

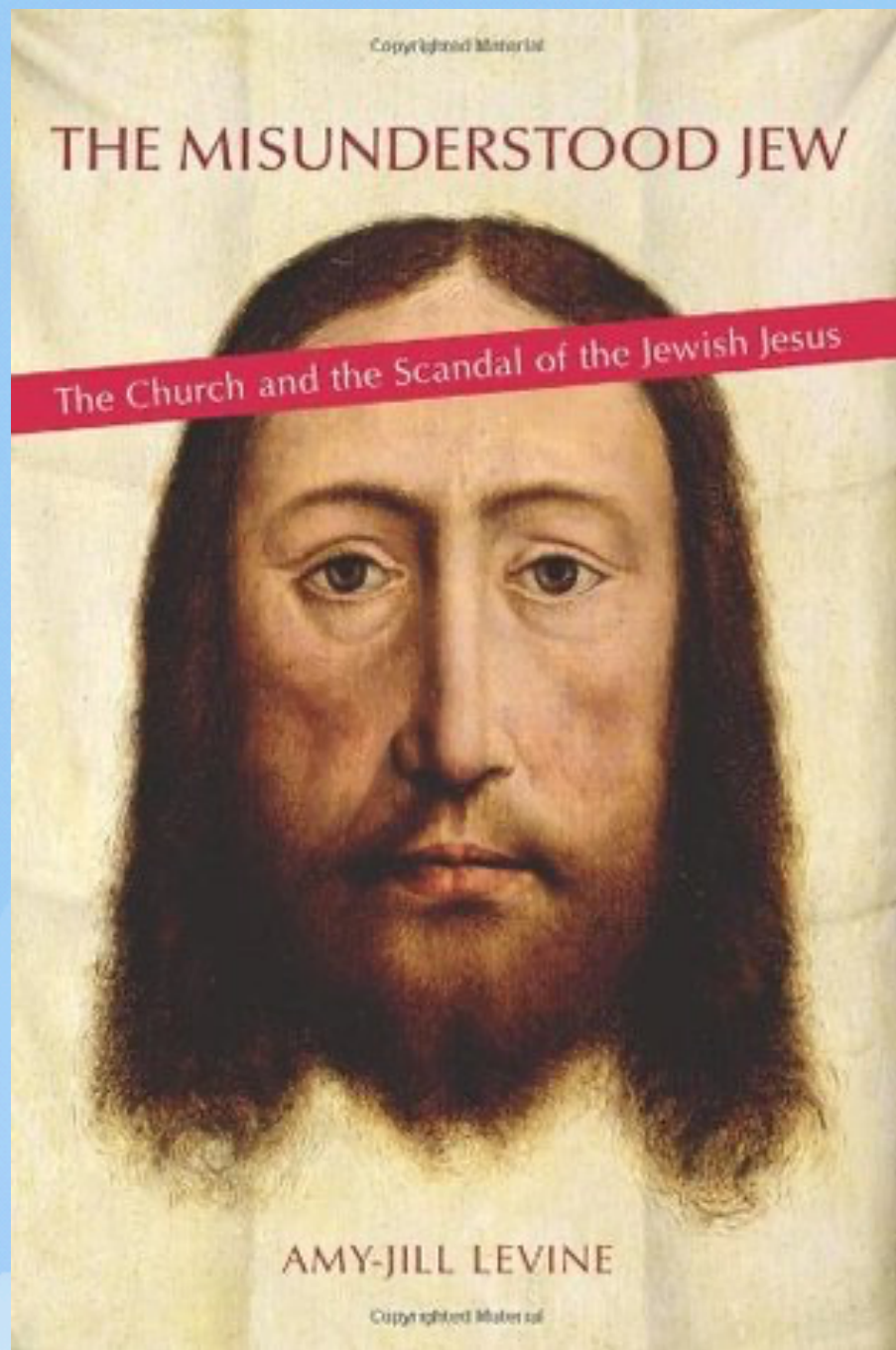
Christians and the State of Israel

Messianic Judaism and Christian Zionism



Use this link to ask questions and participate in the Q&A





Review from Last Week

- Jesus and all of his early followers were Jewish, and the gradual separation of Christianity from Judaism took several centuries
- This process of emergence left the Christian tradition with an ambivalent and mercurial relationship with Judaism — at times fascinated with and embracing Jews/Judaism (→ philosemitism) and at times repulsed by and rejecting Jews/Judaism (→ supersessionism/antisemitism)
- The antisemitic/supersessionist aspect of Christian theology has contributed to violence and pogroms against Jews, conspiracy theories, and the Holocaust
- So what about that philosemitic aspect of Christian theology? Where does that lead to?



The US Embassy in Israel



- Announced by the Trump Administration in October 2017 and enacted in May 2018 (the 70th anniversary of Israel's founding), the US moved its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem
- According to an AJC survey in 2017, only 16% of the American Jewish community supported this move (36% favored doing this later "in conjunction with progress in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks," and 44% opposed moving the embassy altogether)

- Comparatively, 53% of US Evangelicals supported the move, leading Trump to exclaim, mystified, in an interview with Mike Huckabee: "the Jewish people appreciate it, but the Evangelicals appreciate it more than the Jews"



 **HAARETZ**

WATCH // Trump on Jerusalem Embassy Move: 'Evangelicals Appreciate It More Than the Jews'

'It's not a surprise though Mr. President, because evangelicals are people of the book,' Mike Huckabee replied, 'And they believe you kept a promise'

Dedication Ceremony for the US Embassy in Jerusalem

David Friedman, Trump's US Amb. to Israel



Rabbi Zalman Wolowik, Chabad

Robert Jeffress, Trump Evangelical advisor and Baptist pastor



What is Christian Zionism?

- “...political action, informed by specifically Christian commitments, to promote or preserve Jewish control over the geographic area now comprising Israel and Palestine” (Robert O. Smith, *More Desired than Our Own Salvation*)
- A form of philosemitism that entails Christian support for the creation and endurance of the modern state of Israel for theological reasons

Some Facts

- *The US was the first country to recognize Israel as a state in 1948*
- *Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of US foreign aid, with a legal minimum of \$3.8 billion a year in military assistance provided annually*
- *The US is the only nation to recognize the Golan Heights (which the UN designates as Syrian territory occupied by Israel) as part of Israel*
- *The US and Guatemala are the only two nations with embassies in Jerusalem (Guatemala followed the US move in 2018)*

Was Israel Given to the Jewish People by God?

	Yes %	No %	Don't know %	Do not believe in God^ %
NET Jewish	40	27	5	28=100
Jews by religion	47	27	6	20=100
Jews of no religion	16	27	3	55=100
Orthodox	84	10	3	3=100
Ultra-Orthodox	81	13	4	2=100
Modern Orthodox	90	5	1	4=100
Conservative	54	25	7	14=100
Reform	35	35	6	24=100
No denomination	24	25	4	46=100
U.S. general public	44	34	11	11=100
Christian	55	32	11	1=100
Protestant	64	26	9	2=100
White evangelical	82	12	6	*=100
White mainline	47	37	13	3=100
Black Protestant	51	39	8	2=100
Catholic	38	45	15	1=100
White, non-Hispanic	34	51	14	2=100
Unaffiliated	16	37	11	36=100

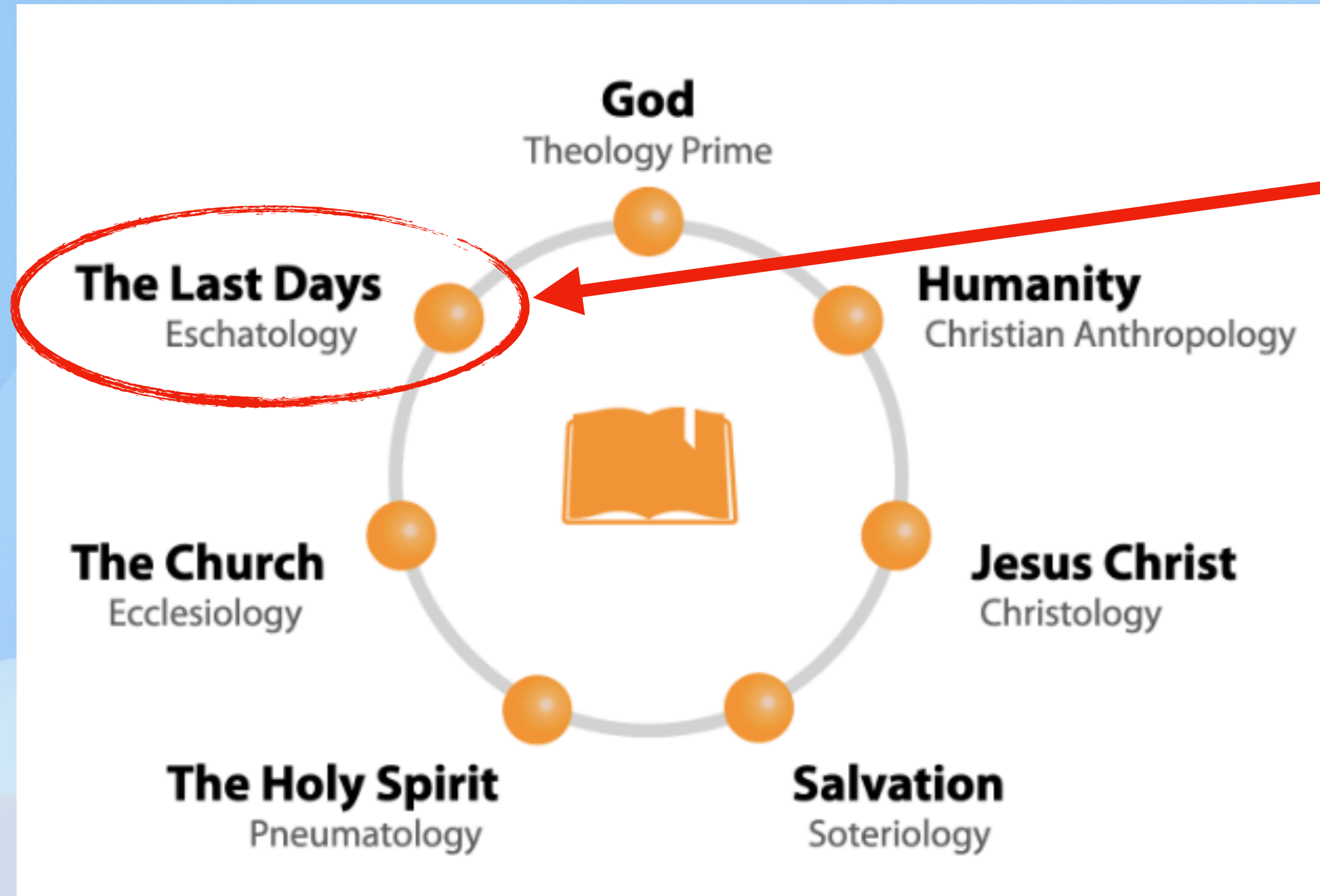
^Includes people who said "don't know" or declined to answer when asked whether they believe in God or a universal spirit.

Source: Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, Feb. 20-June 13, 2013. Q.H6& 6c. U.S. general public data from June 12-16, 2013, Pew Research Center poll.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Christian Eschatology and Judaism



- Eschatology - from Greek *eschatos* “last” - theology about the end of time/end of the world
- The Christian theological concern with Jews and Judaism is not merely retrospective (i.e., making sense of the origins of Christianity within Judaism and relationship between the two) but prospective (making sense of the role of Jews/Judaism/Israel at the end of the world)
- Core questions of Christian Eschatology:

What does it mean for Jesus to “come back” (2nd Coming)?

What will happen to the church at the end of time?

When will these things happen & in what sequence?

What will happen to the world/creation at the end of time?

What will happen to the Jews/Israel at the end of time?

Will there be a “messianic kingdom” in history?

When/how will God’s judgment occur?

The Source Material of Christian Eschatology (a few samples)

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord your God. (Amos 9:14-15)

Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. When they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:17-20)

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years... Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:1-3,6)

New Testament

...this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

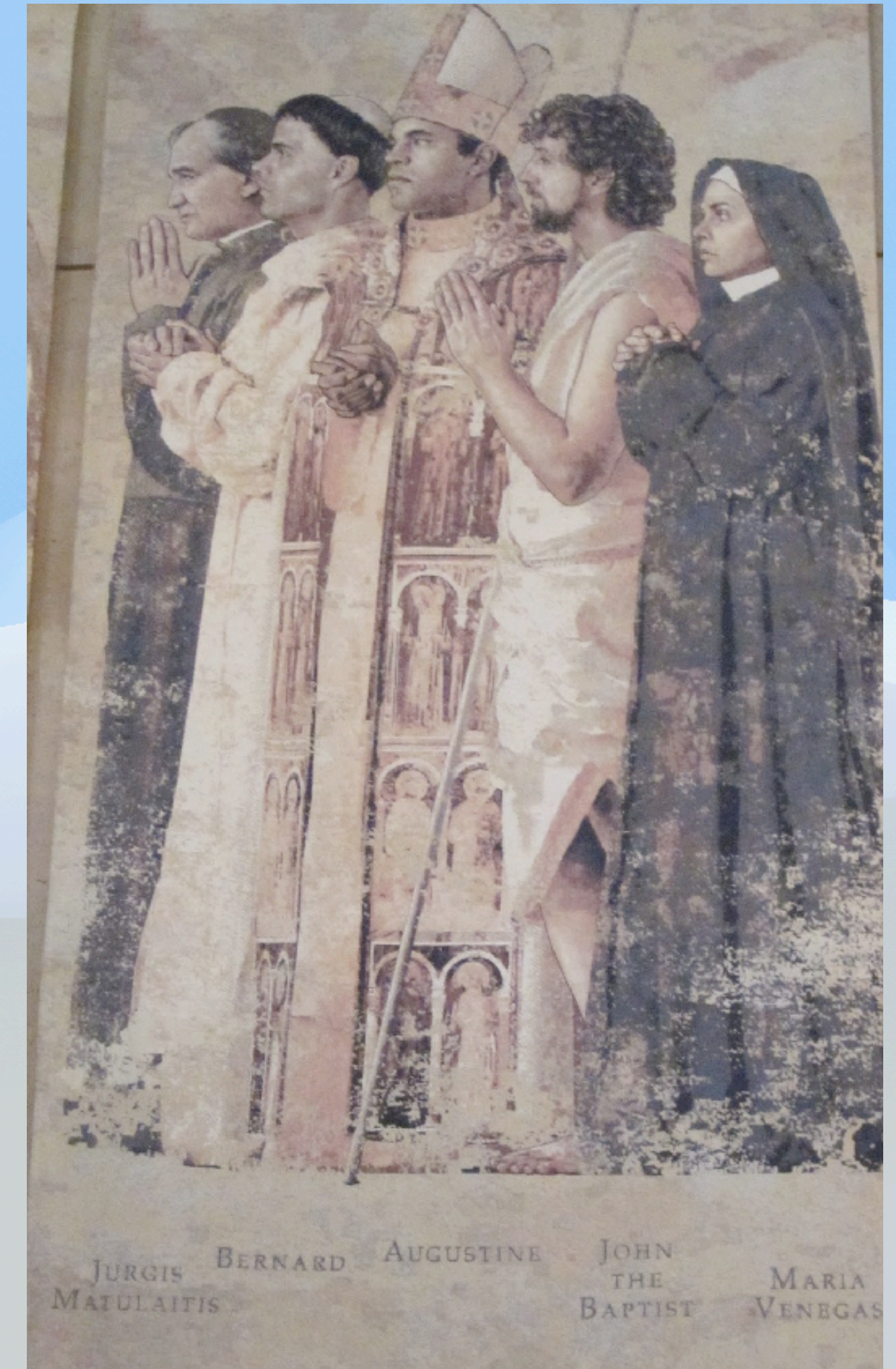
‘Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.’ [Isa. 59:20-21]
‘And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’ [Jeremiah 31:33-34]

As regards the gospel they are enemies of God* for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:25-29)

Augustine (again)

- Early Christian eschatology was pretty scattered and amorphous, but, in this area of theology as in many others, Augustine created an early medieval synthesis that became central to Western Christianity
- Augustine interprets the “1000 years” of Revelation 20 (a.k.a., the millennium or messianic age) as a symbolic and indefinite period between Christ’s 1st and 2nd comings, where Christians “reign with Christ” through the Church – This position would later become known as “amillennialism”
- Hebrew Bible and New Testament promises of Israel’s redemption or restoration or exaltation over the nations are fulfilled, in Augustine’s interpretation, by the Christian Church – the “spiritual Israel” over and against “carnal” Judaism
- This becomes the position of the Catholic Church (and some Protestants)

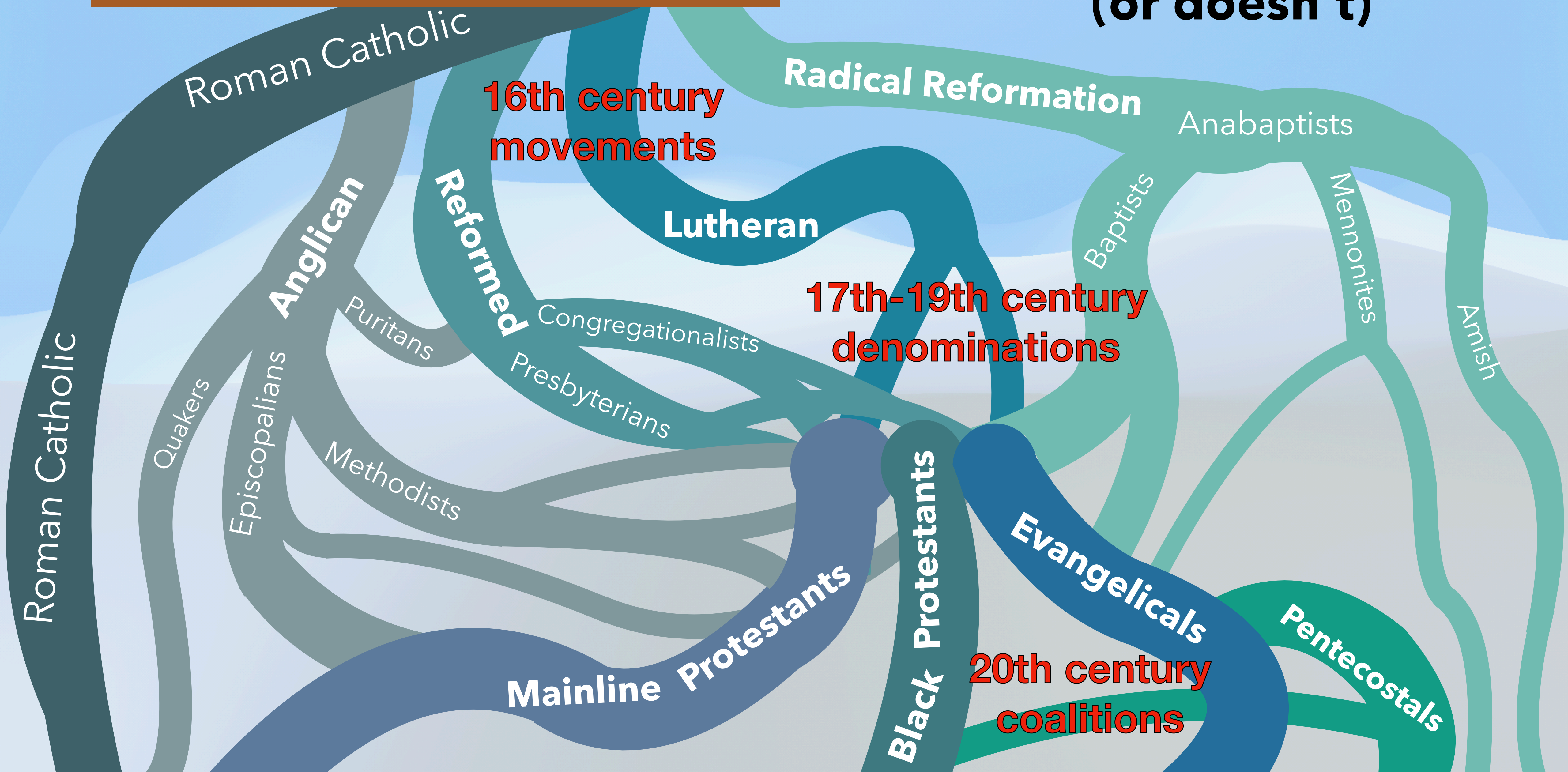
“Jews will remain Jews, Augustine avers, until the end of the age... The conversion of some Jews to Christianity in the time before the End thus has no eschatological significance whatever since, as a people, Israel as Israel shall endure until the end of the age.” - Paula Fredriksen, “Augustine and Israel”



354-430 C.E.

Who gets to read/interpret the Bible?
(Where does authority come from?)

How Protestantism Works (or doesn't)



Millenarianism Unleashed



Melchior Hoffman

- Lutheran lay missionary in Strassburg (Strasbourg) who switched to Anabaptism and adopted a radical eschatology
- Declared the world would end in 1533 (1500 years after Christ's death), and that Strassburg would be the site of the New Jerusalem



The Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster

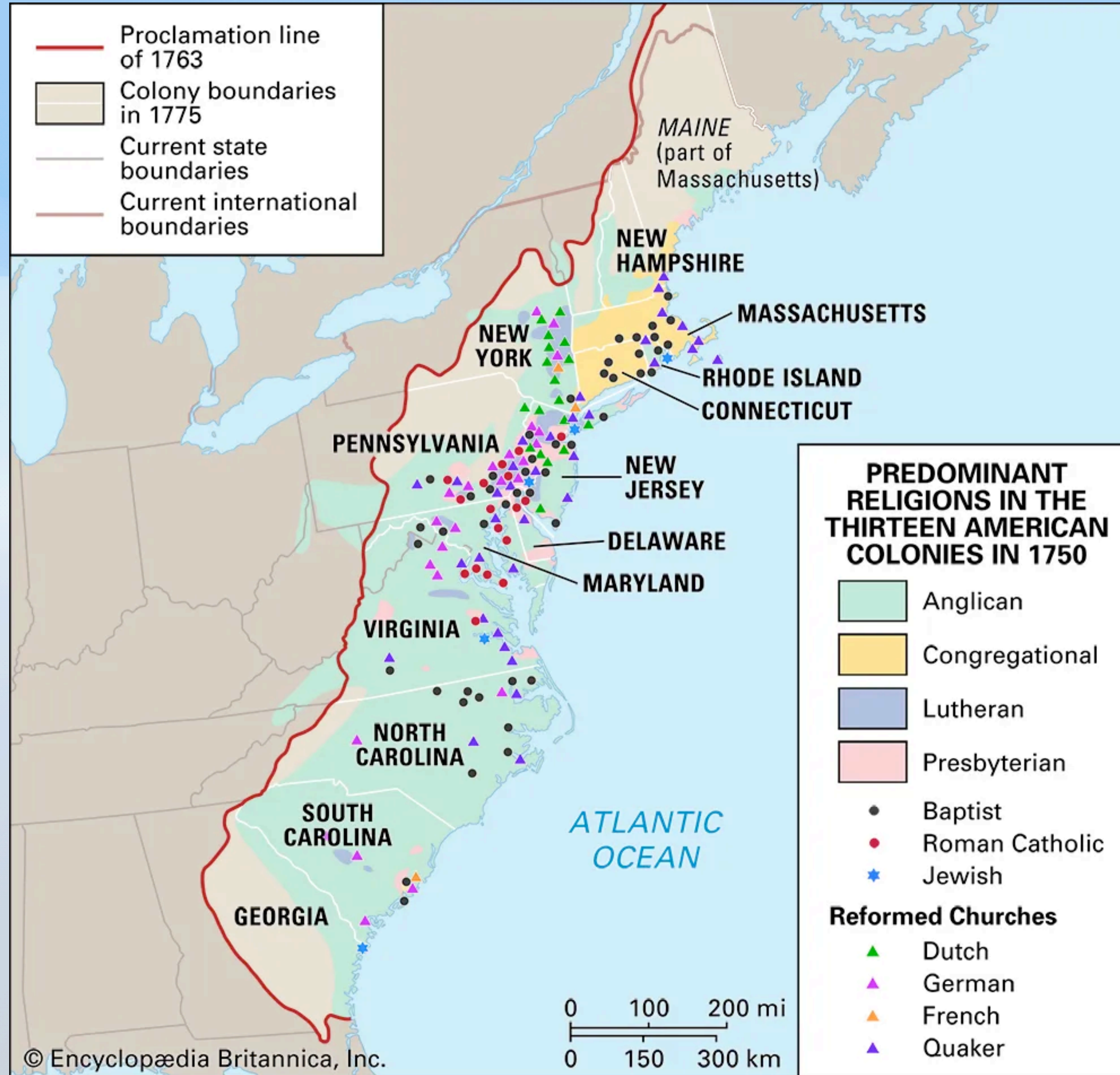
- Followers of Hoffman, especially Jan of Leiden and Jan Matthys, picked up his millenarian theology and took control of the city of Münster claiming it was the real New Zion
- They (re)baptized 1400 citizens in one week calling them "Israelites," instituted compulsory sharing of property and polygamy, named the town leaders the "12 Elders of the Tribes of Israel", and reportedly executed those who refused to comply
- After about a year of this, the local Catholic bishop mustered an army and overthrew the Anabaptist Kingdom

- Among the many effects of the Protestant Reformation(s) was the opening of Pandora's Box with respect to Christian eschatology
- Calvin, Luther, and other more magisterial, erudite early Reformers mostly adhered to Augustine's amillennial synthesis, but the Anabaptists and later Reformers went to town with apocalyptic theories



Jan van Leiden baptizes a girl / The Anabaptists in Münster

Protestants in Colonial America



The Building Blocks of Christian Eschatology

"Jesus is coming back"
(a.k.a. The Second Coming
and Judgment)

"The Millennium"
Christ's messianic reign
on the earth (Rev. 20)

"God will make
all things new"
New Heaven/New Earth

The Resurrection
of the Dead for the
Afterlife

"Amillennialism"

Israel/Jews have no major eschatological significance

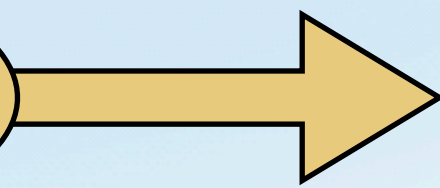
"The Millennium" is symbolic and right now
(i.e., the Era of the Church when Jesus reigns spiritually)

Resurrection of
the Dead

The Second Coming
& Judgment

New Heaven /
New Earth

Augustine



Roman Catholics

Eastern Orthodox

Some Protestants

Millenarianism/Millennialism - 2 Forms

Postmillennialism

"The Millennium" will come about through the triumph of the church (and
good over evil) – the transformation of human culture into the Kingdom of God

Second
Coming

Resurrection
of the Dead

New Heaven/
New Earth

Premillennialism

The Second Coming
(sometimes with the "Rapture")

"The Millennium" where Christ literally reigns with
the Church, and everyone submits to God

Resurrection
of the Dead

New Heaven/
New Earth

These two forms of Christian Millennialism have predominated among Protestants (especially Evangelicals/Pentecostals):



Postmillennialism

“The Millennium” represents the transformation of human culture into the Kingdom of God

Second Coming

Resurrection of the Dead

New Heaven/
New Earth

Christians are empowered to build the messianic Kingdom of God on earth, progressively reforming all societies to bring them into godliness



Premillennialism

The Second Coming (sometimes with the “Rapture”)

“The Millennium” where Christ literally reigns with the Church, and everyone submits to God

Resur-
-rection of
the Dead

New
Heaven/
New Earth

Christians’ task is to spread the Gospel and wait for Jesus to come back and establish the Millennium/Messianic age on earth

For Breakout Discussion: Which of these forms of Christian Millennialism do you think has led to more Christian support for the modern state of Israel?

Postmillennialism and Premillennialism

- It's less helpful thinking about Postmillennialism and Premillennialism as they're commonly presented - as opposing eschatologies - and more helpful to think of them as **different moods of Christian Millennialism: one optimistic and one pessimistic**
- Actually, both of these moods of Protestant eschatology have contributed significantly to Christian support for the state of Israel — both tend to see the reconstitution of Israel as a necessary event in Christian eschatology
- Some Protestants began speaking about and even advocating for the reconstitution of the state of Israel as early as the late 1500s, and they have historically done so within both Postmillennial (triumphalist) and Premillennial (waiting for Jesus) frameworks
- This advocacy begins in Great Britain, but migrates to the American colonies and US as well

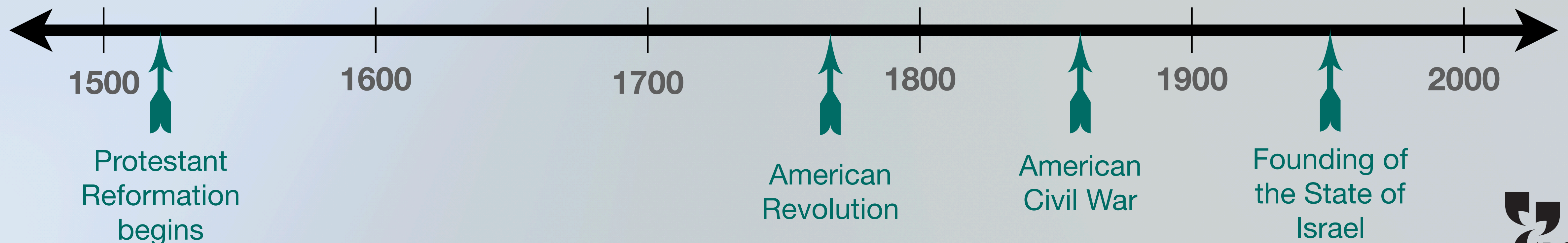
Almost all Christians are Amillennial

“Jewish restorationism”

Postmillennialism dominant

“Christian Zionism”

Premillennialism dominant



Postmillennial Jewish Restorationism and Christian Zionism

- Held especially by the Puritans in Great Britain and the US - Postmillennialism powered American Puritan ambition, and the Puritans believed they were creating the model for the Millennial Kingdom in New England
- Postmillennial Christian Zionism tends to emphasize both the conversion of the Jews and Jewish restoration (to the land of Israel) as simultaneous Christian goals with debates about which comes first
- Supersessionism and the Christianization of Jews/Judaism is of a piece with the Christianization of the whole world



London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews

- Founded 1809 as a mission of the Church of England
- Key Leader: Joseph Samuel Frey, an Orthodox Polish Jew and former rabbinical student who converted to Christianity in 1798

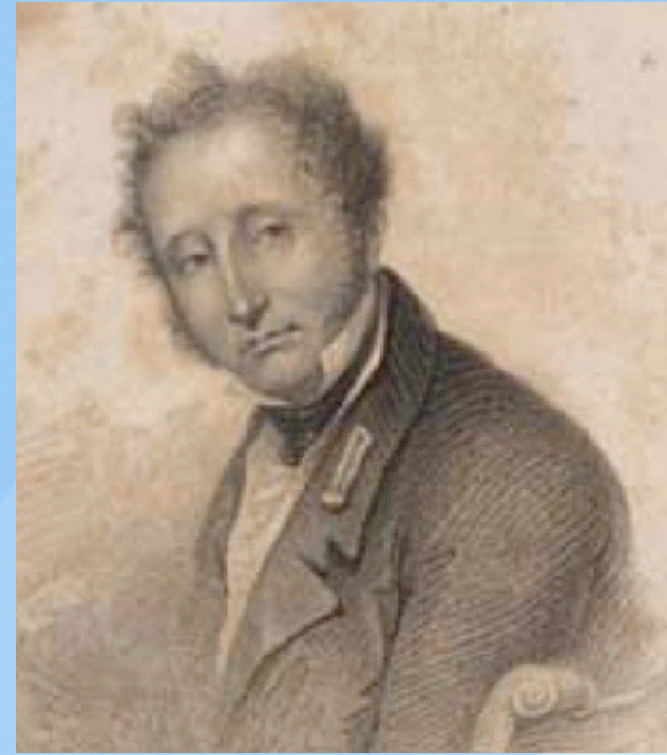


American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews

- Founded 1820
- “We Christians are assured, by unerring truth... that in all these severe and unheard of sufferings of this unfortunate nation, that they will see their error; they will repent, and turn unto the Lord their God: that he will have mercy upon them, and restore them to their ancient city, and set them chief among the nations of the earth.” — Elias Boudinot, inaugural address ASMCJ

American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews.

Mordecai Manuel Noah, Ararat, and Proto-Christian Zionism



**Mordecai
Manuel Noah**
1785-1851



- A fascinating character from early American history - journalist, playwright, diplomat, and maybe the most prominent American Jew of his era
- Vocal advocate for slavery and noted racist, but also strong advocate for Jewish immigration to the US
- Winds up partnering with missionaries from the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews
- Pioneers an approach by which Christians and Jews could work together politically to establish a Jewish state for very different motivations
- Purchases Grand Island in upstate New York in 1825 as a sort of proto-Zionist reservation for Jewish immigrants, named it “Ararat,” and declared himself “judge” over the Jewish people

“I could find it in my heart to wish that you [Noah] had been at the head of a hundred thousand Israelites . . . & marching with them into Judea & making a conquest of that country & restoring your nation to the dominion of it. For I really wish the Jews again in Judea an independent nation.” (John Adams to Mordecai Noah in 1819)



Warder Cresson

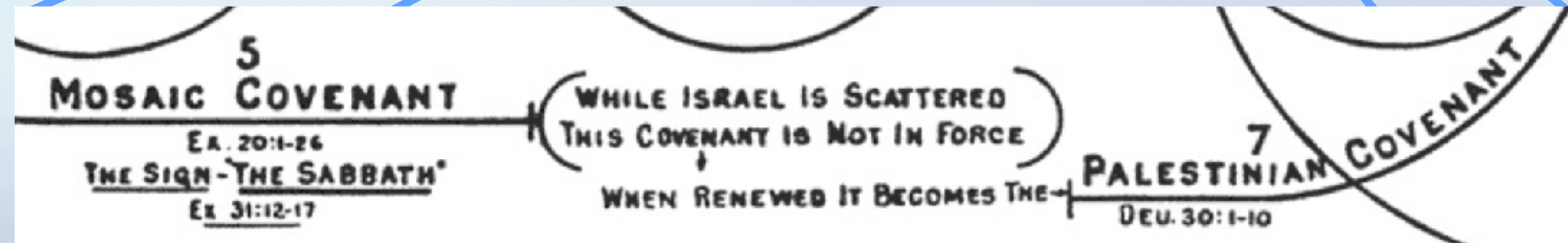
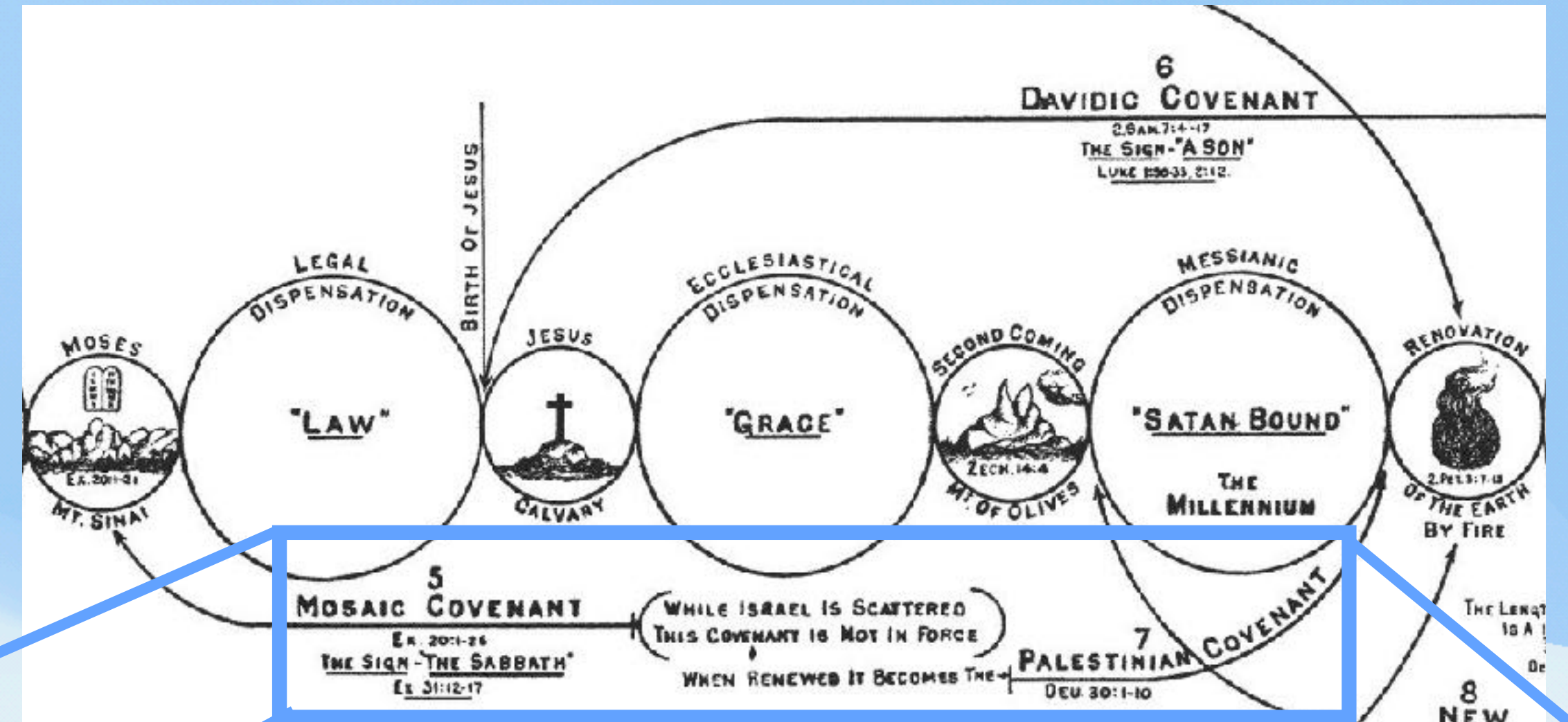
Warder Cresson (1798-1860), a millenarian Quaker associate of Noah’s, became so convinced of Noah’s program that, with Noah’s help, he was appointed first US Consul to Jerusalem in 1844.

While in Jerusalem, Cresson converted to Judaism, and his family put him on trial for lunacy when he returned to Philadelphia. He was convicted but won on appeal. He eventually remarried a Sephardic Jew and settled in Jerusalem under the name Michael Boaz Israel ben Abraham.



Premillennial Christian Zionism

- Grows rapidly in influence with the after the US Civil War (Postmillennialism's optimism about a unified triumphant Christianity is harder to square after the war)
- Tends to emphasize the recreation of the state of Israel as a precondition for Christ's return - less interested in Jewish conversion now, per se, with the hopes that Jews will ultimately convert after Jesus comes back
- This transition from Evangelical Postmillennialism to Evangelical Premillennialism is facilitated by the spread of Dispensationalism, a form of Premillennialism that divides up human history/future into "dispensations" of God's grace and covenants
- Dispensationalism is what happens when apocalyptically oriented engineers (with few literary sensibilities) read the Christian Bible
- Dispensationalism tries to bypass supersessionism (idea that Christianity replaces Judaism) by situating Christianity within the story of Israel/Judaism

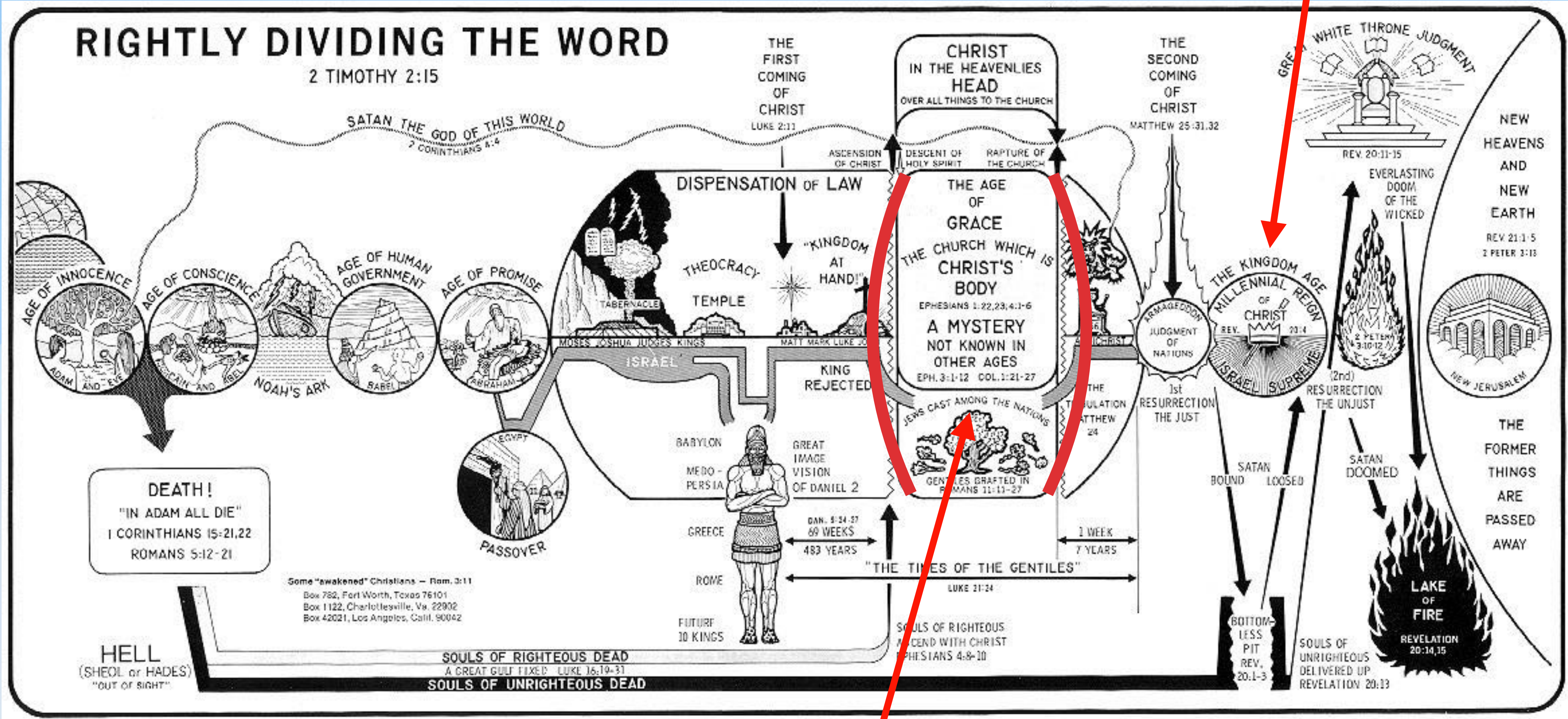


A physical restoration of "Israel" to "Palestine" is the sign of the renewal of the Mosaic Covenant, making possible the Millennium (a.k.a., Messianic Dispensation)

This is written in 1914.

Dispensational Premillennialism

"MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST...
ISRAEL SUPREME"



"JEWES CAST AMONG THE NATIONS"

William Blackstone and Louis Brandeis

- Jewish Zionism, prior to World War I and the Balfour Declaration (1917), was primarily a European movement, with only a few thousand supporters in the US
- Reform Judaism, the dominant strand of Judaism in the US, was mostly opposed to Zionism at the time, preferring a program of Jewish integration, so American Zionists often made common cause with Christian Zionists
- Example: William E. Blackstone and Louis Brandeis



William E. Blackstone
1841 - 1935

Palestine for the Jews

COPY OF
MEMORIAL
PRESENTED TO
President Harrison

March 5th, 1891

What shall be done for the Russian Jews? It is both unwise and useless to undertake to dictate to Russia concerning her internal affairs. The Jews have lived as foreigners in her dominions for centuries, and she fully believes that they are a burden upon her resources and prejudicial to the welfare of her peasant population, and will not allow them to remain. She is determined that they must go. Hence, like the Sheperdim of Spain, these Ashkenazim must emigrate. But where shall 2,000,000 of such poor people go? Europe is crowded and has no room for more peasant population. Shall they come to America? This will be a tremendous expense, and require years.

"[T]here seem to be many evidences to show that we have reached the period in the great roll of centuries, when the everlasting God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is lifting up His hand to the Gentiles (Isa 49:22) to bring His sons and his daughters from far, that he may plant them again in their own land, Ezekiel 34, etc. Not for twenty-four centuries, since the days of Cyrus, King of Persia, has there been offered to any mortal such a privileged opportunity to further the purposes of God concerning His ancient people."

- Letter from Blackstone to President Harrison, 1891



**Nathan Straus, Louis Brandeis,
Stephen Wise,
leading American Zionists**



Formation
of the UN

World War II

Christian
Zionism

Jewish Zionism



- Many factors went into the creation of the modern state of Israel, but we cannot factor our Christian Zionism (particularly US-based Christian Zionism) for building up support for the state and championing its endurance
- By the time the state of Israel is established in 1948, several generations of world leaders had been petitioned by Evangelical Christians for the establishment of the a Jewish state in the Eastern Mediterranean — these were some of the most prominent Christians in America, and they were working with some of the greatest fortunes amassed in the Gilded Age.

The Infrastructure of a Longstanding Alliance

The State of Israel

American Evangelicals



Friendships

Billy Graham and Golda Meir

 **HAARETZ**

Israeli Ministry to Fund Evangelical Bible Program in West Bank Settlement

Hosting



Outreach

Knesset Christian Allies Caucus

Strengthening relations between the Israeli Parliament and Christians around the world.

Tourism



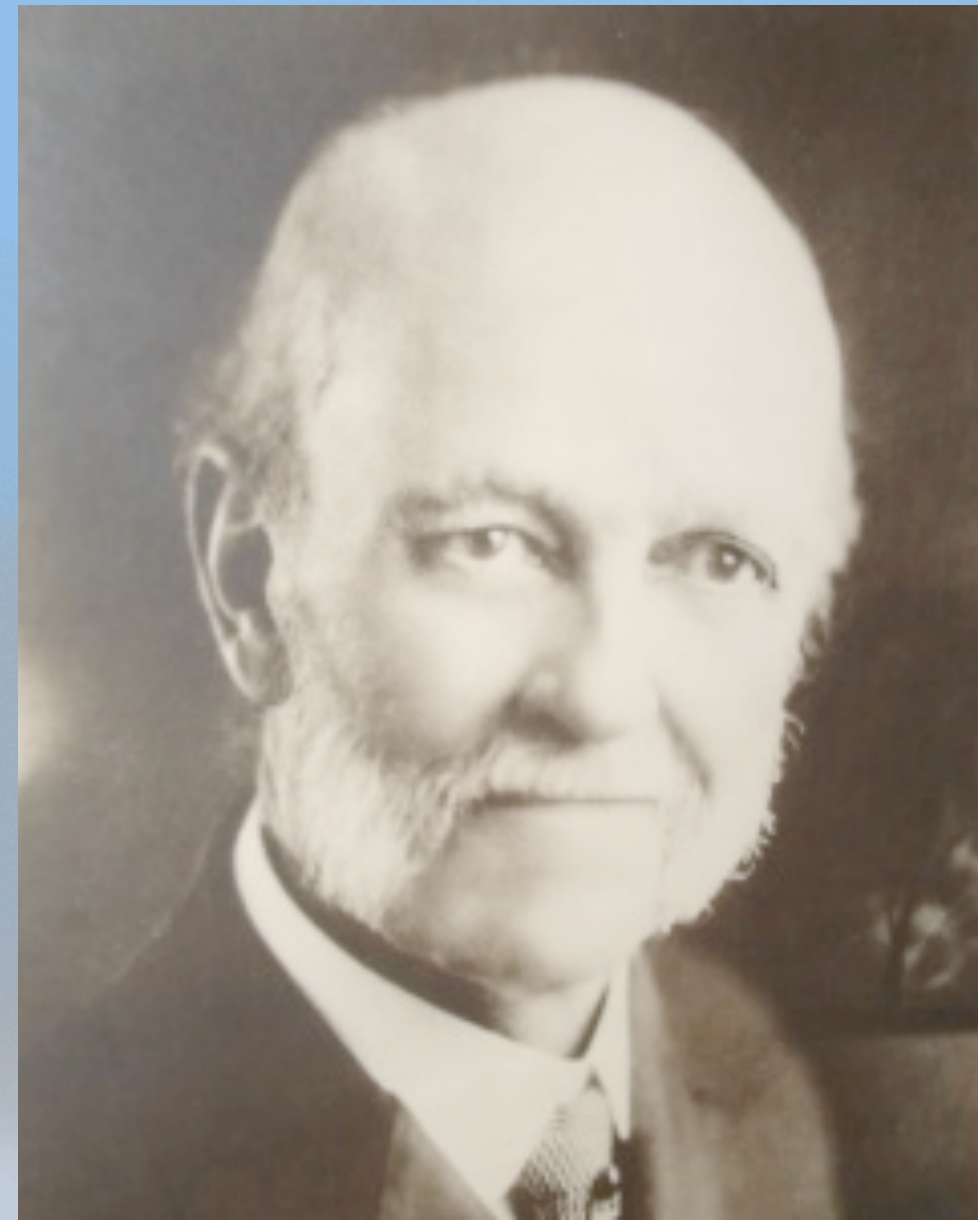
Advocacy

Voting



Concluding Thoughts

- Christian Zionism is driven by Protestant eschatologies but also by the same dueling supersessionism/philosemitism aspects to early Christian theology.
- Postmillennialism and Premillennialism have both contributed significantly to Christian support for a state of Israel, but most of us have become used to the Premillennialist mood of Christian Zionism (Christians supporting Israel and waiting on Jesus to return to set the world right / convert the Jews) that dominated the 20th century. What happens if a Postmillennialist mood returns? More on this next week...
- We will have sharper analysis of the Israel-American alliance if we recognize that the American Jewish community is not necessarily the sole or even the primary driving force in many of the foreign policy moves the US makes toward Israel or vice versa.
- Interreligious cooperation and alliances can exist without interreligious dialogue. Many Jews and many Christians have a lot of stake in Israel but for very different reasons.



Christians and the State of Israel

Messianic Judaism and Christian Zionism

What happened in the Protestant Reformation(s)?

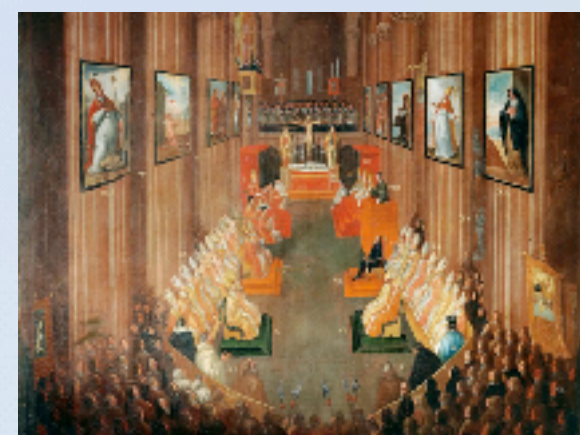
- The fire that fueled the Protestant Reformation(s) was a revolution in literacy, interpretation, and authority
 - It piggybacked on the invention of the printing press (1450s) and the ongoing Renaissance to promote a middle-class literacy in the Bible and theological argumentation
 - The core Protestant-Catholic debate was about authority: Who gets to interpret the Bible, and what texts/sources are canonical?



Ignatius of Loyola



Pope Leo X



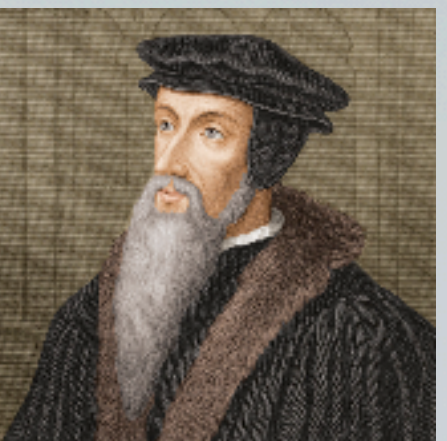
Council of Trent

- The Catholic Church is guided by the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible
- Revelation is “contained in the written books *and* the unwritten traditions” - the Church interprets both
- The Church can be reformed in continuity with its prior custodianship of revelation

- The Holy Spirit indwells the individual Christian who comes to the Bible
- Revelation is contained most definitively in the Bible, and unwritten traditions can never overrule clear scripture
- The Church stands under scripture’s judgment & needs renewal from its corruption



Martin Luther



John Calvin



Melchior Hoffman