

Chapter 5

ISRAEL – THE RELATIONSHIP TO JUDEO-CENTRIC PREMILLENNIALISM

CONTEMPORARY discussion with regard to the relationship between national Israel and the various schools of millennialism is fraught with misunderstood terminology and simplistic expression. This is especially the case concerning the eschatological understanding of Israel within conservative Christianity, but even more particularly when premillennialism and dispensationalism are under consideration. So often there is resultant confusion, the reason being that the complexities of the subject, both historic and exegetical, are subordinated to simplistic clichés, often with defamatory intimations that are quite unwarranted. This writer's frequent experience has been, especially within a Reformed environment, that upon his expression of a future premillennial hope, he is then subjected to careful scrutiny. Qualification is sought as to whether one is an historic premillennialist, after the manner of George Eldon Ladd, or a dispensationalist after the lineage of Darby, Schofield, Chafer, Walvoord, etc. The tone of the enquiry suggests that the former is acceptable while the latter is unacceptable. So explanation is made that one believes in a glorious future time when the redeemed people of God, distinctively comprising national Israel and the Gentile nations, will enjoy the consummation of their salvation on an earth of renovated spiritual materiality where the glorious, spiritually tangible and substantial Jesus Christ will reign from Jerusalem in the midst of Israel. At this juncture, the common response is that such a belief identifies one as a dispensationalist, especially since Ladd is said to have not incorporated such particularity concerning Israel within his premillennialism. In other words, if a person was an historic premillennialist, he would not retain any clear-cut distinction between Israel and the church, but especially within the one redeemed people of God in their future manifestation. When one then points out and specifically names a number of notable Christians who were not dispensationalists, such as Horatius Bonar, J. C. Ryle, and C. H. Spurgeon, even postmillennialist Jonathan Edwards, who nevertheless believed in the aforementioned scenario, that is Israel and the Gentile nations retaining their distinctive identity under the earthly reign of Christ, the frequent response is that of a blank stare. It is this problem that we now consider and attempt to clarify, especially in terms of the degree to which historic premillennialism has been Judeo-centric.

By way of a further illustration of the problem, we quote from William Hendriksen's previously referenced Master of Theology thesis, *The Premillennialistic Conception concerning Israel and the Church* submitted to Calvin Seminary, in Chapter 2. From the outset, this author defines the essence of his primary concern as follows:

We are not concerned with the distinction between Israel as a nation and the Church as an independent spiritual organization. No one denies this distinction. . . . The real point at issue . . . [is] whether or not God has ONE chosen people: whether or not the Church has been from the beginning of the world and will continue to exist to the end of the world.¹

¹ William Hendriksen, *The Premillennialistic Conception concerning Israel and the Church*, Th.M. Thesis, p. 1. Presumably the author is accepting the present separate existence of the Christian Church and the nation of Israel. However, he fails to declare whether Israel as a present nation has divine, covenantal validity; his whole rationale inescapably leads one to conclude that he denies such a possibility.

In response it must be pointed out that, quite apart from the debatable issue as to whether the Church was founded from the beginning of the world after Hendriksen's Dutch Reformed convictions, it cannot be too strongly asserted that the heart of the matter is *not* whether God has ONE chosen people, as distinct from two. Rather, the fundamental concern is whether the ONE people of God may include a distinction between Jew and Gentile, that is a unity that incorporates diversity. This is not a mere semantic difference since even progressive dispensationalists will affirm that there is only one covenanted people of God, through the atonement of Christ, whether prospectively or retrospectively, that yet accommodates a distinction between Jew and Gentile. More broadly speaking, premillennialists have historically believed that there is only one redeemed people of God. However, they have also believed that Scripture describes an eschatological distinction whereby Jew and Gentile, or Israel and the Nations, represent a diversity within the unity of the kingdom of God. After all, it must be acknowledged that the angelic order does inject what appears to be an eternal personal distinction, of course outside of the qualified community of the redeemed. Are they participants in the kingdom of God?

It should also be pointed out that Hendriksen's Thesis as a whole presents widespread confusion insofar as a right distinction being made between premillennialism and dispensationalism. The title addresses "premillennialism" without any effort being taken to distinguish the historic understanding of this eschatological school over the centuries of church history, originally known as chiliasm, from the more recent distinctive dispensationalism. In fact many of the points of Hendriksen's criticism are with regard to what is commonly acknowledged today as being particular aspects of dispensationalism, yet they are repeatedly identified as being premillennial. This is made abundantly clear in the introductory "Review of the Premillennialistic Position," such as where future glory for the Church is heavenly, while that of Israel is earthly.² A further illustration of this misrepresentation concerns the teaching of early dispensationalism, according to Blackstone, Scofield, Larkin, etc., that there were two gospels: "The Gospel of the Kingdom is for the Jews only while the Gospel of the Grace of God is for both Jew and Gentile."³ Thus: "It is clear, therefore, that there is, according to the Premillennialist conception concerning Israel and the Church one norm or ethical standard for Israel; another for the Church."⁴ However further on we note a qualification:

[T]here is one way of salvation for Israel; another for the Church. At this point, again, we should be very careful. Many Pre's would not subscribe to this statement. Many, indeed, cannot be charged with this error. Even though their system, consistently applied, would lead to this conclusion, we have no right to ascribe to them a certain theory which they do not themselves avow.⁵

Certainly this is a rare qualified acknowledgment that many premillennialists do not subscribe to all of its ascribed particulars, especially some which in fact are associated with dispensationalism. Nevertheless, the overall presentation remains confused and lacks any real attempt to sort out the distinction between historic premillennialism and dispensationalism. However, we will most definitely maintain that, in general, both historic premillennialism and progressive dispensationalism have upheld a diversity involving Israel and the Gentile nations within the redeemed people of God. Reluctance on Ladd's part to bring Judeo-centric clarity and definition into his eschatology at this point places him outside the overwhelming emphasis of historic

² Ibid., pp. 1-4.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 34.

premillennialism. Hence, in this most important aspect of premillennialism, his perspective is decidedly not historic or normative.

A. Israel and Judeo-centric Premillennialism up to the Reformation.

The classic distinction for centuries was between the supercessionism of Augustine, as reflected in his *City of God*, and chiliasm that was often maligned for its alleged carnality and Judeo-centricity. As will be demonstrated, undoubtedly chiliasm, and subsequent premillennialism, have continued to uphold a closer identity with the perpetuation of the Jewish people as a nation having a distinct eschatological hope. This being so, and in the light of the theological anti-Semitism that flowed forth with dominant influence out of Augustine's eschatology, it is easier to understand how premillennialism suffered belittlement, Cinderella like, as a consequence. Over the centuries that led up to the Reformation, the commanding influence of classic amillennialism was not a matter of choice according to the free biblical enquiry of Christians in general. During this period, the eschatology was that accepted and administered by the ecclesiastical powers, according to the lineage of Augustine and Aquinas, and it admirably suited the perpetuation, indeed the consolidation of the Church triumphant on earth as the new Israel that was rigidly intolerant of any suggestion of a revived and regenerated old Israel. Thus, upon the dawning of the Reformation,

[i]n the sixteenth century, the rejection of the doctrine of a future terrestrial millennium was so common in Puritanism, and in Protestantism more generally, that it represented a mainstream position at the time. Luther and Melanchthon, Zwingli and Bullinger, and Calvin and Beza repudiated the millenarian doctrine, as did the Elizabethan Anglicans John Bale and John Foxe and their Puritan contemporaries Thomas Cartright and William Perkins. These and other "amillennialists," as they are often called, either assigned the millennium to a past historical epoch that antedated the supposed corruption of the apostolic church by Roman Catholicism, or saw the millennium as the whole period of the Christian dispensation between the incarnation and the second coming, or regarded the millennium as a purely spiritual condition existing only in heaven or perhaps in the souls of living believers. But in the early to mid-seventeenth century, this amillennialist consensus unraveled as the idea of a future millennium on earth gained popularity, particularly in Reformed circles.⁶

Only with the advent of printing and the freedom to publish that coalesced during the early seventeenth century did a more independent pastorate result and the people at all stratas find themselves exposed to a revival of more millennial interpretations of Scripture, especially as eventually designated as premillennialism and postmillennialism.

B. Israel and Judeo-centric Premillennialism beyond the Reformation.

In broad terms, the eschatology of the late sixteenth century perpetuated Augustinianism, the result being that chiliasm continued to be associated with certain extremist segments of Anabaptism. The seventeenth century introduced an openness to millennial speculation that has continued to the present, though the reason for this eruption and consequent flurry of discussion is a most enlightening matter that has already been indicated briefly in the Concluding Summary of Chapter 2. At the conclusion of Crawford Gribbens' published

⁶ Richard W Cogley, "The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Restoration of Israel in the "Judeo-centric" Strand of Puritan Millenarianism." *Church History*, 72:2 (June 2003), pp. 306-307.

doctoral thesis, he draws upon the observations of Christopher Hill which prove to be most enlightening. Their significance call for their being repeated here.

If, as [Christopher] Hill claims, English Calvinism was crumbling in the 1590s, then after the 1640s both strict church discipline and Calvinist theology finally “lost their grip”: “Calvinism broke down when the Revolution established freedom of discussion.” . . . The revolution’s literary implications were also enormous. . . . As Thomas Manton noted in 1655, “The press is an excellent means to scatter knowledge, were it not so often abused. All complain there is enough written, and think that now there should be a stop. Indeed, it were well if in this scribbling age there were some restraint. Useless pamphlets are grown almost as great a mischief as the erroneous and profane.” Hill has noted that, “The collapse of censorship saw a fantastic outpouring of books, pamphlets and newspapers. Before 1640, newspapers were illegal; by 1645 there were 722. Twenty-two books were published in 1640; over 2,000 in 1642. As both sides in the Civil War appealed for support from the ordinary people, the issues at stake had to be discussed. But it went farther than that . . . No old shibboleths were left unchallenged in this unprecedented freedom.” Perhaps Owen had been right in hoping “we might have less writing, and more praying.”⁷

The result was a resurgence of millennialism that continued to be opposed by much of the Anglican, European Reformed and Lutheran establishments. Nevertheless,

[o]n the Continent, the key figures in the transition to millenarianism were two German Reformed theologians, Johann Piscator and Johann Heinrich Alsted; and in England, they were Thomas Brightman and Joseph Mede, an Anglican whose influence on the emergence of Puritan millenarianism was profound.⁸

Thus as eschatological study of Scripture and resultant speculation fomented fresh discovery, two schools of millennialism emerged, premillennialism, which anticipated the future return of Jesus Christ just prior to the commencement of his earthly thousand year reign, and postmillennialism, which anticipated the future earthly thousand year millennium at the end of which Jesus Christ would personally return to earth. However, “the three major eschatological traditions which the Christian church has developed—a-, pre- and postmillennialism—each found expression within the puritan movement.”⁹ So that now our interest is to discover in particular the degree of Judeo-centric focus which the millenarian schools evidenced. Here we will find the real character of historic premillenarism. Hence, in keeping with the whole thrust of this volume’s purpose, we will not focus on particulars of the millennial categories in any detail, except where they relate to the absence or presence of a distinct Judeo-centric emphasis.

C. Israel and the People of God in Premillennialism.

Because of widespread misunderstanding concerning the participation of Israel in the millennium, it is important that both the dispensational premillennial and classic historic premillennial perspectives be made clear. At the outset, and at a most practical level, let it be understood that both schools of eschatology evidence a most loving interest in the salvation of the Jew *and* at the same time give ready acknowledgment of his divinely valid, individual, national, and territorial identity, even in unbelief, but especially in terms of future millennial participation.

⁷ Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, pp. 194-195.

⁸ Cogley, “‘Judeo-centric’ Strand of Puritan Millenarianism,” p. 307.

⁹ Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, p. 16.

1. The two peoples of dispensational premillennialism.

In varying forms, dispensational premillennialism has maintained that there have been, are, and will continue to be two distinct peoples that comprise His redeemed children, namely the redeemed of national Israel and the redeemed of the Church. This has been the standard teaching of Louis Sperry Chafer, John F. Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, and more recently Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. In this regard, earlier belief in two new covenants was eventually abandoned by Walvoord, Ryrie, and presumably Fruchtenbaum, in favor of the one new covenant revealed in Jeremiah 31. Consequently, further development within this movement has seen the emerging of Progressive Dispensationalism that has more willingly accepted the implications of this one new covenant for the redeemed, whatever distinctions they might incorporate. As a result, Bruce Ware representatively writes of his

conclusion that Israel and the church are in one sense *a united people* of God (they participate in the same new covenant), while in another sense they remain separate in their identity and so comprise *differing peoples* of God. (Israel is given territorial and political aspects of the new-covenant promise not applicable to the church.) Israel and the church are in fact one people of God, who together share in the forgiveness of sins through Christ and partake of his indwelling Spirit with its power for covenant faithfulness, while they are nonetheless distinguishable covenant participants comprising what is one unified people.¹⁰

2. The one people of classic historic premillennialism.

With the forgoing in mind, it is now appropriate to consider the very real Judeo-centricity of classic historic premillennialism concerning which it has been commonly believed that there is only one people of God, the inclusive church of Jesus Christ. At the same time this unity incorporates a specific diversity between saved Israel and the saved Gentile nations. Israel anticipates restoration to the land, it being the Jew's inviolate inheritance, national conversion, and Christ's future millennial reign from Jerusalem. The Gentile nations, in surrounding Israel, will happily yield to Christ's reign from Jerusalem as He is served by the honored and restored tribes of Jacob. For this reason, while acknowledging George Eldon Ladd's significant contribution in eschatology at this juncture, which will subsequently be reviewed, yet we exclude him as being truly representative of historic premillennialism. Unfortunately, some have characterized the classic historic premillennial perspective as if its acknowledgment of Israel was at best token in the present with the result being the converted Jews' absorption into the Gentile or homogenous kingdom of Christ where, at best, Hebrew categories will merely be symbolically represented. In this regard, consider the common confusion that Samuel Waldron represents, from a Reformed perspective, when he writes as follows:

The revival of premillennialism in the 17th century did not necessarily entail the church/Israel distinction. Famous premillennialists have rejected it. Iain Murray provides

¹⁰ Bruce A. Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, pp. 96-97.

extensive evidence that Charles Haddon Spurgeon, for instance, did not accept this distinction.¹¹

Yes, the seventeenth century premillennialists did not distinguish between Israel and the church, but they did distinguish between Israel and the Gentile nations within the one people of God, that is the church. Likewise with Spurgeon, he rejected the dispensational distinction between Israel and the church, yet as an historic premillennialist he upheld a distinction between Israel and the Gentile nations within the one people of God, that is the church. Refer to his sermon based on Ezekiel 37, *The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews*, in Appendix F, which leaves no doubt as to Spurgeon's Judeo-centric loyalty with which Waldron does not in fact agree.

Thus Waldron's intimation that the premillennialism of the seventeenth century was not Judeo-centric is definitely not the case, even when the seventeenth century revival of millennialism in general, both pre- and post-, is considered. At that time Judeo-centrists became numerous, indeed dominant amongst Puritan millenarians.

[T]hey viewed the plan to readmit Jews into England in the mid 1650s, the Sabbatian movement of the mid 1660s, and the decline of Turkish power in the 1680s and 1690s as foreshadowings of Jewish conversion and Ottoman defeat. . . . Judeo-centrists assumed that both branches of the children of Israel [Judah and the ten lost tribes of Israel] would fight the Ottomans, embrace Christianity, return to the land of Canaan, and inaugurate the millennium in Jerusalem.¹²

Five influential representatives of this reemerging emphasis are now briefly considered. While both postmillennialism and premillennialism are represented here, and, not unexpectedly, the premillennial perspective of Bonar is that which is most clearly defined, yet together there is resounding agreement that the eschatological destiny of the Jew is distinctively individual, national, and territorial. Quite apart from the exegesis of Revelation 20, the Old Testament is substantially employed in the upholding of this doctrine. The Augustinian hermeneutic, formerly embraced due to the inheritance of past centuries, and as essentially propounded today by George Eldon Ladd, is consistently jettisoned for a more literal mode of interpretation. As a result, it is most obvious that in line with this recovered perception, there also resulted a more kindly attitude toward the Jew which in turn ignited a heartfelt concern for evangelistic missionary outreach toward the Jew.

a. The Judeo-centric postmillennialism of Thomas Brightman (1562-1607).

Having become a fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, in 1584, Thomas Brightman was also a gifted preacher, a Calvinist in theology who, in both pastoral and teaching ministry, expressed the unpopular view that the Church of England become thoroughly reformed along Presbyterian lines. However his influential writings on *Revelation*, *Daniel*, and the *Song of Solomon*, indicated a change of theological direction. Thus, "[t]he first important and English revision of the Reformed, Augustinian concept of the millennium was made by Thomas Brightman early in the seventeenth century."¹³ The unpopularity of his

¹¹ Samuel E. Waldron, *The End Times Made Simple*, p. 138. The reference is to Iain Murray's *The Puritan Hope*, pp. 258-260, where he refers to Spurgeon's rejection of the *dispensationalist* distinctive.

¹² Cogley, "'Judeo-centric' Strand of Puritan Millenarianism," p. 309, 315.

¹³ Peter Toon, "The Latter Day Glory," *Puritan Eschatology*, ed. Peter Toon, pp. 26-27.

ecclesiastical and eschatological beliefs led to ostracism and publication of his writings in more receptive Europe. Hence,

[t]he first English translation of Brightman’s Commentary on Daniel 11-12 appeared in 1635, being printed in Holland. The sub-title gives a good indication as to its basic contents—*The restoring of the Jewes and their callinge to the faith of Christ after the utter overthrow of their three last enemies is set forth in livelie colors*. In fact the one hundred and eight pages of this book explain how the three enemies of the Jews, Antiochus Epiphanes and the Syrians, the Romans, and the Turks have been or will be destroyed, how the Jews will return from the areas North and East of Palestine to Jerusalem and how the Holy Land and the Jewish Christian Church will become the center of a Christian world.

He went on to tell his friends that the conversion and restoration of the Twelve Tribes was clearly prophesied in Ezekiel 37ff. and that they should earnestly pray that God “would bring down those two main enemies of His Gospel and His people, the Roman Antichrist in his old Rome, and the Eastern Gog and Magog in his new Rome or Constantinople.”¹⁴

Subsequent publication of Brightman’s writings in England in 1642 as a result of the new printing frenzy which the interregnum Parliament countenanced, was “designed to provide puritans with an eschatological alternative to fuse with the more recent developments in the native tradition.”¹⁵

b. The Judeo-centric premillennialism of Joseph Mede (1586-1638).

In terms of puritan stature, Joseph Mede was acknowledged to be a profound theologian having added skills in the fields of logic, philosophy, mathematics, botany and astronomy. A graduate of Christ’s College, Cambridge, only modesty rather than worthiness restrained him from attaining doctoral status. Thus as a Cambridge fellow and college lecturer, that included Milton as a student, correspondence with premillennialist William Twisse and James Usher, along with reputed temperance, frugality, and charity, he established renown through influential writings. Most renowned was his commentary *Clavis Apocalyptica*, a later edition in 1642 being titled, *The Key to Revelation*. Thus in a discourse on Isaiah 2:2-4 he comments:

[T]here are two sorts and times of the *calling of the Gentiles*: The first is that which should be with the rejection and casting off of the *Jews*, and (as *Saint Paul* saith) to *provoke them to jealousy* (Rom. 11:1): such a *calling* as should be in a manner occasionally, that God might not want [lack] a Church the time the *Jews* were to be cast out; for this is that which *Saint Paul* means (Rom. 11:15). *That the casting away of the Jews* is the calling of the Gentiles, or *reconciling of the world*: whence we may see, that the Apostles were not to preach *Christ* to the *Gentiles*, until being first offered to the *Jews* (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28), they refused him. And this is that *calling of the Gentiles*, which hitherto hath been for many ages.

But there is a second and more glorious *calling of the Gentiles* to be found in the prophecies of Scripture: not a *calling*, as this is, wherein the *Jews* are excluded; but a *calling* wherein the *Jews* shall have a share of the greatest glory, and are to have a preeminence above other nations, when *all nations shall flow unto them* [Isa. 2:2],

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 26, 30-31.

¹⁵ Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, p. 45.

and walk in their light: For the calling of the remainder of the world which is not yet under *Christ*, is reserved for the solemnizing of the *Jew's* restitution.¹⁶

The influence of Mede's opinions was considerable, as Clouse indicates:

[I]t is perhaps not an exaggeration to claim that Mede was the father of premillennialism (which still has many disciples) in the English-speaking churches. For the seventeenth century we may mention the names of John Milton, Samuel Hartlib, Jeremiah Burroughes, Nathaniel Holmes, Henry More, William Sherwin, Isaac Newton and virtually every Independent minister in England and Wales. . . . As an example of a divine who followed Mede's general viewpoint we may take Thomas Goodwin.¹⁷

c. The Judeo-centric premillennialism of John Archer (d. 1642).

A more radical extension of the seventeenth century millennial awakening was its social manifestation by means of the Fifth Monarchists. Their concern was "for the imposition of Old Testament law in place of England's hated Norman heritage. The Fifth Monarchists were interested in legal reform as an expression of Christ's impending millennial reign."¹⁸ Thus John Archer moved in this direction without being subversive. A church lecturer in London, he became an exile and co-pastored a church with Thomas Goodwin in Arnhem, Holland. In 1643 his millennialism was set forth in *The Personall Reigne of Christ upon Earth*. He stands "[h]alf-way between the spiritual vision of Mede and the political and material vision of the Fifth Monarchists."¹⁹ Clouse describes his Judeo-centricity as follows.

The social class structure of millennial society as presented by Archer is quite interesting. The apostles are at the top, followed by all Jewish people who are converted. Palestine is to be a very prominent part of the earth and Jerusalem will be the chief city of our world. Next in the social pyramid are the converted Gentiles who will be formed into various groups ranking on the social scale according to faithfulness to God while they lived. Finally the unbelieving remnant as slaves will be at the bottom of the social scale. All the freemen of the kingdom will be holy, their prayers will all be answered, their children shall gladly follow them in holiness; in short, there will be a fullness of spiritual blessings. Along with this spiritual bounty shall come such temporal blessings as absolute peace, safety, riches, health, long life.²⁰

d. The Judeo-centric millennialism of Johann Alsted (1588-1638).

This major European scholar was quintessentially Augustinian and Reformed, so much so that he was invited to attend the Synod of Dort in 1618. However, by 1627 when his *Diatribes de mille annis Apocalypticis* was published, it was evident

¹⁶ Joseph Mede, *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly Learned Joseph Mede*, p. 139.

¹⁷ R. G. Clouse, "The Rebirth of Millennialism," *Puritan Eschatology*, ed. Peter Toon, p. 62.

¹⁸ Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, p. 51.

¹⁹ B. S. Capp, "Extreme Millenarianism," *Puritan Eschatology*, ed. Peter Toon, p. 66.

²⁰ Robert Gordon Clouse, *The Influence of John Henry Alsted on English Millenarian Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, Ph.D. Thesis, State University of Iowa, 1963, pp. 101-102.

that considerable change had taken place, in fact remarkably so in that he “echoed many of Archer’s conclusions.”²¹ As a result,

[i]n the 1620s not a few English Puritans were moving both by the logic of their Biblical exegesis and the signs of the times in the direction of chiliasm. Yet they hesitated to take the final step and to advocate the ancient doctrine of the future millennium since they were conscious that it had been often branded as heretical by the Reformers. But when chiliasm received the support of a leading German Calvinist divine, Johann Heinrich Alsted, they began to forget their inhibitions.²²

According to Clouse, this gradual turnabout was the result of several factors. To begin with there was Alsted’s allegiance to Ramism rather than Aristotelian logic. His earlier expositions of Daniel and Revelation were according to Reformed orthodoxy. However a revised understanding developed over several years, so that his eventual *Diatribes* was a strong premillennial apology, drawing heavily upon the exegesis of Revelation 20 and the promises of Old Testament eschatology. So he writes as follows with obvious Judeo-centricity.

During the millennium the ancient people of God were to have an honored place and one of the many passages cited by Alsted which predicted the conversion of the Israelites to the Christian faith is Jeremiah 32:37-39: “Behold I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. . . . Passages in addition to Jeremiah 32 that were mentioned to prove this included Genesis 49:10; Deuteronomy 32:1-44; Isaiah 27:13; Jeremiah 16:14-15; 31:1, 3; Amos 9:14-15, and Micah 5:7.²³

e. The Judeo-centric premillennialism of Horatius Bonar (1808-1880).

We have featured two examples of Bonar’s Judeo-centricity in Appendices F and G. However, this quotation from Appendix I is emphasized at this juncture because it declares this author’s historic premillennialism with such clarity, and in basic continuity with Brightman, Mede, Archer, and Alsted.

I am one of those who believe in Israel’s restoration and conversion; who receive it as a future certainty, that all Israel shall be gathered, and that all Israel shall be saved. As I believe in Israel’s present degradation, so do I believe in Israel’s coming glory and pre-eminence. I believe that God’s purpose regarding our world can only be understood by understanding God’s purpose as to Israel. I believe that all human calculations as to the earth’s future, whether political or scientific, or philosophical or religious, must be failures, if not taking for their data or basis God’s great purpose regarding the latter-day standing of Israel. I believe that it is not possible to enter God’s mind regarding the destiny of man, without taking as our key or our guide His mind regarding the ancient nation—that nation whose history, so far from being ended, or nearly ended, is only about to begin. And if any one may superstitiously ask, What can the Jews have to do with the world’s history?—may we not correctly philosophise on that coming history, and take the bearing of the

²¹ Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, p. 51.

²² R. G. Clouse, “The Rebirth of Millennialism,” *Puritan Eschatology*, ed. Peter Toon, pp. 42.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 51.

world's course, leaving Israel out of the consideration altogether? We say, nay; but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Art thou the framer of the earth's strange annals, either past or future. Art thou the creator of those latent springs or seeds of which these arise?

He only to whom the future belongs can reveal it. He only can announce the principles on which that future is to be developed. And if He set Israel as the great nation of the future, and Jerusalem as the great metropolis of earth, who are we, that, with our philosophy of science, we should set aside the divine arrangements, and substitute for them a theory of man? Human guesses of the future are the most uncertain of all uncertainties; and human hopes, built upon these guesses, are sure to turn out the most disappointing, if not the most disastrous, of all failures.

I believe that the sons of Abraham are to re-inherit Palestine, and that the forfeited fertility will yet return to that land; that the wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them, and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose. I believe that, meanwhile, Israel shall not only be wanderers, but that everywhere only a remnant, a small remnant, shall be saved; and that it is for the gathering in of this remnant that our missionaries go forth. I believe that these times of ours (as also all the times of the four monarchies) are the times of the Gentiles; and that Jerusalem and Israel shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. I believe that, with the filling up of these times of the Gentile pre-eminence, and the completion of what the apostle calls the fulness of the Gentiles, will be the signal for the judgements which are to usher in the crisis of earth's history, and the deliverance of Israel, and the long-expected kingdom.

How the Jew, so long in abeyance, shall resume pre-eminence, I do know not; but that he shall do so, seems written plainly enough in the prophetic Word. How Jewish history shall once more emerge into its old place of grandeur and miracle, and how it shall unwind from itself the bright future of all nations, I know not. But so it is fore-written, "What shall be the reconciling of them be, but life from the dead?" "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."²⁴

Hence, classic historic premillennialism, with exceptions acknowledged, nevertheless has specifically upheld the place of national Israel within the people of God of the church of Jesus Christ.

3. The one people of Jesus Christ's assembly/church according to Scripture.

In a world where Gentile Christianity predominates, there is a necessity to offer some considerations here concerning the "Church" which name has, over the centuries, been "Gentilized" so that its mention is commonly identified with Gentile congregations, indeed a Gentile kingdom of God. However, a number of facts need to be kept in mind here which lead us to conclude that while the redemption of Jesus Christ is to be acknowledged with the doxology: "Worthy are You . . . for You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9), nevertheless there is a Hebrew current that permeates all of this that eternity will never diminish. Hence the New Jerusalem shall not only acknowledge the twelve gates named after the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, but also the twelve foundation stones named after the twelve apostle, all twenty-four names being Jewish (Rev. 21:12, 14)! Consider:

²⁴ Horatius Bonar, "The Jew," *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, July 1870, pp. 212-214.

- a. The Savior of the Christian church, who was *and remains* a Jew, that is if nail prints will identify His hands in the future, appears to uphold the continuity of Abrahamic Judaism (Matt. 8:11; 19:28; John 4:22), even when His reign from the New Jerusalem will be with the signification of twenty-four Jews (Rev. 21:12, 14).
- b. The Christian mother church was wholly Jewish at birth, and this was a dominant feature for the first 125 years of its history. The New Testament never gives so much as a hint that the Jewish Christian assembly in Jerusalem will inevitably pass away while the Gentile Christian assembly in Antioch was destined for perpetuity.
- c. The Scriptures of the Christian Church are essentially Jewish, and their right interpretation must take into account this hermeneutical principle. Is the Gentile mindset best qualified to grasp the writings of Hebrew Christians? There is no indication that the early Hebrew Christians, in their use of the Old Testament, saw the necessity of “re-interpretation” of Old Testament eschatology, to use Ladd’s expression,²⁵ by means of a new hermeneutic. Rather the apostolic hermeneutic was in continuity with a standard Hebrew methodology.
- d. The foundation stones of the Christian church, namely the twelve apostles (Eph. 2:20), were Jewish, even Matthias as the replacement for Judas. They were assured by their Messiah that they “shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28).
- e. The new covenant, which established the church, the one people of God, was promised to Jews, “the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:27-37). It was initially signified to Jews at the institution of the Lord’s supper (Luke 22:14-22), and first proclaimed to “all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36).
- f. It was the Jewish mother church at Jerusalem, in consultation with all of the apostles, that proclaimed freedom from the law to the Gentile church at Antioch (Acts 15:1-35). This does not mean that such a gracious inheritance, welcomed by the Gentile children, is justification for these same children demeaning their familial heritage and claiming the inheritance of their nother’s promised blessings.
- g. When Jesus declared, “I will build My church [assembly]” (Matt. 16:18-19), he was addressing a Jew named Peter concerning his expressed faith, and inaugural, foundational role at Pentecost. At that occasion, when Peter proclaimed his first sermon, he principally addressed “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem” (Acts 1:14), the result being thousands of Jews becoming the foundation of the body of Christ.
- h. When Jesus declared, “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it” (Mat. 21:43), the addressees he denounced were “the chief priests and the Pharisee,” who confessed that “He [Jesus] was speaking about them” (Matt. 21:45).²⁶ The supplanting “people,

²⁵ George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things*, pp. 9-18.

²⁶ David Stern comments: “Yeshua is not saying that the Christianity will replace the Jews as God’s people, as many Christians teach. Rather, he is warning that the Jewish leaders who do not look out for God’s interests (vs. 33-42) will be deprived of sharing in his rulership; and this task, with its rewards, will fall to a different

producing the fruit of it” were initially Jewish Christians who welcomed Gentiles into *the fold of Abraham, not Moses*. Hence, this passage is *not* saying that the Gentiles, as spiritual Jews, will supplant the ethnic Jews as custodians of the kingdom of God.

- i. Paul reminds the Gentiles of their being graciously engrafted into the olive tree of Romans 11, that is, more specifically, the root of Judaism as sourced in the Abrahamic covenant, and not the other way around as if the Gentiles supported Judaism (Rom. 11:18). In other words, the Gentiles are not to manifest arrogant dominance, though in fact history indicates that they have consistently acted this way.
- j. The Gentiles addressed in Ephesians 2 as being excluded from “the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise,” v. 12, and “far off,” v. 13, are then “brought near by the blood of Christ,” 13. This cannot mean that the Jews are integrated into the Gentile church, but quite the opposite. The Gentiles are incorporated into the “covenants of promise,” the stock or people of Abraham, even as “wild olive branches” partake of “the rich root of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:17). According to Paul, Judaism is not eliminated here, but fulfilled and enlarged through their giving succor to the Gentiles.
- k. Jews who become Christians, and thus are of the “remnant according to God’s gracious choice” (Rom. 11:5), who remain rooted in Abraham, not Moses, do not become Gentiles or nondescript church members, and therefore lose their Jewishness. Rather they represent the diversity of the one body of Christ, comprised of He as the head, with attending and yet harmonious members (Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 4:15-16).

This panorama of the fundamental Jewishness of the one New Covenant people of God, the church, divests caricatured historic premillennialism of a falsely attributed, essential, dominant Gentile character. Of course, as already pointed out, Paul prophetically anticipates this problem when he exhorts the engrafted Gentile branches in Romans 11:18. Clearly the antithesis here is between the Gentile branches and the natural branches, who as “supporters” have a place of foundational prominence that is surely Hebrew at its root, *not* Gentile. This then makes for diversity within the unity of the New Covenant people of God which rightly and happily accommodates both a Jewish and Gentile community that the Old Testament prophetic record plainly anticipates.

In other words, the Christian church has Abrahamic, Judaic roots that yet incorporate the distinctive Gentiles. Walter Kaiser critiques the three main types of theology that describe the relationship between Israel and the church.

1. The *new Israel* view holds that geopolitical, national Israel was replaced by the church, which is now the new spiritual Israel. . . .
2. The *covenant* view maintains that Israel and the church are one and the same throughout all of history: namely they are the faithful from all of humanity. . . .
3. The traditional *dispensational* view holds that Israel and the

group of Jewish leaders, the Messianic Jewish *talmidim* caring for Yeshua’s Messianic Community [the Christian church].” *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 64.

church have separate and distinct identities, destinies and promises. . . . [E]ach of these views, as stated in their classic forms, is seriously flawed. The most basic is that each begins with the church and then considers Israel from within the church, trying to fit the Jews within this framework. . . . Each of these three solutions to the relationship of Israel to the church fails to reckon with one or more of the following three primary assertions of Scripture: 1. The church is grafted into Israel, not Israel into the church. 2. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 was made with “the house of Judah and the house of Israel,” not with the church. It is not a covenant made with all humanity, but all humanity may be grafted into it. 3. God has had a faithful remnant ever since the beginning of the human race. The church is that portion of the faithful remnant that was called out of the Gentiles, since Pentecost, to be grafted into the faithful remnant in Israel. There is a distinction between Israel and the church, but not a separation; there is oneness in which distinguishable aspects of that oneness may be seen without implying or necessitating a division of identity or destiny.²⁷

In view of Kaiser’s footnoted acknowledgment of high regard for *The Church and the Jews*, we quote Dan Gruber concerning his excellent conclusion of this matter.

Through Jesus, the King of the Jews, God has made Abraham, the first Jew, the Father of many Gentiles. All the true children of Abraham, whether they be Peter and Paul or Rahab and Ruth, walk with God as Abraham did. They leave everything behind to follow God.

Through Israel, the New Covenant, and the Church, God is fulfilling His promise to Messiah: “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the Gentiles as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession” (Ps. 2:8). If there had not been those from Israel to proclaim the message of redemption, the Gentiles would have continued to be in darkness, “hopeless and without God in the world.”

If there had not been those of the house of Israel and the house of Judah who received the New Covenant, Gentiles could not have been brought into it. If there had not been believing Jews to make up the original Church, there would have been no one to testify of the crucifixion and resurrection. There would not have been any New Covenant Scriptures.

On the other hand, Israel also needs the Church. Who else can bring good news, announce peace and salvation, and say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” (Isa. 52:7). Even the faithful remnant by itself, like Joshua and Caleb, would be unable to enter the Promised Land. God has prepared a place for a people, not a handful. The Church is the way in which all the nations can be brought to bow before the living God, the God of Israel.

In God’s plan, Israel and the Church are complementary, not competitive and irreconcilable. Neither is or will be complete without the other, “because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:40). Together, Israel and the Church are made complete in God.²⁸

D. Israel and the Contemporary Historic Premillennialism of George Eldon Ladd.

Contemporary evangelical scholarship in eschatology has tended to promote George Eldon Ladd as being the most exemplary, scholarly, and prolific historic premillennialist of the modern era. For instance Riddlebarger rightly declares:

²⁷ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. “An Evangelical Response,” *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*,” eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, pp. 360-361. Kaiser acknowledges his indebtedness, with regard to his position here, to Dan Gruber, *The Church and the Jews*. We agree with his commendation of Gruber, which is as follows: “. . . thoroughly biblical. I have never seen things stated so courageously and forthrightly. . . . I think you have a breakthrough. . . . This is a very, very important book.”

²⁸ Dan Gruber, *The Church and the Jews*, p. 209.

The most articulate and influential historic premillennialist on the American scene was George Eldon Ladd of Fuller Theological Seminary. Through the work of Ladd, historic premillennialism gained scholarly respect and popularity among evangelical and Reformed theologians.²⁹

Moreover there are others who should be included as representatives of contemporary historic premillennialism including F. F. Bruce, George Beasley Murray, and Dale Moody, though they are by no means Judeo-centric in a classic sense. Moreover many of these have tended to equivocate concerning the present and future status of national Israel, and in this regard it is maintained that they do not best represent historic premillennialism which reasserted itself during the mid-seventeenth century. Hence, while the title “contemporary historic premillennialist” may appear to be a contradiction in terms, nevertheless it is coined to best represent and qualify what has become a misnomer. It is maintained that earlier premillennialists, being more Judeo-centric, would include Joseph A. Seiss, David Baron, Adolph Safir, B. W. Newton, H. Grattan Guinness, J. C. Ryle, C. H. Spurgeon, George Peters, Nathaniel West, Horatius Bonar, etc., and as such were far more historic in the accepted sense of that term when their lineage is traced back at least to the millennial awakening originating in Protestant England. Concerning Israel, without exception, these latter mentioned authors all upheld the expectation of a distinctive, glorious, prominent, national prospect for Israel in the land under the personal reign of Jesus Christ. Theirs was a Judeo-centricity that qualified them as being far more authentically historic in their premillennialism. Nevertheless there were some earlier examples of premillennialism, such as represented by John Albert Bengel, Henry Alford and Frederic Louis Godet, who were not so explicitly Judeo-centric. Consequently, in the light of the earlier broad millennial awakening, they represented more of a minority opinion in this regard.

However, for the purpose of this study we return to the primary contribution of Ladd for consideration of the degree to which his premillennialism accommodated a distinctive place for the Jew, but particularly national and territorial Israel. From this it will become plain that Ladd does not properly represent historic premillennialism. Rather he created his own distinctive niche, incorporating a predominance of amillennial elements which, by an increasing weight of influence, established an identity that virtually became a category of his own making.³⁰ In this scheme the Jew was tolerably included, yet without any national and territorial glory associated with the restoration of Zion. Four areas that distinguish Ladd are as follows.

1. The church as the spiritual Israel.

Ladd maintains that Revelation 20 explicitly and exegetically provides the sole, albeit conclusive proof from the Bible for the premillennial school of eschatology. When pressed concerning the degree to which the Old Testament gives further support to premillennialism, he responds that it provides none whatsoever! His reason here is that he perceives Old Testament passages that have been commonly understood in

²⁹ Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, p.28. Also refer to Cornelius P. Venema, *The Promise of the Future*, pp. 195-201.

³⁰ In *The Meaning of the Millennium*, edited by Robert G. Clouse, while authoring the essay defending historic premillennialism, yet on page 27 Ladd readily agrees that much of his perspective “sounds like amillennialism.” Further, in responding to Anthony Hoekema’s essay upholding amillennialism, he declares on page 189, “I am in agreement with practically all that Hoekema has written with the exception of his exegesis of Revelation 20.” This then is not historic premillennialism.

millennial terms as finding their fulfillment, not with regard to national Israel's future glory, but rather the Christian church, comprised of Jew and Gentile, that has inherited God's Old Testament promised blessings as the new people of God. Thus he identifies with a more Augustinian appropriation, by the Christian church, of promises made to abandoned Old Testament Israel, which new body of God's people becomes the new spiritual Israel. Thus,

Old Testament prophecies must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament to find their deeper meaning. . . . I do not see how it is possible to avoid the conclusion that the New Testament applies Old Testament prophecies to the New Testament church and in so doing identifies the church as spiritual Israel.³¹

By way of example, Ladd refers to Romans 9:24-26 where Hosea 2:23; 1:10, while in their primary setting make reference to Israel, yet are quoted by Paul concerning the church in Rome that is comprised largely of Gentiles and some Jews. Thus here Ladd's Gentile logic, rather than Hebrew perspective, concludes that Hosea's prophecy finds a broader, more inclusive fulfillment which nullifies a more narrow, national, eschatological interpretation of the prophet. Thus, "[t]he prophecies of Hosea are fulfilled in the Christian church. . . . It is clearly what the New Testament does to the Old Testament prophecies."³² Therefore, other national promises in the Old Testament may similarly be understood as being fulfilled in the church. So he elsewhere concludes that, "it is highly probable that when Paul speaks of the 'Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16) he is referring to the church as the true spiritual Israel."³³ However, refer to Appendix C where it is indicated how far more improbable Ladd's opinion here proves to be.

Nevertheless, concerning the reference to the quotations in Romans 9 from Hosea, an explanation is in order, and it will somewhat justify the prior reference to Ladd's "Gentile logic." As a converted Jewish rabbi, Paul confessedly remains a Jew (Rom. 11:1) who, in quoting the Old Testament in a manner that a Gentile is not accustomed to, makes use of Hosea in an applicatory manner which nevertheless does *not* nullify the obvious, original literal interpretation. So David Stern comments:

Sha'ul [Paul] uses these texts from Hoshea midrashically. Hosea was not referring to Gentiles but to Israel itself; he meant that one day Israel, in rebellion when he wrote, would be called God's people. Sha'ul's meaning, which does not conflict with what Hoshea wrote but is not a necessary inference from it, is that 'God's people' now includes some Gentiles. How this has come about and for what purpose are examined at [Rom.] 9:30-10:4 and 11:17-32, as well as in the book of Ephesians.³⁴

That this explanation is much closer to explaining the author of Hebrews' hermeneutical method is born out by the similar conclusion of Simon Kistemaker in his doctoral thesis concerning quotations of Psalms in this Epistle. To begin with he makes a very frank confession. "In contrast to the NT authors the present day writer is bound

³¹ George Eldon Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," *The Meaning of the Millennium*, ed. Robert G. Clouse,, p. 23. Similarly Ladd declares in *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 433, concerning these same biblical reference: "The church is in fact the true Israel of God."

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

³³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 584.

³⁴ David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 392. Also refer to this author's commentary on the quotation of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15. Here the four basic categories of Scripture interpretation employed by the rabbis, P'shat (simple), Remez (hint), Drash or Midrash (search), and Sod (secret), are explained, pp. 11-13.

in his writing and thinking by profane [secular] motifs, by grammatico-historical principles, which characterize him as a child of his time. Hence our motifs and principles may never be foisted upon the writers and literature of the first century of our era.”³⁵ Then he concludes the section dealing with hermeneutical principles as follows.

It is quite understandable that this type of [*Midrashim*] sermon delivery was transferred from the Synagogue to the Early Church. Many of the characteristics in the Jewish manner of expounding a portion of Scripture in respect to method, were directly passed on to the sermons preached by the apostles and evangelists. There are still a few of these early Christian *Midrashim* extant. The Second Epistle of Clement, usually considered a homily, is in fact an early midrash. It may be said conclusively that the recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews were addressed in accordance with the literary methods prevalent in that day.³⁶

Thus, Horatius Bonar, although writing over a century earlier, nevertheless appreciates this same approach concerning the presupposition of a Hebrew hermeneutic when he writes:

Much is to be learned in the way of typical exposition from the Epistle to the Hebrews, not merely in reference to the passages cited, or the events referred to, but respecting a multitude of others to which there is no allusion at all. The apostle proceeds upon certain principles of interpretation recognized among his countrymen. He did not write as one who had discovered a new theory of interpretation which he called on them to receive; but he proceeds upon principles owned by and familiar to them. He takes his stand upon their own application of the prophecies regarding Messiah, and reasons with them upon principles which both he and they acknowledged. To ascertain these is of much importance, They are the principles adopted by the nation to whom the prophecies were addressed, and, therefore, acquainted with the circumstances in which they were spoken; a nation to whom the language and dialect of prophecy were as their native tongue, and of whose history every event had been an accomplished prophecy; a nation who had not only prophets to predict, but also to guide them to the right meaning of “what manner of things the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify;” a nation that in their last days had the Messiah himself to expound to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, to correct their principles wherein they were false, and to confirm them wherein they were true.³⁷

In this regard due credit should also be given to John Calvin at this point who, in considering the manner in which some of the Old Testament quotations are employed in Hebrews, comes to a conclusion not unlike that of Stern. In commenting on Hebrews 2:7 where Psalm 8:5-6 is quoted, he declares:

[This] Psalm which he [Paul?] quotes must be examined, for it seems to be unfitly applied to Christ. . . . He [David] does not, then, speak of any particular person, but of all mankind. To this I answer, that all of this affords no reason why the words should not be applied to the person of Christ. . . . It was not the Apostle’s design to give an exact explanation of the words. For there is nothing improperly done, when verbal allusions are made to embellish a subject in hand, as Paul does in Romans 10:6, from Moses. . . . [H]e only bids us to consider the abasement of Christ, which appeared for a short time, and

³⁵ Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Th.D. thesis, p. 89n.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³⁷ Horatius Bonar, *Prophetic Landmarks*, pp. 211-212.

then the glory with which he is perpetually crowned; and this he does more by alluding to expressions than by explaining what David understood.³⁸

This basic hermeneutical principle being true, then it opens up a world of understanding concerning how the Hebrew authors could legitimately quote from the Old Testament in a more applicatory, illustrative sense without invalidating the literal meaning, as Ladd's rigid exclusionary approach demands, and as is frequently the case with Reformed amillennialists.³⁹

2. The void testimony of the Old Testament to premillennialism.

Ladd's eschatological hermeneutic is plainly stated as follows, and not surprisingly, Hans K. LaRondelle references this approach in support.⁴⁰ However the dichotomy here completely avoids the fact of historic premillennialism, in the main, interpreting Scripture prophecies literally.

Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament into it. A nondispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament. It confesses that it cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies of the end are to be fulfilled, for (a) the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, and (b) there are unavoidable indications that the Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the Christian church.⁴¹

We would vigorously maintain that, as Bonar makes abundantly clear,⁴² authentic historic premillennialism, as well as dispensationalism, upholds the literal

³⁸ John Calvin, *Hebrews*, pp. 56, 58-59.

³⁹ Consider the same form of amillennial argumentation, employing Romans 9:24-26; cf. Hos. 2:23; 1:10, in Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, p. 156; W. J. Grier, *The Momentous Event*, p. 44; William Hendriksen, *Israel and the Bible*, p. 57; Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, pp. 130-131; Cornelius P. Venema, *The Promise of the Future*, pp. 271-272; etc.

⁴⁰ Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, p. 19. Also refer to a review of LaRondelle's hermeneutic in Chapter 2.

⁴¹ Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," p. 27. Millard Erickson is also obscure in this regard when he writes that, "[f]or the dispensational premillennialist there is yet another argument for the millennium: the large number of prophecies, particularly in the Old Testament, still unpublished." *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, p. 101. The inference is that this approach to Old Testament eschatology is distinctive to dispensational premillennialism. However, we have offered abundant evidence that the classic historic premillennialist, being Judeo-centric, has an essentially identical, literal hermeneutical approach to Old Testament prophecy as that of the dispensational premillennialist.

⁴² Horatius Bonar writes: "The truth is, there is less figure and more literality in Scripture than many will allow; and, as a general rule for its interpretation, I know not a safer one than that we are to interpret literally until cause be shown for our departing from it. The literal is the basis of the figurative, and the key to its translation. The former is the rule, the latter the exception. Proceeding, then, upon this principle, that we must take all as literal till we are forced from it by something inconsistent or absurd, we shall find a far smoother and straighter way through the fields of prophecy than most men will believe. . . . What we need most in the present day is a pure system of scriptural hermeneutics constructed after the apostolic model, of which we have so rich a specimen in the Epistle to the Hebrews. I plead for no mysticism, but the reverse. I advocate literal interpretation. And why? Because Christ himself and His apostles interpreted the Old Testament with a plainness and simplicity that amazes us." *Judeo-centric Premillennialism [Prophetic Landmarks]*, pp. 91, 106, also cf. pp. 68-70, 88-97, 114-129. Different conclusions, even a varying employment, of the literal hermeneutic, according to dispensationalism in distinction from historic premillennialism, do not alter the essential truth here.

interpretation of Scripture, but especially as represented in the Old Testament. Consider non-dispensationalist Robert Murray M'Cheyne who declared:

I love the literalities of Scripture, and believe that the literal view of Scripture history and promises is truly spiritual; for what is meant by "spiritual," if not that which is according to the Spirit of God and revealed by the Spirit in the Word? It is not only Moses and the prophets who declare the future of Israel restored and converted, but our blessed Lord himself came as the minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made of God unto the fathers. He predicted the day when the whole nation will welcome Him. The Apostle Paul teaches emphatically, and in organic connection with the doctrines of the gospel, that all Israel shall be saved; and in no book of the New Testament is so essentially Jewish as the Gospel of John, in which Israel is distinguished from the children of God scattered abroad as that *nation* for which Jesus should die, and in which, at the foot of the cross, we are reminded that Israel shall look upon Him whom they have pierced.⁴³

Concerning Ladd's previously confessed "non-dispensational" eschatology, which in fact is a more contemporary model incorporating Augustinianism, we would draw attention to a most revealing comment in that while "the explicit teaching of the New Testament" is authoritative, there is obviously a problem with incorporating "the explicit teaching of the Old Testament," and this admitted difficulty shows itself here and throughout Ladd's overall eschatology. For this reason he seems forced to introduce a term of doubtful legitimacy, namely "reinterpretation," with regard to the Old Testament.⁴⁴ As a result we end up with two distinct hermeneutics, one for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament. The mere expression of "reinterpretation" in this approach suggests that something is fundamentally astray here. Obviously Ladd appreciates that careful exegesis of the text of Old Testament eschatology confronts him with difficulties, the result being that he is willingly boxed into a corner of generalization and suggestion according to the imposition of the New Testament. In proof of this, consider Ladd's regard for such classic eschatological passages as Ezekiel 36-37 and Zechariah 8, 14, especially as they relate to Israel's national and territorial destiny. Most evident are, in the place of particular exegesis, statements that are more general about the future that seem to intentionally ignore the repeated designations of "Israel," "nations," "land," and "Zion/Jerusalem." All of the following examples are taken from Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*.

- a. In Ezekiel 36-37, the word "Israel" is quoted 22 times; "nations" is quoted 18 times; "land" is quoted 14 times.
 - (1) Concerning 36:22ff., "Ezekiel looks forward to the day of the messianic salvation when God will restore his people, cleanse them from their sins, and give them a new heart by placing his Spirit within them, thus enabling them to be *God's people*."
 - (2) Concerning 36:26-27, "The Old Testament looks forward to the messianic salvation when a new dimension of the Spirit will be given *God's people*."

⁴³ Andrew Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, pp. 196-197.

⁴⁴ George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things*, pp. 9-18.

- (3) Concerning 37:27; 36:26, “When God completes his redemptive work, he will make a new covenant with *his people*; he will implant a new heart and a new spirit within them.”
- b. In Zechariah , 8, 14, the words “Zion/Jerusalem” are quoted 19 times; “nations” is quoted 9 times; “land” is quoted 4 times.
- (1) Concerning 8:8, “The new covenant will be different from the old, in that it will put God’s laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. Then will be fulfilled the repeated goal of God’s dealings with *his people*.”
- (2) Concerning 14:5, The Old Testament conceives of God working in history to accomplish his redemptive purposes; but it also looks forward to a day of divine visitation when God will come in judgment and salvation to establish his kingdom. In the New Testament this divine theophany is fulfilled in the coming of Christ; and the glorious return of the Lord is necessary to bring salvation to *his people*.”
- (3) Concerning 14:9ff., “Although God is now King, other references speak of a day when he shall become King and shall rule over *his people*.”

Hence Ladd will not particularize by means of a precise exegetical manner, the result being the establishment of a more arbitrary, accommodating hermeneutic with regard to the Old Testament. Not that this is a novel approach. Bonar confronts its Achilles heel, namely its avoidance of clear distinction with regard to the text, as follows.

Every word of prophecy is big with meaning. Hence it must be most carefully and exactly interpreted. To attach a general meaning to a whole chapter, as is frequently done, shows not only grievous irreverence for the Divine Word, but much misconception of the real nature of that language in which it is written. Yet such is often the practice of many expositors of prophecy. They will take up a chapter of Isaiah, and tell you that it refers to the future glory of the Christian Church; and that is the one idea which they gather from a whole chapter, or sometimes from a series of chapters. Their system does not admit of interpreting verse by verse and clause by clause, and affixing an exact and definite sense to each. Bring them to this test, and their system gives way. It looks fair and plausible enough, so long as they can persuade you that the whole chapter is one scene, out of which it is merely designed that one grand idea should be extracted; but bring it to the best of minute and precise interpretation, and its nakedness is at once discovered. Many prophecies become in this way a mere waste of words. What might be expressed in one sentence, is beaten out over a whole chapter; nay, sometimes over a whole book.

These expositors think that there is nothing in prophecy, except that Jew and Gentile are all to be gathered in, and made one in Christ. Prophet after prophet is raised up, vision after vision is given, and yet nothing is declared but this one idea! Every chapter almost of Isaiah foretells something about the future glory of the world; and every chapter presents it to us in some new aspect, opening up new scenes, and pointing out new objects; but, according to the scheme of some, every chapter sets forth the same idea, reiterates the same objects, and depicts the same scenes. . . .

I should like to see a regular paraphrase upon the Prophets, constructed upon their system, and going over each chapter, verse and clause. I suspect there would be found

some difficulty; and that just because of the loose ideas which are entertained with regard to the language of Scripture, and especially to the language of prophecy.⁴⁵

3. The diminutive place of the Jew in the present and the future.

The fact that Ladd clearly identifies the church as the true spiritual Israel appears to come into conflict with a further equivocating observation.

Possibly the modern return of Israel to Palestine is part of God's purpose for Israel, but the New Testament sheds no light on this problem. However, the preservation of Israel as a people through the centuries is a sign that God has not cast off his people Israel.⁴⁶

Even here there is a lack of clarity concerning a statement that is more of an afterthought. What exactly does he mean by his second reference to "Israel"? Further, this brief comment comes at the conclusion of a chapter titled "What about Israel?" that chiefly focuses on the refutation of dispensationalism and the defense of supercessionism through the church. We acknowledge Ladd's confession that:

Literal Israel is still the chosen people. She is still the special object of God's care and will yet be the instrument of salvation. . . . The people Israel continues to be a "holy" people—a people whom God has designated for his redemptive purpose in the world. This future purpose is indicated in the following words: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15).⁴⁷

But what of Israel's present and future status as a nation? The following is another rare brief comment, again at the conclusion of an article, that nevertheless lacks any degree of certitude.

Saul of Tarsus was brought to faith only by a special vision of the glorified Christ; yet he was saved by faith like any believer and was brought into the Christian Church. In a similar way, perhaps, it will be the appearance of the returning Christ which will be the means of convincing Israel that Jesus was actually her Messiah. If so, they will be saved by faith in Christ and in the largest sense of the word will become a part of the Church, yet as a distinct people. Perhaps during the Millennium, we shall see for the first time in human history *a truly Christian nation*—Israel converted and brought to faith in Jesus as her Messiah.⁴⁸

Hence the obvious problem here concerns a hermeneutic that evacuates Old Testament prophecy of its exactness and literal meaning. Thus we agree with Fruchtenbaum's conclusion, from a dispensationalist perspective, concerning Ladd's Historic Premillennialism.

[His] strong reluctance to base it [Covenant Premillennialism] on the prophecies of the Old Testament is very problematic. This requires a great deal of allegorizing of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Even Ladd admits at one point that his view of the Old Testament certainly sounds like Amillennialism. To base a theology of Israel's future only on Revelation 20 and a few scattered New Testament references leaves a lot to be desired.

⁴⁵ Bonar, *Prophetical Landmarks*, pp. 234-236.

⁴⁶ Ladd, *The Last Things*, p. 28.

⁴⁷ George Eldon Ladd, "Israel and the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 36 (1964), p. 211.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

Ignoring such a wealth of Old Testament information leads to a shallow Eschatology in general, and a shallow Israelology in particular.⁴⁹

Furthermore, we would add that a shallow eschatology is at the same time weak. With regard to the present and future destiny of Israel, this is especially evident in Ladd's eschatology.

4. The inconsequential role of the land.

In the foregoing, particularly concerning Ladd's interpretation of Old Testament prophecy and his understanding of Israel, it has been difficult to discover any substantial appreciation of the concept of a Jewish nation in the present and the future, that is with regard to biblical and divine covenantal authority. This being said, it has been far more difficult to discover any mere reference in Ladd's writings to present and future prospects for the land of Israel, again with regard to biblical and divine authority. Certainly Jewish individuality is acknowledged; even nationality seems to find some brief, indistinct, uncertain mention; however in the writings of Ladd, though not so surprisingly, consideration of the land and its validity for national Israel is virtually nonexistent.

It seems as if Ladd's pseudo eschatological Marcionism, in which the Old Testament is dismissed in real, substantial eschatological terms and refashioned according to New Testament dictates that extract broad declarations, lacks the ring of factual authenticity. However the specificity and historic reality of the Prophets still stands for all to read. Its use for mere New Testament window dressing implicitly suggests it is of no concrete importance. Rather, we believe that the Hebrew mindset of the New Testament authors, when rightly comprehended, would be startled to discover today a principle of "reinterpretation" that tends to denigrate the plain meaning of the Prophets. They would call for a return, "to the law and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20). There is a great need today for the Gentile to learn about and abide by a more Hebrew hermeneutic.

⁴⁹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, pp. 316-317.