

‘Christian Zionism among Evangelicals in the Federal Republic of Germany’

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ABSTRACT

Christian Zionism is usually studied within an Anglo-American context. This thesis examines the movement in Germany after 1945. Its emergence from Restorationism, its development, and its present state are described. The movement was not imported from abroad, but to a large extent has German roots.

Analyses of ideaSpektrum, the weekly news magazine of the Evangelical Alliance, and of Evangelical books in German dealing with Israel and the end times explore the broader Evangelical context. German Evangelicals have a more moderate approach to Israel than Americans, but also display a narrower spectrum of views. No institutional voice promotes a non-Zionist position. There exists a large reservoir of pro-Israel sentiments and beliefs, exemplified in the common phrase ‘solidarity with Israel’, but this frequently falls short of a fully developed Christian Zionism.

Based on the literature surveyed, a model of the Christian Zionist system of ideas is developed to explain its coherence and persuasive power. In the resulting narrative, an Israel-centred retelling of the Biblical story and world history, Israel fulfils numerous functions and becomes an object of admiration or even veneration. The model shows that the Jewish-Christian past is far more important in Christian Zionism than commonly recognized. Dispensationalism is less important, at least outside of the United States.

In neo-Pentecostal circles, Christian Zionism takes on a number of unique characteristics, warranting the distinction of a Charismatic variety of Christian Zionism. It is particularly through this variety that Christian Zionist publications and other activities have increased dramatically since 1990, leading to an ‘Israel boom’ after the ‘prophecy boom’ of the 1970s.

The final chapter offers an Evangelical critique of the movement and of the observed structures of popular Evangelical thought, in which interpretation of Scripture and of world events is often dictated by an established tradition more than by anything else.