antisemitism.

[41] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988).

Chapter 1 Understanding Supersessionism

I. The Chronological Development of Supersessionism

This chapter will provide the background necessary to understand the movement and beliefs of supersessionism. This in turn will prepare the ground for the critical analysis of the New Supersessionism in the following chapter. The historical development of supersessionism will be traced through the major eras of church history, from the apostolic church up to the present day. This will give a panoramic perspective of the movement allowing focus to fall upon the major events and eras that witnessed a significant development within the tradition. As will be demonstrated, sometimes an event such as the fall of Jerusalem in CE 70 can play a significant part in precipitating a shift in the church's understanding of itself and thus encourage a particular belief, such as supersessionism, to grow or decline in popularity. This chronological survey is also interested in briefly highlighting how historical events can play a role in the emergence of new hermeneutical models being accepted by the church. This will provide a foundation for future chapters which go into greater detail on the hermeneutical methods employed by these movements. Another feature of such a broad historical survey is that it demonstrates how the doctrine of supersessionism has had a bearing upon the church's acceptance of anti-Judaism. This is a significant historical reality within the discussion of supersessionism and this background will allow for further discussion as to whether there is a direct connection between the two. The second half of this chapter will then concern itself with noting that throughout these different historical ages the doctrine of supersessionism has not remained constant. This knowledge will also feed into the later chapter examining the latest variation of the New Supersessionism.

Ia. The Apostolic Era (CE 33 – 100)

Although supersessionism became a dominant viewpoint in a relatively short period of time, it was not present as a developed system of doctrine during the time of the apostles. The general consensus of scholarship is that its roots can be traced back to the post-apostolic period. Diprose confirms stating that "according to some, the roots of replacement theology are to be found in the New Testament. According to others its origin is to be sought in post-

apostolic times."[42] The new messianic movement was ultimately still considered a sect within the Judaism of its day. It is a fairly uncontroversial statement that nascent Christianity consisted almost entirely of Jews. Koester states that "one could with justification designate the whole first generation of Christians as 'Jewish Christians'".[43] Marvin Wilson also comments that "the New Testament evidence is irrefutable about the beginnings of the Church: in its origin, Christianity was Jewish to the very core. The essentially non-Jewish character of today's Church is a matter of history, not a question of origins."[44]

Given this predominately Jewish composition of early Christianity it is no surprise that many of the beliefs of second temple Judaism carried over into early Christianity. A strong emphasis in the Judaism of this period was a belief in the restoration of Israel.[45] Bauckham elaborates that this concept included the repentance of Israel, as well as the overthrow of her enemies and restoration to the land. He concludes that "the sources of these hopes were, of course, the scriptural prophecies, with special importance given to the concluding chapters of the Torah (Deuteronomy 30-33) and the later chapters of Isaiah (40-66)."[46] Tiede concurs with this assessment arguing that the "concern for the restoration was shared by many of the interpreters of the scriptures of Israel throughout the intertestamental era."[47] Similarly, he also identifies "the fountainhead" for such ideas as the scriptures – especially the final part of Deuteronomy. He also identified The Song of Moses, Tobit, 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra and the writings of Josephus as extra-biblical sources which have as their eschatological goal "the hope of restoration."[48] Staples follows the terminology of E.P. Sanders and uses "restoration eschatology" to refer to the future hope of Israel's restoration held by many (though not all) early Jews. Staples defines this as "the theological

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[42] Ronald D. Diprose, *Israel in the development of Christian thought*. (Rome: Instituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000), p. 32.
[43] H. Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter 1982), p. 198.
[44] Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*. (Grand Rapids: Wm.B Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1989), p. 43 .
[45] Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). See also, Richard Bauckham, "The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts" In *Restoration*: *Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives, ed. by* James Scott (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), p. 435.
[46] Richard Bauckham, "The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts". In *Restoration*: *Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives, ed. by* James Scott (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), p. 435.
[47] David L. Tiede, "The Exaltation of Jesus and the Restoration of Israel in Acts 1." *The Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1/3 (1986), p. 279.
[48] Ibid. p. 284.

conviction that Israel has fallen under the curses of YHWH's covenant and awaits a time of glorious redemption and restoration."[49] If he includes the same elements in this restoration as Sanders then this concept includes the reunification of the nation and their national sanctification, the conversion of the nations, and the restoration of Jerusalem.[50]

While it is true that by the first century many of these restoration motifs that permeated Judaism had been mistaken simply for hope for political autonomy, this did not however abrogate the foundational truth that the national salvation of Israel and the restoration to their land to be ruled by a Messianic King from Jerusalem remained a central facet of their eschatology. It is for this reason that the history of supersessionism really starts in the second century onwards and builds from there. While supersessionists would argue that they find support for their views in the New Testament, they do so through employing innovative hermeneutical techniques– the reality is that such doctrinal convictions surfaced later in church history.

Although there are too many specific scriptures used to support supersessionism to examine each one individually, it is worth examining a representative text to demonstrate the argumentation involved in reaching such a conclusion. One oft used scripture to prove the logic of supersessionism comes from the Gospel of Matthew 21:43:

> "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it."

Supersessionists see in this passage a statement by Jesus "in which he specifically rules out any notion that Israel would enjoy a divinely mandated national identity as a kingdom in the future".[51] Sizer comments that this verse proves that unbelieving Jews will be "thrown outside"[52]. Another supersessionist, John Gerstner comments that this verse signals "the end of the nation of Israel as the chosen people of God."[53] And David Hill interprets this to teach that "the Jewish nation, as a corporate entity, had now forfeited its elect statues."[54] It

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[49] Staples, *The Idea of Israel,* p.95.
[50] E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1985), pp. 289-98.
[51] Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p. 158.
[52] Ibid.
[53] John Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 1st ed (Brentwood TN: Wolgemuth &Hyatt, 1991) p. 191.
[54] David, Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New Century Bible Commentary, (Granp Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972) p. 301.

is clear that this verse is repeatedly used to affirm the belief of supersessionists that the Jewish people have been rejected and replaced by the gentile church. Yet, this is not the only interpretation of a text such as this. Christian Zionist Theologians would counter that the text is not announcing a wholesale replacement of the entire nation, but rather a more specific replacement concerning those in charge of the stewardship of the Kingdom of God. Diprose concludes that "the subject of the sentence is not the Jews themselves but rather the kingdom with which they had enjoyed a special relationship."[55] The statement that these leaders who were meant to be stewarding the kingdom message to the people would lose that privilege is not the same as saying the entire nations special covenantal relationship with God is now terminated.

The allusion in this text draws upon the imagery of the Vineyard parable in Isaiah 5 and Isaiah 27:2-5. In Matthew 21:33–46, Jesus adapts this Old Testament imagery in His parable of the wicked tenants. In this parable, God the Father is cast as the landowner who establishes the vineyard, symbolizing Israel, and leases it to vine-growers, who represent the religious leaders of the nation. The servants sent to collect the fruit symbolize the prophets, and the son represents the Messiah. The tenants' violent rejection and eventual murder of the son is a direct indictment of the religious authorities' rejection of Christ. Jesus concludes the parable with a pronouncement of judgment: the kingdom of God will be taken from these leaders and entrusted to a different people who will produce its fruit.

The most straightforward interpretation of this parable is one that remains rooted in the "vineyard" tradition of the Old Testament. It suggests a temporal judgment on Israel for rejecting the prophets and the Messiah, followed by a future eschatological restoration. This is affirmed by Jesus' citation of Psalm 118:22–23, where He identifies Himself as "the stone the builders rejected," which has become "the chief cornerstone." By quoting this passage, Jesus signals both His rejection and eventual exaltation. The immediate consequence for the generation that rejected Him was the removal of the offer of the kingdom, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE—a judgment Jesus foreshadows in Matthew 23:37–39. As Willitts notes the focus of judgement is "much more limited" stating that the judgement

[55] Ronald D. Diprose, *Israel in the development of Christian thought*. (Rome: Instituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000), p. 39.

was not “on ethnic Israel but on the inept and corrupt leadership. It is they whom God will replace.”[56]

Despite this judgment, Jesus also points to the prospect of national restoration. In Matthew 23:39, He speaks of a future moment when Israel will collectively acknowledge Him, saying, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” This eschatological expectation provides a framework for understanding the identity of the “people” to whom the kingdom is transferred in Matthew 21:43. The Greek term *ethnos*, commonly translated as “nation,” suggests a specific ethnic or national group, rather than the universal and multi-ethnic church. Thus, the identification of ethnos with the church—common among proponents of replacement theology—appears problematic, as the church is not a singular nation but rather a transnational assembly.

The more contextually consistent interpretation is that the kingdom is taken from the generation that rejected the Messiah and will be given to a future generation of Israel characterised by repentance and acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. This future generation will declare, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” and will receive both the Messiah and the kingdom. Such an interpretation aligns with the narrative flow of Matthew’s Gospel and harmonises with broader eschatological expectations, such as Paul’s assertion in Romans 11:26 that “all Israel will be saved.”

Ib. The Patristic Era (CE 100-400)

The absence of supersessionist views in the apostolic period motivates us to seek explanation for the sudden rise of supersessionism elsewhere. There is a dangerous tendency to overgeneralise the sweep of history when looking for direct historical causes for particular movements. Therefore, it is necessary to include a number of historical factors in the investigation and assess how they cumulatively contributed to the development of supersessionist doctrines in the post-apostolic period. Scholars generally offer a number of contributing events. The focus of Diprose is the “disastrous Jewish wars of CE 66-70, which witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple”. According to him this

[56] Joel Willits, ‘Zionism in the Gospel of Matthew: Do the People of Israel and the Land of Israel Persist as Abiding Concerns for Matthew’ in *The New Christian Zionism,* ed. McDermott, p. 127.

"began a process which changed the face of Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations".[57] Other scholars additionally point to the final Jewish rebellion in CE 135, the misunderstanding of "in house" discussions taking place between the biblical writers and the Jewish community, the rise of antisemitism in the early church and the increasing gentile composition of the church.[58] Finally, came the rise of a "hermeneutical approach that allowed the church to appropriate Israel's promises to itself."[59]

Additional explanations could be included here by relevant scholars, but they consist of similar historical themes which represent the consensus of scholarship on the rise of supersessionism. Three factors seem to stand out: (1) the parting of the ways, (2) the influx of gentiles to the church and (3) the differing method of hermeneutics they bought with them.

The Jewish revolts of CE 70 and CE 135 are often referred to as the beginning of "the parting of the ways".[60] The CE 70 destruction of Jerusalem created the first rift between the new followers of Jesus and their fellow countrymen. Judaism could no longer function in the same way without the Temple worship – however this was not such a problem for those Jews who had believed in the messiahship of Jesus. This seemingly foundational conflict, that actually centred around the identity of Jesus and whether or not he was the promised Messiah, separated the two communities. W.D. Davies comments that "the early Church up to 70 C.E. was a daughter of Judaism: only after that did it leave the nest".[61] There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to when the roots of the historic split occurred, and whether it was sudden or gradual. Jewish historians such as Jacob Neusner argue that Jesus himself instituted such a radically new movement with its own reinvented rituals, that his followers could not remain within the scope of Judaism. Neusner concluded that: "the two religious traditions, Christianity and Judaism, in their first statements really do represent

[57] Diprose, *Israel in the development*, p. 73.
[58] Wayne H. House, "The Church's Appropriation of Israel's Blessing" In *Israel the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises, ed. by Wayne H. House* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), pp.98-99.
[59] Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville: B&H Publishing. 2010), pp.28-29.
[60] Michael Bird, *The Historical Jesus and the Parting of the Ways* (2010) Accessed: https://www.academia.edu/4601138/The_Historical_Jesus_and_the_Parting_of_the_Ways
[61] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1980), p. 28.

different people talking about different things to different people."[62] Some Christian scholars agree, with Craig Evans arguing that "the roots of early Christianity's separation from Judaism are found in the teaching of Jesus, the apostles, and the New Testament writings; that is, the roots of separation are found in the earliest forms of Christianity."[63] This view is challenged by James Dunn who argues that there is nothing within the teaching of Jesus concerning the Temple or the Torah that would necessitate a radical departure from Second Temple Judaism, which was multifaceted enough to accommodate a wide range of views.[64] Although it may be possible to locate both continuity and dis-continuity with Judaism in the teaching of Jesus, the real impetus for the split was accelerated by historical factors that coincided with this growing messianic movement in the first and second centuries. Michael Bird concludes:

> "The controversy and notoriety surrounding Jesus that resulted in his death was replicated by his followers who found themselves initially experiencing persecution from their co-religionists in Jerusalem, regarded with suspicion in the synagogues in the diaspora, expelled from the synagogues in certain places, and later anathematized by post-70 CE representatives of Judaism."[65]

With the destruction of the Temple the Jewish people could no longer practice their religion as they had previously, as much of the ritual relied heavily on the services of the Temple and the priests. The rabbis convened a council at the academy of Yavneh in CE 90 to solve this problem. The result was an intensive process of reorganization producing what became known as rabbinical Judaism. The Temple was replaced with the synagogue, the sacrificial system and atonement was now to be accomplished with acts of prayer and confession along with other charitable deeds. The Levitical priest was replaced with the local rabbi. Such a radical restructuring of the Mosaic Law changed the face of Judaism forever. The relationship between the Jews and the growing messianic movement continued to deteriorate.

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[62] Jacob Neusner, 'Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishna's Explanation,' *NTS 35* (1989), p. 290.
[63] Craig Evans. 'Christianity and Judaism: Parting of the Ways,' in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Development,* ed. by Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp.159-62.
[64] James D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), pp. 55-56.
[65]Michael Bird, 'Jesus and the 'Parting of the Ways,' in *The Handbook of the Study of the Historical Jesus*, Ed. by Stanley E. Porter and Tom Holmen 4 Vols. (Leiden: Brill 2010), Vol 2. p. 1188.

Although this marked the birth of rabbinical Judaism, a milestone in Jewish history, it was the Jewish revolt of CE 132-135 that furthered the disparity between the two communities. The Bar Kokhba rebellion was an attempt by Jews to overthrow the yoke of Roman rule –not in itself a novel endeavour, as centuries earlier the Maccabean rebellion had thrown off the Greeks. However, what made this particular rebellion have such an impact on the Messianic community was that its leader, Bar Kokhba, claimed to be the Messiah. For those Jewish Christians who already believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, this belief invalidated the messianic claims of Bar Kokhba which meant it was impossible to support his movement. Their unwillingness to support the rebellion was seen as a gross act of treason by their fellow Jews and caused insurmountable differences between the two communities.[66]

A corollary that resulted from these events was that they were often used as evidence to justify a belief in a hard form of punitive supersessionism by Christians that placed the focus on Jewish rebellion as a catalyst for divine judgment. Future generations who interpreted the CE 70 and CE 135 revolts as a righteous judgment by God for the crime of deicide were more predisposed to accepting supersessionism. This charge of deicide against the Jews has provoked antisemitic repercussions throughout their subsequent history. The church father Justin Martyr speaking on the destruction of Jerusalem in the second century commented that: "these things have happened to you [Jews] in fairness and justice, for you have slain the Just One…and now you reject those who hope in Him."[67] Such statements took on additional anti-Jewish overtones as time went by. Simon concludes that reflection on the destruction of Jerusalem in CE 70 and 135, "appeared to Christians as the confirmation of the divine verdict on Israel."[68]It is from this belief that a hard form of punitive supersessionism developed within the early church, as McDonald states:

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[66] James Carleton Paget. 'Jewish Revolts and Jewish-Christian Relations'. In *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70–132 CE*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017).

[67] Justin Martyr. "Dialogue with Trypho", in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol 1* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers. 1994) 1:202.

[68] Marcel Simon, *Versus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire* (135-425), trans. H. Keating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 65.

> "the church fathers concluded from God's evident rejection of the Jews, demonstrated by the destruction of their Temple, and their displacement from Jerusalem, that the Christians themselves constituted the 'new Israel.'"[69]

Two other closely related factors gave rise to supersessionism during this early period of the church. Firstly, the sudden influx of gentiles into the formerly Jewish movement changed the demographics in such a way that Jewish influence was gradually marginalised. The emperor during the Bar Kokhba rebellion was Hadrian, who was deeply Hellenistic in his proclivities. He sought to rebuild the ruined Jerusalem as a Hellenistic capital called *Aelia Capitolina* and dedicated the Temple Mount to Jupiter. Scholars are divided on whether this or something else actually gave rise to the rebellion. However, during this period he enacted numerous anti-Jewish measures, such as prohibiting circumcision and Torah study, in an attempt to erase their memory from the land. He even changed the name of the province from Judea to *Palaestina* – a name derived from the ancient enemies of Israel – the Philistines.[70] This rebellion was a major turning point in Jewish history and served as the catalyst that completed the diaspora of Jews which started in CE 70. Following the rebellion, Hadrian issued a decree which forbade Jews from coming within sight of Jerusalem. The impact such a measure would have had on the Jerusalem church cannot be ignored. The church historian Eusebius tells us that, "down to the invasion of the Jews under Hadrian, there were fifteen bishops in that church, all which, they said, were Hebrews".[71] It was only after Hadrian's decree that the church had its first gentile bishop – Marcus. Such a dramatic change in ecclesiastical leadership undoubtedly influenced the direction of the church as it spread across the gentile world. House states that this meant Jewish influence "had become so irrelevant to the majority of the church that by the fourth century, at the council of Nicaea, eighteen members had come from Palestine. Every one was Gentile and not a single Jewish bishop attended."[72]

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[69] L.M. McDonald, 'Anti-Judaism in the Early Church Fathers,' in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and faith*, ed. C.A. Evans and D.A. Hagner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 230.
[70] Louis H. Feldman, 'Some Observations on the Name of Palestine.' *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 61, 1990, pp. 1–23.
[71] *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*, trans. by C.F. Cruse (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), p. 111.
[72] House, 'The Church's Appropriation', p.93.

As the church continued to expand with more and more gentiles entering its ranks, the methods used to interpret the scriptures also changed. Leaving behind the Jewish soil, the church saw fit to appropriate Israel's blessings for itself. The second-century *Epistle of Barnabas* shows how supersessionism developed during this period and the church begun to take the place of Israel. In one portion it declares, "take heed now to yourselves, and not to be like some, adding largely to your sins, and saying, 'The covenant is both theirs and ours.' But they thus finally lost it."[73] The gentiles incorporated Greek philosophical thought into their biblical interpretation in order to support this appropriation of Israel's blessings. Such interpretations where not completely foreign to the Jewish world with writers such as Philo adopting early allegorism in his biblical interpretation. This demonstrates that it was not a completely novel phenomenon that solely originated with the gentiles. It did however become much more common place in Greco-Roman Christian interpretation. They relied heavily upon the allegorical methods of interpretation whereby the original Jewish context was lost. The influential theologian Origen of Alexandria (CE 185–254), a teacher at the Alexandrian school which became the hub for allegorical interpretation, harmonised the beliefs of Greek philosophy with the scriptures. This naturally led to an approach that favoured more allegorical methods over early Jewish literalism, particularly in areas relating to Israel and eschatology. This led to Origen adopting a hard punitive supersessionism. He commented:

> "And we say with confidence that they will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Saviour of the human race in that city where they offered up to God a worship containing the symbols of mighty mysteries. It accordingly behoved that city where Jesus underwent these sufferings to perish utterly, and the Jewish nation to be overthrown, and the invitation to happiness offered them by God to pass to others,--the Christians, I mean, to whom has come the doctrine of a pure and holy worship, and who have obtained new laws, in harmony with the established constitution in all countries; seeing those which were formerly imposed, as on a single nation which was ruled by princes of its own race and of similar manners, could not now be observed in all their entireness."[74]

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[73] *The Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter* 4, http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-roberts.html [Accessed 17/09/24]

[74] Origen, *Contra Celsus* 4:22. http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen164.html [Accessed 01/06/2020]

Origen was perhaps the first to formalise a system of interpretation that served as the foundation for the church to spiritually appropriate the promises of Israel through a process of allegorical biblical exegesis. In addition, the majority of the church was unable to read the Hebrew text which meant a reliance upon the Septuagint Greek translation, originally prepared for the Hellenistic Jewish community, which was also claimed as now belonging to the church. Justin Martyr (CE 100–165), in his work *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, challenges his opponent on scriptural promises related to Jesus, "Are you acquainted with them Trypho? They are contained in your scriptures, or rather not yours, but ours."[75] Caution must be used to avoid the error of importing later developments of supersessionism into these earlier statements in a way that implies they are identical. Instead, these must be understood within the historical and cultural context they were composed. Yet at the very least we can use them to illustrate that the trend to appropriate Israelite blessings in a spiritual manner occurred early in the church. This provided a foundation for subsequent generations to build upon with additional layers of often anti-Jewish rhetoric couched in the veneer of theological language.

Such qualifications withstanding, this allegorical hermeneutic and spiritual appropriation still became the dominant method of interpretation in the early church and was accepted almost unanimously during the Middle Ages.

Ic. The Medieval Period (CE 400-1500)

One of the most influential theologians of this period, and of Western Christianity in general, was the Bishop of Hippo, Augustine (CE 345–425). He built upon the foundation of the early patristic interpreters and continued to apply an allegorical hermeneutic to the scriptures. In particular, he applied this to the idea of the Kingdom of God and the reign of Christ described in the New Testament. Augustine's hermeneutics led him to teach that the text of Revelation 20 was not describing a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth from Jerusalem, as early chiliasts claimed, but a spiritual reign through the new spiritual Israel which he saw as the church. He was also reacting against the tendency of early chiliasts to

[75] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 29, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol 1*. Ed. By Alexander Roberts (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers. 1994), p.209.

set dates for the apocalypse. This spiritualised view of the millennium would develop into a formalised system called amillennialism, the belief that all Old Testament Kingdom promises given to Israel were now spiritually fulfilled by the church.[76] Thus, supersessionism was ingrained into his interpretive methodology and due to the popularity of Augustine this view became broadly accepted throughout Christendom during this period. It is easy to draw a connection between Augustine's view of the millennium and the previous exegetical methods practiced by the early church that grew from an allegorical approach to scripture. Crome states that "One effect of [Augustine's hermeneutic] was the allegorisation of the land promises of the Hebrew Bible, which were instead applied to Christians in spiritual and non-physical ways, so that God was understood to have no end-time role for the Jewish people."[77] Such was the influence of Augustine that by the fifth century virtually any belief in a restoration of the Jews to the land had disappeared and the replacement theology explained by the amillennial system dominated the church until the eighteenth century when interest in eschatological subjects was renewed.[78] Augustine's contribution to supersessionism was considerable, his unique 'witness doctrine' influenced institutionalised antisemitism of the medieval Catholic church. Augustine was reluctant to opt for a hard punitive supersessionism that would reject any ongoing purpose for Israel. Based on his exposition of Psalm 59, Augustine came up with a solution that would in some measure maintain a "reason" for Israel's continued existence, yet also deny them any significant role in the Kingdom, as he interpreted its current form. In his classic work *The City of God* he explains his unique view of how the continued existence of the Jewish people performed a valuable service for the church:

> "By evidence of their own scriptures they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ…It follows that when the Jews do not believe in our scriptures, their scriptures are fulfilled in them, while they read them with

[76] Stanley N. Gundry, 'Hermeneutics or Zeitgeist as the Determining Factor in the History of Eschatology?' *JETS* 20:1 (Winter 1977).
[77] Andrew Crome. 'Christian Restorationism Prior to 1900'. In *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements Ed. By* James Crossley and Alastair Lockhart (eds.) [Accessed 20 February 2022] https://www.cdamm.org/articles/christian-restorationism-prior-to-1900.
[78] CenSAMM. 2021. 'Millenarianism.' In James Crossley and Alastair Lockhart (eds.) *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*. 15 January 2021. Retrieved from www.cdamm.org/articles/millenarianism.

> blind eyes… Hence the prophecy in the Book of Psalms: 'Slay them not, lest they forget your laws; scatter them by your might.'" [79]

Augustine further elaborates on this verse in his commentary on Psalm 59:

> "Scatter them abroad in Your virtue (v11) - Now this thing has been done: throughout all nations there have been scattered abroad the Jews, witnesses of their own iniquity and our truth… take away from them virtue, take away from them their strength." [80]

Augustine, along with the Church Fathers generally, attributes the scattering of the Jews in CE 70 to their role in the death of Christ. Yet Augustinian witness doctrine adds a positive gloss as Fredriksen observes:

> "More than merely punitive, the Jews' exile is also providential, because everywhere that Jews go, they bring their book with them. Thus, despite their hostility, they serve everywhere to authenticate Christian claims, because their exile, the penalty for the crime of killing Christ, was foretold by their own prophets (e.g. Sermons on John 35-7)."[81]

Tragically, such a degrading view of the Jews, whereby their only purpose is to be left on the earth as wanderers, a witness to the fate of those who reject Christ, has led to many years of shameful anti-Judaic treatment throughout history.

A steady stream of ecclesiastical councils and state imperial codes enacted anti-Jewish laws during this long period. Atrocities associated with the Crusades, the inquisitions, the formation of European blood libels, and a multitude of other antisemitic calumnies also took root in Western culture in the Middle Ages.[82] However, it is also worth noting that the influence of Augustine's witness doctrine is often seen as providing Christendom with an attitude of limited toleration towards the Jews and therefore actually helped preserve them during the long medieval era. Augustine insisted that the Jews must be preserved so that they could continue their divine mission to provide witness to the Christian gospel. He also

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[79] Augustine, *City of God* 18.46 Quoted in Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defence of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2010), p. 290.
[80] Augustine, 'Psalm 59' in *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* (ed) Philip Schaff. Online Edition: Accessed at: https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf108.ii.LIX.1.html.
[81] Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defence of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2010), p. 306.
[82] Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986).

believed that "they must accompany Christianity as it expands into new realms lest the purpose of Jewish preservation not be fulfilled."[83] Fredricksen, speaking about the special status and service that the Jews render to the church according to Augustine, states that in the violent days of the Crusades this witness doctrine was used "to deflect and defuse Christian violence against the Jews."[84] There is a paradox whereby Augustine's view could both contribute to antisemitic supersessionist attitudes in the church, yet still in some way limit the severity of that antisemitism.

A broader interest in the Jewish people and Jewish-Christian polemics also developed. The supersessionism that is often mentioned during this period refers not so much to areas of eschatology like the restoration of Israel and the millennial kingdom, but to the idea of Judaism and Christianity as broader religious movements. Christian replacement views were well entrenched and often manifested in anti-Judaic polemics and physical persecution. Timothy Jackson states that "the consuming error of Christian supersessionism is holding that to celebrate the son (Jesus) one must slay the father (Judaism)".[85] He follows the work of Daniel Goldhagen who saw the period as key and focused specifically on religion and theology. He called this the "the medieval Christian phase, in which the object of loathing was the Jews' religion and ritual practices, and the main charge was theological: that the Jews deny God's son and indeed are Christ killers."[86] Goldhagen argues that the charge of "Christ killer" is the foundational antisemitic paradigm laid down by Christianity. Jackson points out that Christianity and Judaism have much common ground ethically and theologically, then muses that it is odd that "Christianity has been among the worst persecutors of Jews throughout its history."[87] He concludes this is "due to the evils of supersessionism, the implausible vilification of a tradition in order to supplant it".[88]

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[83] J. Garroway, Church Fathers and Antisemitism from the 2nd Century through Augustine (end of 450 CE). In: *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism* ed. By Katz S (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2022), pp.66-82.

[84] Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, p. 12.

[85] Timothy P. Jackson, *Mordecai Would Not Bow Down: Anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and Christian Supersessionism* (New York, 2021; online ed, Oxford Academic, 17 June 2021), p. 121.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid. p. 123

[88] Ibid. p. 124

The eleventh and twelfth centuries did see some significant events in the relationship between Jews and Christians. Funkenstein has argued that this era witnessed a change in Christian attitudes towards Jews and a change in Christian polemical writings. He noted that this involved three novel elements to the discussion: the argument from reason (implicitly implying Jewish protagonists were void of reason), the argument against the Talmud, and even the use of the Talmud to prove Christianity.[89] Lasker comments that these "innovations signalled the beginning of the end of the relative Christian tolerance of Jews and Judaism inspired by the writings of Augustine."[90] He also highlights that the use of the Talmud to prove the truth of Christianity was a tactic developed by Pablo Christinai at the disputation of Barcelona (CE 1263). The Barcelona disputation was one of a trilogy of famous disputations that dominated Jewish-Christian relations in the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, the others being held in Paris (1240) and Tortosa (1430). The Paris disputation was the earliest and is generally considered not to be a fair debate but rather "a trial of the Talmud"[91]. Maccoby writes that "the Paris disputation was not really a disputation at all, but an interrogation in which the Jewish spokesman Rabbi Yehiel, was given very little scope for the exposition of fundamental Jewish ideas".[92] The most famous of the disputations was the one held in Barcelona, considered to be the fairest, but also because the Jewish spokesperson was none other than the esteemed Jewish scholar Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, or Nachmanides, as he was commonly known. Chazan notes that this disputation "set an important precedent for subsequent religious confrontations of the later Middle Ages" and that it confronted "European Jewry with a new brand of proselytizing".[93]

While these disputations were influential in shaping the relationship between Jews and Christians in the following centuries, they did little to influence specific doctrines such as the restoration of Israel or the millennial kingdom. Generally, Augustinianism ruled the day. The power of ecclesiastical rule meant that official decrees could be pronounced on church

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[89] Amos, Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
[90] Daniel J. Lasker, 'Jewish-Christian Polemics at the Turning Point: Jewish Evidence from the Twelfth Century.' *The Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 2 (1996), p. 161–73.
[91] Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), p. 11.
[92] Ibid. p. 12
[93] Robert, Chazan, 'The Barcelona 'Disputation' of 1263: Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response.' *Speculum* 52, no. 4 (1977), pp. 824–42.

doctrines, and these were all overtly supersessionist. This institutionalised supersessionism bought with it an atmosphere that was conducive to anti-Jewish sentiment. Perhaps the most enduring symbol of anti-Jewish medieval Catholic replacement theology was the *Ecclesia* versus *Synagoga* imagery, which consisted of two female statues: *Ecclesia* (the Church) is usually depicted standing at Christ's right hand, victorious and noble, with head held high and a crown on her head. She is usually holding a chalice and staff, representing her religious authority. *Synagoga* on the other hand is downcast, hunched over with a blindfold on. The benighted female is a clear slight against the Jews, as she loosely clings onto the tablets of the Law with one hand and has a broken staff in the other.[94] Such depictions can be found at Notre Dame in Paris and Strasbourg Cathedral. This triumphalist imagery (the gentile church over the Jewish synagogue) is representative of the bad fruit that replacement theology produced throughout the Middle Ages.

This era also gave rise to the European blood libel which had a significant impact on Jewish-Christian relations and fostered some extreme manifestations of antisemitism. A blood libel is defined by Flannery as "an official murder of a Christian, preferably a child, in Holy Week for ritual purposes."[95] The first recorded blood libel in Europe happened in the aftermath of the First Crusade (CE 1096). The massacres that occurred in conjunction with this crusade "have long been considered a turning point in the history of Jewish-Christian relations".[96] Under the preaching of Pope Urban II knights were roused to head across Europe to liberate Jerusalem from its Muslim conquerors. Along the way crusaders attacked Jewish communities, killing many, and often seizing their resources and confiscating their religious books.[97] This provided a fertile breeding ground for antisemitism to flourish, even among the authorities and ruling class at the time. The "first" instance of blood libel was in 1141 Norwich England, when the Jewish community was blamed for the death of a young boy called William. The Jews were accused of ritual murder and the narrative given was that they had purchased this boy for a ritual murder and that they "tortured him with all the

[94] 'Ecclesia Et Synagoga' Jewish Virtual Library. Accessed: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ecclesia-et-synagoga
[95] Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986), p.99.
[96] Emily M., Rose, 'Crusades, Blood Libels, and Popular Violence', in *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, ed. by Steven Katz, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 194–212.
[97] Shmuel Shepkaru, "The Preaching of the First Crusade and the Persecutions of the Jews," *Medieval Encounters* 18.1 (2012), 93–135.

tortures wherewith our Lord was tortured, and on Long Friday hanged him on a rood in hatred of our Lord."[98] From this point on accusation of ritual murder became common place in England, France and Germany. Such themes became a staple of medieval life with one even making its way into Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. In this work Chaucer depicts Jews as being aroused by satanic urges to murder Christian children. He included the case of little Hugh of Lincoln who was said to have been thrown in a well by the Jews in 1255.[99] This led to heavy retaliation against the Jewish community. During the reign of King Edward I (CE 1272) Jewish fortune worsened. He passed the famous *Act Concerning the Jews* in 1275 which prohibited them from usury and trades they knew and encouraged them to work as labourers and in jobs they had no skills in. This culminated in 1290 when King Edward gave the decree for the expulsion of all Jews from England. They were allowed only to take what they could carry, and any remaining assets became property of the crown. Although this was an official decree from the reigning monarch in England, it is one that builds upon centuries of institutionalised Christian antisemitism. Not long before, in 1222, the archbishop Stephen Langton convened the Synod of Oxford which was a council of the church in England. This council enacted several anti-Jewish regulations. Many of these had already been canonised into ecclesiastical policy at the fourth Lateran Council in Rome held by Pope Innocent III in 1215. Some of these anti-Jewish measures included the requirement to Jews to wear an identifying badge to distinguish them from Christians, and that Jews were banned from holding public office. The Synod of Oxford affirmed these restrictions and even supplemented them by restricting Jews from building synagogues, placing a specific tithe on Jews, and forbidding social interactions between Christians and Jews. Measures such as these sufficiently ostracised the Jewish community and led to formal expulsion years later by King Edward I. The Church of England formally apologised for the Synod of Oxford in 2022. Speaking at the event author Rebecca Abrams said:

[98] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Blood Libel", Holocaust Encyclopedia. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/blood-libel#blood-libels-in-the-middle-ages-1 [Accessed 14/04/2025).

[99] Emily M., Rose, 'Crusades, Blood Libels, and Popular Violence', in *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, ed. by Steven Katz, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 194–212.

> "The Synod of Oxford did not create antisemitism, but it played a decisive role in creating a hostile environment… It formalised Christian antipathy towards Jewish people and the Jewish religion and created a catastrophic blueprint for centuries to come."[100]

European antisemitism reared its head again in the following century with the arrival of the Black Death (c.1348-1350). As the plague decimated the population of Europe people inevitably looked for a scapegoat. As Flannery says, "who else but the arch conspirator and poisoner, the Jew?".[101] This time the Jews were charged with poisoning the wells with dark magic, human blood, and a number of other unusual concoctions.[102] The resultant hysteria often led to extreme persecution and destruction of Jewish communities throughout Europe. Although such actions were not directly tied to religious motives, often there was a connection. Rose states that "provocations to violence were in many cases closely linked to the religious calendar"[103] and it was often the case that outbreaks of Jewish persecution would coincide with the Christian liturgical calendar. [104]

Countless more examples could be given for this period, but it is clear that medieval antisemitism flourished throughout Christendom in Western Europe. Often this was justified and motivated by religious convictions and ecclesiastical laws. The European churches at this time subscribed to the doctrines of supersessionism which surely contributed to the ease with which these institutions persecuted their Jewish inhabitants.

Id. The Reformation Period (CE 1500-1700)

The centuries leading up to the reformation were a tumultuous time with long held power structures being challenged. The reformers reacted strongly to the perceived excesses of

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[100] Diocese of Oxford, "Unique Cathedral Service Remembers and Repents Historic Anti-Jewish Church Laws", 10th May 2022, https://www.oxford.anglican.org/synod-of-oxford-commemoration-service.php [Accessed 15/04/24]

[101] Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews*, p.109.

[102] Tzfrir Barzilay, "Early Accusations of Well Poisoning against Jews: Medieval Reality or Historiographical Fiction?" *Medieval Encounters* 22.5 (2016), 517–539.

[103] Rose, *Crusades, Blood Libels*, p. 211.

[104] Cecil Roth, "The Eastertide Stoning of the Jews and Its Liturgical Echoes," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 35.4 (1945), 361–370.

the Church at this time and these efforts were pivotal in recapturing what they believed to be the fundamental truths that marked the reformation - such as justification by faith and the need for wide access to the scriptures. However, the Augustinian legacy of supersessionism inherent in the amillennial system did not come under the scrutiny of the magisterial reformers and therefore the understanding of Israel as rejected and the church as the spiritual heir to the promises remained fully intact. Along with these doctrinal elements, the entrenched anti-Jewish sentiment across medieval Europe survived the reformation period. The reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546), himself formerly an Augustinian monk, initially seemed quite favourable towards the Jews, but when they did not accept the gospel in the manner he expected, Luther's disposition towards them changed. He drew upon a rich European heritage of anti-Jewish opinions and stereotypes, and even exceeded them with his own writings. His preaching often contained supersessionist views. He firmly believed that the Jews had been rejected by God and the destruction of the Temple was evidence of this fact. He frequently used language that appropriated the identity of Israel and applied it to the New Testament church:

> "[T]he Jews are no longer Israel… Those alone are the true Israel who have accepted the new covenant…"[105]

Michael Vlach also lists Luther as someone who subscribed to punitive supersessionism. For him, the destruction of Jerusalem (CE 70) was evidence that God had permanently rejected the nation of Israel:

> "Listen, Jew, are you aware that Jerusalem and your sovereignty, together with your temple and priesthood, have been destroyed for over 1460 years? ...For such terrible wrath of God is sufficient proof that they certainly must be in error…Therefore this wrath leads to the conclusion that the Jews are certainly rejected by God, and are not his people anymore, and he is also not their God anymore."[106]

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[105] *Luther's Works* (35:287-88; WA, DB 11:400) quoted in: Michael Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010) p. 57.

[106] Martin Luther. *On the Jews and their Lies* (1543) (Oregon: CPA Publishers) pg. 10-11 Accessed online at: https://archive.org/details/Luther_201906/page/n7/mode/2up?q=wrath

Luther's Augustinian background, his amillennial supersessionism and the cultural milieu of latent medieval European anti-Semitism surely contributed to his later antisemitic writings. As Kaplan notes:

> "Indeed, given his background as an Augustinian monk and the fact that in his early years he set out to reform rather than rupture the church, it is not surprising that Luther's theology toward the Jews was firmly rooted in medieval anti-Judaism."[107]

John Calvin (CE 1509-1564), another reformer, was much more temperate when compared to Luther's writings. However, he still held to the same Augustinian eschatology and often used extremely negative descriptions of the Jews, reminiscent of medieval antisemitic stereotypes, in his writings. One incident, in reference to a disagreement with a rabbinical scholar, elicited the following comment from Calvin:

> "I have had much conversation with many Jews – I have never seen either a drop of piety or a grain of truth or ingenuousness – nay, I have never found common sense in any Jew. But this fellow, who seems so sharp and ingenious, displays his own impudence to his great disgrace."[108]

During the reformation period there was a small movement towards belief in a national restoration of Israel. This begun with the more benign belief in an eschatological conversion of the Jewish people – this, over time, grew into the belief of national restoration to their land. Peter Martyr Vermigli's 1586 commentary on Romans argued at length that according to Romans 11 the Jewish people would experience a national salvation in the future. The famous Geneva Bible expressed similar sentiments a few years earlier in the study notes for Romans 11:26. Gruber has noted that "the probability is strong that Martyr's careful exposition of the eleventh chapter prepared the way for a general adoption amongst the English Puritans on a belief in the future conversion of the Jews."[109] This belief was accepted by numerous leading theologians of the late reformation period that undoubtedly laid the foundation for a later acceptance of full-scale restoration. Gribben comments:

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[107] Debra Kaplan. "Martin Luther and the Reformation" In *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism* ed. By S. Katz(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p. 277.

[108] John Calvin, 'Commentary on Daniel 2:44*,' Commentaries on the Prophet Daniel*. trans. Thomas Meyers, 1852 (Albany: Ages Digital Library, 1998).

[109] Daniel Gruber*, The Church and The Jews: The Biblical Relationship* (Springfield, MO: General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1991), p. 302.

> "This latter-day conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith was to become a staple component of subsequent puritan eschatology. But it is an expectation that is absent from the writings of the earlier reformers."[110]

It was not until the seventeenth century with the rise of the Puritan movement – especially those in England and the Netherlands, that millennial beliefs in the restoration of the Jews rose to prominence again in a major way – although they built upon the eschatological expectation of Jewish salvation from the late reformation period. This will be addressed in more detail under the topic of Christian Zionism.

Ie. The Modern Period (CE 1700 – Present)

For this thesis this period will encompass everything from the enlightenment to the present day. The last three centuries have witnessed a revival of belief in the restoration of the Jews and an increased focus on eschatology. The growing trend of European higher critics to apply a post-enlightenment rationalism to the scriptures, which operated with an anti-supernatural philosophy, elicited the rise of Fundamentalism within evangelical Christianity, particularly in the United States. Along with this came a re-evaluation of previously held hermeneutical methods. The allegorical interpretations that had for so long been dominant were beginning to be replaced by a return to premillennialism in some sectors of evangelicalism, although it remained far from being a majority position. The nineteenth century was an era of restorationist re-discovery and with it the supplanting of supersessionism with more Israel-focused versions of historicist postmillennialism and premillennialism.

The mid-nineteenth century also witnessed the rise of a new movement known as dispensationalism. This was firmly restorationist and its spread fostered great interest and expectation in the restoration of the Jews. Although early dispensationalists were not actively involved in the political world, their teaching would become so prevalent that it spread across denominational boundaries. Dispensationalists emphasized a distinction

[110] Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature & Theology, 1550–1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 39–40.

between Israel and the church and rejected supersessionism. They affirmed a future return of the Jews to the land of Israel and a place of prominence for Israel during the coming millennial kingdom. The popularity and influence of dispensational theology was accelerated across the United States by men like Cyrus I. Scofield, who produced the popular *Scofield Reference Bible*, and preachers like Dwight L. Moody. The rise of the Bible Conference movement along with a proliferation of books, Bible schools and teaching ministries led to a widespread acceptance of dispensational theology along with its strong emphasis on Israel and the Jewish people.[111]

Although this popular revival of premillennial expectation had meant many were more theologically attuned to expectations of Jewish return to the land, many mainstream denominations remained at odds with this unique version of dispensational premillennialism and continued to hold onto their supersessionist convictions. There were a number of events that started to impact the way the church viewed supersessionism. These included the rise of reform Judaism in the nineteenth century along with greater Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe due to the increasing persecution in the late nineteenth century. However, two twentieth century events in particular forced the church to confront its historical legacy of supersessionism on a larger scale. First, the tragic events of the Holocaust led to a period of soul-searching for Christianity. The tragic and premeditated murder of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis is surely one of the greatest crimes in history – more pointedly, this historical sin transpired in the heart of the Protestant homeland. Germany though was still religiously divided and most of the Holocaust actually happened in central and eastern Europe which still remained predominantly Catholic. Following this period, and upon reflection on these tragic events, a movement known as post-holocaust theology arose which further stigmatised the views of supersessionism and forced the church to re-examine its supersessionist assumptions. Williamson remarks that

[111] See chapter 3 'John Nelson Darby and Dispensationalism' in Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) Also see, Daniel Hummel, *The Rise & Fall of Dispensationalism: How the Evangelical Battle Over End Times Shaped a Nation* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmanns Publishing Co. 2023), Also see, Donald Harman Akenson, *The Americanization of the Apocalypse: Creating America's Own Bible* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

post-holocaust theology has led many theologians to "criticize the church's supersessionist ideology towards the Jews and Judaism."[112]

The second event was the 1948 re-establishment of the modern state of Israel in its ancient homeland after almost two thousand years. This has spawned decades of theological debate about the status of modern Israel and whether it has any theological implications. Commentators remain firmly divided. Futurists[113] have generally been ready to embrace the newly formed state as a thrilling fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Others, who disagree with futurist interpretations argue that the modern state of Israel has no relevance to biblical prophecy at all, and they remain ambiguous as to modern Israel's role today. Still others, such as Palestinian liberation theologians, see the establishment of the state of Israel as the mistaken creation of the Zionist enterprise. However, since that event the question of Israel has become an enduring theological discussion. These two events combined, within close succession to one another, forced the church to "revisit the teaching of supersessionism after nearly two thousand years."[114]

The attempts by post-holocaust theologians to actively remove any trace of supersessionism were admirable. For the most part their efforts did lead to a successful reappraisal of Christian theology in this area and an acknowledgement that this belief had contributed to antisemitism. In 1965 *Nostra Aetate* was issued by the Second Vatican Council to describe the Catholic Church's relationship with the Jewish people. This is an ongoing development in the arena of Christian theology. In 2015 the publication of "The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable" (G&C) by the Pontifical Commission for the Religious Relations with Jews (CRRJ) joined the movement to repudiate supersessionism. Tapie highlights the significance of this document:

> "Though Catholic teaching about Jews and Judaism after *Nostra Aetate* has developed according to what G&C refers to as a 'new theological framework' that emphasizes the positive and ongoing theological significance of God's covenant with

[112] C.M. Williamson, *A Guest in the house of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), p. 7.
[113] Futurists hold the view that the majority of Biblical prophecies in Revelation pertain to events that are yet to come.
[114] R Kendall Soulen. *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996), p. 10.

> the Jewish people, the CRRJ had not previously explicitly rejected supersessionism… G&C makes this rejection explicit."[115]

The most recent expression from a large denominational body comes from the Church of England. In 2019 the Church of England Faith and Order Commission published "God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian–Jewish Relations". It is the first time the Church of England had officially acknowledged the way Christian theology contributed to the antisemitic attitudes that eventually culminated in the Holocaust. In the document one of the key principles is stated as follows:

> "Christians have been guilty of promoting and fostering negative stereotypes of Jewish people that have contributed to grave suffering and injustice. They therefore have a duty to be alert to the continuation of such stereotyping and to resist it"[116]

The document is not addressing negative attitudes towards the Jewish people in general, but specifically concerned with how its own theological traditions may have contributed to this. With this in mind, Archbishop Justin Welby commented in reaction to the report that the finding that "the theological teachings of the church have in fact 'compounded the spread of the virus' of antisemitism is instructive."[117] Importantly, for us, the specific teaching that is purported to have motivated this teaching is associated with punitive supersessionism. The document states that:

> "The attribution of collective guilt to the Jewish people for the death of Christ and the consequent interpretation of their suffering as collective punishment sent by God is one very clear example of that [supersessionism]."[118]

This continued reflection upon supersessionism has developed into a new strand of theological inquiry that has taken the mantle of "Post-Supersessionism". This term has been defined in the following manner:

> "Post-supersessionism designates not a single viewpoint but a loose and partly conflicting family of theological perspectives that seeks to interpret the central affirmations of Christian faith in ways that do not state or imply the abrogation or

[115] Matthew Tapie, Christ, Torah, and the Faithfulness of God: The Concept of Supersessionism in "the Gifts and Calling " *SCJR* 12, no.1 2017. p. 1.
[116] God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian-Jewish Relations. The Faith and Order Commission (Church House Publishing, 2019), p. 14.
[117] Ibid
[118] Ibid

> obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people, that is, in ways that are not supersessionist. Positively expressed, a theology is post-supersessionist if it affirms the present validity of God's covenant with Israel as a coherent and indispensable part of the larger body of Christian teaching."[119]

Although such theological developments have been encouraging, the debate surrounding supersessionism is far from over. Just as the trend to "post-supersessionism" has been gaining traction, a new form of supersessionism has been rising alongside it. This has been motivated by the complicated backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The phenomenon of the re-establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 has facilitated the presence of a robust and vigorous strand of Christian Zionism within evangelicalism. This in turn has elicited the birth of a reactionary counter movement which is decisively anti-Zionist. This movement has been classified as "Christian Palestinianism" and is an "inverted mirror image of Christian Zionism."[120]

The ongoing tensions in the Middle East provided a fertile breeding ground for this new form of supersessionism which is a hybrid of traditional supersessionist doctrines mixed with Palestinian Liberation Theology. This synthesis has given birth to a novel form of supersessionism that has come to be known as "The New Supersessionism". The appearance of such a strong ideological form of supersessionism carries with it the risk of repeating many of the errors of the past and once again giving theological justification for anti-Judaic sentiment. One commentator suggests that the ancient doctrine of replacement theology, which had really only been suppressed for a season after the Holocaust, has now "been revived under the influence of the Middle East conflict".[121] Canon Andrew White, a Church of England Middle East representative, says the reason "is that Palestinian Christian revisionism has revived replacement theology. The catalyst for its re-emergence has been

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[119] R. Kendall Soulen, 'Post-Supersessionism' in *A Dictionary of Jewish Christian Relations Ed. By* Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 350.

[120]Paul Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the role of John Nelson Darby* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2007), p. 48.

[121] M. Phillips, 'Christians Who Hate Jews', *The Spectator*, 16 February 2002, http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/16th-february-2002/14/christians-who-hate-the-jews. [Accessed 17/05/24]

the attempt by Arab Christians to reinterpret the scripture in order to de-legitimize the Jews' claim to the Land".[122]

The influence of this New Supersessionism has been considerable in recent years. The movement operates internationally and is supported by theologians, political activists, and charities of all stripes. It is important for historians and theologians to carefully examine it. If it is a revival of the more punitive versions of supersessionism mixed with a strong political ideology, it could be the catalyst for a modern resurgence of theological antisemitism.

This brief survey of the chronological development of supersessionism has provided the contextual background to the movement. It has demonstrated that supersessionism has been prevalent in the church, both Protestant and Catholic, since its early days and has risen and fallen at various times due to a number of factors that can include events relating to politics, theology, and hermeneutics. With this background it is now necessary to explore further the various nuances that exist within the different versions of supersessionism itself to fully understand the movement.

II. Major Forms and Variations within Supersessionism

Although there is a broad agreement within supersessionist theology that national Israel has been superseded by the Christian church, and thus no longer maintains any unique status, supersessionism as a whole is not monolithic. This means that any critical analysis will run the risk of overgeneralising and misrepresenting the particular nuances that exist among those who maintain some form of supersessionism. For example, there is a strand of supersessionism that simultaneously adopts replacement language by affirming that the church is the "new Israel", yet also retains the belief that there is a future for national Israel. This usually takes the form of an eschatological event whereby a remnant of Jews will be saved and subsumed into the Christian church. [123]

There is thus a spectrum within supersessionism itself. Many proponents hold to a soft form of supersessionism, being convinced from the scriptures that the church is either

[122] Ibid

[123] See Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003).

incorporated into an expanded Israel or is now in some way united with all believers into a 'spiritual Israel'. Often advocates of soft supersessionism will be equally opposed to the hard forms of supersessionism that combine the theological belief that the Jews have been cast aside due to their wickedness with a strong anti-Zionist narrative, a view that is pervasive within the New Supersessionism today.

Whilst demonstrating that the issue of definition is complex and that critical investigation must proceed with clarity and avoid overgeneralisations, it does provide a good illustration of just how complex the topic can become at the theological level and why we need to contextualise the historical development of supersessionism in order to adequately understand its contemporary expressions.

As the chronological survey demonstrates, supersessionism has existed as a theological construct from early patristic times and survives well into the modern era. Throughout history it has been the subject of debate in various forms. However, it has only recently been subject to sustained critique and theological inquiry following the events of the twentieth century such as the Holocaust and the establishment of the modern state of Israel. Perhaps the most formative contemporary works that identify the differences within supersessionism are *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* by R. Kendall Soulen and to a lesser degree, N.T. Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Wright is a significant figure in New Testament studies and Pauline scholarship, so his views must be examined. Wright himself dislikes the term supersessionism, stating that it is "so readily flung around these days at anyone who has the temerity to say anything like what Paul was actually saying, [it] needs (to say the least) to be clarified".[124] Wright goes on to clarify by distinguishing between three varieties: (1) 'Hard' supersessionism; (2) 'sweeping' supersessionism and (3) 'Jewish' supersessionism.[125]

'Hard' supersessionism, according to Wright, is found amongst some members of the early Christian community who had disregarded Paul's warnings against gentile arrogance (Romans 11). They taught that the Jews had been permanently cast off as the people of God and this position has now been given to gentile believers. Wright concludes that such a

[124] N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols (London: SPCK 2013), p. 806.
[125] Ibid.

belief does not feature in contemporary biblical scholarship, especially in a post-holocaust context. Indeed, other researchers take Wright's dismissal as evidence that such a belief is only "a hypothetical position"[126] rather than still held. I would urge caution in relegating the impact of this view into history. It may be true that theology in the post-holocaust context uses greatly tempered language – but as our historical survey showed there is no denying that such hard forms of supersessionism existed in the early church and continued through the Middle Ages and into the reformation period. Such a long theological tradition is bound to leave its mark on contemporary expressions which undoubtedly draw insights from its pervasive historical legacy.

The second type of supersessionism mentioned by Wright is termed 'sweeping' supersessionism. This "is the sweeping claim that, in line with a certain style of post-Barthian (and perhaps post-liberal) theology, that what happened in Jesus constituted such a radical inbreaking or 'invasion' into the world that it rendered redundant anything and everything that had gone before".[127] This view is differentiated from the first due to the denial of any historical continuity between Israel and the church. Wright comments, "it isn't that 'Israel' has 'turned into the church', but rather that Israel, and everything else prior to the apocalyptic announcement of the gospel, has been swept aside by the fresh revelation".[128] Wright, however, also rejects this type of supersessionism.

The third type, Wright calls 'Jewish supersessionism' where the emphasis is placed upon covenant renewal and fulfilment. In Wright's own words:

> "This is the claim that the creator God has acted at last, in surprising but prophecy fulfilling ways, to launch his renewed covenant, to call a new people who are emphatically in continuity with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to pour out his sprit afresh upon them, to enable them to keep Torah in the new way he had always envisaged and to assure them that he and his angels were present with them in their worship (even though they were not in the Jerusalem Temple) and that their united community was to be seen as the real focal point of 'Israel'". [129]

[126] Philip La Grange du Toit, 'Is Replacement Theology Anti-Semitic?', *In Die Skriflig* 54(1), a2536. 2020.
[127] N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness,* pp. 807-808.
[128] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, p. 808.
[129] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness,* p. 809.

It is this particular version of supersessionism that Wright associates with the sectarian beliefs of the Qumran community. They saw themselves as a new community in continuity with greater Israel but specifically as the "new Israel", a subset of the larger group that had not succumbed to the general apostasy of the nation. Wright argues that unlike the first two versions, which clearly advocate a definite replacement of Israel with something new, this sort of thinking offers a much more "characteristically Jewish note of fulfilment".[130] Wright's proposal is that "Paul's revision of the Jewish view of election was more or less of the same type as what we find at Qumran".[131] Thus through a "revision" of concepts like Jewish election, the identification of Israel has come to its fruition and the promises have found their fulfilment in the Messiah, the seed of Abraham. Those who follow Jesus, both Jewish and Gentile, are now seen as the true Israel going forward, just as the Qumran sect saw themselves as the true Israel. He can now argue that the church is the continuation of Israel. As one reviewer said about a debate where Wright spoke on this subject, "Wright planted this idea of an 'acceptable' supersessionism among the audience at the debate."[132] This is the idea he also perpetuates in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*.

The specific textual justification for Wright's line of argumentation comes from Romans 2:17-20. He seems to pre-empt the pushback when he states: "The claim could of course be challenged: *your* idea of 'fulfilment' doesn't fit with *ours*, or the events that *you* claim constitute 'fulfilment' don't look like what *we* expected to see under that heading, and therefore your claim is falsified".[133] This is precisely the question – does this explanation of 'fulfilment' concur with the biblical authors' understanding of fulfilment? Does this allow for the promises given to Israel to be expanded to the church without violating the content of the promises in such a way as to make them unrecognisable to the original recipients? Specifically, a critical question that will have bearing on the matter of Israel is whether all the 'promises' find their fulfilment, under Wright's conception of it, at the first advent of Christ – or whether some of them await fulfilment at the second advent? Ultimately, those who hold to this perspective do affirm that many promises await fulfilment at the second

[130] Wright*, Paul and the Faithfulness*, p. 810.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Deborah Pardo-Kaplan, 'Historic Debate Addresses the Future of the Jewish People: N.T. Wright and Mark Kinzer Meet'. *Kesher Journal of Messianic Judaism* (July 21st, 2020).
[133] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, p. 810.

advent, however they also assert that these promises have been revised and reinterpreted to such a degree that they are almost unrecognisable from when they were given – which seems a little disingenuous. However, this is exactly the line of argumentation that Wright takes.

Overall, Wright prefers this last version of supersessionism, whilst making it clear that he does not agree that this "somewhat sneering term"[134] should be applied to this view. His tri-fold classifications fail to paint a full picture of how ingrained supersessionism is in Christian theology. For him one version does not really exist anymore, the second is around but easily dismissed, and the third should not really be called supersessionism at all. As an alternative, the different forms of supersessionism outlined by R. Kendall Soulen paint a much more comprehensive picture that will be followed here.

In his work Soulen defines three distinct variations of supersessionism: (1) punitive, (2) economic and (3) structural supersessionism. This tri-fold classification has become standard when describing the distinctions used in the assessment of supersessionism. Recent work by other scholars have added two more types of supersessionism that are worth mentioning; first, 'territorial supersessionism' as proposed by Barry Horner in *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged*. Second is the proposal by Robert Benne, in an article for *First Things Journal,* that coined the phrase 'political supersessionism' – however, this is really just a part of the New Supersessionism rather than a separate variation in and of itself.

II.a. Punitive Supersessionism

This variation, sometimes labelled "retributive" supersessionism, focuses on Israel's disobedience and rebellion, seeing it as the catalyst for divine retribution and the primary cause for their rejection. As demonstrated in the chronological survey it is possible to trace a clear line of punitive supersessionism through much of church history. On this view the continued wickedness perpetrated by Israel in rebellion against God's divine commands means the nation has forfeited the right to be God's elect people and representatives on the earth. As Soulen puts it, "God abrogates God's covenant with Israel (which is already in

[134] Ibid.

principle outmoded) on account of Israel's rejection of Christ and the gospel…because the Jews obstinately reject God's actions in Christ, God in turn angrily rejects and punishes the Jews".[135] Such sentiments were found early in the patristic writings as previously demonstrated in the examples from Justin Martyr. In the centuries that followed the apostolic period, the early church developed an *Adversos Judaeos* tradition that consisted of a growing collection of polemical works aimed at the Jews. Punitive supersessionism dichotomised the growing disparity between the synagogue and the church so much that "the Jewish people became the embodiment of all that is unredeemed, perverse, stubborn, evil, and demonic in this world".[136]

In the third century, bishop of Carthage Cyprian (CE 210-258) produced the three volume treatise *Testimonies Against the Jews* which consists of a compilation of amorphous texts regarding the church's position on Judaism and Christianity. In book one he lists the following points:

1.1) That the Jews have fallen under the heavy wrath of God because they have forsaken the Lord, and have followed idols.

1.2) That the Jews should lose Jerusalem and should leave the land which they had received.[137]

The third-century father Hippolytus of Rome (CE 170-235) wrote in his *Treatise Against the Jews:*

> "Furthermore, hear this yet more serious word: 'And their back do thou bend always;' that means, in order that they may be slaves to the nations, not four hundred and thirty years as in Egypt, nor seventy as in Babylon, but bend them to servitude, he says, 'always'."[138]

Such denunciations of Jewish identity continued into fourth-century Christendom, to the point that:

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[135] Soulen, *The God of Israel*, p. 30.

[136] Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Antisemitism* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock 1995), p. 13.

[137] Cyprian, Testimonies Against the Jews Book 1, in *Anti-Nicene Fathers Vol 5. Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian*. Accessed at Christian Classics Ethereal Library 06/01/20 http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iv.v.xii.ii.xvii.html.

[138] "Treatise Against the Jews 6" in Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 5. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1886).

> "the Jew as he is encountered in the pages of fourth-century writers is not a human being at all. He is a 'monster', a theological abstraction, of superhuman cunning and malice, and more than superhuman blindness."[139]

Such polemical manifestations of punitive supersessionism are not confined to the patristic or medieval eras. As we noted in the historical survey these views can also be seen in the writings of the reformers.

Aside from the obvious theological concerns that are raised by such aggressive forms of supersessionism, it is impossible to deny the strong anti-Judaic tones that accompany these doctrines. History is witness to the fact that these strong forms of supersessionism provide a fertile breeding ground for anti-Judaic activities.[140]

II.b. Economic Supersessionism

Soulen's second form of supersessionism, "economic supersessionism" is more subtle than punitive supersessionism and therefore often goes unnoticed, although the two share many similarities and it is not uncommon to find single authors displaying tenets of both forms in their writings. Tapie briefly summarises the relationship by highlighting that they share the conclusion that the church has replaced Israel, yet they differ as to the process by which that conclusion is reached. He states:

> "Economic supersessionism assumes the Jews are no longer God's elect because the Jewish Law is fulfilled and obsolete. Punitive supersessionism assumes that Jews are no longer God's elect because God is punishing them for rejecting Christ."[141]

In this view the entire history of Israelite religion serves a preparatory role in the larger redemptive picture. Accordingly, the unique place and purpose of Israel as God's elect nation was always intended to expire with the messianic arrival and the establishment of His new order – the church. Vlach states: "with this form of supersessionism, national Israel corresponds to Christ's church in merely a prefigurative and carnal way".[142] Of course, this is

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[139] James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York: Atheneum 1983), p.158.
[140] Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986).
[141] Tapie, *Christ, Torah*, pp.1-18.
[142] Vlach, *Has the Church*, p.14.

intended to juxtapose Israel with the church, which now corresponds to Jesus in a direct, spiritual and permanent way. Soulen describes economic supersessionism as follows:

> "Everything that characterized the economy of salvation in Israelite form becomes obsolete and is replaced by its ecclesial equivalent. The written law of Moses is replaced by the spiritual law of Christ, circumcision by baptism, natural descent by faith as criterion of membership…as a result, carnal Israel becomes obsolete."[143]

Interestingly, Soulen's description of economic supersessionism seems to build upon the early work of French historian and Holocaust survivor Jules Isaac (1877-1963). In Isaac's most influential work *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Antisemitism* (1962, translated into English in 1964) the term "supersessionism" is used in a way that seeks to highlight the many problematic ways that Christian teaching viewed the Mosaic Law and Israel after the coming of Christ. Isaac sought to expose the ingrained narrative that had formed within Christian polemics which viewed Judaism, and often by extension the Jews themselves, as a degenerate carnal people. This is then given as the reason why they had such an attachment to the "Old Law".

Isaac states:

> "This contention has its source in the earliest Judeo-Christian controversies over the Torah - the Law of Moses – and its observances. The Christian apologists maintained that with the coming of Christ, the Law had been fulfilled and superseded. They taught that the Jews were attached to the letter and not the spirit of the Law because they were carnal beings, blinded by Satan, incapable of understanding their own scriptures."[144]

Such a viewpoint is much more subtle than punitive supersessionism. Economic supersessionism need not display an overtly hostile attitude toward Israel and the Jews, one which is easily identified and repudiated, rather it can continue to survive and flourish by sheltering within the lofty nesting ground of theological prose and the doctrinal classifications already well established within Christendom. The medieval concept of *cessatio legalium* (cessation of the law) provided an established theological language that could shelter this form of supersessionism. The complexity of the discussion regarding the

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[143] Soulen, *The God of Israel*, p.29.

[144] Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism.* Translated by Weaver Helen. 1st ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1964), p.75.

place of the law does necessitate careful reading – for much of the language in the literature of the medieval church was grappling not primarily with the identity of Israel per se, but rather with the function of the Old Testament Law for the church. The classic thirteenth-century work by Robert Grosseteste *On the Cessation of the Laws* is representative of this period. In this work Grosseteste "seems to be writing for Christians who, he thinks, are too sympathetic with Jewish practices" [145] and who thus argue that the Law is still applicable for the church. Grosseteste responds to those who still believe that the OT law must be observed by refuting their argument and affirming that the law was made void by Christ.[146]

Of course, such arguments have been present since the early church, even in Paul's letters. During the reformation it was frequently argued that baptism was the Christian equivalent to circumcision. Attempts have been made to split the Law into three distinct categories: the ceremonial law, the dietary law, and the moral law. Theologians still argue amongst themselves about which parts, if any, are still operative today.[147] Much is often made of this issue in debates surrounding human sexuality and the validity of Old Testament prohibitions regarding types of sexual practices. So, although many of the issues did not directly focus on the question of Israel, it often lay a little further down the theological stream.

The implications taken from arguments about the cessation of the Law would leave a question over the continuing validity of the nation to whom the Laws were given – What now became of them? The arguments for the cessation of the Law fit easily within a framework of economic supersessionism and were naturally assumed as the interpretive backdrop for such discussions. By operating firmly within the confines of established theological language, economic supersessionism can quietly eradicate any theological distinctions between Jew and Gentile without raising alarm. It is then free to simply apply the terminology formerly designating the carnal and ethnic "old Israel" to the "new Israel", a universal spiritual community in which all distinct identity markers have been rendered obsolete. It is this subtle abrogation that caused Soulen to state that "economic supersessionism poses a far more difficult problem for Christian theology today…it logically

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[145] Robert Grosseteste, *On the Cessation of the Laws*, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (Washington: Catholic University Press 2012), p.15.
[146] Ibid p.27.
[147] Matthew A. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church: The Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), pp. 109–35.

entails the ontological, historical, and moral obsolescence of Israel's existence after Christ".[148]

Theologians who adopt this viewpoint understand the "old Israel" as being nothing more than a preparatory apparatus which will find its ultimate consummation in the "new Israel". The old Israel is associated with the Old Covenant and the new Israel formed with the commencement of the New Covenant. The old Israel was a carnal entity consisting only of physical Israelites, now the new Israel has been universalised into the church. These interpretations draw on biblical texts such as Galatians 4 which contrasts the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem using the imagery of Hagar and Sarah. Such language and theological constructs will lead to one definite conclusion: The Jewish people and the nation of Israel represent a form of the kingdom which has been superseded by the church and thus retains no special significance in the ongoing plan of redemption. Her role has been fulfilled. To speak of "Israel" from a theological perspective now means the church. This transformation is engrained within much theological thought. Martin Luther comments:

> "The Jews make a point of the name Israel and claim that they alone are Israel and we are Gentiles. Those alone are the true Israel who have accepted the new covenant, which was established and begun at Jerusalem." [149]

The issue of the place of the Law, whether it was done away with by the death of Christ (cf. Romans 10:4) or is an ongoing concern for Christians today, is an important theological topic that intersects with the issue of supersessionism. The majority of Christian traditions overwhelmingly agree that the Mosaic Law is no longer applicable for the church in its totality and therefore this move from the Old Testament era to the New Testament era could be classed as a valid case of supersessionism – one superseding the other. However, although the Law is directly attached to the nation of Israel, it is not the foundation for their existence – which comes from the covenants made with the patriarchs. Therefore, one does not have to equate the end of the Law with the end of the purpose for Israel as a nation in the biblical narrative. Regardless of whether one believes the whole Law or just the moral

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[148] Soulen, *The God of Israel*, p. 30.

[149] Martin Luther, *The Bible and the Jewish People*, *A Reader*, Ed. Brooks Schramm and Kirsi. I. Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012), p. 158.

portions of it still apply, the question of Israel's purpose in the plan of God still remains to be answered.

II.c. Structural Supersessionism

The third form of supersessionism given by Soulen is "structural supersessionism". This warrants more attention as it is primarily a perspective derived from hermeneutical considerations when interpreting the Jewish scriptures, rather than being simply a theological assertion about the place of Israel in Christian theology. This fact makes it much harder to deal with as it means engaging with the deeply ingrained bias against the Old Testament that is found within the church from at least the second century. As Soulen puts it:

> "the problem of supersessionism in Christian theology goes beyond the explicit teaching that the church has displaced Israel as God's people in the economy of salvation. At a deeper level, the problem of supersessionism coincides with the way in which Christians have traditionally understood the theological narrative unity of the Christian canon as a whole."[150]

Structural supersessionism rests upon what Soulen identifies as the 'standard canonical narrative', which is the interpretative framework formulated by Christians in their approach to unifying the Old and New Testament canons. The standard narrative is a truncated history of God's interaction with the world and is centred around four key events: (1) The creation of the physical universe, and the creation of Adam and Eve, (2) their subsequent disobedience and the Fall, (3) the cross of Christ and redemption of humanity, (4) the eschatological consummation. This fourfold narrative can be found almost universally across ancient and contemporary works on Christian theology. Soulen traces the origins of this standard canonical narrative back into the second century to the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. Such a narrative may have served a number of polemical purposes within the religio-historical context of the second century. It provided a logical narrative of scripture that gave the church its own distinct identity against the many varied claims of its theological opponents at the time, namely Jews and pagans of different strands, particularly Gnosticism.

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[150] Soulen, *The God of Israel*, p. 33.

Although such a narrative provided an impressive hermeneutical outline that could be easily remembered and applied in polemical situations, there are a number of more problematic conclusions that flow out of it. The fourfold structure led to a certain way of understanding the overall message of the Bible in the church's mind. Based as it was around four key events (creation, fall, redemption, and consummation), these now represented the entire story of Christianity to those who espoused the narrative and function as a structural overview. The immediate problem from this narrative being offered as a comprehensive retelling of the Christian story is that it began with Creation in Genesis 1, moved to the Fall in Genesis 3, then leapfrogged over the entire Old Testament canon until the arrival of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew.[151] To understand the scriptures in this way means that "Israel's story contributes little or nothing to understanding how God's consummating and redemptive purposes engage human creation in a universal and enduring way."[152]

This should be seen as the Achilles heel of the standard narrative. To relegate almost the entire Old Testament canon to the background of the narrative, one that could almost be omitted without altering the main plot of the story, results in flawed theological conclusions and reflections concerning the role and purpose of the nation of Israel. Structurally the standard narrative allows only for Israel to operate, at best, as a type or prefiguring of what is to come. I agree with Soulen's conclusion that "as a result, God's identity as the God of Israel and God's history with the Jewish people become largely indecisive for the Christian conception of God."[153]

The demotion of Israel's history to the background of the narrative has often meant that practically the church today struggles to find a place for much of the Old Testament in its theology. Historically, the terminology of Old Testament and New Testament, with the Old being associated with the Jews, and the New being associated with the gentile Christian church, creates a dichotomy that has permeated much of Christian theology. Patristic writers often spoke of the Jews as rejected and the church as the new people of God. Irenaeus states:

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[151] Although recognition is still given to the messianic promises progressively revealed through the Old Testament.

[152] Soulen, *The God of Israel*, p. 32

[153] Soulen, *The God of Israel*, p. 33.

> "for in as much as the former [Jews] have rejected the Son of God, and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him, God has justly rejected them, and given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation." [154]

Such statements are anticipatory of the standard model and make Jewish identity and ethnicity fade into the background of the narrative. They will become obsolete after serving their preparatory function. Christians are thus predisposed to place all of this under the category "Old" and contrast it with everything found in the "New". It has been pointed out that due to the dominance this terminology has had in Christian theology, "Christians are often semantically preconditioned to regard the Hebrew Bible as inferior or antiquated in relation to the new".[155]

Wilson goes on to expand this line of thought, further explaining that Christians have been historically influenced to think pejoratively about the Old Testament because negative terms such as "superseded", "abrogated" or "annulled" have been associated with it. This unfamiliarity with the Old Testament has historically led many Christians to become uncomfortable with its content. This in turn has led to a number of proposed solutions to "the problem of the Old Testament".[156]

While much of the literature that looks at this issue is not primarily concerned about the identity of Israel and the Jews, but more with the character of God as reflected in the divine directives found in the Old Testament, the question of identity must sooner or later be addressed. Wilson warns of the danger of this way of thinking commenting that if such a hermeneutic is used, "the nation of Israel, God's covenant people, tended to evaporate spiritually and be replaced by the church. In addition, the extensive and excessive application and considerable misuse of the allegorical and Christological method tended to render the Old Testament and Israel as little more than the launching pad for Christianity". Thus, he concludes that, "vestiges of neo-marcionistic thinking continue to plague the

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[154] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 36.2.

[155] Marvin R. Wilson, *Exploring our Hebraic Heritage: A Christian Theology of Roots and Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2014), p.26.

[156] Duane A. Garrett, *The Problem of Old Testament Theology: Hermeneutical, Schematic, and Theological Approaches* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020).

church, especially in various expressions of Judeophobia, antisemitism. And anti-Zionism".[157]

Such thinking has left the church with a theology that cannot fully incorporate a place for ethnic Israel, other than to simply become Christians. This theological identity crisis ran concurrently with the proliferation of supersessionist doctrines throughout church history and still exists today. The witness doctrine of Augustine outlined earlier is a good example of this line of thinking in the church. Notwithstanding Fredriksen's conclusion that Augustine's unique approach to Psalm 59 ultimately "would safeguard Jewish lives",[158] the subjugated position afforded by Augustinian theology still left the door open for mistreatment in other ways.

This Augustinian legacy is not just a footnote in historical theology, it still exerts considerable influence on many theologians today. Those Christian traditions that took the mantle of Augustine in matters relating to eschatology and Israel still suffer from the same identity problem concerning Israel as the early church fathers did. Reformed theology is in many ways is "a form of Augustinian theology".[159] This exegetical legacy found its way into the Reformed theology of the sixteenth century and from there continues to be present today. Reformed theologian B.B. Warfield states that, "the system of doctrine taught by Calvin is just the Augustinianism common to the whole body of reformers."[160] This stream of theology is overwhelmingly supersessionist, in line with the standard model, which often manifests in an unfamiliarity or lack of concern for Jewish identity and God's role for Israel in the redemptive metanarrative. Although thankfully contemporary Reformed scholars would not use the "witness doctrine" for the same practical ends in a post-Holocaust world, many nonetheless still hold onto the theological foundation provide by Augustine, as will become clear as we proceed.

Such theology leaves much to be desired. If the ideas outlined above are true – then what becomes of the Jews? It is very easy to see how one moves from this to the "witness

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[157] Wilson, *Exploring our Hebraic*, p.27. Marcionism rejected the God of the Old Testament, seeing Jesus as in opposition to, rather than continuity with, him.
[158] Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews,* p.352.
[159] R.A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree* (Durham: Labyrinth 1986), p. 176.
[160] Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1956), p. 22.

wandering" of Augustine, or worse, the *Adversos Judaeos* tradition and the social and civil restrictions placed on Jews throughout the world at this time.

This chapter has now provided key contextual background information for understanding traditional supersessionism. The chronological survey has demonstrated that supersessionism appeared very early in church history and along with it there was often an increase in anti-Judaic literature and behaviour. I have shown that supersessionism itself is a variegated position and there are multiple nuances among adherents. The three most common designations of supersessionism, punitive, economic, and structural, have been clearly explained to aid understanding as we progress to look at the most recent developments of the movement. These three variations reach the same conclusion – that national Israel no longer retains a unique identity and purpose in the plan of God, but they utilise different methods in getting to this conclusion. Supersessionism can be accepted by believing that the Jewish people have been rejected due to their rejection of the Messiah, this belief often accompanies the more anti-Judaic expressions. Or supersessionism can develop because of the belief that the Jewish people as an elect nation have served their purpose and that their position has been given to the church. Finally, supersessionism can come as a result of hermeneutics – the way the canonical narrative is understood. It has been necessary to fully understand the historical development of supersessionism and its various formulations because as we progress to examine the New Supersessionism we shall see that there are elements of all these within it. Being able to identify these will allow us to also identify what is an addition to this new movement and whether there is enough to significantly categorise it as novel.

With this contextual background in place, and an understanding of the chronological development of supersessionism, we can begin to examine the growth of the New Supersessionism. The next chapter will continue to analyse the New Supersessionism itself as well as identifying specifically the new areas that it contains and how these have impacted the movement as a whole. This will include an examination of the political and hermeneutical landscape, especially as it has been affected by the contemporary post-1948 history of the Middle East.

Chapter 2 - The New Supersessionism

This chapter will lay out the main elements of the New Supersessionism. The first half will focus on highlighting the unique ideological roots that form the foundation of the New Supersessionism. This will show that the New Supersessionism is not a monolithic movement but has absorbed components from various disciplines into its construction. These include Palestinian nationalism, liberation theology, critical theory, and a strong aversion to Christian Zionism. Once these have been properly explained and shown to clearly be a part of the New Supersessionism, the second part of the chapter will seek to demonstrate how these elements actually impact the theology, hermeneutics, and politics of this movement.

The most significant ideological influence on the New Supersessionism comes from the movement that has been classified as 'Christian Palestinianism'. This term was coined by Paul Wilkinson in his 2007 book *For Zions Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby*, where he observes that almost every belief of the new supersessionists is the exact opposite to Christian Zionism. It can thus be seen as a reactionary movement that arose to counter the influence of Christian Zionism.[161] This movement advocates for a pro-Palestinian narrative by utilizing arguments from both Palestinian nationalism and liberation theology. Therefore, the focus of this part of the movement is concentrated mainly on the current situation in Israel, particularly the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. The Palestinian narrative sees the 1948 establishment of Israel not as something to be celebrated but as a day to mourn. It is referred to as *Al Nakba* – the catastrophe, and it is commemorated on May 15th every year, the day after the celebration of Israeli Independence. The *Nakba* commemorates the day when Israeli troops dispossessed indigenous Palestinians of their ancient homeland, which has remained under Israeli occupation ever since. This political narrative now shapes the theology held by proponents of Christian Palestinianism, which is a broad ecumenical group of Christians from the Middle East. One influence prominent among these proponents is liberation theology. Cathey notes

[161] Paul Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the role of John Nelson Darby* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2007).

that since the 1960s "radically creative and subversive ways of enacting and communicating Jesus of Nazareth's message of emancipation have emerged around the planet that have become grouped under the controversial heading of 'liberation theology'". He argues that this developed in the Palestinian context through Naim Ateek who he calls the "theological pioneer" of Christian Palestinian Liberation Theology.[162] This political influence can be illustrated with 'The Jerusalem Statement on Christian Zionism', released in 2006 by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michael Sabbah along with the leaders of the Orthodox, Episcopal and Lutheran churches in Jerusalem:

> "The Christian Zionist programme provides a worldview where the Gospel is identified with the ideology of empire, colonialism and militarism. In its extreme form, it places an emphasis on apocalyptic events leading to the end of history rather than living Christ's love and justice today. We categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliation… With urgency we warn that Christian Zionism and its alliances are justifying colonization, apartheid and empire-building."[163]

This political theology has been disseminated and picked up by various denominations and organisations across the world – almost every institution that wades into the often-murky water of the Middle East conflict forms an opinion on this issue. Often, opinions on the Middle East are shaped by an overly simplistic interpretation of the region's history. This in turn influences theology and activism. Depictions of Israel as the quintessential oppressor, a brutal regime that is guilty of many crimes against humanity is propagated through this narrative and given justification in the theological world through the use of liberation theology applied to the Palestinian context. When presented in simple binaries of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed', this narrative can be very persuasive – it is logical to stand with those who are being oppressed. To fully grasp the ideological undercurrents of the movement these influential strands must be examined.

I. Sabeel, Palestinian Liberation Theology and Critical Theory

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[162] Robert A. Cathey, "Where We Live, What We Believe: Thinking Contextually with Ateek, Rahab, and Gregerman about Israel/Palestine" in) *Peace and Faith: Christian Churches and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* ed. By Cary Nelson and Michael Gizzi (Philadelphia & Boston: Presbyterians for Middle East Peace, 2021), pp. 258-259.

[163] "The Jerusalem Statement on Christian Zionism" Accessed at: https://int.icej.org/media/jerusalem-declaration-christian-zionism. [Accessed 10/09/24]

The major institution responsible for promoting Christian Palestinianism internationally is the Palestinian Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre, popularly known as Sabeel and founded by Naim Ateek in 1994. Ateek's work has been extremely influential in developing the theology of Christian Palestinianism and the New Supersessionism. Deeply moved by the events of the first Intifada, Ateek published *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (1989) in which he seeks to set Palestinian Liberation Theology "in the context of other liberation theologies from around the world."[164] Liberation Theology can be traced to Gustavo Gutierrez's work *A Theology of Liberation* (1971). However, many of the fundamental tenets of liberation theology actually predate this and are found within the multidisciplinary field of critical theory. Critical theory as a discipline goes back to the Frankfurt school in the 1930s and was already well established in Latin America at the time Gutierrez wrote.[165]

Defined broadly, critical theory is an ideological framework that tends to divide the world through power differentials and thus through a binary oppressor and oppressed narrative.[166] According to critical theory this oppression is usually perpetuated by the exercise of hegemonic power. As a theoretical paradigm, critical theory dominates much of the discourse in academia surrounding the social justice movement. Liberation is a consistent theme in the writings of critical theorists. Paulo Freire comments, "Since it is a concrete situation that the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is established, the resolution of this contradiction must be objectively verifiable. Hence, the radical requirement – both for the individual who discovers himself or herself to be an oppressor and for the oppressed – that the concrete situation which begets oppression must be transformed."[167] The liberation of oppressed groups as defined by critical theory is the meaning given to the term social justice. Oppression occurs not so much by overt acts of violence, for example by a military dictatorship, but more by the dominant group's hegemonic discourse. Hegemony refers to the control of the ideology of society. As DiAngelo confirms, "the dominant group

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[164] *Sabeel Newsletter Issue 1: Spring 1994*.http://www.sabeel.org/datadir/en-events/ev19/files/Issue%201.pdf p. 5. [Accessed 10/09/24]

[165] Robin DiAngelo, Ozlem Sensoy. *Is Everyone really Equal? An Introduction in Key Concepts in Social Justice Education* (New York: Teachers College Press 2017), p. 25.

[166] Ibid. p. 64 See Also: Dino Felluga, *Critical Theory: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[167] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Edition (The Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, 2005), p. 50.

maintains power by imposing their ideology on everyone."[168] In this framework the concept of power is closely linked to the principle of hegemony. Power does not speak of the tyrannical power used by a regime to control a population, which is more in line with the traditional usage, but "power in the context of understanding social justice refers to the ideological, technical, and discursive elements by which those in authority impose their ideas and interests on everyone."[169]

The concept of hegemony goes back to Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) whose intent was to produce a theoretical framework to account for how power structures operated within modern capitalist societies. Marmura states that "most contemporary accounts of hegemony assume that political struggle and ideological contestation among an indeterminate and shifting range of institutionalised and grassroots actors is ongoing within industrialised societies."[170] Marmura goes on to describe the perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as "the struggle for hegemony" which is where two competing groups strive to gain favour with the public and achieve cultural and political dominance over the other. There are many tools that the groups engaged in the struggle use – the media and internet being powerful ones at present.

One does not have to read too far into the literature of Palestinian theology before coming across very similar themes. Palestinian hermeneutics has been described as a "critical movement that emerges during…the later 1980's and 1990's, and that is resolutely liberationist at heart – reveals manifold points of contact with a number of such new approaches and agendas."[171] This approach is replete with liberationist themes drawn from the framework of critical theory. In a volume entitled *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation: Towards a new hermeneutic of liberation* we find this statement, "We may call the global hegemonic power-knowledge nexus that re-inscribes on bodies, texts, and

[168] Robin DiAngelo, Ozlem Sensoy, *Is Everyone really Equal? An Introduction in Key Concepts in Social Justice Education* (New York: Teachers College Press 2017), p. 73.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Stephen M. E. Marmura, *Hegemony in the Digital Age: The Arab/Israeli Conflict Online* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), p. 6.
[171] Fernando F. Segovia, 'Addressing the Palestinian Theological-Critical Project as Liberation' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation* (ed. Mitri Raheb) (Diyar, Bethlehem, 2012), p. 30.

practices as empire…empire expresses its hegemony in terms of 'network power'."[172] Raheb utilizes this theme of Empire in his writings too. Speaking of European Christian theologians, he says:

> "they continue to operate within the logical framework of the empire. Some of them have even planted Christian Zionist cells in Jerusalem to speak on behalf of the native Christians, which only ends up disseminating propaganda for the Israeli state. Many Western Christians become like a 'fifth brigade', located within the Church of Jerusalem but really designed to fight on behalf of the Israeli state." [173]

When theological positions are viewed through the lens of liberation theology and its binary narrative those who hold to any differing perspective become tools of the oppressors – and so it is that those Christians who acknowledge a future purpose for Israel and are actively supporting projects in the land, are pejoratively branded as "Christian Zionists" and charged with being responsible for placing an enemy "cell" in hostile territory by putting their fellow Zionists in the land. Liberation theology even extracts narratives from the Hebrew Bible to apply to the modern state – whilst at the same time reversing the characters so that the persecutors of Israel in the Bible are now associated with the Jews of today. Uruguayan liberation theologian De Santa Ana is typical, commenting that what Israel does today is analogous to "taking the Pharaoh's side against the Hebrew slaves"[174] describing the Israelites who had been freed at the Exodus as being consumed with "nationalist and exclusive aspirations"[175] once they got into the land. It is easy to see how he then creates a parallel with the modern situation and the Jews who migrated to Israel from the diaspora who they claim have also succumbed to nationalism and Jewish exclusivism. Raheb makes a similar claim "how close is the parallel between Pharoah's policy and Israel's!"[176] Ateek also looks to OT events to support the Palestinian narrative through the use of liberation theology. He chooses the story of Naboth's vineyard from 1 Kings 21. In this story Ahab the King of Israel seeks to take a vineyard from a Jezreelite called Naboth – who refuses his

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[172] Eleazar S. Fernandez. '(Home) Land, Diaspora, Identity, and the Bible in Imperial Geopolitics: What does the Asia-pacific Region have to do with Israel-Palestine?' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation* (ed. Mitri Raheb) (Diyar, Bethlehem, 2012), p. 124.
[173] Mitri Raheb. 'Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation: A Palestinian Christian Perspective' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation* (ed. Mitri Raheb) (Diyar, Bethlehem, 2012), p. 18.
[174] Julio De Santa Ana, "The Holocaust and Liberation" in Otto Maudro, *Judaism, Christianity, and liberation: An Agenda for Dialogue* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 50.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Mitri Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 90.

offer. Ahab then hatches a plan to kill Naboth and take the vineyard anyway. In this episode Ateek sees a story that modern Palestinians identify with, "the death and dispossession of Naboth and his family has been re-enacted thousands of times since the creation of the state of Israel".[177] This event typifies the "tragedy of Palestine"[178] and as Ateek states it is the "central biblical paradigm for a Palestinian theology of Liberation."[179]

Another Old Testament narrative used by liberation theologians is the story of the prophet Jonah's anger at God's forgiveness of Nineveh (Jonah 4). Typically, the story is used to show that God is against any particularism towards Israel and is instead universal in focus. As Gregerman says, Jonah "serves as the text par excellence for Christian theologians who want to read the Jews out of their own narrative."[180] Typical of this is Ruether. She commends the work of Ateek and liberationists for providing a way to distinguish "between passages of the Bible that portray God as a tribal god (who sides with the Jews against other people) and those passages of Hebrew scripture that point to a universal God of justice and peace for all people."[181] She argues against the view that God "elects only one people and is concerned with only one territory"[182] as this could legitimise the "racist nationalism"[183] of the state of Israel. As Gregerman again points out, Ruether rejects particularism and praises universalism, "supporting an interpretation of the Bible and God's promises in which God is fundamentally the God of all people." The flipside of this is that "it is morally unacceptable to claim that the biblical God is most significantly the God of Israel"[184]. Ruether herself provides a case study demonstrating the effects of Liberation Theology as it is applied to the Israel-Palestine situation. Her 1974 book *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Antisemitism* is widely regarded as "one of the most complete treatments of a Christian hostility to Judaism".[185] It is worth noting that the publication date comes just after the Yom Kippur war of 1973, which had a significant effect on liberal views of Israel. Its tone stands in

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[177] Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1989), p. 87.
[178] Ibid. p.87.
[179] Ibid. p.88.
[180] Adam Gregerman, 'Old Wine in New Bottles: Liberation theology and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (41:3-4, Summer-Fall 2004) p. 323.
[181] Ibid. p. 187.
[182] Rosemary R. Ruether, Herman J. Reuther, *The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 231.
[183] Ibid. p. 225
[184] Gregerman, 'Old Wine in New Bottles', p. 322.
[185] Ibid. p. 317.

stark contrast to the later work, *The Wrath of Jonah* which uses liberation theology and applies it to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and thus ends up "tapping deep into the wells of anti-Judaism".[186] Another reviewer picks up on this too stating that the book leaves her readers with a mystery:

> "How can someone who spoke so clearly against Christendom's antisemitism publish a book like this?... And what turned the mind and spirit of the promising young professor who so ably traced the development of mutually repudiating Christian and Jewish midrashim…in *Faith and Fratricide* (1974)"[187]

He suggests the solution to the mystery is one does not have to be a strong ideological Marxist to be controlled by a false universalism.[188]

The false universalism the reviewer speaks of is precisely the universalism set up in the false dichotomy presented by Palestinian Liberation Theology and ultimately this impedes any progress being made in the discussion over this conflict. Gregerman's conclusion encapsulates the same thought:

> "looking back on Rosemary Ruether's impressive list of suggestions for improving Jewish-Christian relations and purging Christian teaching of anti-Judaism and antisemitism, with which she concluded *Faith and Fratricide* in 1974, it is shocking to realise how liberation theologians, including Ruether herself, undermine nearly every one of them."[189]

Such a conclusion will have ramifications in the ongoing discussion about Palestinian Liberation Theology. As Cathey observes, the theologies of Raheb, Ateek and Ruether "fail to account for what Gregerman discovered…the old Christian hatreds and animosities that are recycled in new conflicts."[190]

Although this movement draws deeply from the resources and frameworks of critical theory and liberation theology originating in Latin America, it is important to notice that it has not

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[186] Ibid. p. 340.
[187] Franklin H. Littell. "Ruethers' 'The Wrath of Jonah.'" *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 81, no. 3/4, 1991, pp. 467–70. [Accessed 27 Jan. 2023].
[188] Ibid.
[189] Gregerman, "Old Wine in New Bottles", p. 340.
[190] Robert A. Cathey, "Where We Live, What We Believe: Thinking Contextually with Ateek, Rahab, and Gregerman about Israel/Palestine" in (eds) *Peace and Faith: Christian Churches and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Michael Gizzi (Philadelphia & Boston: Presbyterians for Middle East Peace, 2021), pp. 258-273.

simply regurgitated them. Palestinian liberation theologians have contextualized them for their own situation. Liberation in the Latin American context primarily focused upon the economic situation, resisting a world brought about by a capitalist global economy. This capitalist system is considered to be responsible for the unequal wealth distribution that resulted in the formation of the controlling class and the working class, or in the classical Marxist definitions, the bourgeois and proletariat. This different economic and class status would be seen as the oppressor and oppressed situation – with liberation meaning that the workers had to rise up against those who economically enslaved them. The difference between this and Palestinian Liberation Theology is that the concern is not primarily with economic class, although similar arguments are often used. Instead, the key focus is oppression by dispossession . It views the narrative through the lens of colonialism and seeks to apply a postcolonial perspective to the conflict. This has resulted in a decolonial theology that interprets the biblical narrative through these ideas. As Segovia explains:

> "Palestinian theology follows its own course…this optic has to do with oppression by way of deprivation of land and property as a result of armed conflict and military occupation, resulting in external displacement or exile as well as internal displacement or marginalization. One does find reference to the political economy, but little elaboration of it."[191]

The issue of liberation and justice in the Palestinian theological matrix are drawn from a number of socio-cultural events that decisively shaped Palestinian national identity and impacted people like Ateek and Raheb as they formulated the beginnings of a distinct Palestinian Liberation Theology. Firstly, events of 1948, but also the circumstances that led to the 1967 'six-day' war between Israel and surrounding Arab nations. For Ateek, the results of the war were an exercise in "injustice and dehumanization to which the people of Palestine have been subjected". [192] The next major event formative in developing Palestinian national identity was the First Intifada of 1987 that lasted for five years. He characterises this as a "popular uprising – deeply nationalist and broad based…intent on freedom from occupation and marked by non-violence."[193] To claim that the intifada was an event marked by non-violence is debatable and illustrates the difficulties that arise when

[191] Segovia, 'Addressing the Palestinian', p. 37.
[192] Ateek, p. 75.
[193] Segovia, 'Addressing the Palestinian', p. 40.

theologies are formed solely through the perspective of singular events.[194] Ateek had recently returned from doctoral studies in the USA and taken up residence at St. George Cathedral in Jerusalem when the Intifada begun. It was during these years of ministry that the seeds of his liberation theology "began to sprout and grow…through workshops, small gatherings of people, and discussion inside and outside of St. George's Cathedral."[195] This led to the convening of the first global conference on Palestinian Theology in 1990, the proceedings of which grew into the institutionalization of Palestinian theology and the founding of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre. Lodberg highlights the intifada of 1987 as a defining moment for the solidification of Palestinian national identity. [196]

The Six-Day War and the Intifada were pivotal events in the formation of a growing national Palestinian Identity. This emerging identity would now contribute to the direction and formation of a distinctive Palestinian Liberation Theology. Lodberg comments, "Palestinian theology is a local theology formulated in the tension between construction of national identity and religious identity."[197] A theology formed as a result of such contemporary events is unlikely to pay proper regard to the original historical context of an ancient collection of texts such as the Bible, rather it will be prone to recontextualize the narrative of the biblical text for its own purposes of liberation. Raheb spells this out when he comments:

> "I believe that it is time to develop a new hermeneutic that takes the land and its native people seriously and that becomes an instrument for liberating people from occupation." [198]

This liberation narrative or "social justice" approach now becomes the hermeneutical grid through which the entire Bible is read. This is often seen in the way it seeks to identify Jesus with the Palestinian cause. This is done in both Christian and non-Christian streams of

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[194] Jeremy, Pressman, "Throwing Stones in Social Science: Non-Violence, Unarmed Violence, and the First Intifada." *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 4 (2017), pp. 519–36.

[195] Naim Ateek. *A Palestinian Cry for Reconciliation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books 2008), p. 9.

[196] Peter Lodberg, 'Palestinian Theology between Construction and Identification' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation*, ed. by Mitri Raheb (Diyar, Bethlehem, 2012), p. 83.

[197] Ibid. p. 97.

[198] Mitri Raheb, 'Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation: A Palestinian Christian Perspective' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation,* ed. Mitri Raheb (Bethlehem, Diyar, 2012), p. 26.

Palestinian society which only illustrates how important this liberation narrative is to Palestinian national identity. In 1983, Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat declared, "We know how to resist imperialism and occupation. Jesus Christ was the first Palestinian fedayeen who carried the sword along the path on which the Palestinians today carry their cross."[199] A few years later he proclaimed that Bethlehem was "the city of the Palestinian Jesus".[200] Such statements have become commonplace throughout Palestinian society – especially within Palestinian theology. Ateek echoes the words of Arafat in his 2008 publication *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*, where he states specifically that "Palestinian liberation theology focuses on the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, who was also a Palestinian living under an occupation."[201] Ateek at other times has likened the Israeli government to Herod and commented that Jesus is a Palestinian humiliated at the checkpoint, even stating that the whole of Palestine is like one huge Golgotha – the site of crucifixion.[202]

Such depictions, born out of this liberation framework have become so entrenched in Palestinian national identity that they remain an issue today – in both the political and religious arenas. It is common with those living in Israel and the Palestinian territories, but the narrative has become so pervasive that we also find it within mainstream politics and media in the west. In December 2020, BBC Radio Scotland's Sunday Morning show made references to Jesus as a Palestinian without any comment to clarify his Jewish identity. Activist Linda Sarsour and US senator Ilham Omar recently sparked backlash by publicly referring to Jesus as a Palestinian. Both comments were made on social media accounts and received considerable push back. Reading some of this can shed further light on the points raised already. David Parsons, writing for the *Jerusalem Post*, argues that "the fabrication of a Palestinian Jesus has been a core part of the lexicon of Palestinian Nationalism since at least the 1960s…the message is clear: the Palestinians are suffering at the hands of the Jews

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[199] Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, Revised and enlarged English edition (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1985), p. 145.

[200] Serge, Schmemann, 'Arafat Speaks to Throngs in Bethlehem," *New York Times*, December 24. 1995

[201] Ateek. *A Palestinian Cry*, p. 11.

[202] Naim Ateek, "The Massacre of the Innocents – A Christmas Reflection," *Cornerstone*, Christmas, 2000; *Sabeel Easter Message April 6 2001*. https://web.archive.org/web/20140204002929/http://sabeel.org/res-archives.php?eventid=126, [accessed September 10th 2024]

just like Jesus did."[203] Parsons goes on to delineate a number of sources for this narrative. He identifies specifically classical supersessionism, antisemitism, and liberation theology as influences present in this movement.

II. Christian Zionism in the Crosshairs

It is clear that when viewed through such a framework there is little choice but to side with one of the two parties: either the oppressor (Israel), or the oppressed (the Palestinians). There is no third way or alternative framework allowed. Liberation theology is all consuming. Thus, it is no surprise that Sabeel and Christian Palestinianism exerts much of its influence seeking to counteract Christian Zionism. Anyone who expresses an opinion on Israel, whether theological or political, that differs from the liberation theology narrative is labelled as a "Zionist" and have sided with the oppressor. There are a number of charges that are brought against Christian Zionism by various authors, generally revolving around the themes of apocalypticism, militarism and even antisemitism. Below are some representative examples of these. Palestinian Christian Philip Saa'd has described the substance of Palestinian theology as consisting of a number of different strands which are: "liberation theology…amillennialism, Replacement theology, and the covenant of Grace theology". He concludes:

> "Though these streams of theology are different in terms of hermeneutic, they have one thing in common which unites all the adherents…a strong rejection of dispensationalism and of a literal interpretation of the Bible."[204]

Raheb has strongly denounced Christian Zionists as being, "anxious for Armageddon, no more and no less. They do not even care for Israel itself, but for the final "big bang". Deep down they are anti-Semitic, hating Israel and the Jewish people."[205] Such statements are

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[203] David, Parsons, 'No Truth to the Palestinian Jesus' *The Jerusalem Post*, July 11th 2019. https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/No-truth-to-the-Palestinian-Jesus-595393?fbclid=IwAR32zkQHQK39g1zzOGsCm-9rqaLmCOMJLpSI4NYqbrdx8bzBuNQo1RFkcFA . Last accessed 10th September 2024.

[204] Philip Saa'd, 'How Shall We Interpret Scripture about the Land and Eschatology? Jewish and Arab Perspectives' in *Christian Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Ed. By* Wesley H. Brown and Peter F. Penner (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2008), p.114.

[205] Mitri Raheb, *Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), p. 90.

commonplace in Palestinian theology. Palestinian-American author Mubarak Awad claims that "Zionism deviates from the heart of the New Testament. New Testament Christianity proclaims, 'for God so loved the world…', while Christian Zionism proclaims, 'for God so loved modern Israel'."[206] Awad goes further to state that Christian Zionism is "militarizing the church" – while no explicit detail is given as to how or what this means, one can presume it is referring to supporting the Israeli military. So "if the Christian Zionist agenda is carried out, it will mean the death of Christianity in the Holy Land."[207]

It is not uncommon to see such radical depictions of Christian Zionism presented in these works. Another example comes from Eleazar Fernandez, who gives the following definition of Christian Zionism:

> "Christian Zionism considers the formation of the state of Israel and the return of the Jewish diaspora to Palestine as a way to hasten the arrival of the end times, which means the annihilation of the Jews. Though Christian Zionism has a different motivation for its support of Israel, which is another form of anti-Semitism, Israel welcomes the support of the Christian Zionist. In contrast to their support of Israel, Christian Zionists view Arabs as evil and their leaders as manifestations of the Anti-Christ." [208]

As I will discuss when we turn our attention to the subject of Christion Zionism, I am unaware of any Christian Zionist who would accept these crude definitions. Such descriptions seem to be borne out of a binary narrative; little nuance is given. Such frameworks hinder an objective interpretation of history as well as the formation of biblical theology. These definitions overemphasise the apocalyptic aspects and overplay the motivations of these groups.

Sabeel continues to propagate these negative stereotypes about Christian Zionism. In preparation for its Fifth International Conference in Jerusalem (2004), Sabeel issued a document entitled *Challenging Christian Zionism* in which it condemned the movement for identifying the gospel "with the theology of empire, colonialism, and militarism". The

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[206] Awad Mubarak, "Their Theology, Our Nightmare", in *Introduction in Christian Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* (Pasadena: William Carey International University Press, 2008), p. 59.
[207] Ibid. p.61.
[208] Eleazar S. Fernandez, '(Home) Land, Diaspora, Identity, and the Bible in Imperial Geopolitics: What does the Asia-pacific Region have to do with Israel-Palestine?' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation* ed. Mitri Raheb (Diyar, Bethlehem, 2012), pp. 129-130.

statement continued: "Therefore, we categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as a false teaching that undermines the biblical message of love, mercy, and justice."[209] Ateek in an article entitled "Christian Zionism: The Dark Side of the Bible", written for Sabeel's journal *Cornerstone,* describes this theology as "one, if not the most dangerous, biblical distortion that is challenging us today", and argues its supporters are "contributing to the oppression and killing of many innocent Palestinians by Israel".[210]

III. Western Support for Palestinian Liberation Theology

Both Christian Zionism and Christian Palestinianism have their respective supporters amongst Western theologians. The influence of the New Supersessionism and Palestinian Liberation Theology has been gaining popularity in the Western evangelical church, particularly in the Christian Zionist stronghold of the US, which is testimony to the efforts of its supporters. The church in Britain and much of Europe was never heavily invested in the theology of Christian Zionism, so anti-Zionist pro-Palestinian theology has a ready base of support there too. This success is largely due to the efforts of a few high-profile evangelical Anglican scholars and left-leaning progressive evangelicals. David Brog writing from the American context states:

> "The days of taking evangelical support for Israel for granted are over. As they are increasingly confronted with an evangelical-friendly, anti-Israel narrative, more and more of these Christians are turning against the Jewish state… Anti-Israel Palestinian Christians such as Sami Awad and Naim Ateek have travelled the country telling American Christians how their 'brothers and sisters in Christ' are being oppressed by Israel's Jews. Left-leaning evangelicals such as Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, and Serge Duss have echoed this narrative in their corner of the Christian world."[211]

Although such divisions have always existed in the landscape of Christianity it was hard to tell how much this would impact support for Israel among evangelicals. However, Brog again comments that a shift has occurred within the last decade that changes the situation dramatically. Through a co-ordinated campaign of conferences, publications, documentaries, and social action, "more evidence is emerging that these anti-Israel

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[209] Sabeel, 5th International Conference Statement*: Challenging Christian Zionism,* http://www.sabeel.org/documents/5thConfStatementfinal.htm [accessed on 1st April 2015].
[210] Naim Ateek, 'Christian Zionism: The Dark Side of the Bible'. *Cornerstone 30 (Winter 2003)* pp. 1-2.
[211] David Brog, 'The End of Evangelical Support for Israel'. *The Middle East Quarterly*. (Spring 2014:21:2)

Christians are succeeding in reaching beyond the evangelical left and influencing the mainstream. In particular, they are penetrating the evangelical world at its soft underbelly: the millennial generation." As he warns, these young evangelicals are rebelling against the perceived political conservatism and excessive biblical literalism of their parents. As they try to imitate Jesus' stand with the oppressed, they want to find out for themselves who is actually being oppressed in the Arab-Israeli conflict. He concludes: "Whoever first defines the conflict for these young people will win lifelong allies."[212] Although it does not necessarily invalidate his conclusions, it is worth noting that Brog's position at the time of writing was as a director of a large Christian Zionist organisation (CUFI), meaning he is not a neutral academic observer. Rather, it could imply a vested interest on his part, as both politically and financially the organisation is dependent on continued support for Israel. A similar conclusion is drawn by a *Jerusalem Post* survey which claims that young evangelical support for Israel among US Evangelicals dropped from 69% to 33.6% between 2018 and 2021.[213]

The research for this report was conducted by Motti Inbari and Kirill Bumin of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.[214] Their explanation for this links to the New Supersessionism. Their research argues that young people view the world through the oppressed/oppressor binary we discussed previously. As the *Post* concludes, "The way in which young evangelicals are reading and interpreting the Bible differs from the way in which their parents and grandparents did."[215]

These evangelicals are now being taught to use liberation theology, using the language of social justice, to interpret the Bible – which is having an impact on the outcome of their Biblical Theology.

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[212] Ibid.
[213] Motti Inbari, Kirill Bumin, and M. Gordon Byrd, 'Why Do Evangelicals Support Israel?' *Politics and Religion,* 14:1 (2021), pp. 1-36.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, 'Young Evangelical Support for Israel Drops by Half in 3 Years – Study'. *The Jerusalem Post*. 16th June, 2021. Accessed: https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/evangelical-youth-losing-love-for-israel-by-35-percent-study-shows-671178?fbclid=IwAR0ggnBsxsem8Cr8WQQJRdFxAkGQj-74PKM71xN54Y7IDxdv60SnlLuVQLo, See also Motti, Inbar and Kirill Bumin, *Christin Zionism in the Twenty-First Century: American Evangelical Public Opinion on Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024).

However, it is also worth noting that the extremely partisan nature of American politics and identity could also have played a role. The desire that Brog mentioned, to move away from the political conservatism of their parents, might be responsible for attitudes regarding Israel. The bi-partisan political scene impacts many other social and political realities. Democrat and Republican positions have become so intertwined with certain issues that the label one identifies with may well force one's hand on another issue simply due to an identification with one party. Conservative politics (and particularly evangelicalism) is often associated with the Republican Party, which is perceived as having a more prominent pro-Israel majority. Support for the Palestinians is usually considered to be a Democratic party position. However, the complexity of associating a singular position with one side of the political aisle is unrealistic. There are many left-leaning democrats who show a strong support for Israel and an interest in the nation's national security. Just as there are many right-wing conservatives who do not agree with the continued political support for Israel shown by the republican party. At a certain point the binaries break down as there are too many exceptions to the rule. However, broadly speaking at a popular level this is how the argument is presented, and many people consider it to be the reality. Therefore, many will allow their partisan political identity to decide for them on issues that they are not necessarily concerned about in reality. It is almost a position by default – as long as it means they can either identity or not-identify with a chosen side.[216] However, although political allegiance is a significant factor it is not the only reason for such support. Theology continues to play an important role.

There is considerable support for Palestinian liberation theology amongst Western academics. One representative theologian for this perspective is Colin Chapman. He published his book *Whose Promised Land?* in 1983 and it has been through many reprints since then. The book is a comprehensive look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict utilising history and theology in its argument. Overall, it is much less pejorative than Sizer's work, yet the author's aversion to Christian Zionism and Israel is clear. He states that Christian Zionism

[216] Amnon Cavari, and Elan Nyer, 'From Bipartisanship to Dysergia: Trends in Congressional Actions Toward Israel.' *Israel Studies* 19, no. 3 (2014), See also, Eric, Kaufmann, 2022. 'The new culture wars: Why critical race theory matters more than cancel culture.' *Social ScienceQuarterly*. 103: 773– 788. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13156

"lacks understanding of the conflict" and "leads to a one-sided political stance". [217] He further states that Christian Zionists has "no real message or concern for the Jews and Muslims, and little desire to share their Christian faith with them."[218] In another publication Chapman suggests that Western support for Israel, especially that of evangelical Christians, is the underlying cause for the 9/11 terrorist attacks against America. He states:

> "I might even go as far as to suggest that if the West after 1967 had dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a more even-handed way and pressed both sides hard and consistently towards a peaceful resolution on the basis of international law, the events of 9/11 might have never happened."[219]

This thinking is what informs the theologians who are the driving force for this movement and representative of those who are attempting to frame the conflict in a particular way. The battle to define this conflict from the perspective of liberation theology espoused by Sabeel has been greatly assisted through its International Friends of Sabeel (IFOS) network. This consists of ten regional chapters that operate throughout most of the Western world. The UK chapter has become quite prominent, mainly due to its work being sponsored by the Church of Scotland and a number of large Christian charities such as World Vision. It has been given academic credibility within the Anglican Church due to a few high-profile clerics supporting it. Chief among these is the Reverend Stephen Sizer. Sizer recounts his own conversion experience during his first trip to Israel in 1990. He describes it as a "radical change of perspective", from his previously held "naïve Zionist views",[220] that occurred when he first met a Palestinian Christian on a tour of Israel. Sizer left his role as Vicar of Christ Church in Surrey, England in 2017. His active involvement in anti-Israel projects is considerable and at times controversial. [221]

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[217] Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2002), p. 284.
[218] Ibid. p. 286.
[219] Colin Chapman, "A Biblical Perspective on Israel/Palestine" in Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden, *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Context* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012) p. 283
[220] Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p. 10.
[221] In December 2023 Sizer was found guilty of antisemitic activity by a Church of England Tribunal – specifically convened for the intention of identifying whether his actions were antisemitic. This is the first tribunal of its kind in recent history and a watershed moment for the Church. See: Harry Farley "Retired Vicar banned over 'virulently antisemitic' posts" (30th January 2023) Accessed at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64460767

Sizer is a Trustee of Friends of Sabeel UK, a member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the founding member of the Institute for the Study of Christian Zionism. This describes itself as a:

> "Group of pastors, academics, students, interested laypersons and a Rabbi who have been disturbed by the growing influence of Christian Zionism on the political scene in America recognizing this ideology to be a major factor in the stalled peace process in Israel Palestine." [222]

He has also been involved in authoring a number of formal statements such as the 2004 statement "Challenging Christin Zionism" and the "Bethlehem Evangelical Affirmation". Sizer's own writings have also been influential. His doctoral thesis was published as a book under the title, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (2004). This was followed, at the request of the large evangelical publisher, by a more popular level book called, *Zion's Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel and the Church* (2007). His work is characteristic of Western theologians who promote Christian Palestinianism. It repeats the same anti-Israel sentiments found within the native strand. Israel is depicted as a "brutal, repressive and racist state", a "materialistic society, an apartheid state practicing repressive and dehumanising measures against the Palestinians".[223] It is not uncommon to read accusations that Israel is engaged in "ethnic cleansing" of the Palestinians as well as comparisons to Nazi Germany, and comments that the Jews are to be "condemned for exploiting the Holocaust".[224] The overtly political nature of his work is easily seen, as he himself admits, explaining the purpose of his book is to "make a case for a covenantalist approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict". [225] His books have been endorsed by a number of leading evangelical luminaries such as the late John Stott, who served as the rector emeritus of All Souls Church in Langham place London until his death in 2011. He called Sizer's critique of Christian Zionism "groundbreaking".[226]

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[222] https://www.christianzionism.org/

[223] Cornell, N. and Sizer, S, *'Whose Promised Land: Israel and Biblical Prophecy Debate'.* March 1997 http://www.sizers.org/articles/debate.html [Accessed 10th October 2014]

[224] Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, p. 21.

[225] Ibid. p. 261. Covenant theology is a conceptual framework for interpretating the bible using the theme of covenant as an organising principle. It is most often contrasted against the opposing framework of dispensationalism.

[226] Stephen Sizer, 'Sixty Academics Endorse Christian Zionism Book,' November 13th 2013, http://stephensizer.com/2020/02/sixty-academics-endorse-christian-zionism-roadmap-to-armageddon/

In spite of these endorsements, some of Sizer's associations remain extremely controversial. His anti-Zionist theology has opened doors for him to campaign throughout the Islamic world. This is an important factor to note as obviously the influence of the Islamic worldview is felt by all who live in the Middle East. Anti-Semitism is well documented and rampant in certain portions of the Islamic world.[227] This Islamic influence is clearly visible in Christian Palestinianism. It seems both have found solidarity around common enemies: Zionism and Israel. Thus, "the replacement theology of Palestinian Christians, as it is spread in the Land, now finds a common language with a Muslim replacement theology".[228] Political analyst and director of the Centre for Israeli Studies at University College London, Neil Lochery comments:

> "any quick glance at the Arab media reveals a more radical lexis of vocabulary than its Western counterparts. 'Occupation', 'Zionist entity', 'forces of repression', 'military might', 'curfew' and, yes, even 'Nazi' are commonplace."[229]

Sizer's hard anti-Israel stance has led to frequent and ill-advised associations with groups taking similar political stances, albeit with differing theological beliefs and motivations. Sizer has had his work published in the Islamic *Al-Aqsa* journal. [230] Even more controversially for a leading evangelical theologian was his attendance at the 2014 New Horizon conference in Iran. This conference brought together an array of speakers with anti-Israel motivations and many who had a record of clear anti-Semitism. The decision of an Anglican clergymen to attend such a conference, let alone contribute, was at the least ill-advised. According to the Iranian state-run Press TV, the conference was intended "to unveil the secrets behind the dominance of the Zionist lobby on the West".[231] Sizer himself was to speak on the subject of the Israeli lobby in England, sharing the panel with holocaust denier Ahmed Rami.[232]

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[227] *Anti-Semitism-Muslim/Arab World*, Anti-Deformation League. http://www.adl.org/anti-semitism/muslim-arab-world/ [Accessed 6th April 2015].
[228], Gershon Nerel, 'Spiritual Intifada of Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews', in *Israel, His People, His Land, His Story* (Eastbourne: Thankful Books, 2005), p. 217
[229] Neill Lochery, *Why Blame Israel* (Cambridge: Icon Books 2004), p. 3.
[230] Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake,* p.49.
[231] *Press release: Iran Hosts 2nd International New Horizon conference.* September 20th 2014. http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/09/30/380593/new-horizon-confab-2014-opens-in-iran/ [Accessed 13th October 2014].
[232] CST Blog, Rev. Stephen Sizer Speaking at Antisemitic Conference in Iran. October 2nd 2014. Accessed at: https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2014/10/02/rev-stephen-sizer-speaking-at-antisemitic-conference-in-iran

The following year Sizer again enraged the Jewish community by insinuating that Israel was somehow behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks when he shared a post on his Facebook account that made the accusations. The Board of Deputies of British Jews labelled the post "unquestionably anti-Semitic" and noted that it was posted two days following Holocaust memorial services.[233] In response to this litany of controversial activism, he was subject to a disciplinary tribunal by his presiding diocese and banned from commentating or posting anything related to the Middle East.[234]

The fact that Sizer also claims that anti-Semitism must be "repudiated unequivocally"[235] raises many questions for Christian theologians. The truth remains that he is still considered an expert on Christian Zionism and his books are still published by one of the most well-known evangelical publishers.

Sizer illustrates the way in which supersessionism can bleed into antisemitism. A common denominator running from historical to contemporary instances of Christian antisemitism is the presence of supersessionist doctrines. In the New Supersessionism the inclusion of political activism has only increased the potential for antisemitic activity as has been demonstrated with this tribunal.

N.T. Wright, who we have discussed earlier, has also been a significant influence on the movement. Both Sizer and Chapman frequently reference Wright in their publications and share similar hermeneutical conclusions that we will examine later. Ultimately, he lays out a well-developed theological systematic approach that practically denies any relevance to the Land of Israel since the coming of Christ. Chapman references Wright seventeen times in his *Whose Promised Land* and glowingly endorses his work, even intimating that no work of equal quality can be produced by Christian Zionists.[236]

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[233] Lizzie Dearden, 'Vicar investigated over Facebook post linking to 'anti-Semitic' article '9/11 Israel did it''. *Independent*, 30th January 2015. Accessed: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/vicar-investigated-over-facebook-post-linking-anti-semitic-article-9-11-israel-did-it-10012794.html

[234] Farley, 'Retired Vicar'.

[235] Stephen, Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel and the Church*. (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), p. 15

[236] Colin Chapman, "Ten Questions for a Theology of the Land," in *The Land of Promise: Biblical. Theological and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Philip Johnston and Peter Walker (Leicester: Apollos, 2000), p. 185.

Wright's affinity with the leaders of the Christian Palestinian movement is clearly stated in his book *The Way of the Lord,* where he shares his belief that most of those who practice their Christian faith in the Holy land are Palestinians. They are also Anglicans like Wright which is how he knows them.[237] A little further on he accuses Israel of "torture" and the "systematic brutalization of a whole people."[238] He also openly denounces Christian Zionism declaring it to be "the geographical equivalent of a *soi-disant* 'Christian' apartheid, and ought to be rejected as such."[239]

Wright clearly provides the theological foundation for many within the new supersessionist movement – even if he never set out to do so. His hermeneutical methodology that posits the "redefinition" of important biblical themes such as Israel and the land underlies much of the theology of this movement which will be demonstrated later.

There is also a strong element within American evangelicalism that supports the Christian Palestinian movement. A leading figure here is Gary Burge, professor of NT at Wheaton College. He is on the board of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, on the advisory board for The Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation and an avid supporter of the Palestinian cause. An article in *Christianity Today* listed Burge's top five book recommendations for learning about Israel and Palestine. His top three included *Blood Brothers* by Elias Chacour, Chapman's *Whose Promised Land*, and *I am a Palestinian Christian* by Mitri Rahab.[240] Another scholar describes Burge as the "undisputed champion of Christian Palestinianism"[241] in the American evangelical church. He has made his own considerable contributions to the literature of the movement with his volumes, *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians are not being told about Israel and the Palestinians* (2013) and, *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to Holy Land Theology* (2010).

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[237] Tom Wright, *The Way of the Lord* (London: Triangle, 1999), p. 127. Tom Wright is the name used by N.T. Wright for his popular level works.
[238] Ibid.
[239] N.T. Wright, 'Jerusalem in the New Testament', in *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God* 2nd ed. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), p. 75.
[240] Gary Burge, "My Top 5 Books on Israel & Palestine" in *Christianity Today*, February 1, 2013. Accessed: https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/december/my-top-5-books-on-israel-palestine.html
[241] Paul Wilkinson*, Israel Betrayed Volume 2: The Rise of Christian Palestinianism (*Texas: Ariel Ministries, 2018), p. 138.

Burge also sets his sights on Christian Zionism, exposing what he believes to be its Achilles heel:

> "Christian Zionism is committed to what I term a 'territorial religion.' It assumes that God's interests are focused on a land, a locale, a place. From a NT perspective, the Land is holy by reference to what transpired there in history. But it no longer has any intrinsic part to play in God's program for the world."[242]

Another notable academic whose work has had considerable influence in the evangelical world is Donald E. Wagner, professor of religion and director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University in Chicago. As with most in this movement they describe themselves as former supporters of Christian Zionism, until they experienced a radical transformation. Wagner describes this in a multi-author volume edited by Michael Prior called *They Came and They Saw: Western Christian Experiences in the Holy Land* (2000). His chapter details how his understanding was altered through conversations with PLO officials.[243] Another significant contribution is his book, *Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to 2000* (2001) which presents a history of Palestinian Christianity and the influence the *Al Nakba* had on it. In this volume he also attempts to argue that half the population of Israel in the first century would not have been Jewish – therefore providing support for his claim that Arab Christians are descended from the Church during the time of the Christian Apostles. Meanwhile, in *Anxious for Armageddon: Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians* (1995), he assailed the religious right and Christian Zionists for craving an end-times apocalyptic showdown at Armageddon and described Christian Zionism as a "heretical cult". [244]

There are many other notable theologians who hold a similar theological stance yet do not align themselves so closely to the Christian Palestinian movement. However, it is clear that the New Supersessionism has considerable support amongst Western theologians due to the continued presence of classical replacement doctrines that have been shaped to fit the current conflict in the Middle East. The writings of Sizer, Chapman and Burge all constitute

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[242] Gary Burge, "Christian Zionism, Evangelicals, and Israel" (article no longer available online) cited in Barry Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism must be challenged*. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), p. 45

[243] Michael Prior, *They Came and They Saw: Western Christian Experiences in the Holy Land* (Melisende UK, 2000).

[244] Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), p. 111.

the Western arm of the New Supersessionism. This is identifiable by acknowledging the key themes in their work – both theologically and politically. They all advocate for a hermeneutic that redefines the covenantal promises and universalizes the promised land to be the world. They are all active in supporting the Palestinian narrative and highly critical of the modern state of Israel. They all vociferously repudiate Christian Zionism as not only a theological aberration but as a decisive cause in ongoing Palestinian suffering. Just as they accuse Christian Zionists of playing a part in the political decision making and standing blindly with the state of Israel, they do the exact reverse.

IV. The Kairos Connection

In 2009 Palestinian Christian leaders released a document entitled "Kairos Palestine: A moment of Truth – A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering." This codifies the ideology of the Christian Palestinian movement. The name of the document itself is significant – it attempts to forge a link to the original Kairos document that was released by South African liberation theologians in 1985: "A challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa". There is obviously a vested interest in utilising the terminology associated with apartheid in South Africa, it provides a strong rhetorical corollary to the situation in Palestine and evokes a link with UN Resolution 3379 equating Zionism with racism. A frequent accusation of the Christian Palestinianists is that the Palestinians are suffering occupation under an apartheid regime. Ateek states that "it is the occupation that is evil and violent. It is apartheid in its ugliest form."[245] Sabeel Patron Desmond Tutu writes "now, alas, we see apartheid in Israel."[246] Steve Haas, vice president of World Vision (USA) has called the situation in Israel "apartheid on steroids".[247] Sizer has said that Christian Zionism "bears primary responsibility for

[245] Naim Ateek, 'The Massacre of the Innocents – A Christmas Reflection,' *Cornerstone*, Christmas, no.20 (2000).
[246] Desmond Tutu, foreword in Michael Prior, *Speaking the Truth: Zionism, Israel, and Occupation* (Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2005), pp.10-12.
[247] Steve Hass, 'All of me: Engaging a World of Poverty and Injustice,' *Lausanne Global analysis*, Vol.4 Issue 1 (January 2015).

perpetuating tensions in the Middle East, justifying Israel's apartheid colonialist agenda and for undermining the peace process".[248]

"Kairos Palestine" specifically serves as both a political and a theological document. It clearly states that the Israeli occupation is a sin against God and is in violation of international law. In addition, the document specially targets the theology of Christian Zionism stating that this is an "error in fundamentalist biblical interpretation" that turns the word of God into a dead letter that brings death and destruction. It also blames "certain theologies in the West" (referring again to Christian Zionism), for attaching a theological legitimacy to their suffering. It calls for the total boycott and divestment from anything produced by the occupation.[249]

It is clear from the document that the Kairos movement, while seeking to deconstruct and oppose a theology that it considers to be territorial and nationalistic, wants to replace it with one that is equally nationalistic. All the tenets of Palestinian nationalism can be found throughout the document. While integrated with a religious language, deeper analysis shows the motivation behind much of the document is connected to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). As is clearly stated in the Kairos document, boycotting Israel is an important part of non-violent resistance to the occupation. Thus, it is often considered to be a legitimate form of activism, especially by Christians who live outside of Israel and support the movement. The Kairos document acts like a manifesto for Palestinian Liberation Theology and specifically calls for political activism, which in turn means that at its core the movement is wedded inseparably to politics. It is a political theology in the most literal sense of the term. In light of such politically infused activism it is quite common to see prominent churches who hold to supersessionism calling for support of the BDS movement. The Kairos document is supported by Sabeel and these issues continue to invoke controversy. One recent example is the call that took place between the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of

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[248] Stephen Sizer, 'Christian Zionism: The New Heresy that Undermines Middle East Peace' Middle East Monitor, January 29th, 2014. Accessed: https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20140129-christian-zionism-the-new-heresy-that-undermines-middle-east-peace/

[249] The Kairos Palestine Document: A moment of truth, A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian Suffering. Accessed online: https://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-kairos/kairos-palestine-document.

Churches (WCC) and a number of influential clergy, including Ateek, Burge and Wagner. During this call the Israelis were compared to demons and participants were told that the world would seek blood from those who support Israel.[250]

Many within this segment of Christianity devote their efforts to propagating the anti-Zionist narrative against Israel. They partner with secular NGOs in addition to any religious denominations that share their viewpoints on Israel. Their activism is politically motivated and openly hostile to the Jewish state. From a theological perspective, those BDS supporters who are part of a Christian denomination all seem to adhere to some form of the New Supersessionism which is clearly a significant influence in their views. The extremely fine line between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is blurred beyond recognition in the BDS movement. As Fishman observes, "one of the major components of the BDS message and its terminology is the amalgamation of Jew-hatred with the rejection of the Jewish state"[251] and Cannon agrees that the "BDS movement has succeeded in its propaganda war using techniques that successfully demonized, delegitimized, and denounced Israel, Zionism, world Jewry, and America."[252]

V. Christ at the Checkpoint Conferences

One way that the message of the New Supersessionism is making headway into the broader evangelical world is through the Christ at the Checkpoint Conferences (CATC) organised by Bethlehem Bible College (BBC). The President and founder of BBC is Dr. Bishara Awad and its purpose is to provide theological training to "prepare Christian leaders to serve Arab churches and society".[253] The college has often been the subject of controversy regarding its anti-Israel activities. The chair of the board of directors, Dr. Jonathan Kuttab, wrote a controversial article which obscured the definition of terrorism and left open the possibility of legitimate use of suicide bombings. He said that there must be a place for actions that

[250] Dexter Van Zile, 'Church Official Declares War on Israel and Its Supporters' *The Algemeiner* (February 10th 2021) Accessed: https://www.algemeiner.com/2021/02/10/church-official-declares-war-on-israel-and-its-supporters/?fbclid=IwAR0B-Zrla6N2udDAc3P936ypPVi_C8cKg6yyPqrnlhiZUt3dLVHBd9khLJs

[251] Joel S. Fishman 'The BDS message of anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism, and incitement to discrimination', *Israel Affairs*, 18:3 (2012), p. 416.

[252] Ellen Cannon, 'The BDS and the Anti-BDS Campaigns: Propaganda War vs. Legislative Interest-Group Articulation' *Jewish Political Studies Review* Vol.30, Numbers 1-2 (2019).

[253] Bethlehem Bible College, http://www.bethbc.org/welcome/about-us/mission [Accessed 1st April 2015].

include “the perpetrator taking the supreme sacrifice in an effort to inflict maximum casualties on his enemies as a method for drawing attention to his cause.” [254]

The conferences bring together the leading voices for the New Supersessionism and Christian Palestinianism including Ateek, Burge, Sizer, Raheb, Alex Awad, and Colin Chapman among others. Some attempt is made at being objective and balanced, usually by making sure one speaker is there to represent the Messianic Jewish community or Christian Zionist tradition, which often receives the most negative attention at the conference. In the past they have featured messianic scholars such as Darrell Bock, Richard Harvey, leading evangelical messianic commentator Michael Brown and Jerusalem Pastor Wayne Hilsden. Yet, the general theological thrust of the conference is squarely in line with its supersessionist credentials. Typical of supersessionist readings of scripture, conference speakers often claim that the land promises to Israel have been universalised. Salim Munayer, speaking at the first conference in 2010 claimed that “God’s promise has been fulfilled through Jesus, and our understanding of it has shifted from the narrowly defined land of Canaan to the whole world.” [255]

The CATC conferences also provide an insight into the symbiotic relationship between politics and theology that manifests within this movement. Aside from the name of the conference, the promotional material always features foreboding images of the Israeli Security Wall. The conference website explains that “the checkpoint and the wall became a focal point and symbol of the conflict”.[256] Calls for its removal are a frequent part of the narrative at the conferences and the spotlight is often on the suffering caused by the presence of this wall. Such issues cause strong emotive reactions and both sides are prone to dig their heels in and stand firm for their particular perspectives.

In addition to this problem the CATC conferences push a particular viewpoint which often misinforms conference attendees about the reality of the situation – particularly in regard

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[254] Jonathan Kuttab, ‘Victim Terrorism’, *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture.* Vol.10 No.1 (2003). http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=76 last accessed 1st April 2015

[255] Salim Munayer, ‘Theology of the Land: From a Land of Strife to a Land of Reconciliation’ *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Context* ed. By in Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), p. 248

[256] http://www.bethbc.org/get-involved/visit-us/christ-at-the-checkpoint-conference Last accessed 13th October 2014

to the antisemitism that exists. At the 2012 conference Alex Awad, the pastor of East Jerusalem Baptist Church and dean of students at Bethlehem Bible College, downplayed the issue of antisemitism within Palestinian society by implying that the Palestinians are suffering the consequences of Europe's legacy of antisemitism and that Europeans only supported the creation of the modern state due to historical guilt. For Awad, "Anti-Semitism is a European thing…It's not a Palestinian thing. Anti-Semitism never originated in this land."[257] He seems to be implying here that the current situation in Palestine is a legacy of the historic situation with the Jews in the Second World War and the Holocaust – a European issue. Whether he means there is no Palestinian antisemitism in its own right or that it exists as simply a leftover from European colonialism is unclear.

At the 2016 CATC conference Islamic scholar Mustafa Abu Sway spoke about the issue of Islamic extremism. In response to a question about Palestinian society being taught to hate Jewish people he said, "I know that you have spin doctors from the Israeli side who shift the blame". He went on to state emphatically "We *never*, we *never*, I can tell you we *never* taught our kids to hate".[258] Even if we grant that he may be speaking from the context of his own form of Islam practiced within his own local context, and that statement may be true in that context, the emphatic double negative in this declaration implies a broader intention referring to Palestinian society as a whole.

Whilst it is obvious that strong cultural pressures exist within the complex demographic found in this region, which no doubt means caution must be used in public dialogue, there is still the responsibility of an evangelical Christian conference if it is disseminating factually inaccurate narratives in order to support its own political or theological viewpoints. As far as antisemitism being a European rather than a Palestinian problem, this cannot be substantiated historically. The existence of Islamic antisemitism has historical roots that

[257] Dexter Van Zile, 'Plight of Palestinians in Syria Ignored at First Night of Christian Conference.' *The Algemeiner*, March 11th, 2014. Accessed: https://www.algemeiner.com/2014/03/11/plight-of-palestinians-in-syria-ignored-at-first-night-of-christian-conference/

[258] Dexter Van Zile. 'Three Things you Need to Know About Christ at the Checkpoint'. October 11th, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.camera.org/article/three-things-you-need-to-know-about-christ-at-the-checkpoint/

predate the formation of modern Europe. Admittedly there was a long history of European antisemitism, but the term is equally "applied to the parallel in the Arab world".[259]

As Webman states, the stereotyping of Jews, Zionists and Israelis in the Arab media includes:

> "traditional Islamic libel emanating from religious texts, typifying the Jews as deceitful, bloodthirsty, hateful, money-loving and conniving, and accusing them of falsifying historical and religious legacies, and of extreme hostility towards Muslims."[260]

She repudiates the claim that antisemitism is a European invention – either solely by source or migration. Islam had its own source as well: "traditional enmity towards the Jews originating in Islam is an important source of hatred towards the Jews as a group in the contemporary era".[261] It is worth noting that the logic of supersessionism is also present within Islam – as Islamic theology requires it to have superseded both Judaism and Christianity as the true revelation with Muslims now the people of God. Thus, we can see that as supersessionism implies an anti-Judaic tradition in Christianity, then the same may be invoked in Islam. This is significant as the Palestinian narrative has been influenced by the Islamic worldview in which it exists and thus it is involved in the formation of the New Supersessionism which incorporates both Christianity and Palestinian perspectives. It seems unlikely that such attitudes have not influenced the formation of a Palestinian theology that is extremely anti-Zionist.

As CAMERA concludes:

> "Whether the organizers of the CATC want to admit it or not, Jew-hatred is a problem in Palestinian society. No one truly intent on promoting peace in the Holy Land can ignore this issue."[262]

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[259] Esther Webman, 'The Challenge of Assessing Arab/Islamic Antisemitism.' *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 5 (2010), p. 680.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Dexter Van Zile. 'Three Things you Need to Know About Christ at the Checkpoint.' October 11th, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.camera.org/article/three-things-you-need-to-know-about-christ-at-the-checkpoint/

Whilst much more could be said on the subject of antisemitism in the Arab world there is enough here to demonstrate that the narrative being promoted at the CATC conference is overly simplistic and being utilised to support the promotion of a particular view of history.

One of the aims and objectives I initially laid out in the introduction was to detail the progression of the New Supersessionism into the political-theological movement it is today. I aimed to specifically locate the ideological influences that have been influential in its formation and show how they constitute a novel addition to traditional supersessionism. This section has made it is clear that the Kairos document and the CATC conferences offer a Palestinian perspective on the situation in the Middle East and have tailored their theology around it, utilising a mix of different ideological and political sources to do so. Often the outcome is a nothing more than a highly politicised call for activism against the Jewish state couched in the theological language of peace and justice. This mix of theology, Palestinian nationalism, liberation theology and politics is clearly seen through these two outlets and shows why the New Supersessionism is a movement that is just as driven by contemporary politics as it accuses Christian Zionism of being. The major difference is that the narrative has been reversed.

One final issue to examine is the way that these relatively modern ideologies such as a unique Palestinian Liberation Theology have impacted the hermeneutical approach of the movement. The issue of hermeneutics is a vital factor when understanding why certain movements interpret texts and events the way they do. In a theological movement that engages with specific religious texts this is all the more important. In the case of the New Supersessionism the mixture of liberation motifs along with the latest in critical theory has produced a new hermeneutical methodology that is increasingly being applied by its adherents. This is a key novel component of the New Supersessionism which we shall now examine.

VI. The Decolonial Hermeneutic

An emerging approach to Palestinian theology has been developed by Mitri Raheb and others which is continuing to shape the landscape in parts of the theological world –

particularly the "Global South".[263] The premise is that "Western Theology was part and parcel of European colonial thinking and practice."[264] This is applied particularly to the theology of Christian Zionism which must be answered with a new hermeneutical approach. Johnson comments that "the theological and missiological task today is faced with the duty of developing a non-Westernized epistemology…and a decolonizing agenda."[265] Proponents of this perspective understand the governing reality of the world to be a "global coloniality". Therefore, they conclude that in order to answer this coloniality a "postcolonial/decolonial" approach is needed.

Typically, the debate between supersessionism and non-supersessionism has been framed as being between those who adopt a literal or non-literal interpretation. Yet, the hermeneutical landscape today is not so neatly categorised, and the emergence of the postcolonial option adds another layer of complexity to the discussion. The debate has moved beyond merely pointing out inconsistent application of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation. A number of new hermeneutical methodologies have emerged that exert considerable influence upon the New Supersessionism. As each claim authority for their position from their religious texts, the question is how they read these texts? This is all a matter of hermeneutics, making their examination critical "since the hermeneutical foundation of a theological perspective has an important influence on how people who hold that perspective approach and interpret biblical texts".[266] Thus, to properly fulfil the objectives of this thesis and detail the developing progression of the New Supersessionism it is necessary to understand how the worldview of postcolonial interpreters, especially as applied to the Palestinian context, effects their interpretation of the Middle East. It moves the debate beyond a purely textual discussion and now must include social and political factors related to the history of colonialism. There still seems to be little acknowledgement and discussion that this is where the conversation has moved, so this section will introduce

[263] Mitri Raheb, Mark Lamport (ed.), *Emerging Theologies from the Global South* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2003).
[264] Raheb, Lamport, 'The Interpretive Challenge for Grace and Peace in the Global South: A Hermeneutical Perspective' in *Emerging Theologies,* p. 9.
[265] Oscar, Garcia-Johnson, 'The Postcolonial/Decolonial Option in Theology' in Mitri Raheb, Mark, Lamport. *Emerging Theologies from the Global South* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2003), p. 41.
[266] Vlach, *Has the Church*, p. 79.

this element to the overall picture of the New Supersessionism being presented in this thesis.

The methods of biblical interpretation that are used by proponents of the New Supersessionism are multifaceted and incorporate a number of novel characteristics when compared with the more traditional literal/allegorical binary often used in theological textbooks, or beyond traditional historical-critical methods. These newer methodologies "lean heavily on cultural studies, social analysis, and postcolonial hermeneutics";[267] as we have already seen Palestinian Liberation Theology opens the door for these sorts of hermeneutics. The specific addition of postcolonialism is an extension of this perspective. In his conclusion Yeo summarises the arguments made by Hulisani Ramanstwana, an African theologian who specialises in biblical interpretation and decolonial readings. Yeo states that:

> "From a decolonial perspective, we continue to live in a world burdened by the structures of colonialism…[a decolonial approach] pays attention to the power relations between the colonizer and the colonized as it relates to the formation of the biblical canon. Decolonial reading seeks to analyse the nature of the relationship between Israel and the imperial powers who dominated Israel."[268]

Such socio-political decolonial perspectives are commonplace in the writings of the New Supersessionism. Not only do they seek to offer a way to read the text of the Bible, but also include strong political conclusions that go well beyond the text. Raheb views the land and native people as a form of fifth and sixth gospels, stating they are "the two important hermeneutical keys to understanding the scripture and interpreting it."[269] Such a statement shows a rift in thinking between the type of supersessionism being offered by Wright and Western academics whose argument is about universalizing the land and people so that they have no special relevance. It would most likely be too far to say this is a split in the movement, as it is a broadly ecumenical anyway, but this does show the internal difficulties faced by the supersessionist to do away with significance to Israel while maintaining support for the Palestinian perspective. This should be an area for continued observation and research. There is a more hard-line position with the indigenous Palestinian Liberation

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[267] K.K.Yeo, 'Conclusion' in *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Space, and Covenantal Identity*. (Eugene: Cascade Books. 2021), p.150.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Mitri Raheb. 'Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation: A Palestinian Christian Perspective' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation* (ed. Mitri Raheb) (Diyar, Bethlehem, 2012), p. 11.

Theology being put forward by Raheb here who obviously sees the land as important – but for the Palestinians. He is very forthright in his conclusion: "the Palestinians of today stand in historic continuity with biblical Israel. The native people of the land are the Palestinians."[270] Such conclusions are extremely polemical in the current climate and leave open the question, if this is claiming to be a work of biblical theology and not just a political debate about land, who are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and what of the promise of a people and a land that was made to them? This seems to be an ethnic rather than a spiritual version of replacement theology.

Whilst authors like Raheb freely claim that "the Palestinian people (Muslims, Christians, and Palestinian Jews) are an important continuum from biblical times until today,"[271] this is not nearly as clear as he supposes. This comment introduces a revisionist version of history that seeks to present the modern Palestinians (primarily those living in the West Bank and Gaza) as the end result of a long line of Palestinian national identity that can be easily traced back through history into the Ancient Near East. The picture is much more complex than that as scholar Rashid Khalidi states:

> "There is also often a tendency to see an essential Palestinian identity going well back in time, rather than the complex, contingent and relatively recent reality of Palestinian identity, and to stress factors of unity at the expense of those tending toward fragmentation or diversity in Palestinian society and politics."[272]

The location spoken of by those who today are Palestinians was for much of its modern history considered to be a province of larger Syria. Historian Philip Hitti details this when discussing the rise and conquests of early Islam, noting that four districts together made-up larger Syria.[273]

Thus, the sort of Palestinian nationalism that is so prevalent in contemporary writings of the Christian Palestinian movement "was altogether unknown among the Arabs at the end of

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[270] Ibid. p. 17
[271] Ibid.
[272] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 34.
[273] Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, 10th Ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 154.

the nineteenth century."[274] This must be considered if it is to truly be useful as a hermeneutical key to the Bible as Raheb claims

Tthe narrative being espoused by such figures as Raheb forms a pivotal part of the decolonial hermeneutical methodology. The implications of this hermeneutic are subtle, but rhetorically convincing. If the Jewish people in the land today can be classified simply as colonial settlers, then this means the other people must be the indigenous natives who have been displaced. In light of this conclusion any action taken by Israel, be it for security or sovereignty, is seen as a gross act of injustice. As Ramantswana argues:

> "Thus, a theology of the biblical Land, as Raheb argues, should also listen to the voices of the native people of the Land, the Palestinians, heeding the cry from the oppression of Jewish colonial settlers…we stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people who are dispossessed of their land – an act that is symbolized visually by a wall of injustice. Therefore, the wall of injustice must fall."[275]

Such a radical decolonial hermeneutic is unable to assess additional factors such as why the security "wall" was installed in the first place. How many lives has it saved? Such questions are seen as giving legitimacy to colonial power and therefore are irrelevant to the larger issue which has already given one side moral supremacy. As stated,

> "Decolonial theology of land must reject the normalisation of the dispossession of land by rejecting the notion that the status quo is irreversible. The commitment to decolonial justice requires us to be aware that in settler colonialism, the structures of colonialism are so embedded in us that what we see is our naturalization into the settlers' system, while the settlers are not naturalized in our indigenous system." [276]

The separation wall "has become the context for doing theology".[277] Thus, the conclusion of such a methodology is fairly forthright in its application to the contemporary state of Israel:

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[274] Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Los Angelos: University of California Press, 1976), p. 22.

[275] Hulisani Ramantswana. 'Negotiation and/or Conquest of the Land: Reading the Land of Promise Motif in the Hexateuch through Decolonial Lenses' in *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Space, and Covenantal Identity*. (Eugene: Cascade Books. 2021), p.124.

[276] Ibid. p.125

[277] Peter Lodberg, 'Palestinian Contextual Theology' in *Emerging Theologies from the Global South* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2003), p. 9.

"In solidarity with the Palestinians, the colonial Jewish state also has to be denounced as it flies under the myth of the Jewish people as the sole rightful owners of the Land."[278]

A key feature of the post-colonial hermeneutic is to sever any exclusivity in regard to the land and the Jewish people. In order to do this and sustain the colonial narrative it must be made clear that there is no connection between the Jewish people in the land today and the Jewish people in the land during the first century. As Raheb claims, "many Christian theologians and Zionist thinkers confuse the Israelites of the Bible with the Israelis of today."[279] So Yeo argues that "a cross cultural method that uses postcolonial insights can enable us to re-examine, who are the Hebrews, Israel and the Jews in the OT."[280] It is very much a novel method of biblical interpretation that is being specifically applied to the modern-day Israeli-Palestine situation. It is an attempt to "use de-colonial and postcolonial hermeneutics in a re-reading of the Bible", in order to "unveil new theological loci emerging out of this research that otherwise would be ignored in traditional biblical studies."[281] At the core of this decolonial methodology and its sharp aversion to Christian Zionism is the belief that the Bible is being used by "the current Israeli government, by the Zionist movement, and by Christian Zionists to colonize Palestine and to push its indigenous people, slowly but surely , out of the country."[282] This new hermeneutic is primarily perceived as the response to such activity and is being developed in order to accomplish exactly what Raheb suggests, to become "an instrument for liberating people from occupation."[283]

This part of the thesis has focused on looking at the key features of the modern theological expression of supersessionism which is simply labelled the New Supersessionism. We have seen that ideologically it is heavily influenced by the Palestinian narrative of the Middle East and views the conflict through the lens of the "oppressor" and "oppressed" narrative that it sources from contemporary critical theory. Thus, there is an overtly political nature to the movement that is led by a number of organisations and theologians from the Palestinian Christian movement. It is a reactionary position that emerged as a response to the

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[278] Ramantswana. 'Negotiation and/or Conquest of the Land', p. 124.
[279] Mitri Raheb, 'The Bible and Land Colonization' in *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Space, and Covenantal Identity*. (Eugene: Cascade Books. 2021), p.27.
[280] Yeo, 'Conclusion', p. 151.
[281] Ibid. p. 150.
[282] Raheb, 'The Bible and Land Colonization', p.10.
[283] Raheb. 'Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation', p. 26.

prevalence of Christian Zionism which it considers to be a racist theology that is giving support for the occupation of land in the region. The theology that is espoused by the movement is a new form of liberation theology which uses the decolonial method of interpretation to support the notion that Christian Zionists are supporting the colonisation of empire. Coming to the Bible with these ideological presuppositions plays a huge part in the way that the new supersessionists understand the biblical texts that relate to the role and territory of national Israel. As discussed, the most common method for this is to universalise any promises that relate to a particular territory for Israel either through redefinition, relocation, or spiritualisation in Christ.

As this section has demonstrated the New Supersessionism itself is not a unified movement in the broad sense. There are considerable differences among adherents. Theologically, they are ecumenical consisting of Evangelical, Catholic, Greek Orthodox etc, which means there will always be a measure of fragmentation. There is also the difference between Western theologians and supporters of Palestine who advocate the more traditional supersessionist hermeneutics as against the more radical Palestinian Liberation theologians whose theology is intertwined with their overt political activism. They are all held together by their agreement that Christian Zionism is an errant theology, the Palestinian narrative is the right interpretation of the Middle East conflict, and that the modern state of Israel has acted unjustly towards the Palestinians. These common themes are what bind the movement together in spite of the theological differences that exist within it, demonstrating that the political elements are equally as important as the theology in the New Supersessionism. The melding together of novel hermeneutics such as decolonial methods of interpretation, the active call for BDS against Israel, the strong influence of Palestinian Liberation Theology, and the intense opposition to Christian Zionism rightly constitutes a new expression when compared to classical supersessionism and it is helpful and accurate to designate it as such.

The future of the movement is hard to predict. The increasing politicisation in the Western world will most likely mean that the Israel/Palestine issue will become even more of a partisan political one for the younger generation. This means that theological concerns (such as exegesis of biblical texts) will not necessarily enter into the larger debate. This polarisation can be easily demonstrated with the fervour surrounding Donald Trump. When

such a divisive political figure shows support for one side, many of those who oppose him politically will likely take the opposite view. The current trajectory of this issue would imply that this is its future – unless a more robust case can be offered by the other side that can remove the contentious partisan political nature of the debate and place it back in its proper context.

The impact and popularity of the broader movement has been considerable and has not gone unnoticed by those who have previously promoted a theology that continues to hold a place for national Israel in the future. This can include a vast array of divergent theological positions that would all be found under the broad banner of Christian Zionism. Those who hold these views acknowledge that some of the challenges presented have been considerable and require a more thought-out response than may have been offered in the past. This in turn has led to the development of an emerging movement from within the Christian Zionist perspective. It is to this I shall now turn my attention.

Chapter 3 - Understanding Christian Zionism

This chapter will focus upon the development of Christian Zionism and how it has progressed in its most recent expression, known as the New Christian Zionism (NCZ). We shall follow the same pattern as the investigation into supersessionism. Specifically, I aim to demonstrate what has changed within the movement to warrant its classification as "new". I am also concerned with detailing how the movement is engaged with the political world. In a similar way to supersessionism, it seems both views charge the other with being too influential in the political sphere. However, before we turn our attention to an examination of the most recent developments within the Christian Zionist tradition, we need to contextualise the movement as we did with supersessionism in order to be properly able to identify significant changes within it.

The continued interest in the subject of Christian Zionism and the Middle East has been bolstered by the boost that American Evangelicals felt during the Trump administration, which was seen to be favourable towards Israel.[284] As mentioned in the introduction this has led to a number of recent publications on the subject.

Although written from a broad range of viewpoints, these works add to the body of literature on Christian Zionism that needs to be examined. Much of it looks at Christian Zionism from an American perspective. Both Goldman's and Hummel's works focus largely on this context. Whilst both Price and Ice's works are geographically broader and take a more theological approach through a dispensational lens, they are both nonetheless Americans writing from that perspective. As we shall see when examining the discussion in the USA surrounding Christian Zionism, it can be extremely polarised and often focuses predominantly on dispensational Zionism. A specific aim of this thesis is to note the way in which the Christian Zionist movement has responded to the attacks from the New Supersessionism. While much literature in the Christian Zionist tradition is aimed at readers on a popular level, the challenges that recent critics have raised need to be answered with a

[284] Robert D, Blackwill, 'Trump's Foreign Policies Are Better Than They Seem.' *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council Special Report No.48, April 2019. https://www.cfr.org/report/trumps-foreign-policies-are-better-they-seem [Accessed 17/05/24]

more robust response. By noting attempts at this from within the broad Christian Zionist tradition we will be able to see the current state of Christian Zionist and evangelical thought.

I. The Chronological Development of Christian Zionism

Before charting the development of Christian Zionism, it is necessary to briefly mention that a unique form of Jewish Zionism did exist for many centuries before the advent of the nineteenth-century secular Zionist movement or any of its Christian derivatives. Zionism's definition is contested. Previously in this work we have looked at the view of supersessionists and anti-Zionists that Zionism is racist, evil, or responsible for Palestinian dispossession. These definitions have been engaged in the previous chapter. This section is concerned with how Zionists themselves use the term. It is first necessary to define clearly what is meant by Zionism as this varies between different authors. Historian Max Dimont comments that Zionism simply means a "return to Zion – that is, a return to Jerusalem. The idea of such a return has permeated Jewish thinking ever since the earliest days of the Diaspora."[285]

For many the term is used to talk of the modern state and the return of the Jewish people from the diaspora. Staunch Zionist Rabbi Shmuley Boteach has stated it like this:

> "Zionism is, quite simply, a statement of intent of the Jewish people to return to Zion and there to re-establish their home…Zionism simply means a belief that the Jewish people belong to Zion. And Zion belongs to the Jewish people. Therefore Zionists are those people who believe in Zionism, those who support Israel. Zionism has nothing to do with race. It is simply the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, which holds that Jews, like any other nation, are entitled to self-determination in their homeland, which is Israel."[286]

Zionism in this context focuses on the political movement that began in the nineteenth century and ultimately came to fruition with the establishment of the State of Israel. A major motivation and impetus for the growth of Zionism at this time was the constant experience of antisemitism across European Jewry. The modern Zionist movement took

[285] Max I Dimont, *Jews, God and History*. 2nd Edition (New York: New American Library, 2004), p. 413.
[286] Shmuley Boteach, *The Israel Warrior: Fighting Back for the Jewish State from Campus to Street Corner* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2016), p. 141.

shape under the auspices of Theodore Herzl. Herzl was initially an advocate for Jewish assimilation but witnessing European antisemitism would change his mind. Herzl's Zionist aspirations were fuelled by the injustices he witnessed during the infamous Dreyfus affair. Alfred Dreyfus was a French Jewish captain framed for treason and exiled by the French government. Herzl, devastated by the openly anti-Semitic prejudices displayed throughout the affair, wrote *The Jewish State* (1896) which argued for a return of the Jews to their ancient homeland as the only means to escape anti-Semitism as his conviction over the impossibility of European acceptance was confirmed. He went on to form the World Zionist Organization and convene the World Zionist Congress in 1897. Gavison explains that Zionism emerged in response to the persecution of the Jews and their widespread assimilation, and that only a Jewish State could guarantee their safety. [287]

It is impossible to study the history of modern Zionism without encountering a number of people who worked within the movement who are Christians – these Christians share many of the principles of Zionism except they root them in the Bible and not in any secular political system or personal attachment to the land. However, this does not hinder them from working together for the common goals of Zionism.

As indicated earlier, the term Christian Zionism is a later addition to the theological dictionary. Yet, the basic beliefs inherent to most forms of Christian Zionism (e.g. the continued election of the Jewish people and the covenantal promises regarding the land, as well as largely a firm belief in their national restoration and salvation), were all present in various degrees much earlier than the nineteenth century. This chronological survey will seek to demonstrate the reality of this and fully contextualise the complexity of beliefs within what ultimately became known as Christian Zionism. This present survey will take us briefly from the early church up to the present day, finishing our examination with the New Christian Zionism. It will however place most of the attention on the nineteenth and twentieth century developments in Christian Zionism that immediately preceded and followed the establishment of the modern state of Israel. This emphasis is needed to

[287] Ruth Gavison, 'The Jewish State: A Justification' in *New Essays on Zionism*, ed. David Hazony, Yoram Hazony, Michael Oren (Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2007), p. 7.

correctly differentiate the emergence of the New Christian Zionism from the older type of Christian Zionism and judge whether it is truly a new movement.

I.a. The Early Church

Although the specific designation of Christian Zionism was not used during this period, a belief in the restoration of Israel and a future millennial kingdom were still present. The early church in the first and second century continued to advocate a premillennial eschatology,[288] one that envisaged a future kingdom reign after the second advent. These sources were not as clear on delineating their beliefs on the role and future of Israel as they were about premillennialism. Although Ehle argues that what "is singularly absent from the early millenarian schemes is the motif of the restoration of Israel…the church fathers from the second century did not encourage any notion of a revival of national Israel"[289], this may be overstating the case somewhat. There were at least some indications that the early church fathers anticipated a restoration of Israel in some sense. Justin Martyr, although responsible for laying the groundwork for using the term 'spiritual Israel' for the church, and paving the way for later supersessionist writers, still held to a premillennial doctrine that included a role for the Jews in the eschaton. He understood that the future millennium would still have Jerusalem at its centre:

> "But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare…"[290]

Barnard concludes that "Justin introduces the idea of a millennium or 1000-year reign… there is no doubt that Justin held that Jerusalem would be physically rebuilt."[291] Whilst there are a few other postapostolic fathers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian who in some way

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[288] See Frederick C. Grant, 'The Eschatology of the Second Century.' *The American Journal of Theology* 21, no. 2 (1917) and Robert L. Wilken, 'Early Christian Chiliasm, Jewish Messianism, and the Idea of the Holy Land.' *The Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1/3 (1986): 298–307.

[289] Carl F. Ehle Jr, 'Prolegomena to Christian Zionism in America: The Views of Increase Mather and William Blackstone Concerning the Doctrine of the Restoration of Israel.' Ph.D. Dissertation at New York University, 1977, abstract.

[290] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 80. Accessed at: https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01/Page_239.html

[291] Lee. W. Barnard, "Justin Martyr's Eschatology." *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1965, pp. 86–98.

allowed a role for Israel in the future, they also nonetheless often spoke in the language of supersessionism.

However, when Augustine formulated his unique view of the millennium in the fifth century it set the trajectory for the next thousand years. Augustine was disillusioned with his interactions with the "chiliasts" of his day, many of whom wrongly envisaged a thousand years of delights and sensual pleasures. In reaction he proposed that the character of the millennium was spiritual in nature residing in the hearts of the faithful.

Thus, given the fact that Augustinian thought so heavily influenced Christendom for the next ten centuries it is no surprise that we do not encounter a strong stream of Christian Zionism during this period. The belief of a physical restoration of the Jews along with an earthly kingdom could not be reconciled with the spiritual kingdom view held by the majority of Christian intellectuals at the time It would not be until centuries later that a revived interest in the subject of Israel in the scriptures would become prevalent again.

I.b. The Reformation and Puritan Period

The rediscovery of classical learning during the Renaissance pushed people to re-examine ancient texts in the original languages. This in turn led many Christian scholars to begin looking at biblical texts in their original languages and thus the process of allowing more scholars to contrast church teaching with that of scripture. This combined with other factors, such as the invention of the printing press, which ultimately led to the gradual increase in literacy among the populous and helped reformation ideas to spread across Europe. As Pettegree and Hall argue "there can be little doubt that the book was one of the great forces of change in sixteenth-century Europe. At the centre of this lay the reformation."[292] It is worth mentioning that to talk of the reformation as a single unified event is not entirely accurate: as MacCulloch states, "there were very many different reformations"[293] which all aimed at recovering an authentic Christianity. Our context speaks primarily to the influence of Reformation thought in continental Europe and the British Isles.

[292] Andrew, Pettegree and Matthew Hall, 'The Reformation and the Book: A Reconsideration.' *The Historical Journal* 47, no. 4 (2004): 785–808.
[293] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (Penguin UK, 2004).

With the printing of vernacular Bibles there was access to the biblical text on an unprecedented scale. It was at this time that increased attention on scripture caused the premillennial beliefs of the early church to return. Along with this was a belief in the continued purpose of Jews and a future restored Israel in the land. These are the basic beliefs of theological Zionism. Andrew Crome in his study of Christian Zionism in early modern England highlights two main individuals as being significant figures in proto-Zionism, or Jewish restorationism. The first is Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) whose posthumous 1609 commentary on the book of Revelation was his major contribution to this subject. Although by no means a futurist interpreter like many Christian Zionists today, his commentaries none the less "reveal a God who was interested in both the future of the Jews on earth, and of individual nations."[294] Brightman wrote about the return of the Jews to Jerusalem again after years of dispersion when they will finally worship Christ.[295]

One of the concerns of Brightman's apocalyptic studies was the restoration of the Jews and their conversion to Christianity. Kobler states that Brightman believed that the final calling of the Jews consisted "not only in their becoming a Christian nation but also their return to Palestine and in the restoration of their kingdom."[296] Crome argues that Brightman's understanding "evidenced a change in the way in which the Jews were viewed after their end-times conversion. Rather that become a part of the gentile church, the Jews remained a distinct group after salvation; a group superior to the gentiles."[297]In addition to this, we see in Brightman's commentary on Revelation some proto-dispensational ideas, with his interpretation of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation being representative of seven distinct ages of church history. This historical-prophetic view is often found in dispensational commentaries on Revelation today. Brightman's work was highly influential during this period and started a stream of prophetic writings that put a particular focus on the topics of Jewish salvation and restoration. One such work came from lawyer and MP Henry Finch (1558-1625). He published his work *The World's Great Restauration, or The*

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[294] Andrew Crome, *Christian Zionism and English National Identity, 1600-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 51.
[295] Thomas Brightman, *The Revelation of St. Ihon, Illustrated with Analysis and Scholions* (London, 1644), p. 544
[296] Franz Kobler, 'Sir Henry Finch (1558—1625): And the First English Advocates of the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine.' *Transactions (Jewish Historical Society of England)*, vol. 16, (1945), p. 107.
[297] Andrew Crome, 'The Proper and Naturall Meaning of the Prophets: The Hermeneutic Roots of Judeo-Centric Eschatology.' *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 24, no. 5, (2010), pp. 725–41.

Calling of the Jewes: A Present to Judah and the Children of Israel that Ioyned with Him, and to Iospeh (that valiant tribe of Ephraim) and all the House of Israel that Ioyned with Him in 1621. He specifically countered the supersessionist teaching and hermeneutic when he declared:

> "where Israel, Iudah, and Ierusalem, are named in this argument, the Holy Ghost meaneth not the spirituall Israel, or the Church of God collected of the Gentiles, no nor of the Iewes and the Gentiles both (for each of these have their promises severally and apart) but Israel properly descended out of Iacobs loynes."[298]

Finch also stated forthrightly that in the future reign the Gentile nations and their kings would be subservient to restored Israel. This did not sit well with the reigning English monarch James I. The book was subsequently banned by order of the High Commission and both Finch and his publisher arrested. Another towering figure in English premillennialism at this time was the Cambridge scholar Joseph Mede (1586-1638) who had his commentary on Revelation published in 1642 by order of parliament. He advocated the Zionist theme of Jewish restoration to the land.[299]

Many seventeenth-century puritans continued to hold to restorationist views.[300] This was true in England and included such expositors as John Owen (1616-1683) and authors like John Bunyan and John Milton.[301] These provided the foundation for the strong Christian Zionist beliefs that existed in Britain in the nineteenth century. These beliefs travelled with English settlers to the American Colonies. A number of influential Puritan ministers continued to teach these restorationist themes of the salvation of Israel and their return to the land. Among them were John Cotton (1585-1652) whose works included *The Powring out of the Seven Seal* (1642) which was largely a polemic against Rome. In the same year he also published *The Churches Resurrection* which argued for a future millennium and conversion of the Jews. Another strong American advocate for early restorationist themes was Increase Mather (1639-1723). He published *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation* in 1669

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[298] Henry Finch, *The World's Great Restauration, or, The Calling of the Jewes* (London: Edward Griffin and William Blade, 1621), p. 6.

[299]Crome. *Christian Zionism*. p. 62.

[300] See N. I. Matar, 'The Idea of the Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought, 1661-1701.' *The Harvard Theological Review* 78, no. 1/2 (1985): 115–48; Mayir Vreté. 'The Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought 1790-1840.' *Middle Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1 (1972), pp. 3–50.

[301] See N. I. Matar, 'Milton and the Idea of the Restoration of the Jews.' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 27, no. 1 (1987): 109–24

and later his *Dissertation Concerning the Future Conversion of the Jewish People* (1709). These works argued for a future millennium and a restored Israel "as the focus of his millenarian eschatology."[302] American author and Christian Zionist Thomas Ice concludes that:

> "From the earliest times, American Christianity has always tilted towards support of the restoration of national Israel in the Holy Land. American Christianity, when compared with Euro-Asian Christianity has always had a philo-semitic disposition. Thus, it is not surprising that this tradition continues today, especially in dispensational circles."[303]

Another group that provides a crucial link in the eighteenth to nineteenth century were reformed and Pietist protestants. Yaakov Ariel notes how the Pietists played an important role in shaping theologies that "placed the return of the Jews to Palestine as the centre of the events of the end times."[304] The German Pietists in particular were the most influential starting their own mission, the *Institutum Judaicum* which was pivotal in shaping protestant ideas on missions to the Jews. The Pietists were similar to the Puritans in their beliefs about the restoration of Israel and their redemption. Ariel notes that the Pietists insisted "that the biblical references to Israel, Judah, Zion, and Jerusalem should be read literally, and that the Old Testament prophecies about the rejuvenation of Israel were meant for the Jews."[305] The influence of Pietist theology and missionary activity has been considered to be crucial in the rise of Jewish and Christian Zionism.[306] These views placed the Pietists in historical continuity with the Puritans and provided the link into the nineteenth-century evangelical world as they both "adhered to a messianic faith and understood the biblical prophecies of the restoration of Israel to its ancient homeland".[307] The timing of this also coincided with the rise of political Zionism in the nineteenth century that laid the groundwork for mutual cooperation between the older Pietists, evangelicals and Jewish activists.

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[302] Carl F. Ehle, 'Increase Mather's Puritan Hope.' *Hebrew Studies*, vol. 17, 1976, pp. 88–99.
[303] Thomas ice, *The Case for Zionism: Why Christians should Support Israel* (Green Forest: New Leaf Press, 2017), p. 193.
[304] Yaakov Ariel, 'From the Institutum Judaicum to the International Embassy' in Goran Gunner, Robert O. Smith, *Comprehending Christian Zionism: Perspectives in Comparison* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), p. 97
[305] Yaakov, Ariel, 'A New Model of Christian Interaction with the Jews: Pietist and Evangelical Missions to the Jews' in *Jews and Protestants: From the Reformation to the Present* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020) p. 91
[306] Goran Gunner, Robert O. Smith, *Comprehending Christian Zionism: Perspectives in Comparison* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).
[307] Ibid, p. 99.

I.c. Nineteenth-Century Christian Zionism

The nineteenth century could be classed as the golden age of British Christian Zionism.[308] A number of factors coincided with the strong current of British restorationism that led to Christian Zionists having significant cultural and political influence during this century. These included, amongst other factors, the rise of Victorian evangelicalism and social activism, and the beginnings of the political Zionist movement of Herzl. America also witnessed a rise in Christian Zionism due to factors like the second great awakening as it swept across the country, bringing with it a popular evangelical revivalist movement and a more literal approach to biblical interpretation. This led to a "new wave of fascination with prophecy."[309]

The century also witnessed the rise of dispensationalism under J.N. Darby (1800-1882), although too much focus is often placed on his role in this era.[310] It is true that dispensationalism would become a staple for Christian Zionists of the twentieth century, but at this stage its influence was limited. This link often comes from supersessionists attacking Christian Zionists. Sizer has described Darby as "the most influential figure in the development of …Christian Zionism."[311] American critic Donald Wagner makes similar statements, "If Brightman was the father of Christian Zionism…then Darby was its greatest apostle and missionary"[312]. There are also those seeking to defend the contribution of Darby and correct the mischaracterisations they feel the above critics present such, as Paul Wilkinson's 2007 book *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the role of John Nelson Darby.* The book attacks critics and equally takes aim at his fellow Christian Zionists who also downplay the role of Darby in Christian Zionism.

Unfortunately, such excessive focus on Darby disregards the strong streams of restorationist themes that predate him. The problem with these critiques is that they often

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[308] David Schmidt, *Partners Together in this Great Enterprise: The Role of Christian Zionism in the Foreign Policy of Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (United States: Xulon Press, 2011).
[309] Yaakov Ariel, 'Israel in Contemporary Evangelical Christian Millennial Thought.' *Numen* 59, no. 5/6 (2012) p. 458.
[310] Crawford Gribben, *J.N. Darby and the Roots of Dispensationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024).
[311] Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Its History, Theology, and Politics.* Online edition: https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=7adf41d9762a6e9c436611d13bead4d9e98fcdd7. [Accessed 01/09/24]
[312] Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon*, p. 89.

simply conflate dispensationalism and Christian Zionism. This is historically inaccurate, and it is easy to demonstrate the Darby was not responsible for Christian Zionism, as even many dispensationalists admit. As Ice states, "The real advocates of Christian Zionism in Britain were primarily Anglican premillennialists."[313] Many of these staunch Christian Zionists in Britain at this time held title and influence among the political elite of their day. Through their influence the fledgling Zionist movement of Herzl was brought to the attention of decision makers in the Western world. Ultimately, this support would lead to a decisive policy change by the British government in the Balfour Declaration. Yet, this groundwork had been laid previously by a number of well-known Christian statesmen who ardently promoted the Zionist cause.

Among the list of notable evangelicals at this time was Henry Drummond (1786-1869). An MP and a wealthy merchant banker, he used his wealth and influence to advance his belief in the conversion and restoration of the Jews. Drummond expressed his shock that there were parts of the evangelical church that did not believe in this:

> "it was not until the year 1826 when Mr Lewis Way informed me that the majority of what was called the religious world disbelieved that the Jews were to be restored to their own land, and that the Lord Jesus Christ was to return in person on this earth, that I had the remotest idea of the mass of infidelity which lurked under the guise of what was called evangelical religion."[314]

Way (1772-1840) was another high-profile Anglican evangelical who professionally was a trained barrister. He used much of his wealth to revitalise the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews (LSJ). This was the only Jewish mission agency in Britain at this time. In 1814 he donated over £10,000 to the mission which "effectively reorganised and re-founded the LSJ".[315] Way published a number of books from the premillennial perspective including *Millenium* (1822) and *Pallingenesia: The World to Come* (1824). In the summer of 1826 Way and Drummond joined together to form The Society for the Investigation of Prophecy. This led to them convening a conference the same year on Drummond's estate at Albury Park. They invited the most influential millenarians of the day,

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[313] Ice, *The Case for Zionism*, p. 194.

[314] Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Sessions from the Via Media*, c.1800-1850 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 165.

[315] Donald M. Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 78.

a "Who's Who" of prophetic writers.[316] Several of the main points from these conferences linked to restorationism:

1. While the judgments were falling upon Christians, the Jews would be restored to their ancient homeland.
2. The collective judgments would be followed by the millennium.
3. The Second Coming of Jesus would take place at the beginning of the millennium.
4. The French Revolution marked the beginning of the End-times and Jesus would return soon.[317]

The final point above clearly shows that the predominant hermeneutic at the Albury conferences was historicist premillennialism and not dispensationalism. This was different to the futurist school being adopted by the Brethren and Darby in the nineteenth century. However, this period of increased attention to the restorationist theme of Jewish return did lay the groundwork for the political nature of Christian Zionism that would soon emerge. Lewis pinpoints this period as when the shift from restorationism to an early form of Christian Zionism occurred.[318] This period is best observed through the influence of a number of people who shaped the early Christian Zionist movement.

A key figure in this period was Anthony Ashely Cooper (1801-1885), the seventh earl of Shaftesbury. Tuchman calls him "the most influential non-political figure, excepting Darwin, of the Victorian Age."[319] Crome notes that "as an influential MP and Step-son-in-law of foreign secretary (and later Prime minister) Lord Palmerston, Ashley had enviable access to those in power."[320] He was a restorationist and premillennialist whose views had been shaped by his close relationship with his spiritual mentor Edward Bickersteth who "believed a mass conversion of Jews to Christianity would occur after their return to Palestine, rather than before".[321] This in the opinion of Lewis had opened a way that "Christian

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[316] Ibid p.84.
[317] Donald Harman Akenson, *Discovering the End of Time: Irish Evangelicals in the Age of Daniel O'Connell*. Montreal (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016) Accessed August 7, 2023. ProQuest Ebook Central. p.359
[318] Donald M. Lewis, *A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021), p. 108.
[319] Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: Ballantine Press, 1956), p. 176. Although, it must be noted that the designation of non-political seems to be too much as Shaftesbury was at one time an active MP and sat in the house of Lords.
[320] Crome. *Christian Zionism*, p. 242.
[321] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 108.

restorationists could now become 'Christian Zionists' and work for the goal of Jewish return 'in unbelief'".[322] He had a passion for Jewish missions and a desire to see established, "an Anglican bishopric in Jerusalem, with a converted Jew consecrated as its first bishop."[323] Shaftesbury's influence played an important role in shaping British national identity and its increasing attachment to the Jews. At Shaftesbury's request the foreign secretary Lord Palmerston agreed to the establishment of a British consulate in Jerusalem. An evangelical vice consul was put forward by Shaftesbury and appointed in 1838. Britain was the first European nation to do this, and it begun a wave of European interest in Israel and the idea of Jewish return. In 1841 the first Protestant church in Jerusalem was established with royal approval. The first bishop chosen was converted Prussian rabbi Michael Solomon Alexander which was a huge step for the Christian Zionist cause. This period was a high point for British restorationism, a large body of support from the public as well as high ranking government officials existed. These politicians, motivated by their religious beliefs, now focused on effecting their restorationist views through the political establishment and thus we see the blending of religious and political motivations for the return of the Jews to Israel.

Another influential figure, a later contemporary with Shaftesbury, was the Reverend William Hechler (1845-1931). He worked diligently to see the Jews restored to the land. When the Russian pogroms of 1881 occurred Hechler and Shaftesbury together worked to raise funds, bring international attention to the plight of the Jews, and encourage the Jews to return to Israel. Shortly after this Hechler published his book *The Restoration of the Jews According to Prophecy* (1882). He was appointed chaplain to the British Embassy in Vienna in 1885 and eleven years later came across Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* in the city. Merkley points out that "here is the first encounter between official (Herzlian) Zionism and Christian Zionism."[324] A year later Hechler and Herzl met, and their relationship furthered the Zionist movement. There is no doubt that this relationship was crucial for the Zionist cause. French minister Claude Duvernoy wrote of it as "the friendly confluence of two Zionist streams, one Jewish and the other Christian, marching side by side toward the same kingdom and the same

[322] Ibid.
[323] Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, p. 202.
[324] Paul C. Merkley, "Zionists and Christian Restorationists", *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies / דברי הקונגרס העולמי למדעי היהדות* יא (1993): 93–100. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23536830.

Jerusalem."[325] The relationship between these two men was pivotal for the early Zionist movement. There were some who were uncomfortable with this link, seeing Herzl as "a tool in the hands of the missionaries trying to convert Jews to Protestantism".[326] Yet, as Herzl himself recorded, most Zionist leaders "saw their relationship as strategic rather than spiritual."[327] It is therefore no surprise that Hechler was one of the few non-Jewish participants to be invited to the first Zionist Congress in 1897 and even received a monthly pension from the Word Zionist Organization until his death in 1931.

I.d. The Balfour Declaration

The history that gave rise to the Balfour Declaration has garnered considerable attention.[328] Although it is not the primary focus of this work it is necessary to briefly sketch this and note how it connects to Christian Zionism. This will highlight the role it played in the preparation of the establishment of the modern state of Israel.

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed the entry of the first wave of Jewish immigrants fleeing Russian persecution to Palestine. This is known as the first Aliyah (1882-1903). The Second Aliyah (1904-1914) was for the same reason. After the death of Herzl, the role as head of the Word Zionist Organisation fell to scientist Chaim Weizmann, who would be a hugely successful lobbyist for the Zionist cause, becoming Israel's first president in 1949. The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 changed the situation in the Middle East and the role that Britain would play. Weizmann had proven himself invaluable to the British war effort. A chemistry professor at the University of Manchester, he had discovered how to synthetically manufacture acetone, the key ingredient needed to produce explosives. This was vital to the British war effort and gave Weizmann considerable favour with the British government, particularly then minister of munitions David Lloyd George. Weizmann was introduced to Arthur James Balfour who was a strong supporter of the Zionist cause already due to his Christian upbringing.[329] Weizmann first met Balfour whilst he was leader of the

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[325] Claude Duvernoy, *The Prince and the Prophet* (Christian Action for Israel, 1979), p.70.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid.
[328] See, for example, James Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade: The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance 1914-1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and Bernard Regan, *The Balfour Declaration: Empire, the Mandate and Resistance in Palestine* (London: Verso, 2017).
[329] Blanche E. C. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour: First Earl of Balfour, 1848–1906* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1937), p. 324.

British Conservative Party and persuaded him to use his considerable influence for the Zionist cause. Lloyd George became the prime minister rather unexpectedly with the fall of Asquith in 1916 and he had Balfour in his new cabinet. They "took an interest in Zionism"[330] and with Lloyd George as prime minister the government "began to seriously consider a public statement of policy on Palestine and opened official talks with the Zionists."[331] This was a unique time in history where the Zionists were presented with a window to push their dreams with the favour of the British Government. Koestler put it well when he says that "for one glorious moment, the British Cabinet assumed the role of Messianic providence. Politics was lifted from the trivial to the romantic plane."[332]

Shortly after this the British government issued a brief letter consisting of three sentences that affirmed their support for the Zionist cause. This has become known as "The Balfour Declaration"[333], as it was sent from Balfour to Lord Rothschild, a prominent English Zionist at the time. The Declaration has been described as the "single most important event in the history of Zionism prior to the establishment of the state of Israel" and one that "changed the course of world history".[334] The San Remo peace conference in 1920 gave rise to the Palestine Mandate – control of the former Ottoman territory was given to the British who were to be responsible for "putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".[335]This was approved by all member states of the League of Nations on July 24, 1922, coming into effect in September 1923. This meant that the Balfour Declaration, and with it the larger Zionist cause, including a national home in Palestine, had been legitimised by the League of Nations. This gave them legal status as the recognised people with sovereignty over the land

[330] Schmidt *Partners Together*, p. 39.
[331] Husan Shamir, 'The Zionist Project and the British Mandate in Palestine.' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 75, (2014), p. 969.
[332] Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment, Palestine 1917-1949* (London: Macmillian & Co. Ltd, 1949), p. 7.
[333] The Balfour Declaration, full Text: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/text-of-the-balfour-declaration
[334] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 164.
[335] The Avalon Project, 'The Palestine Mandate,' Full text: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp [Accessed: 20/06/24]

allocated in the mandate Palestine. The San Remo resolution has thus been referred to as the modern state of Israel's "principal founding document".[336]

Many historians have tried to discover the motivation behind British support for the Zionist cause. It is a difficult task to ascribe motive to historical personages when their intent may not be clearly stated. Balfour noted that the issuance of the declaration was "a unique situation in a manner wholly without precedent in history."[337] Schmidt outlines five key theories when it comes to motivation behind the Balfour declaration. The fourth theory he lists is the expansion of empire theory, he says this is "the most generally accepted explanation"[338] and the views of Verete and Segev, although different, still come under this category. The other views he lists are the theory of winning Jewish favour, the theory of remorse, the gratitude theory, and finally the theory of Christian Zionist motivation. While there is surely validity with aspects of each of these theories and he recognises that "there were various political factors that motivated the cabinet to publish the Balfour Declaration", he still ultimately places "a Christian Zionist spiritual impulse" as the principal factor.[339] This is the most pertinent or our discussion. Schmidt concludes that Christian Zionism "was the most significant single factor motivating the publication of the Balfour Declaration."[340] A more contemporary Israeli historian, Tom Segev, quipped that the Balfour declaration "was not guided by strategic considerations, and there was no decision-making process…The declaration was the product of neither military nor diplomatic interests but of prejudice, faith, and sleight of hand. The men who sired it were Christian and Zionist…"[341] Many who do not understand the intricacies of Christian doctrine as it relates to the restorationist view often refer to Zionist "sentiment" or a general public "sympathy"[342] towards Zionism. Isaiah Friedman's summary is that "the view dominant among British historians is that the Balfour Declaration was the result of miscalculation, a product of sentiment rather than of considered interests of state."[343] He highlights that the Foreign Office files and War Cabinet

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[336] Howard Grief, *The Legal Foundation and Borders of Israel under International law: A Treatise of Jewish Sovereignty over the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Mazo, 2013), p. 9.
[337] Arthur Balfour, *Speeches on Zionism* (London: Arrowsmith, 1928), p.128.
[338] Schmidt, *Partners Together*, p. 46
[339] Schmidt, *Partners Together*, p. 37.
[340] Ibid, p. 38.
[341] Tom Segev and Haim Watzman, *One Palestine. Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), p. 33.
[342] Isaiah, Friedman, 'The Response to the Balfour Declaration.' *Jewish Social Studies* 35, no. 2 (1973): 105–24.
[343] Ibid. p.105

papers indicate that the most important motivation "was to counter the possibility of a Turco-German protectorate of a Jewish Palestine emerging in the aftermath of the war."[344] In a similar vein, Mayir Verete argues that the declaration was an attempt by the British to renege on the obligations formerly stipulated in the Sykes-Picot agreement. The arrangement between Britain and France basically outlined how the Middle East would be divided if the Ottomans were defeated. Verete argued that Zionist ambitions were being utilised by the British to gain full control of Palestine and remove any French claim to the region..[345] Verete does at least acknowledge the religious sympathies of Lloyd George stating that "he came of those fundamentalist Protestants who not only regarded themselves as true Christians…but held to the belief that the return of Israel was 'nigh at hand' and that England was destined to help them."[346] A recent work by Renton seeks to challenge common perceptions of motivations behind Balfour, arguing that explanations involving religious sympathy are a myth that has persisted in the scholarly world due to the influence of Zionist thought on historians. [347] He argues that the idea that world Jewry could be won over to the British cause via Zionism was a mistaken venture based "upon the belief that there existed a dominant and unchanging Jewish identity, which was fixed upon the restoration of national life in Palestine."[348] Renton ultimately concludes that the Balfour declaration was a mistake, being "issued primarily to enable a globalist Zionist propaganda campaign to capture the support of world Jewry for the British war effort."[349] Whether Renton's new paradigm is powerful enough to overturn prevailing scholarly opinion is beyond the scope of this work – however it is clear he downplays the role of Christian Zionist support as a significant factor.

I.e. American Christian Zionism

Although the nineteenth-century restorationists were dominated primarily by Anglican theologians in Britain, a shift was about to occur that would have huge ramifications for

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[344] Ibid.
[345] Mayir Vereté, 'The Balfour Declaration and Its Makers.' *Middle Eastern Studies* 6, no. 1 (1970): p.60. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4282307.
[346] Ibid.
[347] See James Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade: The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance 1914-1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
[348] Ibid. p. 3.
[349] Ibid. p. 149.

later Christian Zionism. In the twentieth century the centre of Christian Zionism shifted to the United States. Most historians attribute this to the rise of dispensationalism - so much so that as Lewis has stated, "contemporary discussions of American Christian Zionism often begin and end with dispensational premillennialism."[350] Darby who began his ministry with the Church of Ireland but later became disillusioned with Anglicanism, became a leader in the Plymouth Brethren movement. The dispensational theology of Darby is "often viewed as the greatest impetus for American Christian Zionism."[351] The specifics of Darby's eschatology were a result of his personal study of the Bible. In his switch to futurism, he came to see a future salvation for the nation of Israel and a restoration to the land. He kept a clear distinction between the heavenly blessings to be experienced by the church and the earthly blessings to be experienced by the Jews in a future dispensation when they were redeemed. Darby and dispensationalism also became known for the doctrine of pre-tribulationism – that the church would be raptured to heaven before a final seven years of tribulation. In contemporary debates, much criticism and discussion circle around this particular issue.

Although much of Darby's eschatology had historical antecedents in Christian theology, he systematised it. He approached prophecy according to the literal hermeneutic, believing that when the text addressed Jews, this must be taken in a straightforward manner and not imported with any spiritual meaning to actually refer to the church. Darby was not as heavily focused upon "end times" as his critics make out, nor as obsessed with prophetic speculation as dispensationalists are today. In a similar vein to his modern counterparts, Darby placed a specific emphasis on the Jewish nature of many eschatological teachings in the Bible, particularly the "time of Jacob's trouble", more commonly known as the tribulation. Under the dispensational scheme this is a future seven-year period of divine judgment that will come upon the world and those who reject Christ – and specifically upon the nation of Israel in order to bring them to the point of repentance that will lead to their national salvation. For Darby, "the great tribulation is either Jewish as in Matthew 24, or over the whole world after the church is gone (Rev.7), with neither of these has the church

[350] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 132.
[351] Irvin G. Chetty, 'The New Apostolic Reformation and Christian Zionism.' *Journal for the Study of Religion*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2014), p. 301.

to do."[352] An interesting observation regarding Darby and the early dispensationalists was that they were not politically active – standing in stark contrast to many of their modern-day counterparts. In fact, it is this political activism on behalf of the modern state of Israel that elicits much of the hostility directed towards them. Darby and the early dispensationalists were satisfied to be "mere observers of the Zionist movement."[353] Darby himself is known for saying "we do not mix in politics; we are not of this world; we do not vote."[354] This apolitical stance was followed by the Brethren movement and the early American popularisers of dispensationalism. Darby toured North America multiple times between 1862 and 1875, and his premillennial dispensational views had a "profound and increasing influence upon American evangelicalism."[355] Akenson agrees that during Darby's itinerant ministry in North America his particular brand of apocalyptic theology "found its home soil."[356]

There were a number of other prominent evangelicals and early proponents of dispensational Zionism that helped its rise in the United States. One of its chief proponents was Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), who Sandeen described as the "most influential 'clergyman' in America"[357]. He acquired his prophetic theology from the Open Brethen and Darby and had him teach at his Illinois Street Church. He believed in a restoration of the Jews to the land and the imminent return of Christ. The most lasting legacy of Moody upon American evangelicalism came through the establishment of The Moody Bible Institute[358] which trained a whole generation of ministers in dispensational doctrine. Another influential figure that provides a bridge from a theologically to a politically active Christian Zionism was William Blackstone (1841-1935). He has been called "America's first quintessential Christian

[352] John N Darby, 'Letter to Mr Ulrich' in *Letters of J.N.D.,* Volume 2 1868-1879. Accessed at: https://plymouthbrethren.org/article/11025.
[353] Ice, *The Case for Zionism*, p. 199.
[354] John N. Darby. Letter (1878) *Letters of J.N.D.*, Volume 7 1868-1879. Accessed at: https://plymouthbrethren.org/article/11026.
[355] Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, p. 21.
[355] Ibid. p. 130.
[356] Donald Harman Akenson, *The Americanization of the Apocalypse: Creating America's Own Bible* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 120.
[357] Ernest Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1790), p. 172.
[358] Founded in 1886 as The Bible Institute for Home and Foreign Missions of the Chicago Evangelisation Society.

Zionist".[359] Blackstone was a wealthy Chicago businessman who turned his attention to ministry and the cause of Jewish restoration. Lewis proposes that he "reinvented dispensationalism, turning it into an activist Christian Zionism" and that although "he professed to follow Darby's teaching, he bent it to his politically engaged Christian Zionist vision."[360] His bestselling book *Jesus is Coming* (1878) is little more than a compilation of scriptures that talk about the return of the Jews to the land of Israel. It became one of the most widely read Christian publications of its time.

Blackstone was far more politically active than Darby and other dispensationalists. In an attempt to help Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution, he put together a petition to then President Benjamin Harrison in 1891. This became known as the Blackstone Memorial. It aimed at getting presidential support for an international conference to support the idea of Jewish return to Israel. Although the memorial failed to win approval from Harrison, its message had already penetrated the religious consciousness of America. Blackstone was undeterred and continued to be an avid supporter of the Zionist cause, insisting that what was transpiring was a fulfilment of biblical prophecy.

Two other significant figures responsible for the early spread of dispensationalism in America are Arno Gaebelein and C.I. Scofield. Their lasting influence upon American evangelicalism is still prominent in contemporary dispensationalism. Gaebelein was a Jewish immigrant from Germany who became "a key organiser of the surging dispensationalist cause"[361] as well as "a central figure in the formation of the fundamentalist movement in the United States."[362] Gaebelein served as a Methodist minister for many years and also as a missionary among the Jewish population in New York. He founded The Hope of Israel Mission as an outreach ministry to Jews. Gaebelein also served as the editor of the popular dispensationalist publication *Our Hope* which allowed him to spread his theological views to a wide audience. He continued to hold prophecy conferences and promote dispensational premillennialism through his writings and speaking. He was friends with another influential figure in the rising dispensationalist movement within American evangelicalism at the time,

[359] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 153.
[360] Ibid. p. 154.
[361] Ibid. p. 159.
[362] David A, Rausch, 'Arno C. Gaebelein (1861–1945): Fundamentalist Protestant Zionist.' *American Jewish History*, vol. 68, no. 1, 1978, p. 44.

Cyrus Scofield the originator of the popular reference Bible bearing his name which was a collaborative project that he edited. The Scofield Reference Bible was also responsible for spreading the distinct teaching of classical dispensationalism to the American populace in a way previously unheard off. Akenson argues that it totally transformed how people understood the Bible by placing the framework of dispensational theology over the text: "Once a Bible student engaged the Scofield system, an innocent reading of the scriptural text was forever impossible."[363]

The enduring legacy of these men is seen in the rise of the Bible Conference movement along with a proliferation of books, Bible schools and teaching ministries that led to a widespread acceptance of dispensational theology along with its strong emphasis on Israel and the Jewish people.[364] Of particular importance was Dallas Theological Seminary that Gaebelein helped establish with his colleague Lewis Sperry Chafer in 1924. It became a stalwart institution for the dissemination of dispensational ideas in the twentieth century, training many evangelicals to defend its central tenets with academic rigour. Today it still remains a bastion of dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism spread quickly in America in the early twentieth century and it served as a unifying force for American evangelicalism. Dispensationalists had detailed and specific outlines of eschatological events and a firm belief in doctrinal distinctives such as the rapture and tribulation as well as the continued election of Israel. Ariel notes "Since the late 19th Century, most American premillennialists have been dispensationalists which has been the most influential eschatological school in the country".[365]

It is this dominance of American evangelicalism that soon led to an inseparable connection between dispensational Zionism and a right-wing political position.[366] These two positions became synonymous in the eyes of the world and for theologians who did not support the view of a future restoration of Israel. This led to increased critique from opposing views and

[363] Akenson, *The Americanization of the Apocalypse,* p. 411.
[364] See chapter 3 'John Nelson Darby and Dispensationalism' in Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
[365] Yaakov Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel, American Fundamentalist Attitudes Towards Jews, Judaism, and Zionism 1865-1945* (New York: Carlson Publishing Ltd, 1991), p.11.
[366] See Matthew A. Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014).

in turn to a need for a response from more academically minded Christian Zionists. This came in the form of the New Christian Zionism. However, it will be instructive to briefly demonstrate how problematic the connection between American Christian Zionism and partisan politics had become – this will allow us to properly understand the motivation behind the emergence of this new form of Christian Zionism.

Following the 1948 war of independence and leading up to the 1967 Six Day War, the locus of Christian Zionist support had completely relocated to American soil. The popularity of dispensationalism within evangelicalism meant that support for Israel both theologically and politically was widespread. Lewis observes that the events of 1948 "ushered in a new era of Christian Zionism."[367] In his analysis of post-war Christian Zionism Lewis splits the period into four eras. First, from 1948 to 1967 (the eve of the Six-Day War), second, 1967 through to 1979, third, 1979 to 1989 and fourth, 1989 until the era of Robertson and Hagee.[368] Hummel categorises his division according to the particular type of Christian Zionism he sees in a specific era rather than distinct chronological periods. He divides the modern era of Christian Zionism into: (1) Christian Right Zionism (2) Spirit-Centered Zionism, and (3) Global Christian Zionism. He contends that this 'Christian Right Zionism' was now a central part to the political dimension in America's relationship with Israel and constituted what was often called the pro-Israel lobby.

Lewis attributes the rise of the Christian Right to the popularity of the 'Moral Majority' founded by Jerry Falwell in 1979 and later Pat Robertson's 'Christian Coalition'.[369] These groups were unquestionably associated with the political right, specifically the Republican Party. They represented the fundamentalist movement of American Christianity and preached against liberal social progressive movements as well as supporting the anti-Communist movement.[370] Falwell became the de facto leader of the Christian Right during the late seventies and eighties. He often warned that America's fate was linked to its support for the nation of Israel and failing to do so would put the nation in real danger. His understanding of the USA as a nation elected by God for a purpose – in this case supporting

[367] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 243.
[368] Ibid. p. 245.
[369] Ibid. p. 272.
[370] Hubert Villeneuve, *Teaching Anticommunism: Fred Schwarz and American Postwar Conservatism*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020) Accessed September 11, 2023.

the Jewish nation -- is similar to the thinking of the early puritans who settled in America. Speaking to *Christianity Today* in 1981 he said:

> "God has raised up America in these last days for the cause of world evangelization and for the protection of his people, the Jews. I don't think America has any other right or reason for existence other than those two purposes."[371]

Falwell also formed a close relationship with Israeli prime minister Menachim Begin, who sought to establish strong connections with Christian Zionists during his term from 1977-1983. Such relationships proved fruitful for Falwell and the Moral Majority as Israel rewarded his support with a private jet and he received the prestigious Jabotinsky award for his support for Israel in 1981.[372] This friendship "began a tradition of establishing connections with all the Israeli prime ministers to follow."[373] Undoubtedly this period has influenced perceptions of Christian Zionism and dispensationalism – for either being too powerful politically and guilty of abusing the Bible, or as a good example of the outworking of principles found in the Bible. The landscape remains very much divided. As Schmidt notes, "Evangelical influence in America during these decades was impossible to ignore."[374] This influential relationship between Falwell and Israeli prime ministers continued into the Netanyahu era and is evidenced by the fact that during the Israeli PM's visit to the United States to discuss the delay in implementing the Oslo Accords that Clinton and Rabin had agreed, Netanyahu upon landing, went straight to a meeting of Christian Zionists organised by Jerry Falwell, before visiting the White House. The following day he also appeared on TV show *The 700 Club* with Pat Robertson.[375]

Following the end of the Cold War and the fall of the USSR, Falwell announced that the Moral Majority would cease to function having fulfilled its purpose. Now the leadership of American Christian Zionism shifted to the charismatic wing of the church. Leaders like Robertson and later John Hagee rose to the top of Christian Zionist influence in America. As was typical for the movement their actual doctrinal beliefs seemed to take second place to

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[371] 'An Interview with the Lone Ranger of American Fundamentalism,' *Christianity Today*, September 4th, 1981. Accessed: https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1981/september-4/interview-with-lone-ranger-of-american-fundamentalism.html.
[372] Samuel Goldman claims that the private Jet was only a rumour. p. 179.
[373] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 273.
[374] Schmidt, *Partners Together*, p. 343.
[375] David Brog, *Standing with Israel: Why Christians support the Jewish State* (Florida: Front Line, 2006), p. 142.

their political and cultural activism and gift-centred messages. It was this Pentecostal and charismatic type of Christianity that now led the Christian Zionist movement. In terms of political and social influence it was Hagee, a Texas Megachurch pastor from the Pentecostal tradition, who has had the most success. He founded Christians United for Israel (CUFI) in 2006 after he was asked by Netanyahu to help raise American Christian support for Israel. Durbin comments that out of all the leaders in the movement seeking to mobilise their followers into practical politics, "Hagee and CUFI are among the most renowned and effective."[376] While more traditional Christians Zionists such as LaHaye and Falwell were extremely conservative theologically, and they considered much of the charismatic movement, prosperity gospel and televangelist world to be unbiblical, Hagee was very comfortable in that world. He bound the promises of Genesis 12:3 to his charismatic prosperity theology of blessing. Hagee's CUFI movement has become "one of the most influential pro-Israel Lobby Groups".[377]

It is important to note here how strongly related the cause of "Israel" became with the political realm at this time. The associations are closely tied to Christian nationalism, right wing extremism and a number of other moral and ethical issues championed by the moral majority years before. The fact that Israeli Prime ministers could turn to Christian lobby groups and by utilising their activism influence and change policy demonstrates their considerable influence – and also why many Christians formed such a strong objection to the pro-Israel side. The debate had primarily moved beyond a clear theological discussion and was having an impact in geo-political decision making in the United States and across the globe. To many, Christian and non-Christian alike, even many Christian Zionists, such political manoeuvring was unacceptable. One critic mentioned earlier, Gary Burge, blames the overwhelming evangelical support that Trump had, and the support for his Jerusalem embassy move, on the "remarkable theology" Christian Zionists have built around the modern state of Israel. His basic thesis argues that evangelicals are "building a bridge from ancient Israel to the modern secular state of Israel"[378] and thus the command to bless Israel

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[376] Sean Durbin, *Righteous Gentiles: Religion, Identity, and Myth in John Hagee's Christians United for Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 54.
[377] Ibid. p. 206.
[378] Gary Burge, 'You Can Be an Evangelical and Reject Trump's Jerusalem Decision' December 6th 2017. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/12/evangelical-trump-jerusalem-embassy/547643/ (Accessed: 12/03/24).

provides a "political mandate for Israel's privileges today". Thus, he accuses Christian Zionists of being "filled with a tangle of commitments" that lead to an inappropriate willingness to accede to Israeli demands.[379] He concludes that the bridge between ancient and modern is "fundamentally unsound" and is using the Bible for political ends. This is an interesting charge as it is clear that both hermeneutical methodologies have inherent political implications. Christian Zionists are generally supportive of modern Israel in its policies and decision making, whereas evangelical anti-Zionists like Burge are champions of the Palestinian cause as we demonstrated above. Both sides suffer from the same problem – an attachment to a political narrative that at times leads to extremes. It is also worth noting that only interacting with the extremes of a movement offers a limited perspective of the broader movement itself.

This leads to interpreting the opposing side's actions through a fairly narrow set of constraints. For example, Burge sees the attempt to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem through the conflict of "Christian Zionists" versus "evangelical anti-Zionists". Stephen Spector has argued convincingly that what was behind this move was not the inordinate influence of the pro-Israel lobby who were trying to fulfil biblical prophecies, or even a partisan gesture by Trump appealing to his evangelical base, but "a new geopolitical strategy that they believed responded to recent changes on the ground in the Middle East."[380] He points out that the arguments given to try and influence Trump's decision were not religious, but rather focused on "Israel's security and its strategic importance to the West." In an interview that Spector had with Johnnie Moore, who was operating as the unofficial spokesmen for Trump's evangelical advisors, he noted that it was not theology that was spoken about in the meetings with Trump but geopolitics. However, there is also a possibility that political statesmen with religious motivations know when to offer pragmatic arguments over religious ones – something quite common in the political realm that we encountered historically with figures like Shaftesbury and Blackstone.[381] Yet, there does

[379] Ibid.

[380] Stephen Spector, 'This Year in Jerusalem: Prophecy, Politics, and the U.S. Embassy in Israel' *Journal of Church and State*, Volume 61, Issue 4, (Autumn 2019), p. 3.

[381] Shaftesbury in his diary complained that he had to make only political arguments in order to convince Lord Palmerston. See Donald M. Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.183.

seem to be considerable reason to believe this was more about shift in foreign policy rather than overt theological motivations.[382]

This section has provided a broad overview of the development of Christian Zionist thought. By looking at these theological themes throughout the different eras of church history we can observe that discussion around the continuing election and role for the Jewish people has been present throughout Christian history. Christendom has generally vacillated between restorationism or replacement perspectives in relation to Israel. Sometimes one of these views has risen to prominence while the other has been relegated to the fringe, but never completely disappeared. We have shown how directly related this is to the dominance of a particular hermeneutical methodology. The shift towards a more allegorical and spiritual type of application transformed the church's approach to interpreting biblical texts about the Kingdom of God and the field of eschatology from the fifth century onwards. This led to a decline in the popularity of premillennial views that placed more importance on the nation of Israel in biblical theology and a more literal hermeneutic.

Later we observed how with the reformation and the puritans there was a return to the restorationist perspective that laid the foundation for the emergence of what would become Christian Zionism. During the nineteenth century, British Christian Zionism had its heyday, the melding of politics and Zionism in British society and government leading to the Balfour Declaration and eventually the establishment of the modern state of Israel. Significantly for our investigation we observed the shift in the stronghold of Christian Zionism from Britain to the United States. Dispensationalism facilitated this relocation. The dispensational version of Christian Zionism in the twentieth century became linked with partisan politics in a way that previous eras had not experienced. With the post-war global political scene where America was a, if not the, major world power, it exerted considerable influence over other nations' decisions and policies. To many the influence of dispensational theology and its strong Christian Zionist support led to it being inseparably tied to Republican Party politics and thus it became extremely controversial in both the theological and political world. To support Israel – either for theological reasons or pragmatic ones, was

[382] Jonathan Tobin, 'The Blood Isn't on Trump's Hands' *National Review* (May 15th ,2018) Accessed: https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/05/palestinian-protests-trump-embassy-move-to-jerusalem-not-cause/

generally associated with one particular side of the political aisle. This is problematic as often times in the partisan political world there are spectrums of belief, with extremes on every position. When a particular theology is attached to one side its opponents will associate it with the most extreme manifestations of that side. The situation is similar to what we observed with supersessionists– they found themselves associating with a hard-left anti-Zionist theology that often crept into antisemitism. Thus, the actual biblical and theological discussion was hindered through association with problematic elements of an overtly political narrative. It seems that Christian Zionism in the United States particularly finds itself in a similar position today. It has been this situation that provided the motivation for a development in the Christian Zionist tradition. The question for Christian Zionists was how to respond to the situation in an attempt to bring academic respectability back to the movement. The answer to that question is what we will examine in the next chapter.

Chapter 4- The New Christian Zionism

This chapter provides the answer of Christian Zionism to the question raised at the end of the last chapter – namely, how the movement responds to the way it has been linked so closely with popularist theology and right-wing politics through the historical association it had with the republican party because of figures like Falwell and Robertson. How can the movement gain intellectual respectability without abandoning its central and unique doctrines that have been negatively coloured in the public eye through years of being so closely involved with geo-politics in America? The primary vehicle for a response came in 2016 in the form of a non-renewalist[383] academic work edited by Professor Gerald McDermott who formerly held the Anglican chair of Divinity at Beeston Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama and included an impressive list of scholars. This book is called *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land*. It gave traction to a newly forming but growing movement among Western academics to provide substantial and comprehensive rebuttals to the increasing popularity of supersessionist interpretations. So, whilst it can be classed as a progression in the Christian Zionist tradition, it is also primarily a reaction to the ascendancy of supersessionist theology in the academy. Lewis notes the New Christian Zionism (NCZ) is "an alternative vision differing from both traditional dispensationalism and the emergent renewalist strands".[384] The title, as Lewis states, "invites the question: How new?"[385] This will be an important focus of this chapter as I seek to ascertain an answer to that question. I will analyse in what ways this new movement has developed from traditional Christian Zionism and whether this is enough to actually warrant the classification of a new movement or whether it is simply a rebranding exercise. This will mean examining the hermeneutics to see if anything about this has changed, as well as whether the movement as a whole is drawing upon any new influences for their arguments and responses to their critics.

This chapter will first provide an overview of this new movement and the significant contributors who are publishing works related to it. It will then examine in detail the actual

[383] Non-renewalist in this context refers to a stream that is outside of the charismatic Pentecostal tradition.
[384] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 345.
[385] Ibid. p. 344.

arguments being put forward to ascertain the particular beliefs of the New Christian Zionism. I will examine the incorporation of post-supersessionist methodologies that are being utilised by the NCZ, and clearly show where they align and how they differ. This will help us differentiate between this and previous versions, clearly identifying any novel features. I will conclude by making the case that there are enough significantly new components to this movement to warrant the classification as 'new'.

I. An Overview of the Movement

The NCZ is in many ways a response movement. One reviewer, speaking about one of the movement's key texts, describes it as "a compelling theological critique of the supersessionist strain of Christian interpretation."[386] The movement as a whole clearly seeks to answer the allegations of bad theology, political manipulation, land theft and racism that have become regular charges of the anti-Zionist Christian movement codified in the writings of the new supersessionists. This is important to understand as many who identify with the NCZ in different ways and have produced academic work for it have more broadly been identifying their work as post-supersessionist. This is a way to affirm a theological belief in the election of Israel and repudiate supersessionist teaching yet does not necessarily affiliate them with the term "Zionism" which has been problematic. I am including the work of both the New Christian Zionism and post-supersessionism together in this section as they clearly share many points in common theologically and hermeneutically. There are a number of significant works that have come out in recent years that argue broadly for a future restoration of the Jews as a national entity. This is an important part of the NCZ movement and thus it is no surprise that there are many shared contributions between scholars who have each contributed to the larger movement while building upon their own existing work.[387]

Theologian Michael Vlach has stated that the NCZ "is a relatively recent addition to the theological community" and examined its theology in regard to the new creation model of eschatology.[388] He sees it as being in line with this approach as it utilizes the Old Testament

[386] Donald J. Westblade, 'The New Christian Zionism Review Essay', *American Affairs Journal*, December 2017. Accessed at: https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/12/new-christian-zionism/.
[387] Gerald McDermott is a founding member of the Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology.
[388] The New Creation Model is a paradigm that attempts to account for all dimensions of God's creation purposes and the nature of eternal life.

narrative "without spiritualizing them" whilst affirming a future earthly kingdom and "the significance of national Israel". He also argues that the NCZ asserts that God uses particulars (Israel) in order to bring about blessing to the universal (earth), but "in a way that does not make the particular disappear."[389] He also sees that the NCZ's rejection of Platonic and Augustinian thought to refute the spiritual vision models hermeneutic. The fact that scholars are assessing its impact in relation to other theological beliefs indicates that it is a bona fide movement in its own right and more than just a repackaging of existing beliefs. Perhaps one of its most significant features is the belief in the continued significance of national Israel – which is often the main point of contention with supersessionism. The *New Christian Zionism* volume is a synthesis of existing thought already developed by numerous scholars such as Rudolph, Blaising and Bock. Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock are both New Testament scholars and pioneers of the movement known as progressive dispensationalism. They have written many volumes about eschatology and Israel that feed into the movement. Another key thinker in the movement is David Rudolph the director of Messianic Studies and professor of New Testament at The King's University (Texas). He argues that the apostle Paul does not eliminate particularity for Israel by his universal proclamation of salvation for all. Rudolph has been making these claims since before the release of the *New Christian Zionism* volume. In his previous works it is easy to ascertain a clear continuity of thought with the developing NCZ literature and the ideas of other scholars such as Blaising and McDermott. Rudolph does not use the terminology of Christian Zionism, yet his work features a strong sustained argument for the restoration and redemption of Israel and the relationship between the church and Israel. His volume *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23* (2016) is a post-supersessionist interpretation of this Pauline text as it relates to Jewish identity. It is also heavily critical of the supersessionist reading of scripture which is very much in accordance with the NCZ. .

It is important to understand this post-supersessionist approach as many of the contributions to the NCZ come from this current stream of scholarship. Rudolph's co-editor Joel Willits has stated that "the post-supersessionistic reading of the New Testament takes the Jewish nature of the apostolic documents seriously, and has as its goal the correction of

[389] Michael Vlach, *The New Creation Model: A paradigm for Discovering God's Restoration Purposes from Creation to New Creation* (NC: Theological Studies Press, 2023), p. 381.

the sin of supersessionism."[390] This sounds very similar to the stated intention of the NCZ. It shows that NCZ is drawing upon this new line of scholarship and incorporating it into the movement. Soulen gives a good definition of the meaning of post-supersessionism in this context:

> "Post-Supersessionism designates not a single viewpoint but a loose and partly conflicting family of theological perspectives that seeks to interpret the central affirmations of the Christian faith in ways that do not state or imply the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people…Positively expressed, a theology is post-supersessionist if it affirms the present validity of God's covenant with Israel"[391]

This means that a central facet of the NCZ has been drawn from the waters of post-supersessionist theology. I will explore this further in this chapter and show how it contributes to the argument that the NCZ is a distinct movement and that it is warranted in classing itself in this way.

Shortly after the release of McDermott's NCZ book he published another volume of his own, *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently About the People and the Land* (2017). This is another example of post-supersessionist theology placed within the context of his own NCZ. He spends most of the volume arguing against supersessionist reading of the Bible and concludes that "God is keeping his covenant with the Jewish people, that he has brought them back to their promised land in remarkable ways, and that he has a future for both the people and the land."[392] In this volume he also addresses many of the political arguments that have been brought against Christian Zionists by the new supersessionists such as claims regarding stealing land from Arabs, violating international law and the charge that Zionism is simply a modern expression of nationalism and racism. The inclusion of such questions demonstrates that these political topics are still at the forefront of the debate and need to be addressed if attempting to bring intellectual credibility to the NCZ movement. However, such topics also show that the NCZ is not identical to the methodology of post-

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[390] Joel Willits 2016, 'Jewish fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) in postsupersessionist water: Messianic Judaism within a post-supersessionistic paradigm', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72(4), a3331.
[391] Edward Kessler (ed), *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 350.
[392] Gerald, McDermott, *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land* (Grand Rapids: Brazon Press, 2017), p. 78.

supersessionist theology which typically would not engage such issues and is more of a specific theological-hermeneutical approach.

Another contributor to the NCZ is the aforementioned Joel Willits, professor of biblical and theological studies at North Park University in Chicago. His contribution to McDermott's volume is on "Zionism in the Gospel of Matthew: Do the People of Israel and the Land of Israel Persist as Abiding Concerns for Matthew?". This shows that although he usually writes under the designation of post-supersessionism, he is also comfortable applying the term Zionism to his theological beliefs about Israel in the correct context. He states that his intent in that chapter is to "highlight Matthew's preoccupation with the land and argue for an affirmative answer to the question posed in the subtitle: Yes! The people of Israel and the land of Israel persist as abiding concerns in the Gospel of Matthew."[393] For Willits a central concern is the question of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles within the Church. His main thesis is that there should be a distinct Jewish presence within the *ekklesia* and that theology should seek to promote this unity in diversity. For him, a "post-supersessionist reading of the New Testament is rightly called a renewed perspective because it reclaims the essential diversity of the *ekklesia* at its earliest period of social praxis subsequent to, and consequent of, the advent of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel."[394] He believes only a post-supersessionist reading of scripture "or whatever else it may be called"[395] will cultivate such ethnic diversity. His focus is different to that of McDermott, yet in many areas they cross over. For example, both are concerned about preserving distinct Jewish identity within the church. So Willits believes and affirms the ongoing covenantal status of the Jewish people, which also includes the land. Thus, when he says "or whatever else it may be called" this could very well apply to the NCZ. Willits and Rudolph together affirm that a foundational assumption of post-supersessionist theology is that the covenants made with Israel are both present and future.[396] This conclusion is also a foundational part of the belief structure of the NCZ.

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[393] Joel Willits, 'Zionism in the Gospel of Matthew: Do the People of Israel and the Land of Israel Persist as Abiding Concerns for Matthew' in *The New Christian Zionism,* ed. McDermott, p. 111.
[394] Joel Willits, 'The Renewed perspective: Post-Supersessionist Approach to the New Testament.' *Hebrew Studies* 57 (2016), p. 377–80.
[395] Ibid.
[396] David Rudolph; Joel Willitts (eds). *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), p. 317.

Another contributor to the NCZ and a founding member of the Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology is Mark Kinzer.[397] He is the senior scholar and president of the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute. Interestingly again, Kinzer would place himself as part of the post-supersessionist school of biblical interpretation. His work is primarily focused upon shaping the messianic Jewish movement and engaging particulars of how Jewish believers in Jesus should live and practice their faith. However, in his volume *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (2005) he argues that the New Testament text "affirms the validity of Jewish practice for all Jews and the validity and importance of the covenant between God and the Jewish people."[398] He dedicates a whole chapter to refuting the supersessionist perspective and highlighting the tragic results of this view throughout church history. As with Willits, Kinzer contributed a chapter in McDermott's volume which makes an argument for the importance, both now and in the future, of the land of Israel in the books of Luke and Acts. He argues that according to these biblical books "Jerusalem possesses a unique status not only because the Kingdom of Christ is historically anchored there but even more because that kingdom will achieve its eschatological consummation within its walls."[399] Interestingly Kinzer also claims that his argument alone – a post-supersessionist argument for the continued election of Israel, "is not sufficient ground for cultivation of a twenty-first-century theological Zionism". He argues this would require work on the identity of the church and her relationship with the Jewish people, the role of Israel in the realm of worldly politics and an engagement with a multitude of historical factors. He passes this obligation onto the other chapters in the NCZ volume which admits "takes us further on the road to a new twenty-first-century theological Zionism."[400] In 2018 Kinzer expanded upon this with his own volume *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen*. Here he is concerned with recapturing an interpretation of the gospel "in which the death and resurrection of Jesus are inseparable from the historical journey and eschatological destiny of the Jewish people."[401] In his

[397] https://www.spostst.org/
[398] Mark Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), p. 181.
[399] Mark Kinzer, 'Zionism in Luke Acts' in McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016) p. 142.
[400] Ibid. p.164.
[401] Mark Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen: The Resurrected Messiah, the Jewish People, and the Land of Promise* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), p.3.

argument to recover this Jewish element of the gospel Kinzer focuses on the book of Acts and its relationship to the book of Luke. A significant part of the thesis is again concerned with correcting the supersessionist view that has de-territorialised the gospel and removed any significance to the land and Jerusalem. Kinzer engages with the work of N.T. Wright who proposes these universalised readings. Interestingly, although Kinzer is not willing to classify this work under the broad banner of "Christian Zionism", mainly because of its previous attachment to the American political scene and dispensationalism, he does have a chapter which analyses the larger Zionist movement as part of the divine plan. He makes a theological assessment of modern Jewish history (i.e., Zionism) in light of the teaching of the New Testament and concludes that "the establishment of a Jewish national home in the land of Israel (i.e., the success of the Zionist enterprise) was itself providentially ordained by the divine *boule* [plan] and constitutes a historical fact of enormous theological significance."[402] Kinzer goes on to address numerous modern political objections to Zionism and the modern state of Israel. These contributions would seem to place his work under the banner of the NCZ as envisioned by McDermott.

Another novel element of the NCZ is its inclusion of broader issues related to the legal discussion surrounding the modern state of Israel. One key scholar writing is this area for the movement is Robert Nicholson. He is the president and executive director of the Philos Project – an organisation that seeks to promote positive Christian engagement in the Near East. It is a non-partisan entity politically.[403] He is also an adjunct professor at the Kings College in New York City, and publisher of *Providence* – a journal of Christianity and American Foreign Policy.[404] The inclusion of someone with the credentials of Nicholson, who focuses more on active engagement with the legal and political realms of Christianity, rather than a theologian who addresses textual arguments for the theological world, indicates the broad resources that the NCZ is seeking to utilise in their battle against supersessionism. Nicholson's work focuses on such questions as whether or not the State of Israel adheres to international law and their covenantal requirement for justice. He also addresses the more controversial issues of the Palestinian territories. The NCZ as a movement clearly sees the need to address these issues and the work of a legal scholar like Nicholson shows that it is

[402] Kinzer. *Jerusalem Crucified,* p.252.
[403] https://philosproject.org/
[404] https://providencemag.com/

willing to focus on them. This is another clear differentiation from previous iterations and highlights the distinct and novel approach of the NCZ as a whole. Nicholson also addresses the charge by supersessionists like Sizer and Raheb that Israel is an occupying force and in violation of international law. These inclusions are necessary for a twenty-first century defence of Christian Zionism in the manner that the NCZ claims to be.

The inclusion of a scholar like Nicholson is another novel element that shows the NCZ is a broader multi-disciplinary movement that seeks to present itself as comprising scholars and experts in their respective fields. This makes the NCZ considerably different from typical Christian Zionism in the United States that is often solely the purview of popularist pastors and theologians from the dispensational perspective.

One final volume worthy of note, that is building upon the work of both post-supersessionist theology and the NCZ, is the 2023 *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism* edited by Stanley Porter and Alan Kurschner. The volume is "an extensive set of essays on a specific question concerning Israel. Will God restore the nation of Israel?"[405] The stated intent of this work is to "advance the exegetical, theological, and historical literature with the aim to challenge supersessionism on the question of Israel's futurity."[406] It brings together a number of scholars from a broad range of theological traditions – therefore it is not so much concerned about having every contributor agree on all issues, rather the focus is specific, constructing solid exegetical arguments for the future of Israel to answer the claims of supersessionism. The contributors include many from the post-supersessionist movement such as Rudolph and J. Brain Tucker, along with progressive dispensationalist Bock, and premillennial scholars focusing on eschatology such as Kurschner. It also features those involved in Jewish missions such as Mitch Glaser and Michael Brown. I will engage with their work in this chapter to show its continuity with the NCZ. This volume definitely shows a continuity of ideas with the NCZ – presenting a solid academic case for the restoration of Israel in the future, yet at the same time being more specific in focus. This is noticeable in that the book does not really address in detail questions surrounding the modern state of Israel, meaning it does not deal with

[405] Stanley E. Porter, Alan E. Kurschner, *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2023), p. 1.
[406] Ibid.

many of the political arguments typical of the New Supersessionism which were examined in the New Supersessionism chapter. I will highlight these weaknesses in the conclusion to this chapter.

II. The NCZ and Dispensationalism

The previous chapter closed posing the question of how Christian Zionism would respond to the troubling associations it often accrued due to its connection to dispensationalism and American politics. Having now given a broad overview of the movement that has emerged as a response I will examine some of the more specific components. One of the primary ways that the NCZ has responded is by attempting to sever any association with traditional dispensationalism and thus with the sensationalism and popularist stream of Christian Zionism that dominates the American scene. As one reviewer summarises the collection of essays in McDermott's book, they seek "to challenge the longstanding association of Christian Zionism and premillennial dispensationalism."[407] It is clear the McDermott considers the association with dispensationalism to be the root cause of the problem. In his introduction, as he seeks to explain what the new Christian Zionism is, he immediately begins by stating that "most scholars have assumed that all Christian Zionism is an outgrowth of premillennial dispensationalist theology. Originating in the nineteenth century…and then developed by Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*".[408] He states forthrightly that "the Christian Zionism that this book proposes is not connected to the dispensationalism described".[409] McDermott states that the purpose of his book is not to merely make a prudential argument for the existence of the state of Israel – although some chapters will do that. Crucially, the purpose of these prudential arguments "is to undergird a new theological argument for the twenty-first century."[410] First he wants to be clear what the NCZ is not:

[407] Caitlin Carenen, 'Review: Gerald R. McDermott, Ed. The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land'. *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12 (1) 2017, p. 1.
[408] Gerald McDermott, 'Introduction' in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016), p. 11.
[409] Ibid.
[410] Ibid. p. 13.

> "It is neither dispensationalism nor mere nationalism, nor land theft, nor merely Christian eschatology, nor theocracy."[411]

This aversion to the reputation of dispensationalism and the close association it has had with Christian Zionism is shared by many in the academic world who have contributed to the NCZ. Kinzer in the introduction to *Jerusalem Crucified,* also makes it clear that his argument for the restoration of Israel is not Christian Zionism. He cautions that "many readers might assume that the present volume advocates political and theological positions characteristic of the movement…Christian Zionism."[412] He critiques those who "espouse a dispensationalist theology" and highlights their eschatological focus with mention of the rapture, the tribulation, and the millennium. From these statements it is easy to deduce that in Kinzer's mind there are too many problematic associations with the term Christian Zionism as it currently stands, especially with its dispensational emphasis in America. He very clearly states "theologically, I have never been a dispensationalist, and even hold an agnostic position regarding the millennium."[413] It seems that such a caveat in the introduction to a book arguing for Israel and against supersessionism is indicative of the problematic associations that Christian Zionism has by reputation and the desire to avoid any of these associations as part of the argument.

Another NCZ contributor engaged with above, Joel Willits, is also quick to disavow any association with dispensationalism. In a foreword to Nicolas Brown's post-supersessionist book *For the Nation: Jesus, the Restoration of Israel and Articulating a Christian Ethic of Territorial Governance* (2016) he recounts a story about how after delivering a paper on the territorial restoration of Israel in Matthew's gospel he was asked by one esteemed scholar "are you a dispensationalist?" He was taken back by the question as his topic was early Judaism and the Kingdom teaching of Jesus. However, it became clear that even a New Testament scholar steeped in work relating to the Jewish context of Jesus still "as a rule thought only dispensationalists raised questions about the land."[414] He continues to clearly state "I'm not a dispensationalist" and identifies himself with a new army of scholars who

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[411] Ibid.
[412] Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified,* p.19.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Nicholas R. Brown, *For the Nation: Jesus, the Restoration of Israel and Articulating a Christian Ethic of Territorial Governance* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), p.9.

are reading the New Testament in a way that removes the deeply ingrained supersessionist bias of history.

This need to separate from the dispensational landscape of Christian Zionism is clearly something the NCZ and post-supersessionists feel is necessary to try and bring a measure of intellectual respectability to their work. Many would share the view of Hummel who argues for the demise of scholastic dispensationalism; that the movement became associated with popularist mass market level books, which although playing a hugely influential role in shaping American evangelicalism, ultimately left it without any substantial defenders. Hummel notes that the dire situation of scholastic dispensationalism was seen in the way that authors like Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye became the movement's most prominent spokesmen. They "ushered dispensationalism into the centre of American popular culture, pioneered its restructuring around culture and politics, and acted as agents of its dispersion into virtually every form of media and the Centre of the New Christian Right." Hummel argues that although it primarily began as a theological movement within the evangelical world, its influence spread to larger segments of American culture. So, by the end of the twentieth century its implied "influence on political groups and politicians drove national headlines and its most successful cultural productions sold in the tens of millions."[415] He identifies this as a form of "pop-dispensationalism" which in addition to churning out end-time scenarios also became a major driver in "evangelical engagement in politics and culture".[416] Pop-dispensationalism of this kind has little to do with theological discourse and the fictional end-times scenarios in its popular novels advanced a "new Christian-Right kingdom" which had been developed not by scholars or theologians but by the "theologically uninterested or illiterate".[417]

Such descriptions of Christian Zionism show clearly that it has something of a reputation problem. Hummel is a historian of religion, but supersessionist critics also frame Christian Zionism through this narrow lens focusing mainly on popularists and politics. Burge states that Christian Zionists believe that "being Christian has a necessary political

[415] Daniel Hummel*, The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism: How the Evangelical Battle over the End Times Shaped a Nation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2023), p.21.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Ibid. p.291.

entailment…supporting Israel's nationhood is a spiritual obligation".[418] Both critics either frame it as a theological belief that leads to unqualified support for the modern state of Israel's polices, or as a movement that is inseparably linked with extreme right-wing politics. These associations are why we see such an attempt to distance themselves from dispensational iterations of Zionism by McDermott and others attempting to shape the NCZ into an intellectually respectable movement for the twenty-first century. Mitch Glaser, the president of a global Jewish mission, Chosen People Ministries, who has a PhD from Fuller Theological Seminary writes in his chapter in Porter's volume ("The Impact of Supersessionism on Jewish Evangelism") that the book by McDermott and others "attempts to separate the perceived excesses of the historic Christian Zionist position from the core belief that God's plan for Israel, which includes the land, continues today and tomorrow."[419] Glaser, himself a dispensationalist, clearly states that the contributors do still hold to the central tenets of the historic Christian Zionist position, "although some would deny ties to a more dispensational form of Christian Zionism."[420]

This explains the continued highlighting that the NCZ is not dispensationalism – an attempt to remove guilt by association with the dispensational popularisers and overtly politically active proponents. Rather, the NCZ and the post-supersessionists want to place their movement firmly within the realms of academic theological discourse. The desire to be seen as academically responsible provides them with intellectual capital and positions them as an authority culturally. Those evangelicals associated with fundamentalist movements like dispensationalism hold little intellectual capital with the public or the wider church. The evangelical church wants to be able to communicate to culture and this means that academics still hold considerable influence. Therefore, the NCZ wants to be able to present a theologically supportable case for Israel free from these negative associations. This means that many of the NCZ proponents will hold the same beliefs about Israel theologically as dispensationalists and are therefore unable to completely disavow them. They just do not

[418] Gary Burge, *Why I am Not a Christian Zionist* (December 2019) at: https://www.thebanner.org/features/2019/12/why-i-m-not-a-christian-zionist
[419] Mitch Glaser, 'The Impact of Supersessionism on Jewish Evangelism' *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism Ed. By* in Stanley, E. Porter, Alan E. Kurschner (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2023) p. 380.
[420] Ibid.

have a place for sensationalist pop-dispensationalism in a movement that seeks to present itself as an academic and scholarly perspective.

This reality is seen by the fact that two major contributors to McDermott's NCZ volume are Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock. Both are founders of the progressive dispensationalist school of thought. The progressive stream of dispensational thought is relatively new in the history of dispensationalism and represents a significant development of traditional dispensationalism in certain areas. The leading dispensational college, Dallas Theological Seminary, witnessed the birth of progressive dispensationalism by Bock. This may indicate a shift away from historic dispensationalism. However, the Seminary's doctrinal statement has not changed and being a progressive dispensationalist does not violate any of their doctrinal distinctives. More likely this is considered to be another revision of a system of thought that is not static. There has been a continual revision of dispensational thought over the generations that have developed the movement, progressive dispensationalism is the latest, and most controversial, in this line. Yet it is still very much part of the dispensational tradition especially in relation to Israel and the Jewish people. Its inclusion signifies that its proponents are leading scholars. Bock is a senior research professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and has earned recognition as a Humboldt scholar from Tubingen University in Germany for his work on the gospel of Luke. He is the author of over 40 books and hundreds of scholarly articles. He is recognized as a leading Lukan scholar and expert in historical Jesus studies. Blaising is also a highly ranked scholar, being the senior professor of theology at South Western Baptist Theological Seminary and a past president of the Evangelical Theological Society (2005). He is the co-author with Bock of *Progressive Dispensationalism* (1993) and has published numerous other books and academic journal articles. The credentials of these scholars have to be taken seriously, and they cannot be dismissed as simply theologically illiterate or as pop-dispensationalists. They have both contributed strong arguments for the continued election of Israel and for the continuing importance of the land in volumes from dispensational, post-supersessionist, and now from NCZ perspectives. This shows that there is a common core of academic arguments for the main tenets of Christian Zionist belief concerning the significance of Israel. It also shows that the NCZ is not absolutely cut off from dispensational thought and that there may well be a place at the table for scholastic dispensationalism is some form, especially in the fight against

supersessionism. The question will be whether or not progressive dispensationalism or scholastic dispensationalism can survive the previous generation of popularisers and show a less sensationalist approach.

Bock has been at the forefront of the attempt to make a solid exegetical argument for the future of Israel as a nation in the plan of God. His contributions are included in both McDermott's *The New Christian Zionism* and in McMaster Biblical Studies Series volume, *The Future Restoration of Israel*. Clearly this contribution is welcomed in the academic response against supersessionism – and Bock is clear that even though he is a progressive dispensationalist he still considers his writing as stemming from the dispensationalist tradition. He states that his conclusions still "reflect a dispensational structure"[421] even though he does often describe it as a dispensationalism with a small "d".[422] It may be that Hummel has written the obituary for academic dispensationalism prematurely. There is a movement within dispensationalism that is attempting to revive its academic heritage and shares the wider view that pop-dispensationalism had become too closely aligned with right-wing politics and mass market sensationalism. A recent volume entitled *Discovering Dispensationalism: Tracing the Development of Dispensational thought from the First to the Twenty-first century* (2023)[423] attempts to reinvigorate the scholastic arm of dispensationalism. Bock has contributed an article to this volume, which is cited above, and provides a connection to the wider NCZ approach. As Vlach has concluded, although many may not like to admit the similarities that exist between the NCZ and dispensationalism, they cannot be flatly denied. He states the "New Christian Zionism's belief in the theological significance of corporate Israel both now and in the future is similar to dispensationalism."[424]

It has been important to show that one of the unique facets of the NCZ is its disavowal of forms of Christian Zionism that have become inseparably linked with sensationalism and right-wing politics. The NCZ considers this to be a problematic situation and is attempting to

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[421] Darrell Bock, 'The Progressive Movement (1980-present)' in *Discovering Dispensationalism: Tracing the Development of Dispensational thought from the First to the Twenty-first century Ed. By* Cory. Marsh, James I. Fazio (California: SCS Press, 2023) p. 342.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Cory Marsh, James I. Fazio (ed) *Discovering Dispensationalism: Tracing the Development of Dispensational thought from the First to the Twenty-first century* (California: SCS Press, 2023).
[424] Vlach, *The New Creation Model*, p. 378.

remove all these excesses and present the core ideas of Christian Zionism concerning the role of Israel from a theological perspective. As this section has demonstrated this is not a wholesale rejection of all dispensationalism's arguments, as the progressive and revised traditions have made considerable arguments in favour of Israel and against supersessionist interpretations, but it is a firm rejection of popularist dispensationalism's influence, troubling associations, and problematic reputation. This is one feature that clearly stands out in the NCZ movement and its defence of a role for corporate national Israel in the Bible. As a response to critics who continuously attack the doctrines related to a future purpose for Israel because of this form of Christian Zionism and dispensationalism, the NCZ is seeking to remove those easy targets and make sure they provide a robust academic case for their position.

III. The NCZ and Hermeneutics

An examination of the hermeneutics used by proponents of the NCZ will help us determine what is new, revised, or in continuity with existing forms of Christian Zionism. This section will seek to identify key common hermeneutical themes that undergird the belief in a future for national Israel. It will not be possible to describe with precise uniformity the exact hermeneutical methodology used by every scholar associated with the NCZ as a movement with such a broad view will draw upon a number of sources and influences as they relate to specific interests in areas of theology. This section will primarily be focused upon how those from a non-supersessionist position interpret the Bible over against their supersessionist counterparts. Both Blasing and Bock are representative of this type of hermeneutics: Blaising as a founder of the Society for Post Supersessionism and Bock as a historical Jesus scholar.

Blaising, who writes the chapter on NCZ hermeneutics in McDermott's volume, sees the issue revolving around the way that the OT promises regarding Israel are understood in relation to the NT. He notes that there are those who "admit that the Tanak predicts an ethnic national, territorial Israel in the consummate plan of God"[425] yet these same people

[425] Craig Blaising, 'Biblical Hermeneutics' in McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016), p. 80. Tanak is an acronym for the Jewish scriptures derived from the letters of its three components: Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim.

would still "argue that the New Testament does not do so."[426] They would argue that the consummation of the promises in the Tanak is different and in order to harmonize this with the New Testament usually they choose "to see the Israel of the Tanak redefined, spiritualized or transcendentalized, or sometimes simply replaced as, the church of the New Testament".[427] This hermeneutic has already been examined in depth in the chapter on supersessionism. The important issue is to look at how the NCZ responds.

The hermeneutical approach of the NCZ is clearly laid out by Blaising who states that:

> "…the New Testament is best read as the continuance and advancement of the plan and purpose of God presented in the Tanak for Israel and the nations, Jews and Gentiles. The New Testament affirms the expectation of the Tanak of an ethnic, national, territorial Israel in the consummation of the divine plan."[428]

The NCZ affirms the ongoing validity of the covenantal promises regarding the future of Israel and their land. In order to continue to sustain this they must have a hermeneutic that understands these promises to still mean what the original OT author intended. This must therefore continue into the NT era of Christianity without any spiritualizing or universalising. Blaising argues from the canonical level against supersessionist readings. He sees these two options as "different ways of construing the entire canonical narrative – the plot line running through all of scripture."[429] This is an argument that follows the work of Soulen, discussed above, who identified what he called structural supersessionism as involving the entire canonical narrative of scripture. Blaising is building upon his earlier work with this line of argumentation.

In a 2001 journal article addressing the future of Israel as a theological question Blaising critiques supersessionist hermeneutics and the way they construe the narrative of the promises from the OT to the NT. Blaising asserts that the affirmation of Israel's future is "spoken by scripture, both Tannach [*sic*] and Christian Bible, both Old and New Testament alike."[430] He identifies the problem with the structural nature of supersessionism that set

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[426] Ibid.
[427] Ibid.
[428] Ibid. p. 81.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Craig A. Blaising, 'The Future of Israel as a Theological Question', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:3 (September 2001) p. 442.

the tradition of "excluding ethnic, national Israel from the theological reading of scripture." Blaising says the response to this must be an "overall adjustment"[431] to the way scripture is read. He proposes what he identifies as a "non-supersessionist Evangelical theology". Blaising is writing from within the evangelical world – and the majority of the debate concerning supersessionists and non-supersessionists emanates from the evangelical world too. The concept Blaising proposes here is similar to the post-supersessionist movement that would arise a littler later but demonstrates the foundations and common roots between those who would contribute to the NCZ. Blaising asserts that he employs the "consistent application of a grammatical-historical-literary hermeneutic."[432] Through this hermeneutical lens he believes that the New Testament "carries forward and advances"[433] the themes of Israel's eschatological restoration. He states his belief that "the church is not in the New Testament as the completion of the kingdom plan or as a 'spiritualisation' of its expected reality'[434], thus clearly setting himself apart from the supersessionist hermeneutic that is prone to spiritualizing such elements away from nation Israel. Vlach concurs in his assessment of the NCZ stating it "offers a robust contextual, literal hermeneutic that is non-supersessionist and affirms the literal fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies."[435]

However, Blaising does not simply see his belief in the future of Isael as solely resting upon the hermeneutic above. He draws upon the deep well of modern scholarship and historical Jesus studies that has been developing over the past forty years. This approach shows the novel development of the movement and distinguishes it from previous forms of Christian Zionism. He notices that a strong connection between the restoration of Israel and the teaching of Jesus has been shown by scholars in this field. Scholars working in historical Jesus research "share the view that the teaching and mission of Jesus can only be understood in terms of Jesus' vision for the restoration of Israel."[436] He highlights that a significant feature of this "new consensus" is the "nationalist particularity"[437] of the

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[431] Ibid. p.443.
[432] Ibid.
[433] Craig A. Blaising, 'A Theology of Israel and the Church' in *Israel, the Church and The Middle East: A biblical Response to the Current Conflict* Ed. By Mitch Glaser and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2018), p.92.
[434] Ibid. p.95.
[435] Vlach, *The New Creation Model*, p. 380.
[436] Craig A. Blaising, 'The Future of Israel as a Theological Question'. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:3 (September 2001) p. 438.
[437] Ibid. p. 439.

teaching of Jesus that continues through his life and into the New Testament era. Blaising sees the clarity of this new consensus pushing supersessionism out of favour. [438]

Blaising is also a founding member of the Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology and, as mentioned earlier, this developing movement is now leading the pushback against supersessionist readings of scripture. This hermeneutical approach to the question of Israel is far more developed and involved than often stereotyped by using a simple "literal vs. allegorical" approach. As Blaising says, this way of reading the New Testament is "a continuation of the canonical narrative of the Tanak."[439] Another post-supersessionist concurs stating that the Hebrew character "of the OT Scripture ought not to be regarded in its literal form as passe, and therefore the object of reinterpretation by the NT Gentile Christian."[440] This seems to be the crux of the issue as it relates to the discussion between supersessionist and non-supersessionist theologians.

Bock has also been heavily involved in the current historical Jesus research being a part of the Institute for Biblical Research Jesus group that met from 1998-2008. He has written numerous volumes that came out of this research.[441] In addition, Bock has written extensively on the subject of the restoration of Israel and against supersessionist readings of the NT. Similarly to Blaising he affirms that the Christological focus of the NT does not need to exclude "God's commitments to Israel as a people or nation".[442] The fact that the promises have a Christological focus does not nullify the hope of Israel. He states that "promises of restoration after proclamations of judgement are rooted in God's speech acts in the Torah *and* in the New Testament."[443] Bock in a recent work argues for the future of Israel as a nation, not just individual Jewish people who believe in Jesus, but as a corporate national entity. He structures his argument around the original OT promises and covenants. The Abrahamic covenant was not just about a soteriological promise for all people and God

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[438] Ibid.
[439] Craig Blaising, 'Biblical Hermeneutics' in McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016), p. 90.
[440] Barry Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic Publishing 2007), p. 195.
[441] Darrell Bock, *Who is Jesus? Linking the Historical Jesus with the Christ of Faith* (New York: Howard Books, 2012).
[442] Darrell Bock, 'How should the New Christian Zionism Proceed?' in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016), p. 306.
[443] Ibid.

also made a commitment to Abraham that leaves "a role and place for ethnic Israel, the people tied physically to Abraham."[444] This aspect is differentiated from what he promises to the nations, the point being there are both promises and plans for the nations and for Israel. As Bock says, "there is one plan, but in it are key pieces to which God commits. Israel as a people and nation are a part of that program." He thus agrees with Blaising's conclusion that the NT should be read in continuity with the Tanak and the promises when he sums up his approach stating that "our argument is that nothing in either testament indicates that this is no longer the case."[445] One does not come at the expense of the other and the promises "culminate in fulfilment through the seed, both singular and collective".[446]

These types of argument are grounded in a hermeneutical approach that allows the covenantal promises to Israel, including the land promises, to be read into the New Testament without being substantially revised or spiritualised into signifying the church or the world. This is a key feature that is shared by all those in the NCZ movement. It is also compatible with dispensational theologies and historic premillennial perspectives. It is even compatible with those who may not speculate on eschatological specifics but broadly class themselves as post-supersessionist. I have already demonstrated how many from the NCZ associate broadly with this movement, so it is worth briefly providing an outline of this current stream of scholarship and the hermeneutics that many draw from in the NCZ. Ultimately, this will provide another line of evidence that the NCZ is a new movement which has developed by considering the latest in biblical scholarship.

IV. Post-Supersessionism

As I outlined in the overview section there is a new group of scholars sheltering under this banner that argue strongly against all supersessionist readings of scripture. In this they are very relevant to the goal of NCZ theology which supports a future for national Israel. Whilst the post-supersessionist movement is not so defined by issues such as eschatology, nor in making specific statements regarding the modern state of Israel, it does provide a theological and hermeneutical argument for the continued election of Israel and that the

[444] Darrell L. Bock, 'Israel's Future as a Nation and Reconciliation' in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism* Ed. By Stanley, E. Porter, Alan E. Kurschner (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2023), p. 90.
[445] Ibid. p. 90.
[446] Ibid. p. 91.

promises to Israel are still relevant. Willitts characterises this "emerging post-supersessionist" approach as consisting of the following four assumptions. First, that the covenantal relationship with the Jewish people and the nation as a whole is both present and future. Second, that there is a distinctive role for Israel in God's redemptive plan through the Messiah Jesus. Third, that there is a continued distinction between Jew and Gentile in the church today. Fourth, for Jewish people this distinction is most clearly seen through Torah observance as the chief expression of covenantal faithfulness.[447]

It is interesting to note here in these assumptions that the post-supersessionist movement is not identical with the NCZ as the third and fourth points are not really a concern for the NCZ in the larger sense. The Jewish scholars who believe in Jesus and lead the post-supersessionist movement have a concern for how they practice their Jewish identity within the church. Of course, a large part of this is presenting arguments for the continued covenantal status of Israel and that the future promises to her remain, but they are also concerned with practical living and issues relating to maintaining a Jewish identity. The first two points are really what is being utilised by the NCZ movement and demonstrates why there is considerable cross over and shared purpose between these movements. However, the inclusion of the other elements provides enough of a different purpose to separate them even though they draw upon each other at times. It is more reasonable to class it as a hermeneutical approach. It goes beyond the typical bifurcation of law vs grace and presents a "third way"[448] which builds upon the work of historical Jesus studies and more comprehensive research on Judaism in the first century.

This continued interest in developing understanding of Judaism in the first century has impacted historical Jesus studies and also helped to refine Pauline scholarship within New Testament studies. This has also been incorporated into the NCZ. NCZ contributor David Rudolph has argued that one of the most promising developments in New Testament studies is "the emergence of a new school of thought referred to as 'Paul within

[447] Rudolph, Willitts (eds), *Introduction to Messianic Judaism,* p. 317.
[448] Joel Willits. 'Jewish fish (IXΘΥΣ) in postsupersessionist water: Messianic Judaism within a post-supersessionistic paradigm', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72(4), 2016, a3331.

Judaism.'"[449] The argument of this perspective is that Paul's writing needs to be understood within the context of late Second Temple Judaism. This is a rapidly growing area that has served to redefine "the way we understand the nature of Second Temple Judaism, which is the historical, cultural and theological context of early Christianity."[450] Post-supersessionism brings together scholars who draw from these current streams of New Testament and Jewish studies in their hermeneutical approach. As Willitts says, it is "an approach, not a method",[451] describing it as a theological and historical "posture towards the texts of the NT."[452] He concludes that a significant advantage to the post-supersessionist reading of scripture is that it provides a counter to the prevailing dualistic understanding that separates the literal from the spiritual and downgrades the physical in favour of the spiritual which more naturally leads to an allegorical approach. The post-supersessionist way of reading the text is:

> "a hermeneutical approach to the NT that goes beyond the faulty modern intellectualist dualism of body and mind…that have exercised hegemony over the interpretation of the NT in the last two centuries."[453]

The Society for Post-Supersessionism which exists to advance scholarly discussion in this area also states that a major purpose of its existence is to "overcome understandings of the New Testament that entail the abrogation or obsolescence of God's covenant with the Jewish people, of the Torah as a demarcator of Jewish identity, or the Jewish people themselves."[454] As Korner explains, a post-supersessionist reading of a New Testament text serves "theologically, ideologically, socially, culturally, and/or politically to emplace Jews and Gentiles, who are followers of the Jewish Messiah into God's eternal covenant with Israel."[455] Interestingly, Korner does include a political component under the banner of post-supersessionism which provides a further connection to the NCZ movement.

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[449] David Rudolph, ''To the Jew First': Paul's Vision for the Priority of Israel in the Life of the Church'. *Kesher: A Journal of Messianic Judaism* 37 (2020), pp. 11-25.
[450] Joel Willitts, 'The Re-Newed Perspective: Post-Supersessionist Approach to the New Testament.' *Hebrew Studies* 57 (2016), p. 378.
[451] Joel Willits, 'Jewish fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) in postsupersessionist water: Messianic Judaism within a post-supersessionistic paradigm', *HTS TeologieseStudies/Theological Studies* 72(4), 2016, p. 2
[452] Ibid.
[453] Ibid. p. 5
[454] The Society for Post-Supersessionist Theology', http://www.spostst.org/ [Accessed 17/09/24]
[455] Ralph J. Korner, 'Post-Supersessionism: Introduction, Terminology, Theology' *Religions* 2022, 13:1195

Ultimately, we see that a primary concern is for an approach that maintains the continued importance of God's covenantal promises. This is a concern shared by the NCZ movement and it is important for them to utilise the best in modern scholarship to argue for it. A non-supersessionist reading of the Bible is essential for the NCZ movement. It emerged as a response to contemporary critiques of Christian Zionism both theologically and politically from the new supersessionists. The NCZ has responded to the theological critiques in the same manner as the post-supersessionists, reading the NT in a way that ensures the fidelity of the covenantal promises to Israel and drawing upon the most contemporary fields of biblical and Jewish studies. It has responded to the more political attacks firstly by disavowing any connection to pop-dispensationalism and sensational Christian Zionism. However, the NCZ, unlike post-supersessionism, cannot completely avoid engaging with the political questions regarding the modern state of Israel which I will now turn attention to.

V. The NCZ, Politics and the Modern State of Israel

Perhaps the most contentious issue for Christian Zionism revolves around the subject of the modern state of Israel. The NCZ has made it very clear that it does not want to be linked with the popularist dispensational models or even the non-dispensationalist Pentecostal prosperity models of Zionism – which it associates with a type of support that is not required or supportable and has been the subject of heavy criticism from opponents. Nonetheless, inherent in the system of Christian Zionism is a role for the nation of Israel. As the NCZ has to contend with the modern state of Israel, it is important to examine their position and how it may differ from other iterations of Christian Zionism.

Typically, the NCZ is more reserved in its pronouncements about the place of the modern state of Israel today. This is not necessarily a retreat from their belief that modern Israel is significant, but rather an attempt to separate itself from the dispensational Zionism which has been accused of unqualified support for all Israeli actions.[456] It is also seeking to be less dogmatic in its pronouncements of prophetic fulfilment and certainty when it comes to the eschatological timeline, again a feature associated with dispensationalism. One reviewer states that while the NCZ does affirm the unending promise of the land to the Jews, it

[456] Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995).

"demurs from emphasising specific fulfilment of prophecy in modern events as a way of distancing the new Christian Zionism from premillennial dispensationalism".[457] McDermott clearly states that the NCZ rejects the dispensational approaches that are "confident they can plot the sequence or chronology of end-time events". Instead, the NCZ believes the "schedule of events leading up to the eschaton are in God's secret providence."[458] McDermott argues that the NCZ "asserts that the people and the land of Israel represent a provisional and proleptic fulfilment of the promises of that new world to come."[459] Blaising is a little more specific when he argues that "what we are witnessing today in the present state of Israel is a preconsummate work of God in continuity with the divine plan for Israel and the nations".[460]

McDermott in his own volume is again cautious about being overly dogmatic and suggests that the present state of Israel may not be the last ingathering of the Jewish people or the final fulfilment of the restoration promise. However, he has concluded that "God is keeping his covenant with the Jewish people, that he has brought them back to their promised land…and that he has a future for the people and the land."[461] We see here from McDermott a reluctance to have the NCZ associated with the American Pro-Israel Zionist lobby and therefore he stays away from the type of political lobbying that American dispensationalism has become known for through organisations such as CUFI. Yet, an affirmation of the importance of modern Israel is inescapable. As Wilfred M. Clay states "The embrace of modern Israel, not only as an idea but as a place, is an essential element in a Christianity that has freed itself of supersessionism. That is the core assertion of the New Christian Zionism."[462]

Bock, writing from the progressive dispensational perspective does not have such a problem with the dispensational association, as we have seen. He is more forthright in his affirmation that the modern state of Israel is of theological significance and that a legitimate

[457] Caitlin Carenen, 'Gerald R. McDermott, Ed. The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land'. *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 12 (1) 2017.
[458] Gerald McDermott, 'Introduction' in *The New Christian Zionism, p*. 14.
[459] Ibid. p. 27.
[460] Ibid. p. 98.
[461] Gerald McDermott*, Israel Matters, p*. 78.
[462] Wilfred M. McClay, 'What Christians See in Jews and Israel in 2020 of the Common Era'. *Mosaic Magazine*, July 6, 2020.

case can be made for its existence from legal and geo-political arguments. He states that "theologically, the nation has had a right to the land because it is a part of God's promise to Israel."[463] He then goes on to state that it is also hers by "legal right" and a careful examination of the history can demonstrate this. Bock also served as the editor for a 2014 volume *The People, The Land, and The Future of Israel* that is similar in ways to McDermott's NCZ volume – the difference being this is a compilation of chapters featuring a number of leading academic dispensationalists such as Michael Rydelnik and Vlach. It also features other leading scholars who are not dispensationalists such as Waler Kaiser and Craig E. Evans. The book makes a case for the restoration of Israel from the Tanak, the New Testament and also from hermeneutics and church history. It is much more overt in its claims about the place of modern Israel and its authors are all conservative evangelicals. Rydelnik for example states that the "modern state of Israel seems to be a dramatic work of God in fulfilment of the Bible's predictions of a Jewish return to the land of Israel."[464] Bock himself in the conclusion summarises that "national Israel and her King are at the centre of the biblical plan of redemption"[465]. This may indicate a slight area of tension within the NCZ itself as the approach of McDermott to distance the movement from dispensationalists seems to stand at odds with the view of Bock who often works with dispensationalists in formulating arguments against supersessionism. There are clearly many similarities. Both Bock and McDermott, as well as the post-supersessionists are seeking to present a broad academic case for the significance of Israel in the plan of God, even if they have a diverse spectrum of beliefs in other areas.

Another NCZ contributor, Mark Kinzer, has addressed the subject of the modern state in a unique way. Rather than seeking to engage in a political or ethical defence of Israel he provides a theological assessment of Zionism as a whole in light of the prophetic *evangelion.* The central thesis of his book is that the gospel envisions the eschatological restoration of Israel and Jewish life in the land of Israel as an essential byproduct of the resurrection of

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[463] Darrell L. Bock, 'Israel's Future as a Nation and Reconciliation' in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism* Ed. By Stanley, E. Porter, Alan E. Kurschner (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2023), p. 102.
[464] Michael Rydelnik, 'The Jewish People: Evidence for the Truth of Scripture' in *The People, The Land, and The Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish people in the Plan of God Ed. By* Darrell Bock, Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publication, 2014), p. 259.
[465] Ibid. p. 320.

Jesus the Jewish messianic King. He suggests that if this thesis is accepted the fact of the historical re-establishment of Jewish life in the land raises theological questions. Jewish believers living in a post-1948 world "face a political fact crying out for theological interpretation."[466] Kinzer provides three primary lines of evidence to support his assessment of Zionism. First, as previously stated, he contends that the restoration of Jewish life in Israel is an integral part of the gospel. Second, he argues that the expectation that this restoration would occur before the return of Jesus coheres with the NT witness. Third, he sees Zionism as a continuation of a Jewish religious tradition which was providentially ordained by God. From these strands of evidence Kinzer concludes that the restoration of the Jews to Israel as a national home is part of the divine plan. He keeps his conclusion deliberately broad when he affirms that something of significant theological importance in occurring with the Zionist movement. He also realised that this would invite more specific questions about Israel and the events taking place in the Middle East. Kinzer tries to offer some guidance on a number of questions that are more overtly political than anything else he has addressed. It is here that we see a clearer association with the motives of the NCZ. In answering the question as to whether the Jewish state as it currently exists is the beginning of the redeemed order of the world, he is less forthright. He feels his broad conclusion that "the rebirth of Jewish national life in the land of Israel is a divine work with profound eschatological implications"[467] does not require him to make such definite conclusions about the state. In this way, we see his phrasing here is different to most Christian Zionists who speak of the rebirth of the state; he talks only about the rebirth of Jewish life in the land. The modern state simply serves as the current vehicle to facilitate that. He regards it "as a particular political arrangement" for national Jewish life, and that "the state serves the nation but is not identical to it."[468] In his view it is merely an instrument, and this means it may take various forms while still fulfilling its purpose. This is a unique view that Kinzer argues with a specific focus on a theological assessment of Zionism – and his conclusion affirms the central theses of the NCZ movement.

Kinzer also offers his perspective on the question of whether a positive theological assessment of Zionism as he has offered somehow obligates the adherent to always support

[466] Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified,* p. 251.
[467] Ibid. p. 255.
[468] Ibid. p. 255.

the policies and actions of the state of Israel. He believes the answer to this is obvious, as disciples of Jesus are not even obligated to agree with every decision their own ecclesial governing authorities make – thus rendering any question of unconditional approval moot. Yet, he also goes a little deeper stating that "fundamentally, that attitude should be one of solidarity" and that a follower of Jesus "cannot adopt a neutral posture in thinking about the Middle East".[469] He supports this claim for solidarity by reminding Christians – Jewish or gentile – that they "are bound inextricably to the Jewish people" and that they should view the "the overall Zionist enterprise as a miracle of the Holy Spirit"[470] tied to the gospel and the plan of God. Finally, he argues that Christians should be aware that the presence of antisemitism is alive and well today. He states that "not all anti-Zionism serves as a socially acceptable cloak for antisemitism, but some of it does." Once all of these facts are acknowledged it should mean that a follower of Jesus speaks in a posture that is constructive, even if it is not always positive, about the "inevitably ambiguous fruit of Israeli politics."[471]

Kinzer's overall argument is an expansion of his original chapter in the volume on NCZ. His approach fits well with the aims of the NCZ to affirm the ongoing importance of Israel in the plan of God and to refute supersessionist readings of scripture. His unique angle to argue for the significance of restored Jewish life in the land–rather than for the current political state per se--is an appealing approach. It allows one to affirm the biblical texts that speak of Jewish presence and life in the land and even to affirm God's hand in the Zionist movement, but it does not obligate one to necessarily affirm every facet connected to the current political state which is just the vehicle. It is easy to see why this is welcomed into the NCZ armoury as it allows for a complete disavowal of the overtly political posturing associated with mainstream American Christian Zionism.

McDermott himself acknowledges that making such arguments will mean that inevitably the political issues do have to be addressed, not only because the existence of Israel as a state necessitates this for the NCZ as a movement, but also because people will sooner or later raise them. It is therefore important to examine how the NCZ addresses them and whether

[469] Ibid. p. 263.
[470] Ibid. p. 263.
[471] Ibid. p. 264.

this is substantially different to previous versions of Christian Zionism. As briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, McDermott does this in his *Israel Matters* volume, devoting a chapter to political objections. Perhaps the main issue concerns the complex relationship with the Palestinian people and the claim that the Jews stole the land their state currently exists in. McDermott affirms that his position on the modern State of Israel is that it constitutes "a partial fulfilment of biblical prophecies". He is referring of those prophecies that speak of the Jews returning to their land. Yet, he knows many believe that this constituted "naked theft"[472] on the part of the returning Jews. To answer this, McDermott simply provides an analysis of the modern history of that region. He begins with the 1920 San Remo Treaty, under the charge of the League of Nations mandated that there be a national home for the Jews. He outlines the original territory in the mandate and how this was subsequently divided between Jews and Arabs which is what formed Trans-Jordan. He then outlines how the 1947 UN partition plan again divided the land. The Jewish people were not happy with the UN partition, but accepted it nonetheless. The Arabs rejected the partition. After the 1948 War of Independence the armistice lines meant that the Jews were left with a small percentage of the original 1920 mandate and their Arab neighbours-controlled territory "640 times as large as the Jewish territory." This is a recounting of history that is not necessarily new. Many works from a Christian Zionist perspective would relay the same facts as McDermott here. He is concerned with only the facts of history and is careful not to fall into any pejorative comments about either party. This is typical of an approach that is striving to be a respectable voice with intellectual credibility in the academic world. His conclusion is clear based on his analysis of the historical data, "In this exchange of territory, did the Jews steal Arab land? All in all, no."[473] The historical context of territory exchange must be considered before dogmatic pronouncements are made.

However, it must also be mentioned that a critic could push back that such a typical presentation of the historical data can be used to obscure some of the pertinent issues. It does not address whether or not land was taken from people who were expelled in 1948 and it tacitly assumes that the League of Nations had the right to parcel up Palestine and the region into different mandates. The key issue that could be raised is whether this whole

[472] McDermott, *Israel Matters*, p. 80.
[473] Ibid. p.82.

accounting puts too much reliance on the legal structures of the time? These issues need to be more deeply addressed. McDermott's approach is on the one hand replying to supersessionist views that claim Israel is a colonizer and has no right to the land, and also to pop-dispensationalists who often claim that Palestinians have no right to the land. He examines other issues like the occupation of the West Bank and its status under international law in relation to UN Resolution 242. He agrees with Nicholson that the charge of illegal Israeli occupation must be rejected as according to the UN resolution Israeli withdrawal was to occur in the context of a mutual recognition of the right to exist. Nicholson is more expansive in his work, providing eight points that must be taken into consideration before making charges of illegal occupation. These included the fact that Israel's territorial gains in the Six Day War were conducted in self-defence against aggression from Arab nations. Also, that these territories did not legally belong to anyone else under international law. He further notes that Israel frequently planned to exchange the captured territories for peace. He adds that the presence of Jewish civilians inside the West Bank does not constitute a war crime under the Geneva Conventions. According to Nicholson Israel has substantially performed its obligations under UN resolution 242. Finally, he comments that the Palestinians do have legal and political autonomy.[474]

The final question McDermott covers is the charge that Christian Zionism offers an unqualified unilateral support for Israel in all policy and decision making. This is an accusation often made by supersessionists and present in some forms of pop-dispensationalism. He is clear that the short answer to this question is an obvious no. He readily acknowledges that Israel is not perfect and has its own problems, much like any other nation. He also argues that at times it was necessary for the Jewish people to establish a state, yet "we are not in a position to know that this is the last state before the end of days."[475] Although the people and the state are not the same, they are intertwined. The state obviously could not exist without the people and the people could not survive in the land without the state. This must be taken into consideration when criticism is levelled against the state. McDermott is trying to present a position that allows for constructive criticism and acknowledges wrongdoing regardless of theological perspectives. At the same

[474] Robert Nicholson, 'Theology and Law' in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016), pp. 265-279.
[475] McDermott, *Israel Matters*, p. 91.

time, he is seeking to avoid a double standard and unfairly harsh stance be taken against the only Jewish state in the Middle East. Undoubtedly, such political objections will continue to be raised as the situation continues to evolve in the Middle East.

This chapter has framed the arrival of the NCZ as an answer to the question of how the broader Christian Zionist movement will respond to the increasing challenges being levelled against it by the New Supersessionism. The answer has come in the form of a new movement that has developed to specifically address these challenges. In this chapter I have examined this new expression of Christians Zionism and looked at its distinguishing features that help to identify whether or not it warrants the classification as "new". I conclude that the NCZ is a distinct and separate development in the Christian Zionist tradition that differs from its predecessors sufficiently to warrant the description. Perhaps the most significant and novel feature that is immediately apparent with the NCZ is that it does not want to be associated with dispensational theology that is so often linked with Christian Zionism. I highlighted that this is not necessarily an attempt to deny the shared theological conclusions that exist between the two groups concerning Israel, but more to avoid being caught up with the "pop-dispensationalists'" sensational claims about current events and politics. I highlighted in the survey of modern Christian Zionism that it had become inseparably linked with right-wing partisan politics and the NCZ seeks to place itself as a credible theological position not a partisan political one, and therefore seeks to avoid this association as well.

The NCZ also does not associate with the renewalist Pentecostal forms of Christian Zionism that mix prosperity theology with political activism. Instead, it is primarily a Western academic response to the increasing popularity of supersessionist interpretations, but also to the existing forms of Christian Zionism that cannot offer intellectually satisfying responses. The NCZ has as one of its chief aims the goal of refuting the supersessionist interpretation of scripture and affirming the ongoing covenantal promises to Israel. It is here that the NCZ is at its strongest. In not solely identifying so closely with a narrow set of theological distinctives such as dispensationalism it has allowed itself to draw upon a rich stream of emerging scholarship. This is another area in which the NCZ differs from its predecessors. It is a group comprised of scholars from many different viewpoints and perspectives who all agree that the supersessionist reading of scripture is mistaken. The NCZ

and many of its contributors take their hermeneutical insights from the emerging "post-supersessionist" movement. This is a broad family of theologians who focus on 'historical Jesus' research, Pauline studies, and offer a hermeneutical approach to reading the New Testament from within the context of Second Temple Judaism which affirms the ongoing validity of God's covenant with Israel and refutes the dominant supersessionist readings. The NCZ has much in common with this movement with some of its key contributors holding founding positions in the society representing this stream of scholarship. This is another keyway that the NCZ is different in that it has to respond to the contemporary arguments put forward by the new supersessionists and it utilises post-supersessionist theology in its attempt to do that.

The NCZ however does go beyond the post-supersessionist approach in that it admits the nature of the discussion will invite questions surrounding the issues involved with the modern state of Israel. As discussed above, many of these charges are highly political in nature and are just as frequent as the more theological questions. The NCZ first presents a robust case for its post-supersessionist interpretation of the texts and then turns its attention to the more political questions. The NCZ has already made clear that it is not a partisan political project, and it is therefore careful in dogmatic assertions concerning the modern state. Some of its adherents are more ambiguous in their position on the modern state, being clear to make a distinction between the state and the people. This again is a clear difference from previous versions of Christian Zionism. This is an area that I will explore more in the next chapter as it highlights the difference between the progressive dispensationalist approach and the Anglican approach from scholars like McDermott. The NCZ draws on experts from different fields to address the complex legal and historical issues involved which is in keeping with its academic character in the Western context.

This chapter has provided an in-depth overview of the NCZ and its beliefs as well as examining its novel hermeneutical approaches. Having now examined both the New Supersessionism and the NCZ as individual movements I can turn to highlighting some of the ambiguities that these movements have created which may lead to further development in the future.

Chapter 5 – The Ambiguities of the "New" Christian Zionism and Supersessionism

In this final chapter I will utilise the analysis that has been conducted on both the New Supersessionism and the New Christian Zionism in order to demonstrate areas where these new movements present internal contradictions, ambiguities, or weaknesses in their viewpoints. In the previous chapters I have shown the historical development of these movements by tracing them through to their most current expressions. This has enabled a clear identification of where they progress and differentiate themselves from earlier manifestations of their position in order to validate the claim that they constitute separate and new movements rather than just a repackaging or rebranding of existing ideas. Traditional supersessionism manifests in a number of different types that Soulen identified for us as punitive, economic, and structural supersessionism. Each of these have their own respective methods to remove any particularity for the nation of Israel. This is either through a process of disqualification as a retributive punishment in punitive supersessionism, a softer fulfilment motif as found in economic supersessionism, or simply reading them out of the canonical narrative of scripture as a whole in structural supersessionism. I analysed these particular methodologies in an earlier chapter and highlight them again here to provide context for the differences found in the New Supersessionism. The New Supersessionism seems at times to draw upon these existing methods to argue that the role of Israel and the land is no longer important, but also incorporates influences from a number of new disciplines that developed in the modern context and particularly in the aftermath of the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel. These include elements from Palestinian nationalism that believes the events of 1948 were a catastrophe, Palestinian Liberation Theology that utilises critical theory's hierarchy of oppression, and decolonial hermeneutics as a way to argue that the entire Zionist endeavour is a product of Western colonial imperialism and must be rejected. This way of reading scripture is clearly a contemporary innovation which separates the New Supersessionism from existing versions of traditional supersessionism throughout history.

With regards to the NCZ, this chapter will also analyse the issues raised by the new developments in this movement. The NCZ has positioned itself as an academic counter to the growing popularity of the New Supersessionism. This means that the two movements are linked as they are reactions to each other. However, another notable novelty with the NCZ which this chapter will examine is its desire to distance itself from the more popular forms of Christian Zionism. The focus and association of Christian Zionism with dispensationalism has been dominant, particularly in the American context. The NCZ sees this association as damaging and goes to great lengths to show that it is different. This has led to a greater focus on biblical studies and providing solid academic arguments for their beliefs. It has also led to a softening of enthusiasm for some of the more overtly contentious elements of Christian Zionism found in dispensationalism, such as statements about the modern state being a direct fulfilment of prophecy. This chapter will look at these issues raised for each movement and include detailed analysis of the problems as it progresses. The analysis will show that the main tension for the New Supersessionism is the disparity between the writings of Palestinian Christians who maintain a significance to the land in their narrative, and the Western academics who seek to theologically disavow any significance to the land whatsoever. The main point of tension for the NCZ is their lack of interaction with the decolonial interpretations of the New Supersessionism.

I. Issues for the New Supersessionism

It is with the addition of Palestinian Liberation Theology that the New Supersessionism begins to develop some internal inconsistencies between Western theologians and Palestinian theologians. It quickly becomes clear that the New Supersessionism is not a unified movement in the broad sense and that there are considerable differences among its adherents. Theologically, they are ecumenical consisting of Evangelicals, Catholics, Greek Orthodox and others, which means there will always be a measure of fragmentation. There is also a difference between the Western theologians and supporters of Palestine who advocate the more traditional supersessionist hermeneutics as against the more radical Palestinian Liberation theologians whose theology is intertwined with their overt political activism. Further differences among these two groups are also worth exploring, for instance, their view on whether the State of Israel itself has the right to exist, or whether the state is an error of history. Equally, does the land hold any importance at all anymore? Has it been

simply universalised to hold no further particular importance or is it still a vital part of Palestinian identity and theology? The answers to these questions vary from within the new supersessionist movement and there is definitely an internal ambiguity within it. However, in spite of these differences their mutual disdain for the theology of Christian Zionism seems to provide a focus that can overlook these inconsistencies. Yet, they still remain and need to be explored.

To answer the questions raised above a comparison is needed to expose the divergent view of Western theologians and Palestinian theologians in the movement. This will highlight how they differ when it comes to statements about the land and the Jewish people demonstrating that even within the movement they have not arrived at a uniform opinion. Western theologians who advocate for the New Supersessionism such as Gary Burge are clear that the land no longer holds any special significance. He is opposed to what he terms "Christian territorial theology".[476] Burge takes a slightly different route than simply universalising the land promises in order to remove any Jewish particularity to them, instead formulating the idea of "relocation". He claims that although the OT does indeed place a great emphasis on the concept of land and Jewish identity, during the diaspora a major shift occurred in Jewish thinking regarding the land. He writes that "both Christian and Jewish identification with the land were in a formative stage in the first century and experiencing considerable redefinition."[477] Utilizing the writings of both Philo and Josephus he concludes that "Judaism's 'Land Theology' has been entirely redefined. And it will be a redefinition that will deeply influence the formation of Christian thinking in the New Testament."[478] He argues that the New Testament pays little attention to the physical territory, rather it has a "theological agenda" that he traces particularly through the gospel of John, calling it "John's messianic replacement (or fulfilment) motif."[479] Burge finds this notion of replacement throughout the fourth gospel and applies it to both the Temple and the land. He writes, "divine space is no longer located in a place but in a person."[480] His conclusion is not that the NT simply spiritualises the land, but that "the New Testament relocates the properties

[476] Burge, *'Whose Land?*', p. 113.
[477] Ibid. p. 15.
[478] Ibid. p. 24.
[479] Ibid. p. 46.
[480] Ibid. p. 52.

of the Holy Land and discovers them in Christ."[481] For Burge the land has been spiritualised and then relocated into the person of Jesus who now becomes the "holy Space".

Whilst his route to a spiritualised fulfilment may take a slightly different journey from traditional replacement motifs, the concept of relocation that is unique to Burge hardly bypasses the objection. It simply places the spiritualisation at a different point – after a relocation into the person of Christ rather than on its own. Either way the final concept of the land is one that has been spiritualised. It is hard to see how anyone following this sort of view can continue to hold any significance to the land for either Jews or Palestinians, as once the proposed relocation has occurred there is no way of going back. And this is precisely the point: any further discussion about a continued role for the land denies his particular relocation hermeneutic and thus constitutes a return to a pre-Christ state of affairs. Burge's relocation hermeneutic therefore stacks the deck against any position that continues to insist on a future role for the land. This Christological hermeneutic is similar to that of Davies who also argues that salvation was no longer bound to a place or a territory but to a person. Davies says that in Christ "the land, like the law, particularly and provisional, has become irrelevant.'"[482] N.T. Wright argues that the land, in a similar way to the Law, was only a temporary stage in God's plan. It has now been fulfilled in Christ and done away with as having any particular purpose. He calls the land "an advance metaphor to show how God's people would eventually bring the whole word under his healing reign."[483] Sizer is similar, arguing that the land has served its purpose and in the New Testament it is spoken of as an old wineskin. He concludes that the land remains "irrelevant."[484]

It is worth noting that those theologians who argue that a narrow focus on the land is theologically incorrect largely come from the Western world and their theological outlook is shaped by this context. There are a number of factors that help explain this. Firstly, they see themselves as the academic counter to the popularist views of Christian Zionism that they

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[481] Ibid. p. 129.
[482] W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (California: University of California Press, 1974), p. 179.
[483] N.T. Wright, "Jerusalem in the New Testament", in: *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God* 2nd ed. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), p. 67.
[484] Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers*, p. 96.

believe elevate the modern state of Israel by misusing the Bible. They thus believe it is their duty to respond to Christian Zionism. However, in addition it is important to notice how much their own views on the matter are shaped by their particular geographical and theological context. For example, American Jewish author David Brog claims that Christian Zionists today "are almost entirely dispensationalists."[485] As has already been shown in the historical surveys, this is a vast overstatement of the case with most European Christian Zionists, even today, not identifying with dispensationalism. For example, one of the largest contemporary Christian Zionist organisations in the world, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) which has served as the epicentre for Christian Zionism in the land of Israel – is explicitly not a dispensational organisation. Hummel states that although the ICEJ regarded the establishment of Israel as prophetically significant, it "rejected the dispensational reflections that accompanied the Christian right."[486] What we see here is a conclusion drawn solely from within Brog's own American context. There is a similar problem with those Christians who are most often the severest critics of Christian Zionism.[487] It appears that often those within the American context whose interaction with Christian Zionism has been coloured by a particular narrow perspective, are the ones who become the most ardent defenders of Christian anti-Zionism. Thus, it is not uncommon to read in critics of Christian Zionism about how they once held to such views but as they interacted with Palestinian narratives, became convinced of the opposing position.

One such recent example is David Crump's *Like Birds in a Cage: Christian Zionism's Collusion in Israel's Oppression of the Palestinian People (2021)*. He begins by charting his journey out of Christian Zionism, defining himself as "a child of American Fundamentalism", whose religious upbringing had been highlighted by "the bold colors of dispensational Theology". He further elaborates that the way he had been raised in this faith was that "the principal outward sign of fundamentalist-dispensational devotion to Jesus was to express love and support for the Jewish people and the modern state of Israel." According to Crump his understanding of Christian Zionism was to believe that "Israel could do no wrong" and those in "Christian America were obligated to combat any and all forces that opposed the Jewish

[485] Ibid. p. 63.
[486] Hummel*, Covenant Brothers*, p. 219.
[487] David M Crump, L*ike Birds in a Cage: Christian Zionism's Collusion in Israel's Oppression of the Palestinian People* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2021), p. 3.

state". After quoting from Genesis 12:3, he concludes "America's earthly attitude toward Israel was the divine key to earthly blessing and national security."[488]

Another American theologian and leading critic of Christian Zionism mentioned previously is Donald Wagner, who tells a similar story of his conversion from "Zion to Palestine".[489] Wagner claims he was at one time a supporter of the state of Israel and a Zionist. However, this changed when he heard a speech by a member of the PLO's national council, Ibrahim Abulughod. He says that this speech "stopped me in my tracks"[490] and put the final nail in the coffin of his Christian Zionism, sealing his conversion to the Palestinian cause. Wagner has become a well-known critic of American Christian Zionist theology and in particular dispensationalism.[491] These two stories show us that a significant factor in the formation of a hard anti-Zionist Christianity is rooted in exposure to a contextualised American fundamental theology – one that was dominant in American culture and was extremely pro-Israel.

The role of personal experience also has to be factored in. Trips to the land of Israel and engagement with Palestinian Christians and culture caused a shift away from Christian Zionism to anti-Zionism. This radical shift then manifests itself in a transformed theological interpretation and political perspective. Although he is British and not American, Stephen Sizer is a good example of this phenomenon. His book *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon (*2004) begins with a similar anecdote in the preface, where he recounts how as a young believer, he devoured popular prophecy books by authors such as Hal Lindsey. He believed the Jews were the 'chosen people' and had been brought back to their promised land in 1948, and that the prophetic signs were being fulfilled in front of his eyes. He states his former belief that "the moral responsibility of evangelical, Bible-believing Christians was clear – stand with God's 'chosen' people, because God was on the side of those who 'blessed' Israel." Sizer then recounts two specific encounters he experienced during a trip to Israel that caused his beliefs to unravel and set him on a path to become an

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[488] Ibid.

[489] Donald Wagner, 'From Zion to Palestine: A Journey from Christian Zionism to Justice in the Holy Land', in, *They Came and They Saw: Western Christian Experiences in the Holy Land Ed. By* Michael Prior (Melisende UK, 2000), p. 199

[490] Ibid. p. 202

[491] See Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* (Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1995)

avid defender of the Palestinian position and denouncing Christian Zionism. He recounts an answer from his messianic Jewish tour guide about who the Palestinians were. The guide answered by explaining that there was no such thing as a Palestinian, they were simply Arabs who had entered Israel in the twentieth century. The second encounter was when he met the Archdeacon of Nazareth Riah Abu El Assal who explained to the tour group how he was a Christian Arab Palestinian Israeli. Sizer recounts his shock, "they did exist. And so began the stream of questions that would not go away."[492] As Sizer says, he now sees support for a partisan Christian Zionist theology, that in his opinion denigrates Palestinians, to be perpetuating the evil of the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan who walked by on the other side.[493]

So, we can observe that those theologians like Crump and Sizer who now hold to a universalising hermeneutic or a Christological fulfilment hermeneutic always seem to not only reject Christian Zionism as an aberration, but also to accept the Palestinian perspective and interpretation of history and events in the Middle East through their personal experience in the land. They are thus joined in some way with their Palestinian counterparts. Yet while Western theologians have to downplay any significance to the land in order to try and counteract the Christian Zionist and dispensationalist emphasis, the teaching coming from their Palestinian counterparts still places a great importance to the land. The irony of this is that Western theologians therefore deny a central part of the Palestinian position and assume a superior Western view that the theologies which place a focus on land and territory are outmoded and primitive. In effect, this presents a favourable disposition and claims to listen and care for the Palestinian theologian's perspective, yet at the same times denies a core aspect of their identity. It also reasserts a new form of colonial thinking – that Western theology is more advanced and has moved beyond a focus on the land as a legacy of settler-colonialism, while simultaneously adopting a colonialist position towards the indigenous Palestinian theology which they view as primitive.

When reading the literature coming from Palestinian Christians themselves, we see that although they have to use the same universalising technique to remove the promises from applying to the Jews, they also add that the land still holds significance for them as

[492] Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, p. 10.
[493] Ibid. p. 13.

Palestinians. Munther Isaac states that the "Palestinian church takes its identity and theology from its natural and unbroken relationship with the biblical land."[494] He argues that there is an existential relationship that exists between them and their land. Raheb is similar, stating that "my self-understanding as a Christian Palestinian has a *territorial dimension*".[495] Palestinian Christians primarily identify with their geo-political identity before their particular denominational status. They self-identify with the first generation of Christians, who they see as Palestinians who were living in the land whilst it was under Roman occupation. Today they see themselves as descendants of those first Christians still living in the land but now under Israeli occupation. In a fascinating twist of ecclesiastical history, we see in this native strand of the New Supersessionism a contemporary version of the Augustinian witness doctrine. Except this time, rather that postulating a reason for the continued existence of the Jewish people, it has exchanged the people of Israel with the land and the Palestinian people. This 'Palestinian Witness' doctrine acknowledges that "the land continues to act as a witness to God's work in history"[496] and that "the land still has a special role that it can play within the Christian faith – as a witness." This has led to the land being called "The Fifth Gospel"[497] in Palestinian theology. It must be noted that this is not identical to a modern Augustinian witness doctrine in the sense that is removes the judicial element. Augustine posited that the Jewish people were witnesses in this way due to divine judicial punishment for their sins. What I term a new Palestinian witness doctrine is focused on the way a switch has happened from the Jewish people as witness to the Palestinian people and the land as a witness, without the Judicial element necessarily present.

There is a conclusion from this language of "witness" that logically follows yet often remains unspoken. To say something is a "witness" naturally leads to the follow up question – a "witness" to what? It is not only a witness to the historical elements associated with the life of Jesus, but equally a witness to the present-day Palestinians as products of this ancient land. The specific point that comes from this new witness doctrine is that the Palestinian

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[494] Munther Isaac, *Palestinian Christians and the Land*. (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2017), p. 1. Available at: https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Palestinian-Christians-and-the-Land-2017-England.pdf [Accessed 10/09/24].
[495] Ibid. Italics original.
[496] Ibid. p. 15.
[497] Ibid.

people today trace their origin back to the first century and ultimately to Jesus. This conclusion, if accepted, mutes the force of many arguments that argue for right to the land based on Jewish descent. Tarazi comments "in a way the Palestinian Orthodox have no choice, since even our own flesh and blood are products of that land: its dust, its climate, its air, its food, its water which centuries ago produced the flesh and blood of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ."[498] While this may seem like an innocuous statement, within the context of the argument it seems to be hinting at the claim that Jesus was of Palestinian ancestry, if not stating it outright. Ateek also argues with similarly obfuscating language that "the Palestinian Christians of today are the descendants of those early Christians…they and their ancestors have maintained a living witness…from the beginning of the church, and they should see themselves as dynamically continuing such a witness in the land."[499] This is why Raheb and Isaac often refer to the people (i.e., Palestinians) as the "sixth Gospel". So, for the Palestinian arm of the New Supersessionism the land itself and then the Palestinian people are a fifth and sixth gospel. They are even described as being the hermeneutical keys to understanding the Bible. These sorts of statements do not seem to correlate with the claims of their Western counterparts that the land and ethnic particularity is now something that is "irrelevant", "temporary" and has already served its purpose.

The statements of Palestinian theologians imply that the modern Palestinians are being associated with the early church in Jerusalem – which was undoubtedly Jewish. This claim seems to erase the Jewish nature of early Christianity in Jerusalem or at least leave it ambiguous. Isaac, in a document about Palestinian Christians and the land produced for Churches Together in the UK and Ireland, states that "the land today tells a story! It tells the story of a God who has chosen a people and a land…eventually bringing from that people and that land a powerful redemption"[500]. The thrust of the document seems to imply that he is referencing the Palestinian people here. So, the question must be asked: which people does he mean? What of the Jews? Never in the document does Isaac clearly specify that the promise of the land and the redemption to come through them was given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He does say that "the people of the land

[498] Paul Nadim Tarazi, 'Covenant, Land and City: Finding God's Will in Palestine.' *The Reformed Journal* 29 (1979), p. 14.
[499] Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice*, p. 113.
[500] Isaac, *Palestinian Christians*, p. 14.

[Palestinians] are as important as the land itself when it comes to narrating the biblical story."[501] This is the new witness doctrine coming out again – the Palestinian people are the ones who can be traced back to the beginning, and their continued existence today means their voice represents the biblical story in the land. Again, a critic might ask where the Jewish people fit into this schema? It seems that this is a sort of ethnic version of supersessionism, whereby the Jewishness of the biblical story has been expunged and the Jewish origins of the early Christian movement erased and replaced with the Palestinians. Perhaps this is the end result of what Ateek means when he claimed that the Bible must be "de-Zionised". Ateek speaks about passages in the Old Testament that refer to any sort of Jewish particularity in the future as being no longer important. In fact, he states, "that kind of racism has no place in the kingdom of God".[502]

It is with these issues that the tension within the New Supersessionism becomes evident – the Western academics who are seeking to popularise their supersessionist viewpoints de-emphasise the centrality of the land – yet their Palestinian counterparts go a step further – they de-emphasise the Jewish presence and claim on the land and through a geo-political reading insert themselves in their place. Rather than dismissing all significance to the land they suggest its ongoing purpose in their witness doctrine described above. Can these two perspectives be held together under the same banner? Interestingly, it is here that we see the overt political implications of Palestinian theology, even with those who are living in the West. Palestinian theology is rooted in Palestinian nationalism which ultimately believes the establishment of the modern state of Israel was a grave injustice and that it should not exist. Western theologians are presented with a dilemma here. They do not want to reject the legitimacy of any Jewish state wholesale, but when they enthusiastically endorse the views of their Palestinian counterparts it seems they not only run the risk of endorsing their supersessionist theology, but also their political ideology as the two at this point have become so intertwined, they are almost impossible to separate. That is why we can observe that almost universally those who adopt the New Supersessionism from within a Western

[501] Ibid.

[502] Naim Ateek, 'The Earth is the Lord's: Land, Theology and the Bible', in Munayer, Salim. Loden, Lisa. *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Context* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), p. 178-179

context end up siding with the Palestinian cause politically. This applies to the broader geo-political aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict and to the political details within the Palestinian Christian community. It seems this internal tension will continue as long as there is mutual agreement between them concerning the error of Christian Zionism. The other theological details they are content to leave in a place of tension and ambiguity, usually as a result of the different contexts from which the arguments are made. However, these issues may be pushed to the fore in future discussions as both these groups will need to reckon with the rise of antisemitism from the largely Islamic Palestinian majority and the prominence of Islamic terrorism. Is it possible for a Western academic affirming the New Supersessionism such as N.T. Wright to support the minority Palestinian Christian view without inadvertently being associated with the larger Palestinian narrative that in many cases is overtly Islamic and antisemitic? This is a serious question and tension that needs to be resolved within this movement. It also runs the risk of falling into the error discussed above: that the Western argument against a primitive theology which emphasises the land, meant to target Christian Zionists, also applies to the indigenous Palestinian theology too. Western supersessionism positions itself as having the mature and unbiased interpretation which undermines the very people they are supporting. Such an attitude displays the colonial mindset of Western superiority that they accuse Christian Zionists of supporting when they affirm a Jewish homeland.

II. Issues for the New Christian Zionism

Although broadly the movement could be described as being more monolithic in its beliefs, there is still a measure of internal ambiguity to be found within the New Christian Zionism. The NCZ presents itself as an academic response to the more popular supersessionist movement. In its striving for respectability within the parameters of academic theology it has made a considerable effort to distance itself from many of the negative associations that Christian Zionism has accumulated over the years. Primarily, this is with dispensationalism, the political right, pop-dispensationalist prophecy teachers, heavily charismatic and Pentecostal Zionism, prosperity theology, and the more extreme forms of Christian nationalism. However, it is also important to be cautious in inadvertently accepting and buying into overly binary frameworks. To point out that the movement seeks to distance itself from the popularism and former associations from the political right, does not

in any way imply they automatically align themselves with the political left. Rather the NCZ seeks to move beyond these simplistic binaries that have clouded this issue and present itself as an academic theological position that engages with the outworking of these beliefs in the political sphere. Theoretically then, the conclusion should be open to acceptance from either position as long as there is a measure of objectivity in someone's analysis. Yet, the inability to do this, in the eyes of the NCZ, are what has given the broader movement of Christian Zionism a bad name and handed its critics plenty of ammunition to disparage the theology of Christian Zionism.

The NCZ has obviously noticed that whenever a staunch supersessionist theologian chooses to argue against Christian Zionism, which it sees as a totally aberrant theology, they choose to critique a popular dispensationalist. Often, by reading critiques, it seems like the only adherents to Christian Zionist theology are in fact popular dispensationalists. The NCZ rightly sees this as a strawman criticism, but also seems to admit that it can understand why this is the case. Its response is to also dissociate from such people and theology. This is why McDermott reminds his readers multiple times that he is not a dispensationalist and the NCZ is not to be associated with that movement. He shows that there has always been a strong stream of Christian Zionism that existed long before the rise of dispensationalism. This is accurate, and our survey of the chronological development of Christian Zionism affirms this position. However, the approach of McDermott, which attempts to sever any connection to dispensationalism, may be an overreaction to the situation that has actually resulted in a conflict between those who try and join together in arguing against supersessionism – and thus, ultimately in some ways weakened their overall argument.

The rejection of pop-dispensationalism and an overt allegiance to a particular side of the political aisle need not necessitate a full-scale rejection of all dispensational arguments. Many of the arguments that dispensationalists have used to argue for a future role for Israel are shared by the NCZ and thus it seems like an overreaction to dismiss them simply because they hold to dispensationalism. There have always been popularisers in every movement, and they often serve to bring attention to it. However, the risk also remains that they will oversimplify and misrepresent. It seems that this is what McDermott and others are so against in the dispensational movement as their fundamental beliefs about the biblical role of Israel are often very much aligned. This can be seen by the inclusion of

progressive dispensational scholars Bock and Blaising who are both high ranking academics and defend a future position for national Israel in the plan of God. The issue is that if their arguments are valid and useful to the NCZ movement, the works of other academic dispensational authors such as Michael Rydelnik and Mitch Glaser should be acceptable too. It appears that their exclusion is not so much due to their theology but due to the striving for academic respectability for the NCZ in the West. The fact is that many, like McDermott, cannot see how it is possible to separate them from the damage done by the popularisers and thus they will not include them. They will include those who claim the mantle of progressive dispensationalist, as its founders Bock and Blaising are accomplished academics. This newer iteration of dispensationalism has not been associated with the popularisers in the same way that classical dispensationalism has which allows it to be included in the NCZ. A failure to distinguish between the movement and its overzealous popularisers will ultimately deprive the NCZ of strong arguments to support their position. It also forces these other writers to publish their own works arguing against supersessionism which runs the risk of overshadowing the intended purpose of the NCZ and dividing resources rather than taking the best of both and utilising it against supersessionism.

This tension becomes particularly acute when the subject of modern Israel and biblical eschatology is discussed. Those within the NCZ such as McDermott who is a Reformed Anglican scholar and Mark Kinzer, a messianic Jewish theologian, tend to downplay the focus on prophecy and eschatology. For McDermott this could be because his position of affirming a future role for Israel is a minority view in contemporary Anglicanism (which typically follows the Augustinian trajectory with regards to eschatology), but it is most likely again a reactionary emphasis to ensure the NCZ is not linked with much of the sensationalist prophecy teaching that is often associated with Christian Zionism. He has noticed that supersessionists often target this ‘anxious for Armageddon’ attitude amongst Christian Zionists and use it against them, indicting them for speculating that every conflict is a sign of the end times and that anything that happens in Israel is prophetically significant. McDermott wants to avoid any hint of such teaching and offers a solid biblical theology for his beliefs. In fact, he goes further and seems to shape his interpretation of the NCZ in order that it avoids utilising prophecy as an argument at all. So, we do not know “the particular

timetable or political schema that will come before or in the final days."[503] He sees the NCZ as offering both prudential and theological arguments for the continued significance of Israel. However, one particular field of theology that is underutilised in these arguments seems to be that of eschatology. McDermott rejects any approach that believes it can correctly depict the exact chronological sequence of events related to eschatology. This is not just referring to only "date-setting", which is typically rejected by all, but to the typical prophecy charts found in dispensational literature that portray a detailed and chronologically sequential view of eschatological events. This is to make sure he is not associated with the dogmatism of some dispensational popularisers; however, it does run the risk of underplaying some of the specifics of biblical eschatology that are given at least broad chronological parameters.

However, it also appears that there is a danger for the NCZ in being so vague about the prophetic material in the Bible that it weakens the arguments it can employ. Many Christian Zionists throughout history, whether dispensational or not, believed that their study of eschatology provided them with a major biblical justification for their beliefs. This does not have to lead into prophetic sensationalism. However, McDermott claims the NCZ believes that the details leading up to the eschaton are "in God's secret providence." He also states that "we cannot know the unfolding of end times with any precision".[504] For another example, Willits fully affirms that the return of Israel to the land is promised in scripture, yet he is unwilling to make dogmatic pronouncements regarding the modern state today. He cautions that "a judgement about the theological legitimacy of the modern state of Israel cannot be rendered with unqualified certainty." Rather he concludes that ultimately the question of legitimacy will be left for history to answer. He does however strongly affirm that an eternal link exists "between the land and the people of Israel in God's eschatological purposes: the people as well as the land have a future."[505]

While they affirm that there is a future for the people of Israel, when it comes to identifying this future with the current geopolitical entity that exists today the NCZ differs from older variations of Christian Zionism., It is unwilling to unquestionably identify modern Israel as

[503] McDermott, 'Introduction' in *The New Christian Zionism,* p. 13.
[504] McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism*, p. 332.
[505] Joel Willits, 'Zionism in the Gospel of Matthew' in Gerald McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Illinois: Inter varsity Press, 2016) p. 139.

the eschatological fulfilment of this. There is a wisdom to this as over history a number of Jewish states have been declared and there is no unambiguously clear scripture that definitely makes this clear connection between a particular polity and the biblical predictions. This is the benefit of Kinzer's approach which argues for continued Jewish life and existence in the land and sees the present state as simply the vehicle for that at present – it may or may not continue in that way and the argument is not so directly linked to the modern state.[506] This avoids the sort of conclusions and dogmatic statements that have come from the more dispensational leaning Christian Zionists. However, the NCZ does make statements like those listed above which imply there is at least a partial fulfilment in the current situation which means there is a measure of equivocation here between not wanting to be dogmatic about connection on the one hand, but also not completely dismissing it as insignificant on the other. They are unwilling to completely disavow any significance to modern Israel today, even calling it a partial fulfilment, yet still not dogmatically asserting that it is the fulfilment.

This seems to present a slightly confused message to those seeking to understand the exact position regarding the modern state. Rather than being a mediating position between the two sides, it could run the risk of confusing the subject by trying to say just enough to satisfy those Christian Zionists who affirm modern Israel's significance, yet nothing dogmatic enough to offend those who deny it. It may be that this is an area that needs to be expanded more fully to provide a clear answer as to the role of the modern state today and how this may connect to the eschatological passages in the Bible. The situation as it is leaves it undefined and actually makes is harder to defend the present situation from a theological perspective which Christian Zionism has historically sought to accomplish.

There does seem to be a slight methodological shift in the NCZ which comes from this issue and tries to build a case largely without getting into the field of eschatology. This is evidenced by perusing the chapters in McDermott's 2016 book which does not include even a single chapter focused on clearly eschatological Old Testament texts which mention Israel in a future context (cf. Zechariah 12,14; Isaiah 2,60; Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36-37, Psalm 110; Daniel 12). Neither is there any extended treatment of New Testament eschatological texts

[506] Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified.*

that speak into this subject (Matthew 24-25, Luke 21, 2 Thessalonians 2), and nothing related to the book of Revelation at all. This is in many ways understandable as the desire was probably to avoid wading into the murky waters of divergent eschatological interpretations which would require a book itself. In addition, this is an area that has been examined before, so would not necessarily be construed as "new". Yet, avoiding the issue altogether is not helpful either. The NCZ could have shown its interpretation of these texts in relation to the future of Israel and in its case against supersessionism without worrying about being associated with pop-dispensationalism. This was achieved quite clearly in the already referenced 2023 volume *The Future Restoration of Israel* by Porter and Kurschner.[507] This had clear articles engaging texts like Jeremiah 31, Zechariah 14, Matthew 23-25, and Revelation 19-20 from a non-supersessionist perspective without wandering into popularist interpretations. This would have been a welcome addition to the NCZ approach, and it may be that not doing so was an overcompensation designed to address the criticism of supersessionists that Christian Zionism is overly concerned with the end times. Yet the reality is, as those like Bock and Blaising demonstrate, a balanced approach towards the use of eschatology can be achieved and it can be a useful tool in the case against supersessionism.[508] This desire to subtract it from the arsenal by McDermott and others is a gap in their overall case. This then means that they are left to offer primarily prudential arguments to explain the modern state of Israel which is a major talking point of the debate.

As demonstrated in the chapter on the New Christian Zionism, not all modern proponents who support a theological role for Israel display an ambivalence to using eschatology. Horner, for example, who upholds an eternal distinctive for the nation of Israel in his biblical theology is more forthright in his statements. So, "Israel is central to eschatology, without it, the prophetic scenario involving human history has no purposeful cohesion."[509] Both Bock and Blaising, writing from a progressive dispensationalist perspective which has a more focused view on the eschatological role of Israel without veering into the popularist extremes, both affirm that the modern state of Israel is a fulfilment of biblical prophecy.

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[507] Stanley E. Porter, Alan E. Kurschner (eds), *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2023).
[508] Craig Blaising. 'The Future of Israel as a Theological Question' in *To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History* Ed. by Darrell Bock, Mitch Glaser (Michigan: Kregal Publications. 2008).
[509] Barry Horner, *Eternal Israel: Biblical, Theological and Historical Studies that upholds the eternal distinctive destiny of Israel*. (Nashville: Wordsearch Academic, 2018), p. 13.

They are keen however to ensure that this does not equate to unqualified support or a conclusion that overrides ethical and justice concerns. But Bock, for instance, is much more forthright and clearer when he states that "National Israel and her King are at the centre of the biblical plan of redemption…one day all is resolved in and through Him as heavenly shalom fills the earth."[510] It is not entirely clear as to whether or not Bock is thinking about the contemporary state of Israel when he states this, but extrapolating from the position of the NCZ it seems as though it is at least implied. Blaising makes this connection clearer when he states that "what we are witnessing today in the present state of Israel is a preconsummate work of God in continuity with the divine plan for Israel and the nations".[511] This is a theological statement that uses biblical eschatology and from that extrapolates that the situation today is a step towards this greater fulfilment. This connection between eschatology and Zionism has been recognised by scholars outside the evangelical world too. Jewish feminist scholar Amy Jill Levine who is a lifelong member of *Hadassah*, the Women's Zionist Organization of America,[512] and a professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies, has concluded from her reading of certain biblical texts[513] that they require "Jews to be present at the Parousia, the second coming. This eschatological role for the Jews in the land of Israel continues throughout the tradition."[514] She makes the connection between the role of Jesus to fulfil the obligations as the heir of David and the land of Israel. To fulfil this role "there must be an Israel, a people and a land, to which he returns…for Jews to exist eschatologically as a people, they must continue to exist as a people in the present world, and that people…had a homeland."[515]

It will be interesting to observe exactly how this tension develops within the NCZ movement. Will the progressive dispensationalists retreat further to accommodate their colleagues' concern with being identified with the popularist element? This will most likely depend on a number of political factors. If a popularist political candidate, such as Donald

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[510] Darrell L. Bock, 'Conclusion' in *The People, The Land, and The Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish people in the Plan of God Ed. By* Darrell Bock, Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publication, 2014), p. 320.
[511] Ibid. p. 98.
[512] https://www.hadassah.org/about/our-mission
[513] Mathew 23:39, Zechariah 12:10
[514] Amy Jill Levine, 'The Gospel and the Land Revisited: Exegesis, Hermeneutics, and Politics' in *Peace and Faith: Christian Churches and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Ed. By* Cary Nelson and Michael Gizzi *(Philadelphia & Boston: Presbyterians for Middle East Peace*, 2021), p. 149.
[515] Ibid.

Trump, wins an election and seeks to court the evangelical voting base it will most likely lead to an unexamined outward surge of support for Israel. This will play into the hands of supersessionist critics who charge the Christian Zionist lobby has too much involvement in the political sphere and sees them as the reason why the contemporary state of Israel continues to be supported in light of its alleged injustices against the Palestinians. A sway towards nationalism and populism in the United States will reverberate throughout the theological world particularly with political issues like Israel and other ethical and partisan voting issues such as abortion, marriage rights and so on. The challenge for progressive dispensationalism will be to clearly demonstrate that it is not a part of any popularist movement – but rather a thoughtful academic perspective that offers a biblical theology of Israel that includes a focus on their eschatological future. Those in the NCZ who come from a more post-supersessionist perspective will most likely be even more cautious about involving dispensationalism in the movement, especially if there is a rise in national popularist politics. However, another challenge will arise for the NCZ movement as a whole if this scenario occurs. Popularist movements, both political and theological ones, tend to grow quickly when the environment allows for it.[516] Will the thoughtful academic approach of the NCZ be lost in the larger wave of popularist Christian Zionism to such a degree that the movement ultimately fails in its purpose? It may be that both the New Christian Zionism and the New Supersessionism have predominantly focused on presenting themselves as viable options in the world of Western academic theology, whereas the future of both may lie outside the Western world.

III. Issues for the New Christian Zionism and the New Supersessionism

Another steadily growing ambiguity that both movements must reckon with is the changing nature of global Christianity that is emerging. What I mean by this is that the areas that have typically been a stronghold for liberation theologies and ideologies, such as Latin America, are now experiencing a surge of Christian Zionism. Meanwhile, those places that were formerly a stronghold of Christian Zionism – the developed nations like the United States and Britain, are witnessing a growth of the New Supersessionism. This reversal can be

[516] Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and the Rise of Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018); David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: New Tribes Shaping British Politics* (Penguin, Random House UK, 2017).

understood by examining the demographic and ideological shift in these nations. Liberation theology was born in Latin America in the late 1960s and was a call for a radical reassessment of hegemonic power structures that led to oppression. It sought to provide a path to liberation for a nation of disenchanted oppressed people. The works of Gutierrez and Paulo Freire provided the structure for the development of these liberationist ideas. These ideas appealed to a class of people who were economically oppressed and had no way of overcoming their poverty. As Franceschini states "The popular and impoverished classes would learn that their misery is structurally induced and repressively enforced."[517] In liberation theologies such misery was seen as being an offense to God. Christian communities absorbed these concepts and began to group together around the praxis of liberationist ideas. These Christian communities "blossomed throughout the 1970's and 80's, most especially in Brazil, El Salvador, and Nicaragua."[518] However, the situation today is different and the religious landscape in the Global South is changing. Whilst traditionally Latin America was almost exclusively Catholic, which generally leaned towards liberationist theologies, today it is almost 20% Evangelical. Tom Ziv has referred to this as "the Latin American Shift" and argues that with this has come a renewed interest in being politically active in their countries. Many elected officials are now identifying as evangelicals. Ziv argues that one of the most important agendas for evangelicals is support for the state of Israel and so this shift is necessitating a surge of backing for Israel in these countries. He concludes that "as long as the Evangelical movement continues in Latin America, the relations of Latin countries with Israel are expected to continue improving."[519]

However, we need to be more specific about the type of evangelical growth that is causing this shift towards Israel and Christian Zionism. A particular sub-set of evangelicalism is the driving force, and this is Pentecostalism. Analysts like Goldman, Hummel and Lewis have all referred to the reality that the focus of Christian Zionism has shifted away from North America. Hummel classifies it as "Global Christian Zionism"[520] whereas Lewis has a chapter

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[517] Eric Morales-Franceschini, 'Latin American Liberation Theology.' *Global South Studies: A Collective Publication with The Global South* (May 9, 2018). https://globalsouthstudies.as.virginia.edu/key-thinkers/latin-american-liberation-theology. Accessed date.12/12/23.
[518] Ibid.
[519] Tom Ziv, 'I Will Bless Those Who Bless You': Evangelicalism and Support for Israel in Latin America.' *Politics and Religion* 15, no. 3 (2022): 485-505. doi:10.1017/S1755048321000316.
[520] Hummel, *Covenant Brothers*, p. 212.

on “Christian Zionism in renewalist and global movements.” Lewis describes renewalist Zionism as the “transnational and trans denominational forms of Pentecostal/charismatic Christian Zionism.”[521]

The Pentecostal movement has been growing at a rapid rate in the Global South and this has been acknowledged by many missiologists. The *International Bulletin of Mission Research* records that “The demographic shift in Christianity from the Global North to the Global South is by now common knowledge…By 2020 fully two-thirds of all Christians were in the Global South, with only one-third in the Global North. By 2050 we anticipate that 77 percent of all Christians will live in the Global South.”[522] This growth in the Global South “has significant implications for the future of Christian Zionism”[523] as it has been almost exclusively in the Pentecostal tradition – which has generally been supportive of Israel. The link between this Pentecostal growth and Christian Zionism has been noted by many scholars.[524] There is huge significance to this because as Hummel has identified, these new Pentecostal Zionists are not driven by apocalyptic theology but more by what he calls a “nation-based prosperity theology” which is an outgrowth of their Pentecostal theology. Whereas the prosperity gospel had been popular in the Unites States, it was applied to an individualistic mindset; now in the hands of the Pentecostal Zionists Genesis 12:3 [525] is being applied in a collective sense –the way God will bless the nation and the people involved with prosperity. This is attractive to Christians in the Global South as it appeals to a desire for prosperity and material blessing. This growth rate and the continued acceptance of Pentecostal Christian Zionism could have staggering geo-political implications, especially in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian context. As traditionally Christians in the Global South have sided with the Palestinians and the narrative of oppression, now we are seeing them side with Israel. For example, when President Trump announced the U.S. Embassy move to Jerusalem the other state to follow suit was Guatemala – the Latin American country with the highest percentage of evangelicals and an evangelical president at the time (2017). It is

[521] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 317.
[522] Gino A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, ‘World Christianity and Mission 2020: Ongoing Shift to the Global South’. *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 44:1 (2020), 8–19.
[523] Lewis, *A Short History*, p. 316.
[524] Joseph Williams, ‘The Pentecostalization of Christian Zionism.’ *Church History*, vol. 84, no. 1 (2015), pp. 159–94.
[525] “And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

also true that since 2016 the Israeli government has been keen to strengthen ties with African countries. The Christian Allies Caucus at the Knesset "remarked that faith-based diplomacy opened endless possibilities for cooperation with African countries".[526] The Caucus is a group of politicians who aim to forge direct lines of communication between Israel and Christian leaders. One of their mission statements is "To reach out to all Christians in order to mobilize political support for Israel".[527] Lewis also notes that the election of Brazilian president Bolsonaro was largely due to his campaign targeting the significant Pentecostal evangelical community in that country. Hummel concludes that as we witness this growth in the Global South of Pentecostal Christian Zionism and its impact on the political sphere, "we are likely witnessing a key arena in which the future of the Middle East will be decided."[528]

This raises a number of interesting questions for both the New Christian Zionism and for the New Supersessionism. For the New Christian Zionism this rapid growth in Pentecostal Christian Zionism that is rooted in prosperity theology poses a problem. It may well become the dominant form of Christian Zionism in the evangelical world, even eclipsing the popularity and numbers of the dispensational variety. It is also growing at a much faster rate and covering a larger geographical region in which more traditional forms of evangelicalism do not have much influence. This poses a dilemma for the New Christian Zionism, because just as they make it clear that they do not associate with pop-dispensationalism and politics, they would be equally averse to being associated with this form of Pentecostal prosperity-based Zionism. In light of this, the New Christian Zionism runs the risk of being so niche that it appeals to no one except a small cadre of Western academics. Will it be able to find any common ground with the fastest growing segment of Christian Zionism in the world today? Or will this actually work to highlight the need for a movement like the New Christian Zionism, even if it remains relatively small? In the light of this new reality – the explosive growth of a prosperity-based Zionism – will there be a greater need for a biblically informed defence of why Israel has a future based upon a more intellectually sophisticated biblical

[526] Christian Zionism finding new sources of growth in the global South? *Religion Watch,* Volume 34, No.10 Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion. See also, Cynthia Rich (ed.). *Christian Zionism in Africa* (Maryland: Fortress Academic, 2020).
[527] See http://cac.org.il/site/
[528] Daniel Hummel, 'The New Christian Zionism', *First Things* (June 2017).

theology? This will be necessary to counter many of the excesses that often accompany Pentecostal prosperity theology such as financial scandals, false healings, millionaire pastors, and televangelism fundraising techniques.[529] There may be the need to demonstrate that the main tenets of Christian Zionism are not in any way dependent on prosperity theology, just as they have sought to demonstrate they are not dependant on dispensationalism. This may be a new area of focus for the New Christian Zionism in light of this changing demographic.

An additional challenge for the New Christian Zionism will be to address the fact that they are losing ground in the Western world. The reasons for this are undoubtedly multifaceted but a few key characteristics can be highlighted. The shift within the culture away from a dominant Judaeo-Christian understanding of the world, which has generally motivated support for Israel, is important. The results of an increasingly non-religious culture have meant that people are more likely to view the world through alternative worldviews such as those shaped by critical theory and social justice narratives. [530] This is significant as even within evangelicalism social justice has become a serious motivational concern for the younger generation. Younger evangelicals are no longer influenced by the history of the previous generation which witnessed the formation of the modern state of Israel and its position as the underdog having to fight for its survival. Instead, they are products of a world where Israel has been seen as the oppressor, a derivative of critical theory which has taken root in the West. This is a monumental shift that has impacted the way evangelicals view Israel, particularly the younger generation. These conclusions are confirmed by the 2023 study by Inbari and Bumin. Their data "repeatedly showed that older evangelicals show high levels of support for Israel, while the younger cohort, 18-29 age range, exhibited lower levels of support."[531] They note the fact that these generational discrepancies are based upon divergent life experiences. Those born after WWII saw Israel rise from the ashes of the holocaust and valiantly defend itself to become a politically mature nation. However,

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[529] Naomi Haynes, 'On the Potential and Problems of Pentecostal Exchange.' *American Anthropologist* 115, no. 1 (2013): 85–95; Shayne Lee, 'Prosperity Theology: T.D. Jakes and the Gospel of the Almighty Dollar.' *Crosscurrents'* 57, no. 2 (2007), pp. 227–36.

[530] See Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britian: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* 2nd Ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2009).

[531] Motti Inbari; Kirill Bumin, *Christin Zionism in the Twenty-First Century: American Evangelical Public Opinion on Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), p. 170.

those later generations in the twenty-first century were exposed to a different narrative, where Israeli superiority was constantly displayed in the media and the issues of social justice and Palestinian oppression were far more prominent. [532] Their survey data also revealed that of evangelicals in the "twentysomething" age bracket, nearly half said that their religious beliefs did not have any impact on their assessment of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The authors conclude that this data suggests, "that for a large proportion of this generation the answer lies in the political, social, and other secular explanations, not religion."[533]

A deeper examination as to the cause of this again leads us not only to the impact of young evangelicals' different historical context in the twenty-first century, but also to the new ideological influences that shape their understanding. That generation have been educated according to the tenets of critical theory and liberation perspectives that utilise vocabulary like "oppression" and "justice" for their cause. Inbari and Bumin mention many of these points in passing, suggesting that "different conceptions of justice and fairness"[534] among younger evangelicals may explain why they are more critical of Israel. Their data also show that the majority of those who support the Palestinians used political arguments: "nearly half of th[eir] justifications invoked social justice, victimhood, the humanity of the Palestinians and their rights as a people."[535] The ideology of critical theory and liberation of the oppressed can be clearly seen here. They became even more visible with the data relating to African Americans as Inabri and Bumin note. They "see the Israeli-Palestinian dispute through the eyes of white-black oppression and identify with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination."[536] Recent conversations on race in America have been dominated by Critical Theory and decolonial perspectives which as I have demonstrated are utilised in Palestinian Liberation Theology as well. For example, Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors used this language in her 2015 remarks on a Harvard Law School panel, saying that supporters should "step up boldly and courageously to end the imperialist

[532] Ibid. p. 171.
[533] Ibid. p. 124.
[534] Ibid. p. 113.
[535] Ibid. p. 159.
[536] Ibid. p. 132.

project that's called Israel."[537] The link between such political ideologies and a less favourable position towards Israel is visible both in the secular world and also in the theological world as demonstrated by the New Supersessionism's aversion to Israel but acceptance of decolonial theories in the form of liberation theology. The unusual trend is that this liberation theology and its underlying ideologies have "been taken up by (upper) middle-class intellectuals and institutions of the Global North".[538] As I demonstrated when analysing the New Supersessionism, a large part of its worldview depends on modern derivatives of liberation theology such as decolonial theory. As these viewpoints are more generally accepted there will most likely be a continued trend in the church to accept the narrative being presented with regard to the issue of Israel and Palestine. The data from Inbari and Bumin's study corroborate this trend as it exists among the younger generations as has impacted the way in which they read the Bible. As they detail in their research:

> "The young Evangelicals think that from a just point of view or a Christian point of view, they should develop more compassion toward the Palestinians."

The article sums up with these revealing words:

> "In other words…The way in which young evangelicals are reading and interpreting the Bible differs from the way in which their parents and grandparents did."[539]

Their hermeneutics have undergone a shift. The way they see the Israel-Palestinian conflict has changed and their solution is that they must always seek justice for the oppressed, a conclusion from liberation theology. This then impacts the way they read the Bible.

One additional element that is worth factoring into these growth trends is the issue of immigration to the Western world. Analysts have generally concurred with the views I have laid out here – that there is a rise in Christian Zionism in the Global South due to the spread of Pentecostalism and a decrease of Christian Zionism in the Global North due to the rising popularity of liberationist ideas, but few have gone further to factor in the impact

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[537] Inbari Motti, Kirill M. Bumin, and M. Gordon Byrd. 'Why do evangelicals support Israel?' *Politics and Religion* 14, no. 1 (2021): 1-36.
[538] Morales-Franceschini, 'Latin American Liberation'.
[539] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, 'Young Evangelical Support for Israel Drops by Half in 3 Years – Study'. *The Jerusalem Post*. June 16th 2021. Accessed: https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/evangelical-youth-losing-love-for-israel-by-35-percent-study-shows-671178?fbclid=IwAR0ggnBsxsem8Cr8WQQJRdFxAkGQj-74PKM71xN54Y7IDxdv60SnlLuVQLo

immigration may have on Christianity in the Western world. What has not been considered, particularly as it relates to the growth of Christian Zionism and supersessionism, is that immigration constitutes the biggest de-secularising trend in the UK. Indeed, there are those claiming that it is immigration, particularly African immigration, that is the future of Christianity in Britain.[540] This phenomenon has been termed "reverse missions"[541] and has been held as the reason Britain is still statistically a predominantly Christian country.[542] This becomes interesting when the type of Christianity being imported into the UK by immigration is examined, that is, Pentecostalism. According to Olofinjana this has happened contextually within African Pentecostalism. This is the same Pentecostalism that has been sweeping the Global South including the African continent. I have already noted how within this Pentecostalism there is a strong adherence to Christian Zionist beliefs, although these are often more nationalistic, and based upon a Zionist version of prosperity theology rather than a solid exegetical theology. Gidron, an African researcher of this phenomenon, notes that the "rise of Christian Zionism in Africa" has attracted little scholarly attention.[543] He argues that in Africa this belief calls "on believers to support them [Israel] in order to be blessed". [544] This clearly shows that this is the same Pentecostal form of Christian Zionism that has spread across Latin America. Gidron further argues that African Christian Zionism is different to dispensational Zionism and its focus on eschatology and that in recent decades Christian Zionism has been shaped by charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity.[545] The opinion of the authors in *Christian Zionism in Africa* (2020) would agree, albeit taking a negative approach to this phenomenon in which they see the existence and growth of Christian Zionism as problematic.[546] The issue that remains to be seen is what sort of impact this will have on the state of Christianity in the United Kingdom. It is also a worth

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[540] Tomiwa Owolade, 'Is the Future of Christianity African? How immigration is revitalising British churches' 29th March 2023. Accessed at: https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/religion/2023/03/future-christianity-britain-african-christian#:~:text=White%20British%20people%20are%20driving,entirely%20a%20white%20British%20phenomenon%E2%80%9D.

[541] Israel O. Olofinjana, 'Reverse Mission: Towards an African British Theology'. *Transformation*, 37:1 (2020), pp. 52-65. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378819877902

[542] Eric, Kaufmann, 'Ethnic Minorites are Keeping Britian Christian' (30th November 2022) https://unherd.com/thepost/ethnic-minorities-are-keeping-britain-christian/ [Accessed 01/02/23]

[543] Yotam, Gidron, 'Christian Zionism in Africa: Divine Interfaces and Political Authority in Times of Epistemological Uncertainty'. *Mtafiti Mwafrika*, 33:1 (2022), p. 4.

[544] Ibid. p. 4.

[545] Ibid. p. 14.

[546] Cynthia Holder Rich (ed). *Christian Zionism in Africa* (Fortress Academic: Maryland, 2020).

considering that the immigration and growth rates of other parts of the Western world may mirror the situation in the UK with regard to the growth of religion and de-secularisation. Dr Timothy Tenant, president of Asbury Theological Seminary in the United States indicates a similar trend, stating "The immigrant population actually presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America".[547]

The primary form of religion being planted through immigration into the Western Hemisphere is either Christianity or Islam. The typical form of Christianity that is being imported through immigration is Pentecostalism. If such a form of Pentecostalism is being imported into the United Kingdom and parts of the Western world through immigration, and if this constitutes a major part of the growth of Christianity in these regions, should we expect to see a resurgence of Christian Zionist beliefs? Or at least a version of Christian Zionist beliefs that are rooted primarily in the charismatic Pentecostal tradition? It would make sense that Christian immigrants would also bring with them their particular doctrinal distinctives which include a growing Pentecostal Christian Zionism. This will again pose a challenge to the New Christian Zionism in how it responds. It could affirm in the minds of its adherents, that now more than ever there is a need for their movement: a form of Christian Zionism that is academic and not part of this charismatic strain. This will be an interesting area to analyse in the future, if within a typically Protestant geographical region these two distinct types of Christian Zionism can work together or whether they will be at cross purposes with one another: one representing a fast growing largely imported Pentecostal Zionism which is typically considered to be biblically deficient by Western academics, coexisting along with a new but smaller version of Christian Zionism that is primarily concerned with academic theology. The NCZ will need to be very clear as to how they plan to proceed in light of this constantly shifting demographic and the change it could bring to the religious landscape of the Western world.

These growth trends, the rising popularity of liberation ideas and the spread of supersessionism in the Western world, highlight an area of research that needs addressing within the NCZ movement. The New Supersessionism is very much driven by its incorporation of liberationist ideas. Gregerman notes that "liberation theology is a new

[547] Jenny Yang, 'Immigration is changing the face of Christianity for the Better' World Relief (August 9th ,2017). Accessed: https://worldrelief.org/how-immigration-is-changing-the-face-of-christianity/

arrival in the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians…only recently have Christian thinkers who have been influenced by the ideas of liberation theology become engaged in the dispute".[548] This includes critical theories and the emerging disciplines that have developed from these frameworks. Most important for us is the use of decolonial theory in liberation theology. As I detailed earlier when analysing the New Supersessionism, these ideas play a huge part in the understanding of history and politics of the Middle East. They specifically shape the biblical hermeneutics of the new supersessionist movement. This means that there is a political driving force in the movement that is wedded to its theology. What is key for the growth of the New Supersessionism in this current moment is that this force is similar to the politics of the secular culture, that is also being influenced by critical theories and decolonial interpretations of history. The New Supersessionism has tapped into this cultural moment and is benefitting from the atmosphere it has created in the Western world. It looks as if the political side of the New Supersessionism, rather than the theological, is actually more influential and the deciding factor as to whether people accept it or not.

This creates another challenge to the NCZ. They have primarily positioned themselves as a biblical and academic movement that generally eschews the constant back and forth over political issues that takes place in the world of pop-Christian Zionism. However, I wonder whether they have really grappled with the seriousness of the influence such issues have on how people interact with the Bible. Nowhere has the NCZ given proper attention to the most current forms of liberation hermeneutics such as decolonial interpretation and social justice ideas that stem from critical theory. The NCZ does address hermeneutics, but it is largely still coloured by the classical theological debates over issues like the interpretation of the Abrahamic covenants and the validity of the land promises to Israel. Whilst these are critical issues to address in a comprehensive biblical theology of Israel, the NCZ as a movement that uses the term "Christian Zionism" and is attempting to rescue its credibility, must address the wider issues in culture. This is particularly evident with the growing trend that younger evangelicals are turning away from traditional support for Israel due to the reasons listed above.

[548] Gregerman, 'Old Wine in New Bottles', pp. 313-314.

Secondly, as previously mentioned, the world that these younger evangelicals have grown up in is one where Israel is no longer an underdog and demonstrates superior military capability over many of its neighbours. They are also less aware of the history of the nation and its early fights for survival. These factors mean that it is much easier for this generation to accept narratives that place Israel as the oppressor and the Palestinians as the underdogs. Another factor mentioned by Inbari and Bumin to explain this generational difference is that young evangelicals have a different media exposure than their parents and grandparents. They argue that the younger generation have more balanced and diverse information sources than their elders, who would often rely on pastors, specialist newspapers or a comparatively small selection of news media. The younger generation have multiple online news sites and access to social media was cited as a major factor in their opinion formation.[549] Another interesting, albeit hard to quantify statistic in the younger generations' support for Palestinians that Inbari and Bumin list is that of "gut-feeling". This is an emotional empathy with the Palestinians that is more feeling oriented than factually assessed. Nearly 40% of respondents in this group could not provide clear specific reasons for their support, instead offering vague subjective platitudes (although, it must be mentioned a similar group also existed for the pro-Israel Christians surveyed). It seems emotions have an important role to play in this discussion. As Inbari and Bumin comment, gut feelings act "below the level of conscious awareness as shortcuts to shape these young evangelicals' preference for the Palestinians."[550] While subconscious, it is still significant and may be linked to the wider news cycle and social environment many of them live and operate in.

The NCZ has to contend with combatting those ideas that influence Western culture at present as well as against the rapid growth of a prosperity based Christian Zionism across the world. It must develop and continue to engage with these trends and their impact on the understandings of history and changes to the hermeneutical lens through which people read the Bible. The impact of decolonial theories and identity politics seem to infiltrate into popular politics but also into the world of theology. The NCZ must offer a hermeneutical framework that is equally compelling and comprehensive in order to stem the rising tide of

[549] Inbari; Bumin, *Christin Zionism* p. 168.
[550] Ibid. p. 160.

liberationist ideas in the Western academic theological world. It may be that Hummel's conclusion that "the fate of Christian Zionism will increasingly be decided away from the traditional sources of American Evangelicalism and Western governments" [551] is only partly true. It may be a non-Western variation of Christian Zionism that becomes dominant, but could it be that through immigration it is too early to rule out the Western world completely?

One final area that will require attention from those who adhere to the New Supersessionism, particularly those supporters who are part of Western academia, is the reality of rising antisemitism and Palestinian terrorism. As I have already demonstrated for those who categorically reject Christian Zionist interpretations and understanding of the Middle East, they almost universally identify with the Palestinian interpretation of history and scripture. However, this creates an elephant in the room for the new supersessionists. They accuse Christian Zionists of offering blind unqualified support to Israel and overlooking all of Israel's faults. Yet they replicate this error by displaying a blind adherence to all things Palestinian. Considering the overwhelming presence of a virulent strain of Palestinian antisemitism and a continued engagement with terrorism this is a clear case of double standards. It seems that their charge against Christian Zionists applies equally well when thrown back at them. Is this a real problem or could such a line of argumentation simply be considered scaremongering?

The issue is similar to the problem that Christian Zionism faces with the rise of popularist movements that inevitably cause a surge of interest in a particular issue. For Christian Zionists, Trumpism and Christian nationalism are two examples where a rising popularist movement would also seem to precipitate a growth in Christian Zionist, or at least pro-Israel, ideas. The new supersessionists have the reverse problem. As anti-Zionist thought is given a vehicle into popular culture through liberationist ideas and thus accompanies pro-Palestinian sentiment, they must also reckon with the concurrent rise in antisemitism. This has been illustrated clearly with the October 7th, 2023, Hamas attack against Israel and the war that followed. The Community Security Trust (CST)[552] has reported a huge surge in antisemitic hate crimes since the conflict begun. In London for example antisemitic hate

[551] Daniel Hummel, 'The New Christian Zionism' *First Things* (June 2017).
[552] https://cst.org.uk/

crimes rose by 1350% according to the Met Police.[553] The anti-Zionist rhetoric that utilises the critical theory framework of the oppressor and oppressed was a significant factor in such responses. If a particular framework, one that has rising cultural ascendency, positions one participant as the oppressor and the other as the oppressed, it is inevitably going to cause a groundswell of public support for the oppressed party. Some scholars see this as a manifestation of the new antisemitism, a novel form of antisemitism "where for the first time it is being perpetrated in the name of antiracism and anticolonialism."[554]

Thus, the reality is that an unqualified support for the Palestinian narrative and cause will most likely involve more than just the theological worldview offered by Palestinian Christians. The overwhelming majority of Palestinian culture is Islamic. Antisemitism is well documented throughout the Islamic world and especially within Palestinian culture. The Anti Deformation League's Global 100 index, which monitors antisemitism worldwide gives detailed statistics by conducting surveys asking people around the world the extent to which they agree with different statements. These include, for example: "Jews have too much power in the business world" and "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust" or "People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave". If people indicate that these statements are probably true, this is recorded and turned into a percentage. So, for example, for these three questions in the region of West Bank and Gaza the scores were,

> Jews have too much power in the business world. 91%
>
> Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust. 64%
>
> People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave. 87%

As an overall statistical rating the ADL records that 93% of the adult population harboured antisemitic attitudes.[555]

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[553] House of Commons Library: 'Increases in Antisemitic Offences' (8th January 20204) [Accessed 01/06/24] https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2023-0238/CDP-2023-0238.pdf
See also: Rosa Freedman and David Hirsch (eds), *Responses to 7 October: Antisemitic Discourse* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024).

[554] Phyllis Chesler, *The New Antisemitism: The Current Crisis and What We Must Do About It* (California: Jossey-Bass, 2003), p. 87.

[555] ADL Global 100 league. 'West Bank and Gaza Statistics'. Accessed at: https://global100.adl.org/country/west-bank-and-gaza/2014

The influence of such Islamic antisemitism is clearly seen in the Palestinian Christian movement and the New Supersessionism. The logic of supersessionism is clearly present in Islam as it positions itself as the final revelation that has superseded both Judaism and Christianity. Thus, it is not surprising to find a similar anti-Judaic and anti-Christian attitude within Islam. This presents a dilemma for the New Supersessionism which is a Christian movement that accepts the Palestinian narrative. It also explains why anti-Zionist rhetoric is replete within it. The danger is that the New Supersessionism finds a camaraderie around mutual disdain for Israel and Zionism. Thus, they now find "a common language with a Muslim replacement theology."[556] This association means that it is very hard for them to not also identify with the antisemitic rhetoric present in the broader society at the same time. This is particularly problematic for Western academics and supporters who promote the New Supersessionism in their institutions and churches in the Western world. How can they charge Christian Zionists with uncritical support for Israel when they themselves seem to be engaging in an uncritical and unqualified support for the Palestinians? There is a challenge here for both the new Christian Zionism and the new supersessionists. For the new Christian Zionists, they must be able to hold to a theology that does not position one people over against another people and have it lead to a situation whereby moral injustices are excused for the sake of the greater narrative's survival. A Christian theology of the land and the purposes of God for Israel must also affirm an ethical system which incorporates concern for all people. The challenge for the New Supersessionism is to acknowledge they may be guilty of the very thing they accuse their opponents of – overlooking moral injustice for the sake of their theology. They must seek to craft a theological system that can equally uphold the rights of Palestinians whilst simultaneously denouncing any element of that narrative that falls short of biblical ethical standards or promotes antisemitism.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter had sought to highlight a number of the tensions and ambiguities that currently exist, or may become increasingly significant in the future, for both the NCZ and the New Supersessionism. This has included the divergent opinions on the significance of the land

[556] Nerel Gershon, 'Spiritual Intifada of Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews', in *Israel, His People, His Land, His Story Ed. By* Fred Wright (Eastbourne: Thankful Books. 2005), p. 217.

within the New Supersessionism. Western academics who espouse the New Supersessionism talk about the land in ways that minimise its significance, whereas Palestinian Christians who hold to the New Supersessionism make their connection to the land a central facet of their identity. These differing viewpoints display a continuing tension that exists within the New Supersessionism. For the NCZ I highlighted the tension between progressive dispensationalism and post-supersessionism. For the broad NCZ movement they have gone to great lengths to demonstrate that they are not associated with pop-dispensationalism. However, this has meant that they have taken a step back from traditional Christian Zionism when it comes to making definitive pronouncements regarding the place of the modern state of Israel and the specifics of eschatology more generally. Another issue that relates directly to the NCZ is the failure within the movement to adequately address the rise in decolonial hermeneutics that is becoming increasingly popular with new supersessionist arguments.

Another developing ambiguity that impacts both the NCZ and the New Supersessionism is the inverse growth patterns of both these movements and their significance for the future development of each. The New Supersessionism which is rooted in liberation theology and has typically been most popular in the Global South where it originated, is now making headway in the Western world. Running concurrently with this is the growth and spread of Christian Zionism in the Global South, formerly a stronghold of liberationist ideas. This is due to rapid growth of Pentecostal Christianity. This is an interesting growth pattern for the study of evangelicalism which could impact the larger movement. An additional trend I examined is the impact of immigration in the Global South. High levels of immigration from Africa and Asia to formerly protestant nations are playing a role in shaping the future religious landscape with imported Pentecostal Zionism.

The final area that I examined concerns increasing antisemitism within Palestinian society and the issue of terrorism. I highlighted that the New Supersessionism that advocates almost exclusively for the Palestinian narrative of history, it is increasingly difficult for them to do this without also giving credence to the larger context of the Islamic world and Palestinian society which includes high levels of antisemitism and anti-Zionism.

Having highlighted these areas of tension for the New Supersessionism and the NCZ we can now move onto summarising and recapping the flow of the argument as it has developed throughout the whole thesis in the conclusion. This will also include identifying pathways to move forward in the development of this research which could help smooth out some of those areas of ambiguities raised in this chapter.

Conclusion

In this conclusion I will recap the key findings of my research. This closing section will summarise the arguments and findings of each chapter and highlight the conclusions of each. I will clearly identify where my research has made an addition to the existing work on this subject and suggest areas for further research and how my findings might apply to specific disciplines and their understanding of their topics. I will also show how this research will assist future researchers working on Christian Zionism and supersessionism.

This thesis has provided an extensive overview of both supersessionism and Christian Zionism. Although both of these movements have existed in the church for a considerable amount of time they have continued to evolve and shift their expressions as they develop. The aim has been to examine them through historical, theological, and political lenses as both movements consist of elements from these three disciplines. The particular focus of this thesis, which constitutes an important addition to the scholarly literature, has been the examination of the most recent variations of both supersessionism and Christian Zionism. These two movements have been respectively designated as the 'New Supersessionism' and the 'new Christian Zionism'. One observation that I have explored throughout this thesis is that these two movements, although on inverse ends of the spectrum with their belief regarding the status of Israel, exist in a symbiotic relationship with one another and each in some way owes its origin to the other. It was the strong expression of Christian Zionism that arose after the Holocaust and the establishment of the modern state of Israel in the twentieth century that ultimately ended up generating a powerful reactive movement that was pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist. In the theological world this manifested in a new form of supersessionism. It was this new variation of supersessionism that then led to the need for a response from Christian Zionists. This came in the form of the New Christian Zionism which was primarily a Western academic movement seeking to associate Christian Zionism with academic biblical theology rather than with popular prophecy and politics.

One of the chief aims of the thesis was to clearly identify and delineate the unique factors that precipitated the rise of both these new expressions. Although they are connected, there were also a number of other external factors that contributed to their rise. The New

Supersessionism differs from its predecessors in form and substance. It still shares the conclusion that there is no longer a specific role for national Israel in the plan of God, but its primary motivations seem to be drawn from the new approaches it has incorporated into its methodology. This is where this thesis has provided key research into this phenomenon, going beyond mere historical analysis of movements in the history of the church and into a comprehensive examination of the ideologies that have contributed to them such as liberation theology, critical theory, and Palestinian nationalism. It shows how they have contributed and influenced this new movement beyond previous examinations. The New Supersessionism is very much a contemporary movement that is being driven by ideologies and approaches in the world today. It draws upon the foundation of liberation theology and specifically applies it to the Palestinian context. The familiar oppressor/oppressed binary though which liberation theology operates is overlaid onto the Israeli-Palestinian situation and casts the Israelis in the role of the oppressor and the Palestinians in the role of oppressed. It is from this particular framework that the movement has garnered popular support from within the Western evangelical church. It is easier to speak against a movement or a nation when they have been portrayed as an evil oppressor.

One unique feature of the New Supersessionism that this thesis examined was its incorporation of critical theory and use of decolonial theory. These approaches are growing in popularity in wider Western culture and therefore people are becoming more disposed to accept their conclusions, even in the church. I noted how the NCZ has failed to really address this particular hermeneutical shift in the debate between supersessionism and Christian Zionism and how this may be limiting the scope and effectiveness of their own movement. This thesis has begun this work of critical engagement with decolonial theory as it relates to the issue of supersessionism and Palestinian theology.

The New Christian Zionism is not only a reaction to a new form of supersessionism that is politically pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist, but also a reaction against popular Christian Zionism as it is represented by dispensationalism. The popularity of pop-dispensationalism in the United States particularly, and the association that this movement has had with American politics, meant that Christian Zionism has become so associated with right wing politics and activism as well as sensationalist mass market prophecy books that it no longer retains any academic credibility in the world of theology. The New Christian Zionism makes

very clear from the outset that as a movement it is not associated with this type of Christian Zionism. In order to fully analyse these unique facets of the new Christian Zionism it was necessary to look at the way contemporary politics plays a role in these movements. The rise of a popularist president like Donald Trump, who himself was considered to be very favourable and supportive of Israel allowed them to have considerable influence in the realm of politics once again. This also led to a sustained response by the New Supersessionism to counter Christian Zionist theology and influence.

After contextualising the movements historically and then outlining the distinct elements that have shaped their developments, I looked at whether or not it is valid to identify the new Christian Zionism and the New Supersessionism as genuinely novel movements. In many ways they are obviously a continuation of previous traditions because neither Christian Zionism nor supersessionism have been static. There are always shifts and developments in emerging theologies. Yet, the unique additions of these latest expressions do seem to validate the need to speak of them in a distinct way to avoid overgeneralising and confusion with historical iterations. They must display enough new elements to speak of them in this way rather than merely being an attempt to rebrand them. I concluded that the New Supersessionism incorporated enough unique features to consider it a genuinely new movement. Because of the way it has been so connected to the situation in Israel, particularly from the war of 1967 to the present, it can only really be considered a contemporary development. Although classical supersessionism has long existed, a form of it that is so reliant on the modern state of Israel is new. The way it utilises contemporary approaches to understanding recent Middle Eastern history and how it interprets the biblical texts, through the lens of critical theory and decolonial narratives, is also different enough from past iterations to be considered new.

The NCZ also displays enough novel features to warrant the distinct classification. It is unique in that it attempts to separate itself from the most popular form of Christian Zionism in the last century, dispensational Christian Zionism. This is true for the United States more than anywhere else. However, the NCZ is also a movement that emerged from the pool of American-led theology. It is also distinct in that is does not take such a dogmatic position on matters related to eschatology and the modern state of Israel. It does not wish to be identified as an eschatological position per se, rather it seeks to present its arguments in the

context of biblical theology. It aims to place itself within the contours of academic theology. It is also new in the way it utilises a much broader body of scholarly material in its arguments and approach to the Bible. The NCZ has drawn deeply from the well of emerging scholarship known as post-supersessionism. I noted that although the NCZ and post-supersessionism share many similarities, the two are not identical. Post-supersessionism is a hermeneutical approach to reading scripture, whereas the NCZ is a movement that seeks to argue for the continued relevance of Israel in the plan of God. Thus, a major difference between the two is that the NCZ has to go further than simply offering theological arguments, as at a certain point it has to engage with political charges and anti-Zionist arguments too. This however also qualifies it as a novel movement, simply because many of these arguments are new and relate to contemporary geo-political events and situations on the ground that did not exist historically and therefore need to be addressed by the NCZ.

In order to clearly trace the progression of the argument that both these movements represent unique and contemporary expressions of Christian Zionism and supersessionism, this conclusion will briefly summarise the cogent points raised in each chapter, allowing the reader to follow the continual thread of the argument that has been running throughout the entire thesis.

In chapter one I provided the necessary contextual history to the study of supersessionism. A chronological survey demonstrated the development of supersessionism throughout church history. This provided context for the main argument of the thesis that the newest form of supersessionism is considerably different from the classical type and constitutes a separate movement. In order to be able to identify these new features it was necessary to understand how it differed from classical supersessionism and also where it shared similar ground. This part of the thesis was also needed to demonstrate that historically supersessionism had always been affected by external events just as the New Supersessionism has been greatly affected by contemporary historical events. After bringing the chronological development up to the present, I detailed the specific variations that exist within supersessionism. I outlined the designations that were laid out by Soulen who identified three distinct types of supersessionism.[557] The chronological survey and analysis

[557] Soulen, *The God of Israel.*

of supersessionism in this first chapter was intended to give the reader a detailed overview of its development throughout history and into the present day. This provided the contextual background for the analysis of the New Supersessionism and how it differs from the previous forms.

This led to the second chapter which examined the New Supersessionism. This laid out the main elements of the movement in order for the reader to gain sufficient knowledge to identify and understand it. A key feature of this was to detail the ideological roots of the New Supersessionism as represented by scholars such as Stephen Sizer, Gary Burge , Mitri Raheb, and Naim Ateek, in order to show how they differ from previous expressions. This includes such factors as Palestinian nationalism, liberation theology, critical theory, decolonial studies and anti-Zionism. Only by understanding these new factors will the warrant for a new classification be understood. With this established, I then showed how the New Supersessionism is growing and influencing theology and hermeneutics today as well as its motivation for political activism. The New Supersessionism frequently brings charges against the state of Israel including of apartheid, genocide, and colonisation. Such terminology is common in the language of liberation theology. I analysed the organisations that promote this perspective, such as Sabeel or the Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre. The roots of Palestinian Liberation Theology draw upon the existing field of liberation theology which begun in Latin America, now applied to the Palestinian context. I highlighted how this liberation theology also draws upon the discipline of critical theory which envisions a world through power differentials and utilises the binary 'oppressed', and 'oppressor' narrative as expressed by DiAngelo[558] and Freire.[559] It is crucial to understand how influential these approaches are to the New Supersessionism and the wider debate with Christian Zionism.

I highlighted how one of the approaches of critical theory was decolonialism – a view utilised by new supersessionists such as Raheb.[560] This view is applied to the theological

[558] Robin DiAngelo, Ozlem Sensoy, *Is Everyone really Equal? An Introduction in Key Concepts in Social Justice Education* (New York: Teachers College Press 2017).
[559] Paulo, Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Edition (New York:The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005).
[560] Mitri, Raheb, 'Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation: A Palestinian Christian Perspective' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation* (ed. Mitri Raheb) (Bethlehem: Diyar, , 2012).

world of Palestinian Liberation Theology and informs their hermeneutics. It seeks to show that all Western theological readings of the Bible, particularly those of Christian Zionists, have been impacted by a colonial imperialist perspective. Just as liberation ideas seek to free the oppressed, decolonial hermeneutics seek to free the biblical interpreter from colonial readings.

I further highlighted the influence that Palestinian nationalism has within the New Supersessionism. Palestinian national identity was shaped by the Six-Day War and the Intifada which gave rise to the formation of a distinct Palestinian Liberation Theology This would develop into a new way of reading the text through the grid of liberation theology and by associating the theology of Jesus with the oppressed, which in this context meant the Palestinian cause. This is also the reason why those associated with the New Supersessionism, such as Mubarak,[561] so categorically reject Christian Zionism and argue it is a tool in the hands of the oppressors to justify imperialism.

The aim of this second chapter was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the new supersession and build upon the contextual background provided by the first. I clearly identified the main foundational ideologies and influences and engaged with their leading scholars. I showed that the New Supersessionism is influenced by Palestinian nationalism which is itself a political identity movement, and one that is fairly recent. It is also heavily influenced by liberation theology and has developed its own distinct Palestinian Liberation Theology. This theology draws upon contemporary critical theory and particularly recent approaches such as decolonial hermeneutics. My aim was to demonstrate just how influential this framework is in the continuing debate which so far is an underdeveloped area in the literature on supersessionism and Christian Zionism. The decolonial liberation framework changes not only how people interpret and understand history, but it also reaches into the theological world and colours the way they read the Bible and understand concepts such as justice. The New Supersessionism therefore clearly constitutes a new movement within the broader field of supersessionism. There is sufficient warrant to classify it this way and it should be analysed differently according to the novel elements that have been incorporated into it. Existing works that provide a critical analysis of supersessionism

[561] Awad Mubarak, 'Their Theology, Our Nightmare', in *Introduction in Christian Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* (Pasadena: William Carey International University Press, 2008).

have given little or no attention to the specific ideological frameworks and approaches that underlie its methodology. This thesis has addressed the paucity of research in this area. I have argued that these factors provide sufficient evidence for the New Supersessionism being investigated as a distinct movement which requires a specific response which this thesis has begun to provide.

Having provided a thorough analysis of the New Supersessionism and the contextual background to the movement, the third chapter follows the same approach to Christian Zionism. It begun by providing the background necessary to understand Christian Zionism and to trace the development of its newest expression which is called the New Christian Zionism (NCZ). This chapter showed that the NCZ is a genuinely new movement. To demonstrate this, it broadly traced the historical development of Christian Zionism from the early church to the present.

In the last century, the dominance of Christian Zionism emerged primarily through its dispensational variant. Along with this came an overt political association. This is what caused many to reject it. This rejection was often on political grounds rather that strictly theological ones. Christian Zionism, particularly through its twentieth century dispensational variant, was associated with a right-wing position giving unqualified support for Israel, and was uninterested in justice for the Palestinians, who were largely seen as being associated with the left wing. Although as we recognised the reality is far more complex than this and each viewpoint displays a broader spectrum of belief and support, or lack thereof, for Israel than these binaries often acknowledge. These classifications of left-right apply to the position on Israel and do not necessarily transfer to every other political issue that usually separates and identifies the two positions. It is this background that gave rise to the NCZ. Supersessionist critics were able to easily attack and discredit Christian Zionism by critiquing popularist teachers and political activists who promoted it. This led a number of scholars to look at this situation and decide that an academic response to the supersessionists was required. They aimed to make their critics deal with the technical theological arguments supporting Christian Zionism, but also make it clear that the NCZ should not be associated with popularism. The NCZ sought to distance Christian Zionism from pop-dispensationalism, Christian nationalism, remnants of the moral-majority, and right-wing extremism. I have argued that the NCZ was a response movement to both of these realities. Unfortunately,

much of the debate that has occurred between these two groups is overly focused on the extremes of both sides – and thus misses crucial engagement with the broader movements.

The fourth chapter looked at how Christian Zionism responded to these challenges from the New Supersessionism. It examined the rise of the New Christian Zionism and provided a comprehensive analysis of this new movement. It demonstrated that the NCZ differed enough to constitute and warrant a new classification. I outlined the movement's beliefs and methodology to demonstrate that the NCZ was a progression from more traditional Christian Zionism.

As highlighted before, the NCZ is a response to the new supersessionists and their critical attacks which often view Christian Zionism as heresy and providing justification for occupation. However, I showed that the NCZ is also a response to pop-dispensationalists and those who have offered a sensationalist quasi-political theology using Christian Zionism. The critique of supersessionism is at the core of the NCZ and the movement is broadly unified around this concept. It is more diverse than traditional Christian Zionism and incorporates work from numerous sources. Much of the work that informs the theology and hermeneutics of the NCZ is from "post-supersessionism" represented by scholars such as Willits and Rudolph.[562] This approach affirms the continued election of Israel as a covenant people and their future role in the redemptive plan of God. Post-Supersessionism however does not associate itself with Christian Zionism nor with its political implications. I clearly outlined how the post-supersessionist movement had been utilised by the NCZ and informed much of their scholarship. Yet I also demonstrated that NCZ is not simply a rebranding or repackaging of post-supersessionism. The NCZ is a synthesis of new and existing thought that brings together many disciplines in a defence of Israel's continued election and its critique of supersessionism. It includes those from different traditions and those who use different approaches, such as progressive dispensationalism, historic premillennialism, post-supersessionism, New Testament Historical Jesus scholars and Pauline studies. The NCZ draws from all of these disciplines in its refutation of supersessionism. It typically goes further than post-supersessionism because it addresses many of the political questions that arise in the context of discussion around Zionism. Post-

[562] Rudolph; Willitts (eds), *Introduction to Messianic Judaism.*

Supersessionism as an approach has no need to wade into the waters of politics as it is primarily a hermeneutical theological approach. This factor is a major separating identifier between the two movements.

Another difference is that post-supersessionism is often concerned with the relationship of Jewish believers within the wider gentile church and how to specifically maintain their identity as they live and practice their faith. This is an area that the NCZ does not engage with and again shows that they are not identical. Inherent in the approach of post-supersessionism is that the promises and covenant to Israel have not been superseded or cancelled in any way. This means that much of their work is concerned with offering arguments to refute supersessionism. It is this part of the movement that crossed over with the aims and intention of the NCZ which both reject supersessionism and seek to provide solid biblical reasons for doing so.

Another aim of this chapter was to show the hermeneutical methodology of the NCZ so that any novel inclusions could be clearly identified. The key point of the NCZ's hermeneutic is that it reads the New Testament scriptures as a continuation of the plan and purpose that God laid out for Israel in the Old Testament. It sees the NT as affirming an ethnic and territorial Israel. This means that it affirms the ongoing validity of the biblical covenants with Israel. The NCZ is largely using a consistent historical-grammatical – literary hermeneutic which carries the theme of Israel's eschatological restoration from the Old to the New Testament.

The issue of the modern state of Israel is one that clearly separates the NCZ from post-supersessionism. It is also the approach to the modern state of Israel that most clearly departs from more traditional forms of Christian Zionism, particularly the dispensational variety which is known for its pro-Israel advocacy in the political world. I demonstrated that while the NCZ may not associate with these approaches to supporting Israel, it cannot ignore the issue altogether as a role for the nation of Israel seems to be inherent in the system of Christian Zionism. The NCZ is more reserved in its pronouncements about modern Israel. The motivating factor for this seems to be an attempt to make it clear that it does not offer unqualified support for the nation of Israel as its critics claim and as often has been seen in certain segments of Christian Zionism. It is also hesitant to make dogmatic prophetic

pronouncements such as those often found in dispensationalism.[563] However, as I demonstrated, there are also those within the NCZ who do view the modern state of Israel as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy, at least in part, and they argue that the nation has a right to the land due to the promises in the biblical covenants in addition to legal and historical circumstances that gave rise to modern Israel.

This is an area of tension within the movement that was examined in the final chapter. I also showed how the NCZ is not bound by one particular model of theology that affirms the future role and significance of Israel. Kinzer for example, offers a new approach that argues for continued Jewish life and existence in the land – noting that this is tied to the biblical covenants and not the existence of the state.[564] This allows for Jewish presence and even affirms the territoriality of this life in the land of Israel, but it does not obligate one to affirm every element of the modern state of Israel which is simply the present vehicle facilitating it. I also looked at how McDermott answers questions around modern Israel.[565] He affirms it as a partial prophetic fulfilment and gives a historical analysis of the period leading up to the establishment of modern Israel and the way various agencies like the League of Nations and the UN were involved in this. I pointed out that there is a weakness in this approach as it reduces the arguments for Israel to depend upon the legal structures at the time. Geo-political bodies and legal structures evolve and change, and the position needs to have a more comprehensive foundation than twentieth-century law. These unique approaches to the issue of the modern state indicate a recession from previous thought within traditional Christian Zionism that boldly affirms the modern state of Israel as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy.

The final chapter demonstrated how the New Supersessionism and the NCZ display points of tension and ambiguity within their own systems. This showed both movements as developing and having areas that still need to be refined, and also provided a deeper insight into how the research can be applied and utilised by future researchers. Traditional supersessionism was largely a result of different hermeneutical methodologies. I identified the different variations within supersessionism according to Soulen's classifications. This

[563] Gerald McDermott, 'Introduction' in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter varsity Press, 2016). pp.11-29.
[564] Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified.*
[565] McDermott, *Israel Matters*, p. 80.

analysis allowed us to clearly see where the New Supersessionism differed from these traditional views. Although the New Supersessionism does share some of the same methodology as traditional supersessionism it clearly incorporates influences that have developed after the establishment of Israel in 1948. However, it is with their inclusion that the movement begun to show some internal tensions among its adherents. The New Supersessionism is not a monolithic position and is quite ecumenical in its make up – the unifying principle is a denial of national Israel in the plan of God and a complete rejection of Zionism.

One obvious tension which this chapter examined was the way Palestinian Christians and Western theologians differ in their views of the land whilst both supporting supersessionism. Western theologians, following the lead of Davies,[566] often advocate for the new supersession by making statements to the effect that the land no longer holds any significance at all, and it is frequently described as being irrelevant. However, in their rejection of Christian Zionism they almost always attach themselves to the Palestinian perspective on history and events in the Middle East. Thus, they are joined with their Palestinian counterparts, and they share many of their beliefs. On the other hand, Palestinian Christians who hold to the New Supersessionism will often use the same universalising hermeneutics as traditional supersessionists and their Western counterparts. They use this approach to remove any attachment of the Jews to the land. However, they also want to add that the land still holds significance for them as Palestinians. Raheb and others argue that the land is key in the formation of their identity and self-understanding operating as a fifth gospel.[567] This belief operates like a contemporary version of the witness doctrine of Augustine except without the judicial element. However, this Palestinian witness doctrine has replaced the Jewish people with the land itself. In this version the land remains as a witness to God's work in history and still retains a special role that it can play in the Christian faith.

There is a deeper claim being implied with this belief – that the witness of the land is to the Palestinian people as products of the ancient land. The Palestinian people themselves are

[566] W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (California: University of California Press, 1974).
[567] Mitri Raheb, 'Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation: A Palestinian Christian Perspective' in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation* (ed. Mitri Raheb) (Bethlehem: Diyar, 2012).

thus referred to as the sixth gospel. These fifth and sixth gospels in Palestinian theology are described as the hermeneutical key for understanding the Bible. This contrasts with Western supersessionists who consider the land to be irrelevant. It also raises questions about what such a view does with the Jewish people. It seems that they are being erased and replaced with the Palestinian people in a way that is operating like an ethnic form of supersessionism. The question is whether these two different emphases can coexist without contradiction. The problem for Western theologians at this point is that in their backing and support of Palestine liberation theology they are not only affirming their teaching but also their political views. Palestinian Liberation Theology is infused with Palestinian nationalism which views the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 as an example of colonialism, land dispossession and occupation. It also begs the questions as to whether the Western theologians are pushing a form of colonial theology when they assume their superior interpretation is one that holds no importance to the land – yet they often support the Palestinian perspective which still attached significance to the land. The unspoken conclusion is that the Western view is superior to Palestinian perspective and therefore it is the correct interpretation.

The NCZ are broadly more monolithic but that does not mean there are not tensions within the movement. The NCZ is attempting to position itself as an academic perspective and therefore often reminds people that it is not associated with dispensationalism or sensationalism when it comes to the field of eschatology. In this it is easy to see how the NCZ, in the same way as the New Supersessionism, is also a response movement and the two perspectives exist partly because of each other. There is a risk that this is an overreaction that is more concerned about appearances than with providing the best arguments for Israel in its critique of supersessionism. An aversion to pop-dispensationalism does not necessarily need to entail a full-scale rejection of academic dispensationalism as it offers many shared arguments against supersessionism. The NCZ does include progressive dispensationalists who have also tried to present themselves in academic terms within the dispensational movement. However, this internal tension becomes more overt when the subject of modern Israel and eschatology is addressed. The NCZ seems so concerned about being associated with overzealous prophecy teachers that it practically avoids the field of eschatology altogether in its arguments. The desire to avoid pop-dispensational prophecy

has caused an overaction to a field of study that yields fruitful argument in support of the major claims of Christian Zionism. The NCZ will often tacitly claim that they believe that eschatology teaches a restoration of Israel, but they are unwilling to make pronouncements about the modern state of Israel today. Some within the movement such as McDermott refer to it as a "partial fulfilment".[568] This downplaying of eschatological material for the sake of intellectual respectability results in a view of Israel that is less defined and harder to provide a theological justification for within an evangelical context. However, the internal tension surfaces around this exact issue and demonstrates that there is at least a measure of inconsistency with the NCZ on this issue.

Those scholars who write from a progressive dispensational tradition, along with those from a historic premillennial perspective have no problem arguing that Israel is central to the eschatological schema found in the Bible. They readily affirm that the modern state of Israel is a fulfilment of Bible prophecy. This does not equate to unqualified support for Israel, nor do they turn a blind eye to justice and ethical concerns. It does however acknowledge that the presence of Israel in the land seems to be an eschatological necessity. Even non-dispensational scholars such as Levine can deduce this from the biblical text.[569] How this tension is resolved or whether it is a tension that can survive within the movement will be seen with time. Whether those who downplay it retreat further may depend on external factors such as the arrival of a popularist political movement that supports Israel. If popularism increases, then it may be that the NCZ doubles down on its desire to avoid any such association. The challenge for those within the NCZ who do see the need and advantages of using eschatology as an argument need to be clear where the line stops and how they will also not be drawn to sensationalist and pop-dispensational type arguments.

One significant observation that I detailed in this chapter was what I called the inverse growth pattern. This refers to the reality that those geographical locations that have typically been a stronghold for liberation theologies such as the Global South are now experiencing a surge in Christian Zionism, and those locations which have formerly been a stronghold for Christian Zionism such as North America are seeing a growth in

[568] McDermott, *Israel Matters*, p. 80.
[569] Amy Jill Levine, 'The Gospel and the Land Revisited: Exegesis, Hermeneutics, and Politics' in *Peace and Faith: Christian Churches and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Ed, by* Cary Nelson and Michael Gizzi (Philadelphia & Boston: Presbyterians for Middle East Peace, 2021), p. 149.

supersessionism. This particular facet of research is critical because if these growth rates continue it could have far-reaching geo-political implications. Traditionally, the Global South have sided with the Palestinians over Israel, because through the grid of liberation theology the Palestinians are the oppressed and Israel are the oppressors. The growth of Pentecostal Zionism has caused a shift in this status quo leading to a rejection of liberation theology and siding with Israel due to its influence. The other side of the inverse growth pattern is that supersessionism and liberation theology seems to be gaining popularity in Western countries which typically have not supported these ideologies. I highlighted a few reasons for this including the context of the world in which the younger generation have grown up, where Israel is no longer an underdog, as well as the influence of critical and decolonial theory. This impacts their view on the Israel-Palestinian conflict as well as on Christian Zionism. At the present it seems that these views will continue to gain popularity which will further distance people from accepting Christian Zionist interpretations. I also highlighted one other factor that so far has not been analysed in the context of its impact on these movements. The issue of immigration to the West is one that could play a role in the shaping of Christian beliefs for the next generation. This phenomenon has been classed as 'reverse missions'[570] and this term is used to designate the reality that increased global immigration from regions like Africa is bringing with it an increase in the type of Christianity within particular communities. This becomes relevant when looking at the type of Pentecostal Christianity being imported. Such Pentecostalism also has deep Christian Zionist roots, and this is being transported along with imported Christianity. If immigration continues, a question must be raised as to whether it will become a major factor in the future growth of religion in the Western hemisphere, and whether it will change the demographic enough that this Pentecostal variation of Christian Zionism becomes the dominant expression in the West.

The current moment and the dominance of liberation narratives through critical theory and other popular ideologies that are presently being taught in institutions around the Western world also presents a challenge to the NCZ which I highlighted in this chapter. The NCZ has sought to gain intellectual credibility in the academic world, and it has shown a reluctance

[570] Israel Olofinjana. 'Reverse Mission: Towards an African British Theology'. *Transformation*, 37(1), (2020), pp. 52-65.

to engage too much with shifting cultural issues and perceptions that may entangle it with politics and culture wars. It has not engaged sufficiently with the influence of critical theory and how it is being a utilised by the New Supersessionism.

The analysis of this final chapter also presents a unique contribution as it highlights the ambiguities and tensions that have emerged with the development of these new movements. These tensions include areas of hermeneutics, theology as well as cultural phenomenon and sociopolitical growth trends. All of these are unique to this thesis and move the research of Christian Zionism and supersessionism a step forward.

Having summarised the thesis and shown how the arguments have been developed it is possible to identify a number of areas that will require additional development by researchers in the future. These include monitoring how the NCZ reacts and develops according to external circumstances such as whether a popularist political government comes to power which will impact its growth, particularly in the United States. This will have a bearing on their direction concerning just how much they are willing to partner with theological positions like dispensationalism. They still show a reluctance to engage adequately with eschatology as it is often too closely associated with one particular type of theology. This may become even more of an issue depending on which direction the future leans, left or right. Of course, politics and a person's political leaning is an ever-changing playing field and thus it is hard to pinpoint the exact trajectory. By left and right we mean the emergence of support for either republican or democratic parties in the United States. Politics is not the same as theology which is much more concrete in its positions often drawing upon a long historical tradition. The introduction and blending of politics and theology in the recent expressions of both these movements will require continued investigation. It will need to be observed just how the changing political landscape influences popular support for these different theologies. Another area for future researchers to focus on is the NCZ position on the modern state of Israel. As I demonstrated, they have retreated from dogmatic assertions regarding this issue due to the reputation problem that Christian Zionism has in the academic world. However, at a certain point the movement is going to have to engage more with this and will need to try and unify their statements about the role of modern Israel. There is already internal tension within the movement between those with different viewpoints. Can they reach internal cohesion on

this point? The issue of the relationship between Israel and the church has been around for centuries, however the relationship between the modern state of Israel and the church is slightly different. The NCZ cannot avoid the issue completely as many want to know the position of the movement with regard to the modern state. This will need to be examined theologically, looking at the covenants, the issue of Jewish identity and the Jewish nation state. The question of whether there is continuity with the present-day state must be engaged more fully in the movement. So far this has been avoided as this be viewed as venturing into the waters of dispensationalism. However, with the geo-political tensions always ebbing and flowing it would be wise to try and construct a more robust theological vision for how the church is to understand and relate to the issue of the modern state.

A further area that needs to be more fully developed is the NCZ engagement with decolonial hermeneutics. I clearly showed just how influential these new methodologies are in the New Supersessionism and in the broader culture due to the popularity of critical theories. The literature of the NCZ movement did not seem to sufficiently acknowledge how influential such narratives can be and how they are shaping the parameters of the discussion with the New Supersessionism. They must begin to incorporate broader critical analysis of these ideologies into their theological system if they are going to fully engage with their opposition. The influence of these new methodologies continues to rise in the academy and the culture. The narratives of critical theory and decolonialism shape much of the contemporary political discourse. However, many Christians today are very politically engaged and therefore need to be able to identify and engage with these sorts of ideologies that shape politics. The challenge moving forward will be to construct a comprehensive response to decolonial theory that does not simply dismiss the pertinent issues but engages them within the context of a movement's theology. As of yet we have only seen the beginnings of such attempts appear in the literature.

This thesis has provided an entry point for such a critical analysis, but it will need to be one that is able to shift as the cultural situation is constantly changing. One key area that is also in need of further analysis is the phenomenon of shifting religious demographics. Both movements have traditionally had their locations which provide a stronghold for their beliefs. Globally, the religious landscape is undergoing a major reorientation in the present moment. The support for Christian Zionism is rising among those more predisposed to

liberationist ideas, at the same time liberationist ideologies are gaining ground in the Western world. If this trend continues, which is most likely the case, how this will impact these movements is yet to be seen. It could have a bearing on the theological arguments being offered and the popularity of these movements. This is an area that requires constant updating and observation in light of contemporary events and culture.

This thesis has provided a contemporary analysis of these movements currently missing in the literature. This will be beneficial to future researchers in a number of specific areas. This research is particularly valuable to those who are researching contemporary evangelicalism and its relationship to Israel. Christian Zionism has been studied historically and extensively as a contemporary phenomenon, but with the inclusion of these features and the NCZ it will require updating. This will also be beneficial for those studying Western perceptions of Israel. It will benefit researchers looking to see just how much the issue of religion influenced support or opposition towards Israel such as Inbari and Bumin.[571] Indeed, this thesis adds additional nuance and suggests new directions for such research. There is also scope for this research to benefit the study of millenarianism and apocalyptic movements in the twenty first century. These have always garnered considerable attention and the reality that a new version of Christian Zionism has arisen, one which does not seem to share the overt apocalypticism of its historic forebears is worth noting as it could hold significant implications for Christian doctrines such as the millennium and how these texts are interpreted.

This thesis has fulfilled its aim of analysing and critiquing the most recent expressions of Christian Zionism and supersessionism. It intended to demonstrate that both of these are justified in being classed and treated as new, distinct movements. It was clearly shown that they each incorporate many novel elements that separate them from their previous versions and because of this, existing critiques and analytical works needed to be updated. In addition, it took the analysis a step further and begun to point out where tensions are arising in these developing movements that will likely continue to emerge and will require sustained critical analysis. These are areas that have not previously been investigated and

[571] Inbari; Bumin, *Christin Zionism.*

thus constituted a gap in the existing literature. This thesis has begun the work of filing that gap and providing critical research into the NCZ and the New Supersessionism.

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