

A historical analysis of Anglo-Israelism and the Hebrew Roots movement in South Africa

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Jeannette De Wet

U17363332

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Declaration of original work

I, Jeannette de Wet, declare that this thesis, which I submit in partial fulfilment of the degree M.Div. at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted previously by me for the completion of a degree at this university or at any other tertiary institution.

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Summary

Christianity has mostly associated itself with biblical Israel in spiritual or analogical terms. In terms of its physical continuity, Israel is mostly associated with the Jewish people. There are, however, two movements within Christianity which makes a distinction between the two houses of Israel: the house of Judah, represented by the Jewish people and the house of Ephraim, represented by the ten lost tribes of Israel. Anglo-Israelism claims that the Anglo-Saxons are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel who settled in Europe after the exile imposed upon them by the Assyrians. This movement, which originated in nineteenth century England, spread to America and South Africa where it adopted a racist, anti-Semitic slant.

The Hebrew Roots movement, gaining popularity in the USA and South Africa in the late 1900's, also draws a distinction between the house of Judah and the house of Ephraim. Both movements share to some extent the eschatological expectation of the re-unification of these two houses before the return of Christ. However, the Hebrew Roots movement relates to Israelite identity through a strong emphasis on Torah observance rather than lineal descendancy. This "two houses" correlation between the two movements justifies an inquest into the historical relationship between them. In order to ascertain this historical relationship, the development of both movements are described, with special attention to their development in the South African context. The main tenets of the movements are

also discussed and compared in order to gain a deeper understanding into how the movements relate to each other.

Key words

Church History, Anglo-Israelism, Hebrew Roots, Christian Identity, Israel-Visie, White Supremacy, Christian Zionism

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The question of biblical Israel's identity and how non-Jewish believers in Jesus should relate to it, dates back to the writings of the apostle Paul. The narratives of the Chosen People, elected by God to journey in faith with Him in order to be a light unto the nations, still serves as an ancestral historical account of personal and corporate identity to the Jewish people. For the Christian Church the matter is more complicated.

According to McGrath (2011:15/3) the New Testament emphasises a continuity between biblical Israel and Christians based on faith. Du Toit (2013:359) says that it was not until 160 CE that the term Israel was self-designated to Christians. In the Patristic Era, some theologians came to understand this relationship between Israel and the Church in supersessionist terms: the Church replaced Israel and were therefor receivers of all the covenantal promises, while God rejected the Jewish people due to their rejection of Jesus (Vlach 2008:54). This view known as replacement theology, which sadly often led to anti-Semitism, was widely adopted in the Church (Mans 1970:70).

However, some of the early church fathers retained an eschatological hope for the future salvation of physical Israel and some even espoused a future restoration of the land of Israel, therefor upholding a distinction and continuity of physical Israel, broadly understood as the Jewish people (Vlach 2008:52). Paul's views on the identity of Israel is a complex matter. However, since Paul regards himself as an Israelite (Rom.1:1), and refers to his "kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom 9:3)" as "the people of Israel (Rom.9:4)" I agree with Du Toit (2013:358, 360) that Paul maintained at least some "diachronic fluidity" between Israel and Jewish identity as understood in his time.

In reformed theology, Karl Barth, places the discussion of Israel's identity within his doctrine of election and makes two distinctions within this identity: the Church is understood as a second member of Israel, chosen by God to be a part of his congregation, and physical Israel (seen in continuity with Jewish identity), which still maintains its election due to the promises of God (Mans 1970:88, 90). This view of Israel's identity in relation to the Church rejects replacement theology and still acknowledges God's special

purpose with the Jewish people as identified with physical Israel. It has been adopted to some extent by the two mainstream Afrikaans Reformed churches in South Africa, although it is not currently a central issue (Mans 1970; West and South Cape Dutch Reformed Synod 2014).

As seen from the brief overview above, contemporary physical descendants of ancient Israel are most widely regarded as the Jewish people. There are however two movements within Christianity which believes “all Israel (Rom. 11:26)” refers to the physical descendants of the two houses of Israel which split after the reign of Solomon into the southern kingdom, represented by the tribe of Judah, and the northern kingdom, represented by Ephraim (also referred to as Israel at times). Anglo-Israelism claims as their main tenet, that the ten lost tribes of the southern kingdom are indeed the Anglo-Saxons, who spread from their captivity in Assyria into Europe. Within the Afrikaner context, this 19th century movement morphed into a virulently racist and anti-Semitic group during the mid 1900’s, commonly referred to as *Israel-Visie*, *Wit Teologie* or *Blanke Israelisme*.

The Hebrew Roots movement, rising in popularity amongst Afrikaners in the last few decades, has as its main tenet the belief that true followers of Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus is used) need to return to the observation of Old Testament laws, most notably the celebration of *Shabbat* and the seven biblical festivals, as a sign of the renewed (rather than new) covenant in Yeshua. This philo-Semitic, Zionist movement seems to have little to do with Anglo-Israelism at first glance. However, teachings concerning the identity of true Israel is also a core aspect of this group, with one faction especially promoting two houses theology, the believe that the physical descendants of the lost tribes of Israel and the tribe of Judah will once again be re-united in the land of Israel.

Due to these similar ideas regarding Israelite identity, this study will concern itself with the possible historical links between the two movements and a comparison between the beliefs of both groups. It is however important to note that not all Christian groups who promote a Hebraic approach to Scripture should be considered as part of the Hebrew Roots movement. Furthermore, Christian Zionism should not be regarded as synonymous with this movement. A distinction should also be made between Messianic Judaism,

defined as Jewish believers in Jesus who embrace the New Testament while retaining Jewish cultural and religious practices, and the Hebrew Roots movement, which consists of gentiles.

1.2. Aim of the study

The main aim of the study is to trace any possible historical links between Anglo-Israelism and the growing Hebrew Roots movement amongst Afrikaners in South Africa and secondly to determine the main tenets of these groups in order to better understand how these two movements relate to each other.

1.3. Research questions

The main research question can be formulated as follows: What is the historical relationship between Anglo-Israelism and the Hebrew Roots movement? In order to answer this question one would first have to inquire into the older of the two movements, Anglo-Israelism. Firstly: How did Anglo-Israelism develop and how did it evolve in the South African context? Secondly: What is the main tenets of the movement amongst Afrikaners in South Africa today?

In investigating the Hebrew Roots movement, the following questions need attention: Where did the movement originate and what were the initial influences of this movement? Did the Anglo-Israelite movement have any historical ties to the originating ideas of the Hebrew Roots movement? How did the Hebrew Roots movement develop in South Africa? What are the main tenets of the Hebrew Roots movement and how does it relate to Anglo-Israelism and its South African expression, *Israel-Visie*?

1.4. Literature review

Scholarly writings on Anglo-Israelism can generally be divided into two categories: theological researchers who pay special attention to hermeneutics and the biblical exegesis used by groups belonging to this movement. These writings serve an apologetic purpose, pointing to the fallacies promoted by Anglo-Israelism. Writers concerned with *Israel-Visie* in South Africa include P.M. Venter's 1988 article *Israelvisie: destruksie of*

dekonstruksie? and H.G. van der Westhuizen's book *Blankheid en Waarheid: Blankes=Israelvisie*. The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church also tasked a team with researching the movement in its Afrikaner context in 1986, indicating its growing concern over this development. The full report is published in the 1990 General Synod's Agenda (pp. 95-100).

The other group of writings are produced not only by theologians, but also other scholars from the social sciences. This research is not concerned so much with hermeneutics but rather with history, causal theory and its socio-political implications. One of the most extensive works is Michael Barkun's book *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (1997). It focusses on the development of the Christian Identity movement in the USA, and therefore does not speak directly to the South African context. It does however provide a very thorough review of the history of Anglo-Israelism and provides critical insight into the racial aspects of the movement. Chris Greyling's article *From hyper-imperialist to Super-Afrikaner: the developments within a White Theology* (1997) studies the political reasons for growing Afrikaner interest in Anglo-Israelism from 1960 onwards and includes an excellent historical overview. A more recent contribution is L. Meyfarth's master's thesis in Theology (2019), which proposes a causal theory based on Afrikaner identity in the context of the "new" South Africa.

Surprisingly little has been written in international academic circles on the Hebrew Roots movement. Although the movement seems to grow in popularity amongst Afrikaners, there are also very few official Church publications in South Africa on the matter (a yet to be approved 2012 concept document appears on the website of the Western Cape synod of the Dutch Reformed Church¹). In the American context, the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS) published a very thorough position paper titled *One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement* in 2014 on the nature and history of the Hebrew Roots movement, expressing their concerns over the threat that it may pose to both Christian and Jewish communities.

¹ <https://kaapkerk.co.za/joodse-wortels-van-die-christelike-geloof-beweging/>

Perhaps an earlier academic article to promote a return to the Hebrew understanding of Jesus' teaching is Keene's, titled *The Hebrew Roots of Christianity* (1974). It does not reflect the main tenets of the Hebrew Roots movement, yet it emphasises important concepts prevalent within it: Paul misrepresents Jesus' teachings in some aspects (1974:21) and a knowledge of ancient Hebrew concepts are necessary in order to remove "the invalid additions of ancient concepts" from the true teachings of Jesus (1974:26).

Several scholarly writings appear on subjects relating to the Hebrew Roots movement, such as Christian Zionism and Messianic Judaism. Joseph Williams' article *The Pentecostalization of Christian Zionism* (2015) is an invaluable contribution, historically connecting Anglo-Israelism to the development of Pentecostal Zionism and the Christian interest in Hebrew roots. Writing about the gentile majority within Messianic Judaism, Hillary Kaell's 2014 article *Born-again seeking: explaining the gentile majority in messianic Judaism* also greatly contributes to our understanding of the historical development of Messianic Judaism and its Christian evangelical support, which intersects with the Hebrew Roots movement. Du Toit writes in the same vein from a South African perspective with his article *The Radical New Perspective on Paul, Messianic Judaism and their connection to Christian Zionism* (2017). Writers on South African pastor, Bennie Kleynhans, an important link between American Pentecostal Zionism and the Afrikaner context, includes Nel (2008) and Horn (2008). It seems that to this date no scholarly publication addresses the Hebrew Roots movement in the South African context directly. A deeply insightful and in-depth description of the Hebrew Roots movement in its American context, is Jewish journalist Menachem Kaiser's article for *Tablet* magazine titled *For some Believers Trying to Connect with Jesus, the Answer is to Live like a Jew*.

1.5. Research methodology

I will be doing a descriptive and exploratory literature study based on historical methodology. This means that I will research the development of Anglo-Israelism and the Hebrew Roots movement over time, from its initial emergence to its current forms in the Afrikaner context of South Africa. I will pay particular attention to the primary sources of both movements, citing from the works of original and current proponents of both

movements. These sources are in the form of pamphlets, books and a vast array of internet material. A number of secondary sources on Anglo-Israelism exist, both in terms of the Christian Identity movement in the USA and the *Israel-Visie* movement in South Africa. Fewer secondary sources on the Hebrew Roots movement currently exist and therefore I will rely more heavily on primary material for that specific section of the research. Since a vast array of sources are internet-based, I have chosen to reference some of the online sources as footnotes instead of in the bibliography to simplify access.

1.6. Delimitation of the study

This study does not aim to deliver extended critical commentary on the biblical exegesis used by the two movements described. Therefore, theological commentary on the beliefs of the two movements are limited, since the main aim of the study is to ascertain the historical lines between the movements and describe the main tenets of each.

2. Anglo-Israelism

2.1. Definition

Anglo-Israelism, also referred to as British-Israelism, is a movement which started amongst Protestant Christians in 19th century England, with the main premise that the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples are lineal descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel and therefor legitimate recipients of God's covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Barkun 1997:iv; Goodrick-Clarke 2001:235, The British-Israel-World Federation 2021). The originally philo-Semitic movement developed into an anti-Semitic, far-right movement in America known today as the Christian Identity movement (Barkun 1997:3). A similarly right-wing, anti-Semitic movement grew in popularity amongst Afrikaners from the 1960's in South Africa, broadly referred to as *Israel-Visie* or *Blanke Israelisme* (Greyling 1992:47; Meyfarth 2019:2).

2.2. The historical development of Anglo-Israelism

2.2.1. The beginning

Barkun (1997:5) points to the immanent millennial expectations of the Puritans during the mid-1600's which already signified some affinity between the British and biblical Israel. Several theories regarding the discovery of the lost tribes emerged at this time, together with the millennial hope that the English would help restore the Jews to Palestine, and so play a leading role in God's end times plan (Barkun 1997:5). The association with biblical Israel was further deepened by the Puritan commitment to cleanse their faith from 'Romish, Latinate encrustations' by focusing on the original Hebrew text and context of their faith (Sleeper 2009:47). Although the association with Israel's journey into the wilderness was mainly analogical (Barkun 1997:5; Teeter 2001:10) it also had a profound impact on the way Puritans in America reflected upon political theory (Sleeper 2009:48).

Richard Brothers (1757-1824), a Newfoundland born Englishman, wrote a booklet in 1794 which drew the first links between British lineal descendancy and the Israelite tribes (Teeter 2000:21). This self-described "prince and prophet" wrote that he would be the one "to order them (the Jewish people) to depart in great haste from all nations, and go to the

land of Israel (Brothers 1794:7).” These “Jews” were not just those who identified as such, but amongst the British people there were also “hidden Israel,” those who are unaware of their lineal Israelite heritage (Barkun 1997:6). Not unlike some in Pentecostal circles today, Brothers displayed his prophetic ability by connecting contemporary political figures to the apocalyptic literature found in Daniel and Revelation. The little horn in Daniel 7 for instance, is attributed to the King of Prussia (Brothers 1794:17). Such assignments were used to make predictions about the immediate future of European powers according to which he dictated to the English government how they should handle international affairs.

Brothers’ eccentric nature landed him in an asylum though, and it would only be with the writings of John Wilson, influenced by Brothers’ ideas, that Anglo-Israelism became a movement (Greyling 1992:48). Wilson’s book *Our Israelite Origins*, published in 1840, provided the first exposition of Anglo-Israelism (Michael 2013:189). According to Teeter (2000:4) he was the first to base his theory on Scripture. The title page of his book boasts to Bible verses: “‘But the birthright was Joseph’s’ – 1 Chron. v. 2” and “‘The gifts and calling of God is without repentance’ – Rom. xi. 28.”

In the preface to the American edition of *Our Israelite Origins*, published in 1853, the editor summarises the just of the argument as follows:

The prophecies concerning Ephraim, whom God declares to be his “first born,” are, that “His seed shall become a *multitude of nations*”... If this prophecy has failed, so may all others. If it has not failed, where is “the multitude of nations”? (Italics by the author)

Joseph and Ephraim is used interchangeably to refer to the ten tribes while Judah refers to the Jewish people. It is clear that the literal prophetic nature of Scripture is emphasised as the editor expounds on the importance of the theory if found indeed to be true:

...in that case, the inhabitants of the United States are a part of the “lost tribes of Israel,” and the literal posterity of Jacob, and particularly are the *Anglo-Saxons found to be the posterity of Ephraim*, the youngest son of Joseph...His grand characteristic was to be that of advance and progression...and still is the prominent

trait of character manifested by the Anglo-Saxon race. (Wilson 1853:vi, italics by the author)

Wilson's broader racial theory consists of the distinction between the Calmac Tartar (Huns), the Caucasians and the Negros as the "three grand races of men" which can be distinguished by physical features "as well as by intellectual and moral character (Wilson 1853:33)." This "biblical" distinction is based on the three sons of Noah: Japheth (Huns), Ham (Negros) and Shem (Caucasians). His view of the Jewish people are somewhat ambivalent since he considers them "an improved specimen" of the Caucasians and are therefor "the chief of the nations (Wilson 1853:35)" and "our kinsman according to the flesh (Wilson 1853:40)" but also "mingled with Edom (Wilson 1853:94)." Barkun (1997:7) states that Wilson did not regard the Jewish people as having equal religious status to the Anglo-Saxons. As will be discussed later, Wilson's white supremacist theory will be utilised by the Christian Identity movement in America and *Israel-Visie* in South Africa to justify racist ideology.

The actual land of Israel is also a central theme for Wilson's prophetic reading of Scripture in which he sees the desolation of the land as fulfilment of biblical prophecy and the immanent return to its former Edenic fruitfulness as the Israelites return to their homeland according to the biblical promises (Wilson 1853:46). Wilson (1853:66) identifies Ephraim (as representative of the ten tribes) with "the fullness of the gentiles" described in Romans 11:25. Ephraim is therefor representative of the Christian nations, and also physical descendants of Israel, while Judah is representative of the Jewish people. In keeping with the patriarchal promises and blessings, it is then these two reunited houses of Israel who stands before the throne of God in Revelation 7, and in this manner "all Israel will be saved (Rom.11:26)"(Wilson 1853:68). Meyfarth (2019:12) and Sharpe (2000:606) wrongly assumes than Wilson does not consider the Jews as part of Israel. This highlights the fine distinction that should be made with regards to Judah's identity, a matter which also later becomes very important in the Hebrew Roots movement. Wilson uses the term "House of Israel" and "House of Ephraim" interchangeably in reference to the biblical northern kingdom who were known as the kingdom of Israel and of which Wilson believed that the tribe of Ephraim was the main representative. Wilson also refers to "all Israel" in

a collective sense when all twelve tribes, including the Jewish people, will be reunited in the end of days.

He then considers Jesus as coming only for the lost houses of Israel (Teeter 2000:15). Both Ephraim and Judah will believe in their Messiah but during different dispensations: Ephraim first and Judah only in the end of days after they have returned to the land of Israel. As we will see later on, this teaching relates directly to the dual purposes of the two houses and the millennial expectation of the reunification of them in the Promised Land as set out in the two houses theology promoted in certain Hebrew Roots circles. Wilson (1853:87) writes:

The two houses seem to have been intended to fulfil considerably different purposes in God's economy of grace to the world. Of Judah was to come the One promised Seed, the Heir of all things: of Ephraim, the multitudinous seed, so much promised to the fathers...They shall be one nation upon the mountains of Israel forever.

Edward Hine, a disciple of Wilson's since his youth, further advanced the cause of the Anglo-Israelite movement in England, Scotland and North America (Barkun 1997:10). In the opening chapter of his 1870 pamphlet *The English Nation Identified with the Lost House of Israel by twenty-seven Identifications* he continues with the two houses concept of Wilson. Like Wilson, Hine (1870:9) explains the separation of the two houses at the hand of the biblical account in which the once united kingdom of Israel split into the northern kingdom, composed of ten tribes, and the southern kingdom, composed of Judah and Levi. After the Assyrians took the northern tribes captive in 725 BC, they became lost in the lands of their captivity (Hine 1870:11). Through a collection of single-verse prophetic Scriptures, Hine (1870:12) asserts that "they were only to be lost in name, to become ignorant of their own ancestry." An important aspect Hine (1870:22) highlights is God's divorce decree against Israel due to their idolatry. Because of this Israel became lost, but God keeps his promise of multiplication to them. It is also because of this divorce that Christians are freed from the ceremonial laws still kept by the Jewish people (Hine 1870:23).

It was then with great zeal that Hine taught the most wonderful news of the mystery of lost Israel revealed as the British themselves! While Wilson included the Germans in his

Israelite scheme, Hine took advantage of his political context and focussed on the exclusive Ephraimite heritage of the British (Barkun 1997:9). He even went on to villainise the Germans, who increasingly became a contending power with Britain, by identifying them with the Assyrians, who apparently became lost themselves (Barkun 1997:11). Teeter (2000:27) rightfully asserts that Anglo-Israelism gave “a justification and explanation for the empire's world position and future.” Hine (1870:20) even identifies colonialism as a sign of identification calling it “one great and grand commission that was given only to Israel.”

Hine later cleverly expanded his scope beyond the British Isles to include the European people now occupying the new world: “America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Hine 1870:21).” Based on this premise, North America will later come to be identified with the tribe of Manasseh (Barkun 1997:11; Goodrick-Clarke 2001:235), notably the ‘lesser’ son of Joseph according to the patriarchal blessing.

Hine (1870:23) also affirms Wilson’s belief according to Matthew 10:5 and 14:24 and a host of other single-verse references, that Jesus came only to save “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This does not mean Hine considered missionary work to other nations unnecessary. On the contrary, he promoted it as a further sign of Israelite identity, yet only necessary until Israel has come to know her own identity. Then there will be a “reverse” order of proceedings when the nations will come to Israel (Anglo-Saxon descendants) in recognition of God’s blessing of them (Hine 1870:34). Judah however, “who will return to the land under the Mosaic Law, and will there re-establish the Temple Service (Hine 1870:24),” is lost to Christ only until the very last days when God Himself will open their eyes to Jesus as their Messiah (Zech.12:10). For this reason, any attempts to evangelise the Jewish people is futile (Hine 1870:24). Similar ideas were introduced by influential Christian Zionist Douglas Young in the mid 1900’s (Hummel 2015:39).

Wilson’s eschatological expectation of the re-unification of the two houses of Israel, Ephraim and Judah, were perpetuated by Hine, who believed that this unification in the land of Israel will mark the return of Jesus to establish his physical rule from Jerusalem. Barkun (1997:11) confirms: “A significant part of British-Israel eschatology was to be the common enterprise of Anglo Jewish resettlement of Palestine as essential to the fulfilment

of biblical prophecy.” It is important to note that the eschatological expectation of Jewish return to the Promised Land, which is also a mayor aspect of Christian Zionism, was not unique to Anglo-Israelism at the time (Smith 2010). The distinctive element of Anglo-Israelism is the identity of the lost tribes and their end-time reunification with the tribe of Judah.

Although Anglo-Israelism had such prominent patrons as Queen Victoria and King Edward VII (Michael 2013:190), the movement peaked in England in the 1920’s with a predominantly middle-class membership of around 5000 (Barkun 1997:15). Members were encouraged to maintain their church membership and there is no claims to an exclusive doctrine of salvation (Barkun 1997:15). The movement was also essentially without an authoritative central body and for these reasons it eludes the status of a cult (Barkun 1997:15; Meyfarth 2019:11).

2.2.2. Historical development of Anglo-Israelism in America

Since the American development of Anglo-Israelism had a significant influence on both *Israel-Visie* and the Hebrew Roots movement in South Africa, it is important to describe it briefly. American Anglo-Israelism essentially evolved into two streams: the right-wing, anti-Semitic Christian Identity movement which resembles *Israel-Visie*, and a Sabbatarian movement advanced by Herbert Armstrong’s Church of God. Goodrick-Clarke (2001:234) says: “The growth of Christian Identity in the United States after the Second World War indicates the Americans’ strong attachment to Christianity to guarantee their status as pilgrims, pioneers and settlers of the Promised Land.” This self-designation as conquerors of the Promised Land was also a permeating theme in Afrikaner culture (Du Toit 1983:920).

As already noted, an American edition of Hine’s writings were already published in 1853 and by the 1870’s there was a notable American following (Barkun 1997:17). According to Greyling (1992:49) two books by American authors MM. Eshelman titled *Two Sticks: The Lost Tribes of Israel Discovered* (1886) and Rev. J.H. Allen tiled *Judah’s Sceptre and Joseph’s Birthright* (1902) became the bestsellers within the early stages of the movement, further disseminating Hine and Wilson’s ideas.

Aside from Eshelman's curious claim that the prophet Jeremiah travelled to Ireland to join the tribe of Dan there, his book also highlights some important aspects which will later become prevalent in Pentecostal circles and the Hebrew Roots movement: He describes his view of biblical prophecy as "the Lord's message of what is to come and where it shall take place (1886:27)". From this he ascertains that Russia will attack the future united tribes of Israel in Palestine for the prophesied battle of Armageddon. "The dragon, the beast, the false prophet and the Anti-Christ (Eshelman 1886:192)" all feature in this prediction. It is quite reminiscent of the bestselling book *Jerusalem Countdown: a warning to the world* (2005) by dispensationalist and Christian Zionist, John Hagee.

Eshelman (1886:181) reiterates the association with the two sticks of Ezekiel 37 with Israel (house of Ephraim) and Judah, and adds to this the identification with the two witnesses in Revelation 9:3-4 & 11:3 and the two olive branches and candlesticks in Zechariah 4:11-14 in which the "mystery of God" will be revealed. Again, the Jews and Anglo-Saxons will be joined together in the land of Israel to fulfil the millennial expectation, yet only after the "two witnesses" have overthrown the Anti-Christ, a false Messiah chosen as leader of Israel before the battle of Armageddon (Eshelman 1886:187, 192).

Like his predecessors, Eshelman (1886:105) also uses Hebrew wordplay to make certain historic-prophetic claims:

The word Manasseh in Hebrew is *Nenasseh*, from *Nasshane*, which means forgetting. So England (Ephraim) and America (Manasseh) will be friends, for Manasseh will forgive and forget (author referring to the Treaty of Ghent).

Although Eshelman's book was influential, Barkun (1997:18) says he lacked the drive to create a national movement and it was the American, Charles Totten, who stepped to the plate. Totten was a prolific writer and this "Professor of Yale" is still quoted in Christian Identity material (Barkun 1997:18). The Hebrew Roots Training Institute founded by South African, Willem Liebenberg, also quotes "the late Professor C.A.L. Totten of Yale University's profound words concerning this crucial subject" under the heading *Foundational teachings every Christian should know*¹. Totten's work of spreading Anglo-

¹ <https://www.hrti.co.za/Downloads.html>

Israelite teachings was greatly assisted by Edward Hine himself, who sailed from England in 1884 to embark on a four year lecturing tour of the United States of America. Barkun (1997:21) summarises their combined efforts:

Totten's and Hine's labours had created three centers for future British-Israel growth in America: the Northeast, where the two had lectured and published; the Midwest, where their teachings struck a responsive chord among some evangelical Protestants; and ultimately, in the Far West, where many evangelicals had moved.

Due to the Puritan association with Israel, Williams (2015:164) says that during this period, many Americans associated their national identity with that of "God's New Israel." According to Barkun (1997:20) it was on this basis that Anglo-Israelism found an accepting audience with some Americans in spite of its eccentric views. The association with America as a parallel type of Israel remains a theme in Evangelical circles today, as clearly expressed in the million copy bestseller book *The Harbinger* (2011), written by Messianic Rabbi Jonathan Cahn (Williams 2015:159).

2.2.2.1. Influence of Anglo-Israelism on early Pentecostalism

Totten's writings found a ready recipient in Maine evangelist Frank Sanford, who established a millenarian community named Shiloh in 1893 and incorporated Totten's material into the Shiloh Bible School (Barkun 1997:20). Williams (2015:173) says: "...given his depth of commitment to British Israelism, Israel themed symbolism and ritual permeated Sanford's ministry." In anticipation of the re-unification of the Anglo-Israelites with their Jewish fellow Israelites, Sanford promoted a return to the Jewish festivals, including Saturday Sabbath, as well as kosher laws and circumcision, which all enforced their literal identification with Israel (Williams 2015:174).

Two of Sanford's students crossed paths with Holiness evangelist Charles Fox Parham in Topeka in 1900 (Goff 1988:59). After Parham studied under Sanford for a month at Shiloh, he returned to Topeka where he modelled his own Bible school on that of the center at Shiloh (Barkun 1997:20). According to Nelson (2020:43) Parham was converted to Anglo-Israelism by prominent proponent of the movement, J.H. Allen, prior to meeting Sanford. Allen, who wrote the influential book *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright*,

was vice-patron of the British Israel World Federation and co-founder of a church in the Holiness movement, The Church of God (Barkun 1997:21). Barkun (1997:21) says: "Together, Parham and Allen infused British-Israelism into the premillennial evangelical sects that were emerging out of Midwestern Methodism." Parham was also eager to learn from other leaders in the movement including Chicago evangelist John Alexander Dowie, founder of the religious community named Zion (Williams 2015:171). As will be discussed later, Dowie's "zionism" would arguably become one of the greatest shaping forces in southern African Pentecostalism. Parham adopted Dowie and Sanford's "incorporation of Israel-themed rituals and dress" (Williams 2015:174).

Goff (1988:8) argues that Parham is the founder of Pentecostalism since he was the first to promote the foundational Pentecostal doctrine of glossolalia as being the evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. The Azusa Street revival (1906-1909), under the leadership of William Seymour, marked the beginning of this movement according to Horn (2009:105) although some of Parham's Bethel school students reportedly spoke in tongues in 1901 already, a phenomenon which was interpreted as "a restoration of the apostolic faith" (Root 2006:85). Despite the dispute of who the true founder of the movement was, there can be no doubt that Parham played a cardinal role in the formation of Pentecostal thought.

Parham considered the Protestant establishment to be corrupt and was therefore a restorationist who wanted to see the Church return to its New Testament state (Root 2006:8). The manifestation of tongues marked a restoration to the church of Acts 2 and the gift also proved the receiver fit to be "the bride of Christ." According to Parham the bride was one of the elite Christian groups to receive Holy Spirit baptism and was tasked with the mission to "live among the Jews who had restored Palestine" (Root 2006:7). These two concepts of a return to the original understanding of the early church in suspicion of mainstream doctrines and the set-apartness of the bride of Christ also became prominent themes in the Hebrew Roots movement.

Although the racial identification of Anglo-Saxons with the lost tribes never became a mainstream component of Pentecostalism, Anglo-Israelism helped to shape a particular eschatological connection with Israel, especially at a time when early Zionism began to flourish. Parham's eschatological view of the Jewish people, clearly influenced by Anglo-

Israelism's concept of the unification of the two houses, is explained by Williams (2015:177): "Rather, it was God's plan from the start that Jews would see and accept Christ at his Second Coming. Then and only then would Jesus unite Jews and Christians 'in the Messiah's Sabbatic Kingdom of one thousand years.'"

It should be noted that Dispensationalism, which had its origins in the 1800's with John Nelson Darby, also draws a sharp distinction between Israel, understood as the Jewish people, and the Church, also with a clear millennial expectation connected to Israel (Sweetnam 2010:198). It does not however consider Christianity as a part of physical Israel, as in the case of Anglo-Israelism. Dispensationalism was widely accepted by Pentecostals in the early twentieth century according to Horn (2008:129). There were thus more than one stream of overlapping influence on early Pentecostal thought concerning Israel's identity and destiny.

It is also worth mentioning Herbert Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God, who according to Barkun (1997:14) developed a sect out of Anglo-Israelite ideas. Armstrong was a Sabbatarian Adventist, convinced of the Christian duty to keep the Old Testament laws, especially Jewish festivals and dietary codes (Barrett 2005:44). Through the extensive media network he built, Anglo-Israelite ideas were disseminated worldwide, including to an Afrikaans audience in South Africa (Pont 1989:8). Since the Worldwide Church of God is also considered a precursor to the Hebrew Roots movement, it will be discussed in further detail in section 3.2.1.3.

2.2.2.2. The Christian Identity movement

Christian Identity is an American development stemming from Anglo-Israelism and it closely resembles the *Israel-Visie* movement in South Africa. As we have seen, early Anglo-Israelites had either an ambivalent or philo-Semitic attitude towards the Jewish people. This would change dramatically with the Christian Identity movement. The belief of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority naturally lend itself to more violent forms of racism which would be fostered within this movement.

According to Barkun (1997:22) Ruben H. Sawyer, an Oregon clergyman who wrote Anglo-Israelite articles since 1921, was one of the first to connect the movement with a

right wing political agenda. This influential Anglo-Israelite figure also lectured on behalf of the Ku Klux Klan in an effort to win public support by softening the racial overtones of the organisation (Barkun 1997:23). Michael (2013:191) points to the popularity of the eugenics movement in the 1920's and scientific racism proponents such as Lothrop Stoddard as contributing factors to the development of Christian Identity. Stoddard was the first to make the distinction between the "purity" of Sephardic Jews and the Ashkenazim, whom he considered a mixed breed and not true Jews (Michael 2013:191). This distinction was promoted by Sawyer (Barkun 1997:25). The separation of the Jewish people from their biblical identity was taken a step further by a booklet published by the British Israel Association of Greater Vancouver called *When?: A prophetic novel of the very near future*. This book, written by a self-proclaimed Semite H. Ben Judah, was one of the first writings to promote the belief that the Jewish people were literal descendants of Satan (Michael 2013:191).

Another influential anti-Semitic Anglo-Israelite figure was William J. Cameron, the editor of Henry Ford's newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent* (Goodrick-Clarke 2001:235). He introduced the American public to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* through anti-Semitic articles published in the 1920's and conceived his own ideas of corrupt Jewish racial identity as being an "Esau race" who has defiled the true Hebrew bloodline (Goodrick-Clarke 2001:236). Anglo-Israelism in general were a fragmented movement up until the late 1920's when Howard Rand succeeded to establish a national organisation, the Anglo-Saxon Federation of America (Barkun 1997:30). Rand and Cameron subsequently succeeded together in connecting the federation with American right-wing politics. Although the organisation fell into disarray after World War II, the network that was set up and the materials distributed through it paved the way for Christian Identity to arise (Barkun 1997:45). The network on the West coast of North America grew especially in the 1940's with concentrated groups in Vancouver and Los Angeles, and it is to this time and place Barkun (1997:48) ascribes the birth of Christian Identity.

The movement continued to promote various theories regarding the illegitimacy of the Jews as true descendants of Israel. Goodrick-Clarke (2001:237) says: "By the 1960's, when Christian Identity was established as a force on the extreme right, the Khazar

ancestry of the Jews was a firm article of faith.” Wesley Swift, a key leader of the movement from the 1950’s promoted again the idea of Jews being the literal offspring of Satan, who seduced Eve and consequently produced Cain (Barkun 1997:49). Through the work of Richard Butler, Christian Identity was used to give neo-Nazi sentiments a Christian veneer as Butler created a military wing connected to his congregation called Aryan Nations (Goodrick-Clarke 2001:242). Michael (2013:198) states: “The Aryan Nations was instrumental in popularizing Christian Identity in the extreme right.” The specific eschatological outlook of Christian Identity also proved a fertile breeding ground for far-right violence and acts of terrorism (Michael 2013:197).

2.2.3. Historical development of Anglo-Israelism in South Africa

After South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1962, Anglo-Israelism grew in Afrikaans membership and adopted a far right-wing ideology (Greyling 1992:47) similar to that of Christian Identity in the USA. The movement’s followers in South Africa was estimated to be about 10 000 in the 1990’s (Schönsteich & Boshoff 2003:52). According to Meyfarth (2019:1) it has seen growing membership amongst Afrikaners in the last two decades. Since times of crises tend to create an ideal atmosphere for various wayward theories and ideas to flourish, so indeed the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to the recent rise in popularity of a prominent Afrikaans Anglo-Israelite who calls himself the Boer of Migdol. His Facebook page *Wat is die Waarheid?*¹ has a following of more than 8000 and some of his videos, which include anti-vaccination propaganda, has more than 7000 views. These numbers might indicate a growing interest amongst Afrikaners on topics relating to Anglo-Israelism.

Greyling (1992:50) says: “British Israel study-groups were formed in South Africa in the 1920’s.” The South African branch of the British Israel World Federation was established in 1928 with A.W. Marris overseeing a membership of 180 (Greyling 1992:51). Through the organisation’s magazine, the *South African National Message*, and later the *Covenant Message*, clear support for the English Empire was garnered based on Anglo-Israelite beliefs (Greyling 1992:53). From the onset, these magazines also tried to convince

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Wat-is-Die-Waarheid-159690928013004/>

Afrikaans readers that they were part of the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people and therefore have to accept the British as their brothers (Greyling 1992:55). Afrikaners had little taste for such pro-British sentiments though.

When the doctrine was adapted by Afrikaans writers, such as H. Swart, to include other European tribes associated with Afrikaner ancestry as part of the lost tribes of Israel, the movement became more palpable to Afrikaners (Pont 1989:9). The notion of God's division of mankind in separate people groups which should remain segregated in obedience to God's order, also resonated with Afrikaner beliefs of the time (Greyling 1992:55). When South Africa became a republic in 1961, to the great consternation of the English Anglo-Israelites, Afrikaners started to branch off from the English Anglo-Israelite body (Greyling 1992:55).

Pastor F.W.C Naser from Vereeniging, which was arguably the most prominent *Israel-Visie* teacher, published his first booklet in 1956 titled *Apartheid (racial segregation): What saith Scripture* (Pont 1989:9). Anglo-Israelite ideology provided another "biblical" basis for white supremacy. Afrikaner association with Anglo-Israelite ideas thus became increasingly founded upon right-wing political ideology similar to Christian Identity in the USA. Naser founded the *Ekklesia Evangeliegroep*, consisting of twelve congregations nationwide (DRC synod 1990:96). The main congregation in Vereeniging still remains active today. Their livestream services can be viewed on YouTube¹. Other *Israel-Visie* groups include *Die Gemeente van die Verbondsvolk*, founded in Kuruman by former Dutch Reformed minister G.J. Steenkamp, *Studiegroep Aktueel* in Windhoek, *Bybelstudiekring Plumstead*, *Aksie Aktueel Perdekop* (DRC synod 1990:96) and Ryno Opperman's Research Institute in Mosselbay which also incorporates Sacred Names theology (Greyling 1992:57). Other than Naser's numerous writings, important Afrikaans books of the movement include Dr N.A. Burger's *Rigters onder die Suiderkruis* and Robert Hayes' *Die land oorkant die rivier Kus* (Greyling 1992:57). Both Pont (1989:8) and Greyling (1992:50) recognises the contribution which Herbert Armstrong's Church of God

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQtYXkAE_is

made to the dissemination of Anglo-Israelite ideas in South Africa through their widely publicised magazine *The Plain Truth*.

Since some *Israel-Visie* groups promote the idea that black people are soulless descendants of Satan, and that God's chosen should be protected, some people connected to these groups have committed racially motivated crimes of violence such as the infamous *Wit Wolf*, Barend Strydom, and Eugene Marais (Schönteich & Boshoff 2003:54).

2.3. Main tenets of Anglo-Israelism and *Israel-Visie*

As already established, Christian Identity and *Israel-Visie* deviated from the original Anglo-Israelite beliefs in certain aspects. For the sake of clarity, I will firstly summarise the main tenets of the original proponents of Anglo-Israelism briefly. Since these tenets were already discussed in detail in section 2.2. I will refrain from referencing it again.

2.3.1. Main Tenets of Anglo-Israelism

Two houses doctrine

Israel is understood as comprising of the two houses who split during Rehoboam's reign into the southern kingdom, referred to as the house of Judah (the Jewish people), and the northern kingdom, referred to most commonly as the house of Ephraim. The house of Ephraim consists of the ten lost tribes who were taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The ten tribes were lost due to God's divorce decree (Jer.3:8; Hos. 2:8) against Israel. In the end of days, God will re-unite the two houses, with Judah returning to Palestine. The Jewish people will repent for rejecting Jesus and accept him as their Messiah. The millennium will finally come after these two united witnesses will overthrow the enemy (associated with Russia) at the battle of Armageddon. The two sticks of Ezekiel 37 is commonly used to refer to the end time's re-unification of the two houses and the preceding battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38.

The Anglo-Saxons are the lost ten tribes of Israel

The ten tribes travelled from their captivity in Assyria to Europe where they became the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic peoples. Therefor the British, and those who spread from Europe to the new world, including America and South Africa, are literal lineal descendants of Israel. Based on this designation they are a superior race destined by God to rule.

Salvation is only for actual descendants of Israel

Jesus came only for “the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15:24).” Salvation is therefor only applicable to the physical descendants of Israel.

2.3.2. Main tenets of *Israel-Visie*

As with Anglo-Israelism in general, there are a variety of divergences from certain standpoints within the different groups who associate themselves with *Israel-Visie*. I have therefor summarised the basic tenets most generally accepted within the movement.

Afrikaners are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel

According to Venter (1988:516) this is the common denominator amidst all the various beliefs of the groups in this movement, upon which they claim true Israelite heritage based on their skin colour, facial features and cultural values. Nesor (1988:5, 7) writes of the elevation of the Afrikaners:

Our own history is proof that God took the cream of Western Europe, Germany, Norway, Sweden, England, Scotland and France, and settled them in this country...Our ancestors in Western Europe were the descendants of the “Lost” Ten Tribes of Israel.

Zephaniah 3:10 which speaks of the worshippers “beyond the rivers of Cush” are used as proof that God sent some of the Israelites to southern Africa, from where they will fulfil their task to be a blessing to the nations (Greyling 1992:56).

The Jewish people are not Israelites

This is where *Israel-Visie* deviates most prominently from early Anglo-Israelism and associates with Christian Identity beliefs. In the vein of the American Anglo-Israelite and anti-Semite, William Cameron, proponents of *Israel-Visie* believe that the Jews are actually descendants from Esau, a literal descendant of Satan, who intermarried with the Hittites and are therefore impure (DRC Synod 1990:97). Nesper (2006) gives a detailed explanation of this “two seeds” doctrine. The statement that Abraham was not a Jew, is important to this theory and repeated in several publications (e.g. Verbondsboodskap¹). Prolific Afrikaans writer, Adriaan Snyman (2019), writes on his blog *Die Vaandeltraer*: “*Die Jode word vandag deur die wêreldkerk geloof en geprys as God se volk, terwyl God by monde van sy profeet Siener van Rensburg, gesê het: ‘Óns is God se volk.’*”

Israel-Visie recognises Jesus as their Saviour, which of course creates a dilemma concerning his Jewish heritage. A creative solution is at hand though, with the movement claiming that Jesus was not Jewish but a pure Israelite, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the untarnished line of David (DRC Synod 1990:97).

Salvation is only for actual descendants of Israel

It states in the confession of the *Gemeente van die Verbondsvolk* (GVV 2014:9) that one can only be saved when you are “born from above.” The true Israelites were actually from the lineage of Yahweh, and without this literal ethnic family tie you cannot be saved. Personal repentance and acceptance of the true gospel is still necessary to activate this genetic means to salvation. Rebirth through faith in Christ is then actually the means by which the restoration of physical Israel is effected (DRC Synod 1990:95).

Nesper (1988:8) says: “According to Matthew 10, it was to this Caucasian Race that Jesus sent his apostles.” Nesper (1988:9) continues to say that salvation is not for “the Jew or the Indian or the Chinese or the Blacks.” The understanding of Israel’s divorce from God (Jer.3:8; Hos.2:8) is also an important aspect here. The old covenant was broken due to this divorce, but through the new covenant the marriage is reinstated so that Israel

¹ <http://www.covenantmessage.com/content/Die%20Verbondsboodskap.pdf>

becomes the bride of Christ (DRC Synod 1990:95). With slight variances, this understanding also plays an important role in the Hebrew Roots movement.

White supremacy and clear right-wing political agenda

Because pure racial descent is such a crucial aspect of the doctrine, racial mixing in any form is prohibited and apartheid was supported on these terms. Naser (2006:41) says that Isaac were strictly prohibited from intermingling with other nations to keep his blood pure. Naser (1988:10) also judged any Afrikaner for daring to worship with “people of other colours.”

Millennial expectations

The millennium of peace will dawn when the white Western nations have defeated Communist Russia, and their African and Asian allies in the final battle of Armageddon and Jesus will return to rule physically from the land of Israel together with the true Israelites (DRC Synod 1990:97). Since the Jewish people are not considered to be a part of Israel, there is no pre-millennial expectation of the salvation of the Jews or of the unification of the two houses of Israel.

The literal interpretation of Scripture and prophecy applicable to current events

Schönteich & Boshoff (2003:16) says:

The extreme right tends to interpret important historical and political events in the context of a perceived worldwide conspiracy. The primary aim of the conspirators is to create a totalitarian and secular One-World Government or ‘New World Order.’ To achieve their aims the conspirators seek to destroy national and cultural differences and the sovereignty of nations.

In *Israel-Visie*, these conspiracy theories are backed up by a literal reading of Scripture. “Jacob’s trouble” is a recurring theme which anticipates an end time suffering of the elect, the Anglo-Saxons as Israel, at the hands of evil world powers perceived as the biblical Babylonian system (Naser 2009:33).

Negative towards mainstream Christianity and forms own worship groups

Different from Anglo-Israelism, *Israel-Visie* beliefs that the Church was corrupted by Constantine and that Afrikaans mainstream churches are misled (Du Preez 2021). They thus form their own congregations or study groups, such as Naser's *Ekklesia Evangelie* group. Some of these groups such as *Die Gemeente van die Verbondsvolk* also adhere to Sacred Names theology, the conviction that true believers only use the original Hebrew names of God instead of the corrupted forms normally used by the Church.

3. The Hebrew Roots movement

3.1. Definition

The main tenet of the Hebrew Roots movement is the promotion of a return to the observance of Torah, especially the keeping of *Shabbat* and the biblical feasts as commanded in the Old Testament. Katz (2001) defines it best:

The Hebraic Roots or Jewish Roots movement refers to various organizations with a common emphasis on recovering the "original" Jewishness of Christianity. This recovery comes through studying the Bible in its Jewish context, observing the Torah, keeping the Sabbath and festivals, avoiding the "paganism" of Christianity, affirming the existence of original Hebrew language gospels and, in some cases, denigrating the Greek text of the New Testament.

This movement began in late 20th century USA with a current estimated following of 200 to 300,000 internationally (Kaizer 2014). Most followers pertinently reject the Christian self-reference based on the conviction that the Church has been corrupted throughout history (Kaizer 2014). They prefer the term "believers" (Wooten 1998:xxvii) or "Messianic" (Hebrew Roots Training Institute¹) in reference to themselves. The IAMCS (2014:2) says that various theories on Israel identity is taken up to promote "One Law Theology," the belief that those who observe the Torah in essence becomes part of Israel. The Hebrew names for God are used, mostly Yahweh or Yeshua, although there are disputes on the correct transliteration (Elim Ministries 2018).

The movement is philo-Semitic and has a clear political aspect in the form of Zionism. It is important to note that not all Christian Zionists belong to this movement. The movement is distinguished by an emphasis on Torah observance. The use of Jewish religious objects (*talit*, *tzitzit*, *shofar* etc.), readings of rabbinical teachings and weekly *parashah* studies are also common in Hebrew Roots. In accordance with the negative view of the Christian Church, Hebrew Roots followers generally do not attend church but might

¹ <https://www.hrti.co.za/vision,%20mission%20&%20policies.html>

belong to a weekly Torah study group (Elim Ministries 2012 for SA directory) or attend Jewish Messianic congregations (Kaell 2015).

3.2. The historical development of the Hebrew Roots movement

3.2.1. Historical development of Hebrew Roots in the USA

The Hebrew Roots movement emerged in late twentieth century USA from a variety of influences rather than a single proponent such as Wilson, in the case of Anglo-Israelism. IAMCS (2014:6) cites the Sabbatarian movement, which emerged from the Millerites, the Sacred Names movement and Armstrong's brand of Anglo-Israelism as major contributing influences. I would argue that the Pentecostal correlation between prophetic fulfillment and the modern state of Israel, as well as the growth of Christian Zionism, also played a role in bolstering the Hebrew Roots movement. According to Dunning (2018:1) the rise of Messianic Judaism also contributed and by the mid 1980's Hebrew Roots had fully emerged as a separate movement. The Hebrew Roots movement poses several challenges to Messianic Judaism (IAMCS 2014) and therefore I do not agree that it was a contributing factor in the growth of Hebrew Roots but rather only served as a platform of expression for Hebrew Roots followers looking to connect with Jewish forms of worship.

3.2.1.1. The Millerites and Sabbatarian Adventism

Butler (1986:51) argues that America went through a cultural transitioning period in the mid-1800's which created the fertile soil for several millenarian ideas to take root. One such millenarian was farmer and Baptist lay preacher William Miller of New Hampton, who prophesied that Jesus will return to earth around 1844 (Butler 1986:51). Miller became a full-time preacher in 1834 and soon spread his message of Christ's immanent return in the cities with his periodical *Signs of the Times* as a tool of dissemination (Harrison 2012:193). In spite of the "Great Disappointment" of 1844, Millerism endured in the form of Sabbatarian Adventism (Butler 1986:52).

In continued expectation of the end, Millerites sought to prepare for Christ's coming through a pursuit of spiritual and moral perfection (Butler 1986:54). One of the reasons given by this group for the delay of Christ's coming was that this perfection was not met

due to Christians' neglect of keeping the Saturday Sabbath (IAMCS 2014:7). This need for holiness was expressed in their rejection of evangelical Protestantism, which they equated with biblical Babylon (Butler 1986:57). The Millerite Charles Fitch published a booklet titled *Come out of her, my People* in 1843 (Butler 1986:57) in which he says of the Protestants: "No one sect can be found that lives by Christ's rules (Fitch 1843:7)." Fitch (1843:9) even calls them the anti-Christ. He ends off with a stern warning: "Not one that is ever saved can remain in Babylon (Fitch 1843:17)". The Afrikaans writer C.J. Koster published a similarly themed book with the same title in 1986, promoting the idea that true worshippers cannot remain in the Church.

"True Israel" are those who separate themselves from the disobedient and who keeps to God's laws, especially the Saturday Sabbath, in anticipation of Christ's coming (IAMCS 2014:7). Sabbath observance thus served as a sign of the covenant people. The need for obedience to Old Testament laws intersected with the Wesleyan Holiness movement's drive for moral perfection and further emphasised this group's sense of "chosenness" (Butler 1986:60). Several Sabbatarian churches emerged out of the Millerite movement, one of which are the Seventh Day Adventists of leader Ellen G. White (Butler 1986:64).

Another Sabbatarian Adventist church which emerged after 1844, was the Church of God, later distinguished from splinter groups by the addition of "Seventh Day" to the name. The Church of God underwent a serious of divisions in the early 1900's, with some of these splinter groups also absorbing Anglo-Israelite ideas (Nickels 1973:68). The members shared in the belief that the Jewish people need to return to Palestine before the second coming of Christ (Nickels 1973:77). The organisation spread its ideas through a published paper called the *Hope of Israel* since 1883, later called the *Bible Advocate*¹, which is still being published as a magazine today (Nickels 1973:26). According to the church's website² they have a worldwide membership of around 300,000. Two earlier members of the Church of God would become influential forerunners to the Hebrew Roots movement: C.O. Dodd and Herbert W. Armstrong.

¹ <https://baonline.org/>

² <https://cog7.org/about-us/>

3.2.1.2. The Sacred Names Movement: Charles Dodd

Charles Dodd joined the Church of God in 1930 and acted as elder in Salem (Nickels 1973:121). He co-authored a book with fellow church leader Andrew Dugger in 1936 titled *A History of the True Church Traced from 33 A.D. to Date*. The book continues in line with the Millerite conviction that there are two churches: one is equated to “mystery Babylon” which was corrupted by pagan Roman influence, and the other is the true church, which is the bride of Christ referred to in Revelation. This true bride has always maintained a remnant faithful to the Saturday Sabbath. Dugger eventually moved to Jerusalem from where he published the *Mount Zion Reporter* (Dodd & Dugger 1972 preface). Today this booklet, also known as *Judah Magazine*, has an online presence with many of Dugger’s writings in digital format¹.

Dodd was expelled from the Church of God due to a doctrinal dispute concerning the biblical feasts described in Leviticus 23 (IAMCS 2014:11). He promoted the celebration of the biblical feasts, while rejecting Christmas and Easter as pagan holidays in his publication *The Faith* (Chryssides 2005:543). Dodd also advocated a use of the original Hebrew names of God (Yahweh and Yashua mostly), and so the Sacred Names movement was born (IAMCS 2014:11). Elder A.B. Traina made a valuable contribution to the movement by publishing a sacred names version of the Bible based on the King James translation (Wells 2021). In the preface Traina (1963) explains why the Hebrew names are used:

Another common error among most of the translators is their elimination of heaven's revealed Name of the Most High, Yahweh, and the Name of His Son, Yahshua the Messiah, and substituting the names of the local deities of the nations among whom they dwelt (Psalms 96:5), expressly transgressing Yahweh's commandments as given in Exodus 20:7 and 23:13... By employing these names (Lord, God, Jesus and Christ) the people unknowingly turn the worship of Yahweh into that of idols and actually ascribe the benevolent characteristics of the Mighty One of Israel to the pagan deities (Hosea 2:8).

¹ <https://jsd-cog.org/downloads/>

It is clear that this understanding is again underscored by the belief that the bulk of Christianity is misled and corrupted by idolatry and that there should be a return to the “original” way of worship understood in terms of the Old Testament laws. It is noteworthy that Traina (1963) also adds a short statement to the preface: “Israel is the Caucasian race.” His version of Anglo-Israelite ideas are presented in his 1940 publication *Union Now?*

The Assembly of YHWH in Michigan, established in 1939, was the first organisation to be formed in the Sacred Names movement (Chryssides 2005:543). This congregation still exists today and continues the publication of *The Faith* magazine¹. A history of the movement written by Wells (2021) and published on their website states:

The Sacred Names groups are growing in number and actively promoting both the Sacred Names and the weekly and Annual Sabbaths. Malachi prophesies that the last message to be given to mankind is the name of Yahweh and His Son Yahshua. This message is being proclaimed at the end of the age by Sabbath-observing groups.

3.2.1.3. Anglo-Israelism and the Worldwide Church of God

Herbert Armstrong served as an elder of the Church of God (Seventh Day) alongside Dodd since 1933 and he was heavily influenced by the writings of Dugger (Dodd & Dugger 1972 preface; Nickels 1973:5). Like Dodd, Armstrong was also expelled from the Church of God due to his insistence of celebrating the Levitical feasts as well as his adherence to Anglo-Israelite convictions (Nickels 1973:5).

He started to publish the *Plain Truth* magazine in 1934 and also launched a radio programme (Barrett 2005:44), both which proved to be highly influential. The monthly magazine eventually had an international circulation of 6-8 million (Barrett 2005:696). He also founded the Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, (Pont 1989:7) and in 1937 he established his own congregation called the *Radio Church of God*, which was renamed *The Worldwide Church of God* in 1966 (Barret 2005:695).

¹ <http://assemblyofyahweh.com/thefaithmagazine/>

Armstrong's teachings had a strong focus on end time events which were reportedly already playing out in contemporary happenings as biblically prophesied (Barret 2005:695). The magazine *Tomorrow's World*¹, published by an off-shoot congregation of the Worldwide Church of God, continues the work of *Plain Truth*. In perpetuation of Anglo-Israelite ideas, Armstrong laid particular claim to the belief that the USA were the receivers of all the covenant promises made to Israel (Pont 1989:7). This off course also etched the biblical enemies of Israel clearly out as the enemies of the USA.

The equation of Russia with the evil forces attacking Israel at the battle of Armageddon by Eshelman (1886:192), one of the original American proponents of Anglo-Israelism, was a handy reference in Cold War America. Whether Armstrong got this idea directly from Eshelman is speculation, but he writes in the same vein when equating Russia with the forces of Gog in Ezekiel 38 (Armstrong 1956:2). Armstrong also co-authored a book in 1987 called *Russia and China in Prophecy*, adding China to the Armageddon confederacy of nations based on their shared communist agenda and certain biblical references, such as the immense army of Revelation 9:16.

Fast-forward to a post 9/11 world where the Taliban just regained power over Afghanistan, the Muslim nations are added to the axis of evil. Prominent Christian Zionist leader Malcolm Hedding (2021) writes in his newsletter in reference to Ezekiel 39:1-4: "The word of God tells us that in the days of Israel's second and final restoration a great conflict will arise in the region over her existence involving Russia, China and a number of Arab/Muslim states."

Armstrong would not have been the only promoter of such a message (Lee 2017), but it is clear that he perpetuated very solid in- and outgroup boundaries connected to Israelite identity, boundaries which seems to be adapted to changing political events. Lee (2017:1) notes that both Presidents Reagan and Bush have used the Gog reference either in relation to Russia or Iran, proving the utility of "biblical" messages in the political arena which play on existing beliefs in order to gain public support.

¹ <https://www.tomorrowworld.org/connect/about>

Greyling (1992:50) says: “One of the best representatives of the British-Israel teaching in America and in South Africa is the Worldwide Church of God of Herbert W. Armstrong and his son Garner Armstrong.” Armstrong never ascribed to Dodd’s Sacred Name beliefs but was certainly a strong proponent of Anglo-Israelite heritage which neatly coupled with the belief of Torah observance as an expression of that identity (IAMCS 2014:15).

3.2.1.4. The two houses doctrine

According to the IAMCS (2014:18) the term Anglo-Israelism was replaced by the less stigmatised term “Messianic Israelites” in the 1990’s, promoted by writer Batya Wootten. She and her husband published a newsletter *House of David Herald* and numerous books (Silberling 1997:1). Her 1998 book *Who is Israel? And why You Need to Know* is highly reminiscent of early Anglo-Israelite writers, complete with a drawing of the two sticks of Ezekiel 37 on the cover. Wootten drops the Anglo-Saxon references of traditional Anglo-Israelism but still proceeds to equate true believers in Yeshua with physical descendants of Israel who were “lost to the Father’s truth (Wootten 1998:178).” This truth of identity will only be revealed to Ephraim when they repent of their pagan practices which permeated the Church (Wootten 1998:177). She also promotes the Anglo-Israelite belief of the end time unification of the house of Judah, recognised as the Jewish people, and the house of Ephraim, to form the restored house of Israel which will become an “invincible army (Wootten 1998:201).”

A very important break from Anglo-Israelism emerges here however: the doctrine is adapted to also make the salvation of people from non-Israelite descendancy possible. The website of *The Alliance of Redeemed Israel*¹, the ministry of the Woottens, states:

The true ekklesia/church/congregation/called-out ones of the New Covenant belong to Messiah Yeshua’s Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-22). That Commonwealth consists of saved Jews and saved Israelites from the lost ten tribes, as well as all of their saved companions – regardless of genetic background... Reborn Judah, Ephraim, and their companions, are both physical and spiritual people; man cannot equitably separate them based on assumed genetic

¹ <http://www.redeemedisrael.com/we-declare-these-truths-to-be-self-evident/>

background. We cannot absolutely know who is or is not, descended from Israel's twelve tribes. However, the Almighty does know, and is fully dedicated to gathering, Israel's lost sheep.

This new commonwealth¹ theology drops the racist ideology of Anglo-Israelism while still maintaining a place for "physical Israel." Silberling (1997:1) says: "It is now incumbent upon these members of 'Ephraim,' they argue, to 'accept their birthright' and live as members of Israel." Other proponents of two houses theology are Eddie Chumney, writer of *Restoring the Two houses of Israel* (1999), Moshe Koniuchowsky (Silberling 1997:1) and prominent Jewish Hebrew Roots teacher, Monte Judah². In Chumney's book *The Bride of Christ*, the bride is identified as those Christians who are Torah observant. On his ministry website³, Chumney says:

...the Father promises us in Jeremiah 31:31-33 that He will do a new thing and pour out His spirit, and the Torah would no longer be written upon stone tablets, but instead the living Torah would be written upon our hearts. So, the harlot bride becomes the repentant bride as she makes *Teshuva* and returns to the God of Israel, and as she returns to keeping the commands from Torah by the power of the Spirit.

An important understanding regarding the covenants comes to the fore here, which is also expressed in some Anglo-Israelite circles. It is the conviction that God divorced the northern kingdom of Israel due to their idolatry, but because Yeshua, the husband, passed away, the previous contract was made void and Israel can now lawfully enter a new covenant with God (Deut.24:1-4). According to this belief, the *Israel-Visie* groups do not uphold the Torah. However, according to Eddie Chumney and other two houses teachers, Yeshua redeemed his bride on the cross and reinstated the marriage contract made at Mount Sinai. Since the husband passed away, it is lawful for the bride to be married again under the same terms. In other words, it is not a new covenant, but the old is renewed by God's act of salvation. Chumney⁴ states: "When we receive Yeshua as

¹ <https://commonwealthofisrael.com/ct-tenets.html>

² <https://www.lionandlambministries.org/>

³ <https://hebroots.com/bride-of-yeshua/journey-of-the-bride/>

⁴ <http://yeshiva.hebroots.org/the-bride/>

saviour, we enter into the first stage of the marriage. Not everyone who is saved will enter into the second stage of the marriage.” Entrance to the second stage is based on Torah observance and therefore a clear distinction is made here between those “who are saved” and those who acquire a special position as the faithful bride. In this way salvation by grace seems to be acknowledged, yet those who keep the law are simply better or “closer” to God.

Some who uphold the two houses doctrine also claim their right to physically return and possess the land of Israel, which the IAMCS (2014:20) considers to be a form of replacement theology. It should also be understood that the adoption of Jewish religious and cultural elements by gentiles in the Hebrew Roots movement is at times deeply offensive to Jewish people (IAMCS 2014:22) and ironically actually undermines the goal of the “unification” of the two houses.

Although some very prominent Hebrew Roots teachers promote two houses or commonwealth theology, it is a contested doctrine within the movement. A discussion between some defenders and opponents of the doctrine is publicised on Chumney’s website¹. The IAMCS (2014:30) is of the opinion though that most Hebrew Roots teachers are “two-housers” but might choose to “down-play” the doctrine in order to avoid controversy.

Some Hebrew Roots followers also relate to being physically part of Israel through the discovery or speculation that their genealogy contains Jewish ancestors. O’Neill (2014) tells of popular Torah teacher Rico Cortes, whose discovery of a Medieval Jewish ancestor led him on the path to Torah observance. In the journalist Menachem Kaiser’s brilliantly descriptive 2014 article on Hebrew Roots he says: “Being Jewish, it seemed, was something to brag about, a mark of authenticity of something that, at least overtly, wasn’t supposed to matter.” Interviewees in the article denies the desire to be considered Jewish and conversion to Judaism is considered a tragedy due to its rejection of Yeshua as Messiah.

¹ <https://www.hebroots.org/twohousemeeting.htm>

3.2.1.5. Pentecostalism

We have already discussed the Anglo-Israelite beliefs of early Pentecostal leader Charles Parham. His teaching on the set-apartness of the bride of Christ and her end-time role to be joined with the Jewish people in Palestine (Root 2006:7) is rather reminiscent of two houses bridal expectations. Although Parham's Anglo-Israelite ideas remained on the Pentecostal fringes, I believe a few key Pentecostal beliefs played a role in positioning people doctrinally to be accepting of Hebrew Roots ideas.

A mayor factor is the prophetic correlation Pentecostals made with the physical land of Israel. Williams (2015:162) says: "Prominent Pentecostal figures drew direct parallels between the founding of the state of Israel and the inauguration of a fresh spiritual revival that they discerned in their midst." The land of Israel therefor gained prominence as a prophetic indicator of the world's trajectory towards the end of days.

Perhaps more importantly however, was Pentecostal desire to return to the powerfully Spirit-led early church of the New Testament, or the "true" church, which led them to also look to Old Testament Israel as an example of authentic covenant people (Williams 2015:165). This yearning enforced the belief that mainstream Protestants have deviated from the original path. The desire to return to true worship according to the lifestyle of the first disciples, who were Jewish, and be removed from later "Greek" influences, is arguably the strongest conviction for Torah observance amongst Hebrew Roots followers. Kaell (2015:1) also argues that spiritual seeking is an important component which drives born-again believers from Evangelical and Pentecostal backgrounds to Torah-centered, Jewish forms of worship.

3.2.1.6. Christian Zionism

Stockton (1987:237) says: "In a cultural sense, American thinking was always characterized by 'Hebraism,' an interest in the Hebrew kingdom, its customs, its history." He explains that this is largely due to the Puritan association with the Hebrew people, one shared by the Afrikaners, and which created a special affinity towards the Jewish people and the modern State of Israel. In America, this affinity bloomed into Christian Zionism which predates Herzl's Jewish national aspirations by a few decades (Stockton

1987:235). According to Hummel (2015:38) Protestant interest in the return of the Jewish people to their homeland even dates back to the Reformation.

Christian Zionism centers on the belief that the birth of the modern State of Israel is a fulfilment of biblical prophecy and a sign that we are indeed living in the end times. Engberg (2020:185) says of Evangelical support for Israel:

Israel is admired for its “miraculous” historical achievements, embraced as a fulfilment of biblical prophecies, cherished for its particular proximity to God, and defended with much fervour in political and theological debates. These sentiments are also frequently translated into religious practices: tours and pilgrimages to Israel; celebrations of Jewish holidays; intercessory prayers for the “peace of Jerusalem”; political lobbying; financial contributions to Israeli society; and volunteer work in Israel in order to be a blessing to the Jewish people.

The biblical premise to bless Israel on the basis of Genesis 12:2-3 (“I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee”) became popular through American pastor Jerry Falwell (Stockton 1987:240) and in certain circles Christian attitudes towards Israel even became the standard by which authentic faith is judged. Other Christian Zionists like Douglas Young, founder of the organisation Bridges for Peace, sought to give Christians a “practical outlet to their premillennial faith” by blessing Israel through financial and political support (Hummel 2015:38). In the wake of the 1967 war, three Christian Zionist organisations were established in Jerusalem: Bridges for Peace, The International Christian Embassy and Christian Friends of Israel (Engberg 2020:185). Engberg (2020:185) says: “These ministries were developed to serve as a bridge between the State of Israel and the Evangelical world; to educate Christians about Israel; and to ‘comfort the Jewish people’ by practical means.”

Although these organisations do not promote the observance of Old Testament laws amongst Christians, an emphasis on the Hebraic¹ understanding of Scripture may serve as an introduction to certain Hebrew Roots ideas. These organisations also have a broad international volunteer base (see Engberg 2020 for detailed volunteer interviews) working

¹ <https://www.bridgesforpeace.com/category/hebraic-understanding/>

in Israel and participating in Israeli cultural life, including the celebration of *Shabbat* and the biblical festivals. These experiences, which connect Christians to certain cultural themes expressed in the Bible, can of course be a faith-building and enriching event. Having once been a Jerusalem volunteer myself, I know it can also be confusing however, if a return to these Old Testament practices are promoted as a way to gain more intimate knowledge of our Messiah or as a way of “keeping God’s house rules,” as one Christian Zionist leader explained to me.

These organisations’ stance against anti-Semitism and their successful promotion of Christian-Jewish relations worldwide is a standard all Christians can appreciate. However, perhaps unwittingly, these organisations have in some way also contributed to the growth of the Hebrew Roots movement which ultimately undermines a healthy understanding of Israelite identity which is not beneficial to the State of Israel.

3.2.2. Historical development of Hebrew Roots in South Africa

Similar to the USA, the Hebrew Roots movement in South Africa is organised around several ministries which have an online network of disseminating information. The movement tends to have an aversion for anything resembling church structure and in South Africa adherents are mostly organised around Torah study groups who gather for the celebration of the biblical feasts and for a weekly *parashat* study on *Shabbat*. The Torah group directory on Elim Ministries’ website¹ indicates more than sixty groups nationwide, including one in Namibia. The directory seems to be outdated however and more groups probably exist, making this movement much more permeating than *Israel-Visie*.

A few congregations do exist however, identifying themselves as “Messianic” congregations (which again is distinct from, but similar in practice to Jewish congregations who prescribe to Messianic Judaism). Sometimes there is an overlap of these distinctions. The congregation Lada’at Hashem in Silverton for example, identifies themselves as proponents of Messianic Judaism but the congregation consists mainly out of gentiles².

¹ <https://elim.co.za/wp/torah-study-groups/>

² <http://www.lada-athashem.co.za/about-us/>

They state: “In early Messianic Judaism both Jews and Gentiles worshiped together in the Synagogue ensuring that Yeshua’s teaching is best understood in the context of Judaism and a Torah world-view.” Another example, the Nazarene Israelite Two House Congregation of Port Elizabeth under Afrikaans leadership, clearly subscribes to the two houses doctrine within Hebrew Roots and therefor shares significant resemblance to original Anglo-Israelism. They describe themselves as practising Nazarene Judaism although members need not convert to be saved¹. Other congregations who do not relate so closely to Judaism but who adhere to Hebrew Roots doctrines, are Menorah Tabernacle in Benoni, who define themselves as a Messianic Pentecostal church, and Christ the Way, Truth and Life ministries² in Centurion.

American based teachers such as Rico Cortes³ have visited South Africa for teaching tours although there are also several South African Hebrew Roots teachers who are not congregationally based. These include Willem Liebenberg from the Hebraic Roots Teaching Institute⁴ who, according to Fairbanks (2012), has established 50 Messianic yeshivas throughout South Africa and Namibia. Liebenberg is a two houses proponent who relies heavily on Anglo-Israelite teachings as is clearly stated on the institute’s website: “Both Professors Totten and Wilson clearly understood the vivid words of Y’shua: ‘I came only for the lost sheep of Israel!’⁵” Another prominent ministry is the Hebrew People Institute⁶ established by Gerrit and Martie Nel, with their main base in Jerusalem and an established network in South Africa, Namibia and Switzerland.

Other than the influence of Armstrong’s teachings, which was widely distributed in South Africa, I believe there are a few other historical developments, mainly of American origin, which positioned Afrikaners to be susceptible to Hebrew Roots teachings.

¹ <http://nazarene2house.weebly.com/who-are-we.html>

² <https://www.cwtlm.org/wabout.php>

³ <https://wisdomintorah.com/about/>

⁴ <https://www.hrti.co.za/index.html>

⁵ <https://www.hrti.co.za/Downloads.html>

⁶ <https://hebrewpeople.com/>

3.2.2.1. Early Pentecostalism in South Africa

As already discussed, the American Holiness movement played a central role in the development of early Pentecostalism. One of these holiness teachers briefly mentioned in section 2.2.2.1 was Alexander Dowie, one of the most influential proto-Pentecostal leaders who eagerly promoted Anglo-Israelite ideas, incorporated Israel-themed worship and had a profound influence on Charles Parham (Williams 2015:171). According to Bruiners (1997:15) several developments prepared the way for Pentecostal beliefs to take root in South Africa, but none would be so influential as Dowie's "zionist" (not to be confused with Zionism) movement.

In his historical account of the rise of the spirit-type African Independent Churches, which would come to include the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), Daneel (1987:54) says: "The driving force behind this entire movement was an apocalyptic church in America...established by John Alexander Dowie in 1896." One of Dowie's followers, Daniel Bryant, visited South Africa in 1904 and baptised amongst others, P.L. le Roux, who founded the Zion Apostolic Church with several black leaders (Daneel 1987:54). Le Roux, however, joined the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in 1908, shortly after the church's establishment by American Pentecostals led by John G. Lake (Bruiners 1997:15, 18). Before Lake's missionary visit to South Africa, he lived in Dowie's Zion City where he joined the oft-visiting Parham's faction after being baptised in the Spirit (Nel 2016:68). Dowie's "zionism" therefor played an integral role in the inception of the Pentecostal movement in South Africa and according to Bruiners (1997:15) some of their doctrinal beliefs were absorbed within the AFM.

The AFM considered the ardent Anglo-Israelite, Charles Parham, as the true founder of Pentecostalism while side-lining William Seymour's contribution (Nel 2020:340). According to Nel (2020:340) Parham's racial ideology, stemming from his white supremacist Anglo-Israelite beliefs, provided a sufficient basis on which the AFM could build their own policies of racial segregation. The AFM supported the proposed implementation of apartheid law since 1944 (Nel 2020:349) and it therefor fitted the church's political agenda not to discard Parham's racial ideas. Although the AFM did not absorb Anglo-Israelism as a doctrine, the AFM and early Pentecostalism played a big role

in introducing certain Zion-centered ideas into the South African conscience. Furthermore, early Pentecostalism's embrace of dispensationalism and millennial chiliasm was also reflected in the AFM and it paved the way for a literal reading of prophetic Scripture as well as "the eternal distinction between Israel and the church and the two purposes of God for his two peoples" (Horn 2008:2).

GR Wessels, vice-president of AFM from 1943 until 1969, was outspoken about Communist Russia's role as evil agent in fulfilment of biblical prophecy as an enemy of the state of Israel (Horn 2008:3). Reverend J.F. Nel of the Full Gospel Church also declared a Russian-Arab alliance to be the aggressors in the Ezekiel 38 war against Israel (Horn 2008:4). Anti-communist rhetoric off course suited the apartheid government well. Wessels was elected a Nationalist senator in 1955 (Nel 2020:350).

After World War II, the World Council of Churches (WCC) were identified by Pentecostals with the religious system of the anti-Christ, again a libel which suited apartheid politics, since the WCC was outspoken against the regime (Horn 2008:5). AFM pastor and influential writer, Bennie Kleynhans, produced several books "with a hermeneutic of fear" in which South Africa and the state of Israel are coupled together in a righteous battle against the enemies of God, heavily laced with conspiracy theories which included the United Nations, the illuminati and the WCC (Horn 2008:7). According to Fairbanks (2012) it was a sermon by Bennie Kleynhans, proclaiming Christians should reclaim the Jewish roots of their faith at the hand of a symbolic explanation of the Jewish marriage ritual, which ignited founder of the Hebrew Roots Training Institute, Willem Liebenberg, to "approach scripture through the eyes of the Jew."

The belief system with its clear in- and outgroups created by Afrikaner dispensationalism favoured the rise of Christian Zionism in South Africa. The vilification of the ecumenical movement also enforced the belief that traditional Reformed churches were not representative of the true *ekklesia*.

3.2.2.2. C.J. Koster and the Sacred Names movement

Doctor C.J. Koster resurrected the Millerite equation of traditional Protestantism with "mystery Babylon" in his 1986 book *Come out of her, my people*. The book details all of

the ways Christianity have embraced pagan culture, including the Sunday Sabbath, celebration of Christmas and Easter, pagan names to refer to God, and even the word Amen as a reference to the Egyptian god Amen-Ra. Koster founded the Institute for Scripture Research¹ which published their first edition of “the Scriptures” in 1993, a Sacred Names version of the Bible. Another Afrikaans Bible translation which cites the Hebrew names of God and is sceptical of the Greek origins of the New Testament, claiming the gospels were originally written in Aramaic, is *Die Pad van Waarheid tot die Lewe*², compiled by Gerrie Coetzee.

It is unclear how wide Koster’s influence stretched, but the notion that the mainstream Afrikaans denominations were deceived, was only enforced in the 1980’s as the Dutch Reformed Church started to take honest stock of their stake in apartheid South Africa. “A Hermeneutic of fear” so aptly described by Horn (2008:7), coupled with the pietistic desire to be found amongst the true faithful in the political context of apartheid, as well as the clear in- and outgroups created in relation to national identity, Israel and the enemy, all worked together to ultimately create the idea which Hebrew Roots perpetuates most: A worthy bride which identifies with Israel in set-apartness based on the obedience to Torah.

3.2.2.3. Christian Zionism

As already stated, Afrikaner dispensationalism was ripe ground for Christian Zionism to flourish. Importantly, it also offered an alternative nationalism in the wake of the Afrikaner disillusionment with apartheid, a nationalism that could now “truly” be scriptural. All the major American founded Christian Zionist organisations such as Bridges for Peace, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) and Christian Friends of Israel had active offices in South Africa before the turn of the century. These organisations have wide literary distribution networks through which newsletters, magazines and books are distributed. Again, Christian Torah observance is not promoted by these materials, but a return to the Hebraic understanding of Scripture is a main theme while also introducing the celebration of *Shabbat* and the biblical festivals as a way of learning about and

¹ <https://www.isr-messianic.org/about/about-us.html>

² <https://www.padwlewe.ch/PWLTuis.html>

identifying with Israel. The ICEJ website states: “the wild Gentile nations, are grafted in to the noble Jewish olive tree by faith in Jesus.¹” Jewishness, and the embrace thereof, is clearly elevated here above anything originating from “wild Gentile” culture. This is alarming because not only can it be used to perpetuate a different type of replacement theology, as Hebrew Roots indeed does (IAMCS 2014), but it creates the idea that the only cultural elements acceptable in the kingdom of God is Jewish, which ultimately forms part of the core belief of Hebrew Roots.

However, I emphasise again that the counteracting of anti-Semitism and the fostering of meaningful relationships between the Christian and Jewish community is a worthy task all Christians should pursue, as we should pursue respect, righteousness and love towards all people groups. The Church’s indifference and complicity in the terrors that the Jewish people suffered through the ages should be a stark reminder that we have failed countless times to be true representatives of God’s character to the people through which He chose to send our Redeemer, a people we rightfully should be humble and respectful towards as Paul reminds us in Romans 11. However, our zeal to restore these wrongs and to express our love and gratitude should not cause opportunity for the preaching of “a different gospel.” This opportunity, I fear, Christian Zionism has at times created unwittingly.

3.3. Main Tenets of the Hebrew Roots movement

Since there is no central authoritative body, as in the case of Anglo-Israelism, there is a variety of different views expressed within the movement. I will therefore highlight the most commonly held beliefs.

The Bible is largely misunderstood or misinterpreted by Christianity

The belief that Christianity was influenced by pagan or Greek ideas and beliefs, and therefore severed from its original Hebrew context, led to the conviction that there should be a return to the original “Jewishness” of the faith community. Rico Cortes’ ministry states: “Wisdom in Torah² is focused on bringing to light the best research into areas of

¹ <https://int.icej.org/news/headlines/why-israel>

² <https://wisdomintorah.com/about/>

Scripture that are often misunderstood due to our cultural divide...Through this understanding, we have led many believers into deeper levels of love and obedience.”

Personalised Torah observance

All Hebrew Roots teachers confess salvation through faith in Yeshua. Liebenberg’s institute¹ states:

We believe that Y’shua’s death and resurrection accomplished the atonement for all who would place their faith in Him... salvation is by faith through the grace of God alone, and not by human efforts.

The contradiction between the statement above and the necessity for Torah observance is mitigated as follows:

We believe that all Believers who trust in Y’shua are grafted into Israel and are granted the privilege of following the Torah (YHWH’s Instructions), having had it written upon their hearts as participants of the New Covenant (Rom. 11:11-24; Jer. 31:33).²

The New Covenant has therefore not replaced the old, but simply made a way to re-enter into the Old Covenant through the Holy Spirit who now writes those laws on our hearts. The Old Covenant was thus renewed by Yeshua³. Acceptance into God’s kingdom is through faith alone, but the sign that you are now truly part of this kingdom is a gradual personal process of sanctification into “deeper levels of love and obedience”⁴ to the Torah and a decisive break with any pagan influences which entered Christianity. For this reason, Hebrew Roots followers do not celebrate Christmas and Easter, but the Levitical feasts. The argument that grace is used as an excuse not to be obedient to God’s laws is also an important viewpoint (Elim Ministries 2002).

The guidance of the Holy Spirit on the personal journey towards obedience accounts for why believers are on different “stages” of Torah observance. Since a return to the

¹ <https://www.hrti.co.za/what%20we%20believe.html>

² <https://www.hrti.co.za/what%20we%20believe.html>

³ <http://www.hrti.co.za/shop/christian-foundational-teachings-on-hebraic-roots/471-04b-daar-is-net-een-verbond-en-christene-het-dit-grootliks-gemis-pdf-download.html>

⁴ <https://wisdomintorah.com/about/>

authentic Hebraic understanding of Scripture is stressed, Torah observance is deeply intertwined with Israelite identity and is understood as a sign of being “grafted in.” The observance of *Shabbat* is considered to be the sign of the Mosaic covenant, like a wedding ring¹, which identifies the true bride² of Messiah on the basis of personal obedience. The biblical feasts are also considered prophetic rehearsals for God’s timeline of events on earth and in order not to be caught unprepared on the Day of Trumpets, when God will return, one needs to take part in these rehearsals³.

The Bride of Yeshua is distinct from the Church

The parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) are most commonly used to draw the distinction between the true bride, who were wise and obeyed the Torah, and those who were invited to the wedding but failed to enter due to their lack of repentance and obedience.⁴ Some Hebrew Roots teachers argue that Christians are still saved although they are distinct from the bride who keeps Torah, while other groups deny salvation to any who is not Torah observant (e.g. Kriel 2021).

The usage of the Hebrew Names of God

Due to the conviction of a return to the authentic Hebraic faith and a repentance of everything believed to have been influenced by paganism, the Hebrew Roots movement as a whole adopted the Sacred Names teachings first advocated by Dodd.

Two houses doctrine

As already extensively discussed in section 3.2.1.4, many Hebrew Roots adherents believe in the end time re-unification of the house of Judah, the Jewish people, and the house of Ephraim, those believers in Yeshua who adhere to the Torah. As HRTI⁵ states: “We believe in the future of the one new man of Eph. 2:15 where the House of Judah and the House of Israel (Ezek. 37:15-17) will be restored as one nation.”

¹ <http://yeshiva.hebroots.org/biblical-festivals/sabbath/>

² <https://kolkallah.com/#tts>

³ https://www.itsmidnight.org/feast-of-trumpets?gclid=Ci0KCQjwpreJBhDvARIsAF1_BU0jKhwomvpXxkWb3gi-BNYb0CsmT2WM3ldZ2GWQXx93B-6zmeimLbUaAj1yEALw_wcB

⁴ https://www.menorahtabernacle.com/uploads/3/9/2/4/39244333/bruid_powerpoint_3_mei_2020.pdf

⁵ <https://www.hrti.co.za/what%20we%20believe.html>

This belief also incorporates for some that salvation in Jesus is only for the “lost sheep of Israel,” those who are unknowingly physical descendants of the lost tribes (Wooten 1998, Cortes¹). Those within the Hebrew Roots movement who adhere to two houses theology clearly shares this doctrine with Anglo-Israelism.

Clear political aspect through a form of Zionism

In following with a literal reading of Scripture informed by dispensationalist, chiliastic views, the Hebrew Roots movement “believe in the continuity of God’s covenants with the physical people of Israel according to Jer. 31:35-36...and the physical return of the people of Israel to their Promised Land (Deut. chap. 30)²” as well as the physical return of Yeshua to reign from Jerusalem. The IAMCS (2014:20) considers the movement’s Zionism as “warped” since “keeping the Law of Moses not only proves that they are the true Israel, but they seem to think it confirms a ‘biblical’ right to possess the land which God promised to Israel.”

¹ <https://wisdomintorah.com/about/>

² <https://www.hrti.co.za/what%20we%20believe.html>

4. Comparison between the main tenets

The following table depicts the main tenets of Anglo-Israelism, *Israel-Visie* and Hebrew Roots. Corresponding tenets are marked in red. Tenets which do correspond to some extent but not in its entirety, or are not accepted by the whole of the group, are marked in orange. Tenets marked in blue is unique to the group compared to the other two.

	Anglo-Israelism	<i>Israel-Visie</i>	Hebrew Roots
Israelite identity	Claims to be physically descendant of the lost tribes of Israel.	Claims to be physically descendant of the lost tribes of Israel.	Relates to Israelite identity through Torah observance. Some claim or speculation of physical descendancy from the lost tribes or of Jewish descent.
Semitic beliefs	Philo-Semitic. The Jewish people (house of Judah) are a part of Israel.	Anti-Semitic. The Jewish people are not a part of Israel but descendants of Satan.	Philo-Semitic. The Jewish people (house of Judah) are a part of Israel.
Soteriology	Only physical descendants of Israel can be saved through faith in Jesus.	Only physical descendants of Israel can be saved through faith in Jesus.	Salvation is for Israel through faith in Jesus, yet gentiles can be joined to Israel through Torah observance. Obedience to Torah is a sign of repentance.
Scriptural view	Fundamentalist. Emphasis on biblical prophecy as relating to current events.	Fundamentalist. Emphasis on biblical prophecy as relating to current events.	Fundamentalist. Emphasis on biblical prophecy as relating to current events.
Eschatology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish return to Israel • Jewish acceptance of Jesus • Re-unification of the house of Israel (Anglo-Saxons and Jews) • Battle of Armageddon: Israel against Russia and allies • Jesus will return to rule from Israel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacob's trouble: persecution of the elect (Afrikaners) • Battle of Armageddon: white nations against Russia and allies • Jesus will return to rule from Israel. He will reclaim Israel from the Jews and restore white rule over the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish return to Israel • Jewish acceptance of Yeshua • Re-unification of the house of Israel (Messianic believers and Jews) • Jacob's trouble: Persecution of the elect (Israel) • Battle of Armageddon: Israel against Russia and allies

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus will return to rule from Israel • The Levitical feasts a prophetic timeline
Worship	Torah observance and Israelite rituals mostly limited to Worldwide Church of God.	No Torah observance or Israel-themed rituals or dress.	Torah observance and Israelite rituals are central.
Church views	Mostly positive towards existing denominations.	Negative towards mainstream denominations. Creates own worship groups.	Negative towards the Church. Creates own worship groups. The bride is distinct from the Church.
Political aspects	Imperial	White supremacist	Zionist
Sacred Names	No	To some extent	Yes

5. Conclusion

The true identity of Israel is the central theme of both Anglo-Israelism and the Hebrew Roots movement. Anglo-Israelism primarily understands the identity of Israel as consisting out of the house of Judah, identified as the Jewish people, and the house of Ephraim, identified as the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples, who are physical descendants of the northern lost tribes of Israel. In the context of apartheid South Africa, Anglo-Israelite convictions were adapted to suite right-wing Afrikaner ideology, adopting a fiercely racist and anti-Semitic stance represented by the *Israel-Visie* groups.

The Hebrew Roots movement, with its main emphasis on the observance of Torah as a sign of being grafted into Israel through faith in Yeshua, also holds on to the end time hope of the re-unification of the house of Judah and Ephraim through the two houses doctrine. The house of Ephraim is understood by most as those who are reconnected to the Hebraic roots of their faith through Torah observance. There are however Hebrew Roots proponents who also harbours the conviction that these believers are unknowingly physical descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.

The starkest contrast between Hebrew Roots and *Israel-Visie* are the movements' stance on the State of Israel and the Jewish people. Hebrew Roots proponents confess a type of Christian Zionism which stresses the continuity of God's covenants with the Jewish people as manifested in the establishment of the modern State of Israel, while *Israel-Visie* regards the Jewish people as impostors. Hebrew Roots followers also generally do not prescribe to right-wing ideology.

The Hebrew Roots movement therefor bears the greatest resemblance to Anglo-Israelism if it is compared to its original teachings, before it developed into Christian Identity and its Afrikaans counterpart, *Israel-Visie*. In tracing the historical development of both movements, the resemblance is confirmed by the clear historical influence Anglo-Israelism had on the development of Hebrew Roots ideas, most notably through Charles Parham's influence on early Pentecostalism and Herbert Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. Alexander Dowie's Pentecostal "zionist" beliefs also had a profound influence on the Christian landscape of South Africa through the AFM and the spirit-type African Independent churches. Influences which shaped the Hebrew Roots movement other than

Anglo-Israelism includes the 19th century Millerites, the Sacred Names movement and Christian Zionism.

In closing, I believe that these movements stand as a testament that religious beliefs are never shaped in a vacuum. Political circumstances, the way society defines its in- and outgroups, and our own psychological desire to be distinct yet belonging, all contribute to how we make sense of the world. It is therefore arrogant to lay claim to such a thing as pure revelation which has been kept a “mystery” for the Church all these centuries. Jesus Christ became the great revelation of God in person, so that “whoever believes in Him may have eternal life (John 3:15, 16)” and belong not to the kingdom of Israel based on genetics or observance, but to a “kingdom that is not from this world (John 18:36)” based on the faithfulness of God “who so loved the world (John 3:16).” Therefore: “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6).”

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