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## **Solidarity as a New Creation: An Ethical-Participatory Study on the Church's Obligation to Support "Israel" in Light of Galatians 6:15-16**

Yohannes Ali Sandro Sitorus<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Huria Kristen Batak Protestan jemaat Cililitan

yohannesass@gmail.com

### **Abstract:**

Israel's invasion on Palestine has sparked a variety of responses from the world society, including in Indonesia. One of the most prominent responses is the action to boycott certain products that are believed to be providing capital to Israel in the invasion. Most people believe that a war that denies humanity is wrong. However, there is a dilemma in responding to this global issue, especially when confronted with Israel's biblical promise of reconciliation. This article will explore the solidarity of the cosmic encounter space, which encompasses all of creation including Israel and the church. The text of Galatians 6:15-16 is also examined to reveal who is meant by the Israel of God and how it relates to the idea of a new creation. Finally, the idea of ethical-participatory is used to emphasize the solidarity that should be done as a cosmic encounter space in addressing this global issue. The church and Israel have a bond as the people of God, but humanity still has a special place in this connection.

### **Keywords:**

Ethical-participatory;  
Church; Israel; Cosmic  
Encounter Space;  
Solidarity.

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## INTRODUCTION

The ongoing assault of the State of Israel against Palestine, which has become the focus of global attention, has generated diverse perspectives and even provoked a dilemma for both the church and individual believers. This dilemma arises from the biblical notion that God will bring about reconciliation with Israel, coupled with the theological understanding that the church is the continuation of Israel.<sup>51</sup> Indirectly, such ideas compel both the church and believers to engage in theological reflection on how to respond to the present global crisis. Should solidarity be exercised and directed toward a particular group believed to remain part of the same "lineage," or should it instead be extended to a broader and universal theme, namely, humanity?

This article does not aim to establish a position in favor of any particular group within the current global conflict, for war itself may rightly be regarded as an inhumane crime.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the article will not focus on the course of the warfare between Israel and Palestine, but rather on the response that the church and individual believers are called to formulate in light of this issue. In this regard, the idea of the church as the continuation of Israel must be carefully examined to discern whether the "Israel" attested in Scripture is identical with the modern State of Israel that has become a matter of worldwide concern.

The text chosen as the point of departure for this study is Galatians 6:15–16, which presents the figure of the "Israel of God" in apparent relation to the notion of the "new creation." The central focus of Paul's writing is the person of Christ, who has revealed true love to humankind. This revelation ushers

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<sup>51</sup> Stafnus M. Marbun, *Umat Allah Sebagai Imamat Rajani: Refleksi Atas 1 Petrus 2:9* (Ponorogo: Uwais Inspirasi Indonesia, 2018), 13; Michael Moynagh and Philip Harrold, *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice* (London: SCM Press, 2012), 380; T. L. Frazier, *A Second Look at the Second Coming: Sorting Through the Speculations* (California: Conciliar Press, 1999), 90.

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity: A Topical Digest of the Case Law of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2006), 198–199; Payam Akhavan and René Provost, "Moving from Repression to Prevention of Genocide," in *Confronting Genocide*, ed. Payam Akhavan and René Provost (New York: Springer, 2010), 3.

believers into the eschatological life of the new creation.<sup>53</sup> In other words, it is Christ alone who confers the seal of divine belonging, transcending human distinctions and divisions. Through Him alone, all humanity, and indeed all creation, may dwell within the space of cosmic encounter.

This article therefore advances the argument that Christ, who is the foundation of Galatians 6:15–16, grounds solidarity not merely in terms of belonging to the same “lineage,” but rather in the recognition of one another as *imago Christi*, rooted in the very being of the Creator.

## METHODS

This article employs a qualitative descriptive method, elaborating on the concepts of the ethics of responsibility, participatory theology, and spiritual Israel. The focus of the study lies in formulating a response, both ecclesial and personal, to the global issue between Israel and Palestine. Accordingly, the first step undertaken is the articulation of a cosmic space of encounter, grounded in the notion of spiritual Israel, which may clarify the correlation between Israel and the church. This finding is then brought to bear on the interpretation of Galatians 6:15–16 in order to affirm the significance of the integrity of the *imago Christi*, which transcends human divisions. Such an exploration serves as the foundation for constructing an ethical-participatory framework: the solidarity of God's people is to be understood as the effort to realize a cosmic space of encounter, with Christ as its central axis, so that the wholeness of humanity may be preserved. Therefore, the church's solidarity does not consist in choosing one side over another, but in standing in solidarity with the *imago Christi*.

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<sup>53</sup> John Paul Heil, *Galatians: Worship for Life by Faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2019), 145.

## PEMBAHASAN

### Fellowship in the Past, the Present, and the Eschaton

The relationship between the church and Israel cannot be separated from the theme of “spiritual Israel.”<sup>54</sup> According to George Eldon Ladd, the concept of spiritual Israel is discernible in Galatians 6:16 and is further affirmed in Revelation 7:1–8. On this basis, Ladd emphasizes that while some people are ethnically and literally Jews or Israelites, they are, in reality, not the spiritual Israel that dwells in God.<sup>55</sup> In other words, Ladd draws a distinction between Israel as an ethnic nation and Israel as the people of God.

Matthew L. Williams offers a compelling explanation regarding the distinction between two versions of Israel. His argument rests on the historical journey of Israel as a nation in relation to the divine work of salvation for all humanity whom God has “chosen” to redeem. Not all individuals within ethnic Israel are saved; rather, the entirety of spiritual Israel is “chosen” to participate in divine fellowship.<sup>56</sup> Spiritual Israel, therefore, consists of believers from every nation who have been born again.<sup>57</sup> In other words, spiritual Israel refers to true believers who have experienced new birth through the “circumcision of the heart,” by which faith is inscribed within them, thus making them the authentic people of God (Rom 2:28–29).<sup>58</sup>

The designation of spiritual Israel must be approached with care, so as not to deny the historical reality or diminish the dignity of Israel as a nation in

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<sup>54</sup> John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2013), 1017–1020; Jakób Jocz, *The Spiritual History of Israel*, Digital (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 2019), 9.

<sup>55</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 115.

<sup>56</sup> Matthew L. Williams, *The Simple Books of Profound Truths: For the Skeptic and Believer Alike* (Bloomington: WestBow Press, 2011), 349.

<sup>57</sup> Williams, *The Simple Books of Profound Truths*, 350; Arthur W. Pink, *Divine Covenant* (Zeeland: Reformed Church Publication, 2009), 275.

<sup>58</sup> Federico Dal Bo, “Paul’s Definition of ‘Circumcision of the Heart’: A Transcultural Reading of Romans 2:28–29,” ed. William M. Schniedewind et. al. (Atlanta: The Society of Biblical Literature, 2021), 400.

the Old Testament. At the same time, this article resists an excessive emphasis on Israel as a nation, whether that of the Old Testament or of the present, when such emphasis risks marginalizing the authority of the church. As Deni Citra Damai Telaumbanua's research demonstrates, the existence of the church is not intended to replace Israel of the Old Testament; rather, both are interconnected and share the same purpose, namely, to serve as the central axis of God's salvific plan for all humanity, unrestricted by ethnic or social distinctions.<sup>59</sup> In this sense, spiritual Israel is best understood as a space of encounter among human beings from every nation, and indeed together with the rest of creation, forming one fellowship in Christ. The relationship between the church and Israel thus constitutes a cosmic space of encounter, wherein manifold relationships unfold: between human beings, between humanity and creation, and between humanity and God, reciprocally.

The cosmic space of encounter presupposes that all believers are embraced into the wholeness of the true people of God, who are made righteous solely through faith in Christ and not by worldly signs or "outward circumcision."<sup>60</sup> Christ Himself constitutes the primary foundation of this cosmic space of encounter, for it is only in and through Him that the relational character of this fellowship, uniting humanity, the rest of creation, and God, becomes possible. Moreover, the person of Christ is able to harmonize physical Israel and spiritual Israel without collapsing the two into one or privileging one over the other. This is so because the very reality of the cosmic space of encounter is a manifestation of the being of Christ Himself.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the interrelation

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<sup>59</sup> Deni Citra Damai Telaumbanua, "Relasi Israel Dan Gereja: Sebuah Tinjauan Biblis-Teologis Berdasarkan Roma 9-11," *Te Deum: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pengembangan Pelayanan* 9, no. 1 (July 2019): 108-110.

<sup>60</sup> Roy Charly H. P. Sipahutar, "Israel Baru: Interpretasi Kritis Atas Teologi Paulus Tentang Israel Di Dalam Roma 9:6-8 Dan 11:23-24," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 3, no. 1 (July 2019): 680.

<sup>61</sup> Argumentasi ini menyadur gagasan dua dimensi yang dimiliki gereja, gereja yang sejati dan gereja yang tampak. Kedua dimensi ini saling terhubung, tetapi tidak melebur menjadi satu. Harald Hegstad, *The Real Church: An Ecclesiology of the Visible* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 26.

between the church and Israel is to be understood within this cosmic space of encounter, whose purpose is to bear witness to and to continue the work revealed by Christ in the world, so that all creation may be saved.<sup>62</sup>

The people "chosen" by God (Gen. 32:28; 33:20; 35:10; 46:2–3)<sup>64</sup> were not merely called to become a nation, but rather to serve as the space in which every nation that has received the Gospel might enter into divine grace, so that in their entirety they may be saved.<sup>63</sup> The purpose of this salvific work has, from the beginning, been directed toward all humanity, and this divine design has remained unchanged to the present day. In other words, the movement from Israel in the Old Testament to the formation of the church may be understood as God's open invitation to all humankind to dwell within, or to participate in, His very being.<sup>64</sup> The cosmic space of encounter presupposes that the fellowship of humanity thus united also maintains an integral relationship with the Triune God through the person of Christ.<sup>65</sup> This space harmonizes the fellowship of the past, the present, and that which is to come in the eschaton.

### ***Imago Christi as God's Possession and the New Creation***

The cosmic space of encounter, which accommodates the interrelation between Israel and the church, culminates in the endeavor to become a "new creation" and to embody the "Israel of God" as articulated in Galatians 6:15–16. This text is chosen as the foundation for constructing an ethical-participatory response to be undertaken by the church and individual believers as one within the cosmic space of encounter, for Paul rejects an excessive exclusivist emphasis on being the "people of God." He dismisses the authority of outward signs that

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<sup>62</sup> Steven Tommy Dalekes Umboh and Leonard Albert Kaawoan, "Konsep Ekklesiologi Menurut Perspektif Alkitab Dan Implementasinya Bagi Orang Kristen," *Epignosis: Jurnal Pendidikan Kristiani Dan Teologi* 1, no. 1 (April 2022): 55.

<sup>63</sup> Leon Morris, "The Epistle to the Romans," in *The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 405.

<sup>64</sup> Scott MacDougall, *More Than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2015), 2.

<sup>65</sup> MacDougall, 8.

are disconnected from genuine life of faith and are used merely for self-glorification (vv. 12–13).

According to the research of Paul S. Jeon, those whom Paul addresses were attempting to create a “favorable impression,” though their lives were in fact inconsistent with such an appearance. In order to achieve this, the group in question “compelled” the Galatian believers to undergo circumcision and even to live as Jews.<sup>66</sup> They pressured the Galatians because they sought to avoid persecution or suffering that would otherwise be inflicted upon them for faith in Christ; for certain Jews held the conviction that anyone who insisted on believing in Christ without being circumcised must be persecuted.<sup>67</sup> Paul highlights this very issue: although these individuals considered themselves to be among the “chosen people,” they lived as Gentiles while at the same time compelling Gentiles to live as though they were the “chosen people” (Gal. 2:14). In this way, they seemed to treat the Galatian believers as “trophies” for complying with what they regarded as the ideal life.

In response to this issue within the Galatian community, Paul offers a striking perspective in verse 14: he desires only to boast in the cross of Christ. Yet, as noted in Galatians 5:11, the cross of Christ was a stumbling block that brought persecution upon him, since he no longer proclaimed “circumcision.” On the basis of Gysbert M. H. Loubser’s study, Paul’s declaration underscores that Christ Himself is the central axis and the decisive factor in determining whether humanity remains within the paradigm of “flesh” and law, or becomes a new creation in the Spirit and in faith.<sup>68</sup> For Paul, the love revealed through the cross

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<sup>66</sup> Paul S. Jeon, *Galatians: Freedom in the New Age* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2023), 134.

<sup>67</sup> Jeon, 134; Ambrosiaster’s, *Ancient Christian Text: Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon*, trans. Gerald L. Bray (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 33; Todd A. Wilson, *The Curse of the Law and the Crisis in Galatia: Reassessing the Purpose of Galatians* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 13.

<sup>68</sup> Gysbert M. H. Loubser, *Paul Cries Freedom in Galatia!: On Ethics in the New Creation* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2017), 273–274.

is life itself; indeed, it is precisely this glory that he seeks to highlight in verse 14.<sup>69</sup>

It is not only a matter of life: the cross also bears witness to the unity in Christ that brings humanity into a sequence of eschatological participation in the “new creation” or the “new world.”<sup>70</sup> Those who once lived in the flesh as the “old self” are shown the way to be reborn and to become the “new self” (Eph. 4:21–24). The focus of life within the community of faith is not the assertion of outward signs or seals as markers of membership, but rather the embodiment of Christ, who has borne witness to the salvific work of God for humankind.

This movement culminates in the idea of the new creation and the “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:15–16. Christ, as the central axis of the community of faith, the cosmic space of encounter, renders outward seals meaningless apart from the effort to embody the new creation. The futility of such outward seals becomes evident when Jews, traditionally regarded as the “chosen people,” and Gentiles alike place their faith in Christ, are reborn, and thus become a new creation (v. 15).<sup>71</sup> It is only by believing in Christ and in what He has accomplished on the cross that humanity is reborn through and in the power of the Holy Spirit, who then summons believers to live within this transformative power.<sup>72</sup>

The concept of the new creation, rooted in the very being of Christ, is the key to understanding the “Israel of God” in verse 16. It must be recognized that this verse provides clear evidence that the church and Israel as a nation are distinct realities, yet not in contradiction with one another in terms of God’s election.<sup>73</sup> This distinction arises because Paul seeks to transcend the legalism of

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<sup>69</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ancient Christian Text*, 33.

<sup>70</sup> Mark D. Owens, *As It Was in the Beginning: An Intertextual Analysis of New Creation in Galatians, 2 Corinthians, and Ephesians* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 80–81.

<sup>71</sup> Bruce Barton et al., *Life Application: New Testament Commentary* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 795.

<sup>72</sup> Barton et al., 795.

<sup>73</sup> I Gede Agus Zafnat Paaneah, “Dasar Alkitabiah Tentang Pertumbuhan Gereja Sebagai Landasan Pertumbuhan Jemaat,” *Iluminasi: Jurnal Teologi STII Palu*, March 2024, 55; Yusuf L. M., “Problematika Teologi Kristen: Hubungan Istilah Gereja Dan Israel,” *BIA: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen Kontekstual* 4, no. 1 (June 2021): 39.



the Jewish community, or Israel as a nation, which had become problematic due to its excessive emphasis on outward signs. Such particularistic legalism, overly fixated on traditions or external seals, was employed as an absolute measure of who belongs to God. In doing so, they neglected and denied the true criterion of the "chosen people."

Seyoon Kim argues that the notion of being God's people is not a form of chauvinism that culminates in hostility toward other nations or groups deemed inferior.<sup>74</sup> For him, "spiritual Israel" is grounded in the person of Christ, who embraces both Jews and Gentiles, not as nations, but as humanity in its entirety.<sup>75</sup> In other words, when Israel denies Christ and refuses to make Him the guide of life, they simultaneously forfeit their distinctiveness as God's chosen people.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that Paul underscores the futility of outward seals apart from dwelling in Christ, who proclaims the unfolding of divine salvation for all creation. According to the research of Christopher W. Coman, the "Israel of God" is a design that encompasses the totality of all who believe.<sup>77</sup> Other nations become the "Israel of God" only through and in Christ, who is the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), and thus they too are counted as Abraham's descendants.<sup>78</sup>

Paul leaves the impression that the essence of being God's people does not lie in visible recognition, but in the invisible reality of genuine faith. The true proof of belonging to God's people is demonstrated in self-denial, in moving by the power of love, and in being freed from worldly life in order to dwell within

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<sup>74</sup> Junias Marvel Lumban Tobing, *Pancasila Satu-Satunya Ideologi Bangsa Indonesia Dan Amanat Pembukaan UUD 1945 Satu-Satunya Landasan Konstitusional Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Nafiri Sion Publishing, 2021), 113.

<sup>75</sup> Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 108.

<sup>76</sup> Yusuf L. M., "Problematika Teologi Kristen," 48-49.

<sup>77</sup> Christopher W. Coman, "Context Is Everything: 'The Israel of God' in Galatians 6:16," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2010), 80.

<sup>78</sup> Coman.

the will of God.<sup>79</sup> This is what it means to become a new creation: to embody the self-giving life of Christ revealed on the cross. When human beings believe in Christ and abide in Him, they assume a new identity for their humanity.<sup>80</sup>

The "Israel of God" is therefore entirely distinct from Israel as a nation, since God's salvific work is not restricted to any one group. The term presupposes a relationality among human beings of all nations, and also with God, through love. Borrowing from Mark T. Miller's notion of relationality in the community of faith as a divine gift, all nations, and indeed the whole of creation, are gathered within the cosmic space of encounter as the manifestation of God's salvific love.<sup>81</sup>

The gathering of all humanity into this cosmic space of encounter cannot be separated from human identity as *imago Christi*, which corresponds to the notion of divine self-emptying or contraction. Humanity and all creation receive their existence because God "limits" Himself to provide a space that accommodates the presence of entities other than Himself; this act may be understood as the manifestation of divine love.<sup>82</sup> Through and within this empty space, God actualizes the existence of His creation.<sup>83</sup> Creation within this self-emptying space is at once the revelation of God's promise of salvation for all creation from total destruction (*annihilatio nihili*), so that all creation may inherit eternal life.<sup>84</sup>

The concept of the "empty space" is understood by Karl Barth as the person of Christ, such that the entire sequence of creation is the unfolding

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<sup>79</sup> Pieter Vos, *Longing for the Good Life: Virtue Ethics after Protestantism* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 21.

<sup>80</sup> D. T. Everhart, "Communio Dei and the Mind of Christ: Relational Christological Anthropology in Psychological Perspective," *TheoLogica Journal* 6, no. 1 (2022), 45.

<sup>81</sup> Mark T. Miller, *The Quest for God & the Good Life: Lonergan's Theological Anthropology* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 187 & 189.

<sup>82</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 86-87; Alan J. Torrance, "A Response to Professor Moltmann," *Theology* 114, no. 6 (November 2011), 417-418.

<sup>83</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 74-75.

<sup>84</sup> Moltmann, 90.

actualization of existence inscribed in Christ, who “pre-exists” all being and is Himself the very image of God.<sup>85</sup> Jürgen Moltmann likewise contends that the empty space is none other than Christ, the Image of God, for if Christ is the foundation of divine salvation, then He is also the ground of creation.<sup>86</sup> Christ is the “primal idea” of creation, which is then actualized on the basis of this idea.<sup>87</sup>

On the basis of this understanding of Christ as the Image of God, through whom all things were created, He is the one who mediates the fellowship between the Triune God and all creation.<sup>88</sup> It is only in Christ that the relational nature of God can be “seen” by creation, thereby enabling creation to move toward the imitation of this mode of existence. For this reason, the “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16, as a cosmic space of encounter that transcends Jewish particularistic legalism, is made possible precisely through the person of Christ, the Image of God.

### **The Solidarity of the Body of Christ**

The cosmic space of encounter, grounded in the person of Christ and thus able to embrace all humanity, whether Israel as a nation, the church, or even the rest of creation, presents a broad and profound relational vision. This interconnectedness among creation does not arise because they belong to the same lineage, but because all human beings are *imago Christi*. In this light, what form of solidarity must be articulated in response to the global conflict between Israel and Palestine? Moreover, the cosmic space of encounter, as derived from Galatians 6:15–16, also acknowledges Israel as a nation. To address this tension

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<sup>85</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 145.

<sup>86</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 94.

<sup>87</sup> Peter J. Bellini, *Participation: Epistemology and Mission Theology* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2010), 100.

<sup>88</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 101; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2: Part III Existence and the Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1957), 109.

is itself the essence of being the cosmic space of encounter, with Christ as the primary *nomos*.

Any response of solidarity must be carefully formulated so as not to fall into the trap of excessive legalism concerning the "restoration of Israel" in relation to the Israel–Palestine conflict. Telaumbanua raises a critical question regarding this matter, particularly about the realization of God's promise of restoration for Israel.<sup>89</sup> This creates a dilemma of faith concerning how to respond appropriately without undermining the principle of the cosmic space of encounter and the message of Galatians 6:15–16.

The ongoing war between Israel and Palestine seemingly compels the church and believers to choose whether to stand in solidarity with the party regarded as the "root," or to stand in solidarity with humanity itself, which is violated through such warfare. For this reason, this section seeks to construct an ethical-participatory response with the cosmic space of encounter as its central axis. Such a response is directed toward bearing witness to Christ, thereby continuing the manifestation of divine work in the world.

L. Roger Owens develops a participatory framework rooted in the gathering of humanity, which simultaneously creates a space for affirming human existence. For him, participation is the event in which human beings are fully embraced by God through the ministry of the church.<sup>90</sup> In other words, participation is not merely a metaphysical idea but a concrete action that takes place in the world.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, from an ecclesial perspective, Pete Ward argues that the concrete realization of human participation in God, transcending the dichotomy between the personal and the communal, is the fellowship of faith.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Telaumbanua, "Relasi Israel Dan Gereja," 104.

<sup>90</sup> L. Roger Owens, *A Theology of Church Practices: The Shape of Participation* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 21–23.

<sup>91</sup> Yohannes Ali Sandro Sitorus, "Partisipasi Sebagai Pemenuhan Tanggung Jawab Gambar Kristus," *Jurnal Teologi Gracia Deo* 5, no. 2 (2023), 298.

<sup>92</sup> Pete Ward, *Participation and Mediation: A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 132–133.

Yet this raises the question: what is the ultimate aim of participating in God for those who are gathered within the cosmic fellowship with Christ as Mediator?

The effort to grasp the purpose of this participation cannot be separated from the interrelation between the divine world and the world inhabited by humanity. Scott W. Sunquist asserts that these two worlds are bound together, such that human beings in the profane world are aided by the power of the Holy Spirit to embody the Gospel of Christ and to bear witness to the divine work revealed in Him.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the divine work attested by the Gospel is the holistic salvific activity extended to all creation dwelling within the cosmic space of encounter without exception.

The cosmic space of encounter also presents a participatory framework imbued with a relational character. Human beings, as creatures, may encounter their Creator, yet the authenticity of both is preserved.<sup>94</sup> It may therefore be concluded that when humans participate in God with the help of the Holy Spirit and through Christ, they do not lose their own existence. Applied to the church and Israel, both remain interconnected while maintaining the authenticity of their respective identities. The concept of the cosmic space of encounter is not intended as the outcome or final product of fusing Israel and the church, but rather as a proposal for understanding the "Israel of God" in Galatians 6:15–16. In other words, the concrete expression of the believer's participation is the endeavor to realize this cosmic space of encounter.

Davison further proposes that those who seek to participate are not subjected to mandatory standards or requirements.<sup>95</sup> Applied to the idea of the cosmic space of encounter, this means that all humanity may enter freely into this space. It may thus be regarded as God's open invitation to relate with His creation. Since this space is not coercive, human beings may also "refuse" to

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<sup>93</sup> Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 231.

<sup>94</sup> Andrew Davison, *Participating in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 2.

<sup>95</sup> Davison, 2-3.

experience such an encounter. Participation, therefore, rests upon the awareness of each individual and upon the initiative of the Creator.<sup>96</sup> In other words, participation in this space is an ethical response enacted by each human being in full awareness.

Although participation may be understood as an ethical response exercised freely, this freedom is not an active right to harm or diminish human existence as *imago Christi*. Humanity's unwillingness to participate in bringing forth the cosmic space of encounter can be understood as the incapacity to exercise freedom in a way that fulfills the ethical demand of one's existence as *imago Christi*.<sup>97</sup> Since Christ is the Image who represents the Triune God, humanity, as *imago Christi*, bears the responsibility to manifest Christ in the world.

Ethical participation, rooted in the being of Christ, is carried out so that human actions and responses do not remain mere subjective interpretations. Eka Darmaputera observes that from the very beginning, human beings have possessed an ethical awareness of the values of right and wrong.<sup>98</sup> Humanity is capable of doing what is "right" on its own, even though such values are ultimately subjective.<sup>99</sup> If participation is carried out according to subjective ethical standards, can humanity truly attain the new creation? Certainly, such a realization would become diverse and contingent upon the ethical awareness of each individual. For this reason, Christ must be placed as the central axis so that the new creation and the cosmic space of encounter may be realized. Without

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<sup>96</sup> Sitorus, "Partisipasi Sebagai Pemenuhan Tanggung Jawab Gambar Kristus," 298.

<sup>97</sup> Gagasan ini disadur dari argumentasi Davison tentang alasan manusia melakukan dosa. Davison, *Participating in God*, 239.

<sup>98</sup> Eka Darmaputera, *Etika Sederhana Untuk Semua: Perkenalan Pertama* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2017), 4.

<sup>99</sup> Yohannes Ali Sandro Sitorus, "Kristonomi Sebagai Hukum Yang Hidup: Partisipasi, Ketaatan, Dan Kebebasan," *Immanuel: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 4, no. 1 (April 2023), 4.

Christ as the primary *nomos*, the solidarity of the cosmic space of encounter would remain nothing more than a utopia.<sup>100</sup>

The believer stands in solidarity as *imago Christi*, encountering life in Christ and striving to bring forth the cosmic space of encounter in the world. Relational encounter would remain only a discourse if the wholeness of humanity were not actively pursued.

## CONCLUSION

The dilemma of offering a response of solidarity to the war between Israel and Palestine must be acknowledged as an inevitable reality within the church. A mistaken understanding of Israel's restoration can easily be misinterpreted as legitimizing acts of aggression. The concept of spiritual Israel, however, should not be understood as the legal status of being God's chosen people, but rather as God's sustaining work directed toward the fulfillment of His covenant with all creation. Galatians 6:15–16 underscores that outward marks of legality do not constitute the essence of being God's chosen people. Every human being is called to participate in God in order to realize the cosmic space of encounter.

Nevertheless, the decision ultimately rests with humanity, whether or not they will fulfill their ethical responsibility as *imago Christi*. When individuals choose to embrace this responsibility by making Christ the primary *nomos*, their response does not incline toward one side or the other, but rather seeks the wholeness of creation denied through war. Christ became incarnate in human form to redeem the whole of creation, and this redemptive work is actualized through His very being.

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