Christian Eschatology covers numerous noteworthy issues and themes. Themes include: the rapture, life after death, second coming of Christ, millennialism, the last judgment, Armageddon, great tribulation, heaven and hell, etc. When I asked my seminary students (Taiwanese and Chinese) what comes first into their minds when speaking of eschatology, the overwhelming answer is the eschatological restoration of Israel. Lest misunderstood that this interest in eschatological restoration of Israel is simply an academic exercise or curiosity, it will be seen that the interest goes beyond skin-deep.

This article will show that while in other western countries, antisemitism is still a force to reckon with; in Taiwan, philosemitism or judeophilia is the growing sentiment in the past decade. This essay will first provide the background of the phenomenon of philosemitism in Taiwan Christianity by describing the churches, personalities, events, literature and websites. These also serve as the primary sources used for this essay. Secondly, I shall provide a brief description of the pertinent biblical texts on the restoration of Israel. Thirdly, there will be a critical analysis on how some Taiwan churches read the biblical prophetic materials. Lastly, I shall provide social and cultural rationale for the philosemitic theology.

I. Philosemitism in Taiwan Churches: An Overview and Sources

Western missionaries brought and introduced Christianity to Taiwan (formerly known as the Formosa). There were the Dutch and Spanish missionaries in 1620s and later the English and American missionaries in 1872. According to 2015 Taiwan Church Report, Christianity makes up approximately 6.25% of the 23,433,753 Taiwan population, including Roman Catholicism.1 Operation World conservatively lists Christianity in Taiwan at 5.82%. The taxonomy of the Protestant Churches in Taiwan is based on the medium of language used: the Taiwanese-speaking churches, the aboriginal-speaking churches and the Mandarin-speaking churches. The Taiwanese-speaking churches belong to Taiwan Presbyterian Church. Taiwanese as a local dialect is spoken in these churches to send a political, social and cultural differentiation from China. The aboriginal-speaking churches are those who use aboriginal language and they are mostly located in the villages and outskirts of Taiwan. The Mandarin-speaking churches however include the mainstream Protestantism, the independent evangelical churches and also the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. At the outset, it is these Mandarin-speaking churches which hold deep preoccupation in Israel/Jews. Although many other churches share the same interest,

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it is the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches which are not just vocal but has placed their philosemitic theology at the center of their preaching, doing church and publication.

There are four major leading Christian newspapers. The Taiwan Church News (Táiwān jiàohuì gōngbào) is a publication of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. The Chinese Christian Tribune (Jīdū jiàohuì lùntān bào) is from World Council of Churches. The Catholic Weekly which is from the Catholic Community in Taiwan. Lastly, the Kingdom Revival Times (Guódù fùxīng bào) from a community of churches with Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal tradition. Its leadership include Yang Ning-Ya, Senior Pastor of Taipei Truth Lutheran Church and Nathaniel Chou of the Bread of Life Church with 183 churches in Taiwan. It is this newspaper publication whose copious content on Jews/Israel is noteworthy. It publishes weekly church news reports, special topics and sermons about the churches in Taiwan. In this newspaper, there is a weekly column entitled “Praying for Israel” with updates on current political, economic and social affairs of Israel (ca. 800-1000 Chinese characters). Apart from that, there are frequent publication of Jewish short articles, mission reports to Israel, personal testimonies by short term missionaries to Israel, and even political and social reports on the current state of Israel.

The Bread of Life Church published a small pamphlet entitled: “Handbook of Praying for Israel” (Wèi yǐshèliè dǎogào shǒucè). It consists of 31 daily prayers for Israel. The publisher introduced the handbook with Psalm 122:6 “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they prosper who love you.”

Yang Ning-Ya of The Taipei Truth Church who pastors a 3000-4000 weekly worshippers, owns an online blog. The blog maintains the weekly sermon of the senior pastor printed in their weekly bulletin but also posted in this online blog. In here, he talks about his views on the eschatological restoration of Israel.2

There is a Christian organization called: Shofar Social Transformation Alliance (Shofar Shèqū zhūánhuà liánméng).3 In May 2015, this organization started a program “Shofar Ministry.” The Shofar Ministry intends to transform the spiritual climate of Taiwan by blowing the shofar horns and to “invite” renewal and transformation. This is a group of taiwanese christians who held their first major sailing event called “Set Sail in Glory” based on Isa 60:1. This is a 3-day sailing journey with participants onboard to sail around the whole of Taiwan island to pray for Taiwan’s renewal. This event was participated by 400 churches with 1750 prayer warriors represented by 20 countries, praying for the revival of Taiwan.4 Last September 20, 2017, this organization organized a prayer rally

2 http://taipeitlc.blogspot.tw/
3 It’s website is: www.yeshua153.com
4 To be sure this organization and the ship sailing event have been criticized by other evangelical churches for exploiting the Christian faith and the ordinary christians for the organization/personal financial and economic interests.
(lit. prayer altar) in front of the Taiwan’s Presidential Palace. The rally started as prelude by blowing the jewish shofar horns.⁵

Andrew Chang is the founder of a Christian organization, Tabernacle of David Prayer Center (TOD) founded in the year 2000. This organization produces praise and worship albums and publishes Christian literatures. It regularly organizes programs of Church healing and renewal with both the national flags of Taiwan and Israel hoisted. It also provide training to church leaders and workers. In their website contains the sermons and lectures of the founder.⁶ In one of the drop down menus of the site is an exclusive link about Israel. In the menu includes three sub-menus: News about Israel, Israel’s Prayer Request and lastly, Pray for the Peace of Israel. This group organizes a program to celebrate the Sukkot Festival in Oct 5-6, 2017. While it is celebrating the Jewish festival, the program includes continuous reading of all 260 chapters of the New Testament. Andrew Chang’s publishing company has translated the book “God's Promise and the Future of Israel: Compelling Questions People Ask About Israel and the Middle East” into Chinese written by Don Finto in 2006. This book is sold in Elim Bookstore, also a publication arm of Tabernacle of David. This book was referred to by Yang Ning-Ya in one of his blogs.

The above are important personalities, programs, events, literatures and other independent sources, produced and organized by a group of Taiwanese Christians, which I label as “Taiwan Philo-Semitic Theology” (TPST, henceforth). They are a group of Taiwanese who have shown heightened preoccupation in Jews/Israel in their soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology.

II. Brief Description of Related Biblical Texts

The Old Testament is not lacking of biblical texts on the restoration of Israel. The following are the key texts often quoted, alluded and used to talk about the eschatological restoration of Israel: Joel 2:32; 3:1-2; Eze 11:16-20 (-24); 37:21-28; Hos 3:5; Isa 11:11-12; 56:6-8; Mic 2:12; Jer 16:14-15; 23:1-8; 30:3; Amos 9:14-15; Zech 8:7-8. The pertinent texts also included New Testament texts Matthew 24:14 and Romans 11:11, 15, 23.

Form-critically, the language of eschatological days is crucial to speak of the restoration of Israel. The language includes: “afterward,” “in the last days,” “on that day,” “the days are coming.” These are found in Hos 3:5; Jer 23:5,7; 30:3; Isa 11:11-12. All these are literary markers to suggest the texts have eschatological timeframe in view. It has

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⁶http://www.hosanna-tod.com
predictive overtone to speak of what will take place in either immediate or distant future. Part of this analysis is the discussion on the prophetic fulfillment: one single fulfillment or multiple fulfillment.

These texts are descriptions of the Old Testament prophets about the future fate of Israel. The occurrence of a hebrew word שׁוּב (shub) is observable in the above texts. The word has a semantic range: “to return” or “to restore”, and even “to repent.” The vision of the restoration of Israel is often described using different metaphors and imageries. The imageries include military, political, and even relational-pastoral imageries. We see the military and political imagery in Isa 11:11-12, Eze 37:20-22. The relational restoration is best represented by the repeated phrase “I will be your God and you will be my people). The pastoral imagery may be found in Her 23:3-4, Mic 2:12, Zech 8:7-8. The language of assemble or קבץ (kibz) refer quite often to reassembling sheep which have been scattered (Isa 40:11; Jer. 23:3; Isa 49:5), certainly a rather frequent task for shepherds in Palestine. This is the technical term for gathering the exiles together (Deut 30:3f.; Isa. 43:5; 54:7; 56:8). The theme of repentance expressed by the language of turning the heart of stone to a heart of flesh. The vision includes the time when Israel will seek God, obey the law and turn away from idolatry and vile images (Eze 11:18-21, 37:23-24, Hos 3:5). It follows that there are two levels of meaning to the concept שׁוּב: national and political restoration and spiritual restoration and return to Yahweh.

Whenever the restoration of Israel is in view, the gentile nations also emerge. On the one hand, the nations are the place of origin where Israel will embark for their return (Isa 11:17). On the other hand, the gentile nations are participating in Israel’s return (Isa 11:11-12, 56:6-8).

Lastly, the prophets describe the restoration of Israel by including the reference to the land and the blessing of fortunes which include abundant agriculture, progeny (increase in number), peace and a king to rule over them. We see these in Isa 11:13; Jer 23:3, 5-6, 30:3; Eze 11:16-17, 37:21-28; Amos 9:14-15. In sum, restoration of Israel is a gestalt than simply a summation of all the above elements.

III. Taiwanese Philosemitic Eschatology on the Restoration of Israel

The following is a critical description of the hermeneutics and theology of the TPST.

1. Literal Fulfillment Eschatology

One of the primary issues in biblical hermeneutics is to ascertain the literary genre of the passage in order to prescribe the method of interpretation. Insofar as the eschatological restoration of Israel passages come from the prophetic genre, the point of contention is on
literal and non-literal interpretation of the texts. The TPST reads the passages as
prophetic oracles to be interpreted literally in order to understand its reference. It is
unapologetic that literal interpretation is their first interpretive principle unless the text
that is before and after suggest otherwise. It argues for the reading by asking rhetorically:
“Aren’t the prophecies about the Messiah has to be literally interpreted and literally
fulfilled in Jesus Christ? Why then do we not interpret the prophesies about the
restoration of Israel literally as well?” It maintains that the prophecies about the Messiah
were literally interpreted and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
It cites the events concerning the soldiers dividing the garment of Jesus at the cross in Joh
19:23-24 as fulfillment of Psa 22:18; the suffering servant in Isa 53 as fulfilled in Jesus
life and suffering; also, Jesus resurrection from the dead after three days was literally
fulfilled.7

Scholarship on OT prophetic tradition identifies two kinds of prophetic speech: forth-
telling and fore-telling. While other reading tradition focuses on the forth-telling message
like the indictment of sins, call to repentance, call narrative, prophetic symbolic actions,
the TSPT places greater attention on the fore-telling elements of the prophecy. The
fulfillment of the prophecy becomes the centerpiece of their reading.

Hence, TPST reads the promises fulfilled first and only in 1948 when the British Mandate
was terminated so that Israel gained her independence led by Jewish leader and Prime
Minister David Ben-Gurion. Hence, this occasion led to the establishment of the modern
State of Israel in Palestine. TPST considers this event critical fas the “watershed in
human history.”8 This event is understood as a partial fulfillment of God’s promise to
Israel. TPST recognizes that “Israel will continue to return to their land, so this prophecy
is not yet completely fulfilled. It will need more time.”9

Other reading traditions read the fulfillment of these restoration prophecies in the return
of exile from Babylon through Persian king Cyrus during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah
in the late 6th BCE. TPST refutes this reading by quoting Ezek 11:16-17:

16Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God: Though I removed them far away
among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have
been a sanctuary to them for a little while in the countries where they have
gone. 17 Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the
peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered,
and I will give you the land of Israel.

7 「以色列復國是否應驗聖經預言？ (二)」 (Is Israel’s National Restoration a Biblical Fulfillment? (Part II))
8 Timothy Lee, 「世界局勢分水嶺：以色列復國」 (The Watershed in Human History: Israel’s National
9 「以色列復國是否應驗聖經預言？ (二)」 (Is Israel’s National Restoration a Biblical Fulfillment? (Part II))
TPST asks the questions: when in human history was Israel “scattered among countries,” “removed far away among the nations,” and then finally “gathered from the peoples and assembled together out of the countries”? According to TSPT, Israel was colonized by many ancient nations and they returned from exile during Ezra and Nehemiah. However, those colonizations and return are not seen as the reference of Ezekiel 11:16-17. They maintained that it is only during Roman period in 70 AD that Israel was completely dispersed the way Ezekiel 11:16-17 depicted. This dispersion is said to solve the problem of food shortage by the Romans during the first century. Jerusalem experienced famine and the jews were dispersed. TSPT quotes Jewish historian Josephus who wrote about 1,100,000 jews who were killed those times.  

TPST specifically alludes to Joel 3:2 (I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations. They have divided my land.) and underscores the phrase “divide my land.” This reading contends that this passage was fulfilled when Britain Mandate gave 75% of the land to the Palestinian Arab in exchange of oil reserves. In 1947, the jews were betrayed when United Nations divided the land of Israel between the jews and the arabs. Jews only received 13% to the west of the land. Accordingly, based on Joel 3:2, God will make Britain responsible for this decision.

Akin with the above reading, Andrew Chang talks about the fulfillment of the restoration of Israel by referring to first Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland in 1897. He explains the fulfillment in modern history such that there were numerous waves of Aliyah Zionist Immigration to Palestine with great number of jews coming from different parts of the world. In his sermon, he lists the various socio-political events in Palestine in line with the establishment of Israel as a nation. He referred to the year 1909 when Tel Aviv was established as the first modern Jewish city. In 1918, the Hebrew University was created. In 1948 the Israel Defense Forces IDF was established. Without a miss, he also talks about the Israel’s modern wars that took place from 1948 to 1982.

TPST asserts that based on Ezek 11:18-20, God’s plan for Israel was to first gather them back to their land, and then, give them a new circumcised heart and spirit. After returning to their land, they will turn away from idolatry and will not harden their hearts.


11 When they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

This reading responds to critics who question regarding 1948 event as fulfillment of the OT prophecies and the lack of differentiation between political and spiritual Israel in perceiving the fulfillment in the 1948 event. These critics prioritize Jewish repentance before any talk of the return to the land can take place.

The TPST is adamant to base their interpretation and theology on the faithfulness of God. They claim that the fulfillment is a demonstration of God’s faithfulness to his promise to Israel. “Israel’s historical experience has never been experienced by others people group and nations in the world. They have been colonized by many great and gentle nations, like Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Romans and Ottoman Empire, etc. but they still survive. Their survival is demonstration that God has a distinct plan for them. God said in Jer 32:37: See, I am going to gather them from all the lands to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation; I will bring them back to this place, and I will settle them in safety."  

TPST asserts that Israel’s restoration back to Palestine in 1948 is not based on human Jewish effort, that is, human worthiness or human confession of faith in Jesus Christ but simply a demonstration of God’s abundant grace, wisdom, and sovereignty in world affairs. To support this statement, they cite OT texts, which include non-Jews, who are pagan gentiles, outside the covenant community of God, yet under the sovereignty of God and fulfilling the plan of God. They cite King Cyrus as God’s instrument in rebuilding the temple; God’s use of Chaldeans in Hab 1:6; Israel who did not believe Jesus yet fulfilled the prophecy that they would betray Jesus (Ps 41:9); In Ps 2:1-2, the pagan gentiles who do not believe in God, fulfilled God’s prophecy concerning Jesus fate in the hands of gentiles.

Yang follows the same argumentation. He is mindful of the importance of spiritual repentance of Israel when he wrote in his blog translated as:  

Today, the gentile church has almost completely forgotten the Jews… but in 1948 there was the reestablishment of the State of Israel. In 1967, Israel retook Jerusalem in the Six-Day War of June 1967. Many said that this is fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, but only in literal sense. Actually, if we really want to know if the prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled, it will depend on the Jews to believe in Jesus. Israel’s return to their land, then the retaking of Jerusalem, both are the processes of the fulfillment of the prophecy. However, it is only until the Jews will believe and accept Jesus and return to God, will the prophecy be completely fulfilled.


While other reading traditions highly focus on the spiritual restoration of Israel, TPST seem to keep the tension and balance between the material and spiritual restoration. For this reading, spiritual restoration is not enough, the national and political restoration of Israel is also necessary.

In sum, instead of debating over historical-grammatical issues and the literary character of these prophetic texts, TPST concentrates on the unfolding of fulfillment of these prophecies in contemporary modern life and history. This hermeneutical lens takes the prophetic literary genre and its literal fulfillment seriously. It is in consonance with Pesher reading of OT texts mindful of how the two horizons, ancient OT and current Jewish geo-political situation in the world are in correspondence. It reads the current socio-political situation found in the newspapers on the one hand, and the OT prophecies on the other hand.15

Also, notwithstanding cessationism of prophecy is common in western theological tradition, the TPST regards prophecy as a spiritual gift and phenomenon a lived reality. Just as the ancient prophecies of Israel are currently being fulfilled, contemporary prophecies spoken by pastor-prophets to churches and individuals are reckoned to be legitimate and trustworthy. This grants confidence and license to continue to practice and pursue prophecy.

More importantly, these national and social developments of the jews are seen as God at work rather than simply deistic historical events of political, social and economic causality. TPST are always abreast with the messianic jews who come to believe in Jesus Christ. It is seen as God slowly but surely fulfilling his promises to Israel into fruition. The TPST sees these as God at work and literally fulfilling the prophecy 2000-3000 years ago.

2. Jewish-Centered Eschatology

One of the many issues in biblical eschatology is on the issue of the continuity and discontinuity between the two testaments, and more narrowly, the relationship between Israel and the Church in God’s kingdom and salvation plan. It has to be admitted that there are different positions with numerous variations to the issue. The Covenantal tradition has adopted suppressionism or replacement theology — the jews are no longer the chosen people of God as the result of their rejection of the Messiah Jesus Christ. This position maintains that the church is now the new people of God. The church is the “new” Israel who have embraced Jesus as the Messiah.

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15 As evidence, in Kingdom Revival Times issue 738 dated Oct 16, 2016, there is a column entitled: Proving Biblical Prophecies: Israel Media.
The TPST concurs with the narrative that God has rejected Israel because of their unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah (Matt 8:11-12, Acts 13:46). However, it still maintains that God has not completely abandoned Israel and still has a plan for Israel (Rom 11:1-2, 11:28-29, 11:25-27). The TSPT insists that the rejection of Israel as God’s chosen people in human history is temporary and partial. God’s irrevocable intention is to take Israel back and restore the fortunes of Israel. This reading quotes Gen 17:8 as support: “And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.” Insofar as the land of Israel is concerned, TPST holds that the Jews have “sacred possession” of the land of Israel. “No other nations or countries, ancient or modern, not even USA or England or China have sacred possession of their respective lands. If there was any nation who has a sacred possession of their land, it would be Israel.” They argue that Replacement Theology has misunderstood the NT texts on the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church when they interpret Gentiles replacing the Jews in passages like Eph 2:14, Rom 3:22, 10:12. Accordingly, unity in the church does not mean that the Gentiles have replaced the Jews in God’s salvation history.

Nathaniel Chou argues that Replacement Theology has “suppressed” (Fēngshā) the Jews from the “whole bowl of salvation,” leaving the Jews completely without share (to this salvation). The following are his exact words in English translation: “Thank God, as we are transformed, God has revealed his will to us to pay attention to our ‘Jewish big brother.’ We have to learn from them, love them and honor them. May God lead not only Taiwan but Chinese churches and non-Chinese churches not to “suppress the Jews” anymore. In the fullness of time, we will see all Jews saved.”

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16 I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
17 Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles.
18 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?
19 As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
20 So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, “Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”
21 And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”
22 「以色列復國是否應驗聖經預言︖ (二)」 (Is Israel’s National Restoration a Biblical Fulfillment? (Part II))

李容珍與林鈺庭. 「國家祭壇：回轉到神面前得地為業」 (National Prayer Altar : Return to God; Land as Inheritance) in Chinese Christian Tribune 3851, Oct 2016, p. 5. Website: https://www.ct.org.tw/1295078. Rev. Chou was the speaker and he talked about the theme of suppression (Fēngshā (封殺)): how the church in the past suppressed the Jews, Taiwan aborigines, the Jewish festivals, and the Holy Spirit. Hence, exhorting Taiwan churches to repent.
In like manner, Yang is unapologetic in criticizing western theologies antisemitism. He writes:23

In the early history, the disciples only went to the jews to preach the gospel until God used dreams and visionary revelation to Peter (in Acts). The revelation has changed their view. From then on, many gentiles believed in Jesus. But Israel’s nation on earth from then on has not been rebuilt. When the gospel was spread to the gentiles, many gentiles came to know Jesus in great numbers, many churches were established. From then on, the church slowly thought that “the church has replaced the jews in God’s heart, the jews are just prefiguring the church, salvation has now reached the church.” This is the so-called “replacement theology” This false notion is common in church history, especially the European churches, they are in fact in hostile relationship with the jews, because the jews killed Jesus. When they do business with the jews, they are often on the losing end. Over all, this led the western world accumulate their hatred towards jews. Even Reformation leader Martin Luther was once at war with the jews. Church in Middle Ages even persecuted the jews. The western church has always been antagonistic of the jews, especially the Germans. German Christians persecuted the jews until today. This forces the jews to have a negative view of the cross. The cross is symbolic of the church, but for the jews it represents hatred.”

In sum, TPST is akin to Progressive Dispensationalism in ensuring the distinction between Israel and the church. Replacement Theology is rejected by affirm the continuity of God’s election and promise of Israel distinct from the church. There is an attempt to correct Replacement Theology by finding the place of Israel in God’s salvation history without affirming Jewish Messianism or Futurism. This is what Yang has to say:24

“Messianism” is a form of Judaism which believe that the jews are privileged over other nations, Replacement Theology on the other hand, overdoes it by discriminating Israel. Both are wrong. In the last days, God will call all people all nations to his temple. Based on Romans 11, the original branch has been cut off, the jews rejected Jesus, they are the unrepentant; as a result, we as gentle church has been inserted into this olive tree, the gospel came to us first. When the gentile believers reach its full number, there will then be great number of jews who will believe in Jesus. Then, Jesus shall return again.

3. Missional Eschatology

While other reading tradition reads the prophetic passages in theological abstraction, and ethical-moral reflection, the TPST reads the passage oriented towards evangelism and world missions. This reading is continually asks the question what these prophecies about Israel has to do with Taiwanese christians. The way of reading goes beyond the mere descriptions of the text, but invokes the Taiwan churches to participate in the evangelization of the jews. The reading repudiates passivity but inspires active participation in the reading exercise. Christians are viewed as transformative agents — agents of inviting the kingdom of God to reign not just in heaven but also on earth. This eschatology may be appropriately called as missional eschatology.

There are long term and short missions teams sent to Israel to do missions work. When it comes to missions funding, more funds have been allocated to do Jewish missions than other people group (i.e., Muslim missions). TPST also organized prayer rallies to pray for jews to believe in the Messiah Jesus Christ. TPST is convinced that sharing the gospel to the jews is their divine calling and chance to “to pay the debt of the gospel.” The Chinese have received the message of the gospel from western missionaries in the past and have received the benefits and blessings of this faith. And now they are commissioned to take the gospel back to the jews.

Although the “Back to Jerusalem” Movement is a missionary phenomenon and vision of the churches in China, but there are parallel ideas between Back to Jerusalem and the TPST — they see themselves in the frontline, to take on the missionary responsibility to take the gospel to the west and south of China, including the Middle East. Also, based on Matt 24:14, they see the missionary work as precondition for Jesus return, as mission work will hasten the return of Jesus:

> We believe God has given us a solemn responsibility to take the fire from his altar and complete the Great Commission by establishing his kingdom in all of the remaining countries and people groups in Asia, the Middle East, and Islamic North Africa. When this happens, we believe the Scripture says the Lord Jesus Christ will return for his bride and “we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words” (I Thessa. 4:17-18). We believe that the farthest the gospel can travel from Jerusalem is to circle the entire globe and come all the way back to where it started — Jerusalem!

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Lest misunderstood, the TPST is not a branch of secular Zionism. The TPST believes in the centrality of Jesus Christ in the full restoration of Israel, not just politically but also spiritually. Christology is front and central as the basis of Israel’s restoration. Hence, the element of repentance from their rejection of Jesus Christ is necessary. Having said that, just like other Christians’ spiritual experience, repentance is a gradual process. Thus, TPST organizes prayer rallies to pray for Israel to repent and believe in Jesus. They call themselves as “watchmen for Israel” based on Hab 2:1.

In sum, the above discussion shows that for Taiwanese (perhaps including Chinese) Christians, eschatology is meaningful and vibrant because they participate in the ushering of the restoration of the kingdom of God, which include Israel. They believe that the coming of Christ is a matter of time and they are prepared to accomplish the Great Commission.

4. Analogical Eschatology

Another dimension of the eschatology of TPST is perceiving Jewish restoration as precondition to Taiwan restoration. In the vision statement of TOD, it is part of the vision statement and goal is to pursue the revival of national Israel and second, the revival of the church of Taiwan. Like Progressive Dispensationalism, TPST speaks of the order of salvation history: Jews, then Gentiles, then Jews.26

This is evident in the statement of faith of TOD (in English):27

We believe that before the coming of the Lord, there will be a global revival. Says in Acts 3:20-21: And that He may sent the Christ, who has been appointed for you— even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.

Such revival at least covers four areas:

1. The revival of Israel
2. The revival of glorious church (spiritual Israel)
3. The revival of every tribe, every people and every nation
4. The revival of all heaven and earth (Rom 8:18, 21)

In the Bible we see the last wave of revival before the 2nd coming of the Christ, the most important movement of revival is restoring the Tabernacle of David.

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Moreover, the relationship between Israel and church are expressed not just in terms of historical priority but also in essence. Chang explains that “whenever we talk about election of God’s people, it includes Israel as the sand of the seashore and the church as the stars in the sky; all are Abraham’s descendants, natural and spiritual descendants. But the spiritual cannot come first; instead, the natural should come first (1 Cor 15:46).”

In another sermon, he said: “God has used the restoration of Israel as the sign of God’s renewal (of the world), God will also use the church, his spiritual children to do the work of renewal.”

Nathaniel Chou expressed the same understanding in a more contextually relevant way. He identifies Israel as the “big brother” (Zhāngzǐ) of the church. Properly, God has not abandoned Israel; hence, the church should not also abandon Israel. It is in fact maintained that the revival of Taiwan as a nation is connected with the revival of Israel.

Consequently, one way to show and express this recognition is expressed in restoring and employing Old Testament language and themes like blowing the horns, use of the language of “altar” (Jītán), celebrating the Jewish feasts and festivals, adopting the Jewish calendar, learning Jewish economics. It is noteworthy that the TPST celebrates the Rosh Hashanah and Sukkoth, blowing of the horns, raising the Jewish flags; instead of using the western or Christian calendar year 2017, Jewish calendar year AM 5778 is used. In explaining why Taiwan churches should adopt and observe the Jewish festivals, Chou argues that “the contemporary churches have “suppressed” the Jewish festivals. Emperor Constantine has used non-biblical festivals to replace biblical festivals.” Chou made special reference to the observance of Sabbath. According to him, “suppressing” the Jewish Sabbath is the cause of the increasing number of church pastors experiencing depression due to lack of rest and extreme work. “God has chosen the Jews and the Jewish language as means of delivering his word. Accordingly, the Bible was written by Jewish authors. Even Jesus has Jewish identity and he spoke about the Kingdom. If the church removed her Jewish roots, we will lose the original flavor because we lose “the fat

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In this site is a table which compares the restoration of Israel on the one hand and the renewal of the church.
30 The philosemitism is selective as it does not adopt the Jewish dietary system, a trait the Taiwanese wouldn’t trade in exchange of their exquisite Chinese cuisine.
of the olive roots.”33 TPST maintains that in the past, the church was influenced by Greek thoughts and ideas, which made western christianity appear as rational, knowledge, science, and abstract ideas. The Hebrew thought was heavy on practice and concrete actions. For the jews, faith itself is a kind of lifestyle; their love for God is reflected in their enthusiasm in studying their Scripture and observing the Sabbath.34

TPST rationalizes that if Taiwan churches find their roots in the Jewish faith, they will experience the blessings of God. What God has in store for Israel will also be for them (I will bless those who bless you, curse those who curse you). Moreover, the OT Jewish instructions and tithes and offerings are used as models for the contemporary church’s tithes and offerings, Chou said: “The Jewish financial management secret is based on the Bible. God has blessed them. When Taiwan Christians also commit to the same financial secret, by obedience will also be blessed like the jews.”35

Contrary to Marcionism, TPST takes the Old Testament as authoritative revelation of God. It regards the election of Israel, her history and culture as God’s revelation to humanity rather than simply a medium of God’s revelation of his salvation plan. Accordingly, Israel is not prefiguring the church, but Israel is God’s revelation itself. The concernment in Israel/Jewish calendar, customs and practices do not serve as background materials to understand Old Testament texts, instead this approach makes the Jewish calendar and culture as God’s revelation itself.

IV. The Rationale for the Philosemitic Theology

One’s social and cultural milieu and experience affects one’s interpretive strategies and theology.36 Despite the linguistic, geographical and historical distance between Taiwan and Israel, Israel has found a fertile soil in the hearts of Taiwanese christians and perhaps also among non-Christians. I suggest three possible social and cultural milieus serving as hermeneutical context behind the Philosemitic theology.

First, geopolitically, the taiwanese perceive themselves as victims or the underdogs by strong oppressive powers. Taiwanese as a small island is challenged to find her place in the world scene. The tense relationship between Taiwan and China goes all the way to...
1949 when a political group left China and settled in Taiwan. Despite having her own
democratic government, flag, and monetary system, she is hard-pressed to be recognized
as an independent sovereign country. The place of Taiwan in international stage is full of
controversy and tension. China has resisted and refused any declaration of Taiwan as an
independent state. Whenever there are attempts to pursue independence, sanctions are in
place against Taiwan. China controls the international community not to give Taiwan
independence from China. This kind of geo-political humiliation in the context of a
shame culture, is a strong emotion that had accumulated in the hearts of many taiwanese
over many years. Taiwan is small, with only 24 million population, yet experienced
colonization by the Dutch, Spaniards and later the Japanese. She is not a member of the
United Nations. Hence, such geo-political state of Taiwan makes the people in Taiwan
insecure. Thus, Taiwan identifies herself with the humiliation of the jews who also do not
have a strong and stable geo-political sovereignty. The OT language “possessing the land
as heritage”, “restoration/renewal of the land,” “freedom from bondage” appeals to TPST.
It adopts and makes this cry for freedom their own. The same language is often heard in
the prayers of TPST. There is geo-political motivation for the taiwanese magnetic affinity
to the jews.

Secondly, although taiwanese are deep in shamanism and ancestral worship, Taiwan is an
increasingly secular and materialistic society. This people group is more interested in
economics than politics. With the larger economic market of neighboring China, the
taiwanese are looking for new paradigms to achieve economic and financial prosperity.
In the eyes of the taiwanese, the jews are known to be rich, famous and successful. In
2016 Forbes Billionaires, eleven of the 50 richest people in the world are Jewish. It is in
the Chinese psyche to emulate the best practice and practitioners in economic prosperity.
This explains the preponderance of books available in the market on how to become rich
from Jewish business tycoon and economic experts. Over all, the combination of the
seduction of the message of prosperity gospel, the force of materialism and the robust

41 The list features five Jews in the top 15 and seven in the top 25 spots. Mark Zuckerberg is the world’s richest Jew. While there Wang Jianlin from China ranked 18 and Li Ka-Sheng ranked 19th on the 2017 Forbes World’s Billionaires.
42 Rabbi Daniel Lapin’s Thou Shall Prosper has been translated to Chinese (猶太人致富金律) in 2009. Another book by Zvika Bergman entitled as Secrets the Rich Jews Know was translated into Chinese in 2015.
economic growth and development in China, it is not surprising that this kind of mentality struck a chord with many Taiwanese Christians.33

Thirdly, Taiwanese culture is grounded in the teachings of Confucianism and Taoism. It is not a religion but a social and ethical philosophy.44 Confucianism has little to say about metaphysical and spiritual realms of life. Should there be any metaphysical reality, it is an abstract concept than a person. Hence, Confucianism accounts the personal, social and environmental realms of human existence. Insofar as the Old Testament and Judaism, also has steep moral and ethical traditions on family, education and lifestyle, it is understandable that Taiwanese Christians find strong affiliation with them.45 Books on Jewish children education translated into Chinese are available in local bookstores.46 It should be underscored that Taiwanese Bible reading practices tend to focus on the moral and ethical teaching than the doctrinal, historical or political aspect of the Old Testament.

In sum, Philip Jenkins maintains that the Global South is characterized by “its veneration for Old Testament, which is considered as authoritative as the New.”47 Such observation is correct perhaps due to how Taiwanese culture shares more similarities with the Jewish culture than the Western culture. Perceiving the Jews as the “big brother” of the church resonate well with the Taiwanese as ancestral and family solidarity, piety for the elderly and predecessors are intrinsic aspect of the Taiwanese culture. Taiwanese share with the Jewish anticipation of future deliverance and victory over oppressive bullies powers.

When one puts the TPST interest in Jewish restoration in its world context, TPST is not completely unique. The resurgence of Israel/Jews discourse in biblical and theological studies is observable in N.T. Wright’s works who underscored the Jewish roots of Christianity. The heightened interest in Jews is also observed by Finto in his book:48

47 Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. pp. 4-5. He writes “These include a much greater respect for the authority of Scripture, especially in matters of morality, a willingness to accept the Bible as an inspired text and a tendency to literalism; special interest in supernatural elements of scripture, such as miracles, visions, and healing; a belief in the continuing power of prophecy and a veneration for the Old Testament, which is considered as authoritative as the New.”
Three events are shaping our 21st century: Jewish eyes are opening to the revelation that Yeshua is their Messiah; nations long held in darkness are learning of the God who brings redemption to the world through Israel’s famous son; and a centuries-long anti-semitic church is beginning to come alive to the Jewish roots of her faith, to acknowledge her sins and to come together with her Jewish brothers and sisters as one flock in God.

V. Concluding Remarks

This paper concludes by providing two gentle warnings to TPST and a question.

First, the amplification of Jewish culture and practice in doing church and in eschatological theologizing unnecessarily elevates what is supposed to be “shadowy” function of OT Israel, her culture and practice. It undermines Jesus Christ and the Church as the final and perfect revelation of God as Jesus and the church are the ultimate realities prefigured in the Old Testament laws, prophets and writings (Heb 10:1). Instead of awaiting the coming of Christ, the focus unwittingly shifts to the eschatological restoration of Israel.

Second, while philosemitism is arguably justifiable and perhaps admirable in the context of antisemitism and zeitgeist of hatred and terror in the world, philosemitism may easily slid to fanaticism (fanatic philosemitic) at the expense of other nationalities/people group and worst, at the expense of one’s own national identity and culture. Such tendency is a disservice to Taiwan Christianity. After all, when Apostle John describes the vision of a great multitude of people in white robes offering their worship and praise to God in Rev 7:9-17, jewish christians are definitely expected to be present, but that vision is incomplete without a distinctive presence of Taiwanese christians.

Additionally, contextualized theologizing requires, on the one hand faithfulness to the Scripture, and on the other hand the creativity of imagination. Knowing the jewish roots of Christianity does not require adopting the jewish culture into Taiwan ecclesiology. The challenge lies on differentiation between what is jewish culture and what is biblical culture. After all, the church is called to incarnate the multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-cultural essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Might it be said that TSPT has been unduly faithful to the literal details of the Old Testament and lacks the creative imagination to go beyond what is written, by failing to tap on its distinct cultural and ethnic resources, in order to develop its own contextualized theology?
VI. Bibliography


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