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Territorial Supersessionism: A Response to Gary Burge

A. Report on United Kingdom and Netherlands' *Future Israel* Ministry.

1. United Kingdom, September 29-October 14.
2. The Netherlands, October 15-November 9

B. Introduction.

In surveying Gary Burge's recent *Jesus and the Land*, hereafter JATL, a number of vital major issues repeatedly come to the fore throughout this book that are here considered in a more topical manner. It is anticipated that a more detailed critique, concerning the various chapters and their distinctive biblical and theological considerations, will subsequently be made available.

Appendix A provides a summary example of Burge's overall supersessionist convictions. Appendix B is a response to replacement land theology, especially as represented by Burge, which misrepresents Paul's declaration in Romans 4:13 that Abraham, or his descendants "would be heir of the world."

C. Biblical Authority.

For the Christian, whatever degree of learning may have been attained, it is the authority of the Word of God that must be determinative with regard to the contemporary status of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. Scholars may be helpful in this regard; we ought to consider them, yet when all has been said and done, they often differ, and especially with regard to the degree to which they regard the Bible as authoritative, whether fully or with qualification. They are not immune from conclusions based more upon presuppositions, however sophisticated their academic technique may appear, rather than objectivity. The scholar may prove to be a good servant and yet a bad master, so that the child of God should never bow before academia to such a degree that the priesthood of the believer is somewhat compromised. Like Roman Catholicism, even "evangelical" scholasticism has

increasingly lorded itself over the pastorate and laity, and especially by means of giving more space to liberal sources and the absorption of its language, environment and alleged status. Hence it is vital at this juncture to uphold both the truthfulness and inerrancy of Scripture while at the same time being sensitive to the reality that many scholars do not accept this foundational evangelical principle. It will be found that once this essential truth is compromised, there develops a tendency to impose subjective authority upon the text, even unconsciously, and thus acculturate the original, literal intent of the text and so end up with what is claimed to be reinterpretation or Christological insight or contemporary relevance.

With this in mind, Burge presses his case with a welter of scholarly comments and sources, some conservative evangelical, some liberal, and others somewhere in between. So he makes the following charge:

No carefully argued theological study has come from within its own ranks [that is Christian Zionism and Restorationism]. No New Testament scholar has written in its defense. Its advocacy groups, such as Christians United for Israel, and Camera, are generally run by political activists. Its books come from the pens of popular television preachers and lobbyists.¹

There appears to be a tinge of scholarly arrogance here. In JATL, there is an annotated list of fifteen references for further reading. Only one, *The Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises*, H. Wayne. House, ed., is said to uphold the land promises as a form of land theology. However, what of:

Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church* (doctoral dissertation).

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: the Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (doctoral dissertation).

Dan Gruber, *The Church and the Jews: The Biblical Relationship*.

Barry Horner, *Future Israel*.

David Larsen, *Jews, Gentiles and the Church*.

R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*.

Michael J. Vlach, *The Church as a Replacement for Israel* (doctoral dissertation).

Further consider Burge's comments in JATL that relate to biblical authority.

The certain Pauline corpus has grown far beyond the "four assured letters" of the nineteenth century and today its bulk is either from the pen of Paul or from some of his close associates. Our treatment of the land in Paul need only rely on those letters that enjoy high confidence as Pauline.²

¹ Gary M. Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, p. 123.

² *Ibid.*, p. 73. From an evangelical and orthodox perspective, Paul wrote all of the thirteen epistles attributed to him. From a more critical and generally liberal perspective, the undisputed epistles would be Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians, Philemon. The disputed epistles would be Ephesians, Colossians, II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, and Titus. However Burge does not identify the more stringent "four assured letters" that he mentions.

Even though this is a highly disputed letter [II Thessalonians], it nevertheless represents a disposition reminiscent of Paul in his other letters.³

This new openness [moving away from ethnicity and regionalism to territorial universalism] continued in the Pauline tradition and appears indirectly in Ephesians (a letter with a contested claim to authorship).⁴

Even its author and origin [concerning Revelation] are uncertain. The book is credited to John (1:4) but is this the same as the author of the Fourth Gospel? Is this another John, someone called "the elder"? Is this John the Baptist? Scholars are divided.⁵

I have been invited to debate some of their leaders [who hold to Christian Zionism or restorationism] and find myself with people who have no training in theology. How can such a widespread movement in the Church be successful without a thoughtful undergirding?⁶

There is a disturbing tone here concerning the assertive, rarefied air of theological academia where liberal scholarship predominates, not only with regard to questioning the authenticity of the Pauline epistles as a whole, but especially with regard to the authorship of II Thessalonians and Ephesians. So to accept a more liberal critical estimate here is to charge the Bible with containing documents that fraudulently attest Pauline authorship (Eph. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1). In JATL Burge does not declare where he stands on this issue, especially concerning these two epistles. One wonders how the early church ever got started since it was so deprived of the expertise of modern scholasticism. Shall the contemporary pastor declare from the pulpit his uncertainty concerning the inspiration and validity of parts of the Bible, after centuries of canonical acceptance? I can gladly challenge the territorial theology of Burge and his supercessionist associates if we have the same authoritative base. But if we approach the matter of Israel, the Jews and the land with differing roots, especially concerning books of the Bible that are brought into question, then we are fundamentally at odds with one another from the very start. To be quite frank, there is good reason for wondering what exactly Burge regards as the canon of both Testaments in the Bible. Further, this leads one to be curious as to what exactly is his view of biblical inspiration.

³ Ibid., p. 92. However this Epistle opens and closes with the affirmation of Paul's authorship (1:1; 3:17). Refer to D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 344-346.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 92-93. This Epistle also opens with the affirmation of Paul's authorship (1:1). Refer to D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 305-309.

⁵ Ibid., p. 102. Refer to D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 468-473. Is even the suggestion here of "John the Baptist" serious scholarship, or a provocative joke, since his beheading was c. 30 AD? Ll. J. M. Bebb, "John the Baptist," *Dictionary of the Bible*, James Hastings, ed., II, p. 678.

⁶ Ibid., p. 123.

D. Abraham as the Covenantal Father of Judaism and the Gentile Nations.

That Abraham is the father of the Hebrew or Jewish people is not a matter for debate. As a “sign of the covenant” (Gen. 17:11) circumcision was ordained at the ratification of God’s original promise. Covenant details were essentially the same as formerly described, namely the promise of the blessing of God coming upon a distinctive nation, a land as “an everlasting possession” for that nation, and further resultant blessing upon “all the nations of the earth.” Replacing “Abram,” the new divinely given name “Abraham” would represent him as the “father of a multitude” (Gen. 17:1-16). However it appears to be the territorial factor at this juncture that troubles many supercessionists and leads them to inject conditionality into the eschatological equation. The result is the virtual nullification of the Abrahamic as well as the Mosaic covenants because of disobedience, and the claim that the New Covenant trumps all that has passed. Burge is no exception here when he writes:

Reformed theologians are not at all convinced that the promises to Abraham much less Moses are still theologically significant today. The work of Christ is definitive. There is one covenant. And it is with Christ.⁷

There is something profoundly wrong here. Certainly the New Testament makes it plain that the old Mosaic covenant has been abrogated and superseded by the New Covenant cut by means of the shed blood of Christ (Luke 22:19-20; Heb. 8:7-13). However, nowhere does the New Testament state that the Abrahamic covenant has similarly been done away with; on the contrary it is integral to the establishment of the New Covenant (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:23-34; Rom. 4:1-3, 9-25; 11:28; Gal. 3:16-18, 29). Vital here, especially with regard to the promise/promises which Abraham believed (Rom. 4; Gal. 3), is to specifically determine the details of what was promised to him. Of course the answer here, which we repeat, is God’s blessing upon a new nation, a land for that nation, and universal blessing for the nations of the world (Gen. 35:11). Yet if Burge’s suggestion that the Abrahamic covenant has been rendered insignificant, then of course the grounds for the perpetuity of the land promise given to Abraham would then have been done away with. But would not this also be true for the prospective blessing of the nation, and the nations of the world as delineated before him? One wonders if this possibility, especially concerning the former point, is at the root of Burge’s claim here.

Yet the New Covenant was established “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:7-13), being as certain as the fixity of the heavenly bodies and the foundations of the earth (Jer. 31:35-37). So the prophet repeats this truth concerning the Lord’s covenant promise to “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” except that he links it with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David (Jer. 33:19-26). The

⁷ Appendix A, p. 25.

Abrahamic and the New Covenants are inseparably related, and this would therefore be with regard to the certainty of the promised blessing of God upon a nation, a land for that nation, and the nations of the earth. The Abrahamic covenant is highly significant today. One senses that behind Burge's unbiblical reasoning here is an agenda that would negate the identity of Israel today.

E. Territory, Ethnicity and Nationality.

The main thrust of JATL concerns the territory promised to Israel, its Old Testament relevance and New Testament irrelevance. It is alleged that since the coming of Jesus Christ, the concept of territory has been universalized, abstracted and thus absorbed within "the world" (Rom. 4:13; refer to Appendix B), even as being historically Jewish has been absorbed within the Christian Church so that all Christians are spiritual Jews, or "the [real] Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).⁸

The problem here with JATL is that in focusing on territory, it gives the impression that this is a distinct entity whereas in biblical terms ethnicity, nationality and territory are indivisibly related. The terms of the Abrahamic Covenant make this point very clear. Abraham is first called a Hebrew in Genesis 14:13, actually "Abram the Hebrew." Later Joseph testifies that he was "kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews" (Gen. 40:15). Here territory and nationality are integrally related. So Paul writes that "I too am [present tense of εἰμί eimi, cf. II Cor. 11:22] an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the [demographic and territorial] tribe [φυλή, phulē⁹] of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1). Here nationality, ethnicity and territory are related. He again describes himself as being, "of the nation of Israel, of the [demographic and territorial] tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5), so once again identifying with nationality, territory, and ethnicity, also in the context of the present.

Gary Burge declares in a token manner: "I believe we are called to love the Jews."¹⁰ Proof of this perfunctory, even if calm, style is found in his earlier volume *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* Here is patently obvious opposition to the contemporary State of Israel, along with its Jewish constituency, and just as evident support for the Palestinians' territorial cause.¹¹ In JATL there is a related tilt that is insistent upon absolute nullification, by absorption or transference, of the literal meaning of the Old Testament land promises. There is to be no place for the distinctive inclusion of the land within a wider perspective, as the prophets plainly taught. So we are also told

⁸ Refer to *Future Israel*, pp. 263-268.

⁹ "[A]fter the conquest [of the land] the tribes became essentially territorial." W. H. Bennett, "Tribe," *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, vol iv, p. 810.

¹⁰ Appendix A, p. 27.

¹¹ Barry Horner, *Future Israel*, pp. 45-55.

that, “the term Israel is used exclusively for the name of a people, never a place.”¹² In a strictly isolated sense this is true. Yet such a disassociation we believe to be, at best, a partial truth when one takes into account the immediate and Old Testament contexts of a considerable number of references, especially within the New Testament. Surely “Israel,” in its textual setting, can mean not only people but also associated with this is the promised land of that same people. Consider the following instances.

- Matthew 2:6; cf. Micah. 5:2. “AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.” This term, “My people Israel” is obviously that which is closely associated with “Bethlehem, land of Judah.” There is an integrated relationship here, as is so clear in the terms of the Abrahamic covenant involving both nationality or people and territory or land.
- Matthew 2:20-21. “²⁰Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead. ²¹So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.” Here Israel as “people” is intimately related with the “land.”
- Mathew 9:33. “After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, ‘Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.’” Surely “Israel” here has a geographical connotation that is associated with the people of the land.
- Matthew 10:23. “But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.” Here “Israel” is closely associated with its cities scattered throughout the land.
- Matthew 19:28. “And Jesus said to them [His disciples], “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The eschatological language here, especially concerning the “twelve tribes of Israel,” has both demographic and geographic indications.
- Mark 12:29; cf. Deut. 6:4, 10, 13. “Jesus answered, ‘The foremost [commandment] is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD.’” The context of the Shemah here is the subsequent revelation and exhortation: “¹⁰Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which

¹² Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, p. 74.

you did not build, . . . ¹³you shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.” Again, there is an integrated relationship here, in terms of the Abrahamic covenant, involving both nationality or people and territory or land.

- John 12:13; cf. Ps. 118:26. “[The large crowd] took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, ‘Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.” To suggest that here “Israel” under “King [Jesus]” has no association with “land” is quite senseless, especially in the light of a Hebrew understanding of the whole setting within the environment of Zion/Jerusalem, as referenced in v. 15, “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”

However, from another perspective, who would not suggest the priority of the people of Israel, made in the image of God, over the physical land. Who would even place them on the same level? Even so, while this order is vital in terms of biblical importance, we would maintain that the primacy of Israel as a people in no way nullifies the secondary importance of the Land in which the people of Israel are destined to dwell under the blessing of God. This is a fundamental order which the apostles were to anticipate (Matt. 19:27-28; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 8:20:21-21) and the likes of Burge adamantly reject, especially by means of the alleged necessary “reinterpretation” of the Old Testament.

F. Unity that Incorporates Diversity.

In most writings that support supercessionism, as referenced in Appendix B, this legacy of Augustine, by its very nature, excludes diversity within universality. The universal of the kingdom of God leads to the elimination of historic legacies, and especially those associated with Judaism. A remnant of Judaic terminology may be retained, such as with the general employment of “the new Israel” and “the new ecumenical land,” but the substance of ethnicity, nationality and territory is not. Burge puts it most plainly as follows:

When Paul’s theology moved away from ethnicity and regionalism and focused on personal appropriation of faith and attachment to Christ—a move that was necessary for his Gentile mission—Paul *inevitably* had to abandon a Christian commitment to Jewish territorialism. This explains his lack of interest in any form of divine geography, or any instinct to list the land among the benefits of Judaism. Paul universalizes faith in Christ in order to include all people; Paul universalizes the promises to Abraham in order to include all lands. Indeed for Paul, something new and revolutionary was afoot when Judaism’s messianic community was born after Pentecost.¹³

¹³ Ibid., p. 92.

We strongly disagree with the statement here that, “Paul universalizes the promises to Abraham,” even though of course a universal element was included from the beginning. Rather he, as the apostle to the Gentiles, indeed the nations, expounds upon their inclusion as originally and distinctively promised in Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 35:11 and referenced in Romans 4:13. In the same vein we are told by Burge:

[T]his new [faith] reality found in Christ gives birth to a new community in which ethnic privilege no longer prevails. Nor do hierarchies of any sort: nation, social status, nor gender (Gal. 3:28). Attachment to Christ has leveled everyone’s opportunity to have complete access to Abraham. “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29).¹⁴

Yes, faith alone in Christ excludes all proposed qualifying distinctions in terms of being reconciled with God. But no, ongoing union with Christ, through ongoing faith, does not eliminate social, gender and even eschatological distinctions. The referencing here of Galatians 3:28 is so misplaced. It is patently obvious that following Christian conversion the man and the woman not only retain their gender, as Paul explains, but also they maintain distinctive yet complementary roles (I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23; Col. 3:11, 18-22). So with the Jew, distinctive Jewishness is retained at Christian conversion and incorporation into the one people or congregation of God; so the land also retains its Jewish distinctiveness according to Abrahamic covenantal promise while at the same time being at the center of the surrounding nations of the world. Within this universal unity there will be hierarchical distinctions (Matt. 19:27-28; 20:20-23; I Cor. 6:2). However with supercessionism and its elimination of ethnic, national and territorial distinctions in absolute terms, there appears to be the imposition of a strict theological egalitarianism that is quite unscriptural. It also conveys a clone mentality, a homogeneity amongst the children of God born of a fear of distinction amongst the redeemed.

G. Gnosticism and Marcionism Lite.

Augustinian eschatology in general has tended to disparage the importance of the material and the ongoing significance of Old Testament Judaism. In the light of this it is interesting to note that Old Testament Judaism has placed considerable emphasis upon earthiness, visceral language and the created order while in no way neglecting the primary realm of the soul and the Spirit of God. Both Gnosticism and Marcionism, following on from Platonism, as late first century heresies, are also known for demeaning the material and Old Testament Judaism respectively. These qualities are certainly found in the writings of Burge and contemporary supercessionism. However Samuel Waldron, as an amillennialist influenced by Anthony Hoekema, has confessed:

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 81.

It is the countless Old Testament and New Testament prophecies that clearly prophesy a future, earthly kingdom. In the past, those opposing millenarianism often failed to satisfactorily interpret such passages. They attempted to apply them to the church in the present age or to heaven. Such interpretations did not make sense to many good people. They shouldn't have! They were wrong. Only the doctrine of the [literal, regenerated] new earth provides a better interpretation of such passages.¹⁵

While this acknowledgment of future, earthly spiritual materiality is refreshing, yet it does not include the literal Jewish context of the literal "new heavens and new earth" that is espoused, especially concerning the coming glory of Zion/Jerusalem (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; cf. 65:18-19, 25; 66:7-13).

1. Gnosticism lite in supercessionism.

Neo-Platonist and Gnostic thought were influential within the writings of the early church fathers. Both philosophies were offended by historic Christianity, so that Gnosticism in particular was eventually regarded as heresy being condemned in particular by Ireneaus. This was especially because of Gnosticism's belief in the lowly status of materiality compared with the superiority of spiritual existence and the heavenly realm; it could not tolerate God becoming incarnate through His Son, indeed impeccably so, and eventually, bodily raised from the dead while remaining materially substantial. John seems to address this vital matter when he writes of Christ being tangible: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, (I John 1:1). Further: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (I John 4:2). Paul may have faced this same problem since he warned Timothy of the false doctrine of Hymenaeus and Philetus which had the potential to spread like gangrene. They "have gone astray from the truth saying that the [future hope of a substantial] resurrection has already taken place [in a spiritual sense]" (II Tim. 2:16-18). While not at all suggesting that modern supercessionists are generally Gnostic, yet their aversion to spiritual materiality in the eschatological realm is reminiscent of this distinctive. This is especially true with regard to the land, and the belittling of its smallness and materiality, as is the manner of Burge. He is aware of this problem and so, to cover vulnerability, he declares that

a commitment to incarnational theology demands a commitment to *place* as having significance. The faith of the Church was not Gnostic at this very point. [The Book

¹⁵ Samuel E. Waldron, *The End Times Made Simple*, p. 241.

of] Revelation did not occur outside of human history but within it. The Holy Land continued to be holy because it was the locale of divine revelation.¹⁶

Hence “place” here is not according to any objective, Old Testament, eschatological definition; that would be intolerable! Rather the meaning here would appear to be more a matter of memorable significance for the Holy Land. So “place” is more christologically defined:

[T]he New Testament applies to the person of Christ religious language formerly devoted to the Holy Land of the Temple. He is the new spatiality, the new locale where God may be met.¹⁷

However, for the believer, union with Christ is by means of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; I John 3:24). He personally dwells at the right hand of His Father, and from there He will come spiritually, bodily, materially, personally, within space, to the Mount of Olives, outside of historic Jerusalem, within the land, from where He ascended (Acts 1:9-12).

For Burge, the Land of Israel today, as covenantally promised territory, is now passé, a carnal regression that conflicts with a more transcending, spiritual, biblical Christology. Inherent here is an anti-Judaism that is not slow to show preference for Palestinian territorial rights¹⁸, hardly according to explicit biblical revelation. So it is alleged: “The New Testament Church did not reach back into the Old Testament to find a place for the land. It looked to Christ.”¹⁹ However a simple response is all that is necessary here. It is that the founding and initial government of that New Testament Church was thoroughly Jewish and within Jerusalem, the very center of the Land! Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of the ungodliness and unbelief of that present generation (Matt. 23:36-38), and yet He anticipated a glorious reentry (Matt. 23:39).

We further read, concerning John 15:5, where Jesus declares, “I am the vine, you are the branches,” that Burge declares this whole parable to be

the Fourth Gospel’s most profound theological relocation of Israel’s “holy space.” . . . Therefore John 15 is in fact a careful critique of the territorial religion of Judaism. . . . In a word, *Jesus spiritualizes the land*. . . . Now Jesus is the sole source of life and hope and future. The land as holy territory therefore should now recede from the concerns

¹⁶ Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, p. 127.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁸ Refer to Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* pp. 43-62, 190-232. The front cover portrays a young Palestinian boy, David-like, about to throw a stone at a gargantuan, Goliath-like Israeli tank that is armed to the teeth.

¹⁹ Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, p. 128.

of God's people. The vineyard is no longer an object of religious desire as it once had been.²⁰

So it is alleged that in Jesus declaring "I am the vine, you are the branches," He does away with Israel as the vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7). Hence the Land is degraded; it is spiritual territory that matters. This is not only so in the present, but also eschatologically. Yet it does not seem to occur to Burge that "vineyard" and "vine" and "branches" could coalesce into a unity that at the same time retains diversity. So we suggest that what is presented here is not in fact superior spirituality, but rather spirituality robbed of its materiality. So the risen Christ said to His disciples: "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. . . . They gave Him a piece of broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them" (Luke 24:39, 42-43). Hence when Jesus returns, "His [spiritually material feet] will stand on the [material, geographic] Mount of Olives [in the Land of Israel], which is in front of [geographic] Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:4). Most plainly, the promised Land here has monumental significance.

2. Marcionism lite in supercessionism.

Marcion believed in a gospel of the God of love, which Jesus revealed, to the exclusion of law, especially as revealed in the Old Testament. Hence the God of Judaism was fickle, cruel, despotic, and thus inferior. Consequently the canonical Scriptures were ten of Paul's epistles (he excluded the pastoral epistles) and parts of Luke. Again, while not at all suggesting that modern supercessionists generally believe in Marcionism, yet their aversion to Old Testament Judaism, especially a literal understanding of the prophets in the eschatological realm, is reminiscent of this distinctive. Burge certainly evidences this demeaning of Old Testament reality in the name of alleged transcendent Christology. So consider:

Therefore the New Testament locates in Christ all of the expectations once held for "Sinai and Zion, Bethel and Jerusalem." For a Christian to return to a Jewish territoriality is to deny fundamentally what has transpired in the incarnation.²¹

This is radical nonsense. To lump together "Sinai and Zion, Bethel and Jerusalem" as if they were all disqualified from inclusion in the eschatological kingdom of Christ is to disparage the Old Testament. At best, for Burge this statement is fanciful extrapolation without there being the slightest explicit New Testament justification. Again we have here unbiblical Christological reductionism, not

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 53, 56.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 129-130.

uncommon in liberal theology, that suggests spiritual superiority. In fact its falsity is laid bare through a comprehension of the perpetual Jewishness of Jesus.

Again Burge writes:

To fight for holy territory, to defend the land [of Israel] as a divinely appointed duty, is to regress utterly in the most miserable way. It is to misplace hope entirely. The kingdoms of this world will be judged. And this includes the kingdom of Judea. Hope in [the Book of] Revelation is for a “new heaven and a new earth” (21:1) that reorders creation as it ought to be.²²

There is muddled expression here. Perhaps the vigorous, non-conversionary support of John Hagee for the State of Israel is in mind in terms of “fighting” for the land. However he, along with his other unorthodox convictions, is hardly representative of the historic, evangelistic premillennialism such as that represented by Horatius Bonar, J. C. Ryle and C. H. Spurgeon, who, though Reformed in convictions and hardly dispensational, were eschatologically supportive of an ethnic, national and territorial future for Israel.²³ If a Christian, while evangelistically interested in the Jewish people, also financially helps a Jew in returning to the Land that is believed to be eschatologically valid in covenantal terms, in the light of Romans 11:11, 14, this is hardly miserable regression or carnal Zionism. It seems far more faithful to Paul’s Romans 11:11, 14, 18-20 exhortation than, at best, the tepid interest of the supercessionist in Jewish evangelism (Rom. 1:16). Yes, judgment is ahead, and unbelieving Israel will not escape. Nevertheless, and this is at the heart of Burge’s supercessionist error, it is the sovereignty of grace, a cherished Reformed doctrine, that will finally win through over sin and unbelief amongst the Jewish people (Rom. 5:20; 11:26-28), so that the “new heavens and a new earth” will see the rebirth of a “land” and a “nation,” even “Jerusalem,” in a day that will also include “the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream” (Isa, 66:7-13, 22). Here will be wondrous universality that is inclusive of distinction.

Colin Chapman, certainly representative of Burge’s anti-Judaic supercessionism, provides many classic expressions of repudiation of the Old Testament, and with a Marcion-like flair. Of course in all of this, like Marcion, justification is claimed to be a transcendent christology. For instance, there is the record of a most revealing encounter between Chapman and Jan Willem van der Hoeven of *Israel My Beloved*, a site that is dedicated to the memory of Widad van der Hoeven, and to Rita, loving wife of Dorian Brown, survivor of the Holocaust. So van der Hoeven recounts:

²² Ibid., p. 107.

²³ Horner, *Future Israel*, pp. 8-14, 339-348.

Years ago, when I was still at the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, Colin Chapman paid me a visit. We had both received our education at the same College in London, England, so that was a link. We had also both spent time serving the Lord among the Arabs in the Middle East. After some time I was asked by the British Organization for the Garden Tomb, Jerusalem, to take over the custodianship of that beautifully kept and serene site many believe was the place of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. I was then married to a Christian Arab woman who has since gone to be with the Lord.

In my conversation with Chapman - who, also perhaps due to his long years of service among the Arabs was a willing advocate of their sentiment - I tried to bring a more biblically-based response to the problems in the Middle East. But as I quoted from Scripture he remarked - and I will never forget this - "If you cannot prove from the New Testament that God still has a destiny for the Jewish people, then don't come with any of your Old Testament verses to prove the biblical case for Israel. To me, these have now been fulfilled in relation to the Church. If you cannot prove it from the New Testament you cannot convince me!"²⁴

Here is the response of a Christian who has willingly divorced himself from the historic Hebrew roots of Christianity, they now being passé by means of "reinterpretation" using a Gentile hermeneutic. In this scheme of things, we interpret, concerning Christ in the New Testament, with a proper literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic. Then we subjectively impose the result upon the Old Testament as a new hermeneutic, supposedly on account of the New Testament authors' use of the Old Testament. Here, we believe, a fatal mistake has been made whereby a Gentile mindset becomes the controlling factor instead of a willingness to appreciate the Jewish hermeneutic employed within the New Testament by its authors.²⁵

H. Gentile Christian Conversion: the Model for Israel.

For Burge, Israel's permanent loss of the land has been on account of disobedience to the Mosaic order that knows of no ultimate recovery through grace. So he writes:

Possessing the land is contingent on Israel's ongoing faithfulness to God and obedience to his law. The land therefore is a byproduct of the [Abrahamic] covenant, a gift of the covenant. It is not a possession that can be held independently. Both Leviticus and Deuteronomy warn Israel in stark terms about the conditional nature of this promise.

As proof of this conditionalism, Deuteronomy 4:25-27 is quoted.

²⁴ http://www.israelmybeloved.com/channel/word_from_zion/article/211

²⁵ Horner, *Future Israel*, pp. 147-202, 247-252.

²⁵When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger, ²⁶I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you.

What is surprising is that Burge does not quote here, or anywhere else in JATL, the subsequent verses that declare good news for Israel, 28-31:

²⁸There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. ²⁹But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. ³⁰When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. ³¹For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Here is the triumph of grace, according to covenant promise, that is greater than Israel's sin (Rom. 5:20). Burge, along with his supercessionist associates, choose to ignore this glorious truth with regard to Israel, though surely not with regard to themselves!

So the conversion of a Gentile Christian, according to New Testament revelation, is a joyous matter to contemplate. It was also the case for the Apostle Paul, even though he continued to confess that he was a Jew or Israelite (Acts 21:39; 22:3; Rom. 11:1). However he passionately declared that Jew and Gentile were saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22, 28-30; 4:16; 11:30-32; Gal. 3:28). And surely the reason is not difficult to discern in Paul's own life for he testifies that, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (I Cor. 15:10). To suggest that his salvation was conditional, that is based upon his obedience to law of any kind, undoubtedly would result in a strong rebuke (Gal. 3:1-3). He further testified that, "even from my mother's womb [God] called me through His grace" (Gal. 1:15). According to Paul's own estimate he confessed himself to be the "foremost of all [sinners]" (I Tim. 1:15), no doubt because he shuddered at the recollection of his violent opposition to Jesus Christ and His church (Acts 8:1-3; Rom. 5:8).

So salvation by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ meant that justification before God, being wholly righteous, was solely according to "the kind intention of His [the Father's] will" (Eph. 1:5); it was "a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Here was demonstrated the reign and dominion of grace that triumphed over sin. "[A]s sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). So grace is ultimately victorious over sin. As Charles Wesley has well written:

Glory to God, whose sovereign grace
Hath animated senseless stones;
Called us to stand before His face,
And raised us into Abraham's sons!

So the question arises, in the light of the Jew and the Gentile's conversion today being through grace alone, then what has been the basis of the Jew's salvation according to Old Testament revelation and promise? Is it conditional upon obedience to the Law revealed in the old economy? No, for Abraham "believed God [before being circumcised], and it was credited to his as righteousness" (Rom. 4:3, 9-12). However Israel stumbled over Jesus Christ as "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," and so pursued righteousness "by works" (Rom. 9:31-33). Yet grace will finally triumph for Israel since, "it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. . . .²⁶From the standpoint of the gospel they [unbelieving Israel] are enemies for your [the Gentile's] sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they [unbelieving Israel] are beloved for the sake of the fathers [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob],²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 9:16; 11:28-29).

I. Conditionalism, Contingency and the Saving Character of God

There is repeated emphasis in JATL of "conditionalism" or "contingency" with regard to God's covenantal dealings with Israel. This is especially surprising when Burge, in claiming to be Reformed in his beliefs,²⁶ denies for Israel that sovereignty of grace which the Gentiles so freely enjoy in the New Testament. Consider p. 4, cf. pp. 6, 9, 10, 11, 36, 38.

Possessing this land is contingent on Israel's ongoing faithfulness to God and obedience to his law. The land therefore is a byproduct of the [Abrahamic] covenant. It is not a possession that can be held independently. Both Leviticus and Deuteronomy warn Israel in stark terms about the conditional nature of this promise.

[T]he promise of the land is anchored to the [Abrahamic] covenant; and life in the land is contingent on upholding the righteousness expected by God.²⁷

What is so surprising here is that while there are several references to the reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 15, yet there is no consideration of its obvious unilateral character revealed in vs. 7-21. This is not surprising in view of Burge's desire to affirm that the Abrahamic covenant is bilateral. As previously mentioned, this

²⁶ Refer to Appendix A. Reformed doctrine is noted for its emphasis on the sovereignty of God, especially with regard to soteriology. In this field of divine truth, Burge is not alone in his Reformed affirmation of conditionalism that also, quite inconsistently, denies the permanent election of Israel according to an eschatological national destiny.

²⁷ Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, pp. 4, 11.

introduces significant problems concerning whether the whole of the Abrahamic covenant is conditional based upon legal obedience; such a prospect wholly eliminates the sovereignty of grace rooted in the promises God gave to Abraham and, at the same time, empties the gospel of its glory.

Perhaps the most egregious aspect of Burge's appeal to contingency is his emphatic, selective employment of passages that declare God's legal demands upon Israel. This is especially true concerning Israel's tenuous relationship with its alleged conditional occupation of the land. On the other hand, there is almost total avoidance of subsequent references to the triumph of grace over Israel's sin, and especially according to a revealed eschatological hope. Here the supercessionist perspective has bifurcated vision. On the one hand it views the supposed disciplinary passages with a sense of disqualification that ultimately knows no remedy. Then, on the other hand, the only recourse concerning the glorious prophetic passages that describe Israel's subsequent national regeneration under Messiah's triumphant reign is their relegation to either past fulfillment or general application by means of an abstract Christological hermeneutic.

Consider the following chart in which we have the disciplinary passages referenced by Burge that, being supposedly conditional, are said to lead to national and territorial Israel's ultimate disqualification and nullification. Then following we have numerous prophetic passages that Burge does not, in most instances, so much as mention and yet they prophetically describe Israel's ultimate glory under Messiah according to the sovereignty of grace that is to the praise of God's glory. Once again we draw attention to a notable example here concerning Burge's referencing of Deuteronomy 4:25-27, p. 4, where the dispersal of Israel from the land, in judgment, is described. However the highly significant, eschatological vs. 28-31 that immediately follow are omitted and are never referenced in JATL.

LAND LOSS REFERENCES BY BURGE IN *JESUS AND THE LAND*

Lev. 18:24-30; 20:22-26, p. 4 (But these disciplinary, generational verses, threatening expulsion, do not negate the covenantal, eschatological national hope of Israel in Deut. 30:1-10).

Deut. 4:25-27, p. 4 (But these disciplinary, generational verses, threatening expulsion, do not negate the covenantal, eschatological national hope of Israel in vs. 28-31).

Isa. 5:1-8, pp. 7, 37, 53, 124 (Yes, the house of Israel, as “the vineyard of the LORD,” is laid waste in discipline, yet this same LORD will remain faithful to His covenant with Israel (46:3-4) and bring about eschatological joy to Jerusalem (66:7-14)).

Jer. 3:19-20; 7:5-6; 25:8-9; 27:6; 31:15, p. 7 (Yes, Judah is expelled from the land and taken captive to Babylon. Yet this severe discipline does not detract from return to the land, both after seventy years (25:11) and eschatologically (30:1-31:40; 33:1-26)).

Ezek. 7:2, cf. 7; 33:28; p. 8 (Yes, here again is promised judgment upon the inhabitants of the land without any referencing of the eschatological significance and restoration of 11:14-25; 36:1-38:23)).

Hos. 9:2-3, p. 7 (But these disciplinary, generational verses, promising expulsion, do not negate the covenantal, eschatological national hope of Israel in 2:14-23; 3:4-5; 11:8-11; 14:1-17. Burge does reference 2:14-23; 11:8-11 as merely post-exilic).

Amos 4:1-2, 17 p. 7 (But these disciplinary, generational verses, promising expulsion, do not negate the covenantal, eschatological national hope of Israel in 9:11-15, though Burge describes this as merely post-exilic).

Mic. 2:1-3 (But these disciplinary, generational verses, promising severe judgment, do not negate the covenantal, eschatological national hope of Israel in 4:1-8; 7:7-20).

Burge does mention the restoration of Israel back to the land following expulsion. He explains:

[T]he prophets also point to a restoration of land (Amos 9:14-15; Hos. 2:14-23; 11:8-11; Jer. 16:15; Isa. 9:1-9). Following the [Babylonian] exile a second entry to the land, almost a “second exodus,” brings Israel back to the land-promise to reforge covenant faithfulness a second time. And once again for prophets such as Ezekiel and Malachi, land inheritance, covenant, and faithfulness must run together.²⁸

This “return” language here is strictly post-exilic and not eschatological. One senses that Burge is struggling with language here, that is attempting to somehow

²⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

incorporate faith with the necessary legal obedience he has so strenuously upheld. Hence we are further told, somewhat mystically:

But it is in Ezekiel that we also find hope. The [post-exilic?] renewal of Israel will be paralleled by the renewal of the land. Waste places will be rebuilt; desolate places replanted (36:33). And above all, God himself will return to the land and bring his glory in his return (43:1; 44:4). In chapters 47-48 this is symbolized by a return to the tribal distributions of Joshua. This is indeed a new beginning. But with a twist. The native-born aliens who live alongside Israel in the land should be treated as “citizens of Israel” (47:22). The alien will gain an inheritance alongside Israel (47:23) and the land will be shared in a way not imagined before.²⁹

However it is clear that for Burge, the prophetic scenario of Ezekiel 36-48 is post-exilic in its fulfillment and anticipatory of God’s first incarnate visitation upon earth. There is to be no thought of any eschatological, national, territorial fulfillment for Israel upon the return of Jesus Christ as Zechariah 14:1-9 and Acts 1:9-11 announce.³⁰ It is here that the supercessionist comes up against insuperable problems, that is if careful exegesis is employed concerning Ezekiel 36-37 and Zechariah 8, 14. There is a general and abstract style of Burge here that betrays this problem

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

³⁰ Refer to Burge’s *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* Here he references Amos 9:14-15; Hos. 2:14-23; 11:8-11; Jer. 16:15; Isa. 2:1-5; 9:1-9, cf. Ezek. 36-37, as examples of Israel’s restoration to the land following the exile, and then declares that: “Of course, these predictions did come true,” p. 103, n. 12, p. 104.

APPENDIX A

The following article provides a more condensed representation of Gary Burge's overall supercessionist convictions whereby he denies ethnic, national and territorial status for the Jew today, that is according to God's covenantal purposes. However he sometimes does write with a deft turn of phrase that could easily be misleading. For instance consider:

[T]his is not a political question per se centering on Israel's right as a nation to have a place in history, to make a claim for statehood or enjoy international legitimacy. I would grant each of these. Israel has a right to exist in safety.³¹

In writing of "Israel's right as a nation to have a place in history," what is the point here when, apart from anti-Semitic extremists, this is a *fait accompli*, though purposely there is no inclusion of the future here. Further, we are told that the secular nation of Israel has a right to exist somewhere, though we are not told where. Presumably this is a matter for the United Nations to determine, that is grant "international legitimacy," though at the same time Burge would not accept that this existence has any validity within the mind of God.

Another matter to be noticed here is Burge's claim that he writes from a Reformed perspective. Certainly the term "Reformed" can include a breadth of meaning today, both liberal and conservative, with various shades in between. So the claim here may have some truth to it in that Burge does certainly adhere to the legacy of Augustine which flowed on through Luther and Calvin into the twenty-first century. However, as demonstrated in detail, this, by and large, is a shameful heritage that has come about by means of an unbiblical, anti-Judaic eschatology.³² Even so, when Burge describes his Reformed perspective as optimistic, encouraging secular art and music, that in Christ something decisive happened, that it involves having a passion for fairness and justice, and that reformed theologians make profound investments in the world, the terminology here is not that of a conservative Reformed point of view. This would be supported by the fact that Burge is an ordained minister of the more liberal Presbyterian Church (USA), with which Princeton Theological Seminary is associated.

One other concern here is with regard to Burge's frequent criticism of John Hagee, as if this unorthodox pastor and writer was worthy as a representative of premillennialism, and its subset, dispensationalism, as they have played out over the last three hundred and sixty years. While Burge is quite critical of some of Hagee's more political associations and solutions, such as concerning Iran, yet he himself does not reveal his own contrasting resolutions. Nor, as a professing evangelical, does he blush when mixing with liberal and

³¹ Appendix A, p. 21.

³² Barry Horner, *Future Israel*, pp. 1-202, 355-377.

radical supporters of the national Palestinian cause, such as through his being on the Advisory Board of *The Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation*.³³

“Why I’m Not a Christian Zionist, Academically Speaking”³⁴

Gary M. Burge, Ph.D., Professor of New Testament
Wheaton College & Graduate School

The average reader may be excused for not understanding the finer differences between an evangelical preacher who calls for a pre-emptive bombing strike against Iran and one who thinks this view is outrageous and immoral. Particularly when both might be classified as conservative Protestants. How do we clear the fog? For instance, high-profile pastor John Hagee of San Antonio, Texas, is a Christian preacher who enjoys outrageously militant sermons, especially when he is preaching them before his 14,000 member congregation. Others like myself find him not only embarrassing but dangerous. How does the average observer make sense of these two views when both spring from Protestant church?

Hagee is a “Dispensationalist.” I am a Reformed Theologian. He takes his cues from recent (as in 100 year old) writers such as Darby, Schofield, and Ryrie. I take my cues from older writers such as 16th century John Calvin, the Anglican and Presbyterian worlds, and theologians who belong to the “Reformed Tradition.” Believe it or not, both of us could be called “evangelicals.”

Dispensationalism was born in the late 19th century as an attempt to parcel out human history with a series of seven biblical categories (or dispensations) for time: there was the era (or covenant) of Adam, of Noah, and others. We live in the era of the church and it will be followed by the end of time (the Millennium). Dispensationalism embraced a pessimistic view of history, thinking that the world was coming to its end and that the judgment day was near. And as a result, it became sectarian, separating itself from mainstream society, calling sinners to repent and be saved from the inevitable catastrophe of the human story.

Reformed theology is not so grim. It has generally embraced an optimistic understanding of life, thinking that the gospel is a call to transform the world (not separate from it) and participate with society bringing the good things of God to bear on the things of this world. Note this test: Reformed Theology might promote “secular” art and music; Dispensationalists will promote “Christian” art and music. Why? It all depends on if you think the world has anything to offer.

³³ <http://www.hcef.org>. Accessed, June, 2010. The ecumenism here has virtually no conservative evangelical representation and is decidedly pro-palestinian

³⁴ <http://www.christianzionism.org/Article/Burge02.pdf> (Accessed, May, 2010).

But here is another test. Dispensationalism decided in the 20th century that the catalyst of the end of time was the reestablishment of the State of Israel – which thrilled them in 1948 when Israel announced its nationhood. Israel’s various military victories in 1967 and 1973 were confirmations of a divine hand on Israel’s future. Many dispensationalists have been caught up in a zeal to see this age end and the next begin. If prophecies are being fulfilled, if history is at its terminus, then Christians are obligated to join in what God is doing. And this expression of faith is no where clearer than when one raises the question of Israel. Such religious zealots today are known as Christian Zionists.

If you want to ruin an evangelical party, just ask this question aloud: Are Christians obligated as Christians to support the State of Israel at all costs? The room will divide, quickly. John Hagee and I would be standing in opposite corners (that is, if we ever attended the same parties).

So what would be our differences?

First, this is not a political question per se centering on Israel’s right as a nation to have a place in history, to make a claim for statehood or enjoy international legitimacy. I would grant each of these. Israel has a right to exist in safety.

Nor in my judgment is this topic a moral question concerning the historic treatment of Judaism in Europe. It is true that Judaism has suffered beyond imagination – and this culminated in the holocaust. And because of this, western society indeed bears a moral obligation to guarantee that such horrors do not happen again. I concede this as well. Christians should be vigilant against all forms of anti-Semitism. But this moral argument is not a uniquely Christian concern unless one were to fix blame for anti-Semitism on Christian theology, which many of my friends in the Jewish community would like to do. Perhaps this argument can be made – but it may be more accurate to say that the New Testament’s teachings have been misused for violent purposes in ways reprehensible to us all.

To ask about Christian obligation invites a theological question. It implies that today men and women sitting in the pews of the church ought to support Israel as a first order commitment because of their Christian faith. Or we could put it another way: Being Christian has a necessary political entailment: We must support Israel as a nation and this is a religious obligation. This is the view of the Christian Zionist. Their interest is less in Judaism and its preservation; it is focused instead on the unfolding of prophecy in the Middle East and Israel is a character in the drama.

Christian Zionism Today

Many of us are deeply tired of the subject of Christian Zionism. But then when I read the transcripts of a meeting that took place in Washington on July 17, 2007, I redouble my efforts. It was a gathering of 4500 people from every state in the country. It was called “A Night to Honor Israel” and was hosted by Christians United for Israel [CUFI]. I was not surprised to see a list of political aspirants such as Newt Gingrich lining up to speak in

support of an American foreign policy that privileges Israel. The aim of the evening was purely political. It's organizers want to influence American foreign policy to support any Israeli security or land issue.

What constantly amazes me is that the audience was entirely religious. Organized by Rev. John Hagee, CUFI works to rouse the evangelical Christians of America – by their count, 50 million. And with this platform, they hope to show that Christians have a spiritual obligation to stand with Israel fully. That night in his keynote address, Hagee said, “When 50 million evangelical Bible-believing Christians unite with five million American Jews standing together on behalf of Israel, it is a match made in heaven.”

And this is true. If these two communities united fully, it would be perhaps the largest voting bloc in America. Hagee continued, “Let us shout it from the housetops that a new day has been born in America. The sleeping giant of Christian Zionism has awakened. If a line has to be drawn, draw the line around Christians and Jews. We are united. We are indivisible. And together we can reshape history.”

But this is where Hagee frightens more than he inspires. Not only has his theological commitments given him Biblically defended views on Israel, but now his eschatology has led him to call for America to strike out militarily against Iran. Using the language of the Book of Revelation, Hagee looked to Iran as the incarnation of evil. “The head of the beast of radical Islam in the Middle East is Iran and its fanatical president Ahmadinejad. Ladies and gentlemen, we are reliving history. It is 1938 all over again. Iran is Germany. Ahmadinejad is Hitler. And Ahmadinejad, just like Hitler, is talking about killing the Jews.”

The answer to this problem is written in the Biblical playbook which he will interpret for us. The answer is to launch a war that will end all war since it will bring the end of human history. Listen again, “... we want you to recognize that Iran is a clear and present danger to the United States of America and Israel. ... it's time for our country to consider a military preemptive strike against Iran if they will not yield to diplomacy. And if they continue the pursuit of nuclear weapons we must not allow them to manipulate the economy of the world because they have a nuclear weapon.”

So there we have it. Rev. John Hagee, a spokesperson for Jesus Christ, a man with no diplomatic credentials, a man with no training in history or political science, calling for an American military strike against Iran based on what the Bible teaches. During his conference he then commissioned his 4500 delegates to go to Capitol Hill as lobbyists. I am not the only one who is alarmed. A host of Jewish leaders, such as Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman and Rabbi Michael Lerner, have spoken out against this “wedding made in heaven.” Rabbi Zimmerman wrote in response:

Other rabbis, including myself, generally support building bridges with other communities. Yet we recognize that there are some groups with whom we should not align ourselves or support in any way. If creating a sustainable peace in the Middle East is important to us, then we cannot support an organization that advocates attacking Iran and launching the region into further

chaos. As Pastor John Hagee, stated, "The United States must join Israel in a pre-emptive military strike against Iran to fulfill God's plan for both Israel and the West... a biblically prophesied end-time confrontation with Iran, which will lead to the Rapture, Tribulation [...]and Second Coming of Christ" (CUFI's Washington, DC inaugural event, July 19, 2006).

Theological Convictions

Permit me to outline what seems to be the essential building blocks for Rev. Hagee's outlook. Some dispensationalists will hold to these points – others might demur. But the outline is widely embraced by churches throughout America. And then I will describe how Reformed theologians differ.

1. God's Promises to Abraham

In Genesis 12, 15 and 17 God promises the Holy Land to Abraham and his descendants. To Christian Zionists this promise of land inheritance was permanent and unconditional. And it is as true in Biblical times as it is today.

This means that for Christian Zionists, the covenant of Abraham continues to be in play today . And as Christians this forces them to have what we call a "two covenant" theology: one covenant for the Jews and one for Christians operates in the church. In a word, the work of Christ does not replace or supplant the Jewish covenant.

✿ Reformed theologians (like myself) believe that something decisive happened in Christ. His covenant affected not simply the covenant of Moses – making a new and timeless form of salvation – but it also affected every Jewish covenant, including Abraham's covenant. Christ fulfills the expectations of Jewish covenant life and renews the people of God rooted in the OT and Judaism. Thus Jesus is a new temple, the new Israel, there are 12 tribes/apostles, etc.

When it comes to the land promises to Abraham – a crux for dispensationalists – I open immediately to Galatians 3:16. The Apostle Paul wrote: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say 'And to his offsprings,' referring to many; but referring to one, 'And to his offspring,' which is Christ." Remarkably Paul argues from the singular noun in Genesis to show that the promises to Abraham – and this means land – point to Christ! Christ is the locus of the promise of land! The promises to Abraham have been realized in Christ – he holds everything Judaism desired – and knowing him gains access to such promises.

Jesus' splendid homily in John 15 does the same. This is the great vine and branches sermon Jesus told in the upper room. The Old Testament image of Israel is that of a vineyard filled with many vines rooted in the soil of the Holy Land. You can see this outlined beautifully in Isaiah 5. But Jesus upends this. We see a vineyard again but now we learn that there is one vine – Christ – and the only question turns not on gaining access to the land but being attached to him.

To think Christianly about land and promise is to think differently than Judaism. In short, the NT changes the spiritual geography of God's people. The Kingdom of God is tied neither to an ethnicity nor to a place. And because the early Christians understood this, they carried their missionary efforts to the entire world. At a time when Jews were debating the meaning of Holy Land, Jesus' prescription was quite remarkable: "the meek will inherit the land" (Mt 5:5). Not the aggressor or the conqueror.

So the point is this: Reformed theologians are not at all convinced that the promises to Abraham much less Moses are still theologically significant today. The work of Christ is definitive. There is one covenant. And it is with Christ. Which explains why Reformed Theologians cringe when they hear Rev. Hagee cite the Old Testament again and again. We are eager to hear him open his New Testament for us and think Christianly.

2. Israel Has Been Restored to the Land

The next step is crucial. 1948 is not simply a political marker in history, it is a theological marker. Israel has been restored to the land in fulfillment of prophecy. This is no different than the restoration following the Babylonian exile. Therefore modern Israel is not simply a politically significant event, it is a theologically ordained event, one that should garner profound Christian respect and awe.

✿ Reformed theologians do not deny the right of Israel to exist. Like myself they speak against anti-Semitism and claim that Israel has a right to national security. I would be among the first to condemn Palestinian acts of terror just as I condemn Israeli acts of terror.

However Reformed theologians characteristically are agnostic with regard to Israel's theological significance. Some deny it outright. But the one thing we do is reject the following proposition: that to be critical of Israel is the same as being anti-Semitic. Israel began as a secular state, the nation barely reflects the beautiful national aspirations of the scriptures, and it has made choices that would inspire harsh criticisms from any Old Testament prophet such as Amos or Isaiah.

The Israeli writer, Avraham Burg,³⁵ has explained the roots modern Zionism. In the late 19th century two forms of nationalism were born: first there was liberal nationalism with its roots in the French Revolution where a multi-ethnic state is built and all citizens stand equal under the law. The second model came from German Romanticism where the state belonged to a particular ethnicity and members enjoyed privileges that non-members could not have. This German model is what shaped Theodor Herzl, the founder of 20th century Zionism and the creator of the World

³⁵ Burg, Avraham, "The End of Zionism," *The Guardian*, Sept. 30, 2003. Burg has also published in *Ha'aretz* (June 6, 2007) and *The New Yorker* (July 30, 2007).

Zionist Organization. And it is this model that shapes Israel today. Therefore the Zionist idea was not born from the Bible but from an ethnic nationalism that also gave birth to other nations such as 1930s Germany with all their attendant problems. Christian Zionists who envision Herzl rebuilding Israel with a Bible under one arm are naïve to the realities of history.

Many modern Israelis see this model of a state coming to an end. In the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz Burg recently wrote, "We are already dead. We haven't received news yet, but we are dead. It doesn't work anymore. It doesn't work." And in the New Yorker he wrote this year, "The Israeli reality is not exciting. People are not willing to admit it, but Israel has reached the wall. Ask your friends if they are certain their children will live here. How many will say yes? At most 50%. In other words, the Israeli elite has already parted this place. And without an elite there is no nation." Avraham Burg is a liberal Jew who sees what is wrong and recognizes – with tears – that Herzl's ethnic state cannot sustain itself without resorting to enormous acts of violence.

For all these reasons Reformed theologians do not see commitment to Israel as a spiritual imperative. I believe that the protection of political Israel is a moral duty because of what happened to the Jews in European history. But that is a different matter. Rev. Hagee wants me to know that "those who bless Israel" God will bless. And those who "curse Israel" God will curse. Reformed theologians find the argument dubious.

3. History is Coming to Its Close

Many Christian Zionists believe that the coming of Israel to the land has started the countdown that will end history. Christian Zionists think that Israel's national life, reborn in 1948, is the key prophetic piece we must watch. And this is not all. Israel's return fits with what else is happening in the world. Moral values are in decline, an ecological crisis is looming, with our oil-based economy in peril – and most important, with a war in the Middle East, there is widespread agreement that history has reached a cul-de-sac. All of this is predicted in prophecy.

✿ Reformed theologians remind us that millennial movements like this which predict the end of the world have been with Christianity from the beginning. And they have not come to pass. So they would have us pause and use sober judgment.

Their chief complaint, however, is how this zeal for the end has shaped the ethics of Christian Zionists. Passion for seeing the Second Coming of Christ now comes before a passion for justice and fairness. When presented with the remarkable losses, for instance, of 3 million Palestinians living under occupation, Hagee and others typically stand unmoved. Land cannot be returned to them, negotiations are against God's will.

This summer Hagee showed us the depth of his opposition of fair play to Palestinians. When the Israeli settlers were removed from Gaza, he preached the following:

“I want to ask Washington a question. Is there a connection between the 9,000 Jewish refugees being forcibly removed from their homes in the Gaza Strip now living in tents and the thousands of Americans who have been expelled from their homes by this tremendous work of nature, the hurricane Katrina? Is there a connection there? If you've got a better answer, I'd like to hear it.”

Notice carefully what has just been said. God punished America with hurricane Katrina because America supported the withdrawal of the Gaza settlers. It is this sort of foolishness that stuns Reformed Theologians. They simply cannot understand this confident interpretation of modern history.

4. Fidelity to Israel

It then follows that the first obligation of the Christian is to watch the End Times prophecies. And to stand guardian over the political decisions of each nation. The first test of righteousness in this dangerous era is to align oneself with God's litmus test, the rebirth of Israel. One conviction is always held aloft: God blesses those who bless Israel and curses those who curse Israel. Hence nations will stand or fall based on this one creed.

✿ Reformed theologians observe the zeal of these people to bless Israel and wonder if the gospel has been lost. My first call is fidelity to Christ and his Kingdom. I do not believe that there are two kingdoms of God at work in the world. There is one and it is found in Christ. And yet this commitment should inspire in me a deep love for Israel and a desire for its people to become what their scriptures call them to become: a nation of priests, a light to the nations. A people in whom there is such goodness that the nations will see the glory of God and rejoice.

I believe we are called to love the Jews. But to love someone is also to come alongside, giving them reassurances and offering them honest truth. Christian Zionists excel in one but fail in the other. They love Israel profoundly but I await the day when Rev. Hagee exhorts Israel (just once) to pursue a national life of justice and truth.

5. Jesus' Second Coming

This is where everything has been leading. This is the crown jewel in Christian Zionism's worldview. This is why Rev. Hagee is willing to risk throwing the Middle East into nuclear war. The birth of Israel has now set the stage for the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore any national agenda that would contradict God's plan, any peace overture that will weaken Israel's hold on the land (such as the promise of a Palestinian state or the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza or the West Bank), any decision that stands in the way of this dramatic stage-setting is not a plan blessed by God.

✿ Reformed theologians believe in the Second Coming as well. We actually stand with Christian Zionists committed to a longing for Christ's return.

The chief difference is that reformed theologians make profound investments in the world. We are not sectarian. We devote ourselves to promoting Christ's commitments here. And we do not despair about the course of the world. We have not abandoned it. Dwight Moody, the namesake of dispensational Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, once asked why you'd want to polish the brass on a sinking ship. There you can hear the pessimism in pristine simplicity. Christian Zionism with its roots in dispensationalism has a pessimistic view of human history – reversed only by Christ's return. Reformed theologians are not as convinced that the ship is sinking and we continue to be committed to polishing the brass, painting its hull, navigating its course, and making its passengers comfortable until we are surprised by Christ's return – just as the Bible tells us we should be.

This is my ultimate complaint perhaps: Christian Zionists believe in Jesus, but I wonder if they are always thinking like Christians in this matter. They have uncritically inherited the territorial world view of Judaism and wed this to prophetic predictions that are unsupportable. And that is why the great historians of the future (who are not yet born) will level a serious critique against this movement.

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APPENDIX B

Supercessionist Land Theology and Romans 4:13

A. Introduction.

Gary Burge, a leading supercessionist scholar in the United States, being Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School, has only this year published *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament challenge to "Holy Land" Theology*. One commendation suggests that "Burge may be American evangelicalism's foremost expert on a biblical theology of the land." To whatever degree such an assessment may be so in that it comes from a doctrinal sympathizer, this, along with the other writings of Burge, all add up to a vigorous defense of supercessionism. His considerable extramural activities involving support for the Palestinian cause and criticism of various shades of Zionism leave no doubt as to the tilt of his biblical and political convictions. This paper is but part of a more broad response, in preparation, to those who, like Burge, propose territorial supercessionism. In this regard, critiques of Naim Ateek, O. Palmer Robertson, Stephen Sizer, John Stott and N. T. Wright, are also included.

The supercessionist merging of Old Testament Israel, its ethnicity, nationality and territory, with the Christian church, is such that the end result is the nullification of the Old Testament order as rooted, not only in Moses, but also Abraham. Identity as an Old Testament Jew is lost by means of spiritual transference into the Church as the body of Christ within which all Christians are denominated as spiritual Jews. Identity of the Old Testament nation of Israel is lost through spiritual absorption into the Church which is denominated as the transcending Israel of God. In the same vein, identity of the Old Testament promised land, designated as Israel, is lost by means of spiritual expansion that encompasses the world as God's superseding territory. In this instance, supercessionist scholars have developed a "land theology" that tends to be unnaturally divorced from what surely are the other two inseparable elements of ethnicity and nationality.

However, the extension of "land theology" from the Old Testament into the New-Testament, whereby the world has become the new promised land to the exclusion of the land of Israel, for all of the children of God, is frequently justified on the grounds of Romans 4:13.

"For the promise [ἐπαγγελία, epangelia] to Abraham or to his descendants [σπέρμα, sperma] that he would be heir [κληρονόμος, klēronomos] of the world [κόσμος,

kosmos] was not through law/Law [νόμος, nomos], but through the righteousness [δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosunē] of faith [πίστις, pístis].”

B. The Pauline Context.

The underlying concern of Paul, that leads to his declaration in Romans 4:13, is the fundamental gospel principle of Romans 3:28-30. “²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. ²⁹Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰since God is one, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.” Here there is an initial expectation that God is certainly the God of the Jews, and at the same time a response to the more surprising, though equally true expectation, that God is also the God of the Gentiles. Consequently there follows a rejoinder to anticipated objections that would criticize Paul’s seeming nullification of circumcision (3:9) and the Law (3:31; 4:13-15). In response Paul provides devastating rebuttal that chiefly employs Abraham, and David to a lesser extent. This father of the Hebrew race, himself a Gentile to begin with, was justified through faith alone before being circumcised (4:10). So he became, “¹¹the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, ¹²and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised” (4:11-12). So the covenantal promise, originating in Genesis, preceded both circumcision and the giving of the Law (Gal. 3:17), and thus incorporates all included in the promise through faith alone, that is Abraham’s Hebrew and Gentile descendants, making him “heir of the world.” However, is this “world” that Abraham inherits without Jewish and Gentile distinction, such as many supercessionists maintain?

1. The one promise to Abraham and the diversity of his seed.

What is “the promise” here “to Abraham” and “his descendants”? It seems quite obvious, being sourced in quotations from Genesis, especially with regard to v. 14 where Abraham is referenced as “A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU” (Gen. 17:5). So his faith is also described in v. 18, whereby he consequently obtained the reassurance, “that he might become a Father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, ‘SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDENTS BE’” (Gen. 15:5). Hence this Abrahamic covenant is that originally promised (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17), formally signified (Gen. 15:5-21), and confirmed to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-8; 18:18; 22:15-18), then Isaac (Gen. 26:2-5, 23-24), and Jacob (35:9-13; 48:3-4). This promise, directed toward Abraham, comprised his seed, through Isaac, becoming a great nation that would receive a homeland and the blessing of God along with an exalted reputation. As a result, that is through this nation of promise coming

from the loins of Abraham, the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). From the beginning here there is a clear distinction made between the promised “nation [goy]” of Israel and “the families/clans [mishpachah] of the earth/ground [adamah].” Further exposition of this distinction concerns the original promise to Abraham being ratified by God to Jacob who is now to be called “Israel.” He is exhorted: “Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you” (Gen. 35:11). Such a clear distinction here between the “nation” of Israel and the Gentile “nations” of the world is fundamental to the whole of the Old Testament, yet at the same time the promise to Abraham incorporates the world under the terminology of “a multitude of nations” (17:4, 6), “all the nations of the earth” (18:18; 22:18; 26:4), “a company of nations” (35:11), “a company of peoples” (48:4).

So there is to be a unity of the people of God that incorporates diversity. The eschatological expectation of the prophets repeatedly makes this point with regard to the redeemed nation of Israel serving under Messiah who reigns from Jerusalem with the regenerated Gentile nations peacefully surrounding this regenerated Hebrew nation (Is. 2:1-4; 11:1-10; 49:5-7, 14-17, 22-23; 60:1-5, 10-14; Jer. 36:22-38; Ezek. 37:27-28; Zech. 2:10-11; 8:1-3, 7-8, 13, 20-23; Mic. 4:1-5).

2. The one promise to Abraham and his inheritance of the world.
 - a. The use of κόσμος, kosmos by Paul, especially in Romans.

In the Pauline epistles, the use of κόσμος, kosmos has a variety of meanings, even as in the other New Testament writings. While referring to the whole planet earth as a created material sphere (Rom. 1:20; Eph. 1:4), more often it describes the inhabited world as a morally dark, ungodly, pagan, orderly entity (Rom. 11:15; 12:2; I Cor. 5:10; 11:32; Phil. 2:15). Synonymous terms are used in Romans 10:18 where the word of Christ has gone “out into all the earth [τὴν γῆν, tēn gēn], . . . to the ends of the world [τῆς οἰκουμένης, tēs oikoumenēs].” More specifically in Romans 11:12, 15, the meaning of κόσμος, kosmos is clearly with reference to the pagan Gentile world, as distinct from Israel.

- b. The use of κόσμος, kosmos by Paul in Romans 4:13.

The context, especially vs. 16-17, indicates that Paul has Gentile nations in mind when he writes here of “the world.” In referencing, in v. 17, Abraham according to Genesis 17:5 as “a father of many nations,” clearly this follows on from the conclusion of v. 16 concerning “those [Gentiles, as distinct from “those who are of the Law”] who are of the faith of Abraham.” As “a

company of [Gentile] nations,” they are distinct from “a nation [Israel]” (Gen. 35:11). So with regard to Romans 4:13, Herman Sasse comments: “In the promise to Abraham κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, R. 4:13, the sense of the inhabited world merges into that of the nations of the world (Gen. 18:18; 22:18).”³⁶ The referencing here of Genesis 18:18 is especially significant since it reads: “Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, an in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.” Here is made the same distinction between a “nation” and “the nations of the earth” that is found in Genesis 35:11.

However Douglas Moo, although associating Paul here with the familiar Genesis references to the Abrahamic covenant, then declares:

Later in the OT, there are indications that the promise of the land had come to embrace the entire world (cf. Isa. 55:3-5), and many Jewish texts speak of Israel’s inheritance in similar terms (Cf. *Sir.* 44:21; *Jub.* 22:14; 32:19; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 14:13; 51:3). Against this background—to which we can add Jesus’ beatitude, “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (Although γῆ, not κόσμος, is used here)—Paul probably refers generally to all that God promised his people.³⁷

If Isaiah 55:3-5 is the best example of this suggested territorial supercessionism, then the argument here is very much lacking in validity. Zion/Israel (cf. Is. 54:7-8³⁸) shall know the mercies of an everlasting covenant mediated through David. Hence, “a nation which knows you not [the Gentiles] will run to you,” v. 5 (cf. 54:3; Rom. 11:17-18), though in no way with absorption in mind. As to the extra-biblical sources, while they express exuberance for the eschatological glory resulting from the seed of Abraham, yet in no way do they even suggest *nullification* of the old Israel territorial order resulting in territorial universalism. This was hardly an exultant Jewish hope.

So we agree with C. K. Barrett who comments that:

“Heir of the world” is probably drawn from Gen. xxii 18 (“all the nations”) and xxii 17, where in the LXX “shall possess” becomes “shall inherit”. Paul uses it to summarize the content of the promise.³⁹

³⁶ Hermann Sasse, “κόσμος,” G. Kittel and G. Friedric, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 888.

³⁷ Douglas Moo, *Romans*, p. 274.

³⁸ Edward J. Young, *Isaiah*, III, p. 366.

³⁹ C. K. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 94.

C. The Supercessionist Conflation.

It needs to be clearly understood here that the supercessionist scholar does not allow for the distinctive inclusion of the Old Testament model of the land of Israel within the wider scope of the territory of the whole world. No, the Old Testament land of Israel has lost its identity, and there is a vehemence, indeed intolerance with regard to the maintenance of the eschatological distinctiveness of the land. It is alleged that the divine appointment of the dwelling place of the twelve tribes of Israel was merely inaugural; consequently it has no peculiar eschatological place in the vision of a redeemed world that has become the new universal territory for the people of God. Here is another instance of supercessionism's absorption, or transference, or melding of the covenantally promised territory of Israel into an ecumenical vision that results in the homogeneity of the redeemed people of God. It is a universality that will not allow diversity.

It is also important to note that supercessionist scholars give misplaced emphasis to "the world" as raw territory in a universal sense, perhaps as a necessary consequence with regard to their argument that attempts to nullify what they regard as the limited Old Testament concept of the raw territory of Israel. However, while Paul undoubtedly has in mind "the world" in terms of extremity, that is an inheritance that reaches to the four corners of the earth, it would be more accurate to state that here "the world" has in mind the universal outreach of the Messianic kingdom, when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). Then "the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one" (Zech. 14:9). Though surely the context of these eschatological references is that of Israel being distinct from, and yet at the center of, the nations of the world.

So to indicate the widespread reliance of supercessionist authors upon Romans 4:13 as a major passage for their reasoning, concerning the nullification of the historic land of Israel, we draw attention to the following sources.

1. Naim Ateek.

The New Testament thus reinterprets the promises of the land in the light of Christ. A good example of this is in Romans 4:13 where Paul says something quite revolutionary. . . . Yet nowhere in the Old Testament was Abraham given a promise relating to the whole world! Instead, Paul has taken the promise made to Abraham concerning the land and has reinterpreted it in the light of the coming of Christ. . . . So in the light of their universal fulfillment in Christ, the narrow Old Testament promises regarding the land have acquired new meaning. They are now seen to be

transitory and provisional in their intention. They are time-bound, and because of their completion in Christ, have become theologically obsolete.⁴⁰

The arbitrary principle of “reinterpretation” here establishes two hermeneutics for the Bible; however the Jewish Christian in particular will not abide by this. It is in reality a subjective Gentilic hermeneutic that, while attempting to hide under christocentricity, yet wholly avoids the Jewishness of Jesus.⁴¹ “Yet nowhere in the Old Testament was Abraham given a promise relating to the whole world!” This sounds like the anti-trinitarian argument that vainly clings to the absence of the word “trinity” in Scripture. Rather we agree with Barrett, as referenced before, that here, “Paul uses it [the term “world”] to summarize the content of the promise.”⁴² Note that apart from the universality propounded by Ateek, there is a vehement denial of any future for the land of Israel, even by means of distinctive incorporation. Such a belief naturally plays out in this author’s politically based support for the Palestinian cause.

2. Gary Burge.

[T]he unique claim God’s people once had on Judea now extends to the whole world. Thus the promise to Abraham and his descendants is no longer for Canaan—but for the world (Rom. 4:13).⁴³

Notice that Burge does not say, “the promise to Abraham and his descendants is not only inclusive of distinctive Canaan—but also the world.” This we believe to be the repeated hope of the Bible. Rather here Canaan, and its tribal divisions, have become outmoded. Hence there is to be no restoration of the Jewish people, no distinctive Hebrew nation, no dominance of territorial Jerusalem in great glory under the personal reign of Christ and the apostles (Matt. 19:27-28).

The formula that linked Abraham to Jewish ethnic lineage and the right to possess the land has now been overturned in Christ. Paul’s Christian theology links Abraham to children of faith, and to them belongs God’s full domain, namely the world [Rom. 4:13].⁴⁴

This is radical language that nowhere, let alone in Romans 4:13, is upheld by Scripture, that is in terms of “overturning” the original land promise made with Abraham. Note how “Paul’s Christian theology” is distinguished from its Hebrew

⁴⁰ Naim Ateek, “Zionism and the land: a Palestinian Christian perspective,” in Johnston, P. and Walker, P., eds., *The Land of Promise*, p. 211.

⁴¹ Refer to Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel*, pp. 147-202, 223-252.

⁴² Barrett, *Romans*, p. 94.

⁴³ Gary Burge, *Jesus and the Land*, p. 59.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

roots, even though the apostle was appointed to include Hebrew messianism in his ministry (Acts 9:15; 28:20; Rom. 1:16). Here replacement territorial theology is plainly stated. Yet again, universality is intolerant of diversity.

The Pauline and Johannine communities were busy rethinking the nature of religious identity in comparison with that found in Judaism and they decided that many of the historic categories needed to change. Not only was a connection with Abraham and the historic people of God universalized (inviting Gentiles into the Church) but religious territorialism—a zealous commitment to the land based on religious privilege—would necessarily change with it. Paul’s treatment of Jerusalem and the Temple makes this clear. Likewise this surprising reinterpretation of the land suggests the same. For instance, Abraham was promised *the world* (Rom. 4:13), not the land of Judea.⁴⁵

This is entirely speculative. The language here, that “the Pauline and Johannine communities were busy rethinking the nature of religious identity in comparison with that found in Judaism and *they decided* [emphasis added] that many of the historic categories needed to change,” so plainly lacks a sense of divine sovereign revelation, direction and oversight found in Acts (11:17-18; 15:4, 7-9, 13-18, 28) and Paul’s epistles (Rom. 15:8-13; Gal. 1:11-12; 2:2, 8). Yes, the Gentiles were invited into Israel (Rom. 11:17), rather than the Church, which all the more suggests that here there was to be no conclusion of the land promise made with Abraham, it being based upon pure grace, not “privilege” (Deut. 7:6-8; 9:5-6). Yes, there was to be change regarding the Temple for the reason that it was an integral part of the temporary Mosaic covenant. But Jerusalem/Zion, in becoming an integral part of the unilateral Davidic covenant, is never referenced to as temporary or superseded; quite to the contrary (Ps. 48:1-8; 132:13-14; 146:10; Jer. 17:24-25; Joel 3:16-21; Mic. 4:1-8). This is equally so in the New Testament where references to “the Jerusalem above” (Gal. 4:26) and “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22), describe that which is to come down to earth (Rev. 21:2-3) and fulfill what was not fulfilled in the preceding, more unholy times of the City of David (Matt. 23:37-38).⁴⁶ Notice that Romans 4:13 is said here to nullify “the land of Judea” rather than distinctively incorporate it as the glorious center of God’s universal Messianic kingdom (Ps. 102:13-22; 132:13-14).

3. O. Palmer Robertson.

Abraham is declared to be heir, not of “the land,” but of “the world” (Rom. 4:13). By this comprehensive language the imagery of the land as a picture of restored paradise has finally come of age. No longer merely a portion of this earth, but now

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

⁴⁶ Horner, *Future Israel*, pp. 247-252.

the whole of the cosmos partakes of the consummation of God's redemptive work in our fallen world.⁴⁷

The logic here, suggesting that because Abraham was promised that he would be heir of "the world," therefore somehow this would not incorporate the land, is breathtaking in its lack of validity. It appears to totally evade the thinking of this author that Israel, with Jerusalem as its capital, instead of being done away with, could in fact become the center of a regenerated world (Matt. 19:27-28; Acts 3:19-21). Yet this is precisely what the prophets foresaw (Isa. 62:1-2; 65:17-25; Ezek. 5:5-8; 20:39-44; 37:24-28). When Habakkuk prophesied that, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14), it would be absurd to suggest that inherent here was the idea that the land of Israel and Jerusalem would have no central significance in all of this! Similarly, when Zechariah prophesied that "the Lord will be king over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9), this universal in no way eliminated the particular truths that, "Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site" (14:10), and that "Jerusalem will dwell in safety" (14:11)."

4. Stephen Sizer.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, quotes and expands on Psalm 37[:11], to promise that the meek will inherit much more than Palestine. Now they will inherit the earth. Paul explores this profound realization in Romans, where he concludes that "Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world" not through the Law but by faith (Rom. 4:13). It is no longer merely a portion of the earth that is the consummation of God's work of redeeming a fallen world, but one in which the entire cosmos participates.⁴⁸

The Lord Jesus did not suggest that the meek would inherit "much more than Palestine" for the simple reason that it was not until 135 AD that Emperor Hadrian scornfully renamed the land of the Hebrew people after Philistia as Palestina. When the Lord Jesus proclaimed the *Sermon on the Mount*, assuming He possibly spoke in Hebrew, He would have declared that the humble/meek shall inherit "the land," *eretz*, being used six times in Psalm 37, though translated $\gamma\eta$, $g\bar{e}$, in the New Testament. So in Matthew 2:20-21, $\gamma\eta$, $g\bar{e}$, twice references $\gamma\eta\nu$ Ἰσραήλ , $g\bar{e}n$ Israēl , clearly the "land of Israel." The crowd listening in Galilee would almost certainly have understood "land" here and not "earth." While one could make application in a more broad sense to "earth" and the children of God as a whole, yet no "expansion" of meaning was being made, and especially as suggested by Sizer with reference to Romans 4:13. We agree with the wording

⁴⁷ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God*, p. 26.

⁴⁸ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, p. 164.

here that: "It is no longer merely a portion of the earth that is the consummation of God's work of redeeming a fallen world, but one in which the entire kosmos participates." Yes, the messianic kingdom of Christ will include not merely the land of Israel with Jerusalem at its center from where the Lord Jesus will reign, but also the surrounding Gentile nations unto the very ends of the earth (Hab. 2:14; Zech. 14:9-11). However, because of what Sizer writes elsewhere⁴⁹, we believe that his diminutive use of the adverb "merely," perhaps ambiguously appearing to be *distinctively* inclusive of the land within the world, does not in fact convey what he really believes.

5. John Stott.

[I]n the Genesis text Abraham was promised Canaan, "north, south, east and west" of where he was standing (Gen. 13:12, 14, 17), whose boundaries were later delineated. How then did "the land" become "the world" [Rom. 4:13]? It is partly that, as a general principle, the fulfillment of biblical prophecy has always transcended categories in which it was originally posterity "all nations of the earth" would be blessed (E.g. Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). This promised multiplication of Abraham's descendants led the Rabbis to the conclusion that God would "cause them to inherit from sea to sea, and from the River unto the utmost part of the earth" (Ecclus. 44:21. See also Jubilees 17:3; 22:14). The third reason for Paul's statement that identified as the Messiah (Gal. 3:16; cf. John 8:56), it was further acknowledged that he would exercise a universal dominion (E.g. Ps. 2:8; Isa. 9:7). Further, his people are his fellow heirs, which is why the meek will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5) and why in and through Christ "all things are ours", including "the world" (I Cor. 3:21f.).⁵⁰

To assert that, "the fulfillment of biblical prophecy has always transcended categories in which it was originally given," calls for clarification. It is often true in, as it were, "looking through a glass darkly" with regard to a prophecy to begin with, that eventually greater clarity has resulted upon fulfillment of the original prophecy. However Stott has more than this in mind here; he is describing progression and development of thought which takes us beyond the basic form of original prophetic revelation. In this case, "land" is to be fulfilled in the "world," especially after the coming of Christ. As already explained, we believe this was not the original divine intent. "Land" means "land," and "world" means "world," within which "land" there will be a distinctive territorial identity." The text does not say that the land will be absorbed into the world and consequently lose its distinctive character.

⁴⁹ Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers*, pp. 61, 153. "Israel now represents those who trust in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles. . . . Jesus repudiated the notion of an earthly and nationalistic kingdom."

⁵⁰ John Stott, *Romans*, p. 130.

As to the referencing of extra-biblical rabbinical sources, previously mentioned by Moo, their only value concerning the point at hand, would be if these authors had a vision of the absorption of the land of Israel into the whole world with a resultant lack of any further Jewish identity. Of course for Stott and others here, this melding results in the more comprehensive loss of any ethnic, national, as well as territorial identity. Whatever smooth turning of language there is along the way here, the end result being sought is ultimately the anti-Judaic repudiation of all things related to the ancient Hebrew order. Jesus Christ, the quintessential Jew, is employed to do away with Judaism. There is a perverted Christology here.

So once again there is recourse to universality that will not allow for the incorporation of diversity. "As soon as Abraham's seed was identified as the Messiah (Gal. 3:16; cf. John 8:56), it was further acknowledged that he would exercise a universal dominion (E.g. Ps. 2:8; Isa. 9:7)." But the universality of Psalm 2:8 in no way nullifies the Jewish individuality of David, the human author, the Lord's human and prototype "king upon Zion," v. 6. This is evidenced when in response to the Lord's covenant promise, David responded: "You have established for Yourself Your people Israel as Your own people forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God" (II Sam. 7:24). The same is true concerning Isaiah 9:7. Yes: "There will be no end to the increase of His [Messiah's] government on the throne of David and over his kingdom." However there is not the slightest intimation here that such promised universality will exclude the individuality of Israel. This is so patently clear in chapter 11 that follows, when "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse," vs. 9-10. Immediately following this universality is the individuality of the restoration of Israel, obviously back to the land and "My holy mountain," v. 9. "And He will . . . assemble the banished ones of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth," v. 12.

Here, as with Sizer, we have the same misuse of Matthew 5:5, allegedly supporting a homogenous universality, that excludes individuality, because, "in and through Christ 'all things are ours', including 'the world' (I Cor. 3:21f.)." However in referencing I Corinthians 3:21-23, once again we are faced with a trust in universality that, it is suggested, excludes diversity. Because for the Christian, "all things belong to you, . . . even the world or life or death," vs. 21-22, this in no way denies variety in the future messianic kingdom, such as with Jew and Gentile. After all, Moses and Elijah will be there (Matt. 17:1-8), and distinctively so. Will their Jewishness have been obliterated? I think not. When the Lord Jesus returns according to Acts 1:9-11, will His Jewishness have been done away with? I think not, any more than the nail prints in His hands! Augustinianism tends to

paint itself into a very amorphous, abstract corner with regard to the eschatological kingdom.

6. N. T. Wright.

The Land, like the Torah, was a temporary stage in the long purpose of the God of Abraham. It was not a bad thing done away with, but a good and necessary thing now fulfilled in Christ and the Spirit. It is as though, in fact, the Land were a great advance metaphor for the design of God that his people should eventually bring the whole world into submission to his healing reign. God's whole purpose now goes beyond Jerusalem and the Land to the whole world [Rom. 4:13].⁵¹

To associate the temporary, bilateral character of the Mosaic covenant, incorporating Torah (Rom. 7:1-4; Gal. 3:23-25; Heb. 8:14), with the inviolate, unilateral character of the Abrahamic covenant, incorporating the land (Gen. 15:1-21; Rom. 11:28; Gal. 3:17-18), is to inject confusion into the point in question. How was the land, "a good and necessary thing now fulfilled in Christ and the Spirit"? We are told, by "God's whole purpose going beyond Jerusalem and the Land to the whole world [Rom. 4:13]." We could accept this, in a large measure, if it meant incorporating the land and Jerusalem, as a central part of the ultimate vision of the world, into the totality of the righteous kingdom of God. Indeed we believe this to be the clear biblical vision. Here then would be the fullness of Abraham's inheritance on account of God's sure promise to him (Rom. 4:13). However, because this author previously described the Land as "temporary" in the purpose of God, we know that, for him, "fulfillment in Christ and the Spirit" means abrogation of the Old Testament concept of ethnicity, nationality, and territory. The end result is the repeal of covenant Judaism, usually alleged to be on account of disobedience, originally established with Abraham.

D. Conclusion.

It is not difficult to discern a pattern of similar eschatological understanding concerning universality, sans diversity, with regard to the foregoing authors' conception of the future of historic Judaism and the consummation of the messianic kingdom of God. They eloquently agree that all things are to be summed up in Christ, yet at the same time are strangely silent concerning His ongoing and future Jewishness. Enthusiasm for christo-centricity sharply contrasts with an alleged repudiation of all things Judaic according to God's present covenant faithfulness; the expression of this is sometimes direct or otherwise oblique. Yet in the end, there is

⁵¹ N. T. Wright, "Jerusalem in the New Testament," in Walker, P. W. L., ed., *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God* (Cambridge: Tyndale, 1992), p. 70.

solid agreement according to the forgoing, that the Land has become passé in the mind of God. So we believe there are evident consequences as a result, particularly territorial supercessionism that plays out in terms of contemporary political life in the Middle East, especially the repudiation of the modern State of Israel.

Hence we are led to a ramification here that is not simply a fine point of theological disputation. It is the inevitable outworking, and consistently so, of far greater support for the Palestinian cause that contrasts with frequent denigration of the Jewish nation of today. John Stott writes:

Away then with anti-Semitism! It has been an appalling scandal in the history of Europe, and even the Christian church has been implicated. Christians should be “pro-Semitic”, in the sense that we recognize how the people of God have been [note the past tense nuance here] highly favored of God. We Gentiles are their debtors, Paul wrote (Rom. 15:27). We owe them a huge spiritual debt, especially in their bequest to the world of both the Scriptures and Christ.⁵²

Then he goes on in the very next paragraph: “Who, then, according to the New Testament perspective, is Israel today? . . . It is that true Israel is neither Jews nor Israelis but believers in the Messiah.”⁵³ Here is essential Augustinianism plain and simple, that has left such a trail of shameful behavior over the centuries. Does this author honestly believe that the Jew today, who Paul exhorts is to be made jealous by the Gentile Christian (Rom. 11:11, 14), will courteously respond: “Thank you so very much for telling me the good news that through faith in the revered Jew named Jesus, my historic Jewishness becomes invalid!” Paul, as a messianic Jew, never did this, or even intimated that this was his real belief. His attitude was quite the opposite. Then Stott is elsewhere quoted as declaring that Christian Zionism is “biblically anathema.”⁵⁴ It is not enough glibly to denounce anti-Semitism and verbalize that the Jews need to be saved. So often this proves to be mere tokenism. Rather there needs to be a passionate loving interest in the Jewish people that admits that even today, in their miserable unbelief, “they are beloved for the sake of the fathers” (Rom. 11:28). Not only in the consummate future will Israel be saved as a nation, but as a consequence the Jewish people will dwell safely in the land under the righteous reign of Messiah (Rom. 11:26; cf. Is. 60:21; 61:7; Ezek. 34:11-16; 36:22-36; 37:11-14, 21-25; Amos 9:13-15; Zech. 14:9-11).

⁵² John Stott, “The Place of Israel,” appendix, Stephen Sizer, *Zion’s Christian Soldiers*, p. 167.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, p. 22. The citation is from Peter Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon*, p. 80.