American Theopolitics and Israel-Palestine

by

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Abstract

Despite being a country of limited security and trade concern to the US, the State of Israel occupies an inordinate amount of space in American foreign policy-making. Only with reference to America's Christian heritage can one understand Israel's significance. In addition to reviewing and updating traditional theological and cultural explanations for Christian activism, this dissertation explored two further elements: interest group organizational and strategic effects and intra-Protestant "theopolitical" contestation. Three questions were considered: Why and how does Israel matter to American Protestant Christianity? Why do some Christians support while others oppose Israel? And what accounts for the twenty-first century rise in Christian activism on behalf of Israel/Palestine? In terms of methodology, the study analyzed primary and secondary sources covering historical perspectives on Israel-Palestine and engaged in extensive interviews amongst members of the two major pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian Christian interest groups – Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and the Presbyterian Church (USA). While previous studies examined these groups separately, this study concluded that they are two sides of the same coin and have been in theological and political conversation with one another from their inception. The key contribution of this dissertation is that pro-Israel activism is utilized by certain Christians as a tool to promote a conservative religious agenda in America. Similarly, the rise in pro-Palestinian activism is due to a sociopolitical shift in America – namely, polarization resulting from the legalization of same-sex marriage and ordination, and the ensuing exodus of conservatives from the mainline Churches which tipped the

political balance in favour of the progressive voices. I conclude that the Jewish people – and likewise the Palestinian people – are not really the focus of Christian activism, but collateral damage in a larger battle between Protestants that has taken place over a period of many centuries.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Daniel Friedman. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Battle for the Holy Land(s)”, No. Pro00054274, September 7, 2016.

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Introduction

From 2002 to 2018, I served as the rabbi of Beth Israel, an Orthodox synagogue in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. While the province of Alberta has a strong history of political conservatism rooted in its evangelical Christian history, the city of Edmonton is fairly progressive and increasingly cosmopolitan (Banack 2016). My congregation was home to a religiously and politically diverse mix of Jews, from multi-generation Canadians to new immigrants from across the globe. During my first number of years in Canada, our local MLA, Mo Elsalhy, was a Liberal Party member, a Muslim businessman, and a beloved leader of our local Jewish and Christian community. I provide this depiction as a backdrop to my encounter with conservative evangelical Zionist Christians.

One day I received a phone-call from Daniella Weiss, who introduced herself as the former mayor of a town in Israel. She wanted to stay with us for the Sabbath.[1] Honoured to have an important visitor to our community, I invited her to address the congregation on Saturday morning. While Ms. Weiss would stay with us on many occasions after that Sabbath, that service was the last time she was asked to preach, as it came to light that she was the "settler-activist" mayor of Kedumim, a town in the West Bank. Prior to becoming a politician, she spent many years as a pro-settlement activist, and was proud of her extensive "rap sheet." (In fact, one year when she came

[1] The Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and concludes at nightfall on Saturday. During this period, travel is forbidden and religious Jews spend the 25-hour period in prayer, family celebration, and communal gathering.

to Canada, customs and immigration detained her for nine hours in the airport, until they were satisfied that she would not be the cause of public disruption). In short, the diversity of views of our congregation meant that many members did not approve of her presentation and political position.

But that did not deter Daniella from further visits. Not only did her trip have nothing to do with the Jewish community, it had little to do with Edmonton. Curiously, each year she was invited to speak to an evangelical Christian church in St. Albert, a small city just outside of Alberta's capital. Once on a pilgrimage to Israel, whilst traveling through – what they refer to as "Samaria" or "Greater Israel" (i.e. the West Bank), these Albertan Christians paused for a pit stop, assuming they would find a public restroom. The facilities at the local gas station being out of order, however, they found the nearest house and knocked on the door, which happened to be Daniella's daughter's home. Her daughter was out at work, and Daniella was in the house, babysitting. One by one, they lined up to use the facilities. Daniella used the opportunity to engage them in conversation, which sparked up a friendship, leading to her annual visits to Alberta. For these Christians, Daniella was a hero of quasi-biblical proportions who was fighting for the return of the ancient Israelites to the Promised Land. The pastor and his church – colloquially referred to as "Christian Zionists" – became ardent supporters of Weiss and Kedumim, visiting the town each year, and sponsoring her visits to Canada.

Let me pause for a brief moment and reflect upon my understanding of Zionism up until that point. As a child, one receives a certain narrative regarding the

establishment of the modern State of Israel. That story begins with a secular Jew named Theodore Herzl, who sees the Dreyfus Affair take place and is motivated to take up the case for political Zionism.[2] He arranges a number of Zionist conventions in Europe, which culminate in widespread nationalistic fervour for a return of the Jewish people to their biblical homeland in Israel-Palestine. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the migration of Jews from Europe accelerates, and in 1948, the State of Israel is established. No sooner does Prime Minister David Ben Gurion declare the new state than the surrounding Arab nations join together to attack the nascent country from all sides. Nevertheless, the tenacity of these young heroes – pioneers in a new country, fighting for their very lives, many having emerged from the ashes of Auschwitz – overwhelms the power of the mighty Arab armies. And the State of Israel is born.

Whilst non-Jews and their role in the story are not ignored in this narrative, they are presented nonetheless as bit part actors, at best, if not as mere extras, tangential to the main scene. As one matures, however, one begins to understand and appreciate that without the assistance of key non-Jews the return of the Jewish people to their homeland would have remained on the tear-drenched pages of synagogue prayer-books around the world. Who were these non-Jews? They are too many to discuss in this project, but some of the key figures include British peer, Lord Balfour, who, in 1917, announced the intention of the British government to found a

[2] In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus of France was tried for treason. He was exonerated in 1906. In the intermittent years, the case garnered widespread charges of antisemitism. See Mayorek (1994) for a discussion around the accuracy of this classic depiction.

country for the Jewish people in the area of Palestine. The list includes American President Harry Truman, whose 1947 United Nations vote and global advocacy were instrumental in the decision to partition British-mandate Palestine into two countries, one for the Jews and one for the Arabs. And the list includes John Nelson Darby, the preacher of dispensational premillennialism, a doctrine that has motivated tens of millions of evangelical Americans to support Israel, spiritually, financially and, most importantly, politically.

When the mayor of a town in the West Bank showed up on my doorstep and announced her intention to visit her Christian friends in St. Albert, I could not help wonder what was going on. Thus began my journey into an exploration of the current and historic role of Christians in relation to Zionism, the movement to establish (and maintain) Jewish sovereignty in the geographical area of the ancient nation of Israel. Despite my initial Canadian exposure to the phenomenon, quickly I learned that the primary story was taking place south of the 49th parallel, where evangelicals have blazed a significant political path, with powerful domestic and international agendas. As my research into the political impact of Christianity in America continued, however, I soon realised that the oft-quoted axiom that Christians uniformly love (the modern manifestation of) the "Land of the Bible" and the "People of the Book" (i.e. the State of Israel and the Jewish people) was not entirely accurate. More and more stories of Christian groups joining Marwan Baghouti's Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions (BDS) movement began to appear. And so my research turned to seeking to understand what was motivating these American Christians. A finding emerged that had not

appeared in academic or media accounts of these phenomena thus far: these two forces – American Christians supporting Israel and American Christians opposing Israel – were not operating in respective vacuums. Each was well acquainted with and apprised of the activities of the other. And the more I delved into the possibility of a linkage between them, the more I realized that the battle did not begin over the last two decades. This dissertation explores a drama that has developed over many centuries in response to American domestic forces in measures no less than the international events they ostensibly address.

1. Why do they care?

> *Jews are only two percent of the US population. Why should I care what they think about Israel? Christians constitute seventy percent of America. What matters is what they think about Israel!* (Daniel Pipes)[3]

On 14 May 2018, President Donald Trump relocated the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Most of the international community criticized the move. Even the response from the Jewish community was less than enthusiastic. But one group stood out in its support for the White House decision: American evangelicals. Fervent believers in the Land of Israel as the ancestral heritage of the Jewish people, these Christians saw the events as a page straight out of the Bible. As folklore would have it, evangelicals were proud of their president who had finally put the USA back into "Jer-USA-lem."[4]

Why Christians Matter to Israel

This dissertation explores the role of Christians in shaping the US-Israel relationship. American Christians are some of Israel's greatest supporters. At the same time, however, America's Christians are some of Israel's greatest detractors. Until now, scholars have examined these two perspectives separately. This study takes a step back and considers both sides of the American Christian fence on the issue of Israel-Palestine, revealing an inter-Protestant battle that has been waged over centuries. While previous studies have acknowledged that Christians play a role in the US-Israel relationship, this dissertation argues that, in the twenty-first century Christians play

[3] This comment was a response to the question of whether he was concerned that the political views of Jewish Americans were increasingly shifting towards the Palestinian position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (April 2017, Valencia CA).
[4] See Alexenberg (2017).

the leading role. As a result of certain sociological shifts, the political lines between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian Christians are now clearer than ever and have fuelled the increased focus on Israel in the international arena.

The Special Relationship

For the last half century, Israel's most steadfast ally and stalwart defender in the international community has been the United States. From 1972 to 2006, the US vetoed forty-two UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israel, more than the number of vetoes exercised by all other Security Council members combined over the same period. In addition, there have been numerous instances of resolutions that were halted due to the threat of US veto. Furthermore, the US routinely backs Israel in its defense against continued attempts at international censure at the General Assembly (Mearsheimer and Walt 2007, 40). No other country comes close to the amount of international criticism that Israel has received at the United Nations. On average, each year the General Assembly passes nineteen resolutions condemning Israel, compared with zero against most other member states (Bard 2018). And no other country comes close to the level of support provided in defense of Israel as does the United States. The State of Israel owes its international legitimacy in large part to the efforts of the United States of America.[5]

[5] "International legitimacy. . . [is] the collective judgment of international society about rightful membership of the family of nations" (Wight 1977, 153). Alexander Wendt explains that the mere possession of the "corporate identity" of a state is not sufficient means to claim legitimacy in international society; rather the state must reflect certain "identity criteria" to be defined as legitimate (1999, 292). While the requirement for membership into international society previously was the "standard of civilization," the test of which was "government capable of controlling white men [and] under which white civilisation can exist" (Donnelly 1998; Gong 1984), since the end of the

Why has America been such a reliable defender of the State of Israel? One school of thought maintains that the strong US-Israel alliance is the result of domestic advocacy efforts. In this vein, in 2007, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt published a detailed study of the Jewish lobby in the United States. From the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to the Zionist Organization of America, Mearsheimer and Walt argued that – like other powerful lobbies – domestic Jewish advocacy groups are uniquely responsible for the unbreakable alliance. Given the convergence of President George W. Bush's policies with those of the pro-Israel lobby, their study appeared – at the time of its publication – to be revealing and compelling. Turning to a competing theory, a second school of thought contends that the primary basis for US support of Israel is the two nation-states' shared "Judeo-Christian" values (Barnett 1996; Koplow 2011). From President Eisenhower, who stated, "'Our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith . . . With us of course it is the Judeo-Christian concept'" (Henry 1981, 41) to President Trump, who decried contemporary "attacks on our Judeo-Christian values" (Jenkins 2017), nearly every White House leader over the last three-quarters of a century has declared his belief in the Judeo-Christian foundations of American society. Scholars of liberalism maintain that countries with similar political cultures will form international alliances (Doyle 1983; Fox and Sandler 2014; Huntington 1996; Kupchan

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Cold War acceptance has been conditioned upon commitment to good governance and human rights (Armstrong 1999, 560; Beetham and Lord 1998, 8; Clark 2005, 27; Dunne 2001, 76; Williams 1996, 52). States that do not commit to popular norms are branded "rogue" and subsequent violation of their sovereignty (framed as humanitarian intervention) is deemed acceptable international behaviour (Bain 2003; Simpson 2004). Thus, it is of the utmost importance to a state to be deemed legitimate by the international society of states.

2010; Russett 1993). Thus, according to these scholars, America supports Israel on account of their similar values.

While each of these theories helps to explain US support for Israel, both explanations leave many unresolved issues. In light of the strong historic ties between the Jewish community and the Democratic Party (Lipka 2016), the weakening of US-Israel ties during the Obama administration (Oren 2015; Ross 2015) is difficult to understand. Indeed, Israel was a relatively minor issue in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary debates. The two final candidates consisted of Bernie Sanders, a Jewish American who argued for reduced US aid to Israel and demanded that the US be more 'even-handed' in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Spivak 2016), and former secretary-of-state Hillary Clinton, who did not hesitate to criticize Israel during her term in office (Landler and Kershner 2009). Contrast this tepidness on Israel with the 2016 Republican primary debates. Ben Carson declared that while being fair to all sides, the US must treat Israel as its "favored child." Marco Rubio insinuated that the Palestinian leaders are terrorists. John Kasich insisted that he had been a public advocate for Israel longer than any of the other candidates (JTA 2016).[6] Ted Cruz affirmed that on his first day in office, he would revoke the Iran nuclear deal[7] and move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (Kampeas 2016). And Donald Trump announced that "'the Palestinians must come to the table knowing that the bond

[6] The debate took place Feb 25, 2016.

[7] See OWH (2015). Many American and Israeli conservatives saw the deal as potentially threatening to Israel's security interests.

between the United States and Israel is unbreakable'" (Holland and Flitter 2016).[8] And ultimately, as president, Trump would end up moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Furthermore, in 2016, the Republican platform was revised, removing any reference to support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, with evangelicals claiming responsibility for the policy amendment (Shimoni Stoil 2016).[9] And while the Democratic Party maintained its Israel-Palestine commitment to "two states for two peoples," the platform committee came under pressure from factions within the party, demanding the insertion of language accusing Israel of "occupation" (Kopan and Labott 2016).

At the same time, however, Barnett's and Koplow's claims that support for Israel may be attributed to shared Judeo-Christian values is likewise problematic on several levels. First, over the years, American Christian support for the State of Israel has been neither homogeneous, nor linear. For a considerable part of the twentieth century, conservative Christians were ambivalent towards the national aspirations of the Jewish people, exhibiting classic historical antisemitism as they saw Jews as "outside their definition of a white Christian American national identity" (Rynhold 2015, 33). Liberal Christians, by contrast, viewed Zionism more sympathetically, particularly on account of the Holocaust (Rynhold 2015, 60). But then, they switched

[8] This prioritization of the Israel agenda followed a similar pattern to that of the 2012 Republican primaries. Mitt Romney, the eventual victor, stated that "Obama threw Israel under the bus;"" Newt Gingrich proclaimed that "the Palestinians are an invented people" (Elis 2012); and Rick Santorum declared that "there are no Palestinians living in the West Bank and this is Israeli land" (Kessler 2012).
[9] The largest religious affiliation in America is Protestantism, with over forty percent of Americans self-identifying as Protestant. The two major sub-groupings of this group are evangelical and mainline Protestants (Pew 2014).

places: while the camps and ideologies shifted over time, the most dramatic reversal took place at the time of the Six Day War in 1967. From that time on, conservatives began to see Israel as a strategic Cold War ally, while liberals stopped seeing Israel as the underdog in a dangerous region and started to question Israel's post-war territorial decisions (Carenen 2012, 133).

The second reason that shared values are an imperfect explanation for the US-Israel alliance is that political culture is never static. From Enlightenment thinkers to modern scholars, the decline of religion in the West was posited (Comte 1865; Durkheim 1912; Marx 1844; Weber 1922), documented (Aldridge 2007; Berger 1967; Bruce 1992; Bruce 2002; Norris and Inglehart 2004), and then re-examined (Berger 1999; Stark and Finke 2000). Jones (2015), for example, suggests that conservative Christians lost the same-sex marriage "battle" once a majority of self-identifying Christians in America had shifted to favour same-sex marriage. Likewise, continued American support for Israel on the basis of Judeo-Christian values cannot be assumed, inasmuch as sociopolitical values are never static (not to mention the fact that the very definition of "Judeo-Christian" is itself contested, as I shall elucidate in the next chapter). Indeed, in the twenty-first century, a significant pro-Palestinian voice has begun to emanate from a powerful demographic within the American Christian population. In 2004, the Presbyterian Church (USA) moved to divest from companies aiding Israel's occupation of the West Bank, which most countries consider to be illegitimate. The World Council of Churches lauded the decision prompting similar motions in other American denominations, including the United Methodist Church,

the Episcopal Church, and the United Church of Christ. In 2014, PC(USA) successfully passed the motion to divest from Caterpillar, Motorola, and Hewlett Packard, three companies accused of "aiding the occupation" (Goodstein 2005).

The third deficiency of a thesis of shared values is that it requires an examination of both nations' values. References to Israel's culture tend to focus on its Western, democratic state and society, whereas the notion of American Judeo-Christian values would appear to emphasize religious culture. Israeli society places far less emphasis on religious foundations. For example, half of all Jews in Israel never pray, and only 21% pray on a daily basis. Contrast these statistics with 55% of Americans who pray daily, including 79% of evangelicals, while a mere 23% of Americans never pray (Pew 2014; Pew 2016).

Thus, neither explanation for American support for the State of Israel fully explains the US-Israel relationship. On the one hand, if US foreign policy toward Israel were driven by Jewish Americans, then one would expect to see a pro-Israel Democratic party, and at best, an ambivalent Republican party. Instead, the reverse is true. Being pro-Israel has become a significant identifier for politically conservative (specifically, Republican) Americans. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the attribution of American support for Israel to Judeo-Christian values does not explain the myriad churches actively opposed to the special relationship, nor the fact that Israel's religious values do not align with America's.

Research Questions

1. Why and how does Israel matter (so much) to American Protestant Christianity?

2. Why do some Christians support while others oppose Israel?

3. What accounts for the rise in Christian activism on behalf of Israel/Palestine?

Thesis statement: The recent rise of Christian activism on the issue of Israel-Palestine is the consequence of three interrelated factors: Presbyterianism's complicated historical relationship with dispensationalism, unique Christian interest-group advantages, and domestic inter-Christian sociopolitical contestation.

This study seeks to broaden understanding of the Christian sources of American support for Israel. I shall investigate three areas. First, I will review previous explanations of Christian support for Israel/Palestine and assess their continued significance to contemporary activism. Particular focus is given to the Protestant ideology of dispensationalism. Whereas previous studies have premised Christian pro-Israel activism on the doctrine, this dissertation argues that dispensationalism has also resulted in anti-Israel Christian activism. Second, I will investigate the impact of organizational and strategic aspects of Christian interest group activism upon the prioritization of the Israel-Palestine issue in America. The dissertation argues that certain structural aspects of American Christian groups have amplified their influence far beyond that of traditional political actors in the Israel-Palestine advocacy sector. Third, I will explore American domestic inter-Christian sociopolitical contestation and analyze the implications for the US-Israel relationship. The dissertation argues that a radical shift in mainline Protestant policies – namely, same-sex marriage and ordination – has resulted in marked shifts on Israel-Palestine policy, both among the

Christian Left and the Christian Right. These shifts have ramifications not only for Israel policy but for Jewish-Christian relations in America.

Methodology

Case studies

In order to investigate these three areas, this dissertation utilizes the case study method, examining two groups: Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Previous studies have considered differing American Christian perspectives on Israel-Palestine utilizing market survey data collection (Lifeway 2017; Pew 2003). While such studies provide useful aggregate information, they offer little in the way of specific determinants leading to one attitude versus another. Small sample case studies offer the advantage of thick descriptions, and therefore sharper and more instructive explanations. The case studies herein explore the beliefs and activities of American Christians, thereby allowing for discernment of the causes leading to their differing perspectives, dissenting voices within the particular political camps, and relevant organizational factors. In terms of case study choices, on the pro-Israel side, Christians United for Israel is by far the largest and most vocal and active American Christian interest group, claiming seven million members, and bringing five thousand activists to Washington, D.C. to lobby annually. On the pro-Palestinian side, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has led the way on Christian-based advocacy. Writing already in the 1990s, Duncan Clarke declared: "No church is more committed on the Palestinian issue or has more informed, organized advocacy and educational programs than the Presbyterian Church (USA)" (Clarke and

Flohr 1992, 72). That leadership position has continued until today, exemplified by the fact that PC(USA) was the first major denomination to initiate and pass a divestment motion against Israel. The second motivation for focusing upon these two particular groups is their shared backgrounds, enabling a most-similar design method.[10] Identifying the points of historical divergence allow for a determination of the factors that distinguished one group from another and defined each group's twenty first century political decisions.

A basic background on the two groups is in order. Christians United for Israel (CUFI) is a Christian Zionist advocacy group, started by megachurch televangelist John Hagee in 2006. Christian Zionism finds its ideological roots in the doctrine of dispensationalism, the belief that the Jewish people will be returned to Israel prior to Jesus' return. While the Christian Zionist movement developed over a period of many centuries, Hagee's pro-Israel activism dates to the early 1980s. In 1981, Israel destroyed the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq. While most of the world condemned Israel for its actions, Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell galvanized the American evangelical community in support of Israel (Brog 2006, 141). One of the most vocal supporters was Hagee, who began a series of "Nights to Honor Israel" (Carenen 2012, 200). In the aftermath of 9/11, Hagee invited four hundred Christian leaders to San Antonio and inaugurated CUFI (Hagee 2007, 46; Marsden 2008, 186; Wood 2007, 80). Jerry Falwell was prominent in the organization until his death in 2007.

[10] Previous analyses have not acknowledged their historical likenesses. I consider these shared histories in chapter 3.

Presbyterianism was founded by John Knox (1513-1572), a leading student of Reformation theologian John Calvin (1509-1564). In 1534, King Henry VIII of England (1491-1547) passed the Act of Supremacy, severing ties with the Catholic Church. In 1560, Knox convinced the Scottish Parliament to adopt Protestantism. Meanwhile, Ireland refused to capitulate to England's religious decision, thus beginning a bloody feud between the two countries, culminating in the desolation of Northern Ireland. In an effort to weaken Catholicism's power in Ireland, King James I of England and Scotland (1566-1625) resettled the area with Protestants from England and Scotland. Over time, they were joined by many more Scotsmen, including Presbyterian clergy. Eventually, the inhabitants became known as Scots-Irish (or Ulster-Scots) and Presbyterianism became the dominant denomination in Northern Ireland (Lingle 1944, 64).

The next stage of Presbyterianism of interest to this study takes place in America. Partly as a result of Catholic persecution from Ireland and Anglican persecution from England, many of these Scots-Irish Presbyterians later fled the British Isles. Initially, they continued their affiliation with the Scottish Presbyterian Church. Following the Revolution, however, American Presbyterians decided that the establishment of an independent Church was in order. Although the US denomination underwent various incarnations, divisions, and amalgamations over the centuries, the primary body of American Presbyterians evolved into today's Presbyterian Church (USA). From the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, American Christians debated issues of biblical inerrancy and modernity, culminating in today's

mainline-evangelical divide in Protestant America. The Presbyterians were no strangers to these disputes, and over the course of the twentieth century, the Presbyterian Church saw a number of major splits. The first occurred in the 1930s with the secession of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the second took place in the 1970s with the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in America. The most recent secession took place in 2012 with the establishment of the Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO). Today's Presbyterian Church (USA), while still the largest Presbyterian denomination in the US, is the mainline/liberal remnant of the fractured history of Presbyterianism in America. At its peak in 1965, the denomination boasted over four million members; today that number has decreased to a million-and-a-half. Numbers-wise, of the mainline Churches, PC(USA) is the third largest, behind the Methodist and the Lutheran Churches (Longfield 2013). Nevertheless, due to its educated, upper-class membership, Presbyterianism has tended to project theological and social influence out of proportion to its size. For example, the major interlocutors in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth century were primarily Presbyterians (Longfield 1991, 4).

Within PC(USA) there exist a plethora of positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some activists would like to see the Jewish state completely dismantled and replaced with a multinational state. Other activists believe that God promised Israel to the Jewish people and that Israel must be supported unquestioningly. And then myriad viewpoints fall in between, including those who believe that pressuring Israel to withdraw from the post-1967 territories is in the interests of peace for both

Palestinians and Israelis, and those who argue that BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) is ill-conceived since it hurts the Palestinians and their economic opportunities. Nevertheless, PC(USA) activists have coalesced around two general camps, one that favours the Palestinian position, represented by IPMN (the Israel/Palestine Mission Network), and the other that tends to support Israel's position, PFMEP (Presbyterians For Middle East Peace). The chapter on PC(USA) refers to these viewpoints employing the short-hand terms: pro-Palestine and pro-Israel. In actuality, many activists in both camps would claim to be simultaneously pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel and assert that their ultimate goal is the pursuit of peace; they simply differ on the best route to get there.

In terms of comparing the two case studies, while CUFI exhibits many features of a traditional interest group, PC(USA)'s categorization as such is not as clear-cut. Laura Olson categorizes the major mainline Churches as interest groups, since they "retain an institutional presence on the national political stage," each with its own Washington, D.C. advocacy office (2002, 55). Unlike CUFI, however, PC(USA) was not formed for the sole purpose of Israel-Palestine advocacy. This particular issue is but one of many with which the Church is engaged. This asymmetry has many implications for this study, both in terms of comparative research and in terms of practical methodological aspects of the research. Nevertheless, this study is not the first to encounter this asymmetry. Claudia Baumgart-Ochse (2017) compares and contrasts the responses of the World Council of Churches and CUFI to the BDS movement. She writes:

> WCC and CUFI are among the most vocal and active Christian organizations with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They are very different in their organizational structure: one being an umbrella organization comprising member churches across the world, the other a US-based, single-issue advocacy organization. The WCC draws its influence and importance from its global constituency in member churches in more than 110 countries. With its main office being located at the UN headquarter in Geneva, the WCC directs much of its advocacy at an international audience. CUFI, on the other hand, utilizes its broad support from Evangelicals of different backgrounds in the US in order to lobby the US government, the most important external power in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given these differences, these organizations do not lend themselves easily to a comparison of their organizational structure, reach and effectiveness. However, they have in common that they claim to represent the two predominant Christian faith-based approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, they are taken as examples of the ways in which Christian organizations react to the challenge of the BDS call. The objective of the analysis conducted below is not to compare the two organizations as such but their theological and ethical responses to BDS. (Baumgart-Ochse 2017, 9)

Similarly, in this study, CUFI and PC(USA) are the two most vocal American interest groups on the issue of Israel-Palestine. Some of the approaches to the issue will be readily comparable, while others will feature elements unique to their structure that enhance or detract from their ability to advocate effectively for their respective causes, all of which is of interest to this study.

Primary and Secondary Sources

The initial phase of the research process involved seeking to understand various scholarly perspectives detailed in secondary materials. Step 1 was to review the literature describing and explaining the activities and motivations of American Christian pro-Israel/Palestine activists generally. I then perused the scholarship on the particular two cases of this dissertation, which led to an investigation into why these two specific groups had undertaken to champion the Israel/Palestine cause. In

an effort to arrive at a suitable explanation, I explored the respective backgrounds of the two groups, seeking to contextualize their current positions in a framework of historical perspectives. To my surprise and excitement, the more I investigated the history, the more I realized that the paths were two sides of the proverbial same coin. CUFI and PC(USA) derive from the religious traditions of Scots-Irish immigrants to America. Their shared and divergent histories have thus far been overlooked. This dissertation argues that present-day contestation stems, in no small part, from historical contestation over the place of Jews and Israel in Protestant theology.

My second step was to seek a clearer understanding of the concept of Judeo-Christian values. Scholars and pundits alike tend to refer to the idea with little thought of its underlying assumptions and meaning. An excellent study by Gaston (2019) revealed that the term itself is contested and focused on mid-twentieth century competing conceptions of Protestant America in an increasingly pluralistic landscape. Despite its origins as a domestic debate, over time it grew to symbolize the contrast between freedoms espoused in America with the curtailed freedoms of communist ideology, thus transitioning the term to the foreign policy domain. The Jewish state's eventual alliance with the US led to the conflation of Judeo-Christian and Western values terminology, as the depiction appeared neat and logical. This dissertation returns to earlier debates around the meaning of the term and proceeds to demonstrate that the original domestic complexities associated with the terminology and contested theological tradition help to explain present-day Christian contestation over Israel-Palestine. And the third step in the review of secondary materials was to

peruse the interest group scholarly literature, including theoretical works and previous studies of actual interest groups. Construction of a theoretical framework of values-based interest groups entailed the examination of a number of interest group studies, some of which covered policy subsystems generally (e.g., Kristin Luker's (1984) study of the abortion debate in America), others that focused on specific interest groups (e.g., Clive Beauchamp's [1992] study of the NRA), as well as enquiries into the nature of religious special interests (e.g., Hertzke 1988; Wuthnow 1990).

The next phase of the research was to analyze primary sources. The key primary texts I analyzed on CUFI were a number of books on Christian Zionism and American values penned by founder John Hagee (2007), executive director David Brog (2006; 2010), and regional coordinator Victor Styrsky (2013). In order to gain a clearer understanding of the role played by dispensationalist ideology, I examined the relevant writings of John Nelson Darby. And as a counterbalance, I perused the expressly non-dispensationalist collection of Christian Zionist essays edited by McDermott (2016). The key primary texts I considered for PC(USA) were the minutes of General Assembly committee discussions, revealing the intense debates taking place in the denomination. These debates led me to the materials produced by each campaign, which were helpful for two reasons. First, they laid out the respective positions clearly in the words of the activists. Second, they helped identify the key activists, whom I subsequently contacted for interview purposes. In addition, I reviewed denominational journal articles and internal opinion surveys relating to Israel-Palestine. For the purposes of the discussion concerning the historical rift

between the Presbyterian Church and dispensationalists, I examined the minutes of the Church at the 1944 convention. I then clarified the matter by perusing letters exchanged between dispensationalist L.S. Chafer and the denomination, which I obtained from a special collection at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Observation/Participation

The next phase of the research was to personally experience the activism. Whilst this research project is not an ethnographic study, I sought, nonetheless, to become immersed in the culture of the two groups by participating actively in their programs. The first step was to attend their respective conferences: PC(USA)'s biennial General Assembly in Portland, Oregon, in June 2016, and CUFI's annual summit in Washington, D.C. in July 2016. For PC(USA), my participation included attending all the meetings of the Middle East Committee at the 2016 convention, as well as a special lunch meeting of pro-Palestinian activists. For CUFI, my participation included attending all events from the large, open programs to the smaller, invitation-only programs, as well as the lobbying visit to Congress. The purpose of the participation in these two gatherings was to assemble the background material for the descriptions of the two case studies. In addition, attending the conferences provided the opportunity to meet with the key activists and to chat informally, prior to arranging the formal interviews.

It is important to note that sitting in the room as a rabbi was not a neutral exercise, neither from the perspective of the researcher nor of the research participants. Contemporary theories of knowledge stress the importance of acknowledging the impact of a researcher's personal perspectives, insisting that no

researcher is ever neutral. Reflexivity recognizes that as researchers, we are part of the social world that we study (Ackerly & True 2010). The investigator always enters a field of research with certain predisposed ideas about what it is all about (Giorgi 1986, 22). Moreover, the perspective of the researcher is limited by their determination of what can be seen (Haraway 1991, 183). This notion applies even in laboratory science (Latour and Woolgar 1986). Hence, in qualitative inquiry, the question is neither whether the researcher affects the process nor whether such an effect can be prevented; rather, inappropriate subjectivity occurs when the effect of the researcher is ignored. The closest the researcher can get to objectivity is the recognition that the knowledge is partial and situated, and to endeavour to account for the effects of the positioned researcher (Haraway 1991, 183).

Interviews

Undoubtedly, my clergy status assisted ease of access to the research participants. Oftentimes, a potential researcher – particularly at the student level – may design a research project specifying their desired interviewees. Upon entering the field, however, many of these people are difficult to reach. By contrast, in the case of this study, all my interviewees were either clergypersons or engaged in faith organizational employment. Nevertheless, despite the best of intentions to present as a disinterested party, one cannot discount the fact that respondents, both active and passive, may have adjusted their behaviour accordingly. As far as data analysis and my presentation of the evidence are concerned, I have striven to avoid approaching the issue of Israel-Palestine with any *a priori* beliefs regarding the historic

rights of either Jews or Palestinians to the land, focusing instead on the domestic efforts of Christian Americans to influence US policy in either direction. As far as the field research is concerned, I was completely open and honest with all interviewees as to my personal identity and beliefs.

This leads to a further issue faced by researchers – the decision whether to offer full disclosure regarding one's own political views. On the one hand, being upfront might lead to reluctance on the part of a research participant with differing views to be completely open and honest. On the other hand, not doing so might lead to regret and anger on the part of the participants upon their discovery of the researcher's agenda (Jacoby 2006, 167). In the case of the present research, my sense was that my reputation preceded me. A basic google search would have provided sufficient material concerning my background and political positions. In fact, it was suggested to me, on more than one occasion during the research, that I had been subjected to a more extensive background check than a mere internet search. Consequently, the assumption in most instances throughout my research was that the participants knew with whom they were engaging. Nevertheless, I still made every effort to empathize with each side as they presented their narratives to me. Jacoby maintains that one does not cross any ethical boundaries, as long as one does not set out to deceive (2006, 169). In this case, while I did not endeavour to volunteer personal information, I was completely honest in all my responses to the research participants.

Turning to specific implications of my personal identity upon the interview process, the varied responses I experienced as I interacted with each research participant group was remarkable – from the pro-Israel CUFI activists to the pro-Palestinian PC(USA) activists to Israel's defenders in the PC(USA) to Jewish pro-Palestinian activists. I begin with Christians United for Israel (CUFI). An essential element of CUFI's modus operandi is outreach to rabbis and Jewish community leaders. Consequently, when interacting with CUFI leaders, automatically I became part of the story. CUFI activists were eager to talk to me, although they did acknowledge that – on account of past dealings with academics who had presented their group in an unfavorable light – they had pre-screened me prior to agreeing to take part in my interviews. Once I had "passed," however, I was able to gain relatively easy access to the top-level leadership of the organization, which would be far more difficult for similar researchers to attain. In terms of researching the Israel/Palestine Mission Network (the pro-Palestinian faction in the Presbyterian Church) activists (IPMN), my identity was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, my position as a clergyperson gave me instant collegial credentials when approaching Presbyterian leaders. On the other hand, despite their initial congeniality, some activists proved difficult to schedule for interview purposes. It was unclear whether their ambivalence stemmed from my religion, my political views, or fear of being misrepresented. Allegations of antisemitic predilections on the part of certain activists by others in the Presbyterian Church – from both factions – may have played a part, but it is impossible for me to answer the question definitively. Whilst I was able to find enough pro-

Palestinian activists in the Church who were willing to be interviewed, the reticence of others to engage may have resulted in an incomplete picture.

The third group of interest was Presbyterians For Middle East Peace (PFMEP), the faction countering the pro-Palestinian campaign in their denomination. Whereas IPMN activists present themselves as powerful agents of change, PFMEP activists see themselves as a weaker, loosely-organized collective, retaining fewer material and labor resources than the pro-Palestinian campaign. This self-representation is somewhat oversimplified, as PFMEP has the support of a number of prominent Jewish organizations. As such, their willingness to engage should be considered in light of their assumption of the sympathies I, an Orthodox rabbi, would harbor towards their efforts. Indeed, I must disclose that my conversations with PFMEP activists resulted in the inclusion of parts of my research in their (2021) book *Peace and Faith: Christian Churches and The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.* And finally, let me address my dealings with Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), the anti-Zionist Jewish group supporting the pro-Palestinian faction in the Presbyterian Church. The mainstream Jewish community tends to marginalize the organization, labelling its activities traitorous. Over the course of my research, however, I became familiar with the long history of anti-Zionist Jews who did not support the establishment and maintenance of a Jewish state. Consequently, I would have liked to have approached JVP activists with fresh eyes. Alas, this element of the research project never came to pass, as said activists did not respond to my calls and emails. As with other activists, the impression I received was that they had already conducted their "homework" on me and elected to dismiss my

approaches. Nevertheless, since this dissertation is about Christians, such conversations would have been tangential to the project.[11]

In terms of specific interviewee selection, Kristin Luker (1984) writes that an effective interest group study must engage with "key activists," which she defines as people who dedicate more than five hours a week to the cause and are recognized by other activists as key. For the present study, I identified the key activists from campaign materials and their activity at the conferences. In an effort to keep the study balanced and comprehensive, I sought out activists from each group with certain characteristics, from pulpit clergypersons to professional lobbyists to organizational leaders to theologians to dissenting voices. Each of the twenty open-ended interviews lasted sixty to ninety minutes and consisted of three parts. One section of the interview inquired as to the motivations underlying their activism and their opinions concerning the motivations of their competitors. Another section addressed issues of timing, with each participant questioned regarding their length of service to the group and the events leading to their personal involvement, as well as their thoughts on how the issue had evolved into its contemporary place of importance on the national agenda. A final section of the interview questioned them on matters of process, seeking their understanding of the organizational structure of their group and advocacy strategies.

[11] For a detailed overview of the historical alliance between Christians and Jews in the anti-Zionist campaign, see Friedman (2021).

Two additional comments must be made regarding the interviews. First, while the above description formed the basic outline of the interview, I should clarify that for the purposes of the dissertation, the order and demarcations of the sections have been presented slightly different to their original format. At the time of the interviews, the contours of this research project were not as well-defined, hence the need for an open-ended interview. As the study has taken shape, its purpose has become clearer. Now that the focus has sharpened to address the three above-stated research questions regarding competing Christian views of Israel-Palestine, the significance of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the role of interest group organization and strategies, the map of the interview process were redrawn. The responses of the research participants remain nonetheless unaffected by this refocus. Second, seeking candid and uninhibited answers from the interviewees, I assured each one that their identities would be protected and they would not be quoted without permission. Consequently, I have applied a coding system to each quotation found in this dissertation, employing titles rather than the participants' real names.

Limitations of the study

Since these religious activists represent the outer limits of the bell-curve of views of the US-Israel relationship, the resultant risk is a deficient understanding of the average Christian American's views on the issue.[12] Let me respond to this potential limitation in four ways. First, the issue of activists not being representative tends to

[12] For example, CUFI activists tend to favour "Greater Israel" – the annexation of all disputed territories. PC(USA)'s activists tend to support the BDS movement. Neither of these positions are espoused publicly by the governments of USA or Israel.

arise when examining interest groups generally. An excellent response comes from Luker (1984), who explains her methods in addressing the debate over abortion in America:

> These are the people who do the concrete, sustained political work of the debate in order to bring law and public opinion . . . into line with their own values. Though it is true that they are not representative of the broad panoply of American thought or belief [on abortion] – because they are so politically energetic in defense of their views – their beliefs and values predominantly shape the debate. (1984, 9)

Likewise, the Christians who are politically active on the issue of Israel-Palestine are the ones with the greatest potential to effect change. Due to their silence, the opinions of those who are not politically engaged – those in the middle of the spectrum – have little opportunity to influence and impact policy.

Second, the perspective of the average voter is of limited concern regarding a study of foreign policy. Since most voters are preoccupied with domestic issues, interest groups have greater power to set the agenda (Horowitz 1981). As this study unfolded, this rejoinder arguably carries less weight. The *prima facie* assumption was that the issue of Israel-Palestine sits in the foreign policy domain. The conclusions of this study suggest a strong domestic aspect of the issue that has thus far received inadequate attention. The third factor ameliorating the concern that this project is overly attentive to the ends of the spectrum is that the primary goal of interest group activism is to influence a likeminded audience of soft-partisans who may not actively participate organizationally but may be persuaded to acquiesce to the initiatives of the more motivated partisans. Unlike most other interest groups, Christian interest

groups in America have a built-in coreligionist audience. Thus, while the activists may occupy the ends of the spectrum, their organic audience occupies the middle ground.[13] Fourth, this study includes interviewed dissidents in each group. These dissenting voices will be helpful in adding nuance and clarity to the discussion. Therefore, while the limitations certainly exist, ample effort has been made to correct the deficiencies posed by such limitations.

Dissertation Outline

Despite being a country of limited security and trade concern to the US, the State of Israel occupies an inordinate amount of space in American foreign policy making and election campaigning. Domestic ethnic advocacy – that is, the Jewish lobby – is an insufficient explanation of Israel's undue space in American politics. Only with reference to America's Christian heritage can one understand Israel's place in the American public square. Nevertheless, the simplistic reference to the existence of common Judeo-Christian values as the basis of the US-Israel relationship is equally unsatisfying. This dissertation seeks to understand the many factors relating to American Christianity undergirding US support for Israel.

Chapter 2 first assesses scholarly explanations of Christian sources of support for Israel-Palestine, factors that I categorize as theological and cultural. I then add two additional sections to consider: interest group theory and theopolitical contestation. Thus far scholars have not factored the interest group literature into

[13] This matter will be elucidated further in later chapters.

the conversation around American Christianity's impact on Israel policy. I argue that certain organizational and strategic elements of interest group mobilization must be factored into any understanding of the rise of Christian activism on the issue of Israel-Palestine. The second novel approach to this question is based on scholarship dealing with domestic Christian sociopolitical contestation, stemming from differing interpretations of the American Judeo-Christian tradition. While competing American Protestant positions originated in the form of debates over the interpretation and significance of "Judeo-Christian" culture, the term was eventually commandeered by the Christian Right, thus necessitating a twenty-first century rephrasing of the debate. I have called it "theopolitical contestation," by which I mean intra-Protestant competition over differing understandings of Christian values and their application in the American public square. I maintain that theopolitical contestation provides the context for debates over Israel-Palestine with significant implications for Jews in Israel and America.

Chapter 3 problematizes two of the primary theological and cultural explanations proffered for American Christian Zionism. On the theological side, pro-Israel activism tends to be attributed to dispensationalism. On the cultural side, pro-Israel activism has been associated with Scots-Irish migration patterns. Paradoxically, American Presbyterianism has a formidable historical association with both traditions. I describe the relationship between the Presbyterian Church and the Christian Zionist movement and argue that they are two sides of the same coin. From the movement's inception, and right up until this very day, the two groups have been in theological

and political conversation with one another. This conversation is fuelling the rise of the issue of Israel-Palestine on the American political agenda, and the role of this relationship between the two groups must be acknowledged as an important factor in the US-Israel relationship.

Chapter 4 investigates the activities of Christians United for Israel, through the lens of the scholarly literature. From a theological perspective, I conclude that the role of dispensationalism must be reassessed. Most Christian Zionists today do not ascribe to dispensationalism. Nevertheless, I demonstrate that its significance lies in the historical role it has played in laying the groundwork for contemporary activism. From an organizational perspective, I demonstrate how John Hagee has harnessed evangelical numbers in America to strengthen his pro-Israel advocacy campaign. And from a strategic perspective, I demonstrate that CUFI's ability to engage with Christian political insiders offers it a distinct advantage over AIPAC. Thus, to subsume Christian Zionist activities under the general rubric of the Jewish lobby misses an important element of pro-Israel advocacy. From a theopolitical perspective, I propose that many Christian Right activists are focused primarily on domestic sociopolitical issues. In this regard, pro-Israel activism may be a tool utilized by certain Protestants to promote a conservative religious agenda in America.

Chapter 5 explores the issue of Israel-Palestine in the Presbyterian Church (USA). From a theological perspective, I examine the debates taking place in the denomination and contextualize them in the contrasting philosophies of the Niebuhr brothers. From an organizational perspective, I demonstrate the unique structure

that facilitates direction of the political agenda by interest groups within the denomination. And from a strategic perspective, I argue that the goal of the pro-Palestinian campaign is not divestment from specific companies, but the advancement of the global BDS movement. From a theopolitical perspective, I show how resolutions on same-sex ordination and marriage led to the departure of religious conservatives from the denomination, which in turn led to a progressive sociopolitical shift in the Presbyterian Church. A significant ramification of this shift was the tilt in favour of the Palestinians.

The concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the dissertation. Essentially, this study makes four claims. First, the Presbyterian Church and Christians United for Israel are two sides of the same coin, whose activists and their forebears have been in dialogue for many centuries. Second, interest group factors have boosted the Israel-Palestine issue in twenty-first century America, as they contest "Who speaks for American Christianity?" Third, Israel is used by many members of the Christian Right as a tool to bolster conservative religious values in (domestic) America. Fourth, domestic Christian Left politics (particularly the campaign for marriage equality) have bolstered pro-Palestinian advocacy in the mainline Protestant Churches and strengthened the global BDS movement. All these elements are important factors contributing to elevating the issue of Israel-Palestine in US foreign policy. In the short-term, this prioritization has led to greater American support for the State of Israel.

2. Christian Foundations of the US-Israel Relationship

> *We must be more forceful in the battle of ideas. U.S. public diplomacy and international broadcasting have lost their focus on the case for Western values and ideals and effectively countering our opponents' propaganda and disinformation. I will consolidate them into a new agency that has a clear mandate to promote the core, Judeo-Christian, Western values that we and our friends and allies share (GOP presidential candidate Kasich 2015).*[14]

Among the various causes undergirding the special relationship between America and Israel are a number of Christian-based factors. Some of these religious foundations have enhanced the relationship, while others have weakened it. This study investigates these Christian elements impacting the US-Israel alliance. This chapter begins with a review of the theological and cultural causes identified thus far by scholars, the continuing relevance of which will be addressed later in the dissertation. The chapter then introduces two fields of study related to American Christianity yet to be considered by the scholarly literature on Israel-Palestine policy. The first is the literature on interest groups. While scholars have explored the motivations of Christian interest groups, little analysis of the specific effects of interest group mobilization on the US-Israel relationship has taken place. The second literature is the debate over who speaks for American Christianity in a country that is, culturally if not constitutionally, defined in Christian terms. I call this theopolitical contestation, and I argue that domestic religious competition has influenced debate over US policy on Israel-Palestine. Protestantism is historically the largest Christian creed in America.[15] Each section of the chapter examines the perspectives and activities of the

[14] Cited LoBianco (2015)
[15] As of 2019, 43% of American Christians were Protestant, while 21% were Catholic (Pew 2019).

two primary categories of American Protestants: evangelicals and mainline Protestants.

An introductory note on categorization is in order. This study examines the ideology and political activism of American Protestants on the issue of Israel-Palestine. Broadly framed, two opposing forces are imagined in the form of evangelical versus mainline Protestants. Such a depiction is undoubtedly an oversimplification, and American Protestants across the denominational and non-denominational spectrum exhibit a wide range of views. This caveat notwithstanding, Carenen (2012) has established a general trend in America over the last century towards stronger support for Israel from evangelical groups and stronger support for the Palestinians emanating from the mainline denominations. Thus, in line with her findings, this dissertation investigates two organizations representing these divergent approaches: Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and the Presbyterian Church (USA). And given the objective of elucidating the sources of American Christian pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian activism in broadly applicable categories, the general and particular appellations are often used interchangeably. Nevertheless, not all evangelicals are Christian Zionists, nor does CUFI represent all Christian Zionists. Likewise, the Presbyterian Church (USA) does not represent all mainline Protestants, and the discussion herein demonstrates clearly that debates over Israel-Palestine continue within the mainline Churches. Despite the flaws inherent in a case study approach, the analyses of CUFI and PC(USA) aim to offer broad understandings of American Protestant political activism on the issue of Israel-Palestine, i.e., why some

Protestants support Israel while others support the Palestinians. Later chapters, however, will suggest distinctive elements that may indeed serve to differentiate PC(USA) from other mainline denominations.

Theological

Let us begin with the theological foundations of American Christian support for Israel/Palestine. Over the last two millennia, Christianity's view of the land and people of Israel has been complex and volatile, resulting in Protestants on either side of the debate drawing contradictory conclusions about Israel-Palestine from the Bible and Christian theology. A basic outline of Christian doctrine on Israel follows, highlighting the key historical moments that have defined contemporary debate, following which these matters are explored as they apply specifically to the two case studies of this dissertation.

Christianity began as a messianic sect of Judaism. With the New Testament's introduction of novel practices such as the proselytizing of Gentiles and the negation of the commandments, eventually the group became a distinct religion.[16] As Christianity and Judaism parted ways, the leaders of the new movement began to preach Replacement theology, also known as "supersessionism," meaning that the adherents of Christianity had now replaced or superseded the Jews as God's chosen people (Roberts 1994, 1:200). Augustine (354-430) taught that in order to bear

[16] For detailed explanations of why mainstream Judaism rejected Christianity, see Klinghoffer (2005) and Maccoby (2001).

witness to their crime of deicide and the origins of Christianity, the Jews should not be killed, but tolerated in a subservient position (Malkiel 2003, 56).

By the eleventh century, however, this toleration all but vanished, when Catholic theologian Ademar of Chabannes (989-1034) called for physical violence against the Jews. Convinced of their complicity in Caliph al-Hakim's (996-1021) destruction of the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and his incitement against Christians and churches in the Middle East, Ademar and his colleagues initiated a campaign of expulsion and murder of European Jews. In the ensuing years, the bishops forbade Christians from maintaining contact with Jews, many of whom, fearing death, accepted baptism. Thus ended relatively peaceable relations between Christians and Jews and began the millennium-long tradition of Church anti-Semitism (Frassetto 2007). One of the earliest manifestations of this new perspective took place in 1095 when Pope Urban II (1042-1099) called for the redemption of Jerusalem from the Muslim "infidels." Tens of thousands of zealous young Christian men heeded the call and set out for the Holy Land. En route, however, they encountered other infidels – not Muslim, but Jewish. Tragically, the First Crusade was responsible for the slaughter of thousands of Rhineland Jews (Mayer 1988, 41).

Nevertheless, the Reformation introduced new ways of thinking that would once again reconfigure Jewish-Christian relations. In 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546) posted his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, wherein he challenged many of the Catholic Church's established notions of Christianity. One area he took issue with was the meaning of the biblical text. Luther declared his belief

in *Sola Scriptura* – "Scripture alone is our authority" – with no need to resort to priestly interpretation (Johnson 2004, 20). This idea opened a whole new avenue to understanding the Bible. No longer were the opinions of the Church Fathers considered divinely binding; the simplest reading of Scripture was the purest.

British cleric John Bale (1495-1563) was the first to reassess the place of Jews in Christian theology. Bale proposed a theological distinction between Catholics and Muslims on the one hand, and Jews on the other, the former being viewed as eternally condemned and irredeemable. Despite his newfound sympathy for the Jewish people, Bale remained steadfast in his commitment to Replacement Theology. In his view, they would eventually come around to the Church (Smith 2013, 59). The primary Reformation theologians Martin Luther and John Calvin (1509-1564) were unchanged in their adherence to classic Church antisemitism (Sizer 2004, 27). Thus, the first division in Protestant theological perspectives on Israel occurred at the time of the Reformation, when two schools of thought emerged. One approach maintained the centuries-old aversion towards Jews. A second approach revised the previous position, however, and began to view Jews in a favourable light.

The first Protestant theologian officially to denounce supersessionism (Replacement theology) was Theodore Beza (1519-1605) (Clark 2007, 30; Smith 2013, 60). In addition, Beza's *Geneva Bible* introduced the idea of Restorationism, the belief that the Jews should be restored to Israel in fulfilment of the Bible's ancient

prophecies.[17] This concept was popularized via a number of subsequent publications, such as Thomas Brightman's (1562-1607) *Shall They Return to Jerusalem Again?* and (former British MP) Sir Henry Finch's (1558-1625) *The World's Great Restauration, or, The Calling of the Jews* (Clark 2007, 34). Thus, the next defining moment in the history of Protestant theology is the advent of the Restorationist movement. Contemporary Protestants who call for support of Israel as a Jewish state are the theological heirs to restorationism.

These two novel theological approaches were elements of the religious "luggage" that the first generations of Protestant colonists brought with them to the New World. Beza's ideas found particular resonance in America, with scores of restorationist works published over the ensuing period (Clark 2007, 44). For example, in 1814, Pastor John McDonald of Albany interpreted Isaiah 18, as a call for America to lead the nations in returning the Jewish people to Zion. His published sermon was disseminated widely and reached a large audience who felt moved to faith and action. Shortly thereafter, Protestant minister Levi Parsons (1792-1822), set off for the Holy Land, declaring that "nothing but a miracle would prevent [the Jews'] immediate return from the four winds of heaven" (Grose 1983, 9-10). In 1819, in Boston's Old South Church, Parsons preached, "'They who taught us the way to salvation were Jews. . . . Our God was their God. Our heaven is their heaven'" (Oren 2007, 81). These

[17] In the interests of disambiguation, it is important to note that the theology of Christian Restorationism predates references to Israel in the Bible. Nevertheless, scholars employ the term in this context as well. Merkley (1993) offers a number of sources for the connection between the two conceptions.

statements were not the rantings of religious extremists – in 1819, former president John Adams (1735-1826) wrote "'I really wish the Jews again in Judea an independent nation'" (Oren 2007, 90). In 1878, William Blackstone published *Jesus is Coming*, sales of which exceeded a million copies. Blackstone asserted therein that "the title deed to Palestine is recorded, not in the Mohammedan Serai of Jerusalem nor the Serglio of Constantinople, but in hundreds of millions of Bibles now extant in more than three hundred languages of the earth" (1908, 235). Imminently, he insisted, the Jews would become God's chosen people once again. Thus in 1891, he petitioned President Benjamin Harrison for the US to lead the way in restoring the Jews to the Holy Land, gathering hundreds of prominent signatories from the business, religious, and political spheres (Grose 1983, 35).

In addition to doctrines relating to the Jews, however, American Christians' theological views of themselves would become additional factors determining their support for Israel/Palestine. Many came to America having fled European religious persecution. Consequently, they interpreted their escape through a biblical lens, seeing their journey to the New World as the re-enactment of the exodus of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and the eventual arrival into the Promised Land (Bercovitch 1975; Cherry 1971, 25; Johnson 1867; Mather 1702; Whitaker 1613). The immigrants framed their country as the *New Israel* or *New Jerusalem,* employing terminology, such as "'our promised land and fortress of freedom, the blessed spot which flows with milk and honey, upon which we invoke God's gracious blessings'" (Cherry 1971, 218). Benjamin Franklin suggested a depiction of Moses splitting the

Red Sea for the confederation seal, and Yale president Ezra Stiles delivered his commencement address in Hebrew. "'We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people, the Israel of our time,'" wrote Herman Melville (Grose 1983, 5). Indeed, for some arrivals to the New World, the sojourn did not end at the edge of the Atlantic. The *Promised Land* had yet to be captured. Many Christian preachers would refer to the Amerindians as Canaanites – a reference to the ancient foes of the Israelites – and encouraged the former Europeans to continue their "conquest" of the inhabitants of the land (Christison 1999, 31; Warrior 1989, 25).

This framing of America as the New Israel had mixed implications. On the one hand, the notion of a replacement for Israel of yore exhibited supersessionist overtones and would lay the groundwork for future antagonism towards the reinvigoration of ancient Israel (Moorhead 1984). On the other hand, restorationist beliefs abounded during this period in America (Clark 2007, 44). Viewing their journey in biblical terms increased American identification with the Jewish people and would later strengthen the sympathy of many Christians for the State of Israel. By way of example, during the congressional hearings into the question of support for the establishment of a Jewish state, Rep. Albert B. Rossdale (R-NY) (1878-1968) argued that the conquest of Palestine was a continuation of the Frontier movement's biblical-civilizational goals (Smith 2013, 177).

The next theological layer concerned the biblical meaning of the millennium. The *Book of Revelations* prophesied the Messiah's return at "a thousand years." While the ambiguity of the phrase gave rise to competing interpretations almost from

Christianity's inception, the debate came to the fore in nineteenth century Protestant America. Postmillennialists believed that the world would achieve perfection prior to Jesus' arrival, while premillennialists believed that Jesus would bring perfection to the world (Marsden 2006, 49). America's prosperous era up until the Civil War led most Christians to adopt a postmillennialist view. The war, however, was a major setback in the eyes of many. Apart from the deterioration in materialistic conditions, contrary to earlier predictions, the war had not resulted in a golden age of righteousness. Such failings of the evolutionary process of progress did not faze premillennialists, who anticipated the unfolding of the *End Times* in the form of a supernatural occurrence. Contemporary events bolstered belief in the distinction between the natural and supernatural order of the cosmos and led to the widespread adoption of the premillennialist position (Clark 2007, 84; Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 80; Marsden 2006, 51; Weber 2004, 42). These divergent understandings played out practically with the arrival of Enlightenment thought into the public conversation. While premillennialists opposed the "newfangled" ideas and "foreign" influences, postmillennialists viewed religion in evolutionary terms and welcomed the opportunity to adjust their religious creed to the standards and needs of modern culture (Ahlstrom 1972, 811; Clark 2007, 84; Marsden 2006, 25).

In 1906, Milton and Lyman Stewart issued a series of twelve pamphlets entitled *The Fundamentals*. These booklets outlined the doctrines that are fundamental to traditional Christianity, including the literal interpretation of the Bible and the inerrancy of Scripture (El-Faizy 2006, 62; Marsden 2006, 56). In 1923,

fundamentalist theologian, John Gresham Machen, published *Christianity and Liberalism*, arguing that the new liberal theology was not Christianity at all. In 1924, Shailer Mathews responded to Machen in *The Faith of Modernism*, wherein he argued that should Christianity fail to adapt to the modern intellectualism, it would lose touch with the new generation of Americans (Marty 1997, 168). And in his pamphlet *Will Christ Come Again?* Mathews went so far as to reject a literal *Second Coming* (Marty 1997, 37). The 1925 Scopes Monkey trial saw the fundamentalists suffer a humiliating defeat in their crusade to ban the teaching of Darwinism. Coupled with various other contemporary failed sociopolitical attempts, such as Prohibition and the campaign against Catholic presidential candidate Al Smith (1873-1944), the setback led to the retreat of the fundamentalists from the public square. During the ensuing decades, they made little attempt to impact national culture (Wills 2007, 423).

These Protestant debates provide an important subtext to the examination of American attitudes towards Israel-Palestine. Differing perspectives on the inerrancy of the Bible led to contrasting conclusions regarding the continued theological relevance of Israel and the Jewish people. Fundamentalists tended to be adherents of restorationism, believing in the enduring prophecy of a return of the Jewish people to Israel. In contrast, postmillennialists either viewed America as the culmination of history, consequently dismissing Israel's place as the *Kingdom of God,* or simply read the Bible as an allegory without prophetic imperatives (Moorhead 1984). Thus, competing millennialist doctrines are a significant determinant of Protestant views on Israel-Palestine and would lay the groundwork for late twentieth and twenty-first

century debates between American Christian supporters and critics of Israel. While most contemporary Christians would not be familiar with theological arguments over millennialism, the disputing camps would ultimately be manifested in the evangelical-mainline Protestant divide.

Christian Zionism - Christians United for Israel

Christians United for Israel is the largest American Christian Zionist organization. While its members support Israel for a variety of reasons, the primary motivations are rooted in the aforementioned debates. Christian Zionists tend to adopt the approach taken by John Bale, viewing Jews more favourably than earlier Christian theologians. Likewise, they tend to harbor restorationist beliefs. Moreover, their theological ideas about American history tend to provide a framework amenable to sympathy for a Jewish return to Israel. And most importantly, they tend to be premillennialist and exhibit a strong belief in fundamentalism. CUFI leaders claim that their primary motivation for supporting Israel is their belief in the literal reading of the Bible, which states that God chose the Jewish people and gave them the Land of Israel. Moreover, they see contemporary events in the region – from the waves of Jewish immigration to the Holy Land to the establishment of the State of Israel to the victory of Israel in 1967 – as the fulfillment of God's ancient promises to the Jewish people and the unfolding of biblical prophecy (Brog 2006, 68; McDermott 2016).

In addition to the abovementioned factors, however, perhaps the most oft-quoted theological basis for Christian Zionism is the doctrine of dispensationalism, the doctrine of dividing biblical history into distinct eras, or "dispensations" (Clark 2007;

Spector 2009). Fuller (1980) explains that traditional Christian theology viewed biblical history as a continuum, whereby each new relationship that God entered into – known as a covenant – improved upon and ultimately replaced the previous relationship. Thus, His first relationship with Adam and Eve and their descendants was then sharpened into a covenant with Noah and his descendants. Next, He refined the relationship further, choosing Abraham and his descendants. After that, He entered into a covenant with Moses and the Israelites. And the final covenant He made with the followers of Jesus Christ. Since each new relationship was a refinement of the previous covenant, "Israel" of the Old Testament was read as a prefiguration for the Church. In contrast with the traditional understanding, the doctrine of dispensationalism, as espoused by Irish theologian John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), posits that when God made His covenant with Christians, He did not forsake His covenant with the nation of Israel. Rather, He formulated two distinct plans, one for Jews and another for Christians. In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with the Israelites, in the New Testament, with Christians. The former is a covenant of law – in order to receive salvation, Israelites must obey the laws of the Torah. The latter is a covenant of grace – in order to receive salvation, Christians must surrender to Jesus. Thus, when the Old Testament employs the term "Israel," it refers not to the Church but to the physical nation of Israel. According to Darby's doctrine of dispensationalism, at the *End of Days*, God will fulfill his promise to each of His covenantal peoples. Israel will be rewarded on Earth and Christians will be rewarded in Heaven. Christians will be taken up to a heavenly kingdom in an event known as

the *Rapture*, while Jews will return to Israel and establish an earthly kingdom of God, during which time a great *Tribulation* will occur in the world (Fuller 1980, 14).

While Darby's theology had limited appeal in his home country, the timing of his arrival in America was perfect. Following the Civil War, premillennialism was on the rise, and the people were seeking clarity and purpose amidst the national and global chaos (Clark 2007, 84; Marsden 2006, 63). In addition, the Niagara Bible conferences, where fundamentalists were gathering to mobilize against modernist ideas, became a center for the promulgation of Darby's teachings. Dispensationalism found its ultimate victory, however, in the publication of the *Scofield Reference Bible,* which by the 1950s would become the Bible of choice amongst half of all American evangelical groups (Ahlstrom 1972, 810; Clark 2007, 92; Sizer 2004, 74).

As well as the theological strides made by dispensationalism, two twentieth century best-sellers further popularized dispensationalist ideas amongst the Christian public. In 1970, Hal Lindsey wrote *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which describes the unfolding of the Bible in modern times and interprets global events from Europe to the Middle East in light of ancient prophecies. And the *Left Behind* series tells the story of non-believers who miss out on redemption when dispensationalists are swept up to heaven in the Rapture (Spector 2009, 180). As a result of these popular works, tens of millions of American Christians have become unwitting partners in the dispensationalist project (Boyer 1992, 2; Frykholm 2007, 26).

Mainline Protestants - Presbyterian Church (USA)

Let us now examine how the abovementioned theological debates have impacted twenty-first century pro-Palestinian Protestants. While the Presbyterian Church and other mainline Protestant denominations sympathize with the Palestinians for a variety of reasons, no present-day mainstream denomination would espouse the antisemitic views of their forebears Luther and Calvin. Most have renounced supersessionism and the general tendency has been a move towards reconciliation and improved interfaith dialogue. Nevertheless, as I shall demonstrate later, perspectives on Jews and Israel remain fraught with tension. Certainly, restorationism has not been a significant doctrine in mainline Protestant discourse, and the mainline denominations are the religious heirs to postmillennialism. Given their non-fundamentalist reading of the Bible, the theological case for supporting the Jewish right to Israel is rather uncompelling for most mainline Protestants. And yet, despite its generally progressive membership, PC(USA) may be somewhat of an outlier amongst the liberal denominations. As a result of the early twentieth century modernist-fundamentalist divide, most mainline denominations lost their conservative adherents. Presbyterian ideology, however, was always committed to the maintenance of a "broad church." It thus retained a significant conservative constituency who believed in the inerrancy of the Bible and consequently venerated Israel and the Jewish people (Hopkins 1990, 150; Schaeffer 1943, 16; Stockton 2006, 115).

At the same time, it should be emphasized that mainline pro-Palestinian activism is no less rooted in elements of a long-standing theological tradition. The biblical commandment (Deut. 16:20) to pursue justice entails standing up for the oppressed (Cone 1997; Makari 2003, 4). Members of the Reformed Church have a particular duty to repair the world and create the *Kingdom of God on Earth*. This mission dictates that one may not wait for redemption to occur; one must look for opportunities to partner with God. John Calvin famously declared that the Church is "'reformed and always being reformed, according to the Word of God'" (Rigby 2016, 6).

In 1967, the Presbyterians adopted a new *Confession*, which called for the Church's active political engagement on social issues. In "'the struggle for peace and justice, the Church must bear witness . . . [and] speak out where no one else dares to, or where truth is not respected, where human lives or human dignity are endangered'" (Preston 2012, 515).[18] Thus, the Church entered a new era of "prophetic witness," and created a number of new sociopolitical programs, including the *Hunger Program*, the *Peacemaking Program*, *Mission Responsibility Through Investment* and councils on women's and race issues (Iosso 2002, 8). Pro-Palestinian activists view the boycott and divestment campaign in this framework of Presbyterian social justice initiatives and point to a longstanding tradition of mainline Protestant divestment initiatives (Hallward 2013). Divestment is seen as a tool of nonviolence

[18] Eugene Carson Blake was Presbyterian stated clerk (CEO) during the 1950s and 1960s.

and an appropriate response to conflict and has been standard PC(USA) modus operandi since the 1960s (Brewer 2016). The Presbyterian Church's previous engagement in a divestment campaign targeting businesses supporting the South African apartheid regime – namely Mobil, Texaco, Citicorp, British Petroleum, General Motors, and the Union Bank of Switzerland – is well-documented (Clarke 2005, 47; Hallward 2013, 144). Indeed, in 1984, the General Assembly designed a comprehensive divestment strategy, grounded in its commitment to socially-responsible investing. While the specific target at the time was South Africa, the framework outlined the approach to be taken concerning any similar "sin stock" investment. Such divestment initiatives would range from the avoidance of particular products, such as alcohol and tobacco, to military production and oppressive regimes (PC(USA) 1984).

An additional justice-based theological source for Presbyterian support for the Palestinians is the adaptation of the doctrine of Black Liberation Theology, an ideology focused on Christianity's role in liberating African-Americans and black South Africans from white political, social, and economic oppression (Rynhold 2015, 129). In an effort to garner Christian solidarity with their cause, during the 1980s Palestinian theologian Naim Ateek established the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem and began to depict the Palestinians as the Jesus character persecuted by the Jews (Rynhold 2015, 130). In his writings, Ateek (1990, 88) compares the corruption of the kings of ancient Israel – as remonstrated by the prophets – to the treatment of the Palestinians at the hands of the modern State of Israel, drawing analogies from biblical ideas such as the

oppression of the widow and the orphan. Likewise, Palestinian Christian pastor Mitri Raheb (1995, 81) inverts the biblical story of the Exodus, such that the modern State of Israel becomes Pharaoh, and the ancient Israelites become the Palestinians who will be redeemed by God. PC(USA) has welcomed these ideas, featuring Ateek and Raheb at Church conventions and in denominational publications (Korn 2007; Van Zile 2011).

Nevertheless, not all Presbyterians and mainline Protestants see the Palestinian cause as the sole justice imperative. Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), one of the twentieth century's foremost mainline Protestant theologians, advocated for the State of Israel on humanitarian grounds (Carenen 2012, 155; Niebuhr 2015, 644; Rynhold 2015, 123). Niebuhr called for nuance and decried the polarized, black and white views of his contemporaries (Preston 2012, 489). Tellingly, the PC(USA) study-guide *Zionism Unsettled* criticized Niebuhr's "Israel-centric narrative" (Presbyterian Church 2014, 40). Jason Olson (2018) explains the mainline debates over Israel-Palestine as having taken place between Niebuhr devotees and Social Gospel adherents. The former defend Israel's right to protect its sovereignty; the latter prioritize the welfare of the Palestinians. According to Olson, support for Israel waned following the passing of Niebuhr, thus explaining the shift in the mainline churches from favouring Israel's position to that of the Palestinians in the conflict. Examining these texts' references to Niebuhr leaves a reader feeling that the various authors have not done justice to the prominent theologian. The analyses tend to be brief and one wonders whether Niebuhr would respond the same way to the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict were he alive today. And yet, the continued appeal to Niebuhr's thought – particularly in the context of PC(USA)'s anti-Zionist literature – leaves this study no choice but to refer to him, albeit with the explicit acknowledgment of the inadequacy of the treatment of his important contributions to American intellectual history.

Cultural

In addition to the theological element of American Protestant support for Israel/Palestine, the cultural dimension plays a significant role. Certain American values have provided the framework for advocacy on Israel/Palestine, values which are often accentuated by American Christians. This section begins with an explanation of national culture and values and then proceeds to demonstrate how these ideas are reflected in the ideology and activism of CUFI and PC(USA).

The most dominant ideas of a nation state's citizens become the political culture of that state, which is then called by many names: society, identity, national interest (Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Krasner 1978; Morgenthau 2004; Verba and Almond 1963). The effect of culture is to predispose collectivities toward certain actions and policies rather than others. Some options will simply not be imagined. Of those that are contemplated, some are more likely than others to be rejected as inappropriate, ineffective, or counterproductive (Duffield 1999, 772). Nations are forged through the interplay of elite proposals and majority responses, which may accept or reject the call. Since the population is subdivided into various regions and demographics, as well as dialect and often religious categories and communities, the elites must choose "symbolic elements that have some prior resonance among a large

section of the population," which will "strike a chord . . . in an often fairly heterogeneous population" (Smith 2009, 31). Different classes, castes, confessions, regions and ethnic communities may espouse variant versions and rival narratives of the nation. This may lead to ideological conflict, as opposing elites propose different historical narratives and prescriptions for the nation, with each competing for dominant narrative status (Smith 2009, 33).

Research on political culture commonly takes two distinct approaches. The first examines culture by assessing the aggregate attitudes of members of populations, by means of surveys, such as Ronald Inglehart's World Values studies[19] or Pew Center research of religious attitudes.[20] The second approach analyzes elite discourses found in media, public statements, and interviews. According to Duffield (1999, 794), elite political culture is easier to describe and interpret as elites express their views frequently and often in great detail. In addition, their views tend to be more coherent and logically consistent than those of the public. Moreover, elite attitudes are likely to have a more immediate bearing on state behavior than those of the general public.

This study analyzes the religious elements of American culture. Since religious attitudes tend to result from clergy views, the approach of elite research is appropriate to this research project. Initially, scholars examined the role of clergy as the primary opinion leaders of their congregations (Hadden 1969). Each week,

[19] www.worldvaluessurvey.org
[20] www.pewresearch.org

thousands of churchgoers listen to the opinions of their pastors, taking cues from the messages and acting upon them (Buddenbaum 2001; Djupe and Gilbert 2002; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). With the advent of new sources of influence emanating from mass media sources including radio and television, however, academic interest in the power of clergy waned. Nevertheless, the development of cable television and talk radio diluted particular media outlets' monopolies on opinion, resulting in greater attention paid to the influence of clergy as opinion leaders. Today, much evidence suggests that many parishioners form their political opinions in church (Crawford and Olson 2001; Guth et al. 1997; Smidt 2004; Wald et al 1988). Consequently, I would argue that a cultural study of religious elites is, in a certain sense, more reflective of broader attitudes of the constituencies they represent. Later chapters will demonstrate how the two groups examined in this dissertation are particularly successful at harnessing this power as they claim to speak on behalf of many more Christians than they really do.

While Christians may claim theology as the source of their activism, certain American cultural motives undoubtedly play an important role, whether consciously or not. Regarding the definition of American culture and values, various interpretations and taxonomies exist (Citrin 1994; Hartz 1955; Huntington 1981; Kohn 1957; Lipset 1964; Mead 2001; Pole 1967; Song 2009). Sources for support of Israel/Palestine may be found in many of these cultural factors. The first is the American liberal creed. As early as 1816, the leading American news periodical *Niles' Weekly Register* endorsed a Jewish state on the grounds that it would promote

American liberal democratic values. A century later, Woodrow Wilson's declaration of the universal right of nations to self-determination similarly undergirded America's liberal support for Israel (Rynhold 2015, 13). Following the Holocaust, this liberal call for the establishment of a Jewish state accelerated on humanitarian grounds. As the twentieth century progressed, however, American culture manifested in support for Israel as a likeminded liberal democratic nation-state opposed to the global rise of communism (Koplow 2011; Rynhold 2015, 15).

A second significant American cultural factor is the concept of individualism, deriving from various interrelated factors. Persecuted Christians immigrated to the Americas to escape European religious harassment of their "wayward" denomination or particular belief system. The country would later declare its independence from Great Britain. Historical tension between state and federal powers as well as between individual citizens and the government continued the development of the American path to individualism as a national value. In addition, the conception of America as an exceptional country similarly stems from this view of itself as exclusive and set apart from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, there is one exception, as Ronald Reagan once declared, "'There is no nation like us, except Israel'" (Rynhold 2015, 13). According to Rynhold (2015), Israel's pioneering spirit, its economic and military successes, and its courage and strength in the face of existential regional threats have led many Americans to see parallels between the two countries.

A third cultural element factoring into the US-Israel relationship is America's Protestant culture. Beginning with the escape by the early settlers from European

religious persecution, the US was established upon deep Christian roots. The Mayflower Compact declared:

> 'In the name of God, Amen. . . . Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia.' (Winslow and Bradford 1865, 6)

Given the origins of European life in the New World, early settlers thought of America as "the Great Frontier of Western Christendom" (Ahlstrom 1972, 17). Similarly, countless reports of the early settlement in America attributed the unfolding of events to an overtly Christian narrative, including such famed works as Alexander Whitaker's *Good Newes from Virginia* (1613), Edward Johnson's *Wonder Working Providence of Sion's Saviour* (1867), Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) and Jonathan Edwards' *Thoughts on the Revival in New England* (1740). Many Americans, such as the Reverend Theodore Dwight Woolsey (1801-1889), harboured no doubts regarding Christianity's special place. The former president of Yale University once noted:

> 'In what sense can this country then be called a Christian country? In this sense certainly, that the vast majority of the people believe in Christianity and the Gospel, that Christian influences are universal, that our civilization and intellectual culture are built on that foundation, and that the institutions are so adjusted as, in the opinion of almost all Christians, to furnish the best hope for spreading and carrying down to posterity our faith and our morality.' (Schaff and Prime 1874, 527)

While religious commitment may have waxed and waned over the centuries, Christianity remained indelibly etched upon the national psyche. Until today, religious language and symbolism flourish, with "God bless America" uttered by presidents and political leaders, "In God We Trust" inscribed on the banknotes, and occasional lapses

into overtly Christian rhetoric, such as President George W. Bush's reference to a "crusade" as part of the response to 9/11 (Bush 2001). In the early twenty first century, approximately 70% of Americans are adherents of some form of Christianity (Pew 2014). According to Huntington and Dunn (2004, 31), Protestantism is an inseparable element of American culture, values, and national character, subtly impacting the American nation-state.

Nevertheless, this sentiment has led to a paradox regarding support for Israel versus the Palestinians. One way to define national culture is the determination of "who is in and who is out." Michael Billig (1995, 78) argued that, in the minds of many people, there can be no "us" without a "them." Politicians contribute to such thinking when they employ rhetoric emphasizing "patriotism." As I shall argue, this method of defining culture in terms of its opposition to others is realized in contradistinctive approaches by competing American Christian activists. For some Christians, the "us" includes all members of the "Judeo-Christian tradition," thereby encompassing Jews and "othering" Muslims, and resulting in greater sympathy for Israel. For other Christians, the "us" incorporates all Christians, including Arab Christians, thus "othering" the Jews and cultivating sympathy for the Palestinian cause. Let us now examine the three cultural factors – Liberalism, Individualism, and Protestant identity – as they relate to the two groups of this study.

Christian Zionism - Christians United for Israel

While the term "liberalism" has multiple meanings, as far as the American Creed is concerned, it refers to the "emancipating aspirations of the Enlightenment and its

concerns for universal human rights [and] religious toleration" (Smith 1988, 229). CUFI leaders claim that Christians are moved by the desire to resolve two millennia of antisemitic sentiment and behaviour towards Jews (Brog 2006, 73; Hagee 2007, 5; Styrsky 2013, 87). These American Christian Zionists are so inspired by their newfound attitude towards Jews that they overcompensate for their past "sins" by appreciating and venerating the Jewish people for all things Christian and American in their lives (Brog 2006, 71). CUFI founder John Hagee, for example, maintains that Christians are indebted to the Jewish people not only for giving them the Old Testament, Jesus, and Christianity, but for all the contributions that Jews have made to society and the world, including funding for the American Revolution and Hershey's chocolate (Hagee 2007, 101)![21]

Yaakov Ariel (2013) articulates this idea with greater clarity. He argues that a direct consequence of evangelical support for Israel has been the warming of the relationship between devout Christians and Jews. For the first time in millennia, they are meeting one another face-to-face as equal human beings, and focusing on matters of joint interest. Daniel G. Hummel (2019) builds on Ariel's ideas and notes that evangelicals and Jews are aware of, and do not seek to minimize, the theological complexities of the relationship. He sees the primary success of Christian Zionism in its reconciliation of Jews and Christians after a long history of animosity. He emphasizes that such reconciliation is not the kind of liberal "different paths to the

[21] Hagee lists a "small snapshot of Jewish accomplishments," which includes Hershey's chocolate. Milton Hershey, in fact, was not Jewish, but Mennonite (Scott 1996).

same God" dialogue, but an understanding of one another's religious viewpoints, without seeking to compromise either position. Hummel contends that the blossoming of the relationship has reached its apex under John Hagee, offering Hagee's veneration of rabbis as an example of his thesis that the evangelical Israel project is not merely about Israel but about reconciling with the Jewish people. In other words, while Ariel appears to suggest that the improvement of the relationship between American Christians and Jews is a consequence of evangelical support for Israel, Hummel's position supports the thesis that liberal attitudes towards American Jews have led to greater support for Israel, even amongst evangelicals.

Turning to the second American cultural factor – "individualism" – Christian Zionists are motivated by a certain manifestation of individualism, referred to as Scots-Irish Jacksonianism. Walter Russell Mead separates US foreign policy outlooks into four doctrines, based on historical approaches taken by various presidents, rooted in specific cultural ideas. His fourth ideology is Jacksonianism, a tradition marked by populism and individualism, deriving from the perspectives of President Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) and his fellow Scots-Irish emigres.[22] The Scots-Irish were a "hardy" group of immigrants. Not content to arrive in America and settle along the east coast, the Scots-Irish led the Frontier movement and laid the foundations for the American South (Baltzell 1979, 156; Klein 1940, 368; Mead 2001, 227; Turner 1894, 203). Stemming from their biblical worldview, Jacksonians see life in black-and-white

[22] Jackson's parents were Scots-Irish immigrants.

categories. As Mead explains, “Complex, when applied either to policies or to situations, is, for Jacksonians, a negative term” (Mead 2001, 240). Regarding foreign policy, Jacksonians spurn international law and institutions as well as multilateral military actions (Mead 2001, 246). While they are reticent to act if they have little to gain personally from international intervention, at the first sign of attack on their way of life, they will not hesitate to respond to the call to take up arms. During the Cold War, Jacksonians were consistently hawkish, ready to challenge the forces that threatened “Americanism” (Mead 2001, 224).

Mead links Bible-based support for Israel specifically to the Jacksonian tradition (2001, 248; 2008b, 13). Nevertheless, says Mead, Jacksonian affinity with Israel runs much deeper than fundamentalist scriptural readings about Israel. In the prophetic tradition of speaking truth to power, they exhibit an uncompromising commitment to the Second Amendment and a suspicion of big government. In that vein, Jacksonians see Israel as the lone nation in a dangerous region prepared to take up arms in order to forge a path to freedom and democracy whilst standing up to international behemoths such as the UN (Mead 2008, 44). While Jacksonianism began in the American South, Mead contends that Jacksonian political culture has expanded across America, far beyond its original geographical and ethnic borders of white, Scots-Irish, Protestant identity. Jacksonian attitudes towards individualism, populism, and suspicion of the government now abound amongst the American people. These political cultural views have led to widespread American support for Israel, particularly amongst evangelicals.

Third, let us turn to Billig's theory of culture that postulates "othering" as the basis of cultural attitudes. Many American Christian Zionists are motivated by the great "clash of civilizations," and their belief that Israel shares America's values (Barnett 1996; Hummel 2019, 50; Koplow 2011), including the two countries' "common religious-cultural foundations" (Rynhold 2015, 102). CUFI leaders point to 9/11 as the turning point in evangelical support for Israel. In light of the *Second Intifada* (2000-5) and the reaction of many Palestinians to the September 11 attacks,[23] they see Israel as an ally in the battle against radical Islam (Brog 2006, 77; Brog 2010; Donaldson-Evans 2001; Hagee 2007, 46). Notably, certain scholars such as Ramy Haija (2006) argue that the alignment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the US-Al-Qaeda battle was a conscious effort on the part of Israel. Israeli leaders, beginning with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (1928-2014), strove to demonstrate that the US and Israel were engaged in the same civilizational struggle. Understanding American evangelicals' support for Israel, his successor Ehud Olmert (b. 1945) became a regular visitor to Hagee's Cornerstone Church (Clark 2007, 274). Thus, from this perspective, many Christian Americans support Israel because they associate the Jewish state with their own worldview, while "othering" the Palestinians as synonymous with Islam. In fact, according to Sean Durbin (2018) CUFI leaders intentionally manufacture their support base by positioning Zionism as the line of demarcation between authentic

[23] Reuters (2001) filmed dancing in the streets following the attacks.

and unauthentic Christians. In other words, not only are Arabs and Muslims "othered," but non-Zionist Christians are likewise excluded.

Indeed, a darker cultural factor motivating Christian Zionist advocacy, critics contend, is Islamophobia. Evangelicals are motivated, they claim, not by any special affinity towards Jews, Judaism, or Israel, but by white Protestantism's historic aversion to Islam and Arabs (Carenen 2012, 196; Rynhold 2015, 17; Smith 2013, 191; Spector 2009, 76). Such attitudes stem from nineteenth century accounts of Arabs as primitive, twentieth century perceptions of Arab countries as lagging behind the West economically and socially, and twenty-first century associations of (radical) Islam with terrorism (Rynhold 2015, 18; Said 1978). Furthermore, concerning the extreme end of the Christian Zionist spectrum, Stephen Spector writes, "The real origin of the Arab-Israeli conflict . . . does not reside in nationalist or economic factors but in opposing spiritual forces" (2009, 88). He quotes Pat Robertson as saying that the confrontation with the Arabs is not about money or ancient customs versus modernity, rather "the struggle is whether Hubal, the Moon god of Mecca, known as Allah, is supreme, or whether the Judeo-Christian Jehovah god of the Bible is supreme" (2009, 89). The conflict for those Christians holding such extreme views is not about Western values; it is about Christianity versus Islam, with no differentiation between radical and non-radical Muslims. Spector offers a number of examples: After September 11, 2001, Franklin Graham called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion." Jerry Falwell denounced Muhammad as a terrorist, Pat Robertson called him "a robber and a brigand, and Jerry Vines called him a "demon-possessed pedophile" (2009, 76). The

chapter on CUFI will examine to what extent these views are representative of American Christian supporters of Israel more broadly.

Mainline Protestants - Presbyterian Church (USA)

Turning to the cultural factors undergirding mainline Protestant attitudes towards Israel-Palestine, liberalism certainly explains broad support for Israel amongst American Christians. Following the Holocaust, American mainline Protestant support for Israel on humanitarian grounds grew considerably. Moreover, from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 until the 1967 Six Day War, most mainline Protestants viewed Israel as the tiny "David" facing an existential threat from the surrounding multinational Arab "Goliath" (Hulsether 1999, 135). Nevertheless, following Israel's 1967 victory, this mainline sympathy began to erode, as the David/Goliath roles appeared to many to have reversed (Rynhold 2015; 123).

As far as Protestant identity is concerned, the laity of the mainline Protestant denominations has exhibited an historical affinity towards Israel. This natural predisposition may be attributed to their church upbringing and Sunday School education which included study, prayer, and songs about Israel (Carenen 2012; Grose 1983; Oren 2007). Nevertheless, mainline elites have not always displayed the same proclivities. Due to the long history of Christian missionary activity in Arab countries, mainline clergy often exhibit greater sympathy towards Palestinians in the conflict. In the early part of the twentieth century, as mainline Protestants dominated the State Department, such pro-Arab sentiment was a significant factor whenever the issue of Israel-Palestine arose (Grose 1983, 93). For example, when in 1917 the British

government announced its intention to establish a Jewish state in the area of today's Israel-Palestine, American Secretary of State Lansing opposed endorsement of the *Balfour Declaration*, on the grounds that "'many Christian sects and individuals would undoubtedly resent turning the Holy Land over to the absolute control of the race credited with the death of Christ'" (Grose 1983, 70). Similarly, Samuel Edelman, director of the State Department's Near Eastern Intelligence Unit, wrote that a Jewish state would be "'polluting and intolerable'" to the "'sacredness of the Christian memorials in Palestine'" (Grose 1983, 82). In an attempt to shift American support away from the *Declaration*, Lansing proposed an independent investigation into Palestinian feelings on the ground. The King-Crane commission concluded that:

> 'The places which are most sacred to Christians – those having to do with Jesus – and which are also sacred to Moslems, are not only not sacred to Jews, but abhorrent to them. It is simply impossible, under these circumstances, for Moslems and Christians to feel satisfied to have these places in Jewish hands.' (Grose 1983, 88)

Likewise, the Presbyterian Church has a long history of engagement in the Middle East, evident in its numerous mission churches, hospitals, and educational institutions, including the American University of Beirut and the American University in Cairo. These relationships have led to strong feelings of Arab affinity and the "othering" of the Jews and their plight (Carenen 2012; Clarke 2005, 46; Hopkins 1990; Korn 2007, 2; Makari 2003, 3).

Concerning the factor of individualism, the American cultural aversion towards government control and authority, many pro-Palestinian Christian activists today are

motivated by anticolonialism.[24] A number of pro-Palestinian campaigns have presented Israel as the product of nineteenth century European colonialism (Mehta 1999), beginning with the 2003 resolution to *End the Occupation Now:*

> Influenced by colonial ideas about Europe's rights to claim and settle other parts of the world, the World Zionist Organization, founded by Theodor Herzl in 1897, declared that the aim of Zionism was: Establish a national home for the Jewish people secured by public law (PC(USA) 2003).

Similarly, the Presbyterian congregational study-guide, *Zionism Unsettled,* concluded, "Right-wing Zionism has been quite open, even proud, about the colonialist role of Zionism and its inherent violence vis-à-vis the natives of Palestine (2014, 13).[25] Rynhold explains that "postcolonial guilt coincided with the decline of Israel's own victim status, as the Holocaust became more distant and Israel became stronger, occupying the West Bank and becoming increasingly allied with the "imperial" United States" (2015, 27). He suggests that the rise of Postcolonialist thought coincided with the growth of Liberation theology in the mainline Churches, since they are both rooted in the Marxist idea that, "the Third World has been victimized by colonialism, imperialism, and multinational corporations, which have placed it in a situation of dependency to the U.S. and its First World allies" (Rynhold 2015, 118).

End the Occupation Now was the product of many years of prior association with likeminded activists. A 2003 report commissioned by the Presbyterian Church

[24] For the sake of neat groupings, I am categorizing anticolonialism under the rubric of American individualism. Undoubtedly, it is just as much a European phenomenon.
[25] The document, it should be noted, negated the spectrum of Zionist ideological positions, choosing instead to focus on one particular early Zionist writer, Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880-1940), who identified Zionism with European colonialism.

(ACSWP 2003) points to a meeting that took place in November 2002 at the United Nations. That meeting was held in response to the *World Conference on Racism* in Durban in August 2001, which included nineteen PC(USA) delegates (Interview with Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Oct 28, 2016; Silverstein 2001). Convened to discuss international efforts to combat bigotry, the conference shifted its focus to criticism of Israel's policies in the disputed territories, with participants drawing comparisons between apartheid South Africa and the Jewish state (Lantos 2002). At that time, the Palestinians were engaged in the *Second Intifada* and the concept of a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions initiative was discussed in Durban (Pessin and Ben-Atar 2018, 8). In fact, comparisons between South Africa and Israel had begun to appear in PC(USA) materials already prior to the Durban conference.[26] In an October 2000 letter to President Clinton, Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick wrote of "the frustrations of Palestinian Christians and Muslims forced to live under a clear form of apartheid" (Kirkpatrick 2000). According to Spotts (2005, 9), the *Presbyterian News Service* (PNS) and other agencies were becoming increasingly partial in their reporting on Israel-Palestine. For example, from January 1, 2000 to June 30, 2004, the PNS ran over ninety stories on Palestine and Israel, fifty-seven of which, according to Spotts, portrayed Israel negatively.

At the 2002 General Assembly, Palestinian pastor, Rev. Fahed Abu-Akel, was elected moderator of the denomination (Makari 2003, 2). In his address to the

[26] See (PC(USA) 2004) for a June 2001 appeal to members to unite in solidarity with other Christians with the goal of applying similar pressures upon Israel as were placed on South Africa. The first group to explicitly call for divestment was Students for Justice in Palestine at Berkeley (Clarke 2005, 45).

assembly, he told of his family's displacement during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. As his father led the eight children away from the village, his mother stayed behind. When they eventually returned, they asked her why she had not gone with them. She told them, "This is our home, our land, and our church" (Abu-Akel 2002). Pro-Israel activists attribute his election to his appeal to his Palestinian roots in his address to the General Assembly (Interview with Presbyterian elder, Oct 28, 2016). One of Abu-Akel's first initiatives was the convening of a Conference on the Middle East, held in March 2003 in Montreat, North Carolina, to which he invited Palestinian activist, Rev. Mitri Raheb. His next step was the tasking of the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) with the preparation of a report on Israel-Palestine for presentation to the 215th General Assembly in 2003, culminating in the resolution to *End the Occupation Now.* Pro-Israel activists point to the title itself as an indication of the new direction of the Presbyterian Church, particularly in contrast with the 2002 General Assembly's resolution, *Urging Sustainable Peace between Israelis and Palestinians.* PC(USA)'s periodical, *Church & Society,* devoted the September 2003 edition to Palestine, including a number of activist authors such as Raheb, as well as Rev. Naim Ateek of the Sabeel Liberation Theology Center. Thus, scholars contend that anticolonialism has become a significant driver of political activity in the Presbyterian Church (Korn 2007; Van Zile 2011, 10).

Interest Groups

Most studies of American Christians and Israel-Palestine have focused on factors stemming from Christianity generally, and American Christianity in particular. However, when Christians mobilize in the form of interest groups, by definition, the whole will be greater than the sum of its individual parts. This section examines the elements of Christian interest group behaviour that have impacted the US-Israel relationship. While scholars such as Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) have investigated the influence of pro-Israel interest groups, the assumption is generally that Christian interest groups are merely an element of such activity. This dissertation seeks to assess the distinct characteristics and contributions of Christian interest groups to the issue of Israel-Palestine. It is important to note that while some of the interest group literature might appear dated, I do not seek to interrogate the interest group literature per se. What matters to this study is that the core principles still apply and serve as a useful framework for assessment of the two case studies.

First, an understanding of the nature and purpose of interest groups is in order. Interest organizations form an active part of the political system of any democratic country and have played a significant role in America for hundreds of years. Classic literature either embraced them as integral to the democratic system (e.g., de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*) or viewed them with suspicion as potential system destabilizers (e.g., Madison in the *Federalist Papers*). Over the last century, various studies on interest organizations in America have reached a wide range of sometimes conflicting conclusions about their impact on the political system

(Baumgartner and Leech 1998, 120). Scholars employ the terminology around political lobbyists and interest groups differently. Not all political interests are groups – many large corporations act as individuals in their lobbying efforts. At the same time, not all interest groups are officially registered lobbyists – formal meetings with politicians are but one way to influence the political process. Berkhout (2013) attempts to clarify some of the conceptual ambiguity by employing the broader term "interest organizations," to encompass any individual, corporation, or group of people expending significant resources to influence politics. Such pursuits include both efforts to effect political change as well as efforts to defend the status quo.[27]

Interest organizations may be separated into the profit and non-profit sectors. In an effort to maximize their profitability, businesses pursue or defend selective political benefits that will further the goals of their individual firms. A pharmaceutical company, for example, may seek FDA approval for its new medicine; a new online mortgage-provider may strive to defend its product against regulatory categorization alongside traditional banks. These advocacy efforts are targeted and specific to the needs of their particular corporate interest. Interest "groups" seek collective benefits that will improve the lot of many. Corporate interest groups include organizations such as industry associations, like the American Petroleum Institute, which advocates for multiple firms in the oil and gas sector. Non-profit interest groups advocate for

[27] Drutman (2015) surveyed corporate lobbyists and found that their primary purpose was defensive, i.e., to ensure the maintenance of the status quo and stave off any potential changes that would negatively impact their ability to conduct business. For example, the tobacco lobby works to avoid further regulation and taxation of their products. According to Berry and Wilcox (2009, 31), however, most of the defensive battles (for the tobacco industry??) were fought years ago.

causes that may or may not incorporate financial motivations. Examples of non-profit groups include the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), advocating for the interests of seniors, and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), advocating for African-American interests. Public interest groups are organizations that look beyond the needs of their own members and advocate for the greater needs of society or humanity, such as the Sierra Club, whose activists work to protect the environment.

Of particular significance to this dissertation is one specific form of non-profit interest organization, the ethnic lobby group. Ethnic lobbies consist of diasporic minorities with an emotional connection to their ancestral homeland that drives them toward increased interest in the affairs of their fellow nationals abroad (Shain 1999). Mearsheimer and Walt (2007, 18) situate their study of the domestic influences on US foreign policy in interest group literature generally, and ethnic interest group research specifically. They see the strong US-Israel relationship as a consequence of the power of pro-Israel interest groups in America, and particularly, AIPAC (2007, 153). In their opinion, "While other special interest groups – including ethnic lobbies – have managed to skew U.S. foreign policy in directions that they favored, no ethnic lobby has diverted that policy as far from what the American national interest would otherwise suggest" (2007, 8). Curiously, despite their lack of ancestral connection to Israel, Christian Zionists are included in Mearsheimer' and Walt's critique of the pro-Israel lobby (2007, 132).

Differences of opinion over how to categorize the Jewish lobby in America appear further to obfuscate the role and place of Christian Zionists. In contrast with Mearsheimer' and Walt's delineation of Jewish activism as "ethnic" interest group advocacy, Kenneth Wald and Alison Calhoun-Brown (2018, 174) describe Jewish pro-Israel groups as "religious" interests. The confusion arises from the fact that "Jewish" could refer either to a religious or to an ethnic affiliation. Israel is a Jewish state not due to any theological foundation, but in reference to its majority ethnic foundation. In fact, most Israelis identify as secular. Thus, this dissertation agrees with Mearsheimer' and Walt's designation of the Jewish pro-Israel lobby as an ethnic interest group. This distinction is integral to the present analysis of the Christian pro-Israel lobby. When Jews advocate for Israel, as members of an ethnic interest group they are motivated by the affinity they feel towards those with whom they share a common ancestral bond. By contrast, when Christians advocate for Israel, they are not tied ethnically to Jews in Israel.

This distinction has important implications for the study of Christian activism on Israel-Palestine. Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) is the premier interest group study of American pro-Israel advocacy to date. Their examination views the activism entirely through the prism of ethnic lobbying.[28] Religious interest group advocacy is significantly different from its ethnic counterpart, in terms of motivations, organization, and strategies (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2018). An assessment of the

[28] Their brief coverage of Christian pro-Israel advocacy is presented as a minor subcategory of the Jewish lobby.

unique features of religious lobbying is thus in order. Moreover, traditional interest group scholarship suggests that the formation of interest groups promoting a certain political position leads to the formation of countervailing interest groups promoting competing positions (Truman 1951). Mearsheimer and Walt (2007, 146) maintain that one specific reason for the success of the Jewish pro-Israel lobby is the lack of any serious counterweight. Notably, that is not the case regarding the Christian Israel-Palestine advocacy sector, which boasts active competition between countervailing political interests, manifested in the views of evangelicals versus mainline Protestants. Let us now proceed to identify elements of interest group organization and activity that serve potentially to impact the political process.

Organizational

The mere existence of an interest group does not imply its political relevance. An integral aspect of an analysis of the significance of an interest group is a description of the corporate qualities of the organization, as determined by the group's origins, numerical power, and organizational structure. Defining when and why the group began offers insight into its longevity. Delineating whom the group represents facilitates an understanding of the credence and priority policymakers will grant the group. An elucidation of how the group is organized provides insight concerning structural issues that impact the group's success.

David Truman (1951) taught that political ideas, or interests, may exist for a considerable length of time prior to becoming salient. Interest group studies investigate the causes and processes by means of which ideas develop into formal

interest groups. Examination of interest group origins is a two-stage exercise. First, the origin of the interest itself must be traced. Second, the reasons and processes by which the idea formalized into an interest group must be elucidated. Earlier in this chapter, scholarly explanations for the historical events engendering Israel as a political idea significant to Christians were identified. Later chapters will assess their continued relevance to twenty-first century activists. The next step is to investigate the processes that transformed the idea of empathic support for Israel/Palestine into tangible support in the form of political interest groups. Thus far, analyses of CUFI and PC(USA) have, for the most part, accepted the groups' self-professed explanations for the timing of their origins. By placing the stories of the two groups alongside one another in the next chapter, this dissertation will offer a novel approach to understanding how the issue of Israel-Palestine materialized in the twenty-first century.

The next factor to consider in assessing the relevance of an interest group is the strength of its resources. Politicians measure significance in terms of money and constituent numbers. Political campaigns cost money to run and candidate success is determined ultimately at the ballot box. Thus, an interest group study must investigate the material and physical resources of the organization. Drutman (2015) explains that corporate interest organizations have a greater propensity for success in their advocacy efforts than non-profit interest groups. First, they have a vested material interest in lobbying for their cause and will therefore invest all resources necessary. Second, selective benefits tend to involve less public scrutiny because of

their narrow and often technical nature. Consequently, given insufficient opposition from countervailing interests, their advocacy efforts often pass undetected (Drutman 2015, 76-8). By contrast, public interests are more difficult to mobilize. One of the major obstacles to overcome is the collective action problem, meaning that if as a result of the activism of a few individuals others will enjoy the collective benefit automatically, then no rational individual will invest their personal resources to join an advocacy organization. When the Sierra Club, for example, advocates for the environment, all of Earth's inhabitants reap the benefits of their efforts. Most individuals, however, will not contribute their time and financial resources to the group, relying on the investment of the few. Thus, membership and investment of resources in the organization require an explanation.

Olson (1965) suggested that in order to entice members, interest groups will find ways to incentivize membership with ancillary benefits, such as discounted theatre passes for AARP members. The excess funding may then be used for advocacy purposes. Robert Salisbury (1969) argued that individuals may join groups for intangible reasons, such as solidary or purposive incentives. Solidary incentives are benefits relating to status in a group, such as title and rank. For example, donors of a thousand dollars are recognized by the National Rifle Association as part of the "Ring of Freedom," while million-dollar donors are recognized with the "Golden Ring of Freedom" blazer insignia. Purposive incentives are intangible self-fulfilment benefits accruing to activists simply by virtue of their passion for the cause. For example, an individual may donate to the Humane Society due to their personal convictions

regarding the protection of animal rights. Doing so contributes to their life satisfaction and happiness. Similarly, in light of their belief in supernatural and eternal reward for earthly behaviour, purposive benefits are often a given for religious activists (Grzymala-Busse 2012, 423). Thus, as regards membership recruitment and retention, religious interest groups have a natural advantage over other groups. Furthermore, from a numerical perspective, the pool of potential members among the Christian versus the Jewish populations is incomparable. And so to subsume Christian activists under the general "Israel lobby" category is to overlook a significant element of pro-Israel advocacy.

It should be noted nonetheless that when the membership of groups is analyzed, caution must be exercised. Self-reported membership tallies require close scrutiny because interest groups tend to exaggerate the number of people for whom they speak (Schattschneider 1964, 61). Moreover, for the purposes of marketing and self-aggrandizement, interest groups tend to overstate their influence. Dan Fleshler (2009, 14) calls this phenomenon "power puffery."

Having discussed numerical strength of interest groups, let us now turn to structural issues. An important factor in the determination of the quality and longevity of an interest group is the strength of its internal organization and leadership. New interest groups tend to be carried by issue entrepreneurs, who develop the agenda singlehandedly, alongside individual patrons who supply the funding (Salisbury 1969; Walker 1983). Jeffrey Berry (1977) demonstrated, however, that groups driven solely by individual leaders and patrons tend to be short-lived. By

contrast, the stronger the internal democracy of a group, the longer its staying power beyond the life of the interest entrepreneur. Internal democracy is the degree to which an organization's political structure facilitates social control by members. As individual members are empowered, they become more committed to the organization (Knoke 1981). Michels (1911) contended that even "democratic" member-driven organizations such as unions and political parties will situate power in the hands of a small elite, ultimately acting more like corporations. Knoke (1990), however, surveyed nine thousand members of four hundred fifty-nine groups and concluded that most associations reflect democratic decision making, including elected boards and decentralized patterns of influence. Therefore, an important aspect of interest group research is an investigation into their internal organizational structure.

Corporations are, for the most part, not designed to act democratically. Since employees are bound to firms by virtue of their paycheque and accountable to them merely in terms of profitability, businesses tend to operate in a top-down "military-style" non-democratic fashion. Political advocacy matters tend to be limited to a few key decision makers. By contrast, non-profits tend to emphasize the decentralization of power and collective decision making. This "democratic" approach curtails leaders' autonomy to act without taking into account the preferences of the membership (Knoke and Prensky 1984, 9). Alan Hertzke's (1988) investigation into the democracy of denominations led him to theorise that religious advocacy groups will be naturally cognizant of their members' desires. Since effective religious advocacy relies upon

grassroots engagement, a successful campaign must have buy-in at all levels and will exhibit signs of a strong democratic culture. Neiheisel' and Djupe's (2008) findings did not support Hertzke's theory. They concluded that decisions made at a denominational level had little effect upon individuals. Since most churchgoers identify primarily with their local congregations, denominations are able to adopt political positions without concern for democratic process, and with limited repercussions. Thus, a study of the internal organizational strength of religious interest groups should examine the process of political decision-making and the impact of the process upon overall membership retention, the ultimate determinant of group longevity.

Strategic

A group may be organizationally robust, but if its strategy is unclear or ineffective its performance will be limited. An examination of an interest group's strategic strength requires an assessment of the group's approaches to direct, indirect, and public opinion advocacy, as well as its coalition building and reframing efforts. Starting with direct lobbying, Baumgartner et al. (2009) demonstrated that hiring former government employees – known as "insiders" – as interest group lobbyists increases effectiveness in terms of both knowledge and access. The most impactful use of insiders, however, is the engagement with likeminded individuals already embedded within the government or the political parties (Farnam 2011; Heinz et al 1993). In this regard, Stigler (1971) contended that bureaucratic agencies run the risk of being "captured" by corporate interests, defeating their purpose of protecting the public

interest against predatory business practices, such as oligarchic price-fixing. Over time, iron triangles may develop, whereby interest organizations provide electoral support to political candidates, who in turn increase funding to the bureaucracy, who in turn cooperate with the interest organizations by loosening regulatory structures. Similarly, E.E. Schattschneider (1963) concluded that expert witnesses presented to lawmakers were never disinterested. In his study of the Congressional proceedings dealing with tariffs, he found that "Committeemen as well as lobbyists made attempts to keep up the pretense that the . . . committees were taking the testimony of competent persons. . . . The committees made no effort to summon disinterested witnesses, able to qualify as experts." Schattschneider calls this problem the "Representative Character of Pressure Groups" (1963, 219).

In this vein, Lee Marsden argued that a major tactic of the Christian Right is to work towards embedding evangelicals throughout all levels of government, from interns to elected officials. Writing in the early 2000s, he explored the operations of Christian Right insiders during the administration of George W. Bush, going so far as to suggest that:

> The principal member of the Christian Right is the president himself, who owes his election success in no small measure to members of the Christian Right wooed by strategist Karl Rove, and who even employed Ralph Reed, once depicted as the 'right hand of God' on the cover of Time magazine, as a campaign consultant in 2000. The president has brought in many other Christian evangelicals at different levels within his administration. (2008, 44)

Indeed, one of his earliest projects in office was the establishment of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, designed to strengthen religious community organizations and expand their capacity to provide federally funded social services.

The logic behind effective direct lobbying efforts is that, contrary to popular belief, lobbying is mostly not about "buying" politicians. Rarely is lobbying about changing the minds of elected officials; rather, the goal of lobbyists is to appeal to politicians who already favour the agenda of the interest group, due to common worldviews or constituent preferences. Successful lobbyists will focus their time, energy, and resources on these officials, with the goal of presenting the issue cogently and succinctly, motivating their audience to invest resources in the cause (Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Hall and Deardorff 2006; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998). Given the fact that seventy percent of Americans identify as Christians, religious interest groups have the good fortune of a present and willing audience.

Such "insider trading" approaches tend to be off-limits to ethnic interest groups. It may be acceptable for dual nationals to maintain ties and sympathies with their ancestral homeland countries and advocate accordingly. However, it would border on treason for a government official to promote the agenda of a foreign country inviting charges of dual loyalties. Such allegations would not arise in the sphere of religious interest group foreign policy activism, thus distinguishing Christian pro-Israel activism from its Jewish counterpart. Once again, to include Christian interest groups under the rubric of the all-encompassing "Israel lobby" misses out on

significant factors undergirding the prioritization of the political issue of Israel-Palestine.

The next sphere of advocacy to review is indirect lobbying, which is the process of mobilizing the grassroots to contact their elected officials (Nownes 2013, 169). The primary indicator of the success of indirect lobbying is the number of member participants (Loomis et al 2012, 179) and the frequency of their contact with elected officials (Fitch 2010). Lacking a grassroots constituency to mobilize, this form of lobbying is less relevant to the promotion of corporate interests. And given the challenge of identifying their constituent members, even issue-based public interest groups may struggle to initiate a grassroots campaign (although the growth of social media has facilitated greater engagement). Ethnic and religious lobbies, however, share a common ability to identify their constituents, appeal to their values and beliefs, and mobilize them to engage in indirect lobbying.

A further strategy to engage in indirect lobbying is the approach Berry and Wilcox call "lobbying for values" (2009, 128). The aim of this tactic is to shift the way that the public thinks about a political issue. With shifting attitudes amongst ordinary citizens, eventually policy will change. Public opinion lobbying can take many forms, from newspaper op-eds to television and print advertising to social media campaigns. While corporate interests, public interests, and religious interests all engage in value lobbying, American religious interest organizations have unique access to certain forms of media, specifically Christian television and radio broadcasting. This cultural

determinant offers Christian interest organizations yet another advantage over the Jewish lobby in the area of pro-Israel activism.

Despite these advantages, all interest groups will seek coalition partners in order to improve the likelihood that policymakers will take notice of their issue (Godwin et al 2013; Gray and Lowery 1998; Holyoke 2011; Truman 1951). Even corporations with the financial means to lobby alone will join industry coalitions. Ethnic interest groups in particular will look to form coalitions with likeminded groups, thereby demonstrating that other domestic groups share their agenda (even if their motivations may differ), and they are not advocating for issues that are contrary to American interests (Rubenzer 2008, 172). Nevertheless, the literature suggests that religious interest groups tend to avoid joining coalitions, preferring "purity" (Hofrenning 1995). In a study of the Republican Party's 1964 presidential nomination of Barry Goldwater, Wildavsky (1965) contrasted purist advocates with professional advocates. The purists were so certain of their cause that they were unwilling to support any candidate other than the staunchly conservative, but ultimately unwinnable, Goldwater. The professional advocates endeavoured to convince their fellow party members that, even if one does not achieve one's ideological objectives in their entirety, politics is about negotiation. Hofrenning applies this model to religious interest groups and hypothesizes that religious lobbyists would be more inclined towards purism, and therefore unable to join forces with any group with which they cannot entirely agree. So convinced are they of the "truth" of their policy objectives that they will refuse to compromise or negotiate their position. Moreover,

since other groups have different doctrinal underpinnings, even if they are politically likeminded, they may be reticent to associate with them, thereby granting them credence. By way of example, Jerry Falwell was criticized for reaching out to the Mormons, a Church considered by many other Christians to be doctrinally suspect. Indeed, Ed Dobson of the Moral Majority is reported as saying, "'politics is essentially the art of compromise and negotiation, and fundamentalists don't place a high value on compromise and negotiation'" (Preston 2012, 557). Thus, an examination of religious interest group strategy must explore their willingness or reticence to engage in coalition building.

The final strategy of interest groups this study examines is reframing. In an effort to maximize success as they make their political case, interest groups strive to frame their issue in a way that resonates with their audience (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). In the case of corporate interests, the real estate and mortgage banking lobbies, for example, portray any countervailing interests as threatening the "American Dream" of owning a home (Holyoke 2014, 124). Similarly, Graetz and Shapiro (2005) argue that the success of the pro-repeal lobby in challenging the estate tax was due to their reframing of the issue from "an estate tax on wealthy heirs" to a "death tax on hardworking couples." In this vein, for ethnic lobby groups to be successful, they must advocate in such a way that demonstrates that US interests converge with the interests of their ancestral country (Rubenzer 2008, 172). Concerning the scholarship on religious interest groups and the strategy of reframing, the research appears to be inconclusive. Schmalzbauer (1999) observed that religious

groups often maintain a "multivocal posture." Internally, they employ religious language, terminology, and rationales. When they communicate externally for advocacy purposes, however, they invoke "secular and instrumental claims." Heaney and Oldmixon (2014) arrived at the opposite conclusion. They found that, in an effort to strengthen their claim to "higher" interests, religious groups tend to invoke sacred language and theological arguments. The conclusion of the present study is that religious reframing is context-specific. As later chapters will demonstrate, CUFI tends to employ a multivocal posture, repackaging their message for broader consumption, while PC(USA) commonly utilizes religious rhetoric to bolster their claims.

Theopolitical contestation

This dissertation examines the Christian factors undergirding the US-Israel relationship. So far, the chapter has reviewed traditional explanations of the theological and cultural motivations and highlighted potential effects of interest group organizational and strategic factors. This section builds on the work of Durbin (2018) and Hummel (2019) around the effect of support for Israel on the sociopolitical agenda of the Christian Right in America. The introduction of Gaston's (2019) research on the history of competition in the American religious marketplace, this dissertation avers, helps to explain differing American Christian positions on the issue of Israel-Palestine.

Sean Durbin (2018) contends that a key component of CUFI strategy is the comparing and contrasting Israel's "success" with America's "failure." Hagee galvanizes Christians with the suggestion that America should endeavor to become

more like Israel and emulate its military and economic successes. Utilizing discourse analysis, Durbin demonstrates how Hagee wants Americans to become "Israeli," that being the ideal form of American. Thus, while Durbin does not frame it in such terms, he is making the claim essentially that Hagee's ultimate focus is not Israel, but America. He wants American Christians to support Israel in order to produce a better America. Hummel (2019) takes this idea a step further, presenting various examples of American Christian Zionists referring to the two nations' shared Judeo-Christian values. Hummel opines that one of the purposes of supporting Israel is in order to reinforce America's Judeo-Christian tradition. Nevertheless, Hummel offers little explanation of the Judeo-Christian values being promoted by American Christian Zionists.

Gaston's (2019) work sheds light on this matter. While her study does not pertain to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, her explication of the contested meaning of the Judeo-Christian tradition in America provides a useful model to frame and clarify the present issue. This dissertation argues that her research on American religious culture offers new ways to think about the cultural sources of differing Christian approaches to Israel-Palestine. Gaston sets out to demonstrate how differing twentieth century Christian views on domestic social policy sought to appeal to the concept of America's Judeo-Christian heritage. While many refer to the concept of the "Judeo-Christian" tradition in America with little thought as to its origins or implications, the term only began to appear in the eighteenth century. In an effort to attribute Christianity's roots to Greek rather than Hebraic thought, Enlightenment

rationalists invented the concept as a pejorative description of those maintaining traditional beliefs (Cohen 1971, 196). During the nineteenth century, however, the term found popularity amongst Protestants who used it to situate their form of Christianity in ancient Judaism before it was "corrupted" by Catholicism's Hellenistic influences (Gaston 2019, 34). In the twentieth century, competing theopolitical perspectives led to a parting of the ways amongst American Protestants, with various groups interpreting the term to align with their views in a bid to claim ownership of "America's Judeo-Christian tradition." Gaston uncovers three primary interpretations of the Judeo-Christian concept, showing how all such references by Christian leaders were intentional social constructions: Exceptionalism, Social Gospel, and Pluralism. What follows is a basic outline of each approach. Later on, the dissertation will demonstrate the relationship between these three approaches and present-day American Christian perspectives on Israel-Palestine.

Exceptionalism

Proponents of an exceptionalist understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition utilized the term to prioritize the sociopolitical doctrines of conservative Protestantism. In their construction, "Judeo-Christian" was an exclusionary term that offered a narrow view of American religion, implying the duty to build a society guided by fundamentalist biblical values (Gaston 2019, 73). At the same time, this interpretation sought to align American domestic religious culture with American exceptionalism. Americans were not associated with the tainted "Christianity" claimed by European fascist groups, but belonged to an alternative "Judeo-Christian"

tradition. As the century progressed, the term Judeo-Christian morphed into an anti-Communist posture (Silk 1984). And until today, the term is used by exceptionalists to promote conservative social values.

Social Gospel

Social Gospel proponents employed the term "Judeo-Christian" to mean a call to return to the religion's "Judeo" roots. Christianity, they contended, should be about pursuing justice for the oppressed like Israel's prophets of the pre-Christian era. The foremost proponent of the Social Gospel in America was Walter Rauschenbusch, who argued that Protestantism had become too literalist and dogmatic (Gaston 2019, 35). American Social Gospel proponents based their ideology on the thoughts of German philosopher Adolph Harnack (1851-1930). The American model, however, adapted and transformed Harnack's thoughts on the personal religious duty to a societal religious duty (Yeager 1998, 116). These ideas were adopted by many major Congregationalist, Episcopalian, and Methodist churches, eventually leading to the establishment of the Federal Council of Churches. For American Christians exhibiting a natural suspicion towards centralized governmental authority, the prophetic tradition of speaking truth to power resonated (Preston 2012, 240).

Pluralism

Following WWII, American identification with the term "Judeo-Christian" redressed feelings of guilt towards their Jewish neighbours over the Holocaust. Jewish Americans for their part responded positively as such rhetoric aided their efforts at assimilation and acceptance into American society (Cohen 1971, 196). Over the next

decade, this approach crystallized in the ideology and politics of religious pluralists, who sought to extend conceptions of Americanism beyond its historical Protestant foundations to include Catholics and Jews (Gaston 2019, 73). In addition to theoretical notions of inclusion, pluralists expanded their ecumenical efforts beyond the sphere of Protestant denominations to the pursuit of interfaith dialogue and association (Gaston 2019, 44).

The Present Study

In order to ascertain whether theopolitical contestation is relevant to the issue of Israel-Palestine, this dissertation must provide evidence that Christian support for Israel/Palestine either advances or is advanced by the promotion of a particular domestic sociopolitical agenda. Chapter 3 demonstrates that while Presbyterians and American Christian Zionists purport to support Israel/Palestine, a significant motivation for their activism is the desire to outperform their domestic Christian competitors. Two arguments are posited: first, Presbyterian criticism of Israel is often focused more on condemnation of American Christian Zionists than censure of the Jewish state. And second, an important factor leading to the establishment of CUFI was the growing sociopolitical "market-share" of the Presbyterians. Chapter 4 argues that John Hagee's pro-Israel activism is motivated in large part by his objective of the promotion of conservative Christian values in America. Advocacy on behalf of a nation-state that "shares America's Judeo-Christian tradition" makes an implicit claim about American values. Thus, support for Israel advances CUFI's theopolitical agenda. Chapter 5 inverts the cause and effect of the theopolitical contestation factor. Rather

than contending that support for Israel/Palestine advances domestic sociopolitical objectives, the dissertation now argues that shifts in the theopolitical landscape have resulted tangentially in Presbyterian support for the Palestinians. The claim, essentially, is that the Presbyterian Church's recognition of same-sex marriage and ordination led to the departure of conservatives from the denomination. This exodus tilted the sociopolitical balance in favour of progressives and radicals and granted them the numbers they needed to pass further "Social Gospel"-inspired legislation, including boycotts of Israel. Nevertheless, not all progressive Presbyterians are likeminded, and this matter refocuses the discussion back onto the effect of Israel/Palestine activism on the domestic situation. Those who have opposed the pro-Palestinian activism are often motivated by pluralist considerations. They fear that criticism of Israel adversely impacts Jewish-Christian relations in America. Thus, while pluralists appear to support Israel, their primary motivation may very well be American domestic issues.

3. Presbyterianism & Dispensationalism

Happily, this small and shrinking denomination does not speak for America's Christians or Americans in general (John Hagee, cited Levitt 2014).

At the tenth annual Christians United for Israel (CUFI) summit in 2016, one of the keynote speakers was Rev. Dr. Kenneth C. Larter, pastor of Deerfield Presbyterian Church in Bridgeton, New Jersey. His presentation followed an article he had penned for CUFI's periodical, *The Torch.* The topic of his article and speech was a condemnation of his denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA). Rev. Larter did not mince his words, accusing the pro-Palestinian supporters in his Church of antisemitism. Upon the conclusion of his presentation, CUFI director, David Brog, thanked him for his "courage" and wondered aloud whether it was time for him to "change his denomination."[29]

CUFI and PC(USA) are the two leading pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian Christian interest groups respectively. Previous studies have either analyzed each group separately or contrasted their positions under the general rubric of evangelical versus mainline Protestant thought on Israel-Palestine. This dissertation maintains that the divergence of perspective between these two groups on the issue of Israel-Palestine runs deeper than the traditional attributions to the evangelical-mainline divide. This chapter investigates the relationship between Presbyterianism and Christian Zionism, demonstrating the historical conversation that has taken place between the two

[29] This author was present for the event.

institutions, which have laid the foundation for contemporary debates over Israel-Palestine.

The chapter begins with a review of the historical roots of American Presbyterians, showing that they derive, primarily, from the same Scots-Irish roots as Christian Zionists. Next, the chapter highlights the prominence of Presbyterians among the founders of the dispensationalist movement in America. Despite countenancing dispensationalism for half a century, however, in 1944 the Presbyterian Church repudiated the doctrine, creating a fissure amongst Scots-Irish Protestants with reverberations until today. The final section examines various moments this lingering tension has come to the fore, culminating in the present-day pro-Palestinian advocacy. This dissertation argues that many Presbyterian activists are motivated more by anti-Christian Zionism than pro-Palestinianism; and conversely, that the formation of Christians United for Israel was, in no small measure, an effort to reclaim the narrative from Christian anti-Zionists, particularly the Presbyterians.

Branches of the Same Tree

Geographical Roots of American Presbyterianism

Chapter 2 presented Mead's (2001) thesis concerning Scots-Irish culture as a source of American Christian support for Israel. In defining this American subculture, Mead paints a picture of heightened individualism, which he refers to as "Jacksonianism." Some of the distinguishing features Mead identifies are the tendency to see conflict in black-and-white terms, an aversion towards big government, and a passionate

affinity for Second Amendment rights. This section problematizes the association of Scots-Irish migration patterns with a pro-Israel predisposition, by demonstrating that American Presbyterians derive from the same roots.

The first issue to investigate is the origins of Scots-Irish Protestantism and its historical attitudes towards Jews and Israel. As explained in the introduction, following the Act of Supremacy, Northern Ireland was populated with Protestants, primarily from Scotland. The inhabitants became known as Scots-Irish (or Ulster-Scots) and Presbyterianism became the dominant denomination (Lingle 1944, 64). Presbyterianism is a type of Calvinist Protestantism. While many Protestants sought to re-examine the place of Jews in Christian thought, the primary Reformation theologians Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) were unchanged in their adherence to classic Church antisemitism (Sizer 2004, 27). In like manner, the founder of Presbyterianism, Calvin's student John Knox (1513-1572), designated the role of the Jews as the precursor of the "wayward" Catholic Church. In addition, he outed many enemies of the Reformation, declaring them "hidden Jews" (Williamson 1994, 108). Thus, at this early stage, rather than Scots-Irish Protestants exhibiting a greater affinity towards the Jews, the contrary appears to have been the case.

The next stage of the story takes place in the New World. When these Scots-Irish Protestants migrated to America they were they not content with settling along the eastern seaboard. In describing the immigrant roots of the Frontier movement, Frederick Jackson Turner explains that "the coast was preponderantly English, but the later tides of continental immigration flowed across to the free lands. The Scotch-

Irish and the Palatine Germans . . . furnished the dominant element in the stock of the colonial frontier" (1894, 203). Likewise, E. Digby Baltzell (1979, 156) notes that the pacifistic tendencies of the Quakers made them shy away from frontier conflict, leaving the conquest to the Scots-Irish. Klein (1940, 368) attributes the frontier movement's fervor to "Scotch-Irish drive." And Mead is certain that Jacksonianism derives from this "rugged frontier individualism" (Mead 1999).

However, as far as religion is concerned, Presbyterianism dominated the American backcountry. By 1770, at least thirty-three Presbyterian academies had opened across the new frontier (Baltzell 1979, 724). Amongst the frontier-conquering Scots-Irish, Presbyterians were to be found aplenty, thus problematizing Mead's association of Israel kinship with Scots-Irish emigres. In fact, Scots-Irish Jacksonianism was so intertwined with Presbyterianism that even the tradition's progenitor was that way religiously inclined. President Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), the son of Scots-Irish immigrants, was a practising Presbyterian, who acknowledged, "'I was brought up a rigid Presbyterian, to which I have always adhered'" (Federer 1994, 310). Jackson married Rachel Donelson, grandniece of Presbyterian minister Samuel Davies, president of Princeton College (Fischer 1989, 644). Nevertheless, Jackson's relationship with his Church was complicated. In one of the great challenges of his tenure, the Presbyterian leadership protested his Indian Removal policy (Longfield 2013, 83). Preston (2012, 138) explains that Jackson justified expansionism in the name of Calvinist predestination, which maintains essentially that whether or not one would be faithful was predetermined and "those individuals who were eternally

profane and those who were sacred were defined immutably by God's will" (Akenson 1992, 112). The Presbyterian clergy, however, disagreed. Preston quotes "one Ohio Presbyterian [who] undoubtedly spoke for many" as preaching a sermon based on Matthew 16:26 and declaring, "'It is the extreme of folly to barter away our souls for the purpose of gaining the world.'" From the clergy's perspective, Christianity's mission was to bring the Gospel to Native Americans, which required the maintenance of healthy relations with the indigenous population. Notably, Jackson and the clergy were similarly at odds over the issue of abolition (Preston 2012, 141).

Thus, the American Scots-Irish tradition was associated historically with American Presbyterianism, suggesting the need for further clarification regarding the evolution of their divergent attitudes towards Israel-Palestine.

Ulster Presbyterians and the Covenant

Donald Akenson (1992) relates the story of the Scottish Protestant settlement of Ulster in theological terms. Rather than viewing the Presbyterians as passive pawns being moved about by ruling powers, Akenson presents the Ulster Scots as active, determined colonizers, who saw themselves on a mission paralleling the journey of the ancient Israelites. Many qualities that Mead (2001) later attributes to Scots-Irish American Jacksonians are already identified by Akenson as distinctively Ulster Presbyterian. First, they place extraordinary emphasis on the Old Testament, modelling their "culture" on a "conceptual grid" "assimilated from the Hebrew Scriptures" (Akenson 1992, 102). Second, "the attractiveness of [Calvinist predestination] to a group of invading colonists . . . is obvious, for one could easily

define the natives as immutably profane, and damned, and oneself as predestined to virtue" (Akenson 1992, 112). Third, the Ulster-Scots exhibited a "very sharp sense of right and of wrong, of sacred and profane," making them "one of the hardest people in the world with whom to negotiate" (Akenson 1992, 118). Fourth, the Ulster-Scots saw themselves as enjoying a special "Chosen People" covenant with Heaven, leading to an "extraordinarily sharp us-them disjuncture in Ulster-Scots thinking" (Akenson 1992, 119). They viewed the indigenous inhabitants of Northern Ireland as "Hittites and Canaanites" who refused "to readily give up the Promised Land" (Akenson 1992, 119).

Akenson (1992, 121) next identifies a "demotic culture" exhibiting a "disdain for central authority." This attitude expressed itself in political, social, and religious spheres. "Rejection of central hierarchic authority is not at all the same as an invocation of chaos. Covenantal thinking, whether among the ancient Hebrews of the Ulster-Scots, involves a great deal of religious, social, and political discipline . . . that discipline is effectively consensual." He then describes how each congregation would elect its own minister who would govern the church together with lay elders. Akenson's subsequent observation is important for the discussion in chapter 5 about democracy in the Presbyterian Church:

> So, when one hears the commonplace observation that the Ulster-Scots were predisposed by their religion to be democratic in politics, it is true, but not in the sense of "one person, one vote," and not in the sense of direct democracy. What the Ulster-Scots practiced was a form of representative government in religion in which individuals who were covenanted to share religious values elected leaders who exercised for the whole community the task of religious governance. (1992, 121)

And finally, Akenson identifies one further element of Ulster-Scot culture that prefigures our discussion of Scots-Irish divergence in America. According to Akenson (1992, 122), Ulster-Scots are naturally radical. "Ulster-Scots manifested an extraordinarily spiky nature. . . What one can never tell is whether the radicalism will be to the far right or to the far left."

Prominent Presbyterian Dispensationalists

Turning to theology, this dissertation argues that Presbyterians played an outsized role in the founding of American dispensationalism. The following section is the culmination of an intensive review of primary and secondary sources on the early leadership of the dispensationalist movement in America, resulting in the curious discovery that most of the leading figures were Presbyterian clergymen. The conversation between dispensationalism and Presbyterianism is over a century old. It is a story unique, among the myriad American denominations, to Presbyterianism. Therefore, any analysis of Presbyterian support for the Palestinians cannot ignore the role of Presbyterians in the promulgation of dispensationalism in America.

While the theological reasons for Presbyterian premillennialists' attraction to dispensationalism are complex and beyond the theological scope of this political science dissertation, a significant factor was its claimed commitment to scientific empiricism, based on the philosophies of Frances Bacon and Thomas Reid. Reid's Scottish School of Common Sense was popularized in America by Princeton University President John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister and moderator of the first General Assembly of PCUSA. More significant, however, was the confluence of

fundamentalism, premillennialism, and dispensationalism, all three theologies coalescing around the Niagara Bible Conferences. In the late nineteenth century, the rise of secular and theologically liberal views led those in the traditionalist camp to put aside denominational variances and join forces in their commitment to what became known as "the fundamentals" – hence, fundamentalism. Gathering annually in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, they would discuss strategies to stem the rise of modernist religious thought. Before long, dispensationalists dominated the leadership of the conferences, and, consequently, dispensationalism became the dominant ideology amongst fundamentalists (Marsden 2006, 51; Weber 2004, 32). Many of those who would later become influential in furthering dispensationalist thought in America emerged from the Conferences, including Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), founder of the Moody Bible Institute, Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921), author of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, and A.C. Dixon (1854-1925), editor of *The Fundamentals* (Marsden 2006, 41; Sizer 2004, 67).

The modernist-fundamentalist debates did not lead to a rift in Presbyterianism, because the denominational doctrine teaches that the unity of the Church is sacrosanct and different viewpoints must be tolerated (Mackay 1960, 97). Consequently, forty-one Presbyterian ministers attended the first conference, the largest attendance of any denomination (Kellogg 1888, 25). This over-representation led, over the ensuing decades, to Presbyterians becoming the leading promulgators of dispensationalist thought in America (Marsden 2006, 46).

The following is a summary of a number of prominent Presbyterians who led the dispensationalist movement:

- **James H. Brookes** (1830-1897) was the Niagara Conference founder. Author of the *Niagara Creed*, he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1854, and pastored the Walnut Street Church in St. Louis, known today as Memorial Presbyterian Church (Kraus 1958, 37; Weber 2004, 32). Brookes authored *Marantha*, a dispensationalist work that called the Jews "a wonderful people" and described the downfall of all the empires that opposed God's chosen nation – Egypt, Persia, Rome, Assyria and Babylon (Clark 2007, 86; Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 80).
- **Samuel H. Kellogg** (1839-1899) was a Presbyterian professor and pastor. He was influential in shifting the conversation from postmillennialism to premillennialism with his works *The Jews or Prediction and Fulfillment: An Argument for the Times* (1883) and *Are Premillennialists Right?* (ca. 1890). Kellogg's writings have been called "the greatest single volume of prophecy in relation to the Jews to be written in our country during the nineteenth century" (Ice 2008, 228).
- **Henry M. Parsons** (1828-1913) was the pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Buffalo, New York, and a charter member of the Niagara Bible Conference (Kraus 1958, 31). Parsons drew the map of seven dispensations, used by many famous dispensationalist preachers (Robert 2003, 274).

- **Arthur Tappan Pierson** (1837-1911) was inspired to belief in premillennialism by Dwight L. Moody (Longfield 2013, 127). Due to his attempts to preach dispensationalism, he was excommunicated by the Presbyterian Church (Wilkinson 2008, 251). He continued nevertheless to worship privately as a Presbyterian. He was a primary editor of the *Scofield Reference Bible* (Robert 1998, 536).
- **Thomas Corwin Horton** (1848-1932) was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1884 and began working as assistant pastor to A.T. Pierson at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. From there he moved to First Congregational Church in Dallas, before moving to Los Angeles in 1906 and ministering at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, as well as founding the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Biola University, in 1908. A vocal proponent of dispensationalism, he was editor of *The King's Business*, the foremost conservative Christian periodical of the day (Balmer 2004, 342).
- **Reuben A. Torrey** (1856-1928) converted to Presbyterianism in 1908, becoming a member of the Los Angeles Presbytery (Draney 2008, 125). As dean of Biola and a contributing editor of *The King's Business* and *The Fundamentals*, he attempted to align Presbyterianism's Calvinist roots with Darby's theology (Marsden 2006, 44).
- **Billy Sunday** (1862-1935) was the assistant pastor at the Jefferson Park Presbyterian Church (Balmer 2004, 561). Sunday's fame was one of the

significant drivers behind the dissemination of dispensationalist thought in America (Marsden 2006, 180).

- **Robert E. Speer** (1867-1947) held the position of secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church USA for nearly five decades. In 1927, he was elected moderator of the denomination (Balmer 2004, 545). He met Dwight L. Moody in 1887 and became an adherent of dispensationalism. In a 1931 address, he called Moody, "one of the half dozen greatest and most influential personalities our country has produced" (Longfield 1991, 186).
- **Charles G. Trumbull** (1872-1941) was the editor of the *Sunday School Times*, a popular American Protestant weekly. He was a member of the Presbyterian Walnut Street Church, and was wont to say, "I'm a Presbyterian layman, and a Congregational clergyman, and the only religious body that can call me to account and discipline me is the session of the Walnut Street Church" (Howard 1905, 300). A protégé of Cyrus Scofield, he later penned his biography and described their relationship as resembling the discipleship of Paul and Timothy (Marsden 2006, 96). Magnum suggests that "some might have even considered the *Sunday School Times* a dispensationalist paper given how many and how often dispensationalist writers contributed to it" (2007, 154).
- **Charles R. Erdman** (1866-1960) served as pastor of Overbrook Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia from 1891 to 1897, and First Presbyterian Church in Germantown from 1897 to 1906. Erdman was elected moderator of PCUSA in 1925, whilst serving as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New

Jersey, from 1924 to 1934 (Balmer 2004, 194). He was an editorial consultant to the *Scofield Reference Bible* and contributed two articles to *The Fundamentals* (Longfield 1991, 138).

Scofield Reference Bible

This section examines the most influential work of dispensationalism, the theological commitments of its author, and the succession of his leading student. Despite its reception as the Bible of Dispensationalism (literally), its Presbyterian influences are many. Consequently, once again this dissertation argues that when considering the present-day antagonism between Presbyterianism and Zionism, one cannot ignore the (theological and personal) Presbyterian roots of the dispensationalist movement.

Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921) was ordained as a Presbyterian minister by James H. Brookes. In 1888, he published *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, which became a popular explanation of dispensationalism (Weber 2004, 39). His greatest work, however, was the 1909 *Scofield Reference Bible*. Scofield's Bible quickly became popular throughout America, including among Presbyterian congregations (Fitzgerald 2017, 102). By 1937, it had sold over three million copies; and by the 1950s, it was the Bible of choice amongst half of all American evangelical groups (Ahlstrom 1972, 810; Clark 2007, 92; Sizer 2004, 74). Magnum and Sweetnam (2009) note many Presbyterian influences in the theology of the *Reference Bible*, deriving primarily from the theology of Southern Presbyterian James Henley Thornwell (1812-1862). In fact, for the second edition of the *Reference Bible* (1917), Scofield provided dates for all the events in the Bible. With the exception of the date of Creation, Scofield adopted

the timeline devised by James Ussher in 1650. Ussher was a Puritan bishop in the Irish Church, who is most famous for drawing up the Irish Articles (1615), which laid the groundwork for the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith (Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 58).

Scofield's work provided a literalist reading of the Bible with insights in the margins designed both for the clergy and the layperson. In an effort to transcend denominationalism, Scofield strove to avoid explicit dispensationalist themes in his Bible. He never referred to the *Rapture,* and the *Tribulation* is mentioned only briefly. Nevertheless, he was unambiguous on the distinction between Israel and the Church, making it a pivotal point of his theology. Indeed, the Church-Israel distinction and the primacy of premillennialism were the two key distinguishing features of the *Reference Bible* (Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 89). Consequently, the *Reference Bible's* reach extended far and wide amongst fundamentalist Christians. For example, although dispensationalism is not entirely theologically consistent with Pentecostal doctrine, early Pentecostal revivalists encouraged the use of the *Reference Bible*, as the most effective personal tool for Bible study. And with time, many came to accept dispensationalism as a given. Likewise, many other churches – particularly southern conservatives – found the *Reference Bible* to be a helpful teaching tool, thus popularizing dispensationalist thought throughout fundamentalist Christian America (Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 174).

Scofield's most prominent disciple was Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952). Chafer transferred his credentials from Congregationalism to the Presbyterian Church

in the United States in 1912. When word spread of his intention to open a theological seminary dedicated to the teachings of dispensationalism, pastors across the country vied for the distinction of having the seminary established in their cities. Eventually, the prize went to William M. Anderson Jr., pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Dallas, where Chafer also accepted the pulpit of the Scofield Memorial Church (Waldrep 2007, 816). As Dallas Theological Seminary became synonymous with dispensationalism, Chafer began organizing regional Bible conferences, one of which was attended by Albert C. Dudley, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Memphis. Waldrep (2007) uses the tale of Dudley's conversion to dispensationalism as an example of Chafer's impact on Presbyterians of the South. Despite his initial denominational fealty, Chafer's progressively negative views on Presbyterianism become steadily evident in his eight-volume explication of dispensationalism (Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 243; Sizer 2004, 77).

Parting of the Ways

Presbyterian Repudiation

This section reviews the events that prompted the fissure between Presbyterianism and dispensationalism. The exclusion of dispensationalists from the denomination led, ironically, to the proliferation of "Independent Bible Churches" in the American South, thus bolstering Darby's ideology. Many of these independent congregations form the foundation of the American Christian Zionist movement today.

In the 1930s, dispensationalism's compatibility with Presbyterianism was a topic of frequent debate in the Presbyterian Church (Magnum 2007, 154). The dispute

revolved around whether the New Testament was a continuation and development of the Old Testament or if it came to disrupt the evolution of the spiritual historical system. According to dispensationalists, the Old Testament was the era of the law while the New Testament introduced the era of grace. Consequently, "Israel" of the Old Testament was to be understood as referring literally to the Jewish people and the Land of Israel for all eternity. By contrast, Presbyterian "covenantal" theologians contended that Israel had been replaced by the Church, thus negating its continued relevance. The new covenant of grace, they claimed, abrogated all prior covenants (Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 238).

During that period, American Presbyterians were split between northern and southern denominations. In the North, the Bible Presbyterian Church[30] utilized the *Scofield Reference Bible* and believed in dispensationalism. The first clergyman to be ordained by the new denomination was Francis Schaeffer, who wrote:

> God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees as the first Jew when the earth had completely apostasized from the living God. He promised him that the land should be his, that he should have numerous seed, but above all things, that all the world should be blessed through him. . . . While our ancestors worshipped we know not what, but certainly not the living God, the Jews were called God's chosen people. . . . Jesus was not a Jew by accident, nor as an incidental thing in the plan of God; if Jesus had not been born a Jew, according to both the Old Testament

[30] Today's PC(USA) is an amalgamation of a number of denominations that split and eventually came back together. Following the Revolution, the first American Presbyterian denomination formed: the Presbyterian Church in the USA. In 1861, the Church split between North and South, the Southerners forming what would eventually be called Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), and the Northerners forming the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA). In 1936, conservative members of the north split to form the Presbyterian Church of America (Lingle and Kuykendall 1978, 95). In 1938, the new Northern denomination again subdivided into the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church. While the former consisted of conservative premillennialists, they were opposed to dispensationalism.

> and the New, He could not have been our Saviour. As for the present time in which we live, Romans 11:17-24 teaches that we Gentile believers should not boast against the Jews, the natural branches (1943, 16).

This quote is significant insofar as it demonstrates the importance of dispensationalism to many Presbyterians. In this case, the theological passions ignited were so intense that the differences in opinion led to the division of the northern Presbyterian Church.

Meanwhile, in the southern PC(US), Cyrus Scofield and Lewis Chafer embarked upon a campaign for the Church to accept dispensationalism as a valid doctrine within the theological realm of covenantal theology. Chafer's original vision for Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) was the ordination of clergy for Southern Presbyterian congregations, and when DTS first opened, most of the students were Presbyterian (Waldrep 2007, 833). The majority of Presbyterian theologians, however, disagreed with Scofield and Chafer. In 1941, the General Assembly appointed a committee to investigate the compatibility of dispensationalism with covenantism. Chafer insisted that the question should not be whether dispensationalism was consonant with the "man-made" *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Presbyterianism's foundational document); rather, whether it was biblically sound.

In 1944, the General Assembly approved the report of the committee, concluding that dispensationalism was incompatible with covenantism:

> It is the unanimous opinion of your Committee that Dispensationalism as defined and set forth above is out of accord with the system of the doctrine set forth in the Confession of Faith, not primarily or simply in the field of eschatology, but because it attacks the very heart of the

> Theology of our Church, which is unquestionably a Theology of one Covenant of Grace ("Dispensationalism," Minutes of the General Assembly, PCUS, 1944, Part I, pp. 123-27).

While the decision did not have immediate ramifications for already-employed dispensationalist Presbyterians, graduates of DTS henceforth were unable to validate their credentials in the Church (Hannah 1988, 364; Magnum 2007, 166).

Despite the denomination's denunciation of dispensationalism, Chafer's influence on Southern Presbyterians persisted. Many pastors remained oblivious to the subtleties of the scholarly debate and continued to preach dispensationalist ideas (Magnum and Sweetnam 2009, 182). For example, J. W. Hickman, minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith, Arkansas, utilized Chafer's books in preparation for teaching his Wednesday night Bible study. Andrew J. Crowell, an elder in the Second Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and a regular contributor to the Presbyterian *Revelation Magazine,* requested thirty-to-fifty copies of Chafer's *True Evangelism* for distribution in Charlotte (Waldrep 2001, 90). And Chafer's successor to the presidency of DTS, John F. Walvoord, grew up in the First Presbyterian Church of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and was later the pastor at Rosen Heights Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth, as well as moderator of the Fort Worth Presbytery (Waldrep 2001, 224).

Following their rejection from the Presbyterian Church, DTS graduates began ministering to independent, unaffiliated congregations throughout the South (Hannah 1988, 364; Magnum 2007, 166). As fate would have it, this development embedded them squarely in the tradition of John Nelson Darby. Darby eschewed

denominational hierarchical structures and harboured particular disdain towards Presbyterianism's system whereby elders are elected by congregations, who in turn elect representatives to the Presbytery and to the General Assembly. Darby contended that the Apostles were not elected but appointed by Jesus:

> 'All this [Presbyterian doctrine] is a fable and a mischievous fable. And I notice it because it is the foundation of the whole religious system to which it belongs. . . . The basis of the entire system of moral relationship with God in Presbyterianism is false' (Allis 1969, 47).

According to Darby, the democratic structure of Church governance was devoid of theological foundation (Darby 1971, 118).

Indeed, Darby modelled his Plymouth Brethren fellowship in line with his anti-hierarchical doctrine:

> The early Brethren envisioned a basis for Christian unity by forsaking denominational structures and names in order to meet simply as Christians. The autonomy of the local congregation is another feature of the movement, coupled with the doctrinal understanding that a church is not a building, but the gathering of people who meet there. . . . In accordance with the meaning of "priesthood of all believers," the service is unstructured. Brethren have consistently refused to restrict the administration of baptism or the Lord's Supper to ordained ministers, thus effectively eliminating a clergy/laity distinction and the traditional concept of ordination (Mead and Hill 2001, 157).

While Darby's Plymouth Brethren did not become a major American movement, his anti-denominationalist approach became popular in the American South (Dearing 2001, 11). Paradoxically, the exorcising of dispensationalists from the Presbyterian Church was responsible, in no small part, for the growth of nondenominational fundamentalism and the Independent Bible Church movement (Waldrep 2007, 833). Eventually these churches would form the foundation for the Christian Zionist

movement and Christians United for Israel. Today, of the thirteen leading CUFI pastors sitting on the executive board or overseeing various US regions, only two are affiliated with denominations (CUFI 2017).[31]

Reverberations

This section presents various Presbyterian debates over Israel-Palestine from the latter half of the twentieth century through the early part of this century. Apparent from this analysis is the lingering tension over dispensationalist ideology in the denomination. As discussed in the previous chapter, dispensationalism is a significant motive undergirding contemporary Christian Zionism. This dissertation thus maintains that a key factor motivating many pro-Palestinian Presbyterians is antagonism towards Christian Zionists, resulting from the denomination's fractious historical relationship with dispensationalism.

Despite the 1944 official Church disavowal of dispensationalist ideology, the Presbyterian debates were far from over. In 1956, *Christianity Today* ran a debate between two Presbyterian theologians over the Jewish right to Israel. In an essay undergirded by Replacement theology, Rev. Oswald T. Allis of Princeton Theological Seminary argued that:

> 'The attempt to restore the Jews to Palestine has proved to be unjust in itself and highly dangerous to the peace of the world. . . . Does the Israeli cause deserve to succeed? We believe the verdict of history will be, No!' (Carenen 2012, 109)

[31] As of July 31, 2017.

The counterview was penned by Fuller Theological seminary professor Rev. Wilbur M. Smith, who argued in favour of premillennialism and the special place of the Jews at the end of history. In addition, he pointed to the agricultural prosperity the Jewish people had brought to the land as a sign of Divine blessing (Carenen 2012, 109).

This tension continued to play out in competing and conflicting Presbyterian resolutions. In 1972, the Northern Presbyterian Church rejected Replacement theology and recognized God's continuing covenant with the Jewish people, as demonstrated by "the current conjunction of Land and People in the state of Israel" (PCUSA 1972). This recognition of a Divine covenant with the Jewish people and their Divine right to Israel was more in line with dispensationalist than Presbyterian doctrine. Meanwhile, in 1978, the Southern Presbyterian Church reaffirmed the findings of the 1944 commission that concluded that dispensationalism was incompatible with the Westminster Confession (Presbyterian doctrine), emphasizing that God has an ongoing covenant with Christians alone (PCUS 1978). In 1987, the reunited Presbyterian Church took a middle ground position. The denomination acknowledged that Jews are "'in a covenant relationship with God," and rejected any "teaching of contempt for the Jewish people,'" noting that the Church's teaching of Replacement theology led to the "'monstrous policy of annihilation of Jews by Nazi Germany'" (Abrams 1997, 51). In addition, the Church affirmed a "'willingness to investigate the continuing significance of the promise of land and its implications for Christian theology,'" albeit with the caveat that "'all, including the State of Israel,

stand accountable to God. The State of Israel is a geopolitical entity and is not to be validated theologically'" (Abrams 1997, 51).

In the same year, however, the Church renewed its vocal condemnation of Christian Zionism, disavowing "'those views held by some dispensationalists and some Christian Zionists that see the formation of the State of Israel as a signal of the end of time'" (Rubin 2012, 76). These anti-dispensationalist concerns came to the fore in 2001. In an effort to ensure that Presbyterians not be influenced by the *Left Behind* movie, the Church published *Between Millennia*, a study-guide detailing the incompatibility of dispensationalism with Presbyterian doctrine. In 2002, fifty prominent Presbyterians published *An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel* on the website of Knox Theological Seminary[32] criticizing dispensationalism (White 2002). The authors later indicated that the declaration was directed specifically at Jerry Falwell, Paige Patterson, and John Hagee (Ice 2002).

In 2004, the Presbyterian Church passed a resolution to investigate divestment from multinational corporations supporting Israel's activities in the West Bank. While politicians, the Jewish community, and the media were preoccupied with discussions about whether the denomination was antisemitic, a significant Church resolution passed almost unnoticed. While the divestment resolution consisted of a mere forty-five words, a contemporaneous resolution attacking Christian Zionism contained one

[32] Knox Theological Seminary, named in memory of Presbyterianism's founder, was established in 1989 by Dr. D. James Kennedy (1930-2007), the senior pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church.

thousand eight hundred thirty words. The resolution directed Presbyterians to read three books from "outside the church," authored by Donald Wagner, Stephen Sizer, and Gary Burge. These three theologians are the most prolific anti-Zionist Christian theologians. Despite the Church's declaration of the authors as outsiders, two are prominent Presbyterian clergymen. Don Wagner is an ordained Presbyterian minister and professor at North Park University (Findley 2003, 273). Gary Burge is an ordained Presbyterian minister and professor at Wheaton College (Miller 2015, 181). The lone Christian Zionist leader singled out for opprobrium by the Presbyterian resolution was John Hagee (PCUSA 2004, 12). Hagee responded by saying that PC(USA)'s actions towards Israel had brought the judgment of God upon the denomination, a reference presumably to its flagging membership (Brown 2004).

2014 was a momentous year for Presbyterian pro-Palestinian activists. First, the denomination passed the resolution to divest. Second, the Presbyterian Church published *Zionism Unsettled*, "to encourage a public debate in the US and elsewhere about a heretofore taboo subject, namely the role of the ideology of political Zionism and Christian Zionism in the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians" (PC(USA) 2014), which singled out Hagee once again (Burge 2014, 177). CUFI issued an action alert to its members, calling upon them to write to the Government of Israel, declaring "The Presbyterians don't speak for us," which garnered over 26,000 responses within 24 hours. Hagee, for his part, issued a curt response, declaring, "'Happily, this small and shrinking denomination does not speak for America's Christians or Americans in general'" (Levitt 2014).

Summary

Let us review the thesis of this dissertation: *The recent rise of Christian activism on the issue of Israel-Palestine is the consequence of three interrelated factors: Presbyterianism's complicated historical relationship with dispensationalism, unique Christian interest group advantages, and domestic inter-Christian sociopolitical contestation.*

This chapter has shed light upon the first of these factors: the contentious historical relationship between Presbyterianism and dispensationalism. Contrary to contemporary understandings, Presbyterians did not start becoming interested in the issue of Israel-Palestine when the denomination began focusing on social justice issues. The Presbyterian Church has a long and complicated theological relationship with Israel and the Jewish people. This history has been fraught with intradenominational tension and has led to significant division within, and separation from, the Church. Nevertheless, this review leaves a number of questions unresolved. First, despite the clearer picture of Presbyterian engagement with the issue of Israel-Palestine, the question of the strong pro-Palestinian shift in the twenty-first century remains unclear. This matter will be investigated in chapter 5, the case study of PC(USA).

Second, John Hagee's disparate responses to the Presbyterian condemnation of his views in 2004 and 2014 requires elucidation. The first time he was criticized he issued a simple statement in response. The second time, however, he mobilized tens of thousands of signatories to declare in unison that "the Presbyterians don't speak

for us." Of course the reason he did not do so the first time is that Christians United for Israel did not yet exist. Thus, this dissertation argues that a significant causal factor for the creation of CUFI was the need for Hagee to mobilize American Christian voices in support of Israel and to regain control over who speaks for Christian America. The dissertation now proceeds to explore the case of Christians United for Israel.

4. Christians United for Israel

Israel and America share the same Judeo-Christian values. . . Israel's fight is our fight. If a line has to be drawn, then let it be drawn around both of us – Christians and Jews, Americans and Israelis. We are one (Hagee 2010).

The US supports Israel due to multiple factors, some of which stem from the prominent place of Christians and Christianity in American society. In an effort to further understand the contribution of contemporary Christian Zionists, the first case study of this dissertation is Christians United for Israel, the leading twenty-first pro-Israel Christian interest group. The analysis of this chapter consists of three distinct sections: an examination and update of the pre-existing literature; the application of interest group theories; and the introduction of the theopolitical factor. The first section re-examines and revises the roles played by the doctrine of dispensationalism and anti-Islam sentiment, two of the primary reasons offered by scholars for pro-Israel Christian activism. The second section investigates CUFI as an interest group: thus far, the scholarship on Christian Zionism has focused on motivating factors stemming from the perspectives of individual Christians; an organized advocacy group is manufactured in order to be greater, however, than the sum of its individual parts. At its most basic level, stripped of all theological and cultural motivations, CUFI is an interest group like any other in the US, and operates with all the advantages and limitations afforded interest groups generally. Nevertheless, as a religious interest group, certain distinct characteristics are present, the effects of which have received little scholarly attention to date. These general interest group and specific religious interest group advantages and limitations will be explored, with the objective of

identifying additional factors that have resulted in increased US support for Israel. The final section introduces the theopolitical contestation factor and argues that John Hagee and likeminded Christian exceptionalists support Israel not only for Israel's sake, but also for the purposes of promoting a conservative religious agenda in America. Israel is a tool in their arsenal, used to advance the narrative of America's biblical foundations and a certain conception of the country's identity and values.

Theological and Cultural

Having earlier reviewed the theological and cultural foundations that led to American Christian support for Israel, this section investigates the continued significance of those factors to contemporary American Christian Zionists. On the theological side, while Christian Zionist activism is often attributed to dispensationalist thought, the following discussion demonstrates that present-day activists are less inspired by the ideology. On the cultural side, the discussion finds that CUFI leaders seek to distance themselves from allegations of anti-Arab predispositions. Nevertheless, regarding the incompatibility of Islam with American values, sentiments continue to be espoused that suggest the presence of a more complex picture.

Dispensationalism

Ever since the time of the Reformation, restorationist Christians have believed that the ancient prophecies of the Jewish people's return to Israel were yet to be fulfilled. The movement to assist in the Jewish return to Israel led to widespread belief that the messianic era was imminent. As the story of the modern State of Israel unfolded, more and more Christians began to view the events as the fulfilment of ancient

prophecies and desired to engage actively in the development of the divine plan. In addition, the biblically-infused narrative of the sojourn to the "New Israel" inspired many American Christians to empathize with the Jewish sojourn to the Land of Israel. And feelings of political desperateness following the Civil War led to a rise in the belief in premillennialism, paving the way for the success of John Nelson Darby's doctrine of dispensationalism.

Previously, I examined the various causes for the popularization of dispensationalist thought in America. Beyond the premillennialist predilections of nineteenth century Christians, the promulgation of dispensationalism may be attributed to the dominance of its adherents at the Niagara Conferences, the publication of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, the success of the Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary, and the popularity of dispensationalist works such as *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the *Left Behind* series. Thus, scholars have tended to accept the axiom that dispensationalist beliefs are a primary motivation driving American Christian Zionist political activism.

As this study set out to revisit and reassess the causal factors for American Christian support for Israel, no previous assumptions were considered axiomatic, including dispensationalism. Examining contemporary literature and meeting with twenty-first century Christian Zionist leaders were important opportunities to investigate the continued significance of dispensationalism to the US-Israel relationship. And indeed, evidence collected for this study suggests that many twenty-first century Christian Zionists eschew dispensationalism. As one research

participant put it, very few evangelicals would be familiar with the term, let alone be able to define it (Interview with evangelical CUFI critic, Jan 2, 2017). Leading Christian Zionist organization the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem rejects dispensationalism (Shapiro 2015, 12), as does CUFI leader, Victor Styrsky (2013, 93). In *The New Christian Zionism,* Gerald McDermott (2016) features a growing movement of theologians who demonstrate their support for Israel based solely on the New Testament, and entirely independent of dispensationalist thought. Furthermore, Brog concedes that most CUFI activists reject the *End Times* aspects of dispensationalist thought and deemphasize dispensationalism on account of negative media portrayals that paint its adherents as religious fanatics (Interview with CUFI exec. director, Nov 22, 2016).

In his original presentation on American Christian Zionists, Brog documented dispensationalism as their prime motive (2006, 91). A decade of personal interaction with evangelicals, however, changed his views of the relationship between the ideology and the movement. He now contends that, while other biblical interpretations may allow for Christian Zionist underpinnings, dispensationalism may be credited historically with "creating the space" for Christian support for Israel:

> I meet a lot of atheists and say to them, 'do you think it's wrong to murder?' and they'll say 'of course it is, I don't need Judaism or Christianity for that.' I disagree. The revolutionary insight that it's wrong to murder even someone from a different tribe, not from your family, comes from the Bible. They might not realize that, but that's the underpinning of their moral code. As best as I can tell there is a prevalent idea in Christianity that God can only work with one people at a time. So if He's moved on to the Church, He can't be working with the

> Jewish people anymore. They've got to be replaced. Darby challenged this idea and reengaged with the notion that Paul calls in Romans this mystery of God's purpose for the Jewish people. Now that space was created whereby you can be a believing Christian and still believe that God has a role for the Jewish people. That space is so large that you can have Christians that say I don't believe in dispensationalism, but I believe in that idea [of a Jewish return to Israel] (Interview with CUFI exec. director, Nov 22, 2016).

In Brog's opinion, the dispensationalist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries introduced Americans to a new way of thinking about the place of the Jewish people in history, heretofore a nation most Christians treated with ambivalence.

Theologians such as McDermott may be able to argue in favour of Christian Zionism outside of the framework of dispensationalism; the historical impetus for such views, however, was the flourishing of the dispensationalist movement. While restorationist thought existed prior to his arrival, Darby *popularised* the notion of Christian support for Israel. Brog maintains that many Christian Zionists employ dispensationalist thought and language unconsciously (Interview with CUFI exec. director, Nov 22, 2016). This phenomenon may be attributed to the hegemonic culture of dispensationalism that arose amongst conservative Christians in America during the twentieth century. For example, Dallas Baptist University Professor Jim Denison suggests that the mere presence in the city of Dallas Theological Seminary has impacted religious thought throughout the city. Even though local pastors have not been theologically dispensationalist, most locals believe in the Rapture. Notably, in addition to the numerous Baptist churches in the city that have been impacted by

dispensationalism, the biggest Presbyterian church in America, First Presbyterian, is in Dallas, at which the prominent dispensationalist Billy Graham was known to preach (Dallas News 2018; Spector 2009, 189). Thus, while dispensationalism may no longer be the primary overt driver of American Christian support for Israel, it has laid the foundation for such support.

Arabs and Islam

Turning to cultural factors undergirding American Christian support for Israel, earlier I cited the thesis that many Christians harbor a greater natural affinity towards Judaism and Jews over Islam and Arabs, deriving primarily from their shared Bible (Spector 2009, 79). Critics allege that Israel is equated with Jews and the Palestinian Authority with Muslims, despite each having significant minority populations – to the extent that many Palestinian Christians feel that American evangelicals are oblivious of their very existence. On the one hand, this contention regarding the "brush-stroking" and "othering" of Arabs and Islam appears to be confirmed by statements such as CUFI director David Brog's comments on his group's support for legislation to appoint a *Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia*. Brog posited that "'Christians in the Palestinian Authority are fleeing, and not because of Israel. Israel is protecting Christians from the forces of extremism'" (Dovere 2013). While an investigation of the matter is beyond the scope of this study, presumably PLO negotiator Hanan Ashrawi, a Christian, would demur, as would prominent Palestinian pastors Mitri Raheb and Naim Ateek. These Palestinian Christians are vocal in their criticism of Israel's

occupation and do not ascribe to the thesis that they would fare better under Jewish rather than Muslim rule. Likewise, upon being asked about the possibility of a non-Christian president, a prominent CUFI leader responded:

> If this were a Fox interview, I would say thank God for democracy, because the president of the US could be gay/straight, female/male, atheist, Jew, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and all the other 1200 faiths there are recognized, you could be anything you want. If it's not Fox News, I would say for a Muslim man, he would clearly and often have to articulate how and why in his worldview as president the sharia conflicts with what he believes (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016).

Such an attitude suggests a visceral aversion towards Muslims, thus reinforcing theories of Christian American antipathy towards Arabs and the Palestinian cause.

On the other hand, in his book on Christian Zionism, CUFI coordinator Victor Styrsky (2013, 216) discusses his close relationship with his Muslim neighbours in Sacramento. Senior CUFI leaders' external conversations must be approved by the organization's communications director,[33] which leads to the conclusion that Styrsky's "pro-Muslim" statement may have been crafted in an effort to counter allegations that support for Israel stems from anti-Muslim proclivities. In fact, various Christian Zionist leaders, including Tim LaHaye, Pat Robertson, and Robert Stearns, have issued statements acknowledging the plight of the Palestinians (Spector 2009, 139). Thus, while Muslim/Arab "othering" is undoubtedly present, this dissertation maintains that it is not a key motivating factor for Christian pro-Israel support.

[33] This author was vetted before CUFI sanctioned any conversations with its employees.

Organizational

The foregoing section built on previous studies of theological and cultural factors undergirding American Christian support for Israel. The next part of this chapter introduces interest group causal factors into the discussion, focusing firstly on organizational aspects of CUFI. Delineating who the group represents facilitates an understanding of the credence and priority policymakers will grant the group. And an elucidation of how the group is organized provides insight concerning structural issues that may serve to strengthen or weaken the group over the long-term.

Numerical Power

Politicians take notice when an interest group consisting of a sizable constituency presents itself. This subsection investigates how many Americans CUFI actually represents. The first matter considered is the collective action problem: Why would anyone join CUFI at all? The analysis then proceeds to problematize the definition of membership in CUFI: With no dues, how accurate is the organization's self-reported tally? The third piece of the puzzle is Hagee's claim to speak on behalf of all evangelicals: With only a tiny percentage of evangelicals as members, who does Hagee speak for? The subsection next assesses whether traditional assumptions regarding evangelical support for Israel may be considered axiomatic vis-à-vis a younger generation of more progressively-leaning evangelicals. The fifth part explores the meaning of "Christians United:" Does this name incorporate all Christians or only evangelicals? And finally, the issue of numerical strength as it relates to

financial matters is unpacked: Do dollars and cents matter? Or are non-paying "members" a useful indicator of numerical strength?

Let us begin with the question of demographic representation. CUFI founder, John Hagee, once declared in an AIPAC keynote address:

> I want to say this as clearly and plainly as I possibly can: Israel, you are not alone. Ladies and gentlemen, it's a new day in America. The sleeping giant of Christian Zionism has awakened. Fifty million Christians are standing up and applauding the State of Israel (Hagee 2007, 2).

Despite claiming to speak for fifty million Christians, as of July 2019, CUFI claimed seven million members (CUFI 2019). These two numbers require clarification, regarding the nature of each constituency and their respective relationships to Hagee's organization. The claimed membership tally implies seven million individuals' decisions to invest their resources in CUFI. Olson's collective action problem asks why any individual would join an interest group like CUFI, when they can rely on others to invest their resources on behalf of pro-Israel advocacy and "free-ride" on their efforts and investment, without incurring personal expense. An initial answer may be the religious interest group "purposive" spiritual reward exception: many religious individuals believe that their contribution earns them heavenly reward (Hagee 2007, 116). If they do not actively contribute, they will not receive their reward. A second solution would be CUFI's (2017) "solidary" incentives they offer to active contributors exclusively, such as opportunities to join various biblically-themed giving circles, with benefits ranging from free books to personal meetings with Hagee to exclusive briefings with Israeli officials (see Salisbury 1969).

CUFI's definition of membership, however, casts doubt upon the organization's self-reported tally. Ordinarily, membership in a group would imply an explicit fee-paying structure. CUFI has a very loose definition of membership: it costs nothing to join; members are simply active email addresses. CUFI contends that, since evangelicals do not pay dues to a church and all funding comes from donations, membership may be determined on the basis of self-identification. This model, they contend, meets the needs of the group, which seeks online political activism in the way of emails to Congress and social media activity (Interview with CUFI communications director, Sept. 28, 2016). This definition of membership overcomes the collective action problem. If joining the group is a matter merely of providing an email address, with a view (perhaps) to sending an occasional email to an elected official, no outlay of resources on the part of any individual is required.

Nevertheless, it would appear that this system of membership calculation is an imprecise indicator of CUFI size. For example, one "member" might receive CUFI's email to multiple email addresses. Another might sign up, not on account of any sympathy to the cause per se, but out of curiosity. Furthermore, the numbers appear to be growing at questionable rates, with an increase of a million members (from six to seven) reported within a space of mere weeks (CUFI 2019b).[34] While interest groups are entitled to count their members however they see fit, when audiences

[34] The rapid rise from six million to seven million may be related to the sensitivity around the number "six million" in the Jewish community – that being the number of Jews murdered by Hitler in the Holocaust. While CUFI likes to report their membership in terms of millions, the group appears to have sought to pass that milestone as quickly as possible. If that is indeed the case, one wonders how meaningful these self-reported membership tallies are.

such as government officials are presented with the numbers, they should be aware of membership criteria. A more accurate gauge of CUFI's size might be the number of attendees at the annual convention. Over the last decade, participation has grown from three thousand to five thousand. This public display of support, along with each individual's investment of time and money to attend the convention, are justifiable indicators of dedication to CUFI. While this number might not sound large, it is no less substantial than other major interest groups. For instance, the Sierra Club boasts fewer than eight hundred participants at its annual gathering (Byrne Barry 2005). It should be noted that, despite CUFI's claims of annual membership growth, numbers at the convention have remained stagnant.[35]

Turning to Hagee's claim of representing fifty million evangelicals, his declaration would appear to be an example of power puffery – groups tend to exaggerate their numbers to appear more prominent (Schattschneider 1964). Nevertheless, his assertion has some merit. According to Pew, one quarter of Americans identify as evangelical, three quarters of whom are classified as "white evangelical" (Masci and Smith 2018). Of these, 82% believe that God gave the Land of Israel to the Jewish people (Lipka 2013). This number translates to 66 million Americans, which does not even account for Christians beyond the white evangelical category. Thus, while other interest groups may make unverifiable claims to represent more than their membership roster, the statistical evidence supports

[35] By way of comparison, over the same period, AIPAC's convention grew from five thousand to over twenty thousand participants.

Hagee's claim. Consequently, CUFI offers the converse of Olson's collective action problem. Instead of a multitude free-riding on the investment and activism of a few, one encounters a phenomenon whereby a few ride on the proposition that a multitude supports their efforts.[36]

This conclusion notwithstanding, it should be noted that the mere fact that evangelicals believe God gave Israel to the Jewish people is insufficient evidence of their support for American intervention in the region. A religious conviction that Israel belongs to the Jews implies support for God's work on behalf of the Jewish people, not Hagee's. In fact, numerous other pro-Israel Christian interest groups exist exhibiting less influence than CUFI, such as On Eagles' Wings, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, and the Emergency Committee for Israel, demonstrating the fact that Hagee does not speak on behalf of all evangelicals. Furthermore, Hagee's conflation of evangelical with pro-Israel may be difficult to sustain over the long-term. David Brog (2014) has expressed concern over the views held by millennial evangelicals, contending that they do not exhibit the same sympathy for Israel as their parents and grandparents.

While claims of a generational shift away from evangelical support for Israel have been posited for many decades (e.g., Burge 1993, 185), the statistics of evangelical pro-Israel sentiment have not declined. This stability might be attributed

[36] This phenomenon is different from the notion of the "Silent Majority," a term used by President Nixon to galvanize "Middle America" into an active constituency (King and Anderson 1971). In this instance, Hagee is not asking anything of the people he claims to represent. He is simply claiming to represent them and speak in their name. The onus to contradict him is then shifted to the policymaker, as he decides whether to trust Hagee, or to risk not believing him.

to the phenomenon of a correspondence between age and conservatism.[37] Youthful idealist views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may have evolved as they became more realist with age, thus leaving the statistical evidence unchanged. Or alternatively, the stability might be a function of the decline of mainline Protestantism and the growing popularity of evangelical churches (Pew 2015). If those switching denominations are motivated by pre-existing conservative religious attitudes, then the decline in favourable views of Israel amongst younger evangelicals might be offset by new conservative adherents of evangelical Christianity in America migrating over from the mainline denominations.

Curiously, all the aforementioned discussion may be immaterial when one considers CUFI's actual membership constitution. Despite its evangelical base, CUFI aims to build as broad a membership "church" as possible. In order to maximize their reach, the leadership avoids doctrinal discussions that might lead to religious disputes:

> We are Christians United for Israel. We have Jews as members. We'll take everyone. We have Catholics committed to Israel. [Mormon] Glenn Beck and Pastor Hagee are close friends. The rank and file of CUFI are evangelicals. They respect Mormons for their moral stance but don't recognize them as Christians (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016).

[37] As many people grow older, they become more politically conservative. (While this conclusion is contested, Glenn (1974) concludes that age tends not to keep pace with societal liberalization. In other words, while the individual might not be experiencing a rightward attitudinal shift, he appears to, relative to general societal views.)

Indeed, despite a preponderance of suspicion of Beck's denomination amongst evangelicals, he was the CUFI summit keynote speaker two years running.

Presumably, this open and broadminded attitude would welcome Americans of all faiths under CUFI's umbrella. Nevertheless, limits are placed on the parameters of membership in the organization. The rank and file of CUFI are often referred to as *Bible-believing* Christians:

> Every single prophet talks of a time when Israel will be taken back from exile. Amos. Ezekiel. Jeremiah. Bible-believing Christians read these things and go, 'Well, this is pretty clear. I don't know how God could make it any clearer' (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016).

For Christian Zionists, the biblical nation of "Israel" is synonymous with the modern Jewish people, and the Jewish people's right to the Land of Israel follows axiomatically. Disputing this right implies, in their opinion, a repudiation of the Bible. CUFI membership consists, therefore, of "Bible-believing Christians," which is then extended to include anyone who believes in the literal meaning of the Bible. This breadth of membership demographic will be further examined in the section on theopolitical contestation.

A final point relevant to this discussion around numerical strength contrasts CUFI with AIPAC, historically the largest pro-Israel advocacy organization. Whether CUFI represents five or fifty million or somewhere in between, its numbers of voters far outweigh those of AIPAC, suggesting far greater potential gravitas. Nevertheless, as a financial interest, AIPAC is much stronger than CUFI. While AIPAC does not report numbers of members or donors, according to tax returns, they raise $100 million

annually (Bykowicz and Andrews 2019). CUFI's fundraising power does not appear to come anywhere AIPAC's. While CUFI itself is registered as a church and therefore not required to make its finances public, even its lobbying branch, the Action Fund, only raised $1.8 million in 2017 (Nowlin 2019). Thus, CUFI and AIPAC are both important political players, exhibiting differing, but both important, strengths.

Leadership and Structure

An essential determinant of an interest group's strength is its longevity, which requires diffusion of power. Internal democracy is the degree to which an organization's political structure facilitates social control by members. Groups driven by individual leaders and patrons tend to be short-lived (Berry 1977). As individual members feel empowered, they become more committed to the organization. The stronger the internal democracy of an interest group, the longer its staying power beyond the life of the interest entrepreneur (Knoke 1981). CUFI's interest entrepreneur as well as founder and national chairman, John Hagee, is the senior pastor of Cornerstone, a megachurch in San Antonio, Texas, and the CEO of John Hagee Ministries, the purveyor of a television program broadcast globally (CUFI 2017b), which provided a built-in audience, familiar with the pastor's passion for Israel. His wife, Diana, plays an integral and public role in the organization, coordinating special events, such as the Washington, D.C. summit and Night to Honor Israel (Hagee 2017). Subsequent to the recent departure of executive director, David Brog, Diana became co-executive director alongside Shari Dollinger (CUFI 2019c). Both Brog and Dollinger are Jewish, as is communications director, Ari Morgenstern.

While John Hagee was the original interest entrepreneur, CUFI is led by an executive board made up of megachurch pastors and influential Christian leaders (CUFI 2018). An early leader was Jerry Falwell (1933-2007), the most prominent Christian champion of Israel prior to the advent of CUFI. New board members are either invited by Hagee to serve or submitted for consideration by current board members and then voted on by the board (Interview with CUFI coordinator, Sept. 30, 2016). Next in the structure of the organization are the field coordinators, who are responsible for promoting Christian pro-Israel engagement in the following spheres: church and community, campus, minority groups, and millennials. And in recent years, CUFI inaugurated the CUFI Action Fund, which lobbies Congress and the White House directly (Action Fund 2018). For church and community matters, CUFI divides the US into three major regions: eastern, central, and western, with a coordinator on staff for each of those regions. Below the paid regional coordinators are volunteer regional directors, covering fourteen geographical parts of the US, similar to the way synods are arranged in many Christian denominations (CUFI 2018b). Their task is to strengthen the connection between CUFI's headquarters in San Antonio and local communities, and encourage participation in the annual Washington, D.C. summit (Interview with CUFI executive board member, Oct 7, 2016). And while regional directors are volunteers, they are nonetheless hand-picked for the position by CUFI leadership. Thus, while CUFI seeks to engage grassroots political engagement, leadership opportunities are limited and controlled by the organization.

Below the regional directors are the state directors, tasked with coordinating CUFI activities throughout their state, from churches to campuses. They act as ambassadors to build bridges with non-Christian entities, such as AIPAC and the local chapters of the Jewish Federation. They set up town hall meetings with elected officials and those running for office to discuss Israel and other matters of policy. And finally, their role is to mobilize the membership for public lobbying, such as supporting state anti-BDS legislation. Sometimes, state directors are invited by CUFI regional directors to fill the role; other times they volunteer for the position. And the final CUFI leader in the chain of command is the city director, who may or may not be a pastor; often, they are congregational leaders. Their job is to initiate contact between the regional coordinator and local pastors. In addition, they organize Nights to Honor Israel and other pro-Israel events, with the goal of engaging city-wide congregations (Interview with CUFI executive board member, Oct 7, 2016).

Beyond regional activism, CUFI also engages with two specific demographics: college students and millennials. Two hundred campuses host CUFI chapters and a further two hundred have CUFI representatives (CUFI 2018c). In 2014, CUFI began a new program for millennials, called The Israel Collective, which takes influencers (such

as musicians and bloggers) to Israel, and develops short pro-Israel films for social media (Interview with CUFI exec. director, Nov 22, 2016). [38]

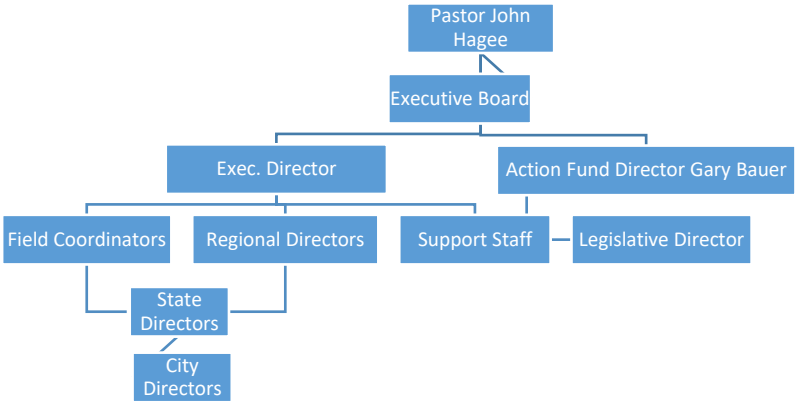

Figure 5.1

This presentation of CUFI as a well-structured, multi-tiered organization would imply robustness and long-term strength and stability. Nevertheless, decision-making remains concentrated in the hands of a small cadre of leaders at the top, which may threaten its long-term prospects as a stable and influential interest group. CUFI decision-making is divided into three general categories: new initiatives, government policy, and operations. Each of these areas is governed by different decision-makers. New initiatives requiring major fund allocations are executive board decisions, shepherded by Hagee. Concerning support for, or opposition to, legislation and

[38] While the above discussion focuses on CUFI's US activities, CUFI also has branches in Canada and the UK. These groups, however, are not officially part of the CUFI structure; they merely borrow CUFI's name and reputation.

government policy, Hagee bases the determination upon the recommendations of his policy experts. Day-to-day operations decisions are made by the senior staff, which includes the regional coordinators and the communications director. This category includes press releases, action alerts, and general operations such as event planning (Interview with CUFI regional coordinator, Sept. 30, 2016). Hagee was the primary patron of CUFI, having provided the "initial six-figure capital infusion" (Interview with CUFI regional coordinator, Sept. 30, 2016). Today, however, tens of thousands of Christians allocate a monthly tithe to the organization. In addition, at Nights to Honor Israel, donations are collected, a portion funds CUFI, the remainder is dedicated to charities in Israel (Interview with CUFI lobbyist, Oct 13, 2016). Thus, CUFI funding has moved successfully from the financial responsibility of an individual to a much wider base.

Since Hagee, his wife, and his close friends make all major decisions at the top of the group, CUFI evinces a hierarchical, non-democratic, organizational structure. The failure to diffuse power suggests a lack of endurance beyond Hagee. If CUFI were to cease operations, then it would not be the first time that evangelical influence in the pro-Israel advocacy sector would wane. The previous incarnation of powerful pro-Israel Christian activism occurred under the aegis of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, which disbanded in 1989. Between the cessation of the Moral Majority and the inauguration of CUFI, little took place by way of Christian pro-Israel advocacy. In the absence of a strong interest group representing their agenda, evangelical love for Israel does not necessarily translate into political influence. Thus, if CUFI, as an

interest group has, in any way impacted Israel policy, it should be noted that such influence may not necessarily be an enduring element of the US-Israel relationship over the long term.

Strategic

In addition to organizational aspects of interest group behaviour that this dissertation introduces into the discussion of Christian-based reasons for American support of Israel, interest group strategic factors must also be considered. An examination of the role CUFI plays in impacting Israel policy requires an assessment of the strength of its advocacy strategy, manifest in the group's approaches to direct, indirect, and public opinion lobbying, as well as coalition building and reframing efforts. An important measure of the potential for direct lobbying success is the degree to which a group is engaged with political insiders. Indirect lobbying success is measured by the number of calls an official receives or expects to receive, which will ultimately translate into re-election votes. And a final area where the strength of an interest group is assessed is its approach to coalition-building and reframing. The more a group can widen its message beyond its membership by collaborating with other groups and broadening the appeal of its message, the greater the chance that it will succeed in its advocacy efforts.

Lobbying

CUFI's strength lies in its employment of insiders, embedding of insiders, and appeal to built-in insiders. Direct lobbying covers the range of activities usually associated with advocacy groups, such as meeting with politicians and other government

officials, as well as assisting with political campaigns. Successful advocacy requires the acquiescence of the power-bearing individual to the request of the lobbyist. Thus, commensurate with the rate of like-mindedness between the lobbyist and listener is the rate of political advocacy success efforts (Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Hall and Deardoff 2006; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; Hojnacki and Kimball 1999).

Step 1 is to employ insiders. CUFI's inaugural executive director, David Brog, was a political insider, having worked in the US Senate for seven years, with roles including chief of staff for Senator Arlen Specter (D/R/D-Pa.), and staff director of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Republican Party stalwart, Gary Bauer, runs the CUFI Action Fund, the group's lobbying arm. Bauer served as Under Secretary of Education in the Reagan administration and subsequently ran for the 2000 Republican Party presidential nomination. As CUFI's senior lobbyist, Bauer seeks to position the organization as the go-to address for general advice, policy briefing, and assistance in drafting legislation on Israel. Bauer composes a daily report, offering pro-Israel talking points absent from media accounts, which he sends to every member of Congress. He sends a similar report to CUFI members with large spheres of influence, including megachurch pastors, city councillors, and radio program hosts (Interview with CUFI lobbyist, Oct 13, 2016). While current co-director Shari Dollinger is not an American political insider, she previously worked for the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., a role that would have provided frequent interactions with US government officials.

Step 2 is to embed insiders. CUFI activists claim they have penetrated the policymaking apparatus of the Republican Party (Interview with CUFI lobbyist, Oct 13, 2016). Whereas in 2012, the party removed the reference to Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel and emphasized language about a two-state solution for Israel-Palestine, in 2016, those decisions were reversed. During the GOP convention, CUFI leaders claim to have liaised with delegates to the foreign relations committee with the goal of aligning the party platform with the policies of the Israeli government. Jerusalem was declared the "eternal, and indivisible capital of the Jewish state," with a call to move the US embassy there "in fulfilment of US law" (US Republican Party 2016, 47). "References to the two-state solution were minimized," recounts the CUFI lobbyist, and "BDS was rejected as antisemitic" (Interview with CUFI lobbyist, Oct 13, 2016).

Were CUFI operatives indeed instrumental in amending the GOP platform, and ultimately responsible for President Trump's relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem? While Bauer took credit publicly at the subsequent CUFI summit,[39] the sole independent account of their intervention is a *Times of Israel* report, in which David Brog is quoted as saying, "We're proud of our efforts to secure platform language recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's eternal capital and attacking BDS for the anti-Semitic movement that it is" (Shimoni Stoil 2016). Certainly, this report merely echoes CUFI's claim without providing any confirmation of the facts. This story is an

[39] As heard by this author.

example of “self-presentation,” inasmuch as the more times the suggestion that CUFI influenced the GOP is advanced, the more it is cemented as the truth in people’s minds. Nevertheless, the fact that Hagee was invited to deliver the closing remarks at the embassy’s relocation ceremony strongly suggests CUFI’s expanded influence during the Trump era (Zonszein 2020).

Step 3 is to work with pre-embedded, or “built-in” insiders, people who are already in position and naturally sympathetic towards the agenda of an interest group. Christians, according to Marsden (2008, 43), are built-in insiders, naturally predisposed to the agenda of Christian interest groups. They speak the same language and think along the same lines. In this regard, the religious nature of CUFI becomes a distinct advantage that CUFI has over non-Christian interest groups in the foreign policy sector. Indeed, assuming the veracity of Marsden’s assertion, little conjecture is necessary to label former Vice President Mike Pence (b. 1959) a built-in insider for CUFI. Pence referred to himself as “’a Christian, a conservative and a Republican, in that order’” (Hamburger 2016). Pence is a personal friend of CUFI lobbyist Gary Bauer, whose son was a senior aide to the vice-president. Indeed, after meeting with Pence on March 31, 2017, Hagee enjoyed one of the earliest scheduled meetings with President Trump, a substantive indicator of the access CUFI enjoys currently (Ayala 2017). Likewise, Trump’s Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, (a keynote speaker at the 2019 CUFI summit) who often speaks of his Christian faith as an important part of his identity, openly declared, “As secretary of state and as a Christian, I’m proud to lead American diplomacy to support Israel’s right to defend

itself" (Wong 2019). While President Trump himself is not a regular churchgoer, he undoubtedly framed his administration as representative of the values of Christian America. Indeed, the ultimate insider is the lobbyist who works in a governmental capacity during his lobbying tenure. In June 2018, the President appointed Gary Bauer to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (JNS 2018). This appointment not only confirmed Bauer's pre-existing relationship with the White House but bolstered CUFI's ability to lobby going forward. Thus, in terms of direct lobbying, given the numbers of Christian adherents in America, the likelihood of CUFI lobbyists encountering a sympathetic official is greater than the typical success rate of most advocacy groups. This particular element grants CUFI significantly greater access and opportunity than AIPAC.

The next area that must be examined is indirect lobbying, which is the process of mobilizing the grassroots to advocate for the cause. Success is measured by the number of emails, calls, and visits to the government official or politician. CUFI communicates with its members on a regular basis: from social media, to a monthly magazine, *The Torch*, to a weekly TV program, *The Watchman*, encouraging its members to engage politically. As well as asking members to attend their elected officials' local town-hall meetings, it will initiate and facilitate specific Israel-related town-halls (Marsden 2008, 37). When Israel-related policy matters arise, CUFI sends out rapid-response action alerts to its members to contact their congressional

representatives via phone or email. On average, 25000-35000 people will respond.[40] Knowing that number enables CUFI lobbyists to enter the congressional offices, quote the number of calls they have received, and ask whether or not they will be supporting the bill in question (Interview with CUFI coordinator, Sept. 30, 2016).

While this project examines political processes and does not purport to assess outcomes, the following two anecdotes are CUFI's own accounts of success. While the results themselves are unverifiable and not germane to this study, the CUFI activists' descriptions of the incidents offer insight into the strength of CUFI's indirect lobbying. Before President Obama's anti-nuclear weapons proliferation deal with Iran, CUFI mobilized four hundred thousand emails to Congress. CUFI leadership claims that Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) originally supported the Iran deal, but switched sides due to the interest group's efforts. Their activists were in his office two weeks prior to his decision, and when later addressing an AIPAC event, he credited his "Christian brothers" (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016). Similarly, Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) appeared ready to support the Iran deal, which would thereby make the bill bipartisan. CUFI secured a full-page ad in the *Arizona Republic*, with one hundred eighty pastors and several elected officials asking Senator Flake to oppose the deal. They then called him on Friday telling him it would run on Sunday; on Saturday, he issued a press release opposing the agreement. According to CUFI activists, while other interest groups apply financial pressure to politicians, CUFI's strength lies not in

[40] The email and phone number provided for members to contact their representatives are not the direct contact details for Congress. The service is provided by a third party that counts the responses and routes them on.

its money, but in the sense of power it projects as representatives of the American Christian community (Interview with CUFI coordinator, Sept. 30, 2016).

These assertions have a number of implications for this study. First, even if the figure seven million is not an entirely accurate sum, and the true membership tally is a half or a quarter of that number, CUFI has extraordinary access to tens of thousands, if not more, of activists ready to contact their elected officials at a moment's notice. Second, the veracity of their claims of voter representation would vary from constituency to constituency, and it remains up to the discretion of each individual lawmaker to assess the extent to which CUFI is indeed representative of the American Christian community. Nevertheless, even if the actual number of devotees who would vote according to CUFI's prescription is not as high as they claim, it would be a risky prospect for a lawmaker to call their bluff. Third, one distinct tool they used in the above campaign was the mobilization of clergy signatories, inferring thereby that each pastor represents many more parishioners. These campaigns typify CUFI's local lobbying efforts.

The pinnacle of CUFI indirect lobbying, however, is the annual summit. Every July, thousands of CUFI members make the "pilgrimage" to Washington D.C. for three days of biblical seminars, advocacy training, prayer, and song. The affair culminates in five thousand Christian Zionists visiting Capitol Hill to lobby their elected officials, amounting to 80-90% of congresspersons and senators receiving annual visits (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016). The event boasts high profile politicians from the US and Israel and includes a satellite address from Israel's prime

minister. Without a doubt, the attendance of a number of prominent members of the Trump administration demonstrates the influence CUFI enjoyed during that period: in 2019, CUFI hosted Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and National Security Advisor John Bolton.

One of the more curious aspects of the gathering is the privilege shown to Jewish participants of the summit. In contrast with the registration cost of hundreds of dollars for Christian participants, Jewish attendees are offered a heavily-discounted entry price. Thrice-daily Jewish prayer services are held and Hagee seats prominent rabbis at the head table. Hagee's fellow San Antonian Rabbi Aryeh Sheinberg would offer a benediction at the annual dinner, and the keynote speaker for a number of years was Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, the Chief Rabbi of Efrat, a city in the West Bank. It is important to note that Hagee emphasizes his organization's avoidance of efforts to proselytize Jews to Christianity (Hagee 2007, 46). The official party line is that if the organization were to have a conversion agenda, it would diminish its ability to support Israel (Styrsky 2013, 155). Spector (2009, 117) points out that not once during his research was there an attempt to convert him to Christianity. Now, it is understandable why CUFI engages with Christians in their indirect lobbying efforts. It is less obvious why they encourage Jews to attend their convention, promise that they will not face proselytizing attempts, and honor the rabbinic attendees. In addition, I note that my rabbinic status assisted this research project, granting entry into a number of exclusive gatherings and briefings, otherwise reserved for significant Christian donors. This special status provided an advantage rarely afforded other

researchers. The most important exclusive event was the address by Presbyterian pastor, Rev. Dr. Kenneth Larter, which served as an integral part of this research project. This peculiar respect and veneration for Jewish participants will be addressed later.

The final area of lobbying is the sphere of public opinion or "values" advocacy. With a view to shifting public opinion about a political issue and changing the public discourse and voting patterns over the long term, interest groups engage in "values lobbying." Traditional campaigns include newspaper opinion pieces, paid advertising and social media, as well as TV and radio interviews. CUFI's primary method to shift public opinion is by outreach to pastors. CUFI sets up information booths at civic group meetings and Christian conferences with the objective of finding clergy and other influencers who are open to their message. They then work to build relationships with these key pastors and congregational leaders and seek their assistance in creating a local network of clergy who are either overtly pro-Israel or at least open to learning more.

Once they identify a sufficient number of local pastors, they invite them to a seminar at the church of the key pastor. While each event consists of anywhere from thirty to three hundred participants, CUFI leaders emphasize that even the smaller number may represent thousands of parishioners (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016). In addition to the educational aspect, the goal of the pastors' breakfast is to encourage the participants to join a heavily-subsidized Israel tour (CUFI 2018d). The focus of the trip is a combination of Christian pilgrimage destinations and

briefings from Israeli officials and experts, demonstrating the security challenges that Israel faces and the need for American Christian support (CUFI 2017c). Pastors inspired by the seminars and trips are then asked to host a pro-Israel event in their church, such as the Night to Honor Israel. Notably, in addition to the Christian community, CUFI will invite the Israeli consul general as well as local rabbis and the Jewish community to the event (Interview with CUFI executive board member, Oct 7, 2016).

In addition to mobilizing pastors and their congregations, CUFI has staff dedicated to young adult engagement, specifically university students and millennials. With the goal of equipping young Christians with the tools to respond to criticism of Israel, CUFI reaches out to pastors to identify student leaders to start campus chapters. These students are then invited to join three programs on full scholarship: the Washington, D.C. summit, Student Advocacy Leadership Training (SALT), and a ten-day trip to Israel called the Bonhoeffer Fellowship. SALT is a seminar that takes place annually in San Antonio. Qualification for the Bonhoeffer Fellowship requires a commitment to becoming active on campus, including holding pro-Israel events and writing for student publications (Campus 2017). In 2014, CUFI learned that competing evangelical groups, such as Telos, were taking influential millennials on trips to Israel-Palestine and offering an alternative (less pro-Israel) narrative of the conflict. In response, CUFI initiated its own millennial outreach program called The Israel Collective (Interview with CUFI exec. director, Nov 22, 2016).

Thus, in the field of values lobbying, many of CUFI's strategies are typical of other interest groups, while some are unique to CUFI as a Christian lobby group. Activities such as campus initiatives and working with millennial influencers are typical of interest group strategies across the board; engagement with clergy, however, is a tactic that affords CUFI a major advantage over other interest groups. The power of the church and megachurches allows CUFI to identify key pastors and use their influence to amplify and frequently reiterate the organization's message. Such messaging changes the way their parishioners think about Israel, with the ultimate aim of prioritizing Middle East policy in their election decision-making.

Coalitions and Reframing

Interest groups maximize their effectiveness by collaborating with likeminded groups, thereby increasing their numeral significance in the eyes of elected officials. Some religious interest groups, however, reject the entire premise of coalition-building. If the messages of the two groups were exactly the same, then they would not need two distinct groups. And if the messages are not the same, then a political interest based on a religious doctrine would require the message to remain "pure," thereby impeding the group's ability to collaborate. Coalition-building implies compromise and religious interest groups are not famous for excelling in that arena.

As well, most interest groups engage in some form of reframing, whereby their message is repackaged for broader consumption (Baumgartner and Jones 1993).[41]

[41] As mentioned earlier, one example is the reframing of the "estate tax on wealthy heirs" as a "death tax on hardworking couples" (Graetz and Shapiro 2005).

Religious interest groups must frame their issue in such a way that resonates with their secular audience. Christians United for Israel attracts adherents to their pro-Israel agenda on the basis of theology. Notwithstanding their personal religious beliefs, however, policymakers are unlikely to support Israel by virtue of the biblical imperative. Thus, an understanding of CUFI's strategy requires the explication of its approach to reframing.

On the issue of coalition-building, CUFI and AIPAC collaborate on an informal basis and ninety-five percent of the time they are in agreement (Interview with CUFI communications director, Sept. 28, 2016). This admission demands an elucidation regarding the necessity of the duplication of efforts. According to CUFI activists, the first reason for having a dedicated Christian pro-Israel interest group is the political weight it adds to an issue, insofar as it demonstrates the importance of the US-Israel relationship to Americans beyond the miniscule Jewish population. CUFI's engagement dampens the arguments of those who critique the Jewish lobby's inordinate influence. Moreover, it moderates anti-Jewish allegations of ethnic-lobby/dual-loyalty motivations (Interview with CUFI communications director, Sept. 28, 2016).

The second need for a separate interest group is their differing religious and sociopolitical outlooks. Due to their conservative religious views, CUFI's membership tends to be more politically conservative than AIPAC's. Consequently, CUFI is often more hawkish than AIPAC (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016), and rejects its counterpart's willingness to compromise in order to maintain bipartisan support

for Israel (Interview with CUFI lobbyist, Oct 13, 2016). In recent months and years, the contrast between the Christian and Jewish lobby groups has deepened, as CUFI has been less critical of Israel than AIPAC (see e.g. Wilner and Hoffman 2019). Moreover, on issues relating to traditional religious values, CUFI and AIPAC do not see eye to eye. For example, AIPAC (2018) touts Israel's progressive attitudes towards LGBT rights, while CUFI is silent on the matter. Thus, in its attempts to maximize its advocacy effectiveness, CUFI recognizes the importance of coalition-building. The purity factor does not impede collaboration but necessitates the existence of two parallel interest groups. As suggested earlier, Mearsheimer and Walt's (2007) commingling of the Christian and Jewish pro-Israel lobbies fails to appreciate the distinction between AIPAC's *ethnic* agenda and CUFI's *religious* agenda.

Turning to CUFI activists' reframing efforts, their modus operandi follows a centuries-long tradition of Christian Zionist approaches to advocacy. A perusal of the 1649 Cartwright petition to the British government to restore the Jews to Palestine reveals an argument couched in realist language. Despite the restorationist beliefs of its authors, the plan focused on issues relating to British national interest in working with the Netherlands to counter Ottoman expansion. Similarly, dispensationalist William Blackstone's 1891 petition to US President Harrison for the restoration of the Jews to Israel made a pragmatic realpolitik case (Smith 2013, 188). In like manner, CUFI's public rhetoric stresses America's strategic and idealist interests as the basis of the campaign to strengthen support for Israel. In the words of Gary Bauer:

> CUFI makes a western civilization argument: that Israel and the US are natural allies, joined at the hip and heart; with shared values: consent of the governed, right of dissent, religious liberty, rights for women, dignity and value of every human being; and, if anything happened to Israel, the US would be in deep trouble (Interview with CUFI lobbyist, Oct 13, 2016).

Similarly, when sending its D.C. summit participants to Congress, CUFI is vigilant in its avoidance of theological language. As one leader explains, "These are Joe citizen Christians, with no advocacy experience, and yet a religious zeal that has brought them to Washington, D.C." And so the instructions are clear: "Pretend it's a job interview. Keep your Bible on the bus" (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016). CUFI provides talking points about the importance of American political support for Israel, none of which mentions theological considerations.

Similarly, when CUFI activists speak on campus, the message is secular. As one leader explained, "I'll say: Although I work for CUFI, today I'm here to start a new group called *Atheists United for Israel* and it should become one of the largest groups on campus if you're a lover of women's rights, social justice, human rights, goodness, peace, equality, and democracy." These activists believe that secular Americans should be "lining up behind Israel in support of its progressive values, which correspond closely to those of America" (Interview with CUFI theologian, Sept. 19, 2016). It should be noted, however, that a closer look at the rights cited by these CUFI leaders reveals the absence of LGBT rights. In this area, Israel is one of the most progressive nations on the planet, and one would assume that its LGBT record would be worthy of a mention to secular audiences. Nevertheless, just as CUFI is unable to unite as an interest group with AIPAC due to religious considerations, its reframing

ability is likewise constrained. Appreciating what will resonate with its secular political audience, it is willing to reframe and create a secular message to promote support for Israel. The framing of its message remains nonetheless circumscribed by the group's religious limits.

Theopolitical

While support for Israel presumes a foreign policy motive, this dissertation proposes a domestic causal factor for Christian Zionist activity. The literature review examined the concept of the Judeo-Christian tradition in America. Historically, the idea was interpreted in three ways. To adherents of the Social Gospel, "Judeo-Christian" alluded to the roots of Christianity in the social justice exhortations of the Hebrew prophets. To pluralists, Judeo-Christian values symbolized a new commitment to expanding American society to include non-Protestant voices. And to exceptionalists, references to Judeo-Christian values served as a moral compass to remind the nation continually of its biblical foundations. This section offers evidence of CUFI leaders' adherence to the exceptionalist strain of the American Judeo-Christian tradition and demonstrates how support for Israel furthers their domestic theopolitical agenda.

Falwell and Hagee

Jerry Falwell initiated the first major Christian pro-Israel campaign in America. Whilst his activism culminated in his appointment to the inaugural CUFI board, it first materialized as part of the agenda of the Moral Majority. In *Listen, America!* Falwell summed up the agenda of his organization, as "pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral, pro-American . . . and pro-Israel" (Falwell 1981). An examination of Falwell's political

statements demonstrates the alignment of his views with the exceptionalist conceptualization of Judeo-Christian American society. Prior to the formation of the Moral Majority, (and indeed, for the first few years of its operation), Falwell would refer to America as a Christian nation. To that end, he was known for distributing copies of the New Testament at the Republican National Convention. In 1985, however, he repudiated his former views, and declared America to be a Judeo-Christian republic (Gaston 2019, 241). During this period, President Ronald Reagan forged an alliance with Falwell and the Christian Right, frequently referring to America's Judeo-Christian values (Gaston 2019, 244).

CUFI founder John Hagee's rhetoric evolved similarly over the course of his career. In his 2000 book, *God's Candidate for America*, he calls the GOP "'the home of social conservatives who believe in the sanctity of life, hard work, clean moral living, limited government interference in our lives, minimum taxation, and a *return to Bible-based societal values*'" (Posner 2008, italics mine). In that book, Hagee suggested that the development of an American society based on Christian values would be a "return" to an earlier era. Notably, prior to the advent of CUFI, Hagee employed the term "Bible-based," a term with no Jewish connotations to his Christian audience. Over the course of the ensuing years, however, Hagee began using the term "Judeo-Christian" to refer to American political culture:

> Judeo-Christian values have provided the foundation of liberal democracy during the last 230 years. America's Founding Fathers used the Bible as a source of inspiration and a basis for values . . . The democratic government and human rights that form the American way of life and the foundation of all Western thinking are based on

> the concept of one God. What a profound contribution to the world! (2007, 103).

Hagee's later rhetorical substitution of the term "biblical" for "Judeo-Christian" suggests one of two things. Either he views the terms as synonymous and interchangeable, or like Falwell, initially he advocated for Christian values to form the basis of American society. Eventually, he softened his tone to advocate for a Judeo-Christian society.

Indeed, this conservative Christian position became enshrined as CUFI ideology with the 2010 publication of *In Defense of Faith: The Judeo-Christian Idea And The Struggle For Humanity*. CUFI executive director, David Brog, had expressed previously that America was "born out of the Judeo-Christian tradition" (2006, 71). In the new book, however, Brog laid out in much greater detail his view that Western society is built on biblical principles. Whilst it may be self-evident that his position would have demanded his book represent the views of the organization, it is valuable nonetheless to quote Hagee's endorsement: "David Brog connects the historical dots in a way that makes the Judeo-Christian contribution to our civilization stand out in clear relief" (Hagee 2010). According to Daniel G. Hummel (2019, 50), Judeo-Christian values are code-word for conservative religious values.

Similarly, the following depiction provided by a CUFI board member and megachurch pastor paints a vivid picture of Christian Zionists' understanding of the nation's Judeo-Christian tradition:

> The founding fathers of our Christian faith were anti-Semitic, for example, Martin Luther. Thankfully there were also others during that

> season, who did not buy into that; like the Puritans those who wanted to see and birth America, and Columbus with his Jewish origins; they arrived with an affinity and a heartbeat for Israel. I read once that the US was only one vote away from Hebrew becoming our national language. The founding fathers of America had a tremendous affinity for the Jewish Scripture, thus establishing our morals, our edicts, our laws straight from the word of God. This nation was founded by religious men who built it from the Torah. It's heart-breaking to Christians today that we're leaving that. I will talk politics based on my Bible, because our nation was built on Judeo-Christian values. . . . The roots of our faith in America are *re-emerging* (Interview with CUFI executive board member, Oct 7, 2016).

Tellingly, the CUFI leader here acknowledges the *re-emergence* of the roots of faith in America, implying a non-linear history of conservative Christianity – or "Judeo-Christianity" – in America.

The Role of Israel

The discussion thus far has focused on Falwell' and Hagee's desire to promote conservative Christian values in America, which they refer to as "Judeo-Christian." Subsequent to their initial respective activism phases, however, they began to advocate for Israel. This dissertation argues that for many evangelicals pro-Israel advocacy is a means of promoting their domestic theopolitical agenda. America and Israel are international allies. International relations theorists maintain that nation-states with similar cultures will form international alliances and cooperate militarily to protect one another's physical security, thereby securing their domestic values and way of life (Doyle 1983; Fox and Sandler 2014; Huntington 1996; Kupchan 2010; Russett 1993). In other words, often one nation-state appears to come to the aid of another nation-state for humanitarian or other altruistic purposes. Their true

motivation for engaging in international warfare, however, may be in order to protect their own values that they have in common with the nation-state they are helping.

CUFI acknowledges openly that its purpose in battling for Israel is to secure America. For example, in their 2012 ad, "Defend America, Vote Israel," CUFI was campaigning for Christian pro-Israel political engagement in order to defend *America*.[42] This idea was encapsulated by Hagee in his 2010 sermon series, *Can America Survive?*:

> 'Israel and America share the same love of freedom. Israel and America share the same passion for democracy. *Israel and America share the same Judeo-Christian values.* Israel and America share the same love of life. Israel and America share the same enemies. Israel's enemies are our enemies. Israel's fight is our fight' (Durbin 2013).

Since America and Israel exhibit shared values, battling for Israel means securing America. In fact, the same logic applies on a metaphysical level, as manifested by the biblical verse CUFI leaders cite as the primary reason for supporting Israel. God said to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), "Those who bless you, I shall bless," which is interpreted by Christian Zionists as an imperative to bless Abraham's Jewish offspring. When Christians bless Israel (the country and the people), they believe that God blesses them in return. In this vein, Hagee professes his support for Israel in terms that point to his ultimate goal of seeing America flourish. The reason to "bless" (i.e., support) Israel is to bring advantage to America. Israel is merely a vehicle, the means to the

[42] David Brog explained the campaign as follows: "'the US-Israel relationship provides the paradigm for pursuing American security in an area of scarcity. Leveraging Israel's military prowess to assume our strategic burdens is far more cost effective than shouldering these burdens ourselves'" (Morgenstern 2012). This argument, that the meaning of the campaign was solely on account of America's need for Israel's military resources, is unconvincing.

end. For example, John Hagee offers historical "proof" for the correlation between blessing the Jewish people and a nation's prosperity, beginning with Egypt's receipt of blessing through Joseph (Hagee 2007, 111).

Along the same lines, Daniel G. Hummel (2019, 186) posits a strong association between prosperity theology and Christian Zionism. Prosperity theology is the idea that personal material abundance results from religious devotion. God blesses those who serve Him faithfully (in terms of worship and behaviour), as well as financially (in terms of charity and Church support). This promise of material blessing has been extended to those who support Israel. Despite the immediate recipient of the largesse being the country and nation of Israel, if the ultimate reward accrues to America, then the motivation for Zionism becomes, effectively, America: the country and nation. Similarly, Baumann (2016) offers prosperity gospel as the entry point for American Black Churches into Christian Zionism.

This refocusing of CUFI's objectives elucidates many anomalies regarding operations and organization discussed earlier. The examination of CUFI's membership tells a different story than the one that Hagee expresses publicly. While he claims to represent evangelical America, CUFI welcomes all "Bible-believing Christians." Presumably, most Christians would consider themselves "Bible-believing" by definition, and yet they are not flocking to join Christians United for Israel. The key to understanding the kind of Christian that CUFI seeks to recruit lies, it would seem, in their acceptance of Mormons and Jews within the fold. This anomaly suggests that when they say "Bible-believing," they mean a commitment to

conservative religious values. This approach follows Falwell's broad-tent embrace of various others on the religious Right. As the leader of the Moral Majority, he welcomed Catholics, Jews, and Mormons. Hummel (2017, 117) maintains that while Falwell remained concerned for individual salvation, he compartmentalized between individual versus national revival. Likewise, when CUFI elevates the status of theopolitically conservative non-Protestants over their liberal Protestant coreligionists, they demonstrate their prioritization of conservative theopolitics over other theological considerations. Sean Durbin's (2018) work traces the discursive practices of John Hagee and other leading Christian Zionists, demonstrating how they seek to consolidate the Christian Right by demarcating a community of "Bible-believers" amongst disparate Christian groups. Hagee contrasts pro-Israel Christians with "liberal Christians" as the true representatives of American Christianity. He then calls upon his Bible-believing followers to support Israel in order to receive God's blessing for America (Durbin 2018).

Earlier, I questioned the placement of Jews at the helm of a Christian advocacy organization from (former and present) executive directors David Brog and Shari Dollinger to communications director Ari Morgenstern, as well as the veneration of rabbis and other Jewish participants at the annual CUFI Summit and monthly Nights to Honor Israel. In a similar vein to the discussion above regarding the membership in CUFI of Mormons and Jews, this study avers that the placement of Jews in prominent positions at CUFI serves to bolster the organization's claim as a purveyor of "Judeo-Christian" culture. The promotion of Jews reinforces the "Judeo" element.

Despite earlier explanations of the development and permeation of "Judeo-Christian" terminology in America in the mid-twentieth century, many Christians resisted the notion as an encroachment on their conception of America as a purely Christian country. While Hagee and Falwell both claim to ascribe to Judeo-Christian values, as discussed above, they were late adopters of the term. Initially, their political endeavours focused on a Christian or "Biblical" agenda for America. Talk of Christian nationalism, however, has connotations and baggage, which would serve to complicate advocacy efforts. Over the years, both Falwell and Hagee arrived at similar conclusions, resulting in respective shifts of their terminology. I posit that the emphasis on Jewish involvement with CUFI may be designed to promote an image of the organization as supporting a "Judeo" Christian America, thus sounding less dogmatic to government officials and the American public.

Nevertheless, the limits of the Judeo/Christian relationship are clarified by the mere existence of CUFI as an interest group separate and apart from AIPAC. As discussed earlier, while it might make sense to share resources with AIPAC and unite as a single all-powerful interest group, a number of ideological differences between the two organizations would make amalgamation an insurmountable prospect. CUFI leaders state that they have no aspirations for bipartisan advocacy, as efforts to win over the Democratic Party would dilute their conservative message. Indeed, CUFI does not approve of many of Israel's progressive values touted by AIPAC. As mentioned, whenever CUFI leaders list the reasons why the US should support Israel, they make no mention of LGBT rights and other progressive policies, as the group's

list of shared values only contains values that support its exceptionalist view of Judeo-Christian culture.

This selective choice of Israeli values to suit CUFI's agenda begs the question of whether America and Israel do, in fact, share Judeo-Christian values. The State of Israel is not a theocracy. It is a liberal democracy whose citizenry consists, overwhelmingly, of secular, non-practising Jews, as well as significant Arab and Druze populations. Israeli society is not biblical. And so, if Israel exhibits different values to CUFI's conservative biblical values, then the shared values thesis would not hold up, thus weakening CUFI's case for support of Israel. Nevertheless, for CUFI activists, those "details" are no impediment to their belief in the shared values of America and Israel:

> There's a very strong train of thought in America: that our founding had God's hand in it. . . Most see our country and Israel as the two pillars not just of Western civilization, but Judeo-Christian civilization. . . Many Christians take the Bible very literally. That's what motivates them. *It's extremely helpful that they see in Israel a reflection of America; they see in modern Jewish people the same values. It makes it less conflictive* (Interview with CUFI lobbyist, Oct 13, 2016).

This statement makes two enigmatic claims. First, in the pursuit of their theopolitical goals, American Christian Zionists do not require a symbiotic relationship of "Judeo-Christian" values. They do not need Israelis to share their values. Israel, by virtue of its very essence, is a corresponding pillar of Judeo-Christian civilization. The fact that Israelis share many values with Americans is an "extremely helpful," but unnecessary, bonus that makes their cultural goals "less conflictive."

Second, the CUFI leader appears to conflate Israelis with "modern Jewish people." In a similar fashion, in Hagee's aforementioned 2010 sermon series, he declared that "'Israel and America share the same Judeo-Christian values. . . Israel's fight is our fight. If a line has to be drawn, then let it be drawn around both of us – *Christians and Jews, Americans and Israelis. We are one'"* (Durbin 2013). In this explication, ancient Israel is synonymous with modern Israel. A Biblical Israelite is synonymous with a modern Israeli and modern Jew. America, the *New Israel*, is culturally aligned with the *Old Israel,* and Christians and Jews are united under the canopy of Judeo-Christian values. If there is any element of truth to this supposition, Hagee and CUFI are supporting an imagined "Israel," a biblical nation and state whose values conform to their ideal American society, which is built on conservative Christian values. As evangelicals journey along the path of rebuilding American society based upon their imagined Judeo-Christian tradition, they are creating an imagined Israel – the country and the people – to support their narrative.[43]

End Goal Concerns

While it may be reassuring to see Jews occupying prestigious positions in CUFI, the long-term ramifications must be considered. If certain Christians are concerned primarily with domestic culture, then Jews are mere tools in a Christian theological

[43] Durbin (2013) makes a similar claim, but I believe that he does not go far enough. He contends that Hagee calls upon America to become "Israel," inasmuch as Israel possesses a strong military and economy. Indeed, McAlister (2001, 196) claims that the contrast between Israel's military victory in 1967 and America's foundering in Vietnam led to the rise of the Christian Right and the election of Reagan. Thank you to Marc Hulsether for bringing this study to my attention. This dissertation argues that the "Israel" Hagee calls upon America to become is more than just a military and financial power. He wants America to become the imagined Israel built upon conservative religious values.

battle, along the lines of Smith's proposition (about dispensationalism) that "Christian Zionism is concerned less with flesh-and-blood Jews than with preserving its own Christian theopolitical hope" (2013, 195). In this regard, Jews are not being promoted for their own merit or benefit but for the Christian Right's "theopolitical hope" for America. As mentioned above, early in his career Falwell would refer to America as a Christian nation (Gaston 2019, 241), and Hagee (2000) called for a return to an American society based on "Bible-based societal values." Such cultural aspirations pose troubling implications for progressive Jews in the short-term, and perhaps even religiously conservative (Orthodox) Jews in the long run, as the following comments by an anti-Zionist Presbyterian research participant suggest:

> A lot of it is lip-service. . . I think Judeo-Christian is code for Christian. I don't think we have anything close to embraced Jewish traditions or moved past antisemitism in structural ways. Judeo-Christian is effectively supersessionist talk. The idea of a New Israel populated by Protestants is the ultimate supersessionism. (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 18, 2016)

Ironically, as far as supersessionism is concerned, his suggestion that Jewish traditions should be embraced is equally disconcerting. Two scenes I witnessed at the CUFI conventions demonstrate the theological problem with such an approach. First, when I initially arrived, I was shocked to see how many "Jews" were in attendance. It did not take long to realize, however, that these attendees were not actually Jewish. Despite their Jewish accoutrements – from yarmulkes to prayer shawls – they were Christian believers in Jesus. They were so devoted to the Judeo-Christian tradition – consisting of both the New Testament and the Old Testament – that they were committed to keeping all the (Jewish) biblical commandments. The second scene of

note was an address delivered by radio personality, Glenn Beck. He spoke, in fearful tones, of the rise of the next Hitler. "Next time, when they come for the Jews," declared Beck, "I will raise my hand and say: Take me. I am a Jew." In response, five thousand Christians in the room raised their hands and repeated his refrain, "Take me. I am a Jew."

While at first these gestures appear reassuring, they are theologically troubling. The blurring of the lines between Judeo and Christian lends itself to confusion and should ring alarms bells. Moreover, it is important to note that, in the eyes of many conservative Christians, not all Jews are created equal. Venerating the right type of Jew is integral to the project of creating this new conservative, biblically-based, civil religion, called the Judeo-Christian tradition. This religion does not concern itself with matters of birth or self-identification. Belief in the tradition and conformity to the culture define a person's religious affiliation with the group, which the following example demonstrates. When President Trump's (Catholic) lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, was accused of antisemitism for denouncing progressive Jewish philanthropist George Soros, he exclaimed:

> 'Don't tell me I'm anti-Semitic if I oppose him, Soros is hardly a Jew. I'm more of a Jew than Soros is. I probably know more about — he doesn't go to church, he doesn't go to religion — synagogue. He doesn't belong to a synagogue, he doesn't support Israel, he's an enemy of Israel.' (Smith and Gregorian 2019)

One might have been born a Jew, brought up Jewish, or identify with the faith-group, and yet still not be Jewish enough for certain Judeo-Christians. It hardly needs mentioning that bolstering claims to Jewishness by means of contrasting frequent

church attendance with poor synagogue attendance has pernicious Replacement theology overtones.

Summary and Findings

US support for the State of Israel is motivated by various factors, including theological and cultural factors stemming from America's extraordinary relationship with Christianity. This study reviewed the roles played by two axiomatically accepted foundations for American Christian support of Israel – dispensationalism and anti-Muslim sentiment – amongst Christians United for Israel activists. I conclude that the emphasis on the role of the doctrine of dispensationalism should be amended to one of historical background, rather than present underlying ideology. Regarding the issue of anti-Muslim proclivities, while CUFI leaders distance themselves from extremist views, they nonetheless exhibit a greater affinity towards Jews than Muslims.

The primary contribution of this dissertation is the presentation of two original Christian-related spheres impacting the US-Israel relationship. The first is the examination of Christians United for Israel as an interest group. Interest groups form because when political activists organize, the totality of their efforts is greater than the sum of their individual parts. Thus, an understanding of the role of organizational and strategic aspects of Christians United for Israel must be considered when assessing the Christian factor in the US-Israel relationship. This dissertation found that CUFI leverages the sizable evangelical demographic in America to demonstrate its strength to lawmakers. In addition, the Christian insiders working throughout the

government apparatus offer the group significant advantage over other interest groups. Nevertheless, the study of the structure and organization of the group suggested weaknesses in the long run arising from the lack of internal democracy. And while CUFI is willing to include non-evangelicals amongst its constituency, it is constrained in its ability to collaborate with non-religious pro-Israel groups such as AIPAC, due to theological differences and ultimate objectives.

These objectives bring us to the second original contribution of this dissertation, the role of domestic theopolitical contestation. This study argues that many American Christians are using Israel as a tool to promote a conservative religious agenda. Israel is presented as an idealized standard that America should aspire to. The sustaining of this Judeo-Christian narrative of Israel, however, requires the negation of inconsistencies that do not fit the picture in black-and-white "Jacksonian" terms. There is only one Israel, and it is not complicated. That is why CUFI (in contrast with AIPAC) has no reason to be critical of Israel's conduct. The imagined Israel is Jewish; if Palestinian Christians exist, then they must be rescued from their Islamist persecutors. While Judeo-Christian values ostensibly promote liberal democracy, the rights of the Palestinian people are not considered, because they do not exist in the imagined Israel. Progressive values do not fit the biblical narrative of Israel they are espousing. When certain "Christian Zionist" activists walk into a Congressperson's office, they are not always seeking support for the State of Israel. Many are advocating for Judeo-Christian civilization. In this iteration, all faiths rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition may be grouped together in the same category, which may

help to explain why Mormons, and Orthodox Jews are able to join CUFI, under the rubric of "Bible-believing Christians." Furthermore, since the enemy is anyone who does not ascribe to biblical inerrancy, presumably Muslims pose no more of a threat to CUFI than atheists or mainline Protestants. Nevertheless, while these Christians are placing Jews on a pedestal at present, in the long-run they are being used to further their exceptionalist theopolitical agenda. If this thesis has any merit, then many on the Christian Right are not truly seeking support for Israel or the Jewish people. Rather, in the words of evanglical leader Happy Caldwell, "'As we stand with Israel, we stand with a nation that's created by God. As we stand with his chosen people, we have the answer and the solution for *the future of America*'" (Durbin 2013).

5. PC(USA) and Israel-Palestine

> *It is about justice. The church does not choose to divest or boycott for purely economic reasons, it does so because it believes God's justice and righteousness are being violated with the help of the blessings God has bestowed upon our community of faith (DeYoe 2014).*

In July 2019, Congress passed legislation opposing the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel; and in December 2019, the White House issued an order prohibiting antisemitic behavior, as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).[44] Antisemitism, according to IHRA, includes singling out Israel for opprobrium, whilst ignoring other global human rights issues. Meanwhile, a year earlier, the Presbyterian Church (USA) approved two resolutions regarding Israel. The first condemned US Government proposals to circumscribe the BDS movement. The second asked members "to reach out in open, truthful dialogue with Jewish colleagues" to discuss the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestine (Marcos 2019; State 2016; Trump 2019; Warren 2018). This chapter discusses the role PC(USA) plays in US foreign policymaking on Israel-Palestine, both directly and indirectly. As one of the most prominent Christian denominations in America, the government, the mass media, and American public are well aware of Presbyterian political activity. The question is to what extent Presbyterian policy matters to foreign policy and the process of making such perspectives matter.

[44] In 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) formally defined antisemitism. Over the course of subsequent months and years, various countries have enshrined the definition into their respective political and legal systems (IHRA 2019).

The analysis of this chapter consists of three distinct sections: an examination and update of the pre-existing literature on PC(USA) and Israel-Palestine; the application of interest group theories; and the introduction of the theopolitical factor. The first section introduces the debates between the two brothers Niebuhr as the theological foundation of the present contestation. While Reinhold has received media and scholarly attention amidst conversations around the Presbyterian Church and Israel, his brother H. Richard's thought has passed relatively unnoticed. Many pro-Palestinian activists in the Church see the roots of their campaign in his ideology. The section then re-examines postcolonialism as a factor motivating pro-Palestinian activism and demonstrates that Presbyterians have a long tradition both of anti-imperialism and Middle East engagement.

The second section investigates PC(USA) as an interest group. Thus far, the scholarship on Christian anti-Zionism has focused on motivating factors stemming from the perspectives of individual Christians; an organized advocacy group is manufactured in order to be greater, however, than the sum of its individual parts. While the Presbyterian Church was not organized for advocacy purposes, insofar as sociopolitical activism plays a major role in the mainline Churches, Olson (2002) makes the case for treating denominations as interest groups. This dissertation recognizes two levels of interest group activity: external and internal. As well its national activism, within the Presbyterian denomination itself various factions battle one another over Church sociopolitical positions. This intradenominational contestation forms an integral part of the present analysis.

It is important to acknowledge the asymmetry that exists between the previous chapter and this one. In contrast with CUFI, PC(USA) was not formed for the sole purpose of Israel-Palestine advocacy. It is but one of many issues with which the Church is engaged. Nevertheless, as Baumgart-Ochse notes regarding her comparative study of CUFI and the World Council of Churches:

> [While] these organizations do not lend themselves easily to a comparison of their organizational structure, reach and effectiveness. . . they have in common that they claim to represent the two predominant Christian faith-based approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict . . . The objective of the analysis conducted below is not to compare the two organizations as such but their theological and ethical responses [to the Israel-Palestine issue]. (2017, 9) .

This study, however, enters territory that Baumgart-Ochse has chosen not to traverse. Despite the asymmetry between them, similar interest group research methods have been applied to both CUFI and PC(USA), not for comparative purposes, but as a technique to uncover sources of Christian support for Israel/Palestine not previously considered.

The final section introduces the theopolitical contestation factor and argues that beyond the campaign for the Palestinians, two concurrent battles are taking place in the Presbyterian Church and exemplified in the contestation over Israel-Palestine. First, mainline Protestants are challenging the Christian Right and utilizing Israel-Palestine to engage with young American Protestants in order to increase their "market-share" in the battle over "Who speaks for American Christianity?" Second, within the Presbyterian Church itself, opinion is divided over the pro-Palestinian campaign's implications for interfaith relations in America. Many of those motivated

primarily by the social justice imperative are determined to champion the highest cause of "the oppressed," despite other consequences that may arise as a result of their activism. At the same time, many of those motivated by principles of American pluralism believe that domestic tranquility and the longevity of the denomination is paramount and should not be prioritized over global affairs.

Theological and Cultural

Having earlier reviewed the theological and cultural foundations that led to American Christian support for the Palestinian cause, this chapter investigates the continued significance of those factors to contemporary mainline Protestants. On the theological side, while the biblical mandate to pursue justice was cited as the primary motivation of pro-Palestinian Presbyterians, a Christian may be faced with competing duties of justice. This dichotomy forms the basis of the debate between the pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel factions in the Presbyterian Church. The theological debate finds its roots in a mid-twentieth century dispute between the two brothers Niebuhr. On the cultural side, the discussion demonstrates that anticolonialism in the Presbyterian Church has deep historic roots both in America and the Middle East.

Niebuhr vs. Niebuhr

For many Christians, the pursuit of justice is of paramount importance. Sometimes, however, justice for one person or group might conflict with justice for another person or group. In 2014, the Israel Palestine Mission Network (IPMN) of PC(USA) published *Zionism Unsettled,* a study-guide for congregations. Retelling the history of Christian engagement with Israel-Palestine, the document singled out Reinhold

Niebuhr's "Israel-centric narrative," for criticism (2014, 40). In response, his great-nephew, Professor Gustav Niebuhr assisted in the publication of a full-page *New York Times* advertisement opposing PC(USA)'s divestment resolution (Berger 2014). From a media perspective, it was neat and tidy to ascribe the contemporary Niebuhr's activism to the legacy of his namesake. A thorough examination of Niebuhrian thought, however, paints a more complex picture, and provides the backdrop and context for debates over Israel-Palestine in the Presbyterian Church. This subsection offers a brief snapshot of the thought of two prominent twentieth century Christian thinkers, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr. It is important to note from the outset that most activists are not well-versed in the theology undergirding their efforts (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016; Interview with evangelical CUFI critic, Jan 2, 2017). While Reinhold' and Richard's names came up during the fieldwork for this dissertation, it is unclear whether all the activists appreciated the complexity of the brothers' theologies, particularly as they developed over time. Given the profundity and evolution of their respective expositions it is difficult to categorize their thought in the context of contemporary debates. Nevertheless, I have attempted her to capture what I have perceived to be the intention of the activists when they refer to the respective Niebuhr theologians.[45]

[45] An example or two may help the reader: One research participant spoke about the important lecture series that H. Richard Niebuhr delivered in the *1960s* at *Auburn* Theological Seminary. It took this author considerable effort to find secondary evidence of the importance of that series, because it eventually became clear that the lectures took place in *1951* at *Austin* Theological Seminary. As far as Reinhold Niebuhr is concerned, while I shall align his adherents with his commitment to American religious pluralism, it is clear that his thought evolved from Social Gospel ideas through pluralism and culminating in his anti-Vietnam stance, which led many of his followers to adopt liberation theology.

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) was one of the preeminent Christian public intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century. Till today, his ideology continues to influence American policymakers, boasting prominent adherents including President Barack Obama. His younger brother, Yale professor, H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) was no less a towering theological intellect and voice, albeit having enjoyed greater recognition in the academic sphere than the public arena. While the brothers had much in common ideologically, they were not afraid to differ publicly. Their most famous disagreement took place on the pages of the *Christian Century* over the US response to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Their debate was centered upon the question: "Could Christians stand by and watch as one nation engaged in a brutal act of aggression against another?" (Gaston 2014, 5). H. Richard argued that inaction represented a legitimate form of Christian action, because human beings could not know God's will. Reinhold responded that such ethical perfectionism rendered action impossible (Gaston 2014, 5). Thus began a brotherly theological debate that would endure for decades.

As a starting point for their theological differences, let us anchor the discussion in the tradition of the Social Gospel. While Reinhold's theology was more closely associated with Social Gospel thinking in his early days, he would later part company with the idea. By contrast, despite H. Richard's critique of the Social Gospel, many of his students would eventually become associated with the ideology. John E. Smith (2009b, 49) summarizes the two main claims of the Social Gospel, as follows: First, Christianity cannot be limited to personal salvation but must also apply to societies

and nations. Second, society is a reality in its own right and not merely a collection of individuals. Leading the movement in America was Walter Rauschenbusch, whom Reinhold Niebuhr (1935b) called the "real founder of social Christianity in this country."

Reinhold Niebuhr began his career as an ardent believer in the Social Gospel. Embracing the liberal theology of the day, he maintained that Christian ideals of love could build a better society. Nevertheless, over time, he grew more pessimistic in his outlook and began reminding his colleagues that Christianity also preaches the sinfulness of humankind. In Niebuhr's (1935b) mind, "The sum total of the liberal Church's effort to apply the law of love to politics without qualification is really a curious medley of hopes and regrets." With this new perspective, Niebuhr distanced himself from early pacifistic tendencies. Whilst acknowledging the imperfections of individual human beings, he believed that the national entity was called upon to go to battle against sinful regimes, such as Nazism and Communism. In the inaugural issue of his journal *Christianity and Crisis* (founded as an alternative to the pacifist-minded *Christian Century)*, Reinhold championed the interventionist cause. In a lead article entitled "Christian Faith and the World Crisis," he challenged the contemporary Christian perfectionist conviction that if a nation is not free of sin, it has no right to defend its imperfections against worse alternatives.

The field of interfaith relations was another sphere influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr's approach. While he did not deny Christianity's primacy, Niebuhr often ascribed democracy and western society to the "Judeo-Christian" tradition. As far as

Gaston's (2019) categories of the meaning of "Judeo-Christian," his earlier writings decrying secularism might appear to place him in the exceptionalist camp (Gaston 2019, 183). Nevertheless, Gaston points out that Niebuhr repudiated Will Herberg's attempt to cast him as a conservative, as well as Herberg's experimentation with conversion to Christianity. Reinhold believed that Jews and Judaism were legitimate and essential members of American society (Gaston 2014; Gaston 2019; Marty 1974).

Turning to his younger brother, H. Richard Niebuhr's famous critique of the Social Gospel was that "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross" (1937, 193). H. Richard's issue with the Social Gospel was that it tended to follow the cultural revolutions of the day, whilst campaigning under the banner of Christianity (1929), such that "history is replete with Jesus getting co-opted for the purposes of some secular ideology" (Stassen 2003). In *Radical Monotheism,* H. Richard declared that the worst form of idolatry is nationalism, which entails commitment to the state above God. His philosophy is summed up in the following statement:

> The situation is similar to the effort to bring about international peace through international war, which results only in the increase of national loyalties and the increase of war; it is similar also to the effort to bring about social justice through inter-class conflict which results in the increase of class loyalties and of social injustice." (Niebuhr 1935, 279)

From a Christian perspective, H. Richard was most concerned with the consequences of military actions on the lives of individual human beings on the ground. In his words, "It is not the mighty, the guides and leaders of nations and churches, who suffer most,

but the humble, little people who have had little to do with the framing of great policies" (Niebuhr 1992, 51). In his formulation, Judeo-Christianity represented the radical monotheistic approach held in contrast with "di-theism," the belief in God and country (Gaston 2014, 15).

However, in 1933, H. Richard read a paper before the American Theological Society, entitled *The Social Gospel and the Mind of Jesus* where he delineated his differences with major Social Gospel thinkers. While he applauded their efforts to repair the ills of contemporary society, he eschewed the belief that such endeavors could result in the Kingdom of God. In H. Richard's mind, one must accept that God has His own schedule. While man must do his very best to act as the "Jewish Jesus" by seeking societal reform, the ultimate outcome is in God's hands alone. Nevertheless, H. Richard made it clear that he agreed with the Social Gospel thinkers that Christians must always strive to reform and recreate society in line with God's will (Niebuhr and Yeager 1998). Consequently, many adherents define his thought as the purest form of Social Gospel ideals (Yeager 1998).

Given H. Richard's aversion to nationalism, it is unsurprising that an additional issue of divergence between the brothers was the question of Zionism. H. Richard could not encourage "'Jewish nationalism . . . [because] Christians cannot be loyal to what is greatest in Judaism . . . loyalty to one kingdom of God above all the nations'" (Gaston 2014, 15). By contrast, during the years leading up to the establishment of the State of Israel, his brother Reinhold became known as a prominent advocate of the Zionist cause (Preston 2012, 489). For example, in *Jews After the War*, he writes:

> We must on the one hand preserve and if possible extend the democratic standards of tolerance and of cultural and racial pluralism that allow the Jews *Lebensraum* as a nation among the nations. We must on the other hand support more generously than in the past the legitimate aspiration of Jews for a "homeland" in which they will not be simply tolerated but which they will possess. The type of liberalism that fights for and with the Jews on the first battle line but leaves them to fight alone on the second is informed by unrealistic universalism. (Niebuhr 2015, 645).

In fact, according to Carenen (2012, 22), the *Christian Century*'s anti-Zionism was a significant factor in Reinhold's decision to establish his competing journal *Christianity and Crisis*.

Returning to the present-day Presbyterian Church, the name "Niebuhr" came up on multiple occasions during the field work for this research project. As mentioned, the sole historical Christian theologian critiqued by IPMN in *Zionism Unsettled* was Reinhold Niebuhr. Indeed, many in the contemporary pro-Israel faction identify with Reinhold's pluralistic ideals. One PFMEP activist commented:

> IPMN says consistently [that] we're willing to sacrifice social justice on the altar of Jewish-Christian relations. Why is that not true? The arguments put forth by IPMN are black and white. I know liberation theology and they've distorted it; it's actually very nuanced. Both what the Left and the Right do is go to a very dualistic worldview in which there's good and there's evil. I went to University of Wisconsin in the 60s when the anti-war movement was going on. And even though I'm on the progressive wing of the Church and society, I've got huge questions about the way the Left operates, because the Left like the Right becomes ideological and begins to demonize people. Anyone that would start suggesting, 'Maybe we should be in Vietnam because…' was immediately demonized. And that's the same thing that's happening here. I was branded a closet neoconservative when I suggested that I agree that what's happened to the Palestinians is bad but look at Israel: it's in a very precarious situation over there and they have reasons for doing what they're doing. And it seems to me that what we should be doing is allaying the concerns of both the Israelis and the Palestinians

> rather than just stomping down on one side calling the Palestinians the oppressed with the Israelis the oppressors. Look back at the map a little and look at tiny little Israel in a hostile ME region. Now who's the oppressed and oppressor? It quickly became for me not about Jewish-Christian relations but about really bad, simplistic thinking. The Presbyterian Church has a long history going back to Reinhold Niebuhr and way before, urging us to think in a nuanced way. He influenced presidents and pastors. And what's going on now is completely unnuanced. (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016)

Thus, given Reinhold's championing of a pluralistic America and a supported Israel, it is unsurprising that many on both sides of the debate have associated the pro-Israel faction in the Presbyterian Church with his legacy.

However, Reinhold was not the only Niebuhr this researcher encountered in the field. H. Richard's name was also a significant reference point, mentioned as the intellectual source of IPMN's social justice activism (Interview with Presbyterian pastor, Oct 19, 2016). The Presbyterian Church was not originally part of the Social Gospel movement (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 18, 2016). In the 1950s, H. Richard delivered a series of lectures at Austin Theological Seminary, which were a significant factor in the shift in Presbyterian Church direction towards the pursuit of social justice. H. Richard called upon Christians to discern and then champion the highest moral and spiritual common ground between the teachings of Christianity and the noblest values of contemporary culture. The teachings were subsequently published as *Christ and Culture* and made a major impact on Presbyterian thinking (Interview with Presbyterian pastor, Oct 19, 2016; Smylie 1989; Stackhouse 2002).

Nevertheless, to attribute the pro-Israel faction to Reinhold's ideology and the pro-Palestinian faction to H. Richard's is somewhat of an oversimplification. The first paradox of this bifurcation is the side taken by Gustav Niebuhr (2014), who denounced the vilification by the Presbyterian Church of his great-uncle's pro-Israel position. Lost amidst the media's reports of the affair was Gustav's grandfather H. Richard's initial ambivalence towards Zionism. This irony highlights the danger of applying one-dimensional brush-stroke assumptions to complex situations. The fact that Gustav Niebuhr defended the legacy of his namesake has little bearing on the conflict. This conundrum brings us to the second problem with Niebuhrian thought on Israel. While the pro-Palestinian faction ascribes support for Israel to followers of Reinhold Niebuhr, his legacy remains ever contested.

Until the 1960s, his ideology of Christian Realism and his *Christianity and Crisis* journal were aligned, for the most part, with American foreign policy. The war in Vietnam changed everything. As the war wore on, Niebuhr became more and more critical of US government actions (Hulsether 1999, 128). Niebuhr's shift away from a stance of general alignment with American policy had implications beyond Vietnam. While the issue of Israel-Palestine was always debated on the pages of *Christianity and Crisis,* the editorial position of the magazine under Niebuhr was unambiguously pro-Israel. With Niebuhr's passing, however, the magazine moved in the direction of liberation theology and became increasingly critical of Israel. This shift culminated in Reinhold's widow Ursula's demand that her husband's name be removed from the masthead of the magazine. The editors were dismayed at her request and insisted

that Reinhold and the magazine always published different opinions (Hulsether 1999, 139). Hulsether maintains that over the ensuing years, "*C&C* did not understand its positions as anti-Israel but, rather, as support for the compromises necessary to build long-term solutions" (1999, 139).

This complexity of Reinhold's legacy was made clear to this researcher in conversation with one particular IPMN leader, who emphatically identified his activism with the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr:

> I would place myself in the Christian Realist tradition of Reinhold Niebuhr. My understanding of liberation theology comes from my reading of the ethic of Jesus. When we can isolate and identify the cause for oppression, our role is to identify with the oppressed. That doesn't make the people sinless, blameless, [or assume that] one side is pure evil and the other is pure good. When I hear that [kind of language], I try to resist it. I don't think any of those are appropriate in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The question is who needs my solidarity the most. My own tradition is informed by the Social Gospel. (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 18, 2016)

Thus, despite attempts to categorize the Niebuhr brothers as theological anchors for contemporary activism and counter-activism, in the opinion of this author, the legacy of the Niebuhr brothers is complicated. Such attribution appears to be an element of strategy on the part of certain activists, either for the purposes of finding a theological foundation for their campaign or alternatively to vilify their opponents by placing them in a theological box. Nevertheless, references to the Niebuhr brothers are not immaterial to this dissertation. Rather than asking 'What would Niebuhr say?' we should think of the intention of the activists when referring to the famous brothers. And the conclusion of this author is that when activists referred to Reinhold, they

were highlighting his devotion to American pluralism and support for Israel. And when they make reference to H. Richard, the meaning of their attribution is to associate the Presbyterian Church with his ultimate "Social Gospel" ideals.

Postcolonialism

Chapter 2 attributed PC(USA)'s pro-Palestinian activism to the growth of postcolonialist ideology, found both in the writings of scholars and publications emanating from the Israel/Palestine Mission Network (IPMN) attributing Zionism to the nineteenth century rise of colonialist thought in Europe. While contemporary labels and categories may appear neat and functional, this section demonstrates that Presbyterian clergy have both a history of opposition to colonialism as well as extensive relationships in the region that predate the Zionist movement, both of which have led to greater sympathy for the Palestinian people. While this history cannot be ignored, this dissertation argues that it must be contextualized within the ongoing debates that have existed in the Presbyterian Church for over a century, as well as the impact of the ideology of intersectionality in recent years.

Scholars offer a correlation between the rise of pro-Palestinian sentiment in the mainline Churches and postcolonialist ideology in the academy (Korn 2007; Nelson 2021; Rynhold 2015; Van Zile 2011). This study found support for this contention, as well as a distinct strand of postcolonialist thought among Presbyterian activists. Amongst the pro-Israel activists in PC(USA), a number of research participants felt that their interlocutors were motivated more by anti-American sentiment than concern for the Palestinian people. As one pastor contended:

> I've come across a great number of folks who are ardent supporters of BDS who seem to be more involved because they're hyper-critical of the US government. They're not pleased with the interventionist attitudes of the US government. This seems to be one venue they can deal with it. And they tie Israel's politics directly to US policy. So they can criticize Israel and be criticizing US politics as well. (Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016)

In addition, many activists from both factions suggested that pro-Palestinian Presbyterians are also motivated by opposition to historical Christian missionary expansionism (Interview with pastor of Pro-Palestinian megachurch, Nov 1, 2016; Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016). As one PFMEP ruling elder framed the matter:

> The Pilgrims come to America and spread Christian belief across America and at the same time taking over territory from Native Americans. There's a guilt of this imperialist movement with Christian roots. When they hear the argument that Israel is a colonized area that stole land, they see that as another form of imperialistic colonization. That message resonates. (Interview with Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Oct 28, 2016)

As far as this dissertation is concerned, the issue to note at this point is that regardless of whether these anticolonial sentiments derive from concerns over American or Christian expansionist activities, the criticism is inward-looking, the primary focus being American Christianity, rather than Israel-Palestine. This matter will be explored further in the section on theopolitical contestation below.

Nevertheless, this dissertation argues that the role of postcolonialist ideology in the Presbyterian Church is more complex than the adoption of contemporary progressive sentiment. Present-day activism is rooted in historic values and relationships. Chapter 3 described the tension between Presbyterian leaders and self-

identifying devotee, President Andrew Jackson (Longfield 2013, 83). The clergy were opposed to Jackson's Indian Removal Policy, such as the pastor who declared, "'It is the extreme of folly to barter away our souls for the purpose of gaining the world'" (Preston 2012, 138). Likewise, Jackson and Presbyterian clergy were at odds over the issue of abolition (Preston 2012, 141). Thus, long before the issue of Israel-Palestine, Presbyterians were actively opposed to European domination and imperialist pursuit.[46]

As far as Presbyterian engagement with Israel-Palestine and the Middle East is concerned, Rynhold (2015, 128) points to the denomination's long history of engagement in the region, evident in its numerous mission churches, hospitals, and educational institutions, including the American University of Beirut and the American University in Cairo (Carenen 2012; Clarke 2005, 46; Hopkins 1990; Korn 2007, 2; Makari 2003, 3). Teaching literacy was an important tool in the arsenal of Christian missionaries throughout the nineteenth century and the Presbyterian Church stood at the forefront of missionary activity in the Middle East. Clearly, Presbyterians have been deeply invested in the issue of Israel-Palestine since its inception. Nevertheless, this dissertation argues that as much as certain Presbyterians have felt an affinity for

[46] Traces of this anticolonialist tension between lay and clergy Presbyterians might be seen already in the Scottish conquest of Ulster. Akenson (1992, 112) emphasizes the colonial fervor amongst the newcomers. While he presents the clergy and laity as united in their colonialist pursuits, the sermons he cites (1992, 116) would seem to suggest otherwise. For example, one sermon quotes Isaiah 56, "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord . . . Even them I will bring to my holy mountain . . . for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." In fact, Akenson is so certain that the clergy was in favor of the conquest that he contends (1992, 370) that a cited biblical reference must be in error. I am not convinced. Nevertheless, the limited number of sermons that he cites do not provide sufficient material for this writer to make a clear case.

their historic Arab allies in the Middle East, equal support for the Jewish state has been ever present. The following review of twentieth-century Presbyterian debates and resolutions reveals the chronic tension that has existed between competing ideologies and factions in the Church.

The story of official Anglo-American recognition of Israel began in 1917 when Great Britain issued the *Balfour Declaration*, enshrining the right of the Jewish people to a national homeland in the Holy Land. In the years leading up to the *Declaration*, American Christian Zionist William E. Blackstone (1841-1935) worked to mobilize US support, garnering the endorsements of business, political, and religious leaders. And in 1916, the Presbyterian Church responded by adopting a resolution petitioning the US President "to call an international conference of the Powers to consider the conditions of the Jews and to adopt such measures as may be deemed wise and best for their permanent relief" (PCUSA 1916, 185). While Presbyterian President Woodrow Wilson relished the thought, "'that I, the son of the manse, should be able to help restore the Holy Land to its people!'" (Bass 2003, 18), Presbyterian Secretary of State Lansing opposed endorsement of the *Balfour Declaration*, on the grounds that "'many Christian sects and individuals would undoubtedly resent turning the Holy Land over to the absolute control of the race credited with the death of Christ'" (Grose 1983, 70). These two positions are emblematic of the opposing perspectives of American Christians, including Presbyterians, who were often the elites of US society.

Two decades later, Germany initiated a series of antisemitic laws excluding Jews from the civil service and the professions. The Presbyterian Church USA

responded expressing its "sincerest sympathy to these victims" for the "persecution of the Jewish people in other lands," and urged "that anti-Semitism be combated aggressively . . . by informing people as to the truth about the Jewish race, by laying renewed emphasis upon the Christian principle of human brotherhood and by encouraging fellowship between Jews and Christians" (PCUSA 1939, 167). Four years later, the denomination issued a protestation against "the wholesale and ruthless persecution of Jews now going on in the many lands of Europe under Nazi domination . . . to give all possible aid to those who are the victims of this legalized anti-Semitism, and to urge unceasingly all possible Government action . . . here and abroad, to assure the rescue of as many of the European Jews as possible from their threatened complete annihilation and extermination" (PCUSA 1943, 258). Likewise, the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA)[47] declared their "utter abhorrence of the cruel and senseless persecutions of God's ancient people, the Jews, in all lands dominated by the Axis powers. We would urge our people to oppose faithfully every manifestation of anti-Semitism" (UPCNA 1943, 1025).

In 1947, the United Nations resolved to partition British-mandate Palestine, thereby creating a Jewish state and a Palestinian state. While the Jews generally embraced the proposal, leading to the establishment of the State of Israel, the Arabs rejected it and declared war on the Jewish community. In the midst of that war, many Arabs were forced to flee their homes, seeking shelter in refugee camps in

[47] The UPCNA was a Presbyterian denomination that formed in 1858 and united with the primary denomination in 1958.

surrounding countries. At the same time, many Jews were forced to flee their homes in Arab countries. Thus, initially in 1948, the Church called for the US to work through the UN for the "welfare, needs, and rights of both the Jewish and Arab peoples" (PCUSA 1948). Most Jewish refugees were quickly absorbed into the State of Israel. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Arabs still found themselves living stateless in refugee camps. In light of the abovementioned strong ties to local Arab communities dating back to the nineteenth century the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission Agency was particularly sympathetic to the plight of these displaced Arabs of Palestine. Reporting to the General Assembly in 1954, the committee noted:

> The struggle over Palestine has aroused the bitter resentment of the people and the government against the Zionist determination to change Palestine from a predominantly Arab to a strictly Jewish country. Much of the resentment has been directed against the United States which they hold to be largely responsible for the present situation (PCUSA 1954).

Thus, in 1956 the General Assembly noted with commendation the holding of a Conference on Arab Refugees and urged "our churches and their members to study its findings, as to a long-range solution of the Near East refugee situation" (PCUSA 1956).

The era of the late 1950s and early 1960s was a quiet period in the Presbyterian Church. While the Mission Agency was still advocating for the Palestinians, during those years the denomination did not issue any official position on Israel-Palestine (Hopkins 1990, 150). Even in 1967 when Israel overwhelmed its enemies, expanding its territory into areas previously under Egyptian, Jordanian, and

Syrian control, the Presbyterian Church, nonetheless, retained its muted position. It merely expressed "deep concern over the unrest and recent conflict in the Middle East, an area which contains much that is sacred to Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike" (PCUSA 1967). Not all Presbyterians, however, were as forbearing. R. Park Johnson (d. 1998), of the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations of the United Presbyterian Church, warned that "'Christians should not identify too closely with Zionist groups if they were concerned about an Arab-lsraeli reconciliation.'" And in a letter to the *New York Times*, prominent Presbyterian theologian, Henry P. van Dusen (1897-1975), declared that "'Christian leaders had silenced their judgment on Israel's assault on her Arab neighbors'" (Hopkins 1990, 154).

It is important to explain the Presbyterian Church's reticence to act upon the counsel of its mission coworkers in the Middle East to condemn Israel. The reason for its silence lay in the unresolved matter of Christian antisemitism. Classic Church theology asserted that God rejected His covenant with the Jewish people and replaced them with Christians. This doctrine was the root cause of Christian antisemitism. And so, after much internal debate and soul-searching, in 1972 the Church rejected Replacement theology, declaring it antisemitic. And in a bold break with much of the Christian world, the Church recognized God's continuing covenant with the Jewish people, as demonstrated by "the current conjunction of Land and People in the state of Israel." Moreover, in response to pro-Arab elements seeking an official Presbyterian Church stance critical of Israel, the General Assembly concluded that it was not in a moral or expert position to issue recommendations or

criticism to foreign nations (PCUSA 1972). Consequently, in 1974, despite a report from the Church's Middle East Task Force stating that "'to ignore injustices that have been commonplace is not reconciliation. A people 'reconciled' to its own suffering and humiliation is not truly reconciled,'" the Church maintained its refusal to take sides (Hopkins 1990, 159). In its final decision, the Church affirmed "the right and power of the Jewish people to self-determination by political expression in Israel, based upon full civil liberties for all," but called for "all parties [to] negotiate a shared common authority for a unified Jerusalem that will preserve the integrity of the city [and] give full expression to the legitimate national political interests of both Israel and the Palestinians" (PCUSA 1974). Similarly, in 1977, the Church called upon the U.S. Government to "reaffirm its commitment to Israel and support for Palestinian self-determination" (PCUSA 1977).

By the end of the decade, however, the tide began to turn in the Church. In 1979, the Church "welcomed the Peace Treaty at Camp David" but "deplored loss of innocent life through Palestinian raids into Israel and Israel's *massive* retaliation" (PCUSA 1979, italics mine). In 1983, the Church issued its first sanctions call, demanding that the US government "enforce its stated position against the establishment of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, by denying all forms of aid to Israel as long as that nation persists in creating new West Bank settlements" (PCUSA 1983). And in 1984, the General Assembly called for American "nonrecognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, pending international negotiations to determine

Jerusalem's future" (PC(USA) 1984).[48] Nevertheless, due to the competing factions in the Church, the pendulum continued to swing back and forth. In 1987, the Church acknowledged that Jews are "'in a covenant relationship with God,'" and rejected any "'teaching of contempt for the Jewish people,'" noting that the Church's teaching of Replacement theology led to the "'monstrous policy of annihilation of Jews by Nazi Germany'" (Abrams 1997, 51). In addition, the Church affirmed a "'willingness to investigate the continuing significance of the promise of land and its implications for Christian theology,'" albeit with the caveat that "'all, including the State of Israel, stand accountable to God. The State of Israel is a geopolitical entity and is not to be validated theologically'" (Rubin 2012, 76).

In the wake of the Palestinian Intifada, the debate and the rhetoric in the Presbyterian Church began to heat up. In 1988, the General Assembly issued a resolution calling upon Israel to "cease the systematic violation of the human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories [including] administrative detention, collective punishment, the torture of prisoners and suspects, and the deportation of dissidents." Furthermore, the Church urged the US Government to insist that weapons supplied for Israel's defense not "be used against civilian populations in the occupied territories or in aggressive attacks or disproportionate retaliation upon other countries" and that "further military and security assistance to Israel be contingent upon the honoring of these principles and upon the cessation of repression

[48] PC(USA) was an amalgamation of PCUSA and UPC.

against Palestinians" (PC(USA) 1988). Moreover, in a resolution that led to charges of Church bias, in 1989, the General Assembly noted Palestinians' desire "to live in peace alongside the State of Israel . . . and Israel's reaction to [the Intifada], characterized by much military and Israeli settler brutality" (PC(USA) 1989).

In 1990, the Church reiterated its "support of the peace process in Israel-Palestine," but called upon Israel to "stop constructing illegal settlements in the occupied territories" (PC(USA) 1990). In 1992, the Church commended the US President's pursuit of peace through bilateral and multilateral negotiations between Israelis, Palestinians and their Arab neighbors, affirmed the US policy of "refusing loan guarantees for Israel until the building of settlements on the occupied territories has come to a halt," and called upon the US government to "press for the end to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza" (PC(USA) 1992). In 1994, the Church called for US aid to Israel to be "conditional upon the cessation of the appropriation of Palestinian land in and around Jerusalem," and in 1998, the Church condemned "the policies of the Netanyahu Government in Israel that favor violence and military solutions over those favoring negotiations" (PC(USA) 1998). In 2001, the Church urged Israel to "desist from its policy of excessive military force and to signal its commitment to peace negotiation by ending the occupation, which is a form of violence," but also called upon the PLO to "appeal to the Palestinian people to lay down their arms and stones" (PC(USA) 2001).

The foregoing review of the Presbyterian Church's historical approaches to the issue of Israel-Palestine demonstrates that Presbyterian interest and activism in the

region did not begin with the popularization of postcolonialist ideology. The Church's long history of engagement in the Middle East coupled with a tradition of clergy anti-imperial protestation form the background and context to contemporary pro-Palestinian activism. As well, the historical account reveals the tension that has existed in the denomination for over a century and provides the backdrop for understanding contemporary intradenominational contestation over Israel-Palestine.

Nevertheless, one cannot simply ignore and overlook the impact and influence of twenty-first century thought on current approaches to the Israel-Palestine issue. We are all products of our environment and contemporary modes of thinking. Thus, in 2018, IPMN published *Why Palestine Matters,* which begins with the chapter entitled, "Palestine Through the Lens of Colonialism and Intersectionality," followed by a chapter called "An Intersectional Approach to Justice." These chapters describe the "connection" between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and various other past and present conflicts around the world, from Native American opposition to the Dakota pipeline to the abolition movement to the arrest of Rosa Parks to Puerto Rican statehood. "'Justice in one place,'" the authors contend, "'is not enough without justice everywhere'" (Nelson 2021, 408). As Nelson points out, even if one could make a case for such connections, the ideas do not derive from any Christian theology and is merely a product of outside influences. The section below on Coalitions and Reframing continues this discussion around the relationships of activists beyond the denomination.

Organizational

The foregoing section built on previous studies of theological and cultural factors fuelling American Christian debate and contestation over the issue of Israel-Palestine. The next part of this chapter introduces interest group causal factors into the discussion, focusing firstly on organizational aspects of PC(USA). While PC(USA)'s total membership of a million and a half is not statistically significant in the grand scheme of American demographics, its historical association with the elites of American society and its leadership position amongst the mainline denominations makes it an important interest group. This section examines how the structure and decision-making process of the denomination allow for relative ease of access to influence and direct Church policy.

As an introduction to the unique structure of PC(USA), a recent legal anecdote is helpful: In 2016, First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem, PA, voted to secede from PC(USA). The regional presbytery, Lehigh, argued that PC(USA) was structured according to a hierarchical arrangement. Thus, the local congregation had no right to remove itself from the denomination without permission from the Church body. In examining the claims of both parties, Judge Steven Baratta found that "PCUSA is not a strictly hierarchical denomination such as the Roman Catholic Church, but at the same time it is not a diffused congregational polity, such as the Baptist Church. . . .it is a loosely structured institution, which, with the exception of PCUSA ecclesiastical doctrine, permits significant self-governance/self-autonomy to the local churches (Lehigh v. FPCB 2016, 21). With that introductory anecdote, let us examine how pro-

Palestinian activists utilize the denominational structure and decision-making process to advance their cause.

Structure

In order to appreciate how special interests are able to control the policy direction of the denomination, it is necessary to understand how PC(USA) is structured as a whole, and the internal relationships between various subgroups. Due to the subject matter of this study, the subgroups that will be elucidated are those relating to Israel-Palestine policy. The denomination exists as a multi-tiered, well-structured system of governance, divided between local, regional and national levels. The basic unit is the local congregation, governed by a church board, called the "session." Each session consists of a teaching elder (pastor) and a number of ruling elders (board members). Congregations are then bound together under regional jurisdictions, called presbyteries. The regional presbytery is staffed by an executive presbyter and volunteer committees. Three or four presbyteries are grouped together as a synod and all the synods in total form the General Assembly (GA). The GA consists of an equal number of ruling and teaching elders, proportionally represented and elected by presbyteries, called commissioners (Office of the General Assembly 2015).

In addition to the General Assembly, over the years the denomination has developed a number of official and unofficial sub-divisions. A number of these sub-groups are active on the issue of Israel-Palestine. First, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, established in 1837,[49] carries out the denomination's missionary and ministry

[49] The original name was the Western Foreign Missionary Society.

work. Consisting of many regional mission networks, in 2004 it formally instituted the "Israel/Palestine Mission Network" (IPMN). Second, during WWII, the "Presbyterian Peace Fellowship" was unofficially constituted for conscientious objectors, its main focus being advocating for the denomination's role in peacemaking. And third, in 2006, "Presbyterians For Middle East Peace" (PFMEP) was formed by a number of members of the Presbyterian Church to counter what they perceived to be pro-Palestinian bias on the part of IPMN.

While headquartered at PC(USA) in Louisville, Kentucky, the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) has its own board and maintains additional offices, one in Washington, D.C., the Office of Public Witness, and one at the United Nations. PMA not only oversees the appointment of employees to these offices; it also selects the experts to serve on General Assembly committees. IPMN has its own independent board, but all are volunteers. The official role of IPMN is to support the mission coworkers (formerly known as missionaries) in Israel-Palestine, from financial to logistical support. When the mission coworkers have information that they want disseminated in the Presbyterian Church, IPMN acts as facilitator. As well, IPMN works to educate the denomination generally on Israel-Palestine issues. IPMN cannot set Presbyterian Church policy; only the GA sets policy. It does, however, make recommendations (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016; Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016). Whilst initially the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF) hesitated to engage with the Israel-Palestine issue, over the last decade it has become a top agenda item. PPF now works closely

with IPMN, coordinating resources and sharing board members. Its organizational structure consists of an executive board of ten members and a wider activist council of seventy-five, as well as a full-time director (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016). PFMEP is a loose coalition of Presbyterians without an official hierarchical board structure or employees. Decision-making tends to be by consensus, although some members are more active and therefore hold more sway (Interview with Presbyterian pastor, Oct 6, 2016).

In terms of pro-Palestinian leadership in PC(USA), from 1996 to 2008 Reverend Cliff Kirkpatrick was the executive director of PC(USA), known in the Presbyterian Church as the "stated clerk." During that time, Kirkpatrick was an advocate for Palestinian causes, writing letters to the White House and the U.S. Congress, as well as encouraging and supporting the work of PMA mission coworkers in Israel-Palestine. His support included the publication of pro-Palestinian materials and church study-guides as well as the establishment of the Israel/Palestine Mission Network (Spotts 2005). Since his departure, many former and current activists have continued and expanded his vision, inside and outside the denomination. For example, when IPMN was first established in 2004, Rev. Katherine Cunningham was the moderator of the Committee of the Office of the General Assembly (COGA), subsequently becoming the moderator of IPMN. Presently, Cunningham is the president and CEO of Kairos USA, the conglomerate of American mainline Churches dedicated to heeding the resistance call of West Bank Christians. Cunningham notes that "'the church has moved slowly but steadily toward the positions advocated by the IPMN'" (Hallward 2013, 175).

In terms of pro-Israel leadership in PC(USA), for many decades Rev. Bill Harter was a member of the America-Israel Friendship League and the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel. When the Presbyterian Church first passed the divestment resolution, Harter mobilized pro-Israel elders to counter the work of the pro-Palestinian activists (Interview with Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Oct 28, 2016). Originally, these efforts led to a group called "End Divestment Now" but later evolved into its present PFMEP form. Since that time, the leadership of PFMEP has expanded to include a younger cadre of pro-Israel elders (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016; Interview with Presbyterian pastor, Oct 6, 2016). And in terms of patronage, both IPMN and PFMEP assert that their funding comes from many individual small donors. Nevertheless, the activists on either side of the fence point to their adversaries' professionally-produced resources and well-funded trips to Israel-Palestine, suggesting that deeper pockets are funding the organizations.[50] PPF claims complete transparency: their 501(c)(3) annual budget is approximately $200k, with donations coming from individuals, churches, and presbyteries. Nevertheless, their Israel-Palestine young leadership delegation, for example, was likewise funded by one private, anonymous donor (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016). If indeed a large number of small donors are the "bread and butter" of the respective activist camps, then they will have no long-term funding

[50] Interviewees were indeed prepared to offer names of wealthy and generous activists "off the record." The problem with officially identifying such individuals is that 501(c)(3) groups need not specify donors below $50,000 in their public records. As quasi-official organizations, these groups are structured in such a way that donors are able to contribute via individual member churches for specific projects, thereby allowing generous donors to spread out their donations and avoid public identification.

concerns. If, however, the campaigns are being financed by individual donors, then long-term success will be conditional on the continued largesse of those contributors.

Decision-Making

Having explained how PC(USA) is structured, let us now turn to the decision-making process that has facilitated the pro-Palestine direction of the Church. Presbyterians believe that ordained ministry should be collegial and non-hierarchical. Decisions are made by clergy and lay leadership in unison (Holper 2001; Mullett 1989, 62). Representative government is so fundamental to Presbyterianism that many consider it an overarching doctrine (Lingle 1965, 126). This collegiality serves to ease the passage of new legislation in ways that disrupt the usual constraints on clergy power. The clergy-lay relationship ordinarily operates as follows: On the one hand, mainline Protestant clergy tend to be more socio-politically progressive than their congregants (Presbyterian Church (USA) Research Services 2002, 2004, 2006). On the other hand, their job security is in the hands of their congregants. Consequently, despite their own sociopolitical proclivities, clergy are forced, to a large extent, to take their political cues from the laity (Calfano 2009). Nevertheless, the collegiality of PC(USA) provides the opportunity to all – clergy and non-clergy alike – to advocate for denominational positions in an egalitarian space:

> If you want to reform something, it starts at the bottom and makes its way up, whereas UCC (United Church of Christ) is more of a network of churches. When they vote at their general council, it's not binding. When we vote at the GA on divestment, it affects everyone – every church, every pastor. (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016)

In contrast with other denominations where activists have seen less success, the democratic structure of PC(USA) has made for fertile ground for the Palestinian cause. The following overview of policymaking in the Presbyterian Church demonstrates, however, that the simplicity of the process does not necessarily guarantee changes on a congregational level.

Every two years, the Presbyterian Church meets at the General Assembly (GA), where motions, called overtures, are submitted and voted upon. Initially, a session, a presbytery, and the synod must approve an overture, which include a rationale and then a series of recommendations. In order to reach the GA, two presbyteries must submit the overture. The overture then comes to the relevant committee at the GA for debate. The committee consists of teaching and ruling elders (pastors and lay leaders) elected by their presbyteries as delegates to the GA. In anticipation of the GA, a computer program randomly assigns delegates to committees and informs them of upcoming overtures. From the moment they are assigned to their committees, they begin to receive information from various parties advocating for or opposing the overture. Once the committee commences its deliberation, submissions are invited from the floor, offered alternatively for and against the motion. Representatives of the presbyteries that made the submission then present the rationale for their overture, following which the committee begins to debate the motion. At this stage, the overture may be amended. The process is overseen by a committee moderator and is directed by a resource coordinator who arranges for experts on the issue to be on hand for questions from the committee. Once the overture is approved by the

committee, it is submitted to the plenary of the GA for a vote by delegates from across all committees. If approved, it becomes official Presbyterian Church policy (Gray and Tucker 2012).

While GA commissioners are elected by their regional presbyteries and then assigned randomly to committees, commissioners are reminded that they are not representing their home-congregation or local presbytery constituency; rather, they are charged with determining the will of God (Office of the General Assembly 2015, 14). As one IPMN pastor explained:

> We seek to discern the will of God in groups of people. We realize we need others to hear God speaking. When we come to GA, my responsibility is not to represent the people back home, but to discern the will of Christ. How? By listening to one another. By being open to what the spirit might be saying. By listening with our head. By listening with our heart. By praying together. By arguing together. And that's how we believe the spirit works. (Interview with Presbyterian pastor, Oct 19, 2016)

Another research participant offered the following example: In the 1950s, the GA took actions supporting integration at a time when most of the people in southern-state pews supported segregation. Despite local opposition, they insisted that "We're not here to represent our members. We're here to represent God" (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016). On the issue of Israel-Palestine, this conflict between representing the will of people and discerning the will of God was particularly pronounced in the case of commissioners from the Great Rivers Presbytery in Illinois. Great Rivers is home to Caterpillar, one of the companies singled out for divestment. Despite the personal dissatisfaction expressed by

Presbyterian Caterpillar executives, commissioners were reminded that they were answerable only to God (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016). Likewise, concerning the present direction of the Presbyterian Church, pro-Palestinian activists argue that any personal discomfort with PC(USA)'s decisions on Israel-Palestine should not be a factor. To critics accusing them of not representing broad Presbyterian sentiment, they respond, "We're sorry people aren't happy, but we have to do what God is calling us to do" (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016). That being said, activists on both sides of the debate emphasized that the passing of a resolution is not a guarantee of impact and influence. Once an overture passes and the GA issues a resolution, thereby designating new denominational policy, unless they are already engaged with the issue of Israel-Palestine, members tend to be unaware of the decisions of the GA (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016). Dissemination and promotion are essential aspects of Church policymaking. These elements will be explained as part of the next section on strategies and tactics.

Strategic

In addition to organizational aspects of interest group behaviour, strategic factors must also be considered. An examination of the role PC(USA) plays in impacting Israel policy requires an analysis of the strategies of the pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel factions manifest in the respective groups' approaches to lobbying, coalition-building and reframing. This section discusses the lengths to which each group goes as they endeavour to place insiders in important leadership roles in the denomination,

thereby easing the passage of interest-specific resolutions. Collaboration with outside advocates plays an additional important role, as does the battle over reframing the message of BDS.

Lobbying

Direct lobbying refers to the range of activities usually associated with advocacy groups, such as meeting with politicians and other government officials, as well as assisting with political campaigns. Successful advocacy requires the acquiescence of the power-bearing individual to the request of the lobbyist. Commensurate with the measure of like-mindedness between the lobbyist and listener is the measure of political advocacy success (Baumgartner and Leech 1998; Hall and Deardoff 2006; Hojnacki and Kimball 1998; Hojnacki and Kimball 1999). Consequently, the most effective lobbying strategy is to embed likeminded insiders into the apparatus of government and the political process (Baumgartner et al 2009; Heinz et al 1993; Farnam 2011). As Presbyterians seek to influence policy, direct lobbying takes place at two stages. The pro-Palestinian IPMN has been more successful than the pro-Israel PFMEP during the first stage, which is the passage of resolutions internally within the denomination. IPMN has seen less success, however, during the second, and more important, stage: government lobbying.

Within the walls of the denomination, IPMN has mastered the art of insider placement. Their influence begins at the committee level, in line with E.E. Schattschneider's (1963) theory of the representative character of pressure groups. Schattschneider asserted that at the committee level experts would reflect the biases

of the stronger interest groups. Thus, early in their campaign, IPMN recognized the benefit of embedding external activists to assist with advocacy at the GA. PFMEP activists accuse their interlocutors of setting the organization up to promote their pro-Palestinian agenda:

> There's crossover between the PMA board, COGA, IPMN leadership. IPMN have worked to insert themselves in the leadership. Even structurers of GA meetings have shown coordination. For example, people with no standing in the denomination are given credentials as resource experts. (Interview with Presbyterian pastor, Oct 6, 2016)

Likewise, Wimberly and Harter (2021, 330) write, "numerous key staffers in Louisville . . . were quite clear that they favored divestment and were working to implement it as PCUSA policy." IPMN activists, however, dismiss the charge, countering that leadership appointments have simply been path dependent upon earlier resolutions of the denomination in favour of the Palestinian cause. As one activist responded, "PFMEP complain that Louisville[51] is tilted toward the Palestinians. There's a reason for that. GA policy as voted on by the Church has gone in that direction. Louisville has to act on that" (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016). One might suggest that this response says even more about their successful campaign. Currently, the pro-Palestinian activists are so deeply embedded that the embedding process is now organic and requires little conscious effort on the part of IPMN.

The next insider placement strategy IPMN employs is the importation of non-Presbyterians to the GA to assist in their campaign. They position these visitors in

[51] "Louisville" is the short-hand term members use to refer to the PC(USA) head office in Louisville, KY.

three key areas. Their first role is to lobby the committees. As experienced activists, they are proficient at making rational and emotional arguments in support of their cause (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016). Their second role is to serve as expert witnesses to the committees. Their third role is simply to fill the room and create a pro-Palestinian atmosphere. When a commissioner sees dozens of members of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) – the primary Jewish pro-Palestinian interest group – wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the slogan "Another Jew Supporting Divestment" (Goodstein 2014), they are less hesitant to vote in favour of a pro-Palestinian resolution.

Those in the pro-Israel camp consider this strategy controversial. From the perspective of a PFMEP activist:

> JVP gives them cover from the charge that they're either being grossly insensitive to the American Jewish community or from the charge of antisemitism. How can we be antisemitic when we've got all these Jews working with us? (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016)

However, IPMN activists feel that the presence of JVP is a legitimate approach:

> When I was a commissioner, the most effective voices I heard to persuade me one way or another were young Jewish people. Some would say you have to get permission. (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016)

Thus, IPMN strives to demonstrate to undecided commissioners that the advocates, experts, and even the Jewish observers, are all pro-Palestinian.

Nevertheless, the pro-Israel lobby has begun to imitate these strategies. In 2016, they "turned the tables," inviting anti-divestment Palestinians to address the

committees. They then filled the room with young Jews wearing t-shirts emblazoned with "Two States for Two Peoples" (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016). One prominent Palestinian who campaigns against divestment is Bassam Eid, who has participated in the PC(USA) General Assembly on a number of occasions. Eid advocates for improved economic sustainability for Palestinians living in the West Bank, and believes that BDS is harmful to Palestinians (Treatman 2016). Nevertheless, his presentations have met with resistance over the years, including a death threat in 2018 (Jennings 2018). Another outspoken critic of BDS who has participated at the GA is George Deek, an Arab-Israeli currently serving as Israel's ambassador to Azerbaijan.

Turning to the question of direct government lobbying, the Presbyterian Church maintains its Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C. Representatives of the denomination lobby national policy-makers and their staff, writing letters, making phone calls and testifying before Congress or facilitating the testimony of denominational leaders (Mission 2019). According to pro-Israel Presbyterian Church activists, however, the Office of Public Witness has had little success on Israel-Palestine matters. The typical response it receives from lawmakers is, "I don't care what the GA says. The average Presbyterian in the pews supports Israel. They're the ones who vote for me" (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016). To verify this assertion, this study analyzed the voting records of Presbyterian lawmakers of the 114th Congress (McArthur 2016; PMA 2015). On eight out of ten issues examined, the Presbyterian members of the House were indeed

more pro-Israel than the average Congressperson; and in six out of ten issues, the Presbyterian senators were more pro-Israel than their colleagues.[52]

Indeed, broadly speaking, US lawmakers do not tend to be favourably disposed to the Palestinian cause. In 2004, thirteen Members of Congress sent a letter to the Department of Commerce demanding that the Presbyterian divestment resolution be declared in violation of the US Export Administration Act's prohibition against Americans participating in the Arab boycott of Israel (Clarke 2005, 48). Similarly, in 2016, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order prohibiting state agencies from doing business with any organization engaged in BDS (Cuomo 2016). Since Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is incorporated in New York State, it may be subject to Cuomo's blacklist. Other states have enacted similar anti-BDS legislation, and PC(USA) is wary of future developments (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016).[53] As well, pro-Israel groups have waged lobbying campaigns to counter PC(USA)'s advocacy. For example, in 2014, Shurat HaDin[54] made the case to the IRS that the Presbyterian Church had violated its tax status by actively engaging with Hezbollah (Weinthal 2014). Consequently, IPMN was forced to curtail its grant-offering program, as attested to by one of its activists:

[52] The analysis was based on a report prepared for the *Washington Report on Middle-East Affairs.* The report card showed all votes by members of Congress relating to Israel-Palestine. I then separated out all the self-identifying Presbyterians and calculated their overall bias relative to the total group.
[53] It should be noted that while the Supreme Court struck down the Massachusetts Burma Law in *Crosby v. National Foreign Trade Council*, it was not for reasons of free speech violations, but because it proposed a secondary boycott and encroached on federal jurisdiction.
[54] Shurat HaDin is an organization based out of Tel Aviv, engaged in legal actions primarily on behalf of terror victims.

> In the past, we used some funds for grant projects in Israel-Palestine interfaith peacemaking issues. We're trying to make sure our vetting process complies with national law. We don't want to funnel money to a front organization to Hamas, unbeknownst to us. (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016)

Thus, while IPMN has been effective with internal direct lobbying efforts, their external activism has met with less success.

Turning to indirect lobbying, the process of mobilizing the grassroots to engage politically, the tool of choice for pro-Palestinian Presbyterian Church activists has been the pursuit of boycott, divestment, and sanctions measures. In terms of implementation, the Presbyterian Church itself divests from holdings in companies promoting Israeli settlement efforts, and calls upon its members to boycott certain products. Once the GA issues a resolution, IPMN activists set out to engage as many Church members as they can. First, they hold an annual conference, the purpose of which is to strategize about moving the actions of the GA into individual congregations. Despite having produced a number of publications, such as *Zionism Unsettled,* the most effective strategy IPMN has found is to arrange speaking engagements and seminars with the goal of educating Presbyterians on the Palestinian cause and engaging them in the boycott campaign (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016). Given its younger audience, PPF also engages in social media campaigns, such as webinars (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016).

While the pro-Israel activists also engage in indirect lobbying, they contend that IPMN has the advantage over them inasmuch as IPMN's leaders have worked on

social justice causes throughout their lives, whereas PFMEP members do not have the same organizing experience. In addition, PFMEP members maintain that they are not generally as committed to their cause as are IPMN members. The primary reason for their activism is often not sympathy for Israel, but concern for defending their denomination against political capture by an agenda-driven minority. In contrast, for many pro-Palestinian activists in the Presbyterian Church, Israel-Palestine is *the* agenda item. A PFMEP leader described the imbalance, as follows:

> We talk regularly on the phone but we don't have their resources. This afternoon there's a meeting, and before then there's a class on occupation. Another thing that gives them an edge is that the people at IPMN, that's their issue. I have about a hundred issues to deal with. A lot of them are retired, that's all they do. (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016)

While it is true that they do not hold conferences and seminars, PFMEP activists do nonetheless produce educational materials, such as *Two States for Two Peoples* (Presbyterians for Middle East Peace 2016), which they disseminate to congregations (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016).

The final area of Presbyterian advocacy to examine is public opinion or "values lobbying." This space is the ultimate focal point of pro-Palestinian activists in the Presbyterian Church. Let us begin with the limitations facing their advocacy efforts. One issue is volunteer hours. Since IPMN consists of only a few dozen activists, their ability to reach every congregation is curtailed, leaving most members including pastors unaware of the denomination's policies on Israel-Palestine. More significant, however, is the question of the financial effectiveness of PC(USA)'s policies.

Presbyterian divestment impacts a mere $21m of investment money in three companies: Motorola, Caterpillar, and Hewlett-Packard (Karoub and Zoll 2014). Israel's 2019 GNP was approximately $390b; as far as Israel's economy is concerned, the impact of the Presbyterian Church's initiative is miniscule. As one PFMEP pastor lamented:

> The policies of the Church have been ineffective. We're a small denomination that has no impact on individuals residing in Israel and Palestine. Even the divestment issue has had absolutely no impact on the ground in Israel-Palestine but has had a negative impact on the ability of the denomination here in the US to be seen as a partner in a potential solution. We're not seen favourably by the Jewish community nor by conservative Christian denominations that have not bought into BDS. And we've lost congregations over the issue. So there's been no success by all measurable standards. (Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016)

Thus, if Presbyterian Church members are hardly aware of its policies and Israel is not suffering, then the objective of the pro-Palestinian activists warrants further enquiry. Moreover, the extraordinary investment of resources on the part of the Jewish community and PFMEP to counter the activism of IPMN begs a meaningful explanation.

The answer to this conundrum lies in the public prominence of the Presbyterian Church. According to Clarke (2005, 48) PC(USA)'s leadership role in the boycott campaign advances the credibility of the BDS movement. Such sentiments were expressed from activists on both sides of the debate. One PFMEP activist described Presbyterian activity as the "canary in the coalmine." When BDS motions pass in PC(USA), the chance that they will pass in other denominations substantially

increases. And conversely, when they fail in PC(USA), they tend to fail in the other denominations as well (Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016). Presbyterian pro-Palestinian activists agree. As one leader put it, while Presbyterian divestment is merely a "drop in the bucket" for Israel, when an institution with PC(USA)'s name recognition "gives permission" and "opens the door," other civil society organizations follow suit. In time, "a trickle becomes a flood," the likes of which ultimately "brought down apartheid in South Africa" (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016).

Coalitions and Reframing

The question of Presbyterian affiliation with the BDS movement was on the agenda for consideration at the 2018 General Assembly (Biz 2016c). The rationale motivating the resolution is that interest groups maximize their effectiveness by teaming up with likeminded groups, thereby increasing their numeral significance in the eyes of elected officials. Important to note for this study, however, is that many religious interest groups reject the entire premise of coalition-building. If the messages of the two groups were exactly the same, then they would not need two distinct groups. And if the messages are not the same, then a political interest based on a religious doctrine would require the message to remain "pure," thereby impeding the group's ability to join a coalition. Coalition-building implies compromise and religious interest groups are not known for prioritizing compromise.

Nevertheless, both Presbyterian factions collaborate actively with likeminded interest groups. Let us begin by looking at IPMN's coalition partners. The key expert

witness the group brought to the Middle East committee at the 2016 GA in Portland was Dalit Baum, founder of Who Profits from the Occupation. Whilst in the city, they spoke at Mt. Tabor Presbyterian Church. The event was cosponsored by the following groups:

> Jewish Voice for Peace-PDX; American Friends Service Committee; Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights; Occupation-Free Portland; Students United for Palestinian Equal Rights; Friends of Sabeel North America; Oregon-Idaho United Methodist Conference Holy Land Task Force; Oregon/Idaho Methodist Federation for Social Action; United Church of Christ-Central Pacific Conference Palestine Israel Network; Lutherans for Justice in the Holy Land-Central Lutheran Church; International Socialist Organization; Code Pink (Portland); Corvallis Albany Palestine Solidarity; Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice; and KBOO Community Radio (Corrie 2016)

As this list demonstrates, IPMN is affiliated with a host of pro-Palestinian organizations (Interview with Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Oct 28, 2016).

IPMN is also a member of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation (End 2016), and PPF leaders are also active in the organization (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016). Recently rebranded as the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, the coalition is an umbrella organization for pro-Palestinian groups in America. Their mandate includes support for the BDS movement (USCPR 2017), and according to item 8.08 of the 2016 PC(USA) Middle East Issues committee, "the US Campaign to End the Occupation is the primary American arm of [the] BDS movement" (Biz 2016b). Campaign steering committee member Sydney Levy was active at the 2016 GA, representing both the Campaign as well as Jewish Voice for

Peace (JVP), which has been active in the PC(USA) divestment campaign from its inception (Plitnick 2004, 119).

IPMN's other significant affiliations include Kairos USA and Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA), whose mandate is to advance the Palestinian cause in the American Churches. The author of the Presbyterian study-guide *Zionism Unsettled*, Rev. Donald Wagner, served as director of FOSNA, and former IPMN moderator Rev. Katherine Cunningham would go on to become the president of Kairos USA. Indeed, many IPMN members are also leaders of FOSNA and Kairos (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016). Furthermore, Presbyterian activists regularly meet with pro-Palestinian activists in the other mainline churches to discuss strategy (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016; Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016).

As far as PFMEP's affiliations go, following the 2004 phased divestment resolution a number of pro-Israel Presbyterians began circulating a petition to recall the GA into session. Their efforts resulted in the End the Divestment Now organization, an early precursor to PFMEP. When long-time Presbyterian pro-Israel activist Rev. Bill Harter heard of their activities, he connected them with the America-Israel Friendship League (AIFL). AIFL and other organizations, including the Jewish Council for Public Affairs began organizing subsidized trips to Israel for Presbyterian Church elders to study the issue and witness the situation first-hand (Interview with Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Oct 28, 2016; Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016). PFMEP maintains ongoing relations and support from the Jewish community,

particularly in the area of information and fact-checking IPMN's publications. The main bodies involved are the Israel Action Network of the Jewish Federations of North America (Felson 2006), J Street (Lerner 2012); and the Anti-Defamation League (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016). Thus, clearly neither faction in PC(USA) has hesitated to collaborate with other groups as they further their political objectives.

Turning to the issue of reframing, most interest groups engage in some form of repackaging of the message for the sake of broader audience consumption (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). This research discovered an additional type of reframing. Interest groups may repackage not only in order to finesse their agenda, but in order to consolidate a certain position. According to pro-Israel activists, when the pro-Palestinian activists submit overtures to the GA, they endeavour to couch them in terms that presuppose their aims. For example, in 2016, the Presbyterian Church passed a resolution *Advocating for the Safety and Well-being of Children of Palestine and Israel* (Biz 2016a). Given the wording of the overture, however, it appears to this author that commissioners were essentially asked to vote on whether or not they supported violence against children. Similarly, a denomination-wide study by the Presbyterian Panel[55] concluded that most members were in favour of divestment. A perusal of the survey appears to present a potential confirmation bias

[55] The Presbyterian Panel began in 1973 and is an ongoing research study in which mailed and web-based questionnaires are used to survey representative samples of constituency groups of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The questions concerning Israel-Palestine were a handful amongst a range of questions researching Presbyterian attitudes to political and social issues.

in terms of how the questions were framed. Concerning divestment from Israel, respondents were asked the following three questions:

1. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: The PC(USA) should avoid making investment profits from *unjust situations* and should use its investments in corporations to promote justice and other Christian values?
2. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: The PC(USA) should try to dissuade corporations from doing things that directly or indirectly *support violence* against Israeli or Palestinian civilians?
3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: If the PC(USA) is unable to dissuade corporations from doing things that directly or indirectly *support violence* against Israeli or Palestinian civilians, it should shift PC(USA) investment funds away from those corporations (as it already does from corporations involved in tobacco, military-related production, and *human rights violations*)? (ARDA 2009, italics mine).

The Church presented the responses to these questions as evidence of widespread support for divestment amongst its membership. As my italicisation indicates, however, the Panel framed the issue in ways that did not offer viable alternative responses. Question 1 assumed that Israel is acting unjustly. If that is the case, the only rational answer is to avoid investment. In question 2, the question assumed that corporations doing business in the West Bank are supporters of violence. Once again, is there anyone who would oppose dissuading companies from supporting violence? And question 3 inserted "human rights violations," thereby amplifying the previous question's assumptions. Thus, this dissertation proffers the thesis that an interest group may engage in reframing not for the purposes of obscuring its agenda but advancing it.

This idea is exemplified in the PC(USA) debate over Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). In a 2016 overture, commissioners were asked to "prayerfully study"

the BDS call. But as one young commissioner inquired, "what is the difference between *studying* and *prayerfully studying*?"[56] Subsequently, the 2018 GA agenda included a proposal for the Presbyterian Church to affiliate with the BDS movement. Rarely has as much meaning been invested into the significance of the words used around BDS as the consideration it has been given in PC(USA). As the following anecdotes demonstrate, the pro-Palestinian faction seeks not only to advocate for BDS, but to ally the denomination with the BDS movement. PFMEP activists claim that IPMN presents its divestment campaign to the larger Presbyterian Church in terms of the pursuit of justice for Palestinians living in the post-1967 territories (Interview with Presbyterian political scientist, Oct 20, 2016; Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016). Nevertheless, many in the leadership of IPMN acknowledge their identification with the BDS movement (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016). Indeed, as IPMN moderator Rev. Jeffrey DeYoe points out, by calling for US sanctions of Israel (2010), boycott of settlement products (2012) and divestment from companies doing business in the West Bank (2014), the Presbyterian Church is effectively part of the BDS movement (DeYoe 2014). And in 2018, IPMN published *Why Palestine Matters,* which explicitly aligns itself with the BDS movement (Nelson 2021, 406).

Alignment with the BDS movement, however, is problematic in the minds of PFMEP members, for reasons outlined forthwith. When the Presbyterian Church

[56] This author was personally present at the debate.

voted in 2014 to divest from companies doing business in the West Bank, these activists insisted on adding an amendment to the resolution clarifying that PC(USA) is not part of the BDS movement, because:

> The BDS movement claims to be a human rights campaign to secure justice for Palestinians, yet its stated goals make it clear that its true goal is to see the de-legitimization and end of the Jewish State. Omar Barghouti, founder of the BDS movement uses the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees to argue, "If the refugees were to return, you would not have a two-state solution, you'd have a Palestine next to a Palestine." The end result of which would be to "end Israel's existence as a Jewish State." The underlying goal of BDS is clear: the replacement of a Jewish State of Israel with a single Palestinian state consisting of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. . . . The affiliation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with such voices is a disgrace to the reconciling message of Jesus Christ. (PC(USA 2014)

Similarly, in 2016, the denomination passed a commissioner's resolution distancing itself from the US Campaign to End the Occupation, "the primary American arm of [the] BDS movement" (Biz 2016b). Wimberly and Harter (2021, 333) contend that "opponents of divestment . . . became convinced that they were no longer battling a group of well-intentioned Presbyterian activists so much as the international, secular Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement . . . (which) sought an end to Israel's existence as a Jewish state, replaced by a secular state with a Palestinian Arab majority."

Moreover, the problem with the BDS movement, explains Baumgart-Ochse (2017), is that its adherents blur the lines between sanctioning the disputed territories and penalizing Israel as a whole. For example, BDS campaigns for academic and artistic boycotts of Israel, thereby marginalizing academics from *all* Israeli universities

and calling on international musicians to avoid performing *anywhere* in the State of Israel. Here one encounters the inverse of the way interest groups ordinarily engage in reframing. Typically, interest groups work to reframe their message in order to present an agenda in language that is marketable to as wide an audience as possible. In the case of PC(USA), the "counter-activists" – those who are working to maintain the status quo – are the ones who are striving to mitigate and reframe the language of the campaign in order to avoid alienating other PC(USA) supporters.

Ultimately, such efforts have met with limited short-term success. If PFMEP activists do manage to mitigate and soften a particular resolution at one convention, two years later, IPMN activists continue to advance the agenda, minimizing the utility of the previous mitigation. Thus, if success is defined in terms of advancing the BDS movement's agenda, then we must conclude that the pro-Palestinian campaign in PC(USA) has been successful. A prominent American Christian denomination has amplified the message of the BDS movement. Despite the lack of direct causal linkage between the Presbyterian Church and US foreign policymaking, IPMN has raised the awareness of the Palestinian cause amongst the American public. This increased awareness impacts public opinion, which eventually impacts government policymaking.

Theopolitical

While support for the Palestinians is motivated presumably by foreign policy considerations, this dissertation proposes a domestic causal factor for Protestant anti-Zionist activity. I call this theopolitical contestation, which refers to competition over

values and their political enshrinement between Christian groups in America. The literature review examined the concept of the Judeo-Christian tradition in America. Historically, the idea was interpreted in three ways. To adherents of the Social Gospel, "Judeo-Christian" alluded to the roots of Christianity in the social justice exhortations of the Hebrew prophets. To pluralists, Judeo-Christian values symbolized a new commitment to expanding American society to include non-Protestant voices. And to exceptionalists, references to the Judeo-Christian tradition were code for conservative religious values. This section offers an alternative explanation for the heightened debate over Israel-Palestine in the Presbyterian Church and, by extension, the mainline Protestant denominations more broadly. While pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel activists in PC(USA) do not make explicit reference to Judeo-Christian values, their positions align closely with the ideologies of the Social Gospel and pluralism, respectively. Viewed in relation to the Christian Zionist exceptionalists, the landscape begins to divide itself between the three interpretations of the place of Christianity in American society. This section is divided into two parts. The first part continues to develop the earlier thesis regarding the complex relationship between Presbyterianism and dispensationalism. The second part examines the internal identity struggle taking place within the ranks of PC(USA), which has intensified the debate over Israel-Palestine.

American Christianity

Chapter 3 demonstrated the awareness exhibited by CUFI and PC(USA) of one another's activities. Multiple resolutions have singled out John Hagee for criticism

and CUFI has run a campaign with the slogan "The Presbyterians don't speak for us." As well, Hagee responded to the Presbyterian denunciation, saying "'Happily, this small and shrinking denomination does not speak for America's Christians or Americans in general'" (quoted in Levitt 2014). This tension over "Who speaks for American Christians?" was apparent in the sentiments espoused by participants in this study, as the following response of a PFMEP pastor demonstrates:

> A lot of what Sabeel and pro-BDS Christians have put out is an over-exaggerated response to Christian Zionism. They're a minority but they've had influence due to their relationship with the previous president.[57] Mainlines don't buy into it but haven't found a productive voice to express their views. We haven't really figured out Kairos. It was written as a repudiation of Christian Zionism. Christians in Palestine wrote Kairos as a response to Christian Zionism, but Christians in the US just see it as a statement about what's going on there, not about Christian Zionism. All part of a larger drama. What does the American Church stand for today? Is it the Christian Right? Is it not the Christian Right? Where's the future of the mainline denominations? What do they stand for? And Israel-Palestine is just one of the issues that's part of the larger drama of mainline denominations trying to figure out what they stand for. How do we view foreign policy? How do we view interventionist policy? There's just so many dramas going on in this story. (Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016)

The feeling expressed here is that the issue of Israel-Palestine is symptomatic of a larger struggle in American mainline churches regarding its identity and future within the American faith landscape.

Moreover, with a greying population and a steep decline in membership (Odom 2013), the mainline denominations are seeking ways to keep their churches

[57] The reference here is to George W. Bush.

relevant.[58] While the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship was established close to a century ago with a broad mandate, in recent years, it has focused on engagement with young Presbyterians, hiring a Millennial pastor and concentrating on the two conflicts of Colombia and Israel-Palestine (Interview with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship director, Nov 14, 2016). Similarly, one PFMEP pastor attributed PC(USA)'s focus on Israel-Palestine to the public attention it garners for such activity:

> The media chooses to cover it because it's a sexy issue. They'll cover Israel-Palestine and then they'll cover the issues dealing with sex.[59] There's far more concern in the Jewish community about where mainline denominations are in terms of Israel than in the mainline denominations themselves (Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016).

Viewed in this light, the struggle is a domestic issue for Christians competing for devotees, and indeed over the banner of American Christianity more broadly. Thus, the first element of theopolitical contestation that this study contributes to the conversation is the utilization of Israel-Palestine policy to promote interest and participation in American mainline Protestantism.

Marriage Equality

The next element of theopolitical contestation that has led to the prioritization of Israel-Palestine policy is situated in the realm of internal competition amongst mainline Protestants generally, and PC(USA) specifically. While theological disputes

[58] For an alternative perspective on the so-called liberal Protestant decline, see Hulsether (2012). He argues that much of the decline is right-wing narrative and that mainline Protestant ideas continue to dominate mainstream media. In addition, measurement of adherents often only counts members of the denominations, neglecting many others who identify as liberal Protestants despite not being members of a formal denomination.

[59] The reference here is to same-sex marriage and ordination.

have taken place between mainline progressives and conservatives for over a century, the issue of same-sex marriage and ordination has brought the rift to the fore, resulting in ramifications reaching far beyond the issue of homosexuality. According to Presbyterian theology, the unity of the denomination is paramount. Differing viewpoints must be tolerated and secession should only be considered if continued membership would imply a major breach in Presbyterian Church doctrine and thus disloyalty to Christianity (Mackay 1960, 97). While the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth century led to the formation of a number of splinter Presbyterian denominations, most Presbyterians remained within the major northern and southern denominations. Consequently, for most of the twentieth century, the primary Presbyterian denomination consisted of a diverse mix of member congregations and pastors, ranging from conservatives to progressives, resulting in fierce and lively policy debates and regular pendulum swings.

One such area of debate concerned the question of homosexuality in the Presbyterian Church. In 1978, the Presbyterian Church issued a statement prohibiting the ordination of practicing homosexuals. After decades of debate, however, in 2011 that statement was overturned. And then three years later, the GA resolved to approve the presiding of its pastors over same-sex marriages. These decisions, however, took their toll on the Presbyterian Church – as a result of the new direction, large numbers of conservative pastors and congregations left the denomination:

> Among the fits and starts the church has faced has been the departure of congregations to other Presbyterian/Reformed communions and the departure of church members, formally or informally. These decisions,

> faithfully made, have nonetheless strained the body, as debate partners have now separated, along with future generations. Those realities should be lamented, and also accepted. The Theological Task Force's Recommendation 5, hard wrought in its effort to keep the church together, was simply not acceptable to all. Perhaps that was inevitable, and perhaps hastened the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s eventual change. (Wilkinson 2020, 287)

Between 2005 and 2013, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church inherited 250 congregations from PC(USA) and in 2012 a new Presbyterian denomination was formed, the Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO) (Fortson and Grams 2016, 157), that as of June 2018 maintained over 350 churches (ECO 2019). In the period of 2012-2017, PC(USA) lost over 200,000 members to these two conservative denominations (Scanlon 2017). These losses are significant – while the Presbyterian Church's membership peaked at 4.25 million in 1965 (Fowler 2015), today it consists of only 1.3 million (Scanlon 2019).

The departure of conservatives from the Presbyterian Church had reverberations beyond the issue of same-sex marriage and ordination. Previously, due to the spectrum of views in the denomination – from progressives to moderates to conservatives – doctrinal evolution was a gradual process. Once significant numbers of conservative members departed, however, the progressive wing's influence increased, and on a variety of issues they began to see their successes multiply (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016). According to pro-Israel activists, the Presbyterian Church's shift on the Israel-Palestine issue was one of the results of the conservative withdrawal. Many of those who previously defended Israel in the face of its detractors were motivated by their

conservative religious and political views. With the departure of that demographic, the pro-Palestinian progressives faced less opposition to their position. Since the remaining pro-Israel advocates were less inclined to insist upon equating ancient Israel with the modern state, the primary focus of theological debate became the question of justice. Current pro-Israel activists lament that proving the justice of Israel's actions can be a challenging endeavour (Interview with Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Oct 28, 2016; Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016). Thus, the second theopolitical contestation factor that has impacted the issue of Israel-Palestine is the mainline Protestant shift in favour of same-sex marriage and ordination.

Anti-Anti-Zionism

Despite the suggestion earlier that pro-Palestinian activism is being used as a tool to garner the interest of younger, more liberal-minded Christians, a number of the pro-Israel research participants who have remained in the Presbyterian Church emphasized that they too are politically progressive. On most other sociopolitical issues, they see eye-to-eye with their pro-Palestinian interlocutors (Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016; Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016). Unlike conservative Christians whose support for Israel is rooted in fundamentalist scriptural foundations, the pro-Israel progressives in PC(USA) are often motivated by a commitment to interfaith dialogue and activity (Wimberly and Harter 2021, 327). Their denomination's one-sided perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they complain, is jeopardizing their domestic bridge-

building efforts. In 1987, the Presbyterian Church resolved to re-examine and renew the historic relationship between Christianity and Judaism, recognizing God's covenant with the Jewish people and the Land of Israel (PC(USA) 1987). Despite efforts on the part of the PC(USA) to separate the issues of American Jewish relations and the State of Israel (Kirkpatrick 2004, 101), the divestment campaign has damaged the ties between the mainline denominations and the Jewish community (Clarke 2005). In fact, prior to the advent of PFMEP, Presbyterians Concerned for Jewish Christian Relations led the anti-divestment charge (Wimberly and Harter 2021, 327). When challenged by their coreligionists concerning their apparent lack of concern for the Palestinians, they respond that interfaith work is no less of a social justice imperative (Interview with Presbyterian theologian, Sept. 16, 2016). In other words, they are prioritizing the domestic value of pluralism over any foreign policy concerns that might threaten their domestic efforts. While it might appear that they are fighting for Israel, many of them are motivated primarily by a desire to thwart the efforts of the pro-Palestinian activists, whom they feel are stigmatizing their denomination.

Moreover, they oppose the prioritization of the issue of Israel-Palestine, when it is not a "burning issue" for most Presbyterians (Interview with Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Oct 28, 2016). For example, upon being asked how he got involved in this issue one PFMEP pastor explained:

> I was asked to become more involved in the Presbyterian peace committee and steer it away from being [focused on] a single issue [i.e.

> Israel-Palestine]. The nominating committee called me. They weren't concerned about the leaning on the issue itself, rather they felt the issue was leading to a breakdown of relationships within the Presbytery. Everything we do is voluntary. When conflict occurs, people don't engage, they just tend to drop out (Interview with PFMEP pastor, Nov 29, 2016).

Thus, many get involved simply because they feel that pro-Palestinian activism is threatening the stability of the Presbyterian Church (Interview with Washington D.C. religious affairs consultant, Sept. 27, 2016).[60] Therefore, this dissertation proffers a third theopolitical contestation factor: the domestic competition between Social Gospel-minded activists and pluralism-minded activists in the Presbyterian Church, and presumably mainline denominations more broadly.

Polarization

In the process of researching the relationship between American Christians and Israel-Palestine, this project encountered matters pertaining to an additional area of political science enquiry. Scholars debate whether political polarization is a widespread phenomenon amongst the general public (Abramowitz 2010), or primarily an elite phenomenon (Fiorina et al 2005). Similarly, scholars of religious sociology discuss the extent to which American Christianity is polarized. Wuthnow (1990) predicted that denominations would strive to maintain the apolitical middle ground. Since they consist of both conservatives and liberals they would avoid taking sociopolitical positions which would alienate a significant portion of their constituency. Such agendas would be taken up by religious special interest groups.

[60] It should be noted that over the first decade of the century, mainline Protestant sympathy with Israel rose fourteen points (Pew 2009).

Neiheisel and Djupe (2008) demurred, concluding that in the realm of religious values individuals identify primarily with their congregations and are often ignorant of or ambivalent towards their denominations' sociopolitical positions. Consequently, surveys of evangelical and mainline Protestant political views have been criticized for the way they painted members of particular denominations with imprecise brush-strokes. Researchers simply equated mainline Protestant with liberal Christian and evangelical with conservative Christian, despite the complex reality surrounding the reasons why individuals and congregations remain members of their denomination.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned findings regarding the exodus of conservatives from the mainline denominations would suggest that, in recent years, these brush-stroked categories have become increasingly more accurate depictions. As conservative and progressive Christians self-select into conservative and progressive congregations and denominations, polarization is indeed becoming a widespread phenomenon amongst elites and mass publics alike. Thus, in the twenty first century, individuals and congregations are making denominational choices that align with their theopolitical values and do not hesitate to vote with their feet, creating an ever-increasing polarized political and religious American landscape.

Summary and Findings

This chapter expands the conversation around mainline Protestantism and the issue of Israel-Palestine in a number of key areas. The introduction of the thought of H. Richard Niebuhr added a further theological basis for the dispute in PC(USA) around social justice imperatives. At the same time, this dissertation finds the categorization

of either Niebuhr brother as representing a clear and unambiguous position problematic. Instead of asking 'What would Niebuhr say?' this dissertation maintains the utility of the brothers' legacies to the argument lies in the way many activists have anchored their efforts in theological precedent representing certain approaches to American religious culture. Whether or not they are technically accurate, when activists referred to Reinhold, they are highlighting his devotion to American pluralism and support for Israel. And when they make reference to H. Richard, the meaning of their attribution is to associate the Presbyterian Church with the Social Gospel. And the subsequent investigation into postcolonialism concluded that anticolonialism should not be viewed as a new ideological perspective for Presbyterians but has deep historical roots, which have prompted intense debate in the denomination for over a century. Nevertheless, IPMN's presentation of intersectionality as a basis for contemporary pro-Palestinian activism reawakens the debate over the influence of current ideological trends on the denomination's position on Israel-Palestine.

Turning to the field of interest group research, the chapter explored features unique to the organizational structure of PC(USA) that have aided in its leadership role in the pro-Palestinian campaign. The democratic process of committee governance provides relative ease of access to special interest groups to direct Church policy. Over time, accomplishments by pro-Palestinian activists have made current decisions inevitable given the patterns of path dependence that have developed. Nevertheless, pro-Israel activists have begun to emulate these approaches, slowing down the process of the pro-Palestinian campaign. Very often these "pro-Israel" activists are

motivated more by concerns about the reputation of their denomination in the eyes of Jewish Americans and Americans more broadly. One particular area of contention has been the denomination's relationship with the BDS movement. While the pro-Palestinian faction contends that their Church is already effectively part of BDS, the pro-Israel faction has made efforts to bifurcate Church policy on boycott, divestment, and sanctions versus affiliation with the BDS movement. Critics allege that the campaign has goals beyond pressure on Israel to retreat to pre-1967 borders and that this objective is merely an initial step towards the ultimate goal of dismantling the Jewish state.

The chapter then proffered the thesis that an important element of mainline Protestant activism on Israel-Palestine is theopolitical contestation. Externally, the issue of Israel-Palestine has been a useful tool to keep denominations relevant and attractive to younger Christians. Israel-Palestine has been employed as a "wedge issue" to demarcate the theological borders between conservative and liberal Christians. The previous chapter cited Sean Durbin's (2018) thesis about Hagee's discursive activity. According to Durbin, Hagee uses Israel to carve out a community of authentic "Bible-believing" Christians. Those who support Israel are part of the community; those who do not are not. I would argue that certain actors in the Presbyterian Church are employing a similar approach, defining Protestant membership in terms of a commitment to pro-Palestinian social justice. The pro-Israel faction in PC(USA) has exerted considerable effort to avoid such demarcation and maintain their denomination's broad church. Nevertheless, the exodus of significant

numbers of conservatives from the denomination as a result of same-sex marriage liberalization has altered the sociopolitical balance, easing the passage of further progressive legislation. And notably, in addition to internal examination of specific sociopolitical issues, the broader demographic shift amongst denominations that has resulted from theopolitical contestation has clear implications for research on political polarization in America.

This chapter opened with a reference to recent US government legislation criminalizing antisemitism and restricting BDS activity. Given those developments, it would appear that pro-Palestinian activism in the Presbyterian Church has seen limited success. Nevertheless, participants in this research project emphasized their belief that success does not happen overnight. Each passing General Assembly has brought further pro-Palestinian accomplishments. And rather than media and Jewish opposition to the Church policy being viewed as counterproductive, activists feel that the attention amplifies the campaign and increases their effectiveness over the long-term. While the boycott, divestment and sanctions initiated by PC(USA) may have little impact, the legitimacy granted to the BDS movement by the denomination's affiliation offers far greater assistance to the campaign than mere balance sheet matters.

6. Conclusion: Many don't really care

> *We cannot turn back the clock to a mythical "Judeo-Christian America" in order to chart a new course for America's moral imagination. Nor can we ignore the fact that the catchphrase has failed to shed its Christian religious residue. Living through an unprecedented era of anti-Semitism, American Jews no longer wish to play the role of guest stars in someone else's theological drama (Loeffler 2020).*

On Saturday, November 13th, 2021, thousands of American Christians gathered at John Hagee's Cornerstone Church in San Antonio for the *Reawaken America* tour. Matthew Hagee opened the assembly with a welcome message thanking the participants for coming. The attendees subsequently heard from a mix of speakers from Christian Right activists to conspiracy theorists and fervent anti-vaxxers. The event might have passed under the radar were it not for the declaration made by former President Trump's National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, who announced, "So, if we are going to have one nation under God, which we must, we have to have one religion, one nation under God and one religion under God" (Smietana 2021). The condemnation came swiftly from American leaders from all walks of life, including an array of Christian clergy. Cornerstone Church distanced itself from Flynn's remarks and Hagee issued a statement that "This past week, Cornerstone Church facilities were used by an outside organization . . . Cornerstone Church is not associated with this organization and does not endorse their views."

I offer this introductory anecdote as a caveat to the conclusions of this dissertation. While the research of this study points to a certain domestic agenda on the part of American Christian activists, it is important to emphasize the spectrum of beliefs and perspectives of American Christian pro-Israel/Palestine advocates. The fact that Hagee distanced Cornerstone Church from *Reawaken America* demonstrates

that they do not share the same agenda. Indeed, despite the categoric language found in this dissertation, I believe that most pro-Israel/Palestine activists are completely sincere in their advocacy efforts and are working for the betterment of the Israelis/Palestinians. Nevertheless, my study identifies a significant number of activists who are driven by American domestic considerations and thus worthy of examination. Put simply, I am not saying that *all* Christian Zionists in America are Christian nationalists (just as I am not stating that all pro-Palestinian Presbyterians believe the Jewish state should be dismantled). My argument is simply that *many* Christian Zionists are motivated by Christian nationalism, and that that motivation has thus far been overlooked.

This dissertation set out to investigate three questions: First, why and how does Israel matter (so much) to American Protestant Christianity? Second, why do some Christians support while others oppose Israel? Third, what accounts for the rise in Christian activism on behalf of Israel/Palestine? In this chapter, I conclude that many American Protestant activists do not really care about Israel-Palestine. The issue is merely the microcosm of a much grander cosmic battle within Protestant Christianity.

Let me open this discussion that many readers may have been asking throughout this dissertation: What about the Catholics? The largest single homogeneous religious group in America has thus far not been addressed by this dissertation. While a comprehensive analysis of American Catholic views of Israel-Palestine is beyond the scope of this study, a brief mention will help shed light on the

motivations of the subjects of this investigation. Critics of Israel are often accused of antisemitism for singling out the Jewish state for opprobrium. While that might indeed be true for certain secular groups and individuals, many Christians point to the Bible as their distinctive right to focus the lens on Israel. Since Jesus walked the Land of Israel and Christianity's roots lie in the country, it is not unreasonable, they maintain, to prioritize criticism of Israel's actions over other alleged human rights abuses across the globe. While there is undoubtedly some merit to this argument, it should be noted that Christianity's universalistic aspirations weaken the contention. In simple terms, while Christianity originated in Israel, in a certain sense it has moved on from the Old Testament's particularistic view of Israel as the Promised Land. In various incarnations of Christian thought, the geographic space of ancient Israel has been replaced as the Kingdom of God by Rome, America, or indeed the entire world. For this reason, the Holy See did not recognize the State of Israel until 1993, forty-five years after its establishment.[61] Recognition of Israel is an implicit acceptance of the continued theological place of Jews and Israel in the world, despite Christianity's historic quest to negate the relevance of the Jewish people subsequent to their rejection of Jesus as messiah.

And yet despite the Vatican's coolness and tardiness vis-à-vis the normalization of diplomatic relations, the Catholic Church and American Catholics tend to exhibit relatively little public antagonism towards Israel. On the contrary, they

[61] To put this anomaly in perspective, it may be contrasted with the US, which recognized the State of Israel eleven minutes after the declaration of its independence in 1948.

have striven to maintain a "balanced" view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Why then are Protestants so vexed by Israel-Palestine? To answer this question, let us review the findings of this study.

Theology and Culture

CUFI and PC(USA) are the two leading pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian American Christian interest groups respectively. Previous studies have either analyzed each group separately or contrasted their positions under the general rubric of evangelical versus mainline Protestant thought on Israel-Palestine. This dissertation maintains that the divergence of perspective between these two groups on the issue of Israel-Palestine runs deeper than traditional attributions to the evangelical-mainline divide. Presbyterianism's complicated relationship with dispensationalism laid the foundation for contemporary debates over Israel-Palestine. American Presbyterians derive, primarily, from the same roots as the founders of American Christian Zionism. In fact, Presbyterians figured prominently among the founders of the dispensationalist movement – the precursor to contemporary Christian Zionism – in America. Despite countenancing dispensationalism for half a century, however, in 1944 the Presbyterian Church repudiated the doctrine, creating a fissure amongst Scots-Irish Protestants with reverberations until today.

This dissertation argues that for many pro-Palestinian Presbyterians, their activism is motivated more by opposition to Christian Zionism than concern for the Palestinian cause. And conversely, the formation of Christians United for Israel was, in no small measure, an effort to reclaim the American Christian narrative from their

anti-Zionist coreligionists. Evidence for this thesis abounds in examples such as CUFI's response to PC(USA)'s divestment resolution: tens of thousands of signatories declared that "the Presbyterians don't speak for us." Thus, the first theological contribution this dissertation makes is the inclusion of historical disputes over dispensationalism in the Presbyterian Church, thereby providing the background and context for twenty-first century debates over Israel-Palestine.

Further on the subject of dispensationalism, this study found that the doctrine plays a far more modest role amongst contemporary Christian Zionists than generally assumed. Most activists either denounce the doctrine or are unfamiliar with it. Nevertheless, given its prominent place among Niagara Conference fundamentalists, the widespread use of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, and the promulgation of dispensationalist ideas via the popular works of Hal Lindsay and Tim LaHaye, it is safe to say that Darby's ideology provided the framework for contemporary Christian Zionism. Thus, the second theological contribution is the re-evaluation of the role played by dispensationalist ideology in contemporary Christian Zionism. Rather than viewing it as the dominant theology, it should be seen as the historical precursor and context provider.

And while Presbyterian pro-Palestinian activism is presented as stemming from the biblical imperative to pursue justice, this study found competing justice priorities in the denomination. The two factions base their activism in the thought of the Niebuhr brothers; each, however, looks to a different Niebuhr for inspiration. Adherents of Reinhold Niebuhr's ideology prioritize neo-Cold War versions of

"realistic" US national interests, which they see dovetailing with US-Israeli alliances — linked to ecumenical and interfaith pursuits (albeit often along the lines of Christian-Jewish dialogue than including Muslims and other faiths). Historically this has been linked to missionary/WCC connections, although at this point Niebuhrians divide among centrist, neoconservative, and left variants. Adherents of the tradition of H. Richard Niebuhr (and the likes of Stanley Hauerwas) are wary of all forms of militarized nationalism, including Zionism when backed by the power of the state. Pragmatic maneuvering that loses touch with core values is a key concern to this school of thought. Thus, the third contribution is the addition of the role of the Niebuhr brothers' ideology and debates to explanations of current mainline disputes over Israel-Palestine. It goes without saying that the concise overview of their ideologies is far from adequate an analysis. Whereas some critics attribute Presbyterian pro-Palestinian activists of jumping on the bandwagon of fashionable radical causes, the contribution of this study is the acknowledgement of a serious theological basis for the Presbyterian campaign. In addition, this dissertation clarifies media confusion around the Niebuhr family and the nuances of their varying doctrines.

With regards to allegations of Islamophobia as a source for pro-Israel proclivities on the part of evangelicals, this study found that present-day activists strive to project a softer tone towards Arabs and Muslims. While certain evangelical leaders had uttered strong anti-Muslim statements in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, CUFI leaders and other Christian Zionist activists have made efforts to distance

their organizations from such attitudes and perceptions. Regarding postcolonialism as the source of the pro-Palestinian campaign in the mainline Churches, this study found such anti-imperialist activism is not a new ideological perspective for Presbyterians but has deep historical roots. Nevertheless, the influence of intersectionality as a basis for contemporary pro-Palestinian activism reawakens the debate over the role of current ideological trends in mainline Protestant social justice efforts.

Interest Group Theory

This dissertation's examination of CUFI and PC(USA) through the lens of interest group theory has provided a twofold contribution to the literature. First, the analysis of the role of Christian political organization and strategy aids in the understanding of factors shaping Israel policy in America. Second, the findings of these two groups' approaches further the scholarship on religious interest groups more generally. Christians have significant advantages over other interest groups in influencing Israel-Palestine policy. The decision-making structure in PC(USA) offers greater ease of political capture by special interests within the denomination. And CUFI activists have been able to capitalize on an insider Christian audience to further their agenda.

The most important factor, however, is numbers. Ordinarily, interest groups form because when political activists organize, the total of their efforts is greater than the sum of their individual parts. Nevertheless, both CUFI and PC(USA) take this "law of large numbers" a step further, marshalling their perceived numeric power to demonstrate their strength to lawmakers. From John Hagee's claim to represent all

American evangelicals to the steering of the Presbyterian Church in the direction of certain factional views, the interest group literature has yet to consider the power wielded by Christian activists when claiming to represent a constituency that is unaware or ambivalent about specific policies. In contrast with the traditional interest group problem whereby individuals will be reticent to join groups when they can free-ride, the case studies herein demonstrate the ability of activists to channel the power of large religious constituencies, who have not officially signed on to their agenda.

Theopolitical Contestation

While shared Judeo-Christian values are often offered as the basis of the US-Israel relationship, historically the concept has little meaning outside the context of American domestic culture. Moreover, the contested nature of the Judeo-Christian tradition gives rise to competing perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus a further contribution of this dissertation is the thesis that contemporary American Christian debate over Israel-Palestine should be situated in the framework of historical approaches to Judeo-Christian values. Pro-Palestinian Presbyterian activists follow the Social Gospel tradition, viewing the duty of American Christians to adopt a prophetic approach of speaking truth to power and prioritizing social justice initiatives. Pro-Israel Presbyterian activists follow the Judeo-Christian tradition of the pluralists, who understood the concept as a call to expand American society beyond its Protestant origins. And CUFI activists follow the tradition of exceptionalists, seeing America as a Judeo-Christian country, which should be built on biblical values.

While CUFI presents itself as a foreign policy interest group, an important motivating factor driving its activism is its leaders' desire to influence American sociopolitical values. Long before Hagee and Falwell were advocating for Israel, they were appealing to a "return" to America's "Judeo-Christian tradition" as the basis for their promotion of conservative social policy. Support for Israel in the name of allying with a likeminded Judeo-Christian nation aids the myth that America is a Judeo-Christian nation with a linear, contiguous, biblically-rooted tradition and culture. Conservative Christians are continuing their culture war battle that began in the late nineteenth century and continued throughout the twentieth century. In their quest to establish America as a Christian nation, the newest tools they have found are Israel and the Jewish people.

Meanwhile in the Presbyterian Church, "Social Gospel" progressive Presbyterians had sought for some time to leverage the denomination in favour of the Palestinians but lacked the necessary numbers. Until the twenty-first century, denominational doctrine had kept most conservatives in the denomination far longer than most other mainline denominations. The pro-Israel faction in the Presbyterian Church (USA) consisted of a mix of conservatives and "pluralistic" progressives, maintaining the balance between conservative and progressive policies in the denomination, including the issue of Israel-Palestine. Theopolitical contestation – namely, same-sex marriage and ordination – led, however, to an exodus of conservatives from the Presbyterian Church. The "pro-Israel" Presbyterians who remained in the denomination are heirs to the philosophy of Reinhold Niebuhr's

pluralist view of the Judeo-Christian tradition in America. They consider themselves progressive, thus explaining why they have stayed in their mainline denomination. As far as they are concerned, any position that threatens to compromise the maintenance of good relations between Americans or invite charges of antisemitism should be avoided. Many of these activists do not consider themselves pro-Israel per se; rather, they view the pro-Palestinian position of their denomination as a threat to Judeo-Christian relations in America and are committed to keeping their Church politically neutral.

Despite this dissertation's assertion that all three approaches towards Israel-Palestine may be situated in the context of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Social Gospel and Pluralist Christians do not generally employ such terminology and would probably deem such language exclusionary. At the time of the original debates, the inclusion of Jews (and Catholics) was novel to American thought. The twenty-first century expansion of American identity to immigrants from a host of national and religious backgrounds would make the concept of America as a Judeo-Christian country anathema to progressive Christians. Modern references to Judeo-Christian values are concentrated in the exceptionalist camp. Many conservative Christians support Israel in order to advance their conception of America's Judeo-Christian tradition, as "Israel" is presented as an idealized standard that America should aspire to. Nevertheless, the Israel they speak of is an imagined society built on conservative religious values. The State of Israel's progressive values, including attitudes towards marriage equality, do not fit the biblical narrative of Israel they are espousing, and when they venerate Israel

such values are negated. Thus, when some Christian Right activists walk into a Congressperson's office, they are not seeking support for the State of Israel. They are promoting conservative religious values in America. This aspiration may explain why Mormons and Orthodox Jews are welcomed into the CUFI family. Indeed, in contrast with more extreme Christian views on Islam, CUFI activists pride themselves on their tolerance. Since the enemy is anyone who does not ascribe to conservative religious values, presumably Muslims would pose no greater threat to CUFI than atheists or mainline Protestants.

Contribution to Scholarship

The dissertation opened with the question of why the US has been the State of Israel's greatest supporter. Two schools of thought were presented: the Jewish lobby and shared values. This study proposes an additional reason for US support for Israel, particularly in recent years: American domestic intra-Protestant politics.

In order to demonstrate my thesis, I have brought evidence in four areas. First, I have shown that the Presbyterian Church and Christians United for Israel are, in a certain sense, two sides of the same coin. The activists and their forebears have been in dialogue for many centuries. Previous studies have examined pro-Israel Christian activism and pro-Palestinian Christian activism in silos. Presenting their shared roots and their parallel stories through the evolution of American religious culture and the fact that key fissures occurred over issues related to Israel (frontierism, millennialism, dispensationalism) aids our understanding of the religious fervor and political passion surrounding the issue of Israel-Palestine in America. Second, interest group factors

have boosted the Israel-Palestine issue in twenty-first century America. Previously, scholars have examined the reasons why Christians support Israel/Palestine. Their conclusions form the basis of explanations of US support for Israel based on Christian elements. This dissertation argues that an overarching factor has thus far been overlooked. When Christians mobilize in the form of a domestic interest group, something "greater than the sum of the parts" occurs. The analysis of Christian pro-Israel/Palestine advocacy through the lens of the scholarly literature of interest groups demonstrates that Christian political organization and mobilization are integral factors fueling the prioritization of the issue of Israel-Palestine in America.

Third, Israel is used by many members of the Christian Right as a tool to bolster conservative religious values in America. And fourth, domestic Christian Left politics (particularly the campaign for marriage equality) have bolstered pro-Palestinian advocacy in the mainline Protestant Churches and strengthened the global BDS movement. These two factors are two key domestic elements that have led to the prioritization of Israel-Palestine. All four factors are important factors contributing to elevating the issue of Israel-Palestine in US foreign policy. In the short-term, this prioritization has led to greater American support for the State of Israel. Over the long-term, however, these domestic factors may lead to a weakening of US support for Israel. While the specifics have been detailed throughout this dissertation, a couple of examples may be helpful to the reader. One potential scenario might be a vacuum in CUFI leadership following Hagee's demise. Such a void would lead CUFI's efforts to falter and pro-Israel advocacy efforts to stall. This scenario is an interest

group factor, which has not been considered by previous scholarship. On the Presbyterian side, as their advocacy strengthens the BDS movement, American public opinion may shift in favor of the Palestinian cause. This scenario is likewise an interest group factor, as it considers the importance of considering coalitions and partnerships when examining political advocacy. Thus, this dissertation maintains that the US-Israel relationship cannot be understood without factoring in intra-Protestant domestic contestation.

Final Thoughts

During the 2021 Republican primaries, US Senate for Ohio candidate Mark Pukita came under fire for an ad calling out his opponent Josh Mandel's Jewishness. "Are we seriously supposed to believe the most Christian values Senate candidate is Jewish? I am so sick of these phony caricatures," a voice says in the ad (Hanau 2021). Mandel has repeatedly pointed to his "Judeo-Christian values" in a bid to attract evangelical voters and the home page of his campaign website features a picture of a church steeple topped with a cross and declares that Mandel is "Pro-God." In one primary debate, Mandel declared that the "Judeo-Christian ethic separates itself from Islam and atheism and all these other belief sets on so many levels, but one of the main levels is our acknowledgment of good vs. evil." While these comments have boosted Mandel's popularity in evangelical circles, his favor has waned in the Jewish community, even amongst Republicans (Kampeas 2021).

While it is unclear whether Mandel is politically pragmatic or historically naïve, the "strange bedfellows" effect of his acceptance by the Christian Right offers a

helpful way to frame evangelical pro-Israel support. This dissertation contends that while CUFI may be supportive of Jews today, their long-term views are less clear. Just as they wish to build their conception of America upon an idealized model of the imagined "Israel," Bible-believers imagine a certain type of Jew that fits their mold. In a world where conservative Christians can identify as "Jews" and Rudy Giuliani can claim to be more Jewish than George Soros, the notion of Judeo-Christian values takes on a whole new meaning. Such rhetoric is supersessionist in practice, despite the absence of any such theological claim. Challenged with such an assertion, these activists would presumably be surprised and repudiate the allegation wholeheartedly. Thus, I would like to borrow the terminology of Clarke (2005), who branded BDS efforts in the mainline Churches "functional" antisemitism and suggest that we are witnessing the rise of functional supersessionism amongst certain elements of the pro-Israel American Christian community.

This dissertation argues that the reason for such bewilderment on the part of both pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian Protestant activists when faced with charges of antisemitism is that the primary focus of their advocacy is not the Jews. Despite the common sentiment expressed by Jews of feeling targeted, this study has demonstrated that Protestant activism is often motivated by Protestant activism. While they may end up caught in the middle of such theological battles, the Jewish people are not the object of interest. The appreciation of this dichotomy is a vital element in the understanding of why Israel matters to American Protestants. For those Protestants who, with the advent of the Reformation's principle of *Sola*

Scriptura (a.k.a. fundamentalism), reread the Jews back into the Bible, ancient Israel – the land and the people – became integral to Christianity's mission. And for those who did not, Israel became the bane of their existence, since Israel – the land and the people – was never destined theologically to be restored.

In the various sections of this study, I have argued that certain anti-Zionist Protestants are more motivated by opposition towards their fundamentalist coreligionists than they are anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian. While evidence for this assertion has arisen from the sphere of domestic theopolitical contestation, I would make a similar argument more broadly across the centuries. Long before the modern nationalistic construction of "Israelis" and "Palestinians" and their conflict, Protestants were engaged in "theopolitical contestation" over the concept of "Israel."

Protestants battled over whether Israel in the Bible referred to contemporary Jews. Protestants battled over whether Jews should be restored to Israel. Protestants battled over the meaning of millennialism. Protestants battled over the legitimacy of dispensationalism. These theological disputes may have had consequences for Jews; the battles were focused, however, on the disputants' fellow Protestants. And so in response to the question of why Protestants care about Israel, I contend that many simply do not care. Israel and the Jewish people are "bystanders" in a larger theopolitical battle between Protestants. Likewise, I would argue that, in a certain sense, they do not care about the Palestinians either. Consequently, when accused of supersessionism or antisemitism, they are baffled, as their primary focus is not the Jews, but one another.

Throughout this dissertation I have endeavoured to present a balanced and coherent understanding of the issue. To that end, I have omitted statements by research participants representing fanatical attitudes. Nevertheless, to give the reader a sense of the tension expressed by certain research participants, let me share the sentiment felt by one Presbyterian pastor who was contemplating leaving the denomination and taking his parish with him:

> PC(USA) in its current iteration and in its essence is simply the religious face of left-wing political correctness. The very fact that PC(USA) will echo and cast a sanctified glow over every liberal teaching reminds [me] of the union of the Beast and False Prophet referenced in the last book of the New Testament which is highly apocalyptic. I wouldn't want to take something that is highly symbolic and put a newspaper interpretation on it. But what it does illustrate is that in apocalyptic times – and I'm not saying we're in apocalyptic times – but what I mean is times in which the conflict between good and evil reaches particularly virulently and potentially violent events; and in those apocalyptic-type times and the world has been through these before. We're on the edge of that at the moment – gross destabilization, increased militarism, ethnic conflict, disintegration of social order, it has a kind of apocalyptic feel. In such times, the difference between good and evil becomes much more prominent and easily identifiable. In an apocalyptic atmosphere, historically what you see, is that the state, the secular, godless, increasingly unjust and violent state, needs religious legitimization for their stance. And there will always be an apostate church that will be wedded to the state. And that's what I call the marriage of the Beast and False Prophet. The Beast being the secular militaristic state and the Prophet being the religious legitimization of that state and its actions. The current iteration is PC(USA) and an increasingly left-wing politically-correct establishment . . . In WWII, Hitler and the Nazis had the cooperation and even the endorsement of the state Lutheran Church. And the Church just turned a blind eye during the Holocaust. And it was breakaway groups from the established church that called Nazism demonic and realized where it was all going.[62]

[62] This is an anonymous quotation for obvious reasons.

While I initially dismissed this diatribe as an irrelevant aberration, I eventually came to the realization that the pastor's declaration captures the essence of the Protestant battle over Israel-Palestine. He makes no mention of Israel. He makes no mention of Jews. In his mind, he has watched his denomination "cross over" to the "dark side." He, in turn, is ready to cross over and walk away from a denomination he cherishes. No doubt, many Christians advocate for Israel/Palestine because they care deeply about Israelis or Palestinians. But it is clear that many Christians are also motivated by a much larger battle over the future of Christianity.

I opened this dissertation with the story of Daniella Weiss, the Israeli settler-activist who visits Edmonton every year. Due to her "extreme" political views, the local synagogue would not give her a platform. But that has never fazed Daniella, because she is venerated and treated as royalty by the evangelical church. Perhaps more poignant, however, is the lack of interest the church exhibits towards their local Jewish neighbours. The Bible's "People of Israel" is exemplified in Daniella Weiss. She is the true Israeli/Jew personifying everything they believe in. Any other so-called Jews have little relevance to their agenda and mission. In contrast with their forebears who may have evinced overt antisemitism, they are essentially ambivalent about Jews who do not meet their idealized construction of Israel. Therefore, I would argue that Jewish inhibitions regarding the meaning of political alliances and collaboration with Protestants are overestimated. While the substance of their Protestant bedfellows' ultimate goals might be discomforting, it is not entirely clear that these Christian activists are consciously aware of the antisemitic implications of

their theopolitical positions. They might be talking about Israel and the Jews or Palestine and the Palestinians, but there are much more important issues on their minds. The future of America and Judeo-Christian civilization is at stake.

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