

Cary Nelson and Michael C. Gizzi, Eds.
***Peace and Faith: Christian Churches and
The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict***

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This collected volume is big in more ways than one. Physically, it is a door-stop; its page count surpasses 475 before appendices. Its backmatter includes a forty-page “Annotated Timeline” of Jewish-Christian relations by co-editor Cary Nelson that begins with the crucifixion of Jesus and ends with the Tree of Life synagogue massacre in Pittsburgh in 2018. The fourteen contributors feature a broad range of Christian and Jewish scholars (e.g., Daniel Friedman, Edward Kessler, Amy-Jill Levine, Robert Cathey, Giovanni Matteo Quer, John Kampen, and Jonathan Rynhold), clergy (e.g., Susan Andrews and C.K. Robertson), and organizational leaders (e.g., John Wimberly, William Harter, and David Fox Sandmel). The introduction, written by Nelson, clocks in at 85 pages.

More important than these metrics, however, is the ambitiousness of *Peace and Faith's* scope and topics. It is rare to read a book that so readily shifts between theological and political contexts, weaving them into arguments that bring supersessionism, election, and chosenness into conversation with the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement (BDS), the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and political lobbying. It is also rare to read a book that combines historical, political, theological, sociological, institutional, and numerous other perspectives in interrogating its main subject, in this case Christian churches—their history, thought, and actions—in relation to the conflict.

Given the range of contributors, it is fruitless to generalize about this book with too broad a brush. The contributors hail from a variety of disciplines and reflect the concerns of churches, synagogues, NGOs, universities, seminaries, and other organizations. The chapters are both broad (Nelson's introduction is wide-ranging and Levine's chapter surveys Christian exegesis of the New Testament) and narrow (John Kampen focuses on the 2017 Mennonite Resolution on Israel / Palestine, for example).

I will try to summarize three themes that bind the sixteen chapters of *Peace and Faith* together. First, there is a general and sustained aversion to supersessionism in Christian theology—in its historical varieties, in its “hard” and “soft” expressions as represented in post-Holocaust Catholic and Protestant theological thought, and in its liberationist strain as represented by the 2009 *Kairos Palestine Document*, among others. While the contributors would undoubtedly differ in the details of their definitions of supersessionism, Nelson’s is a useful stand-in for the volume: “the nearly 2,000-year-long tradition...in which Christianity declares itself the new Israel, with its covenant replacing the one Jews traditionally have with God” (383). For Nelson, as for most of the other writers, this original theological sin of the church has had profound social and political implications in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (though Levine notes that biblical scholars are divided on how supersessionist the New Testament itself is). For modern examples, he cites not only European anti-Judaism and antisemitism, but also blood libels, media portrayals of Israeli military intervention in Gaza, and antisemitism in the BDS movement, among others.

A second commonality across the volume is a shared ambivalence about evangelical Christian Zionism. The organization Christian United for Israel, which has more than 11 million members and is the largest pro-Israel force in American domestic politics, and its founder, Pentecostal pastor John Hagee, are discussed in at least four of the contributions. Evangelicals appear frequently throughout. To some contributors, the historic and contemporary evangelical embrace of Jewish missions, often implicit supersessionism, and apocalypticism (especially as informed by dispensational theology) are clear drawbacks. At other times, evangelicals stand out as Protestant exceptions in their robust support for Israel and opposition to the BDS movement, in their denunciation of “hard” supersessionism and liberationist theology, and in their opposition to terrorism and longstanding rivals to Israel including Iran.

Third, while often framing analysis in terms of “Christianity” or “the Christian churches,” this volume is mostly focused on North American and European Catholicism and Protestantism, with secondary critiques of Palestinian Christian writers (especially contributors to the aforementioned *Kairos Palestine Document* such as theologian Naim Ateek). The largest Christian Zionist organization in the world, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (headquartered in Jerusalem but founded mostly by European charismatic Christians, now with offices in more than ninety countries), receives but one mention, while the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is the focus of fully one quarter of the chapters. The emphases reflect the backgrounds of the contributors (at least half of the Christian contributors have Presbyterian affiliations) and are also justified by the significant theo-political activity in that denomination in the past two decades, including support for divestment, much of it led by the Israel / Palestine Mission Network. Yet it is striking that Latin America, for example, is referenced numerous times in the volume, but almost exclusively in association with “liberation theology” (the historical inspiration for Palestinian liberationist theology). What this association misses is that today Central and Latin America feature some of the world’s most active Christian

Zionist networks, in countries such as Guatemala and Honduras (the only two countries besides the U.S. and Kosovo to have relocated their diplomatic embassies to Jerusalem, in significant measure due to encouragement from Christian Zionists). The distinctive theological and denominational histories that dominate non-Western Christianity are also largely absent from the volume, including charismatic, Pentecostal, and prosperity traditions (which combined make up a majority of Protestants worldwide).

Overall, *Peace and Faith* is a significant marker in anti-supersessionist Jewish-Christian dialogue and a leading illustration of anti-BDS religious thought. In a volume of this length and nature, there are inevitable shortcomings. For example, there is historical information that is repeated chapter after chapter and some jarring tone changes between contributions. The third section, "Reconciliation," would have been better served to be reorganized to begin with a theoretical discussion rather than with a personal reflection. Overall, however, the volume displays a remarkable consistency in the topics interrogated and the broader perspective stitched together from its component parts. Scholars and clergy who are in search of a larger framework for assessing the current state of anti-supersessionist Christian thought, or the ongoing Christian dialogue with Israel and contemporary Jews, will benefit from consulting *Peace and Faith* in parts and as a whole.