

## **Borough Park Symposium 2015**

### **Topic 2: Messiah and Israel – The Implications of Promise and Inheritance**

Response from Richard Harvey, PhD – Senior Researcher, Jews for Jesus

#### **Introduction**

I am most grateful to Darell Bock for locating the key exegetical issues in his paper, setting them in the broader context of political, theological and ethical questions about the Land, and to Mark Kinzer for providing other interpretive options as we read Scripture together. It is refreshing to see the degree of commonality we share on the question before this Symposium, and I am most grateful to the organisers for their courage in addressing this controversial subject, and for the opportunity to participate.

The BPS Organisers have set the topic for this session and given us a briefing on what we should aim to cover.<sup>1</sup> This consists of six sub-questions under the general title “Messiah and Israel – the Implications of Promise and Inheritance”.

1. Broadly discuss the issues at stake, especially as they relate to the Land promises of the Old Testament.
2. What are the various positions held by today’s most influential scholars such as NT Wright, Chris Wright and others?
3. How do these issues impact the underlying Supersessionism that de-validates the literal fulfilment of the Land promises to the Jewish people?
4. How are the leading spokespersons for modern Supersessionism such as Gary Burge, Stephen Sizer and Colin Chapman influenced by this underlying hermeneutic?
5. How does this perspective influence our ecclesiology, as well?
6. What is your response to those who would argue that there is no relationship between Messiah and land and state?

The organisers do not spell out what exactly is promised and inherited, but we can assume that included in the promises that the Messiah Yeshua has come to fulfil are the Land promises (Genesis 15, 17, and Romans 9:4) to Israel (the Jewish people). However, it is precisely this linkage between Messiah, Land and the Israel, and the nature of Israel itself, that is under discussion here. Before giving my own position, I will work quickly through the six sub-questions we have been given, with footnotes giving references for further study and discussion.

#### **1. Broadly discuss the issues at stake, especially as they relate to the Land promises of the Old Testament.**

The Land promises of the Old Testament have been a minority interest in Christian theology since the time of Papias, Irenaeus and Tertullian. The Fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the Land was seen as clear judgment on the Jewish people, who remained as reluctant witnesses (Augustine<sup>2</sup>) to their rejection and

replacement by the Christians as the new Israel, the new people of God, the *Tertium Quid* that was neither Jew nor Pagan, but a new race (Simon<sup>3</sup>). With the Christianising of the Roman Empire, the anathematising of Jewish identity and practice within the Church, the “parting of the ways” (Boyarin, Fredericksen, revising Parkes<sup>4</sup>) separate carnal Israel (the Jews) from spiritual Israel (the Church), and the Land promises were universalised to refer to the Kingdom of God on earth, equivalent to the Church’s dominion.

Whilst occasional exceptions arose (Joachim de Fiore, heretical groups), the Land promises did not resume importance until Covenant theology (Cocceius), the Evangelical revival (Simeon, Shaftesbury), the rise of Dispensational Pre-Millennial Eschatology, and the development of Jewish and Christian Zionism. Biblical scholarship in Evangelical and Pietist circles speculated on the return (the “Puritan hope”<sup>5</sup>) but it was not until the Holocaust and the Modern State of Israel that an equation was made in the minds of Evangelical Christians that the present State may have eschatological significance as a fulfilment of prophecy and the Land Promises.

Within this recent phenomenon the Jewish missions movement (CMJ) and the rise of the Hebrew Christian and Messianic Movements have been closely connected and have provided a spur for Christian Zionist engagement<sup>6</sup>. So it is not surprising that we are who we are, and we are where we are today, because of a clear and strong sense of linkage between Israel’s Messiah, Land and People. But we should be clear also that we are in a minority position within a minority of Evangelicals with a particular understanding of prophecy and fulfilment, amongst other Evangelicals and the wider Church who do not share our self-identity, theological assumptions, hermeneutical methods or exegetical findings.

So our ‘broad discussion of the issues at stake’ is a private conversation – most other groups – other evangelicals, the wider church, the history of theology, our Palestinian Christian friends – do not share our assumptions and see us as biased and blinkered in our reading of scripture, history and contemporary political realities.

**2. What are the various positions held by today’s most influential scholars such as NT Wright, Chris Wright and others?**

Who are today’s most influential scholars<sup>7</sup>? What is influence? How can we assess influence in teaching, research, publishing, impact, citations or associations?<sup>8</sup> Here is my list of influential biblical scholars with a brief summary of their views:<sup>9</sup>

N T Wright <sup>10</sup>	Israel subsumed in Jesus – symbols now fulfilled, no future apart from some Jews coming to know Christ. <sup>11</sup>
C J Wright <sup>12</sup>	Israel subsumed in Jesus – symbols now fulfilled, future restoration <sup>13</sup>
Scott McKnight <sup>14</sup>	“That gospel is the narration of the Story of Jesus as Messiah (and Lord over all) as that Story that completes

	or fulfils the Story of Israel, and brings that Story to its goal. That Story is about Jesus and Jesus, who is Savior, saves through what he did — his life, his death, his burial, and his resurrection.” <sup>15</sup>
Gordon Fee	Justification by faith dissolves distinction and prerogatives of Israel and the nations. <sup>16</sup>
Norman Geisler	“As a matter of fact, it borders on unbelief to deny that God’s unconditional promises to Israel will not be fulfilled just as He predicted them and as the original audience understood them” <sup>17</sup>
Walter Brueggemann <sup>18</sup>	Some linkage, but not wholly clear – Brueggemann avoids supersessionist turn, awaits closure, appropriately postmodern and polyvalent
Richard Hays	Wishes NT Wright would engage with Barth.
Albert Mohler	“While the Bible speaks of a great turning to Christ on behalf of the Jews, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 did not in itself fulfill biblical prophecy.” <sup>19</sup>
James Dunn	No longer a physical restoration – but Messianic Jews a prophetic sign. <sup>20</sup>
E P Sanders	No future significance
Richard Bauckham <sup>21</sup>	Amillennial reading of Revelation – Church as New Israel
Bruce Malina <sup>22</sup>	Anthropological approach to re-constitution of Israel as the Church
Darrell Bock <sup>23</sup>	Here in person – progressive dispensationalist – linkage, but not exact equation. Israel to live with moral and ethical constraints.

From this brief survey it is clear that there is a broad spectrum of views held by influential scholars. They represent the plethora of options found amongst Evangelicals and in the broader church. The majority of them do not see a future for Israel (the Jewish people) that strongly links the covenant promises made to Abraham with an ongoing connection to the Land of Israel today, although there may be an agnostic position held about a future restoration of the Jewish people. There is also a small but articulate minority position that strongly affirms the ongoing election of Israel, with varying eschatological positions.<sup>24</sup>

### **3. How do these issues impact the underlying Supersessionism that de-validates the literal fulfilment of the Land promises to the Jewish people?**

The presuppositions of most Covenant theologians do not allow for a physical restoration of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel.<sup>25</sup> They also redefine the nature of Israel as the elect People of God to de-particularise the Jewish people and universalise the people of God to be the Church of all nations. This may include a national or ethnic Israel/Jewish people, but with no-ongoing theological significance, privilege or unfulfilled land promises.

However, these issues cannot be simplified. Calvin is inconsistent in his views, and Reformed teaching has always tried to balance the election of the individual with the communal election of Israel in the Old Testament.<sup>26</sup>

Today ethical and political understandings of election have privileged ethical and political engagement in the service of justice and peacemaking. Contemporary Israel is seen as the aggressor.

**4. How are the leading spokespersons for modern Supersessionism such as Gary Burge, Stephen Sizer and Colin Chapman influenced by this underlying hermeneutic?<sup>27</sup>**

Colin Chapman <sup>28</sup>	Israel no longer has territorial rights – two state solution least unjust option. <sup>29</sup>
Stephen Sizer <sup>30</sup>	Israel no longer the Chosen People – now an apartheid state
Gary Burge	Israel now replaced by the Church, modern Israel a secular, colonialist aberration

- Each one has combined their hermeneutic of Scripture with a political and ethically engaged reading of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is to be commended.<sup>31</sup>
- Each stays within an Evangelical basic of faith, but not necessarily a Conservative Evangelical or Inerrantist position.
- Each has an eschatology which is amillennial.
- Each has a strong and manifest political agenda.
- Each is concerned with challenging and opposing Christian Zionist interpretation of Scripture and political support for Zionism and the State of Israel.
- Each is particularly concerned for the plight of the Palestinians.
- Neither of the three are original in their thinking, but Colin Chapman is the most theologically creative.

Also should be added the growing number of Palestinian Christian theologians, in particular:

Naim Ateek <sup>32</sup>	The Intifada shakes off the dust, as a sign of the resurrection of Jesus
Mitri Raheb <sup>33</sup>	The Church is the New Israel
Yohanna Katanacho <sup>34</sup>	The Land promises are universalised and for all to enjoy
Munther Isaac	“The land has thus been universalized in Christ.” <sup>35</sup>
Salim Munayer <sup>36</sup>	A theology of reconciliation based on understanding one another’s narratives, identities and theological pre-suppositions

**5. How does this perspective influence our ecclesiology, as well?**

Craig Blaising writes:

*It is most important for an ecclesiology that keeps in view God's future for Israel to recover the meaning of the Church as a fellowship anticipating the coming establishment of the kingdom in all its fullness for Israel and Gentiles. Consequently, it is a table fellowship of Jewish and Gentile believers. It is a table fellowship of one kind of Gentile believers with other kinds of Gentile believers, and of all kinds of Gentile believers with Jewish believers—all of whom have received the inaugural blessings of Christ's kingdom and who await that fullness. The vision of Jesus and the apostles was that in the Church, Jewish believers and Gentile believers would sit down together in peace without Jews requiring Gentiles to become Jews. But in order to truly understand the vision today, we have to add: without Gentiles requiring Jews to become Gentiles.<sup>37</sup>*

Our challenge, in doing post-, non- or anti-supersessionist theology, is to take these challenges on board. Jen Rosner explores six aspects necessary to reconceive Christology and Ecclesiology in Light of Israel's ongoing election<sup>38</sup>. She gives substantial weight in her post-supersessionist understanding of the ongoing solidarity of Yeshua with his people in continuation of Israel's election by considering the following topics, in both ecclesiology and christology:

- The Jewishness of Jesus;
- God's incarnation in the Jewish people
- Theology of suffering
- Renouncing supersessionism
- Christianity as God's expanded covenant with Israel
- Reclaiming the doctrine of election

Space does not permit us here to examine these topics in detail. But they pave the way to a fruitful, coherent and much-needed theology of Israel and Messiah.

## **6. What is your response to those who would argue that there is no relationship between Messiah and land and state?**

I would suggest the following:

Listen to the anger and pain of our Palestinian brothers and sisters in the Messiah.

Engage with their narrative and identity construction, and be willing to compromise on ours.

Notice the asymmetries of power and ideological hegemony – the West, especially USA Evangelicals, need to recognise how self-serving and self-justifying are their own theological articulations.

Seek peace and pursue it through the interdependency of theologies, through repentance, reconciliation and conflict resolution. This involves costly sacrifice, especially as moderates in the conflict partners are stigmatised by extremists.

Do better theology. Messianic Jewish theology is naive and lacking reflection on its own roots and theological tradition. It is a challenge to us to do our theology aware of our own context, theological methods, and the message of Yeshua.

Live alongside and respect those (in the majority and throughout the history of theological interpretation) who have different views – our task is to develop post- and non-Supersessionist theology.

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<sup>1</sup> “Goals and Expectations for Speakers” (Schedule with Topic Goals), email attachment, September 11, 2014, message to author from BPS organizers.

<sup>2</sup> Paula Frederickson, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (Yale University Press, 2011 [reprint ed.]).

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (AD 135-425): Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization)* (Oxford University Press, new ed. 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Fortress Press, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (UK: Banner of Truth, 1971).

<sup>6</sup> David A. Rausch, *Zionism Within Early American Fundamentalism, 1878-1918: A Convergence of Two Traditions* (Texts and Studies in Religion ; V. 4) (Edwin Mellen Press, 1971).

<sup>7</sup> Margaret L. King, “The Social Role of Intellectuals: Antonio Gramsci and the Italian Renaissance” in *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1, Spring 1978, available online at <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/41178047?sid=21105120202481&uid=3738032&uid=2&uid=4> (accessed January 2015)

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<sup>8</sup> <https://bostonbiblegeeks.wordpress.com/2010/06/14/5-must-read-bible-scholars-for-the-non-academic/>. (accessed January 2015) To this list could be added: (Old Testament scholars) Brevard Childs, Gordon Wenham, Bruce Waltke, Daniel Block, Jacob Milgrom, John Goldingay, Mary Douglas, Tremper Longman III, David Noel Freedman.

<sup>9</sup> Other scholars could be included such as:-

1. Influential theologians – evangelical and other –The Pope , R Kendal Soulen , Stanley Hauerwas, , John Howard Yoder , John Stott, Karl Barth, Jurgen Moltman,

2. Historic voices: Athanasius, Augustine of Hippo, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Karl Barth, C. S. Lewis.

3. Influential Christian and Jewish voices on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – Ruether, Ellis, Judith Butler, Colin Chapman, Stephen Sizer, Gary Burge,

<sup>10</sup> N.T. Wright 'Jerusalem in the New Testament', in P.W.L. Walker (ed.), *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God* (Paternoster/Baker, 1994). Available online at [http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_Jerusalem\\_New\\_Testament.pdf](http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Jerusalem_New_Testament.pdf) (accessed January 2015). See also Peter Walker, Jerusalem: at the centre of God's plans? By Peter Walker, <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/jerusalem-at-the-centre-of-gods-plans-by-peter-walker/> (accessed January 2015). "So when Jesus came to Jerusalem he came embodying a counter-system. He and the city were both making claims to be the place where the living God, Israel's God, was at work to heal, restore and regroup his people. Though many people still say that Israel had no idea of incarnation, this is clearly a mistake: the temple itself, and by extension Jerusalem, was seen as the dwelling-place of the living God. Thus it was the temple that Jesus took as his model, and against whose claim he advanced his own." (p.6, online pdf); see also: "For a more positive view towards Jerusalem in Paul some are tempted to turn to Romans 11. There, in verse 26, he quotes from Isaiah 59:20 ('the deliverer will come from Zion') in confirmation of his statement that 'all Israel will be saved'. Does this refer to a renewed physical Jerusalem and a large-scale last-minute salvation of all Jews (or nearly all)? No, it does not. For in the crucial passage (Romans 11:25-28) Paul is clearly offering a deliberately polemical redefinition of 'Israel', parallel to that in Galatians (6:16), in which the people thus referred to are the whole company, Jew and Gentile alike, who are now (as in chapter 4 and 9:6ff.) inheriting the promises made to Abraham." (Page 8, pdf version).

First (as an equivalent to Romans 9:6-10:21) it must be stated clearly beyond any shadow of doubt that there can be no basis in the New Testament for a vestigial remainder of 'holy-city-ness' lingering on from the period before Jesus..... Rather, these promises, seen now through the lens of cross and resurrection, have been in one sense narrowed down to a point and in another sense widened to include the whole created order.(pdf p.13)

Modern attempts to revive such a geographical nationalism, and to give it a 'Christian' colouring, provokes the following, most important, theological reflection: the attempt to 'carry over' some Old Testament promises about Jerusalem, the Land

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or the Temple for fulfilment in our own day has the same theological shape as the attempt in pre-Reformation Catholicism to think of Christ as being re-crucified in every Mass. 35 If, as suggested above, Jesus was claiming to be, in effect, the new or true temple, and if his death is to be seen as the drawing together into one of the history of Israel in her desolation, dying her death outside the walls of the city, and rising again as the beginning of the real 'restoration', the real return from exile, then the attempt to say that there are some parts of the Old Testament (relating to Jerusalem, Land or Temple) which have not yet been 'fulfilled' and so need a historical and literal 'fulfilment' now, or at some other time, is an explicit attempt to take something away from the achievement of Christ in his death and resurrection, and to reserve it for the work of human beings in a different time and place. The work of Christ is once again 'incomplete'. The analogue for this in Paul's writings is perhaps best summed up in Galatians 2:21: 'if justification came by Torah, Christ died to no purpose'. Only when would-be 'Christian Zionists', or near equivalents, can show that they have taken Galatians fully into account (and for that matter Rom. 1-4 and 9-10, 2 Cor. 3, Phil. 3 and Hebrews) can their claim to be acting in accordance with scripture be taken seriously." (pdf version p14).

"That is to say, among other things, that there can and must be no 'Christian' theology of 'holy places' (on the model or analogy of the 'holy places' of a religion that has an essentially geographical base), any more than there can be a 'Christian' theology of racial superiority on the model or analogy of a religion that has an essentially racial base. To that extent, 'Christian Zionism' is the geographical equivalent of a *soi-disant* 'Christian' apartheid, and ought to be rejected as such." (pdf 14)

"If, then, we are called to anticipate what God is going to do in the future with our acts now (for example, we are called to implement already the justice which will be perfectly worked out in the age to come), we should surely also be seeking to create societies in the here and now, which will anticipate the nature of the renewed and healed Jerusalem. Not that we could ever ourselves build or

bring about the New Jerusalem itself; such thinking leads to delusion and ruin.

Rather, we are called, while forswearing all racial, cultural or geographical imperialism, to create communities of love and justice out of which healing can flow to others. What better place to do this than in the old city of peace, Jerusalem?" (pdf p.15).

Also N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark 1991), ch. 13 on Romans 9-11; N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Review in *Theology* 117 (2014): 361-65

<https://larryhurtado.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/wright-review-paul-and-the-faithfulness-of-god.pdf> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>11</sup> "If, then, we are called to anticipate what God is going to do in the future with our acts now (for example, we are called to implement already the justice which will be perfectly worked out in the age to come), we should surely also be seeking to create societies in the here and now, which will anticipate the nature of the renewed and healed Jerusalem. Not that we could ever ourselves build or bring about the New Jerusalem itself; such thinking leads to delusion and ruin. Rather, we are called, while forswearing all racial, cultural or geographical imperialism, to create communities of love and justice out of which healing can flow to others. What better place to do this than in the old city of peace, Jerusalem?" (pdf p.15)

<sup>12</sup> C J.H. Wright, 'A Christian Approach to Old Testament Prophecy Concerning Israel' in P.W.L. Walker (ed.), *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God* (Paternoster/Baker, 1994). Online at



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[http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jerusalem\\_wright.pdf](http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jerusalem_wright.pdf) (accessed January 2015). "Paul is adamant on God's faithfulness to Israel. But he argues that it is to be seen precisely in two facts: first, that there is a believing remnant among the Jews, to which he himself belongs and which fulfills scripture; secondly, the ingathering of Gentiles is taking place, which is eschatologically and scripturally significant because this was the [p.18] original divine purpose for the existence of Israel.<sup>28</sup> Paul wants to affirm two inseparable truths: the ingathering of Gentiles will not be at the expense of God's promises to Israel; nor will God's fulfilment of promise to Israel fail to extend his mercy to the Gentiles. In any case, nothing in the passages cited requires or supports a national or territorial restoration of the Jews as being necessary in order to fulfil prophecy which is explicitly seen as already fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah." (p12)

<sup>13</sup> "In all of this, then, it is not a case of abolishing and `replacing' the realities of Israel and the Old Testament, but of taking them up into a greater reality in the Messiah. Christ does not deprive the believing Jew of anything that belonged to Israel as God's people; nor does he give to the believing Gentile anything less than the full covenantal blessing and promise that was Israel's. On the contrary, we share together in all of it and more-in him, and for ever." Wright, [http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jerusalem\\_wright.pdf](http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jerusalem_wright.pdf), p.14)

<sup>14</sup> Scott McKnight on NT Wright:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2014/02/06/nt-wright-paul-israel-and-the-church/> (accessed January 2015). Craig A. Blasing, "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question", *JETS* 44/3 (September 2001) 435-50; online at [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/44/44-3/44-3-PP435-450\\_JETS.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/44/44-3/44-3-PP435-450_JETS.pdf) (accessed January 2015); Scott McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teaching of Jesus in National Context* (USA: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Scott MacKnight interview with Trevor Wax, "Jesus vs. Paul: An Interview with Scot McKnight about the Gospel" online at <http://www.biblestudytools.com/pastor-resources/archives/jesus-vs-paul-an-interview-with-scot-mcknight-about-the-gospel-11642696.html> (accessed January 2015)

<sup>16</sup> Everett Berry, "Complementarianism and Eschatology: Engaging Gordon Fee's "New Creation" Egalitarianism" online at [http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/blog/Berry\\_-\\_Complementarianism%20and%20Eschatology.pdf](http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/blog/Berry_-_Complementarianism%20and%20Eschatology.pdf) (Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Fall 2008) pp.59-67. (accessed January 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Norman Geisler, "Review of A Review of Hank Hanegraff's Book, The Apocalypse Code" online at <http://www.normgeisler.com/articles/theology/eschatology/ReviewOfHankHanegraffsBookApocalypseCode.htm> (accessed January 2015).

Norman Geisler, "The Importance of Premillennialism" online at <http://www.normgeisler.com/articles/theology/eschatology/2009-TheImportanceOfPremillennialism.htm> (accessed January 2015). "Our spiritual forefathers did not put premillennialism in our doctrinal statement because they thought it was unimportant. To the contrary, premillennialism is based on a hermeneutical (interpretation) fundamental. The literal historical/grammatical fundamental on which it is based underlies all the salvation fundamentals of the Faith. Giving it up belies to serious problems for the future of the church. First, we are giving up the very basis for all the fundamental Christian doctrines.

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Second, there is the underlying tendency to sacrifice important doctrines for the sake of unity, fraternity, or multiplicity (growth). Yielding to this tendency sets a bad precedent for future deviation on even more important issues. One final thought. It is of more than passing significance to note that few, if any, evangelical groups ever move from premillennialism to liberalism. However, this is not true of amillennial and postmillennial views. So, it is not without good reason that premillennialism is a safeguard against liberalism.”

<sup>18</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land (Revised Edition) (Overtures to Biblical Theology): Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002) esp. “Preface to the Second Edition”, xi.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Foust, “Theologians tackle question of Israel & biblical prophecy” <http://www.bpnews.net/13306/theologians-tackle-question-of-israel--biblical-prophecy> (accessed January 2015). “Mohler said that while the Bible speaks of a great turning to Christ on behalf of the Jews, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 did not in itself fulfill biblical prophecy. He added that America should defend Israel as an ally while holding it morally accountable. “We must watch and be very careful that we do not make a one-to-one equation between the Israeli state whose current prime minister is Ariel Sharon and the Israel of God,” he said. “The modern state of Israel is best seen as a vessel for the protection of the Jewish people until the dawning of the eschatological age in its fullness and the turning of Jews to Jesus Christ.” Since the time of Abraham, Mohler argued, Israel has always existed -- in a biblical sense -- even when there was no government structure. He called this a “national” Israel. “We can still speak of Israel as a national reality constituted as those who are of Abraham’s seed,” he said. “There is now in our reality a dispersed Israel even though there is a state of Israel. So when we speak of Israel, we must -- even in the present day -- speak of a national entity that is not just geo-political. It is ethnic.” Mohler argued that present-day Israel -- while not a direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy -- is nevertheless biblically and prophetically significant. Time.com called him the “reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement in the U.S.” <http://www.albertmohler.com/about/> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>20</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their significance for the character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) available online at [http://le-protestant.ru/wp-content/files/R Bauckham - The Theology of the Book of Revelation 2003.pdf](http://le-protestant.ru/wp-content/files/R_Bauckham_-_The_Theology_of_the_Book_of_Revelation_2003.pdf) (accessed January 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Robert J. Myles and James G. Crossley, “Biblical Scholarship, Jews and Israel: On Bruce Malina, Conspiracy Theories and Ideological Contradictions” online at <http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/myl368013.shtml> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>23</sup> “Darrell Bock from DTS is considered probably the top Luke-Acts scholar in the country if not the world. He is very conservative but his commentaries are just excellent.” Daniel Lowe, <http://www.quora.com/Who-are-the-top-5-most-respected-and-influential-New-Testament-scholars-today> (accessed 21 January 2015)

<sup>24</sup> See eg. Robert Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Deerfield, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010).

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<sup>25</sup> Mark W. Karlberg, "The Significance of Israel in Biblical Typology", *JETS* 31/3 (September 1988) pp.257-269, online at [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/31/31-3/31-3-pp257-269\\_JETS.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/31/31-3/31-3-pp257-269_JETS.pdf) (accessed January 2015). Michael Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (B&H Publishing, 2010); Willem A. VanGemeren, "Is Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy", *Westminster Theological Journal* 45:1 (Spring 1983), pp. 254-297.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Potter Engel, "Calvin and the Jews: A Textual Puzzle" *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 1990, pp.106-123, online at <http://journals.ptsem.edu/id/PSB1990Sup1/dmd011> (accessed January 2015)

<sup>27</sup> For a general survey see Richard Harvey, "The Need for a Bridging Narrative" in *Christian Churches and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Concordis Papers VIII) (Cambridge: Concordis Trust, 2010, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), p.20-21, available online at [http://concordis.international/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Concordis\\_Papers-VIII-Christian\\_Churches\\_and\\_the-ISR-PAL\\_Conflict\\_3rd\\_Edition.pdf](http://concordis.international/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Concordis_Papers-VIII-Christian_Churches_and_the-ISR-PAL_Conflict_3rd_Edition.pdf) (accessed January 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land* (5th rev. ed., Oxford: Lion, 2002)

<sup>29</sup> My correspondence with Colin Chapman is given in Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden (eds.) *The Land Cries Out* (Cascade, 2011). See Richard Harvey, "Toward a Messianic Jewish Theology of Reconciliation in the Light of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Neither Dispensationalist Nor Supersessionist?" <https://www.dropbox.com/s/06y4mvngk6fdyeu/Land%20Cries%20Out%20Loden%20draft%20chapter.doc?dl=0> (accessed January 2015).

"The present writer has had several debates and dialogues with Colin Chapman, another writer whose work argues a strong Palestinian reading of the history of the conflict. Chapman sees a future spiritual restoration of the Jewish people to their Messiah in his reading of Romans 9–11. But his interpretation of the New Testament's understanding of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament types of Land, Temple, and Nation leaves no room for a continuing theological significance for the Land of Israel. Over several years discussions have revolved around the understanding of the history of the Middle East conflict, the injustices of land deprivation and humanitarian suffering of the Palestinians, and the theological interpretation of this history. Below are some recent questions posed by Chapman (*italicized*) and my responses.

*Chapman 1. I'd like to know some of the points in my survey of the history that you feel are biased or inaccurate. I fully understand that there are huge differences between the Jewish and Palestinian narratives, the ways they tell their stories. But I don't think there is a great deal of doubt about the bare facts—the increase in the numbers of Jewish immigrants from 5 percent in 1880 and the increasing tensions as a result of the perceived goals of the immigrants, etc. The main sources for my telling of the story are Jewish, and I don't think that all the new Israeli historians like Tom Segev, Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappé can be dismissed as being revisionist and therefore unreliable.*

Harvey - "I disagree with the way you tell the narrative. While I read critically and with interest the 'revisionist historians,' many of the details they report are matters of heated debate, such as Ilan Pappé's defense of the account of one of his students of the alleged massacre in the Palestinian village of Al-Tantura during the war in 1948. Your use of terms such as 'ethnic cleansing' for the

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policies of the IDF is polemical and inflammatory. The 'bare facts' have to be set in the broader context of the politics of the region, the way that both Arab and Israeli positions were used to further the interests of the Imperial powers. I factor the psychological impact of the increasing Jewish population from 1880 with the suffering of the Jewish people escaping the *pogroms* and holocaust in Europe, and am moved by the suffering of my people as much if not more. In terms of a moral calculus of 'who suffered more,' it would be invidious to make a judgment."

*Chapman 2. I would love to sit down with you and go through my statements of the two different starting points and find out which particular sentences/phrases you do and do not accept. I understand your unwillingness to be pushed into a box and own the labels of "Restorationism" or "Covenant Theology." But I find it difficult to understand that you say that you don't accept either of the two starting points and want to own a third position. Could you articulate your own starting point in the same way that I have attempted to articulate the starting points of the Restorationists and Dispensationalists on the one hand and Covenant Theology on the other? Would it be a mixture of the two positions I have given or something completely different?*

Harvey -"My starting point for a Messianic Jewish theology of election is a non-supersessionist biblical meta-narrative. Both the 'restorationist' and 'covenantal' alternatives you propose have been framed in the light of, and in reaction to, the wider Christian tradition. Following R. Kendal Soulen's *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, I see the history of the Church's understanding of the election of Israel as superseded by the new Israel, the Church, as fundamentally flawed by a misreading of the scriptures in the light of Christian anti-Judaism. The building blocks of this meta-narrative are creation; fall; the election of Israel to be a means of blessing for the nations and preparation for the coming of the Messiah; redemption through the death and resurrection of the Messiah; restoration and the consummation of all things. This means that Israel (the Jewish people) has an ongoing election, in partnership with the nations grafted in to an enlarged and renewed Israel. The election of Israel (the Jewish people) carries the covenantal privilege and responsibly of righteous stewardship of the Land of Israel."

*Chapman 3. I have great difficulty in understanding what you mean by your accusation that I am functioning with a kind of "Aristotelian dualism" which makes a distinction between the literal and the spiritual. My approach is that the NT writers see Jesus as the fulfillment (a very biblical concept) of everything in the OT—the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic kingship, the temple, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, the coming of the kingdom of God, etc.—and also the land. The incarnation is a physical incarnation—there's no docetism—so we're not talking about something purely spiritual. The NT writers see the coming of the kingdom of God in the incarnation of Jesus as the real, the substantial fulfillment of all these themes of the OT that were very physical. I feel that "spiritualizing" is a very slippery term and is probably overused, and the distinction between "literal interpretation" and "spiritual interpretation" isn't always clear or helpful. The letter to the Hebrews sees Jesus as the fulfillment—the real, substantial, fulfillment—of so much in the OT, and even relates the very physical theme of the Promised Land to the present experience of every believer in the Messiah (Heb 4). If this is labeled as "spiritualizing," then so be it; but isn't this the main way—even*

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*the only way—the writer attempts to interpret the significance of the coming of the Messiah? Is there any suggestion that the writer secretly still holds to another way of interpreting the OT—a literal way—which is different from the one he has developed? The only Zion and Zionism that he is interested in is “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22). I cannot see anything in the NT to suggest that the Jewish disciples continued after the Resurrection to hold onto their earlier understanding that the coming of the Kingdom of God would mean the establishment of a sovereign independent Jewish state in the Land.*

Harvey - “Like you, I am unhappy with the overuse of the distinction between ‘literal/physical’ and ‘spiritual.’ But for me this means both the ‘physicality’ and the ‘spirituality’ of the land promises are held together. I look for a redeemed Israel back in the land, living in peace and justice alongside her neighbors. I do not want to separate the heavenly Zion from the physical Jerusalem, but rather to see the spiritual truth of Yeshua’s teaching lived out in the physical reality of the Old City today. What you see as an argument from silence, I see as an assumed position—that the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the kingdom of God, would eventually be restored.”

*Chapman 4. I have said many times that I do not accept the charge that I am teaching either supersessionism or replacement theology. I recognize without hesitation that this has been a dominant view for centuries and one that has led to some disastrous consequences. I have said that it was a sad day when Christians started describing the Church as “the new Israel.” So, if I say that the Church is Israel—but Israel renewed and restored in the Messiah (using the language of [N. T.] Wright and many others)—I don't see how you can possibly accuse me of teaching that the Church has taken the place of biblical Israel, that the Church has superseded Israel or replaced Israel. In Paul's analogy in Romans 9–11, Gentile believers are grafted into biblical Israel and Gentile believers come to inherit all the covenant promises that were given to Abraham and his descendants. In this context Paul can say that the Jewish people, biblical Israel, “are loved for the sake of their forefathers” (present tense); but he also says that those of them who do not believe are “cut off because of unbelief.” There is a real tension here, but it seems that Paul was able to live with the two sides of the tension—that the covenant promises are still available to all who see themselves as the physical descendants of Abraham, but that they are cut off and no longer share the benefits of that covenant because of their unbelief. I have constantly tried to distance myself from replacement theology and supersessionism, and I hope you can see the difference between what I and others are saying and what supersessionists have unfortunately been saying and are still saying.*

Harvey - “I realize that you wish to distance your position from the historical supersessionism of church history. But I regard Tom Wright’s position as continuing this supersessionist position. See the criticism leveled at him on this by Douglas Harink in *Paul among the Postliberals*.<sup>29</sup> When you say that Paul lives with two sides of the tension, the ongoing election of Israel (the Jewish people) and their unbelief in Yeshua cutting them off from the benefits of the covenant, I do not agree with this reading. They are still within the one covenant (in which the nations are also incorporated through the Messiah), and their election has not been substituted with the election of others. Yes, they do not enjoy all the

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benefits of this election (faith in Messiah, forgiveness of sins, new life in Him), but they have not forfeited this election either.”

*Chapman 5. I long to hear more from you about the realities of what is happening on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza and how you respond to these situations. I hear your strong plea for reconciliation and for new ways of doing theology. When strongly pressed, you do seem to support the idea of a Palestinian state within the '67 borders, over against Chawkat Moucarry who argues for the one-state solution. But I wonder what your theology encourages you to think about the Jewish settlers on the West Bank who, according to yesterday's Times (12 Dec 2009), are demonstrating against Netanyahu's partial freeze on settlements and burning Korans? According to the report, the banners of these demonstrators say: "Obama wants us frozen, God wants us chosen" and "God's Bible gave us this land." Does your interpretation of the Hebrew Bible allow you to challenge their interpretation, or do you support it? I want to see more of how your theology relates to the present, painful realities on the ground, remembering our starting point on Thursday that the whole discussion needs to be seen in the context of our witness to the Gospel in the Muslim world.*

Harvey - “My theology challenges racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, so I oppose the burning of the Koran just as I would oppose the burning of the Talmud or the New Testament. I personally favor a two-state solution, as my theology allows for the negotiability of territory in the search for peace. This challenges the settler movement’s ideology. My interpretation of the Hebrew Bible is not factored through Rabbi Kook<sup>29</sup> and his disciples’ mystical re-interpretation in the light of political Zionism, but through a different messianic redemption that has come through the Messiah Yeshua. However, I do not rule out of the scope of redemption the land of Israel itself.”

Such responses show the challenges to Messianic Jews of engaging with the views of Sizer, Chapman, and others, but they cannot be avoided.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Leicester: IVP, 2007),

<sup>31</sup> Christians campaigning for justice for the Palestinians (Ben White, Stephen Sizer, Colin Chapman, Christian Aid)

Christians campaigning for justice for the Palestinians, often labeled as ‘Christian anti-Zionists’, bring a strong critique of the legitimacy of the State of Israel, the Occupation of the Territories, and any theological justification for the Zionist project. Their historical analysis, political loyalties and theological interpretation challenge the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the Palestinians. They are seen as supersessionist in their attempt to deny the Jewish people today any continuity with the Israel of the Old Testament scriptures, either physically and politically, or in terms of salvation history.

<sup>32</sup> Palestinian liberation theology (Naim Ateek, Sabeel). <http://www.sabeel.org/>; Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Marynoll: Orbis, 1989). For Sabeel see <http://www.sabeel.org>. (accessed January 2015)

6 For Musalaha see: <http://www.musalaha.org/> (accessed January 2015) and This position constructs of theology of the Palestinian cause based on Liberation theology. Employing an approach that demythologizes the Zionist project and rejects a Dispensationalist or non-supersessionist reading of the Old Testament, it sees the Resurrection of Jesus as a prefiguring of the

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Intifada as a 'rising again' from the dust of Israeli oppression.

<sup>33</sup> Mitri Raheb, *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Yohanna Katanacho, *The Land of Christ: A Palestinian Cry* (USA: Wipf and Stock, 2013) ; see also *The Kairos Document*, online at <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf> (accessed January 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Munther B. I. Isaac, "From land to lands, from Eden to the renewed earth: a Christ-centred biblical theology of the promised land." Available from Middlesex University's Research Repository at <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/13711/> (accessed January 2015). "The land has thus been universalized in Christ. Universalization does not mean the 'spiritualization' or 'heavenization'. Instead, the theology of the land of Israel – modified in the Jesus-event – is a paradigm for Christian communities living in other lands. The theology of the land thus underlines the social and territorial dimensions of redemption."

"We must remember the question: "Why a land?" or "what was its intended purpose?" and then wonder: "did the promise of the land achieve this intended purpose and destiny?" The answer the NT gives to the later question is "yes": Jesus inaugurated a new era in history in which the land became a source of blessing to the entire world – which was precisely the divinely intended purpose of the land. According to Paul, Jesus made the blessing of Abraham a possibility to all the families of the earth. As such, any future restoration for ethnic Israel to the Promised Land would not be in harmony with the biblical narrative."

<sup>36</sup> The organization Musalaha and the work of Palestinian Christian activists advocating non-violence and dialogue with Israeli and Messianic Jewish voices follows the approaches of Desmond Tutu and Miroslav Volf in inviting embrace rather than exclusion and an approach to conflict which calls for a communal response with all sides of the conflict involved in reconciliation and restorative justice. See Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden, *Through My Enemy's Eyes* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Craig A. Blasing , "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question" *JETS* 44/3 (September 2001) 435–50 online at: [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/44/44-3/44-3-PP435-450\\_JETS.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/44/44-3/44-3-PP435-450_JETS.pdf) (accessed January 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Jennifer M. Rosner, "Healing the Schism: Barth, Rosenzweig and the New Jewish-Christian Encounter" (Phd Dissertation, Fuller School of Theology, 2012, unpublished). Rosner 218: *In order for the church to rediscover its true identity before God and the world, it must understand the "politics" of Israel's election as somehow also characterizing its own existence. However, the church has historically appropriated a supersessionist understanding of its own election, one in which the church replaces Israel as the people of God.*

*Rosner 220: Bader-Saye notes the fact that Israel's election precedes its having a homeland, a constant reminder that the domain of Israel's redemptive mission far transcends territorial boundaries.130 Ultimately, Israel's election is not about*

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*violently defending a scarce resource but rather about being the instrument of the cosmic and tangible redemption of creation. The Torah as the blueprint for Israel's faithful living demonstrates the all-encompassing nature of covenant life, and beneath what Christians have attacked as "legalism" lies the true path to human freedom—for "true freedom is not boundless arbitrary choice but liberation from sin."(131)*

*Rosner 221: Participation in Israel's election both lends the church its true identity and unmasks the ways in which it has become co-opted with the secular powers and bound to the myths of the surrounding empires. In order for the church to properly understand itself and walk faithfully before God, it must find itself underneath the umbrella of Israel's election. It must join Israel in the work of bringing about shalom—cosmic wholeness—by choosing radical community over opportunistic individualism, by embodying messianic peace instead of violent power, and by living out the all-encompassing cruciform discipleship that characterizes life in the Kingdom.*