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Christian Zionism: Justifying Apartheid in the Name of God

Stephen Sizer

Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the courtyard of the Al Aqsa Mosque protected by over a thousand armed Israeli soldiers wiped out any hope of a peace agreement between Jews and Palestinians. It simultaneously ended Barak's short lived coalition government, ignited a renewed Palestinian Intifada, led to over 350 deaths, the vast majority Palestinian including many children, with a further 10,000 injured.¹ It has also sparked a revival in Christian Zionist support for Israel.² A Christian Zionist may be defined in general terms as

...any Christian who supports the Zionist aim of the sovereign State of Israel, its army, government, education etc.; but it can describe a Christian who claims to support the State of Israel for any reason.³

The Zionist dream, so forcefully articulated by Theodor Herzl in *Der Judenstaat* in 1896 and a year later at the First Zionist Congress, may actually be attributed to the writings and activities of Christians like Lewis Way, Joseph Wolff and Edward Irving who formed a broad coalition of Christian Zionists from the 1820s,⁴ some sixty years before similar views were being espoused by Jewish leaders.⁵ When it was known, for example, that Herzl was wavering on the option of Palestine as a Jewish homeland in favour of Uganda or South America, he received a Bible from William Blackstone, the American Christian Zionist, in which every reference to 'Israel' or 'Zion' had been underlined in red, together with a letter urging him to insist Zionists settle only in Palestine.⁶

Christian Zionism is born of the conviction that God has a continuing

1 Right Revd. Riah Abu El Assal, *unpublished letter*, 27 Nov., 2000.

2 Open Letter to evangelical Christians from Jews for Jesus, "Now is the time to stand with Israel", *New York Times*, 23 Oct., 2000.

3 W. Riggans, *Israel and Zionism* (London: Handsell, 1988), p. 19.

4 Known as the 'Albury Circle' hosted by Henry Drummond and later included Lady Powerscourt and John Nelson Darby. See Andrew L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and his Circle* (London: James Clarke).

5 Regina Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism, Its Roots in Western History* (London: Zed, 1983), back cover.

6 Donald Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise* (London: Melisende, 2000), p. 16.

relationship with, and covenantal purpose for, the Jewish people. This is based on an ultra-literal reading of Scripture and the conviction that Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel are being fulfilled in the contemporary State of Israel. For Christian Zionists, God's promise to Abraham remains unconditional and eternal. *To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates....The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.* (Gen. 15:18; 17:8).

In 1975, the United Nations condemned the ethnic exclusivism of Zionism as 'a form of racism and racial discrimination'.⁷ At best, it seems, the Israeli State views Palestinians as an inferior species to be herded into Bantustan townships and refugee camps and, at worst, treated like animals, expendable to be sacrificed before the god of Zionism. Israel's continuing illegal settlement plans, land seizures, house demolitions, expulsions, deportations, military occupation, use of torture and 'extra-judicial' killings of Palestinians is seen by many as a form of racially motivated ethnic cleansing.⁸

Essentially, Christian Zionists see themselves as defenders of, and apologists for, the Jewish people and, in particular, the State of Israel. This support involves opposing those deemed to be critical of, or hostile toward, Israel but also inevitably leads to the justification of apartheid on so called 'biblical' grounds. As tensions increase in the Middle East, so the stakes are raised to gain the moral high ground, and the Bible is used as another weapon to silence Israel's critics. Increasingly, anti-Zionist convictions are equated with anti-Semitism and the Shoah exploited by what, even some Zionists admit, is 'holocaustology'.⁹ For example, Hal Lindsey is not alone in accusing those who oppose Zionism of anti-Semitism:

...the same error that founded the legacy of contempt for the Jews and ultimately led to the Holocaust of Nazi Germany.¹⁰

Similarly, Tony Higton, General Secretary of the Churches Ministry Among

7 Regina Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism, Its Roots in Western History* (London: Zed, 1983), p. 1, 120.

8 Ewan MacAskill, "Building Unbearable Lives", *The Guardian*, 12 January, 2001, p. 17.

9 Ruth Rosen, "Holocaustology, Past Oppression, Present Excuse?" *Issues* Vol. 13. 5.

10 Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust* (New York: Bantam, 1989), back page.

Jewish People (CMJ) laments the polarisation of positions.

It is so politically correct in many church circles to condemn Israel (as the recent ritual condemnation from Christian Aid illustrates) that to make balanced comments about her brings accusations of being a right wing, fundamentalist, Zionist...¹¹

In a previous *Churchman* article, the author offered a critique of Christian Zionism and provided an alternative theology of the Holy Land.¹² This article will elaborate on what Christian Zionists believe about current events in the Middle East, why they support the State of Israel, lobby for an exclusively Jewish Jerusalem, advocate the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple, resist Palestinian aspirations for self determination, and are generally pessimistic about any peace deal between Jews and Arabs. Material has been drawn from the most influential evangelical Christian Zionists in Britain and the USA. These include the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People, Jews for Jesus, Christian Friends of Israel, Bridges for Peace and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.¹³ The primary motivation driving Christian Zionism today is the conviction that '*the Bible tells them so*'.¹⁴

1. Ultra-Literalist Biblical Hermeneutic

The rise of biblical literalism and a futurist reading of scripture, which equates biblical references to Israel with the modern State of Israel and not the Church can be attributed to Christian Zionists like Lewis Way, Henry Drummond, Edward Irving and their associates at the Albury 'Unfulfilled Prophecy' Conferences of the 1820s.¹⁵ In 1821, for example, Way published a pamphlet called *The Latter Rain* in which he called Christians to pray for the Jews out of the conviction that Old Testament prophecies have a '*primary and literal reference to the Jews*'.¹⁶

11 Tony Higon, "The Battle Continues", *Christian Herald*, Oct., 2000.

12 Stephen Sizer, "An Alternative Theology of the Holy Land: A Critique of Christian Zionism", *Churchman*, Vol. 113, 2. (1999), pp. 125-46.

13 A more detailed critique of Christian Zionism, dispensationalism and Christian Zionist agencies is available from the author's web site <http://www.sizers.org>

14 Kathleen C. Boone, *The Bible Tells Them So, The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1990).

15 D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin, 1989), p. 88.

16 Lewis Way, "The Latter Rain", 2nd ed. (London, 1821) in Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 88.

This movement was the catalyst not only for the founding of the London Jews Society (now CMJ) but also for John Nelson Darby, Edward Irving and Cyrus Scofield to develop an innovative premillennial dispensational theology which, historically, is the theological basis for Christian Zionism. Rob Richards, former UK Director of CMJ, offers a contemporary paraphrase of that position – “*Israel is Israel is Israel.*”¹⁷

It will be shown that, following this literalistic and essentially pre-Christian hermeneutic, Christian Zionists claim that the borders of the land promised to Abraham – from the Nile to the Euphrates – must become the future borders of the State of Israel since the Jews have never inherited all the land. Similarly, because the Jewish temple described by Ezekiel has never been built, it must one day replace the Moslem Dome of the Rock. Promises made during the Babylonian exile of a return are made to apply 2500 years later to the emigration of Soviet and Eastern European Jews because the language appears to suggest a ‘final’ return, one more extensive than has ever occurred before. Patrick Goodenough of the International Christian Embassy, for example, insists:

We simply believe the Bible. And that Bible, which we understand has not been revoked, makes it quite clear that God has given this land as an eternal inheritance to the Jewish people.¹⁸

Anne Dexter challenges those who reject this hermeneutic:

Some Arab believers and expatriate Christians in Israel feel so strongly about these matters that they will not read the parts of the Bible that seem to promise the land to the Jews or in any way uphold their election....Large parts of the Scriptures are effectively invalidated by this approach.¹⁹

Instead of recognising how Jesus and the Apostles reinterpreted the Old

17 Rob Richards, *Has God Finished With Israel?* (Crowborough: Monarch, 1994), p. 23.

18 K. Kern, ‘*Blessing Israel? Christian Embassy Responds*’ Christian Peacemakers Team, Internet:menno.org.cpt.news@MennoLink.org 2 Nov., 1997.

19 Anne Dexter, *View the Land* (South Plainfield, New Jersey; Bridge Publishing, 1986), pp. 214-15.

Testament, it is made to speak about present and future events almost as if the New Testament were never written. Under the Old Covenant, revelation from God came often in shadow, image, form and prophecy. In the New Covenant that revelation finds its consummation in reality, substance and fulfilment in Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 1:1-4, 8:13, 10:1). The question is, therefore, not whether the promises of the covenant are to be understood literally or spiritually as Christian Zionists like to stress, but it is instead a question of whether they should be understood in terms of Old Covenant shadow or in terms of New Covenant reality. This is the most basic hermeneutical error which Christian Zionists consistently repeat.

2. The Jews Remain God's 'Chosen People'

Because of their biblical literalism and dispensational roots, many Christian Zionists believe that the Jews remain God's 'chosen people' enjoying a unique relationship, status and eternal purposes within their own land, separate from any promises made to the Church. So the promises made to Abraham remain true today for the descendants of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Based on passages like Genesis 15, Christian Friends of Israel, for example, insist:

The Bible teaches that Israel (people, land, nation) has a Divinely ordained and glorious future, and that God has neither rejected nor replaced His Jewish people.²⁰

Similarly, Jews for Jesus perpetuate the dispensational distinction between God's purposes for Israel and that of the Church.

We believe that Israel exists as a covenant people through whom God continues to accomplish His purposes and that the Church is an elect people in accordance with the New Covenant, comprising both Jews and *Gentiles who acknowledge Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer*.²¹

David Brickner, Executive Director of Jews for Jesus, affirms the position first propounded by Darby, that the Jews remain 'God's chosen people' while the

20 Christian Friends of Israel, Standing with Israel, information leaflet, n.d.

21 Jews for Jesus, Our Doctrinal Statement, www.jews-for-jesus.org

church is merely 'a parenthesis'²² to God's future plans for the Jews. Christian Zionists fail to recognise that in the Bible, 'chosenness' becomes progressively universalised, the gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ to all who trust in Him, irrespective of their racial origins.

3. Restorationism

Since the Jews remain forever God's chosen people, the promises concerning the land are similarly seen as unconditional and eternal. Therefore Christian Zionists are active in encouraging Jews to 'return' to Zion. At the *Third International Christian Zionist Congress* held in Jerusalem in 1996, under the auspices of ICEJ some 1,500 delegates from over forty countries unanimously affirmed the following:

The Lord in His zealous love for Israel and the Jewish People blesses and curses peoples and judges nations based upon their treatment of the Chosen People of Israel....According to God's distribution of nations, the Land of Israel has been given to the Jewish People by God as an everlasting possession by an eternal covenant. The Jewish People have the absolute right to possess and dwell in the Land, including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan.²³

Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, Walter Riggans reaffirmed CMJ's continuing commitment to restorationism.

CMJ has always been at the forefront of teaching about God's restoration of the Jewish people to and in Israel, and we are continually excited by, and watchful of all that is happening....In other words, our prayerful interest in the State of Israel is as constant and committed as ever.²⁴

David Brickner summarises how Christian Zionists view the contemporary State of Israel as evidence of God's continuing protection and favour toward the Jews.

22 David Brickner, *Future Hope, A Jewish Christian Look at the End of the World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate, 1999), p. 18.

23 *International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, 25-29 Feb., 1996.

24 Walter Riggans, *General Director's Annual Report 1996* (CMJ, St Albans, 1996).

I believe the modern day state of Israel is a miracle of God and a fulfilment of Bible prophecy. Jesus clearly said that 'Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the nations is fulfilled' (Luke 21:24). It has been 50 years since the founding of that state, but only 30 years since Jerusalem came under the control of Jews for the first time since Jesus made that prediction. Could it be that 'this generation shall not pass until all these things are fulfilled'?²⁵

These theological presuppositions clearly have serious political implications. Jewish 'restoration' to the lands associated with biblical Israel inexorably leads Christian Zionists to support and defend the contemporary State of Israel.

4. Support for the State of Israel

Representative of other Zionist organisations, a CMJ resource pack includes a section entitled, *The State of Israel: Why should we support it?*²⁶

...in the biblical worldview one cannot actually separate theology and spirituality...one cannot divorce the issue of the people of Israel's relationship with God from their relationship to their delegated sovereignty in the land of Israel...God...has made it possible for Jewish people everywhere to come and live in a restored Jewish homeland...it seems to us that God is undoubtedly behind the re-creation of the Jewish State in the modern world. We are called to a support for the State of Israel...²⁷

For similar reasons, Jews for Jesus justify the military stance of Israel based on biblical precedence and divine command, claiming the choice for them is between survival and annihilation.

So far as force of arms is concerned, the choice for Israel has been to fight or to be annihilated. It must be remembered that every defensive position

25 Brickner, 'Don't Pass Over Israel's Jubilee', *Jews for Jesus Newsletter*, April 1998.

26 CMJ, Always be Prepared to Give an Answer Resource Pack (CMJ, St Albans, 1996).

27 CMJ, *The State of Israel: Why should we support it?* (CMJ, St Albans, 1996).

entails some violence. All bloodshed is regrettable; but Israel has no choice when faced with an intransigent and implacable foe who has threatened in the past to “drive her into the sea”....We must also remember that war has not always been “wrong”. In Moses’ time the sons of Jacob did not traipse into the land of Canaan and find a welcoming committee eager to greet them and congratulate them upon their arrival. God commanded that they take Canaan by force. At that point it would have been wrong for them not to do it. There may be some who think that God has learned some new lessons since ancient times, but to our knowledge, God does not change. It is entirely possible that once again he might move Israel to resort to force.²⁸

Logically, such convictions extend to the justification of Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights.

5. The Territorial Extent of Eretz Israel

At the heart of Christian Zionism is the conviction that the Land of Israel in its entirety was given unconditionally, exclusively and eternally by God to the Jews. The geographical extent of *Eretz Israel*, as Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains, is non-negotiable and covers everything from the Nile to the Euphrates.

So, then, according to the Scriptures, three promises are made with regard to the land: first, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all promised the possession of the land; second, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were promised the possession of the land; and third, the boundaries of the promised land extended from the Euphrates River in the north to the River of Egypt in the south....At no point in Jewish history have the Jews ever possessed all of the land from the Euphrates in the north to the River of Egypt in the south. Since God cannot lie, these things must yet come to pass. Somehow or other, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must possess all the land, and second, the descendants of Abraham must settle in all of the promised land.²⁹

28 ‘zionism.htm’ Jews for Jesus FAQ, www.jewsforjesus.org

29 Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “This Land is Mine”, *Issues*, 2.4. www.jewsforjesus.org

Likewise, Louis Goldberg, of Jews for Jesus is equally dogmatic.

To whom does the land belong? Based upon God's statement to Abraham (Unto thy seed will I give this land, Genesis 12:7), and corroborated by the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, we can only declare that the land belongs to the people of Israel. Ultimately Israel will have all that was promised in its entirety to Abraham.³⁰

The fourth resolution of the *Declaration of the First International Christian Zionist Leadership Conference* held under the auspices of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem in August 1985, was entitled *All Nations Should Recognize Judea and Samaria as Belonging to Israel*.

The Congress declares that Judea and Samaria (inaccurately termed 'the West Bank') are, and by biblical right as well as international law and practice ought to be, a part of Israel.³¹

Jan Willem van der Hoeven of the ICEJ offers a theological interpretation of recent historical events. Speaking of the war in 1967 he speculates:

God wanted to give His people that part of the land which they did not receive in 1948, and by hardening the hearts of the different Arab leaders – Presidents Nasser and Assad and King Hussein – He impelled Israel to react. The result of what became known as the Six Day War was that Judea and Samaria – heartland of biblical Israel – and the ancient city of Jerusalem – King David's capital – were returned to their original owner... Thus, the Lord, by hardening the hearts of the Arab leaders, caused His people Israel to inherit the rest of the land, especially their ancient city, in a war of self defense! Until then, since 1949, Jordan had illegally held and occupied the "West Bank" and Jerusalem. Thus, when Israel recaptured Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, they did not even take over a territory that legally belonged at that time to any nation! How few in the West have even realized this. God has *His own sovereign way to fulfil His Word and promise*.³²

30 Louis Goldberg, "Whose Land Is It?" *Issues*, 4.2.

31 Declaration of the First International Christian Zionist Leadership Conference (Jerusalem, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, 1985).

32 Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena: Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), p. 151.

Anne Dexter explains why present or future negotiations involving a land for peace deal will never appease Zionists.

The question of the ancient boundaries cannot be ignored. It underlies the policies of many Israeli statesmen. It explains why Sinai is always negotiable – it has twice been captured by Israel and returned to Egypt. It is the reason why Jewish settlements on the West Bank and Golan Heights is not just a matter of secure and defensible borders. It is the guiding principles in Israel's interpretation of West Bank autonomy, which insists that whatever the degree of self-determination allowed the people, the land itself belongs to Israel.³³

In her view, Palestinian Christians must accept Zionism, and learn to live with it – ‘Arab Christians are squarely faced with the biblical election of the Jews, and their role throughout history, particularly in the present.’³⁴

Tony Higton concedes that Palestinians are unhappy with the size of the ‘areas’, a euphemism for the Bantustans, which the Israelis are offering in a ‘land for peace’ deal. However he justifies Israel's claim to the illegally held Occupied Territories on three grounds. The Palestinians have Jordan, the British allegedly went back on promises made in the Balfour Declaration and the amount of land agreed by the League of Nations in the 1948 Partition Plan was too small anyway.

I understand Mr Safieh's feeling that the Palestinian areas are too small. However, we must remember that Jordan is a Palestinian area too. It was part of the Mandated Palestine and, after we British reneged on the Balfour Declaration, the UN gave the Jewish people – Holocaust survivors and all – far too little land in 1948.³⁵

Higton's arguments contain several errors of fact. According to Uri Avnery, the Jewish historian, the Green Line agreed after the war of 1948 actually gave the State of Israel 78% of Palestine although the UN had only agreed to allow them 55%.

33 Dexter, *View*, pp. 214-15.

34 Dexter, *View*, p. 32.

35 Tony Higton, “Beware of anti-Israel Propaganda”, *The Church of England Newspaper*, 10 Nov., 2000, p. 16.

When the Palestinians agreed to a peace settlement based on the pre-1967 border (the Green Line), they were already giving up in advance 78% of the land between the sea and the Jordan river. They are ready to set up their state in the remaining 22%. Our government wants to 'compromise' over this area. Meaning: 'What's mine is mine, about what's yours, we shall compromise.'³⁶

The Peace Plan brokered by Clinton and Barak would have given the Israelis a further 30% of the West Bank leaving the Palestinians isolated 'Palestans', that is, isolated pockets of land surrounded by barbed wire, electric fences, mines and Jewish settlements. Christian Zionists cannot understand why Palestinians are not grateful. Richard Harvey, for example, points out that:

The Arab minority in Israel lives in better economic conditions than in many neighboring Arab states, and is certainly treated far more humanely than a Jew would be in an Arab land.³⁷

Christian Zionists therefore invariably oppose the dismantling of the Jewish settlements in the Palestinian Territories. Theodore Beckett, Chairman of the Christian Friends of Israel Community Development Foundation, for example, has initiated an 'adopt-a-settlement' program among evangelical churches. The Jewish town of Ariel, for example, has been adopted by Faith Bible Chapel in Denver. Seventy other Jewish settlements have also apparently been adopted in this way:

...with larger churches adopting larger settlements and smaller churches adopting smaller settlements and giving all a morale boost to show them they are not alone and are loved by many.³⁸

Tony Higton questions whether Israel's willingness to allow the Palestinians a measure of autonomy should extend to returning territory illegally occupied since 1967.

But should this involve giving them any further territory, including part of Jerusalem? Israel's borders are scarcely viable now. Would any other

36 Uri Avnery, 12 Conventional Lies, *email newsletter*, 27 Oct., 2000.

37 Richard Harvey, "Has Zionism Failed?" *Issues*, 5.10.

38 Sarah Honig, "Adopt-a-Settlement Program", *The Jerusalem Post*, 2nd Oct., 1995.

country in the world give up half of its capital?³⁹

Jews for Jesus go as far as to compare Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian Territories with the United States claim to Texas.

Many might wish that the Israeli government could feel secure enough to withdraw the settlements on the West Bank. But on the same basis, the United States should seriously consider giving Texas back to Mexico and, indeed, should never have settled it in the first place.⁴⁰

Christian Zionists also downplay or denigrate the role of the United Nations and human rights issues since they believe the Land has been given to Israel unconditionally and in perpetuity by God. Jews for Jesus, for example, have been consistently critical of Christians who point out Israel's failure to uphold the human rights of Palestinians living under military occupation. Brickner even criticises agencies such as Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding (EMEU), founded by John Stott and directed by Don Wagner, who have challenged Israel's failure to respect human rights.

There are, however, others who describe themselves as evangelicals who want 'middle east understanding' – when in fact they are merely mouthpieces for anti-Israel propaganda. They allow their politically correct, over-wrought sense of moral outrage over the suffering of Palestinians to dictate their view of Scriptures. They point to injustice in the land and the fact that Israel is in unbelief, and conclude that God is through with the Jews and the land of Israel is illegitimate in His eyes.⁴¹

This tension between those who seek the implementation of international law and Christian Zionists is nowhere more clearly polarised than on the status of Jerusalem.

6. Jerusalem, The Eternal and Exclusive Jewish Capital

In 1992, the ICEJ sponsored various receptions marking the twenty-fifth

39 Tony Higton, "The Battle Continues", *New Christian Herald*, Oct., 2000.

40 'zionism.htm' Jews for Jesus FAQ, www.jewsforjesus.org

41 Brickner, 'Don't Pass Over Israel's Jubilee', *Jews for Jesus Newsletter*, April 1998.

anniversary of what they referred to as the 'Reunification of Jerusalem'.⁴² In 1996 this position was reiterated.

Because of the sovereign purposes of God for the City, Jerusalem must remain undivided, under Israeli sovereignty, open to all peoples, the capitol of Israel only, and all nations should so concur and place their embassies here.⁴³

In 1997 the ICEJ gave support to a full page advert placed in the *New York Times* entitled, "Christians Call for a United Jerusalem" signed by ten evangelical and fundamentalist leaders including Pat Robertson, chairman of Christian Broadcasting Network and president of the Christian Coalition; Oral Roberts, founder and chancellor of Oral Roberts University; Jerry Falwell, founder of Moral Majority; Ed McAteer, President of the Religious Roundtable; and David Allen Lewis, President of Christians United for Israel.

We, the undersigned Christian spiritual leaders, communicating weekly to more than 100 million Christian Americans, are proud to join together in supporting the continued sovereignty of the State of Israel over the holy city of Jerusalem. We support Israel's efforts to reach reconciliation with its Arab neighbors, but we believe that Jerusalem or any portion of it shall not be negotiable in the peace process. Jerusalem must remain undivided as the eternal capital of the Jewish people.⁴⁴

Readers were invited to:

Join us in our holy mission to ensure that Jerusalem will remain the undivided, eternal capital of Israel. The battle for Jerusalem has begun, and it is time for believers in Christ to support our Jewish brethren and the State of Israel. The time for unity with the Jewish people is now.⁴⁵

Tom Getman, director of World Vision in Palestine, responded with an open

42 *International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p. 24.

43 *International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

44 Christians Call for a United Jerusalem' *New York Times*, 18 April, 1997, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/united.html

45 Christians Call for a United Jerusalem' *New York Times*, 18 April, 1997, www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/united.html

letter to the ICEJ calling them ‘either hopelessly naive or liars’.

Two things you may want to consider in your blatant partisan support:

1. For 5000 years any time this city has been under the exclusive control of one power it has been the cause of untold bloodshed; and 2. Israel’s so called “exemplary record in guaranteeing access to biblical sites” has been significantly sullied in recent years, and even over this past Easter weekend, when in and around the Old City, streets were blocked off to all traffic except Jewish Pessah worshippers. For those of us who could not get to Good Friday and Easter services, and for your Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ who could not even get out of Bethlehem, you are setting yourselves up to be perceived as either hopelessly naive or liars. Jerusalem is the spiritual home for 2 billion people....Only 15 million are Jewish. The better part of wisdom would be for “God’s chosen” to share it or they will absolutely guarantee being proven the world’s rejected once again.⁴⁶

Nevertheless Israel has progressively built more and more settlements in East Jerusalem while at the same time demolishing Palestinian homes and depriving Palestinians of residence permits thereby shifting the demographic balance in favour of Jews. David Pileggi is therefore not surprisingly confident that the ‘facts on the ground’ will ensure Jerusalem remains under Israeli control.⁴⁷ Probably the most controversial issue uniting many Christian Zionists with more extreme Jewish Zionists is the issue of the Temple Mount.

7. The Rebuilding of the Temple

The rebuilding of the Jewish Temple is something many Christian Zionists assume will happen soon. David Brickner basis his belief on passages such as Daniel 9.

Obviously the Temple has been rebuilt because Daniel tells us this ruler puts an end to sacrifice and sets up some kind of abomination (a loathsome horror that would be anathema to Jewish worship) right inside

46 Tom Getman, “A Response to Christian Zionist Exclusivism”, *Cornerstone*, Issue 15, Spring 1999, p. 19.

47 David Pileggi, “Stumbling Over Jerusalem”, *Shalom*, November (1991).

the Temple in Jerusalem. Ultimately this ruler is destroyed in a final conflagration of enormous proportion. Who exactly is this “ruler” who makes a treaty with Israel? Why will the Temple be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and what will this final conflagration alluded to be like?⁴⁸

While Jews for Jesus claim they do not endorse the activities of Jewish groups committed to rebuilding the Jewish Temple, it nevertheless provides information on, and offers direct Internet links to, eight extreme Jewish organisations involved in attempts to destroy the Al Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock, rebuild the Jewish Temple and re-institute Temple worship and sacrifices. These include the Temple Institute and Temple Mount Faithful.⁴⁹

Indeed, Zhava Glaser of Jews for Jesus praises Gershon Salomon, founder of ‘The Temple Faithful’.

Very few Jews have the courage to talk about the most important subject in the Jewish religion: that is, the question of the Temple, the high priest, the altar and the place of sacrifice. Gershon Salomon is a man of such courage. This 53-year-old scholar is the founder and head of a group called, “The Temple Faithful”. His credentials as an Israeli patriot are impeccable, beginning at age eleven when he was arrested by the British authorities for putting up Zionist posters during their occupation of Israel. He has stood up for what he believes to be true ever since....One must take Salomon seriously. Nine thousand people are on his “Temple Mount Faithful” membership list.⁵⁰

Sam Kiley regards Salomon as representing the ‘...almost acceptable face of millennial cults’. In a *Times* interview, Salomon insisted that the Islamic shrine must be destroyed.

The Israeli Government must do it. We must have a war. There will be many nations against us but God will be our general. I am sure this is a test, that God is expecting us to move the Dome with no fear from other

48 Brickner, *Future Hope, A Jewish Christian Look at the End of the World*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate, 1999).

49 Rich Robinson, “Israeli Groups Involved in Third Temple Activities”, *Jews for Jesus Newsletter* Issue 10, Adar 5753, 1993.

50 Zhava Glaser, “Today’s Rituals: Reminders or Replacements”, *Issues*, 8.3.

nations. The Messiah will not come by himself, we should bring Him by fighting.⁵¹

Such sentiments are shared by many Christian Zionists who support Jewish groups dedicated to rebuilding the Jewish Temple. One book, in particular, has galvanised Christian Zionists on this issue, namely, *Ready to Rebuild: The Imminent Plan to Rebuild the Last Days Temple* by Thomas Ice and Randall Price. From their dispensational perspective they anticipate the imminent rebuilding of the Jewish temple next to, if not in place of, the Dome of the Rock.⁵² This Jews for Jesus review of the book implies that the State of Israel is behind such moves.

Something is happening in Israel! For many years there has been speculation as to whether the Second Temple, destroyed in 70 AD, will ever be rebuilt – even though Scripture predicts it. Now you can read the startling evidence. The move is already underway. This fascinating, fast-moving overview of contemporary events shows why the Temple is significant in Bible prophecy and how, more than ever, Israel is ready to rebuild.

A masterpiece presenting all the various views with substantiating evidence....A mine of information for those concerned about prophecy....A solid basis for faith and what can actually be expected in regard to the rebuilding of the Temple...(it) is highly recommended.

John F. Walvoord, chancellor, Dallas Theological Seminary. Chapters include: The Temple in transition; The Temple and Islam; Activity on the Mount; An ancient tunnel uncovered; Temple Mount alternatives.⁵³

8. Antipathy Toward Arabs and Palestinians

Christian Zionists, while lovers of Israel, rarely show the same emotions toward Arabs and Palestinians. Anti-Arab prejudices and Orientalist

51 Sam Kiley, "The righteous will survive and the rest will perish", *The Times*, 13 Dec., 1999, p. 39.

52 Thomas Ice and Randall Price, *Ready to Rebuild, The Imminent Plan to Rebuild the Last Days Temple* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1992).

53 Jews for Jesus review of *Ready to Rebuild* Thomas Ice and Randall Price (Eugene: Harvest House, 1992), www.store.jewsforjesus.org/books/products/bk154.htm

stereotypes are common in their writings,⁵⁴ as are comparisons between Hitler and Arabs.⁵⁵ Hal Lindsey is probably the most popular contemporary Christian Zionist writer. He insists:

Long ago the psalmist predicted the final mad attempt of the confederated Arab armies to destroy the nation of Israel....The Palestinians are determined to trouble the world until they repossess what they feel is their land. The Arab nations consider it a matter of racial honour to destroy the State of Israel. Islam considers it a sacred mission of religious honour to recapture Old Jerusalem.⁵⁶

Franklin Graham, President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, made similar remarks in a recent newspaper interview.

The Arabs will not be happy until every Jew is dead. They hate the State of Israel. They all hate the Jews. God gave the land to the Jews. The Arabs will never accept that.⁵⁷

Many Christian Zionists are reluctant even to acknowledge the existence of Palestinians as a distinct people group. Dave Hunt is typical of those who wrongly equate Palestinians with the ancient Philistines, and who use the term 'Palestinian' in an entirely pejorative sense.

Central to the Middle East conflict today is the issue of the so-called Palestinian people...Palestinians? There never was a Palestinian people, nation, language, culture, or religion. The claim of descent from a Palestinian people who lived for thousands of years in a land called Palestine is a hoax! That land was Canaan, inhabited by Canaanites, whom God destroyed because of their wickedness. Canaan became the land of Israel given by God to His people. Those who today call themselves Palestinians are Arabs by birth, language, and culture, and are close relatives to Arabs in surrounding countries from whence most of them came, attracted by Israel's prosperity. The name Palestine comes

54 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

55 Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?* (Shippensburg, Pasadena: Destiny Image Publishers, 1993), pp. 132-3.

56 Lindsey, *Israel and the Last Days* (Eugene; Oregon, Harvest House, 1983), pp. 38-9.

57 Charlotte Observer, 16 Oct., 2000.

from the Philistines, who were not Semites, but invaded Canaan from Crete and parts of Asia Minor. Yet Arafat, an Arab, claims that ancestry.⁵⁸

Similarly, David Pileggi laments:

Palestinians cannot be entrusted with a state in the heart of Israel....No delegations have lectured the Palestinians on peace and justice like those that endlessly besiege Israel. Is it only reprehensible when Israelis kill Palestinians, but somehow acceptable when Arabs murder each other? ⁵⁹

Rob Richards justifies Israel's apartheid regime on the grounds that Palestinians are the biblical equivalent of the 'alien' residents in Eretz Israel, to be respected but not entitled to the same status, or equal rights as the Jews.

The alien has rights and we can remind Israel of this. Palestinians and Arabs who have made Israel their home come under that biblical word 'alien'.⁶⁰

Richards ignores the fact that Palestinians over the age of fifty were living in their own land of Palestine long before the State of Israel was unilaterally imposed upon them. Brickner similarly uses the term 'sojourner' to describe the status of Palestinians in Eretz Israel.

God commanded Israel to be kind to sojourners because we were once sojourners in the Land of Egypt and we know what it is like to be treated harshly.⁶¹

Jews for Jesus even go as far as defending Israel's denial of basic human rights to Palestinians on the grounds of national security. In a response to Gary Burge's criticisms, Jim Eriksen made the following assertions.

Burge continually gives the reader personal examples, derived from his trips to Israel, of alleged Israeli abuses in the occupied territories. In addition, he attempts to cite human rights studies and international norms that may be applicable to Israel. In doing so, he exposes the weaknesses of his analysis.

58 Dave Hunt, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem' *TBC*, September 2000.

59 David Pileggi, 'Letter from Jerusalem', *Shalom* July (1991).

60 Richards, *Has God Finished With Israel?* (Crowborough: Monarch, 1994), p. 159.

61 Brickner, 'Don't Pass Over Israel's Jubilee', *Jews for Jesus Newsletter*, April 1998.

For example, although Israel is a signatory of various international human rights documents, it has signed with reservations; namely, it has reserved the right to derogate certain rights in times where national security is threatened. This derogation of rights by reservation is not unique to Israel; most nations make a similar reservation to preserve national sovereignty during times of unrest or war. No mention of this is made by Burge, and the reader is left to believe that Israel has refused to abide by agreements it signed.⁶²

While the United Nations is invariably viewed with great mistrust, for many Christian Zionists the two nations of America and Israel are seen as Siamese twins, linked not only by common self interest but more significantly by similar religious foundations. Together they are perceived to be pitted against an evil world dominated by Islamic regimes antithetical to the values of America and Israel.⁶³ It is therefore not hard to see why Christian Zionists are pessimistic of, or even oppose, the current peace process. Walter Riggans, for instance, believes the Oslo Peace Accord threatens to legitimise Palestinian claims to Jerusalem and the West Bank.

...many Jewish people are quite devastated, and feel they have been betrayed into the hands of cunning and ruthless Palestinians who are exploiting the accords as a first step towards the elimination of Israel.⁶⁴

Neil Cohen is equally pessimistic.

Partnership of Jew and Arab is untenable in Israel...we live in an age of political correctness which claims we live in a world where all people have equal rights. I don't agree with that because I don't think it squares with the biblical record...the search for peace in the Middle East, laudable though it is, is a wild goose chase.⁶⁵

62 Jim Eriksen, A Review of *Who Are God's People in the Middle East?* by Gary Burge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) in *Messianic Review of Books*, Vol. 2.2 www.jewsforjesus.org

63 Merrill Simon, *Jerry Falwell and the Jews* (Middle Village, New York: Jonathan David, 1984), pp. 63-4, 71-2.

64 Walter Riggans, "The Messianic Community and the Hand Shake" *Shalom*, 1, (1995).

65 Neil Cohen, Guildford Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship, St John's, Woking, Surrey, 18 March, 1997.

Regrettably such a stance which sees the land as exclusively Jewish, in which Palestinians are 'aliens' and to which Jews from around the world are encouraged to settle, not only undermines the witness of the indigenous Jewish and Palestinian Christians who live there, but also disregards the New Testament ethic which requires us to live by equal grace and common justice.

9. Anxious for Armageddon

It is with regard to their perspective on the future that Christian Zionists appear to be 'Anxious for Armageddon'.⁶⁶ The 1967 Six Day War marked a significant watershed for Christian interest in Israel and Zionism. For example, Jerry Falwell did not begin to speak about modern-day Israel until after Israel's 1967 military victory.

Falwell changed completely. He entered into politics and became an avid supporter of the Zionist State...the stunning Israeli victory made a big impact not only on Falwell, but on a lot of Americans....Remember that in 1967, the United States was mired in the Vietnam war. Many felt a sense of defeat, helplessness and discouragement....Many Americans, including Falwell, turned worshipful glances toward Israel, which they viewed as militarily strong and invincible. They gave their unstinting approval to the Israeli take-over of Arab lands because they perceived this conquest as power and righteousness...⁶⁷

Hal Lindsey asserts:

The Bible foretells the signs that precede Armageddon....We are the generation that will see the end times...and the return of Jesus...⁶⁸ Never before, in one book, has there been such a complete and detailed look at the events leading up to 'The Battle of Armageddon'.⁶⁹

66 Don Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1995); Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War*. (Westport: Lawrence Hill, 1986).

67 James Price and William Goodman, *Jerry Falwell, An Unauthorized Profile*, cited in Grace Halsell, *Prophecy*, p. 72.

68 Hal Lindsey, *The 1980's, Countdown to Armageddon* (New York: Bantam, 1981), back cover.

69 Hal Lindsey, *The Final Battle* (Palos Verdes: California, Western Front, 1995), front cover.

Jerry Falwell's 'Friendship Tours' to Israel include not only meetings with top Israeli government and military officials but also:

....On-site tour of modern Israeli battlefields....Official visit to an Israeli defence installation...strategic military positions, plus experience first hand the battle Israel faces as a nation.⁷⁰

Invariably therefore Christian Zionists are pessimistic and even antagonistic toward peace negotiations in the Middle East.

Because of the sovereign purposes of God for the City, Jerusalem must remain undivided, under Israeli sovereignty, open to all peoples, the capital of Israel only, and all nations should so concur and place their embassies here...the truths of God are sovereign and it is written that the Land which He promised to His People is not to be partitioned...⁷¹

Neil Cohen expresses the sentiments of many Christian Zionists as to why peace cannot be negotiated, and why continual conflict is inevitable.

At no time in history did God cancel his covenant with the Jews. What he promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob remains true to this day and will remain true at least until Jesus returns and the search for peace in the Middle East, laudable though it is, is a wild goose chase.⁷²

Christian Zionists sometimes attempt to silence critics with the threat of divine retribution. For example, Brickner warns those who do not share his particular Zionist perspective that they are fighting against God.

Peril awaits those who presume to say that God is finished with His chosen people: "And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all peoples. All who lift it shall be slashed, and all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it" (Zechariah 12:3). Woe to anyone

70 Don Wagner, "Beyond Armageddon", *The Link* (Americans for Middle East Understanding) Vol. 25 No. 4 Oct./Nov., (1992) p. 3.

71 *International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 Feb., 1996.

72 Debate between the author and Neil Cohen, Guildford Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship, St John's, Woking, Surrey, 18th March, 1997.

who joins those nations to gather against the Jewish people who are now back in the city of David. Just as God judged the nation of Egypt for her ill treatment of His people, so will He judge nations today. Evangelicals who would understand the Middle East must pay close attention to the teaching of Scripture, and take note of the cosmic forces that now do battle in the heavens but will soon do battle on earth. They must choose carefully which side to uphold.⁷³

10. A Summary of Christian Zionism

This article has sought to show that behind their commitment to work with God in his 'continuing purposes' for the Jewish people, another agenda is being pursued by many Christian Zionists, best summarised in Kelvin Crombie's own epilogue.

For if the Bible is true, literally, then Israel would be restored, first physically, then spiritually. The CMJ work in Israel was founded during the last century upon such a belief. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was surely an indication that such beliefs were correct....Those who established the work at Christ Church...believed in the future physical restoration of Israel to its land...it reminds us that throughout the history of the Church a remnant of believers has remained faithful to God's covenant relationship with Israel.⁷⁴

Such literalist assumptions of restorationism preclude any possibility of an alternative reading of the Bible, history or a just and lasting outcome to Middle East peace negotiations. While there is a commitment by Jews for Jesus and CMJ to evangelise Jewish people, their solidarity with other non-evangelistic Christian Zionist agencies such as Bridges for Peace and the International Christian Embassy has led many Evangelicals to equate their faith with Zionism, becoming apologists for the State of Israel itself and defending apartheid and human rights abuses in the name of God.⁷⁵

73 Brickner, 'Don't Pass Over Israel's Jubilee', *Jews for Jesus Newsletter*, April 1998.

74 Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), pp. 257-8.

75 Regina Sharif, *Non-Jewish.*, p. 7; see also Uri Davis, *The State of Palestine* (Reading: Ithaca, 1991), p. 28.

Kenneth Cragg summarises the implications of Christian Zionism's ethnic exclusivity:

It is so; God chose the Jews; the land is theirs by divine gift. These dicta cannot be questioned or resisted. They are final. Such verdicts come infallibly from Christian biblicists for whom Israel can do no wrong – thus fortified. But can such positivism, this unquestioning finality, be compatible with the integrity of the Prophets themselves? It certainly cannot square with the open peoplehood under God which is the crux of New Testament faith. Nor can it well be reconciled with the ethical demands central to law and election alike.⁷⁶

The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) representing the indigenous and ancient Oriental and Eastern Churches has been highly critical of the activities of Christian Zionists. They regard Christian Zionism as a deviant heresy which is subservient to the political agenda of the modern State of Israel. It represents a tendency to:

...force the Zionist model of theocratic and ethnocentric nationalism on the Middle East... (rejecting)...the movement of Christian unity and inter-religious understanding which is promoted by the (indigenous) churches in the region. The Christian Zionist programme, with its elevation of modern political Zionism, provides the Christian with a world view where the gospel is identified with the ideology of success and militarism. It places its emphasis on events leading up to the end of history rather than living Christ's love and justice today.⁷⁷

What should evangelicals make of Christian Zionism and its claim to biblical certitude regarding Israel? Christian Zionists make much of Romans 9–11 suggesting, wrongly in the opinion of the author, that the promises of future spiritual revival are synonymous with physical restoration. It is rare, however, to find any analysis among Christian Zionists of Hebrews 8:13 which, it is suggested, provides not only the hermeneutical key to unravelling the Christian Zionist case, but also to explaining Paul's vehemence at the

76 Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (London: Mowbray, 1992), p. 238.

77 MECC, *What is Western Fundamentalist Christian Zionism?* (Limassol, Cyprus, Middle East Council of Churches, 1988), p. 13.

Judaizing tendencies corrupting the church in Galatia.

By calling this covenant “new”, he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear (Heb. 8:13).

It may be argued that it should be impossible for Christians to view claims and promises made to the Jews by God in the Hebrew scriptures without now reading them through the cross and its irrevocable consequences for the Jews. Now we find that it is Gentiles (and Jews who believe in Jesus) who are declared to be the true children of Abraham and Sarah. Jews outside the new covenant of grace have, through the cross and because of their rejection of Jesus, become the children of Hagar (Gal. 4:21-26). This is no excuse for arrogance or worse. With sensitivity and compassion we must rightly share our faith in Jesus praying that our Jewish friends find their Messiah and complete their faith. However, any suggestion that the Jewish people continue to have a special status or exclusive rights to the lands of the Middle East, as advocated by Christian Zionists is surely, in the words of John Stott, ‘biblical anathema’.⁷⁸

1. The Old Testament promises about the Jews’ return to the land are comforted by promises of the Jews’ return to the Lord. It is hard to see how that secular, unbelieving State of Israel can possibly be a fulfilment of those prophecies.

2. The Old Testament promises about the land are nowhere repeated in the New Testament. The prophecy of Romans 11 is a prophecy that many Jews will turn to Christ, but the land is not mentioned nor is Israel mentioned as a political entity...

3. The Old Testament promises according to the apostles are fulfilled in Christ and the international community of Christ. The New Testament authors apply the promise of Abraham’s seed to Jesus Christ. And they apply to Jesus Christ the promise of the land and all the land which is inherited, the land flowing with milk and honey, because it is in him that our hunger is satisfied and our thirst quenched. A return to Jewish

⁷⁸ John Stott, quoted in Don Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1995), p. 80.

nationalism would seem incompatible with this New Testament perspective of the international community of Jesus.⁷⁹

Essentially, Christian Zionists are viewing biblical prophecy through the wrong end of the telescope. In doing so, they distort the Bible and marginalise the universal imperative of the gospel which is of equal grace and common justice. It may therefore be argued that it is actually Christian Zionists who are anti-Semitic through their partisan support for Israel's apartheid regime, their antipathy toward Arabs, and their almost pathological conviction which makes them 'anxious for Armageddon'.⁸⁰ In so doing they have, whether intentionally or otherwise, legitimised the oppression of Palestinian Christians in the name of God.

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79 John Stott, 'The Place of Israel', unpublished sermon preached at All Soul's, Langham Place, London.

80 In Don Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1995).