

EDITORIAL

In this Issue

Much of the material in this issue of *Living Stones* concerns the two major events that we have organised during the last six months. The first of these was a day conference on 'Zionism, Christian Zionism and the Challenge to the Church'. This was held on Saturday 21 February at the Friends Meeting House in Euston and was co-sponsored by Living Stones, Friends of Sabeel and the Quaker foreign affairs committee. The second was an ecumenical pilgrimage to the Holy Land taking place during the period from 24 April to 2 May.

John Deehan, the parish priest of the Sacred Heart Church, Teddington, contributes an illuminating account of the pilgrimage in this issue. His report underlines not only the depressing realities of the current situation but also records grounds for hope evident from the faith and courage of some of those we met. Apart from the presence of a rump of unstoppable and irrepressible Italian pilgrims many of the holy places were completely deserted and John's article underlines the vital importance of pilgrimage for the survival of the Christian Palestinians, so many of whom are dependent upon tourism for their employment. But if the Christian Palestinians find the indifference of the Christian West to their situation extraordinary, the phenomenon of Christian Zionism astounds and horrifies them still more. In an effort to understand the nature of Christian Zionism Living Stones invited a range of speakers to give papers on the subject and from the outset sought to invite supporters of Christian Zionism as well as its critics. This proved harder than we had imagined but in the event we managed to get Tim Price, the National Field Co-ordinator of the organisation, The Church's Ministry Among Jewish People. The first part of his paper on 'The Restoration of Israel and Anti-Zionism' appears alongside that of Stephen Sizer's 'The Political Agenda of Christian Zionism' and together they offer alternative perspectives on Christian Zionism. Michael Prior's conference paper 'Zionism: From the Secular to the Sacred' is also published in this issue.

In addition our regular feature in the series 'From the Diaspora' presents an illuminating interview with Mr Samir Zreik by Jamil Bullata.

New Publications

The conference also saw the launch of my own book *Pilgrim Preacher: Palestine, Preaching and Pilgrimage*. A further launch at Sabeel in Jerusalem was shared with the symposium, *Speaking the Truth about Zionism and Israel*, edited by Michael Prior. Both are published by and available from Melisende, 39 Chelmsford Road, London E18 2PW.

Bethlehem University Appeal

One highlight of the pilgrimage was the meeting with Brother Vincent at Bethlehem University when we were able to hand over a further thousand pounds towards the provision of a scholarship for the tour guide diploma programme. We are anxious to keep the money coming in and we have so far mobilised only a small section of our members and supporters in contributions and fundraising. If you would like to know more or would like to host the preaching of an appeal please contact me through the Treasurer or via my web site at <http://www.deaconduncan.com>.

Obituaries

With great sadness we report the deaths of two of our friends and collaborators in the work of Living Stones: Bishop Victor Guazelli, one of our spiritual patrons, and Father Andrew Midgely, for several years vice chair of the executive committee. In 1970, Bishop Victor became an auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and titular Bishop of Lindisfarne and in 1972 served as president of Pax Christi. His commitment to peace and justice extended to concern over the Holy Land and its peoples and led him to give his valuable personal support from the inception of Living Stones. Another spiritual patron, Bishop Kallistos Ware, recommended Father Andrew as the Orthodox representative on our committee on which he served until prevented by ill health from continuing. His warm friendship and infectious laughter will be greatly missed. *Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.*

Duncan Macpherson

Conference and Living Stones Annual General Meeting

23 October 2004

'Prospects for Peace in the Holy Land'

A symposium to consist of journalists, political analysts, and pilgrims

Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1

Speakers to be announced

LIVING STONES PILGRIMAGE 2004

John Deehan

Every year on Palm Sunday the Christians of Jerusalem gather at the site of Lazarus' tomb in Bethany and walk to the Old City to commemorate Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem—but not for much longer. Across the road taken by the procession a concrete wall has been built, a monstrously ugly construction about 9 metres high. It is like a prison wall; indeed we saw a prison circumference wall just like it. Soon the wall will be punctuated with guard towers. The Government says, and most Israelis believe, that it has been built to keep out terrorists. A careful inspection of the winding route taken by the wall suggests it has been built to keep the indigenous Palestinian communities in their place, out of sight, and hopefully out of mind.

To those immediately affected by the wall, its construction must feel like those sins that *cry out to heaven*. Ostensibly the wall is a bulwark against terrorism, an attempt to defend the only western and democratic society in the Middle East against suicide bombers. The reality is more sinister, another stage in a grander project to transfer the Palestinian population from their land, a kind of 'ethnic cleansing lite'. The snakelike route of the wall will slowly strangle the Palestinian population by imprisoning them in enclaves and denying them access to the world outside. Already there are travel restrictions in force so that the residents of Bethlehem in the West Bank cannot visit their families in Jerusalem. If they do manage to get permission they cannot stay overnight. Palestinians living in Galilee cannot travel to Palestinian towns in the West Bank and vice versa. The immediate future will see Palestinians cut off from their extended families, having to endure long queues at military checkpoints in the early hours in order to pass through the gates to go to work. Food supplies, businesses and farming will be disrupted. Near Jerusalem the wall divides convents of sisters from the schools they teach in. Land is confiscated in areas where the wall or 'fence' is being built, without any compensation. The ultimate goal of the wall seems to be to make the indigenous population emigrate, because it will not be worthwhile staying.

It is very easy to come to the Holy Land and miss what is going on, if one stays in a five star hotel with western amenities where Palestinians are neither seen nor heard, and is taken around by a government approved guide. One can visit the Holy Places and return home without any insight into what is actually going on. I know this because I have taken part in several such pilgrimages. I have been shown places where the desert blooms, thanks to modern technology, and seen land next-door looking semi-arid and unproductive. What I am not told is that Israeli communities enjoy almost five times more water supply than their Palestinian neighbours.

But if one lives in the Holy Land for any length of time, or speaks to its indigenous inhabitants the reality of life appears very different. The *Via Dolorosa*, or Way of the Cross in Jerusalem is the scene each week for a powerful journey of prayer by Christians from all over the world. But the *Via Dolorosa* is a reality of life for thousands of Palestinians. I

visited Jerusalem for the first time in 1981, when the Palestinians territories had been under military occupation for fourteen years. Each time I returned I have had to rediscover a sense of direction, as more Israeli settlements and cities have been built, and more roads constructed bypassing Arab towns and villages so that the two communities do not have to come into contact. The presence of these settlements is a message to the Palestinians, 'You do not belong here, and we intend to dominate you.'

I have just returned from the Holy Land having made a different kind of pilgrimage with *Living Stones*, an organisation set up to make contact with Palestinian Christian communities in the Holy Land and hear what the people of the land have to say. We were a small group, mainly Catholics but including an Anglican Priest and two Unitarians. Our visits to the Holy Places were complemented by visits to parishes and meetings with the pastors and representatives of the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran communities. As we visited the traditional sites of pilgrimage we tried to relate the stories of the sites and what we read in the scriptures to the realities of Christian life today in the Holy Land.

Our first visit was to the parish of St Joseph in Shafa'amar, about 20 minutes drive from Nazareth, for the Sunday morning Mass. Shafa'amar is a town of 32000 inhabitants in what is now the State of Israel. Before 1948 it had a mixed Christian and Jewish population. Following the war of independence the Jews moved out and Muslim refugees moved in. Now Christians of all denominations represent a quarter of the population. The Latin (Roman Catholic) community has about 500 members. The small church was full, but the congregation represented only a quarter of the community, as Sunday is a working day in Israel and many of the men attend Mass on Saturday evening. Besides, this was the weekend leading to the Israeli Independence Day so many families used the opportunity to get away.

Though I spoke no Arabic I immediately felt at home. The parishioners who spoke English (their third language) went out of their way to welcome us. As the morning went on it became more and more evident just how grateful they were that we had come. In church what struck me first was the vibrancy of their singing. One or two of the melodies were similar to our own in London, so we could hum along. Even without understanding a word one could pick up the sense that Sunday worship was important to this community. Up in the gallery, for lack of space in the main body of the church, the younger children gathered. Watching the restlessness of some of the children and the adults trying to keep them in order, I could have been back in my own parish church in South West London. As the congregation processed for Holy Communion the young children came too. Where in London the priest would bless them, in the Holy Land the custom is to touch their head with the chalice. Afterwards some of these children came to the sacristy to be given an unconsecrated host to eat.

After Mass about half the congregation came to coffee in the parish room. Unlike in London where we always seem to be in a rush, they had plenty of time to sit and chat. Then we visited the Sunday school where three adult volunteers were taking the children through the gospel of the day. One was a teacher, another a nurse and the third worked in an office for a living.

On the surface life looked normal and everything we saw looked no different to what one might find in a vibrant parish at home. We met decent, cultured peace-loving people who like their counterparts in Europe want to do the best they can for their children. But when we spoke to the parishioners we discovered that they were working very hard to keep things as normal as possible. Among their young people the desire to emigrate is very strong. They live with discrimination all the time. Though they are well educated there are a relatively small number of university places available to Arabs so many have to go abroad for higher education, and are tempted to stay. These young people are relatively lucky. Some have relatives in the West Bank who find it almost impossible to travel abroad. The new restrictions on Palestinians travelling between Israel, the West Bank and Jerusalem mean that even some married people have been permanently separated from their spouses.

The Christian community is in our terms a tiny minority in a place where most of its immediate neighbours are Muslims and the surrounding community is Jewish. Many Jews would like to see a Jewish state in which there were no Palestinians at all, and whereas up to now Christians and Muslims have lived in peace together in the Holy Land the rise of Islamic fundamentalism could make life more difficult for Christians. Palestinian Christians however never describe themselves as a minority because in Arabic the word connotes the idea of weakness and being persecuted. So they speak of themselves as a small community witnessing to Jesus, keeping the gospel alive in the land of his birth.

The Christian communities are very conscious of the importance of a Christian education, and are prepared to make financial sacrifices to pay for it. The parish we visited run an elementary school, but they have to rent premises, as their school was rendered unsafe by an earthquake. Christian schools are popular with some members of the Muslim community too, and the Christians see their schools as important places for planting seeds of tolerance between the two communities.

When we asked members of the community what they might need from us, they were at pains to say that although finances were a problem it was our presence and moral support that they needed most of all. When Fr Elias the Parish Priest formally welcomed us he spoke about the possibility of twinning with a parish in England so that Christians from England might visit them more often.

Later that day we also met the Pastor of the Anglican community, also a Palestinian, who was being visited by a group of Episcopalians from Los Angeles who was staying at our hotel. Again he referred to the young people's desire to emigrate and to discrimination against Palestinians in the job market because they have not been in the Israeli army. Their life, he said, is one of spiritual, emotional and political stress. 'We are a people without names. In the media Palestinians

die, but Israelis get killed. Israelis who are killed get named. We are anonymous. At the military checkpoints the soldiers call us monkeys and animals. To them we are not people.' Once again, like Fr Elias he asked us to set up relationships between English and Palestinian parishes. Send volunteers to live with the communities and see what is happening on the ground.

Having prayed in the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth and visited the holy places by the Sea of Galilee we made for Jerusalem intending to visit the Christians in Jericho and see the archaeological remains that include the remains of a walled town from about 7000 BC. Because of the springs the land around the town was among some of the most fertile in the Middle East, and the shops were always teeming with delicious citrus fruits. We tried two roads into Jericho only to find them blocked. Eventually we found a road going in but were stopped by the military which refused us entry without any coherent explanation. This was to be a foretaste of things to come. For us the checkpoints were just a minor irritant. If we could not go to one place, we would go somewhere else. But for those trying to go about their daily business they mean constant hassle, grind and humiliation. Two days later one of our group got in. He found a ghost town. All the shops were shut and no one was on the street. Jericho, which I remember as a peaceful town, was under military curfew, and might have been for days for all we knew.

In Jerusalem we met several inspiring church leaders who spoke to us on behalf of their communities. The pastor of the Lutheran church spoke to us about the problems Christians faced from fundamentalism, which preaches intolerance where traditionally relations between Christians and Muslims in this part of the world have been tolerant. There is growing pressure on Muslims to be intolerant of other faiths. More sinister was the growth of fundamentalist Christian communities who had come to the country from abroad, especially the USA, and establish 'free' churches which have little to do with the traditional mainstream churches. These communities tend to be very favourable to the Israelis. They back whatever the government does and insist that the land belongs exclusively to the state of Israel and that only Jews count in the general scheme of things. Some groups even use financial incentives to get Palestinians to leave the country. This raises important theological questions for Palestinian: 'Is God in any sense just?', 'Why does God choose *our* land?' The pastor went on to speak about the growing climate of fear, even paranoia, in the country. The two communities are afraid to go into one another's territory, even to sit on one another's buses. 'We live beside one another, not with one another.'

Meeting Christian Leaders

The Latin Patriarch, Michel Sabbah, spoke to us about the situation in a global, theological context. While the presenting problem is terrorism, the real crisis is a global loss of values that has resulted in the oppression of the weak becoming commonplace. Nations need a higher moral criterion for action than self-interest. If the Palestinian problem had been just a 'local' one, it would have been solved long ago, but it is an international problem, not a local one. The Patriarch feels that

Europe is beginning to abdicate its responsibility for the Palestinian people. 'Everyone knows, but no one has the courage to give Israel its security and the Palestinians their due.'

In the Holy Land the Government seems more inclined to use violence and war than to solve the problem. The irony is that Israel becomes even less secure. Thousands of Palestinians are killed, but hundreds of Israelis too. And while Israel condemns violence, it uses violence at the same time. The new wall is another form of war, confirming both sides in their inner hostility. Peace will be a long way off, and more suffering is inevitable, until there is new leadership and vision. Despite the fact that Palestinians have lived in peace in the state of Israel, the Israelis refuse to believe that the Palestinians will live in peace. But once the Palestinians have their rights they will live in peace, and be a bridge of peace to the Arab world.

The Patriarch urged us to pray for peace, to support any action for peace and to care for both sides in the conflict, so that ultimately both sides could feel safe. Finally he asked Christians at home in England, to understand what was going on and work for peace without showing hostility to any side.

We also met Riah Abu Assad, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem. He detects a growing polarisation in public opinion, especially with any opposition to the State of Israel being categorised as anti-Semitism. But the problem has its roots not in anti-Semitism but in the policy of the Israeli Government. The war in Iraq creates new dangers and the stakes are high. Now Shi'a and Sunni Muslims have been reconciled, which has never happened before. With regard to the local situation he spoke about the growing humiliation and degradation of the Palestinian community, with women having to wait up to two hours without any sort of toilet facilities, and even having to give birth at the checkpoints, because the soldiers refuse to deal humanely even with pregnant women on their way to hospital. What kind of war is it, he asked, when 31 percent of the Palestinians killed are below the age of 15, where hundreds of homes are damaged because of the actions of a few, and 62 percent of Palestinian olive trees, a vital natural resource which cannot be replaced overnight, are uprooted?

We were in Jerusalem, the place of Christ's execution at the hands of the local politicians and the Roman military. All of us were afflicted with a sense of despondency and foreboding when we saw the wall for the first time and for me this was prolonged as I wandered around the old city of Jerusalem. Even in New Testament times Jerusalem was a place of political tensions that could easily spark into something more serious. As we walked around the city one became more and more aware of the armed military presence. I spoke to two young soldiers and asked them how they felt about their work and the culture of violence they were engaged in. On the surface at least there was no self doubt. 'This is Abraham's land, and Abraham was a Jew, so this is our land.' Both young people had members of their family who had died in the Nazi death camps. So they were entitled to be in the land, and prepared to defend it to the death. Asked if they had any concern for the Palestinians they replied, 'We don't care about the Palestinians.' Enough said. Yet there were other words we had heard, words from the Christian leaders that radiated a quiet strength and hope; words of faith, that

were not prepared to let violence and injustice have the last word. On our visits over the next two days we were to find signs of resurrection that confirmed that sense of hope and lifted our spirits.

Visit to Taybeh

Our next visit was to the Latin Parish in the village of Taybeh. Taybeh is a village in the West Bank near Ramallah. It is unusual in that the population of 1500 people is entirely Christian, about half of whom belong to the Latin rite. The remaining Christians belong to the Greek Catholic or Orthodox churches. The different parishes work together, and now celebrate Easter on the same day. Tradition associates Taybeh with Ephraim, (John 11. 54) as the village where Jesus stayed before his final entrance to Jerusalem. The visitor/pilgrim can stay at a hostel run by the religious sisters of the parish which is named in honour of Charles de Foucauld, who stayed in Tabyeh for three months. Taybeh is also home to a gem of a beer which cannot yet be found in England. It has the only micro brewery in the Middle East, producing only beers without any added alcohol or chemicals.

Our host was Fr Raed, a dynamic pastor who in the eighteen months since coming to Taybeh has been helping to promote the economic and social life of the village. The main income of the village comes from their olive trees on the surrounding hills—a part of which were taken by the Israelis to clear land for one of their nearby settlements. But they had no market as they were not allowed to export to the Arab world. The worsening political situation has meant that money is scarce, and last year the people did not have enough cash to pay the school tuition fee of 300 euros a year. So they paid their fees in olive oil. Now a Fair Trade Company in France is taking a quarter of their oil to sell in French supermarkets, with a promise to take much more.

Work is a major problem in the West Bank. At present over 65 percent of the male population are without an income from work. So Fr Raed is trying to set up workshops in olive wood, and ceramics. One of his projects is to produce a 'peace' oil candle in the shape of a dove which will be offered to churches all over the world as a reminder to pray for the people of Palestine. Plans are also in place to build a home for old people, so that they do not have to leave the village. Traditionally Christian communities have been depended on outsiders to help with finances. Fr Raed hopes that in time Taybeh can be self sufficient and not be a burden on others.

The community is also trying to upgrade its medical centre so that pregnant mothers do not have to travel to Ramallah if there is an emergency. Due to the difficulty of passing the military checkpoint a 50km journey can take over two hours. Over 76 babies were born at checkpoints in recent times, and 27 babies or mothers died.

Fr Raed exudes energy and radiates the light of hope in what otherwise might be thought a bleak situation. And the village itself is not without hope. Some emigrant families have returned or built homes in the hope of returning. Fr Raed, in common with so many we met, blames the problems of his community on the military occupation. 'Abolish that', he says, 'and most problems would disappear.' Students would be able to get to university, his people would be able to visit the holy places in Jerusalem, and sick people would not die

waiting hours at the checkpoints for an Israeli ambulance to take them to Jerusalem.

Fr Raed stressed that one of the most effective ways of helping the Church in the Holy Land is to come on pilgrimage. There is no time like the present. Hotels are empty, so prices are low, and one can visit the holy places in relative tranquillity. Young people on a gap year are welcome to come and help with teaching English. And to our government he would say, 'Recognise that the Palestinians have paid a terrible price for Nazism and the Second World War. Play a more ethical role and positively help both sides in the conflict to make peace.'

Visit to Bethlehem University

The next day we visited Bethlehem. The town used to teem with visitors. Now Manger Square was virtually empty and many of the shops and hotels are closed. After Mass at the shrine we visited Bethlehem University. The University had its beginnings in 1972, when the De La Salle Brothers, who had been working in secondary education all over the Middle East, were invited to set up an institution of higher learning. The University began with just 112 students and has expanded gradually to over 2000. It now includes faculties of Arts, Business, Nursing, Science, Education, Hotel Management and Tourism.

The going has not been by any means easy. For one period of three years the university was closed by the military authorities and classes had to take place outside the campus wherever a place could be found. And shortly after a fine Palestinian cultural centre had been built, it was targeted and devastated by an Israeli missile. Only in the last eighteen months has the university been left alone to get on with its teaching, but even so there are occasional closures which disrupt routine and thwart attempts to plan ahead, or days when students cannot pass the checkpoints to get to their classes.

As we walked around the university we saw Christians and Muslims working and socialising together in a friendly environment. Given the tense situation in the country at present, it was a joy to see the young people looking so relaxed and happy. The campus provides a real oasis of peace where students can get on with the process of learning. 'It is a place of tranquillity, serenity, comfort and hope for young people surrounded by debris, curfews and killings—an island of stability in a sea of turmoil,' said Brother Vincent, the President.

Mordecai Vanunu, Witness for Peace

Later that day Bishop Riah spoke to us of Mordecai Vanunu, who had just been released from prison after serving 18 years without a day of remission for revealing that Israel had joined the nuclear club. Mordecai had served over two-thirds of that time in solitary confinement. On his release Bishop Riah, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, offered him a place of refuge at St George's Cathedral. Asked where he found the strength to sustain him during those years in prison, especially during the early years in solitary confinement when the authorities allowed a chaplain to visit him but not to speak to him. They were allowed to write to one another through a glass partition. As a young man Mordecai had been baptised a Christian, and in prison he was allowed to have the New Testament. He established a routine that every morning and

evening for half an hour he would read the New Testament out loud. That enabled him to transcend his solitude and to keep his faith and hope alive.

The Apartheid Wall

The final day of our pilgrimage coincided with the celebrations in Europe for the enlargement of the European Community. As I saw the television pictures of nations which until relatively recently were under Soviet occupation being formally welcomed into the EU. A few days before the President of South Africa had reflected on the tenth anniversary of the ending of Apartheid. The 'Apartheid Wall', as many are calling the construction surrounding the West Bank, at the moment looks every bit as solid as the Berlin Wall, but the Lord moves in mysterious ways. In the final analysis walls and fences can be pulled down as quickly as they were put up. The harder task is to demolish the walls we construct in our minds and hearts. On the final journey to the airport we noticed a jail by the side of the motorway. Its perimeter wall was the same construction as the wall we had been shown at Al-Azariah. But in the case of the 'Apartheid Wall', it seems to be imprisoning the victors as well as the victims.

I returned to England with a certain sense of relief, but if I had gone from Israel Israel had not gone from me. The first newspaper I sighted on my return had on its front page photos of four children who along with their mother had been killed by Palestinian gunmen in the Gaza strip who had broken out of the cordon of military steel imposed on them. The families belonged to one of the most intransigent communities of settlers in the area, Gush Kativ. Killing is killing wherever it happens, but rarely does the killing of Palestinian children, or the beating of farmers who do nothing wrong except to go through the wall to farm their own land, get a mention.

Retrospect from England

On my first day back in England the opening words of the Psalm for the Office Readings (Ps 72/3) read, '*How good God is to Israel.*' I wondered what the Palestinian Christians would have made of that. I know how difficult the Scriptures become for Palestinian Christians because they are assailed with propaganda that seeks to equate the Israel of the Old Testament with the state of Israel and the receiving of the land as a gift with the Zionist project. But in the very next line the psalmist goes on to define who is Israel. Israel is not a state, not an ethnic grouping, not the inhabitants of a particular territory, but *Those who are pure of heart*. The psalm is a meditation on the part of those who are suffering and seeing their oppressors prosper. *They have no share in men's sorrow ... they clothe themselves in violence ... their minds seethe with plots ... from on high they plan oppression*. It may be tempting to identify the oppressor in the psalm with the Israeli state, but this would be to fall into the same kind of partisan interpretation as the supporters of Zionism. In fact, the psalmist begins by speaking about the grave danger to faith that oppression can create for the one who is oppressed—*My feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped, For I was filled with the envy of the proud, when I saw how the wicked prosper*.

To keep faith in the midst of oppression is a constant struggle, because oppression undermines hope. *How useless to*

keep my heart pure, and wash my hands in innocence, when I was stricken all day long, suffered punishment day after day. The temptation is to abandon faith and to abandon one's moral principles and adopt the values of the oppressor. If I should speak like that I should abandon the faith of your people.

The psalmist presents this predicament as a theological problem, one *too hard for my mind to understand until I pierced the mysteries of God*. As the psalmist reflects on the dilemma, his first insight concerns the oppressor. The project of any oppressor is ultimately doomed to failure. *How slippery the paths on which you set them; you make them slide to destruction. How suddenly they come to their ruin, destroyed, wiped out by terrors.*

But this is not yet the final solution of the mystery. Hope for the future does not necessarily neutralise bitterness felt now. *So when my heart grew embittered ... I was stupid and did not understand.* In his reflection the psalmist comes to discover that God has not abandoned him but is present in

his situation: *Yet I was always in your presence, you were holding me in your right hand.*

The external situation has not changed, but everything has changed for the psalmist. *What else have I in heaven but you? Apart from you I want nothing on earth ... To be near God is my happiness, I have made the Lord God my refuge.*

The psalm ends with the words, *I will tell of all your works at the gates of the city of Sion*. One of the members of the Christian communities who live the reality described by this psalm with its attendant theological question every day of their lives said to me. 'We are a small community, trying to keep our faith alive.' As people united with them in faith and in the same Scriptures, the least, and maybe the most some of us can do is to share with them our presence, by going to see them, the living stones, when we go to see the stones that are the Holy Places. In doing so we are ambassadors of Christ, and living signs of the care of God for all his people.

FROM THE DIASPORA

An Interview with Mr Samir Zreik by Mr Jamil Bullata.

** Do you remember the time when your family were forced to leave Haifa in Palestine?*

Although I was only six years old in 1948, I can still remember many incidents at that time. Before we were forced to leave Palestine, my family (consisting of my parents, my grandmother, my four brothers and I) was having a good life in Haifa. Haifa, especially in the springtime with the scent of blossoms in the air, was truly a lovely city. As children, we played happily with children of different faiths. Palestinian families lived together in peaceful harmony whether Christian, Muslim and Jewish. My three brothers and I had a Christian upbringing both at home and at school. We attended the kindergarten school of St John and later on attended St Luke's Anglican School which had an English headmaster and was supported by teachers from different faiths. We were taught Christian values as well as the ethics of both the Muslim and Jewish religions.

This state of affairs changed dramatically after the massacre at Deir Yassin and after what the terrorist activities of the Hagganah and Ergun gangs inflicted on the Palestinian people.

I was told later how my father got worried and was concerned about the safety of his family. He hastily gathered us all, we took a boat to take us to the Palestinian port of Acre avoiding all the time the snipers on the road. We had to leave our house and of course my father left his business. I can clearly remember how everyone on the boat was seasick. What stuck in my mind until today was the sight of a poor seasick dog at the front of the boat. After our arrival in Acre, my father hired a taxi to take us to Marjou'un—a border town in Lebanon. Everyone was jumping off the boat to take a taxi in order to escape.

** How was your religion affected by this transition?*

As far as I know, we never had any problems for being Greek Orthodox Christians. As a child I have good memories of life

in Haifa especially during the festivals of Christmas and Easter. We always celebrated freely these Christian feasts. At Christmas, we had a pine tree decorated with satsumas and candles. At Easter, one of the main features in the Greek Orthodox tradition was the cracking of coloured eggs and the making of the special Easter sweets of Ka'ak and Ma'moul prepared specially for the occasion.

At Christmas time during the British Mandate, I still remember the Scots Guards in their kilts playing Christmas carols and creating a lovely atmosphere. When we were in Haifa we attended Sunday School at St Luke's and later in Marjou'un we attended the Greek Orthodox Sunday School.

** What were the circumstances of your leaving Palestine and starting a new life abroad?*

Living in Lebanon was my first experience of living as a refugee. After almost one year, my father still had no work. So we all had to move to Saida, another Lebanese town, so that my father can establish a business there in order to support his family. In Saida, my brothers and I attended the College Des Frères where teaching was in both Arabic and French. Two years later, the family again moved to Beirut where I attended the Joint Christian Committee School. Because we were short of money, my father attempted to cross the land-mined border between Lebanon and Palestine in order to return to Haifa in the hope to bring back his family to Palestine at a later stage. However, he was prevented from doing so and was even put in jail for a few days after which time he was taken back to the border and told by the Israelis that Palestine was no longer his home.

Following this incident, my father returned to Beirut where he established his business and where the whole family settled. As to the family finances it was very hard. My father had to work long hours in order to provide food and education for his large family. Education was a major issue

for Palestinians as they were very keen to offer the best education to their children. My mother had to sell all her jewellery in order to provide for our education. It was not only my family that was affected by these hard times. This applied too to all other Palestinians who had been forced to leave Palestine to settle elsewhere.

I was educated in Beirut at the National Protestant College. We had assembly every the morning. I do remember enjoying hymn singing and listening to the excellent piano playing by Mr Salim Domet.

** How do you maintain your sense of being a Palestinian living in the UK?*

I came to live in the UK on a permanent basis in 1972. I took up full time employment in London and settled in Wimbledon where my cousin was living already. She told me that there was a large Arab community living there. It was in Wimbledon that an Anglo-Arab community was established. Meetings were held once a month for worship and for social functions and activities. Members of such a community consisted of Muslims and Christians of all traditions both Arab and British. It was very active at that time and people met each other and made new friends who could relate to the situation in the Middle East. Those meetings gave us the opportunity to speak Arabic, listen to Arabic poetry and music and to having a little bit of social functions.

The majority of members of the community were in actual fact Palestinian. We talked about Palestine to each other as well as to our children. My wife supported all these occasions and shared in the social life. Arabic food was always offered on such social occasions and also when visiting friends.

Charity work for raising funds to help hospitals and the needy in the Holy Land was a major activity in our community. These social functions created the chance for our British friends to learn more about Palestine and its inherent problems. Moreover, I was fortunate to be invited on National Days to various Arab Country Embassies thus giving me the chance to meet other people from the Middle East. My job gave me as well a good opportunity to remain in direct contact with Arab nationals and to speak Arabic frequently.

I am involved with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), a charity established some 20 years ago with the objective of raising funds for various medical projects in Palestine. I also attend lectures relating to the Middle East issues.

** What do you think the prospects are for peace in the Middle East?*

I think the Palestinians should choose their own destiny. A solution that does not secure the right of return of Palestinians to their homeland is no solution. Again, no solution can ever be imposed on the Palestinians by any of the big powers. The Palestinians were always willing to share a state that consists of Muslims, Christians and Jews—a solution which would seem to be the best to everyone. I believe temporarily we could have two states but it would not be the final solution. Many of the Israelis and the Palestinians are peace loving people. They would like to live together in one state. The UK could be the best mediator to put this forward and in its turn Israel should apply the UN resolutions including those relating to the right of return of the Palestinian people who were forcibly expelled. It is only then that the Holy Land would then be a land for both peoples and Jerusalem would be the spiritual capital for the three religions.

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES 1 The Restoration of Israel and Anti-Zionism

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(This paper was given at The Living Stones Conference, 'Zionism, Christian Zionism and the Challenge to the Church', Saturday 21 February 2004)

Introduction

Israel and Zion(ism) are two words that raise passions in our world today, yet why should these words which fill the pages of Scripture have come to be regarded as so pejorative by many within the Church. Didn't the prophet Isaiah say?

'The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And the House of Israel will possess the nations as menservants or maidservants in the Lord's hand' (Is 14:1) or in Isaiah 62

'For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch' (Is 62:1)

In these two readings lies the redemption of these names which have become the source of such bitterness. They hold out both the hope of reconciliation between Arab and Jew, Israeli and Palestinian, and also the glorious destiny of Jerusalem within the eschatological purposes of world redemption when instead of being a source of division, she becomes the centre of kingdom of God. Isaiah writing of this time said:

'In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.' (Isaiah 19:23f) This glorious vision of reconciliation has clearly yet to be fulfilled.

As I look at the whole bible including the maps at the back, the whole of biblical revelation finds its focus in this one nation, Israel. Our theological understanding is shaped by the story of Israel and centres on person of Jesus, the

Jewish Messiah, who embodies and represents Israel around whom the people of God, both Jew and Gentile, find their identity, mission and goal. Israel is the name Jesus uses to describe the land and the nation to whom he is its chief citizen. It is the name that remained throughout the whole canon of Scripture.

Yet as I grew up another name for the land had become the common name for the land—Palestine. Bible books would refer to Palestine in the time of Jesus. Yet the name Palestine came into general use only in AD134 after the Romans finally crushed the second and last Jewish revolt against its rule. They renamed Israel, Syria-Palestina, after the Philistines, Israel's most implacable enemy, as a deliberate affront to Jews. There began the great Jewish exile from the land and the battle for the soul of the land.

Today the names of Israel and Palestine have become powerful symbols around which the Church has divided and polarised as Israelis and Palestinians each seek to assert national sovereignty and to claim the moral, historical, physical and indeed spiritual right to the land. The issue of the restoration of Israel has become the focus of appalling disunity within the Body of Christ.

The Vision

How have we got into this position and is there any way those differences can be reconciled?

Perhaps we can begin by raising our sights to the bigger picture of God's great purpose for world redemption with which I began. The bringing of the nations under the Lordship of Christ through the whole people of God, Jew and Gentile.

The overarching message of Scripture is about the establishment of the Kingdom of God in which the Kingdoms of this world become the Kingdoms of God and of His Christ. It is epitomised in that image from Daniel 2 of the huge statue representing the empires of this world being brought to nought by the stone from heaven which eventually grows to fill the whole earth. A picture of the coming Kingdom of God

The establishment of God's kingdom then is played out in the theatre of nations and through the instruments that God has brought into being to fulfil his purposes, namely Israel and the Church.

The final outcome of that work is seen in the pictures given both in Hebrews and in Revelation. In Hebrews 11 the writer recording the faith of Abraham says of him that 'he was looking forward to a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.' In Revelation that city is described as the New Jerusalem on whose gates are inscribed the twelve tribes of Israel and whose wall's foundations are inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

In this profound picture of the new heaven and earth we see the ultimate goal of God's redemptive purpose in which God comes to dwell with humanity. It marks the reconciliation of earth and heaven, of nature and spirit, of Israel and the Church. It marks the goal of redemption when God indeed dwells on earth with man

In Matthew 19 verse 28 Jesus said 'I tell you the truth at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his

glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

This passage is significant because it encapsulates the core issue that divides the Church today—the restoration of Israel. In two separate commentaries on this passage, the authors reach very different conclusions about the relationship between the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. France concludes that the twelve apostles supersede the twelve tribes and rule over them as the New Israel whereas Schweizer sees the apostles as being installed as regents over Israel which itself will be restored at the eschaton to its full complement of twelve tribes.

The climax or goal is reached when as I Corinthians 15:24 states 'Then the end will come, when he, Christ, hands over the Kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.'

As I have made clear from Revelation, on the New Earth that parity of relationship between Israel and the Church is restored as symbolised by the gates of the tribes of Israel and walls of the apostles of the Church in the New Jerusalem wherein dwells the presence of God. It answers that question of Solomon after the dedication of the Temple in I Kings 8:27 'But will God really dwell on earth?'

Christian Division over Israel

That is the vision, but at present we are far from that reality

Christians in the West are deeply divided and deeply involved, for good or ill, in the conflict between Israel and the Arab/Islamic states that surround her. Whether for or against Israel, Christians are far from neutral in their theology or politics. The Christian Church, from either perspective is therefore not impartial, yet despite this is called by God to engage in bringing about reconciliation and justice.

The very title of this conference has already by implication pre-judged both Zionism and Christian Zionism and concluded they are deeply flawed ideologies and theologies underpinning the State of Israel which it sees as the root of the oppression of the Palestinian people.

The dominant theology of the Church, replacement or covenant theology, however for the last 2000 years has itself been responsible for a far greater oppression of the Jewish nation than that for which Israel is being accused in her handling of the conflict with the Palestinians. Yet no such critique is being made by the Church of her own deeply flawed, theology towards the Jewish people which has bred such bitter hatred and mistrust between Christians and Jews and to such virulent and violent anti-Semitism.

Anti-Zionism

Anti-Zionism, a view held by many within the Church today is but the logical outworking of a theology that at its root has dispensed with any ongoing role for the Jewish nation within the purposes of God. Anti-Zionism is, therefore not morally or theologically neutral. It is deeply embedded in the long, sad history of Christian anti-Semitism which in the words of one commentator is as great now as it was in the 1930s and on a worldwide scale.

Anti-Zionism in an almost mirror image of Zionism

and Christian Zionism in its often uncritical support of the Palestinian cause is guilty of the same distortions to which it accuses those who they believe give uncritical support to Israel. Anti-Zionism then works in tandem with forces for Arab and Palestinian nationalism and indeed with resurgent Islam that have created a powerful set of myths concerning the origins and outworking of the Arab/ Israeli conflict.

Anti-Zionism has its origins in the doctrine of the Early Church Fathers which severed the roots between Israel and the Church and led to Gentile dominance at the expense of Jewish believers. The doctrine of the supercession or replacement of Israel by the Church has led to the denigration of Jewish people as 'Israel only according to the flesh' and to the arrogation of the name by the Church as the 'New Israel' or 'Israel according to the Spirit'. This doctrine is itself a distortion rooted in Christian arrogance and supremacy which has led to the victimization and oppression of the Jews as a race throughout much of the Church era and, in our day, to the denial of a) any ongoing role for the Jewish nation within the purposes of God and b) the denial of the legitimate national aspirations of Jewish people to their historic homeland. Anti-Zionism is therefore rooted in:

- The denial of the eternal and irrevocable covenant with the Jewish people (The Abrahamic covenant)
- The denial of the divine origin and election of Israel and God's promise that they will never cease to be a nation before him.
- The rejection of the historical connectedness of the Jewish people to the land.
- The denial of the centrality of Jerusalem to Jewish affections and of their tenacity in maintaining a presence within the city down through the centuries..
- The denial of the near continuous occupation of the land by Jewish people since AD70 and AD134 or that there has been a remnant, often tiny, to maintain continuity with the land during its almost 2000 year exile.
- The denial of the continuous religious and cultural connections of Jews in the land with those in diaspora through its centres of learning in Safed, Tiberias, Hebron and Jerusalem.
- A systematic attempt to delegitimize Israel's right to exist as a nation.

Anti-Zionism:

- Imputes an historical Palestinian national identity and consciousness which defies historical examination.
- It asserts a demographic cohesiveness which has also been challenged by historians. Much of those who regard themselves as Palestinian today are as recent arrivals as Jews who have returned from diaspora since the 19th century.
- Creates a powerful national Palestinian myth which has led to historical revisionism that

interprets political event through a distorted lens attributing sole blame for the crisis on Zionism without an objective appraisal of Arab Nationalism or the resurgence of Islamic hegemony.

—Flouts the will of the international community, firstly, to create a Jewish National Home in 1920 and secondly by challenging the United Nations decision to create a Jewish state in 1947.

Anti-Zionism then is as deeply rooted within the Church as Christian Zionism and has its own theology and ideology for rejecting the restoration of Israel as of God. The theology of the restoration of Israel is, like replacement or covenant theology, rooted, as we see later, not in the relatively recent manifestation of Christian Zionism, but in the teachings of the early church. Both Christian Zionism and Covenant Theology have, as they say, form!

Causes of Zionism

Whilst there is no doubt about the strong influence of Christian leaders such as Lord Shaftesbury in supporting and advocating the restoration of the Jews to Palestine in the 19th century. Indeed many were key figures in pressing the British, and indeed European governments, for such a Jewish National Home, nevertheless the impetus to return to the land lay within the Jewish community.

It was precisely the pogroms in Holy Russia that led Jews to the conclusion that their future lay elsewhere and led to the pioneer settler movement to Palestine in the late 19th century. The move, then, to return to the land predates Zionism. It was only later Theodor Herzl in his outrage over anti-Semitism in, so called, emancipated Christian Europe concluded that if even well assimilated Jews ultimately could find no place, then the only solution was the creation of a Jewish State.

Again it could be argued that Christian anti-Semitism was the main catalyst for Zionism and not the many voices, both religious and international, who in the 19th Century called for the restoration of Israel. Zionism arose then as reaction to centuries of oppression by largely Christian nations and as a legitimate expression of Jewish self-determination for nationhood in a state they could call their own. Zionism was not always to violently opposed by the Arab nation either and indeed Emir Faisal recognised in the Balfour Declaration the legitimate aspirations of the Jewish people to return to their historic homeland. He welcomed that return and the economic and social benefits that it would bring to all peoples of the region. A vision never allowed to be tested.

Today the Church has become so polarised over this issue that it is itself part of the problem not part of the solution. With rhetoric on both sides getting ever more strident and condemnatory of the other, neither position is helping to bring a resolution to the conflict. If I have already been labelled a Zionist or Christian Zionist and condemned for it, what further way forward is there for debate.

The title I gave Professor Michael Prior when he invited

me to speak to this conference is deliberate, for I wanted to address not an apologetic for Christian Zionism per se, but to address the very issue that most divides the Christian world—The restoration of Israel to which historically there have been other theologies than Christian Zionism.

With both sides appealing to the Bible to legitimate their arguments, is it possible to re-examine the respective theologies of Christian Zionism or Replacement Theology that lie behind the current entrenched positions. Is there a way of exploring Scripture with a fresh perspective?

Dualism

It has been said that the one blank page between the Old and New Testament has been the cause of many of the problems between Christians and Jews because it introduces a break in what was intended as a seamless whole in Scripture. It has created an unhelpful separation so that instead of seeing Scripture as an integrity, we see it in two distinct parts.

The simplest caricature is that the Old is for Jews, the old people of God, the New for Christians, the new people of God. This has led in turn to a dualism in which various strands of the Judeo-Christian tradition and revelation are set at variance one with the other—Law/Grace, Spirit/Nature, Israel/Church. Instead of there being a continuity and complementarity between the Testaments, they are almost put in opposition and contradiction with one another. Our view of Scripture becomes distorted with a Plan A/Plan B mentality, in which the Old Covenant is seen as but the precursor to the New Covenant. Old Israel is, if you like, seen merely as the instrument through which the New Israel, the Church, emerges like the capsule from a discarded rocket from which it has been launched.

John Walvoord writes in *Major Prophecies Unfulfilled* ‘Though the entire Bible bears witness to a gracious, loving God, there is a sharp contrast between the basic revelation of the Old Testament compared to the New. This is captured in the simple statement of John 1:17, ‘For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’ The Old Testament is not entirely law, nor is the New Testament entirely grace, but there is a broad contrast between the two’

The emphasis then in each covenant is different in the Old Testament, Israel is the dominant motif with the Law central to revelation. The Ecclesia, the community called to live by faith, is secondary, hidden, mysterious but present as the writer to Hebrews makes clear when he lists the great saints of the Old Covenant. Likewise, in the New Testament although Israel is the theatre of God’s operation, the emphasis is the Kingdom of God with the calling out of the Ecclesia, comprised of neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, slave nor free’. There is a judgement upon the leadership of Israel in which the Kingdom is taken from them and given to another who will bear the fruits of repentance. This is an indictment on Israel’s leadership and not an annulment of God’s covenant with Israel

The Kingdom, then, is not divorced from Israel, but it finds its focus in the one who fully represents Israel, Jesus. Jesus himself makes clear that Law, the heart of the Old Covenant, is not done away with, for he has come not to

abolish but to fulfil the Law. The only true Israelite who has fully kept the Law becomes the cornerstone for the whole people of God and inaugurates the New Covenant which is centred in himself. Yet as Tom Torrance says in his chapter ‘The divine vocation and destiny of Israel in world history’ from *The Witness of the Jews to God*.

‘Ultimately, of course, the salvation and renewing of mankind depend on the reconciling and resurrecting power of Christ himself, but if the actual unification of world humanity is to come about it must involve at its very centre the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in Jesus Christ. And how is this to take place except through the vicarious role which, precisely because God’s covenant with Israel is not annulled, remains very much in force.’

There is then a deep connectedness between Israel as a people and a nation with Jesus as the representative, and indeed King, of Israel, to which Gentiles are grafted in and who together become the whole people of God.

We need then to understand the wide-ranging plan and purpose of God through nations and individuals, Israel and the Church if we are to begin to understand the ongoing role for Israel in our day.

Interpreting the Scriptures

The Apostles had only the Hebrew Scriptures to interpret the Coming of Jesus, they were the Scriptures. It was only much later in the Church era that the final New Testament canon was compiled and recognised as equally authoritative as Scripture to that of the Old Testament. Christian theology and creeds recognise the Two Comings of Christ yet the Church has often evaluated the Hebrew Scriptures only in the light of His First Coming. Large tracts of the prophetic writings in the Hebrew Scriptures have in effect been written off as irrelevant to any future role for Israel in the light of the Second Coming of Christ. Thus many prophecies which speak of the re-gathering of the Jewish people to the land, are either regarded as allegory, or fulfilled with the return from exile in Babylon or fulfilled in the person of Jesus as the embodiment of Israel.

In the Church’s bid to establish herself as separate from or indeed the successor to Israel it has had to spiritualise away much of Scripture which speak of an ongoing role for Israel and the Jewish nation. Although all Scripture is for spiritual edification, it is not at the expense of the clear and unambiguous meaning of the text.

David Torrance writing in his chapter *Israel today in the light of God’s Word in Witness of the Jews to God* says:

‘To many theologians, accustomed to demythologise and to see only the ethical implications of the Word of God and not to see particular or material implications of that Word, the events of the Holocaust and the restoration to the land must be disturbing in the extreme. Accept the hand of God behind

these events and we see in them a confirmation and unfolding of much that God has said through prophets and apostles. For many this must involve a reappraisal of the very nature of the Word of God, and their understanding of it and a readiness to accept the Jewish position or Hebraic understanding that, whereas prophecy has abiding spiritual value, it does have also a particular literal application’.

The fact that the Church has had to tie itself in knots to make sense of many of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament and indeed the New has often been the consequence of a failure to heed the literal and clear meaning of the text.

The Declaration of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Germany on the Church’s relationship to Judaism on 28 April 1980 recognises that a prophecy of the final restoration of Israel is contained in Acts 1:6,7 ‘When the disciples came together they asked Jesus, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ Jesus did not reject their question as wrong in itself, he does not deny that there will be a restoration of the kingdom to Israel, instead he says ‘it is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has set by his own authority.’

In Hebraic understanding the restoration of that kingdom is not possible without a restoration to the land. The kingdom was, and indeed, still is associated with the earthly reign of the Messiah over Israel and the nations. Jesus remains the King of the Jews who has yet to reign over the nation of Israel in any physical sense.

As David Torrance goes on to say ‘It is therefore all the more surprising that in the light of their own exegesis about the restoration to Israel, the Bishops have omitted any reference to the Land, in their declaration.

Teaching of the Church fathers

An omission perhaps more to do with the unsettling questions that arose as they have sought to come to terms with the Church’s historic enmity toward the Jewish people which has its roots in the teaching and councils of the early church fathers.

The Post-Nicene Church fathers bear a huge responsibility for the development of this distortion in the way the plain meaning of Scripture has been allegorised away. It has done irreparable harm in developing a Christian apologetic that denies any further role for the Jews as a nation and ultimately to the anti-Semitic edicts which cut the Church from its Jewish roots and anathematised the Jews.

What is clear is that both the roots of Christian Zionism and Covenant or Replacement Theology go back to the respective positions of the pre- and post Nicene Fathers. From these positions one can see the development of the two major theologies concerning the Second Coming of Christ and the role of the Jews.

Pre-Millennialism has its roots in a theology that sees a restoration of the Jews and national conversion to their Messiah as a prelude to the Messianic age in which Christ rules with the Church for a thousand years, the earth is

renewed and transformed and the nations acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. A view reflected in Jewish thought in which it is believed that in the Olam Haba, the age to come, the Messiah will reign for exactly one thousand years

Post-Millennialism, by contrast, sees the emergence of a triumphant and victorious Church which rules with the unseen Christ for a thousand years and prepares for the glorious, visible Second Coming of Christ. Its theology is rooted in the Kingdom of God being present now, growing and expanding to fill the earth. Christendom has largely been based on this belief in which the world gradually and eventually becomes Christianised.

Church Arrogance towards the Jews

This view has, however, bred an arrogance towards the Jewish people, in so far as it sees itself as having replaced or superseded national Israel or Israel according to the flesh. This doctrine is rooted in the ascendancy of Rome over Jerusalem as the centre of the Gentile Church. As Torrance says ‘It was evidently in justification of its own claims that the Roman Church gave currency to the false idea that Israel was the People of God only according to the flesh and had to be replaced by the Church of Jesus Christ as the People of God according to the Spirit. That doctrine alone has, as we shall see later, sown the seeds of contempt by the Church towards Jewish people.

The Christian world then mirrors this divide with one part advocating for and supporting Israel and the other coming to the rescue of part of the beleaguered church oppressed by a nation that it regards as having no ongoing spiritual significance and indeed no right to be there at all. Both Israel and Palestine have become powerful symbols of these respective positions. This is reflected in the way in which each side seeks to demonise the other and a powerful testimony to the disunity of the Christian world over this issue.

Polarisation

A few years ago at the National Christian Resources Exhibition at Esher our CMJ stand was right next to the Rediscovering Palestine stand. Quite an irony when you consider the perspectives of each stand, on the one hand a Society committed to the restoration of Israel and the other committed to the national aspirations of the Palestinians.

As you can perhaps imagine there was an uneasy relationship as we sought to present our respective causes to those attending the exhibition. On one stand there was a map of Palestine without any reference to Israel which could equally well have been mirrored on the other stand with a map of Israel with Judea and Samaria transposed over the West Bank.

The map and the respective claim of Israel and Palestine to the land reflect the polarisation of the issue and the suspicion that each side is committed to the ultimate destruction of the other.

(The second part of this article will appear in the next issue)

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES 2

The Political Agenda of Christian Zionism

Stephen Sizer

The purpose of this book is to warn about a rapidly expanding new movement in the Church that is subtly introducing the same errors that eventually and inevitably led to centuries of atrocities against the Jews and culminated in the Holocaust of the Third Reich ... They are setting up a philosophical system that will result in anti-Semitism.¹

In his controversial book, *Road to Holocaust*, Hal Lindsey equates those who reject dispensationalism with the Nazis because, from his perspective, both deny the Jews any separate identity or future destiny within the purposes of God. In the previous two presentations we have examined the historical roots and theological basis for Christian Zionism. Tonight I want to present its political consequences. Christian Zionists are implacably opposed to the present Road Map to peace in the Middle East. I want to show how they may be contributing to the very holocaust in the Middle East which they predict.

We are going to examine six ways in which Christian Zionist theology has been translated into political action: This outline illustrates the correlation between its distinctive doctrines and political agenda.

Doctrine	Practice
Chosen People	Standing with Israel
Restorationism	Facilitating the Aliyah Programme
Eretz Israel	Supporting West Bank Settlements
Jerusalem	Lobbying for International Recognition
Temple	Funding the Rebuilding of the Temple
The Future	Opposing Peace & Hastening Armageddon

1. The Chosen People: Supporting Israeli Colonialism

The conviction that the Jewish people remain God's 'chosen people' in some way separate from the Church, is deeply rooted in Christian Zionism. A recent *Christianity Today* survey of evangelical opinion about Israel gives an indication of the strength of Christian Zionism in America. The survey revealed that 24 percent believe 'the biblical mandate for Christians is to support the State of Israel.'² This is expressed in a variety of ways:

1.1 Standing with Israel

Following the Six Day War in 1967, apart from the support given by the United States government, Israel has been largely

isolated within the international community. Hal Lindsey laments:

Up to the time of the 1991 Madrid Conference, the Arabs were 'called upon' to 'comply', 'desist', 'refrain' etc. *four* times. Israel was 'demanded', 'ordered', etc. to do General Assembly bidding *three hundred and five* times. The UN voted six hundred and five resolutions between its inception and the Gulf War. Four hundred and twenty nine of those resolutions, or, sixty-two percent of the total of the UN's resolutions were against Israel or its interests.³

Citing Isaiah 40, Christian Zionists see their role to, 'comfort, comfort my people, says your God.' So for example, in October 2000, just days after Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Haram al-Sharif, which was deliberately timed to undermine the government of Barak for negotiating with Arafat over a shared Jerusalem,⁴ and sparked the second *Intifadah*, an advertisement appeared in the *New York Times* entitled 'Open Letter to Evangelical Christians from Jews for Jesus'. In it they called upon evangelicals to show solidarity with the State of Israel at this critical time:

Now is the time to stand with Israel. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, our hearts are heavy as we watch the images of violence and bloodshed in the Middle East ... Christian friends, 'The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable' (Romans 11:29). So must our support for the survival of Israel in this dark hour be irrevocable. Now is the time for Christians to stand by Israel.⁵

1.2 The Israeli Lobby on Capitol Hill

Until the 1980s, US Middle East policy was largely peripheral to the wider global threat posed by Soviet Communism. The

³ Hal Lindsey, 'The UN & Israel', *International Intelligence Briefing*, 29 October 1998: <http://www.iib-report.com/pages/transcripts/10.29.98/oct29.htm>. Emphasis in the original.

⁴ In July 2001 the Rabbinical Council of Judea, Samaria and Gaza called on all rabbis to bring their communities to visit the Temple Mount. This was the first time that a group of rabbis representing a significant proportion of the religious Jewish community had ruled that it was permissible for Jews to ascend the Temple Mount. Previously this had been forbidden to orthodox Jews. The rabbis also called upon the Yesha Council of Jewish settlements to organise mass visits to the Temple Mount from the settlements which comprise the more right wing religious Jews. See N Shragai, 'Rabbis call for mass visits to Temple Mount,' *Ha'aretz*, 19 July 2001.

⁵ 'Open Letter to Evangelical Christians from Jews for Jesus: Now is the Time to Stand with Israel.' *The New York Times*, 23 October 2000.

¹ *The Final Battle*, Western Front, Palos Verdes, California, 1995, back page & p. 3.

² Cited in Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel*, Routledge, London, 1999, p.143.

protection of Western Europe through NATO was a higher priority. The collapse of Communism, however, created a power vacuum in the Middle East which the US has filled. Following the Gulf War to liberate Kuwait and then more recently, Afghanistan from the Taleban and Iraq from the Baath Party of Saddam Hussein, the US has significantly increased its influence in the Middle East. Many contend that US foreign policy has become skewed through the disproportionate influence of the Zionist lobby. Michael Lind, the political analyst summarises the ways in which the Israeli lobby has distorted US foreign policy:

'Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, enabled by US weapons and money, inflames anti-American attitudes in Arab and Muslim countries. The expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land makes a mockery of the US commitment to self-determination for Kosovo, East Timor and Tibet. Beyond the region, US policy on nuclear weapons proliferation is undermined by the double standard that has led it to ignore Israel's nuclear programme while condemning those of India and Pakistan.'⁶

The Christian Right came to shape US foreign policy largely through the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. His victory over Jimmy Carter gave a considerable boost to the Christian Zionist cause. Wagner claims this election, 'ushered in not only the most pro-Israel administration in history but gave several Christian Zionists prominent political posts.' He points out that in addition to the US President, those who subscribed to a futurist premillennial theology and endorsed Christian Zionism included Attorney General Ed Meese, Secretary of Defence Casper Weinberger, and Secretary of the Interior James Watt.⁷ White House seminars became a regular feature of Reagan's administration bringing leading Christian Zionists like Jerry Falwell, Mike Evans and Hal Lindsey into personal contact with national and congressional leaders. In the same year, the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, was founded with the purpose of coordinating 'direct political lobbying activities in cooperation with the Israeli government.'⁸ One of its primary goals is to see the removal of PLO offices in Western countries and the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.⁹

The National Unity Coalition for Israel (NUCFI) is probably the largest and most influential network of Christian Zionists to be formed in the US. Founded by Esther Levens in Kansas in 1994, the NUCFI now comprises a broad coalition of 200 different and autonomous Jewish and Christian organisations representing 40 million members who are 'dedicated to a secure Israel.'¹⁰ Their principal strategy is to lobby the US media and political establishment, to challenge

what they term 'disinformation and propaganda' and to express 'the truth about Israel.' The NUCFI includes three of the largest Christian Zionist organisations: Bridges for Peace, the International Christian Embassy and Christians for Israel.

The power of the pro-Israeli lobby, which ensures Israel continues to receive more than \$3 billion annually from the US in grants, loans and subsidies, can be gauged by the fact that George Bush Snr. was the last US president to criticise Israel in public. During the Gulf War, he enraged the Israeli lobby by pressurising Israel not to retaliate against Iraqi attacks and promised the Arab coalition partners that he would deal with the Palestinian issue. In September 1991, he complained that, 'there are 1,000 lobbyists up on the Hill today lobbying Congress for loan guarantees for Israel and I'm one lonely little guy down here asking Congress to delay its consideration of loan guarantees for 120 days.'¹¹ Lind points out that the pro-Israeli lobby was also responsible for encouraging, 'the greatest abuse of the Presidential pardon power in American history' when Bill Clinton, on his last day in office, controversially pardoned Mark Rich, the fugitive billionaire on the FBI's 'Most Wanted' list. In a *New York Times* article in February 2001, Clinton explained that he had done it for Israel:

Many present and former high-ranking Israeli officials of both major political parties and leaders of Jewish communities in America and Europe urged the pardon of Mr Rich because of his contributions and services to Israeli charitable causes, to the Mossad's efforts to rescue Jews from hostile countries, and to the peace process through sponsorship of education and health programmes in Gaza and the West Bank.¹²

The pro-Israeli lobby is also accused of involvement in the selection, appointing and firing of US government officials and appointees.¹³ In 1980, the former US ambassador to Qatar, Andrew Killgore, writing in *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, gave this critique of the Israeli lobby:

It is wrong and perverse for fanatical elements within the two and a half percent of our population who are Jewish to hold Congress hostage ... America must regard the Israeli progression from penetration to direction of US foreign policy as the work of a master criminal.¹⁴

With the formation of the NUCFI bringing together 200 different Christian and Jewish organisations, it is unlikely that the power of the pro-Israeli lobby will in any way be diminished in the foreseeable future. Christian Zionists have also been influential in forging a closer relationship with Israel by facilitating solidarity tours to the Holy Land.

⁶ Michael Lind, 'The Israel Lobby', *Prospect*, April 2002.

⁷ Donald Wagner, 'Beyond Armageddon,' *The Link*, New York: Americans for Middle East Understanding, October–November 1992, p. 5.

⁸ Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon*, Heral Press, PA, 1995, p. 107.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁰ <http://www.israelunitycoalition.com>

¹¹ Lind, *op. cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

1.3 Solidarity Tours to Israel

Since 1967, following the capture of most of the important biblical sites associated with pilgrimages from Jordan and Syria, Israel has systematically exploited what Shirley Eber describes as a lucrative 'touristic gold mine',¹⁵ and made tourism a tool of propaganda.¹⁶ Israel's greatest success, however, has been to enlist American evangelical leaders such as Pat Boone and Jerry Falwell as allies in promoting pro-Israeli solidarity tours. For example, 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.¹⁷

Christian Zionists are not, however, content to support the State of Israel politically and financially. They are also active in persuading Jews to emigrate to Israel.

2. Restorationism: Facilitating Aliyah from Russia and Eastern Europe

Christian Zionists are convinced that it is God's will for the Jewish people to return to Israel since it was given in perpetuity to the descendants of Abraham. With the fall of Communism in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Eastern Europe, Christians Zionists have become increasingly active in facilitating Jewish émigrés to make aliyah.¹⁸

2.1 By Land and Sea: From Restoration to Transportation

Since 1980, a coalition of Christian Zionist agencies has taken the initiative in encouraging Jewish people to emigrate to Israel, seeing this as the fulfilment of prophecy. Exobus was probably the first Christian Zionist agency to turn the doctrine of Restorationism into a reality and assist Jews in the former Soviet Union (FSU) to make aliyah. Founded in 1984 by Phil Hunter and based in Hull, England, the first Exobus team was sent to the Ukraine in 1991. They have since then they have assisted over 56,000 Jewish people to emigrate to Israel in close cooperation with the Jewish Agency. Exobus is also probably the largest Christian agency facilitating aliyah, comprising 80 team members, drawn from 13 countries and operating 40 vehicles transporting approximately 1,200 Jews overland from 16 different bases in the FSU each month.¹⁹

¹⁵ Shirley Eber, 'Getting Stoned on Holiday: Tourism on the Front Line'. In *Focus: Tourism Concern*, 2, Autumn (1991), pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ Glen Owen 'Tourists warned to avoid flashpoints.' *The Times*, 14 August (1997), p. 2.

¹⁷ Don Wagner, 'Beyond Armageddon', p. 3.

¹⁸ 'Aliyah' means 'going up' and is used to describe going up to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. The Israel government plays down the involvement of Christians in bring Jews from the FSU. Brearley claims only 2 percent of the Jewish Agency budget for 'airlifting' Soviet immigrants has been contributed by Christian Zionists. This only includes donations made directly to the Jewish Agency. Margaret Brearley, 'Jerusalem for Christian Zionists' in *Jerusalem, Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, edited by P.W.L. Walker (Deo Gloria Trust, Croydon, 1992), p112; <http://www.christiansforisrael.org>.

¹⁹ <http://www.christiansforisrael.org>.

Since 1991, the ICEJ has also paid for the transportation of 40,000 immigrants, 15,000 of whom were taken to Israel on 51 ICEJ sponsored flights.²⁰ ICEJ Russian team members are especially active in the more remote regions of the FSU. They locate Jews, persuade them to emigrate, help them obtain documents to prove their Jewish origins, distribute humanitarian packages and pay for exit permits, passports, debt repayment, transport and accommodation.²¹ Once in Israel, ICEJ as well as BFP assist émigrés with their resettlement costs, providing food, clothing, blankets, kitchen and school supplies as well as medical equipment.²²

3. Eretz Israel: Sustaining the West Bank Settlements

For religious Zionism, Jewish and Christian, the legitimate borders of Israel are considerably larger than those presently disputed with Syria, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

Christian involvement in the realisation of Eretz Israel includes the military justification of these enlarged borders; the political adoption of the settlement programme; and economic support for the settler movement.

3.1 Justifying Eretz Israel

David Allen Lewis, President of Christians United for Israel, puts the territorial claims of Israel into the wider context of the Middle East. He observes that, 'The Arabs already have 99.5 per cent of the land ... this cannot be tolerated.'²³ Echoing the experience of the Israelites under Pharaoh, Jan Willem van der Hoeven offers a theological explanation for Israel's victory in 1967 and a justification for its refusal to withdraw from 'biblically Jewish lands.'²⁴

'God wanted to give His people that part of the land which they did not receive in 1948. 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 ... God has His own sovereign way to fulfil His Word and promise.'²⁵

In response to international calls on Israel to give back the West Bank, Bridges for Peace asks the rhetorical question: 'What is so sacred about the June 4th, 1967 line?' Nothing, they argue since historically this was all part of biblical Israel and 'squarely won in defensive battles in 1967 and 1973.'²⁶ This conviction that the entire West Bank is integral to Israel

²⁰ Patricia Golan, 'On Wings of Faith' *Jerusalem Post*, 20 December 2001.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 108; Golan, *op. cit.*

²³ David Allen Lewis, 'Christian Zionist Theses', *Christians and Israel*, Jerusalem, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, 1996, p. 9.

²⁴ Lindsey, *Final*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

²⁵ Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?*, Destiny Image Publishers, Shippensburg, Pasadena, 1993, p. 151.

²⁶ Bridges for Peace, 'The Golan Heights Déjà vu', *Despatch from Jerusalem*, September (1999), pp. 10-11.

has led many Christian Zionists to 'adopt' exclusive Jewish settlements to strengthen their claim to the land.

3.2 Adopting the Settlements

Since 1967, using various economic and tax incentives as well as appealing to biblical rhetoric, Israel has encouraged over 400,000 Jews to colonize East Jerusalem, The West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights through 190 illegal settlements.²⁷ Several Christian Zionist organisations have given their full support to this judaization of the Occupied Territories. Jews for Jesus, for example, compares Israeli settlements in the Palestinian Territories with the settlement of Texas by the United States. The Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC), founded by Ted Beckett in 1995, works in partnership with Christian Friends of Israel (CFI) and defines a settlement as:

A piece of land where brave, Jewish pioneers have taken up residence. In most cases it is a barren rocky hilltop set up to establish a Jewish community where none had existed for thousands of years. In some case, such as Shiloh, settlements are established on the original site of an ancient Jewish city. In others such as Hebron and Gush Etzion, a Jewish community is established on the site of a community destroyed by Arab armies during or prior to Israel's War of Independence.²⁸

So far, CFOIC claims 39 illegal Israeli settlements have been adopted by 50 churches in the USA, South Africa, Germany, Holland and the Philippines. For example, Ariel has been adopted by Faith Bible Chapel, Arvada, Colorado; Hebron by Greater Harvest, Tallahassee, Florida; Alei Zahav by Calvary Chapel, Nashville; Revava by the United Methodist Church, Green Forest, Arizona; and Psagot by Tarzana Baptist Chapel, Tarzana, California. To strengthen the settlers' claim to the land, CFOIC publish maps on their website showing the few areas of the West Bank given back to the Palestinian Authority. CFOIC lament the 'partition' of the land as 'the reality of the 'peace process' for those living in the Land G-d promised the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for ever!'²⁹ Christian Zionists have not only made a clear stand in justifying Israel's illegal settlement of the West Bank. Their 'adoption' programme is also intended to be a means by which financial assistance as well as practical support for the settlers is delivered.

3.3 Funding the Settlers

Besides facilitating the emigration of Jews to Israel, several Christian Zionist agencies are active in funding illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank. During the 1991 ICEJ Feast of

Tabernacles celebration, for example, representatives from 12 countries presented cheques to the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitshak Shamir, to help finance the settlements.³⁰ Through their 'Social Assistance Programme' ICEJ also provides financial support for projects in the Jewish settlements, including bullet proof vests to strengthen the resolve of settlers, living among what they describe as '3 million hostile Palestinians.'³¹ ICEJ's 'Bulletproof Bus for Efrat' appeal is also raising \$150,000 to purchase an armour plated bus to transport settlers in and out of the West Bank from Efrat settlement.³² Bridges for Peace (BFP) has a similar scheme called 'Operation Ezra' which funds over 50 otherwise unsustainable projects such as the settlement farm, Sde Bar, near Beit Jala and the Herodian.³³ CFOIC call upon Christians to pray for 'The safety of the Jewish settlers and for terrorist incidents to stop (and) the giving away of land to the PLO will be reversed.'³⁴

Integral to this strategy is Jerusalem and the progressive Judaizing, occupation and settlement of Arab East Jerusalem and the Old City. For Zionism there can be no compromise, since controlling Jerusalem has always been a barometer of their existence as a nation.

4. Jerusalem: Lobbying for International Recognition

At the core of Christian Zionist support for Israel's claim to the Occupied Territories lies the conviction that Jerusalem is, and must remain, the exclusive and undivided Jewish capital. Attempts to reach agreement in the wider Arab-Israeli conflict have so far stalled or stumbled over the final status of Jerusalem. Christian Zionists are strongly opposed to any proposal for joint sovereignty or the creation of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem.

As early as February 1984, the ICEJ sent a representative, Richard Hellman, to testify before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in Washington to urge the US to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognise the city as the capital of Israel.³⁵ Jerry Falwell and the AIPAC lobby also spoke in favour of such a move. Senator Bob Dole later introduced legislation in the American Senate which required the US Embassy to be rebuilt in Jerusalem by 31 May 1999, and authorised \$100 million for 'preliminary' spending.³⁶ In October 1995 he stated, 'Israel's capital is not on the table in the peace process, and moving the United States embassy to Jerusalem does nothing to prejudice the outcome of any future negotiations.'³⁷ Lamenting the failure of the US President to ratify the Senate decision, Dole commented:

²⁷ 'Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories' *Foundation for Middle East Peace*, March 2002. FMEP list 190 settlements with a total population of 213,672 in the West Bank and Gaza; 170,400 in East Jerusalem; and 17,000 in the Golan Heights, making a total of 401,072 settlers based on 2001 figures.

²⁸ <http://www.cfoic.com>

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Wagner, *Anxious*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

³¹ International Christian Embassy, <http://www.icej.org.il/about.html>; 'Life in the Settlements', *Word from Jerusalem*, May 2002, p. 7.

³² International Christian Embassy, 'Bulletproof Bus for Efrat' appeal, *Word from Jerusalem*, May 2002.

³³ Bridges for Peace, 'New Life on the Farm', *Despatch from Jerusalem*, January 2000, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Donald Wagner, *Anxious*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

³⁶ 'Bill to re-locate the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem', <http://www.usdoj.gov/olc/s770.16.htm>.

³⁷ Middle East Realities, 'Lie of the Week', MiddleEast@aol.com, 01/11/95.

Jerusalem is today as it has been for three millennia the heart and soul of the Jewish people. It is also, and should remain forever, the eternal and undivided capital of the State of Israel ... The time has come ... to move beyond letters, expressions of support, and sense of the Congress resolutions. The time has come to enact legislation that will get the job done.³⁸

In 1997 the ICEJ also gave support to a full page advert placed in the *New York Times* entitled, 'Christians Call for a United Jerusalem.' It was signed by 10 evangelical 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 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.³⁹

Readers were invited to 'Join us in our holy mission to ensure that Jerusalem will remain the undivided, eternal capital of Israel.' They claimed, '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.'⁴⁰

In 2002, Falwell controversially linked the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre with Israel's exclusive claim to Jerusalem, calling upon his supporters to petition the US President to 'Keep Jerusalem Free.'⁴¹ Christian Zionists have therefore been resolute in their efforts to get the international community to recognise Jerusalem as the de facto capital of Israel. However, even more critical to a Christian Zionist reading of prophecy is the necessity for the Jewish Temple to be rebuilt.

5. The Temple: Identifying with Religious Zionism

Dispensational Christian Zionists, are convinced the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt because, based on their futurist eschatology from Daniel, the anti-Christ must desecrate it just prior to the return of Christ. Brickner claims that the

³⁸ Donald Neff, 'Congress has been irresponsible on the issue of Jerusalem', *Washington Report*, January (1998), pp90-91.

³⁹ 'Christians Call for a United Jerusalem', *New York Times*, 18 April 1997, <http://www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/united.html>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

⁴¹ Jerry Falwell Ministries, 'Keep Jerusalem Free Petition,' <http://falwell.com/>.

preparations for rebuilding the Temple began in 1967 with the capture of the Old City of Jerusalem.⁴² Lindsey is equally sure that, 'right now, as you read this, preparations are being made to rebuild the Third Temple.'⁴³ Contemporary Christian Zionists are working to achieve this.

5.1 Promoting the Temple Mount Movement

Randall Price is the leading dispensational expert on the imminent plans to rebuild the Jewish Temple. In his 735 page *The Coming Last Days Temple*, he provides comprehensive details of all the Jewish organisations involved in attempts to seize the Temple Mount, destroy the Al Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock, rebuild the Jewish Temple and re-institute Temple worship, priesthood and sacrifices. These include the Temple Institute and Temple Mount Faithful.⁴⁴ Gershon Salomon is the controversial figurehead of the movement and founder of The Temple Faithful. Zhava Glaser, of Jews for Jesus, praises Salomon for his courage to talk about 'the most important subject in the Jewish religion.'

Speaking as a guest of the ICEJ, at the Christian Zionist Congress in 1998, Salomon insisted:

The mission of the present generation is to liberate the Temple Mount and to remove—I repeat, to remove—the defiling abomination there ... the Jewish people will not be stopped at the gates leading to the Temple Mount ... We will fly our Israeli flag over the Temple Mount, which will be minus its Dome of the Rock and its mosques and will have only our Israeli flag and our Temple. This is what our generation must accomplish.⁴⁵

In a London *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 nations. The Messiah will not come by himself; we should bring Him by fighting.⁴⁶

Between 1967 and 1990 there have been over 100 armed assaults on the Haram Al-Sharif by Jewish militants, often led by rabbis. Grace Halsell regrets that 'in no instance has any Israeli Prime Minister or the chief Sephardic rabbi or the chief Ashkenazi rabbi criticized these assaults.'⁴⁷

⁴² Brickner, *Future*, p. 137.

⁴³ Lindsey, *Planet*, p. 156; *Final*, p. 103.

⁴⁴ Rich Robinson, 'Israeli Groups Involved in Third Temple Activities' *Jews for Jesus Newsletter* 10, (1993), <http://www.jewsforjesus.org>.

⁴⁵ Nadav Shragai, 'Dreaming of a Third Temple', *Ha'aretz*, 17 September (1998), p. 3, cited in Price, *Coming*, p. 417.

⁴⁶ Sam Kiley, 'The righteous will survive and the rest will perish', *The Times*, 13 December 1999, p. 39.

⁴⁷ Grace Halsell, 'The Hidden Hand of the Temple Mount Faithful', *The Washington Report*, January 1991, p. 8.

5.2 Facilitating the Temple Building Programme

In order to sustain a fully functioning Temple it is also necessary to identify, train and consecrate priests to serve in the Temple. According to the Book of Numbers, the ashes of a pure unblemished red heifer, itself previously offered by a ritually pure priest, must be mixed with water and sprinkled on both them and the Temple furniture. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD the ashes used in the ceremony were lost and the Jews of the Diaspora have therefore been ritually unclean ever since.

In 1998, however, Clyde Lott, a Pentecostal Mississippi rancher, formed Canaan Land Restoration of Israel, Inc. for the purpose of raising livestock suitable for Temple sacrifice.⁴⁸ According to *Newsweek*, in 1997, the first red heifer for 2000 years was born at the Kfar Hassidim kibbutz near Haifa and named 'Melody'.⁴⁹ Unfortunately she eventually grew white hairs on her tail and udder. Undaunted, Chaim Richman, an Orthodox rabbi and Clyde Lott, the Pentecostal cattleman, have teamed up to breed red heifers in the Jordan Valley, in the hope of saving Israel's cattle industry as well as producing a perfect specimen for sacrifice.⁵⁰

The design and construction work, furnishings and utensils, the training of priests and breeding of sacrifices all require funds and in large measure, like the red heifer, these are being provided by Christian Zionists. According to Grace Halsell, Stanley Goldfoot, a former member of the Jewish Stern Gang, raises up to \$100 million a year for the Jerusalem Temple Foundation through American Christian TV and radio stations and evangelical churches.⁵¹

As Lawrence Wright has also observed, 'Jewish longing for the Temple, Christian hopes for the Rapture, and Muslim paranoia about the destruction of the mosques [are being] stirred to an apocalyptic boil.'⁵²

6. The Future: Opposing Peace and Hastening Armageddon

6.1 The US-Israeli Alliance

While Christian Zionists in general are committed to standing

with Israel, there is a particularly close relationship between Israel and America. Jerry Falwell offers a simple explanation. God has been kind to America because 'America had been kind to the Jew.'⁵³ Gary Bauer, president of American Values and a republican presidential contender in 2000, put it like this. "Terrorists don't understand why Israel and the United States are joined at the heart."⁵⁴ Mike Evans, founder and President of Lovers of Israel Inc. describes the special relationship between Israel and America:

Only one nation, Israel, stands between ... terrorist aggression and the complete decline of the United States as a democratic world power ... Surely demonic pressure will endeavour to encourage her to betray Israel ... Israel is the key to America's survival ... As we stand with Israel, I believe we shall see God perform a mighty work in our day. God is going to bless America and Israel as well ... If Israel falls, the United States can no longer remain a democracy.⁵⁵

For Christian Zionists such as Falwell and Evans, America is seen as the great redeemer, her super-power role in the world predicted in scripture⁵⁶ and providentially ordained.⁵⁷ The two nations of America and Israel are like Siamese twins perceived to be pitted against an evil world dominated by Communism and Islam both antithetical to the Judeo-Christian democratic values of America and Israel.⁵⁸

6.2 Antipathy Toward Arabs

Ramon Bennett illustrates how such prejudices remain common today describing the modern Arab nations as 'barbarous'.⁵⁹ 'The customs of hospitality and generosity have changed little in 4,000 years,' he claims, 'nor have the customs of raiding (thieving, rustling), saving face or savagery.'⁶⁰ Bennett argues that the Arab 'is neither a vicious nor, usually, a calculating liar but a natural one.'⁶¹

Comparisons between Hitler and the Arabs are now frequent in the writings of contemporary Christian Zionists.⁶²

⁴⁸ Randall Price incorrectly attributes this story to *Time* when it actually appeared in *Newsweek*. He also misspells one of the contributor's names. Price, *Coming*, p. 375. 'Red Heifers', *New York Times*, 27 December 1998) cited in Halsell, *Forcing*, p. 65.

'Shortly after this Rev. Lott (who is also a cattleman by trade) came to possess a red heifer that met all the biblical qualifications of Numbers chapter 19. Since that historic time in, November 11, 1994 God has miraculously unveiled His divine plan for the restoration of Israel, to the Church. The Holy Ghost has worked during this time to reveal to Apostolic ministers and laymen the need to unify their efforts in order to see this project move forward, both in the Spirit and in the natural. August 11, 1998 Israel is expecting to receive from Canaan Land Restoration, 500 head of registered Red Angus Heifers.' Joe Atkins, 'Biblical mystery of the red heifer affects farmer in Mississippi' *The Daily Mississippian*, 23 July (1998); Ethan Bronner, 'Portent in a Pasture? Appearance of Rare Heifer in Israel Spurs Hopes, Fears', *The Boston Globe*, Sunday, 6 April 1997, pp. 1, 22.

⁴⁹ Kendall Hamilton, Joseph Contreras and Mark Dennis, 'The Strange Case of Israel's Red Heifer,' *Newsweek*, May 19 1997.

⁵⁰ Jeremy Shere, 'A Very Holy Cow', *Jerusalem Post*, 25 May 1997.

⁵¹ Halsell, *Prophecy*, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁵² Lawrence Wright, 'Forcing the End', *Frontline*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/readings/forcing.html>.

⁵³ Cited in Halsell, *Forcing*, p. 100.

⁵⁴ Julia Duin, 'Zionists meeting brands "road map a heresy"', *The Washington Times*, www.washingtontimes.com/national/20030518-114058-5626r.htm

⁵⁵ Mike Evans, *Israel, America's Key to Survival*, Haven Books, Plainfield, New Jersey, 1980, back page, xv.

⁵⁶ Noah Hutchings, *U.S. in Prophecy*, Hearststone Publishing, Oklahoma City, 2000; Arno Froese, *Terror in America, Understanding the Tragedy*, Olive Press, West Columbia, 2001; Mark Hitchcock, *Is America in Prophecy?*, Multnomah, Portland, Oregon, 2002; Hal Lindsey, *Where is America in Prophecy?*, video, Hal Lindsey Ministries, Murrieta, California, 2001.

⁵⁷ Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina, 1993), p197.

⁵⁸ Simon, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

⁵⁹ Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23; John Laffin, *The Arab Mind*, Cassell, London, 1975, p. 70.

⁶² Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem?*, Destiny Image Publishers, Shippensburg, Pasadena, 1993, pp. 132-133; Bennett, *Philistine*, p. 134.

Van der Hoeven of the ICEJ is typical. 'Just as there was a definite ideology behind the hatred and atrocities of Hitler and the Nazis, there is one behind the hatred and wars by the Arabs against the Jews and people of Israel.'⁶³

Franklin Graham, President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, made similar but unguarded remarks in a US newspaper interview in 2000:

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.⁶⁴

Hatred of Arabs is personified in attitudes toward Yasser Arafat. In February 1999, for example, Arafat was invited to attend the 47th annual Congress-sponsored National Prayer

Breakfast in Washington. The breakfast is normally attended each year by more than 3,000 political and religious leaders and his invitation generated considerable controversy. The Traditional Values Coalition, founded by Pat Robertson and representing 40,000 churches, urged congressmen to boycott the breakfast.⁶⁵ The ICEJ said that attending the breakfast with Arafat would be 'like praying with Satan himself.'⁶⁶ Despite considerable pressure from pro-Israeli groups the invitation was not withdrawn. It was left to the White House press secretary, Joe Lockhart, to defend the invitation. He lamented, 'it's done every year in the spirit of reconciliation. And it's unfortunate that there are some who don't fully understand the spirit of reconciliation and inclusion.'⁶⁷

(The second part of this article will appear in the next issue)

⁶³ van der Hoeven, *ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

⁶⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, 16 October 2000.

⁶⁵ *Christian Daily News*, 4 February 1999. <http://www.christiannews.org/archives/1999/20499/news/full.html>

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

ZIONISM: FROM THE SECULAR TO THE SACRED¹

Michael Prior

The metamorphosis in the religious estimation of Political Zionism is one of the most spectacular about-turns in twentieth-century ideological history. We can judge the extent of the change by comparing the attitudes of prominent Jewish religious leaders in Theodor Herzl's day to those of today's leaders. If Herzl's proposal met with considerable opposition from within the Jewish religious establishment of his day, some hundred years later his project is, in the majority of Jewish religious circles, clothed in the garments of piety and religious idealism. How could such a *volte face* come about, and what were the underlying elements in the transformation? In particular, was there some process by which identifiable theological changes took place, changes that amounted to standing traditional Jewish understanding on its head? Let us remind ourselves of the gulf between the earlier religious view of Political Zionism and that shared broadly by the religious establishment today.

Religious Jewish reaction to Herzl's Zionism in his own day

When Herzl (1860-1904) inaugurated his programme to establish the state for Jews (*Der Judenstaat*) in 1896-97, the Jewish religious establishment dismissed it as an altogether secular, indeed anti-religious enterprise. Herzl's own Chief Rabbi in Vienna, Moritz Güdemann, insisted that the Jews

were not a nation, and that Zionism was incompatible with Judaism.² Similarly, as Herzl's diary entry for 18 November 1895 shows, France's Grand Rabbin, Zadok Kahn, protested. The German Rabbinical Council publicly condemned the efforts of 'the so-called Zionists' to create a Jewish national state in Palestine as contrary to Holy Writ.³ Belgium's Grand Rabbin, M A Bloch, also protested, describing Zionist aspirations as far from those of Judaism.⁴ The Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Hermann Adler, who had received Herzl in London, viewed his programme as an 'egregious blunder' and an 'absolutely mischievous project.' Adler, also, considered the Zionist movement to be opposed to the teaching of Judaism.⁵

Zionism was not merely a variant on the Jewish faith, but a very substitute for it. That the Zionist movement would arrogate to itself the agency for the restoration of the Jewish people to its ancestral land—a task uniquely for accomplishment by the Messiah—was, for Orthodox Jews, nothing short of blasphemy. Thus, rabbis representing all shades

¹ This is a version of the lecture delivered at the conference, 'Zionism, Christian Zionism and the Challenge to the Churches', The Friends House, London (21 February 2004), co-sponsored by Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust, Friends of Sabeel, UK, Elijah Trust, and Quaker Committee for Christian and Inter-faith Relations.

² Moritz Güdemann, *Nationaljudentum* (Leipzig and Vienna: M Breitenstein's Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1897), p. 42.

³ David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 336. Herzl referred to five rabbis, two Orthodox and three Liberal, contemptuously as the *Protestrabbiner* (*Die Welt*, 16 July 1897; see Immanuel Jakobovits, *Attitude to Zionism of Britain's Chief Rabbis as Reflected in their Writings* (Lecture delivered to The Jewish Historical Society of England in London, 9 May 1979) (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1982), p. 6.

⁴ Jakobovits, *Attitude to Zionism ...*, p. 22 n. 17.

⁵ Hermann Adler's writings on political Zionism are limited to a sermon (12 November 1898) published in full in the *Jewish Chronicle* under the title, 'Religious versus Political Zionism' (25 November 1898).

of opinion denounced Zionism as a fanaticism, and contrary to the Jewish scriptures. Herzl and his Zionism were anathema to the most influential eastern European rabbis almost as a matter of course.⁶ Even within the small circle of the Orthodox supporters of Zionism there was the widespread recognition that Zionism was not merely a variant on the Jewish faith, but a very substitute for it.

The Zionist movement, then, was considered to be a rebellion against classical Judaism, and with good reason. For political Zionists in general, religion was irrational, and a repressive and regressive force. For them, salvation lay in escaping from the prison of the sacred, and the hypnotic spell of the Bible. Judaism was a weight of lead attached to the feet of Jews, and was a symptom of Jewry's sickness in exile. For such people, Zionist Palestine would be new, secular, and qualitatively different from the past of the diaspora.

Understandably, therefore, the Jewish religious establishment was vehemently opposed to the Zionist programme. For Orthodox Jews the diaspora was a condition ordained by God, who alone would bring it to an end. Reform Judaism, for its part, viewing Jewish history as evolutionary and dynamic, and according no essential significance to any one period, rejected the notion that Jews outside of Palestine were 'in exile', and insisted that Jews constituted a religious community, and not a nation, and had made their homes in and had become citizens of many states.⁷

Religious Jewish reaction to Zionism today

Yet today, and since 1967 in particular, no body is more supportive of Zionism's achievement than the religious establishment, both inside and outside Israel, and many religious Jews accord the state redemptive and even messianic significance.⁸ The role of the biblical narrative within the Zionist ideology increased significantly in the wake of the 1967 War and the rise of *Gush Emunim*. The biblical paradigm

was the backdrop for the Zionist self-portrayal as the (sole) 'descendants of the biblical children of Israel', while the natives [Arabs] were 'Canaanites'. This introduced into the secular discourse a religious authority justifying the new conquest of the land and the maltreatment of its population. Measured against the divine right of the colonisers, appeal to the human rights of the local population, considered to be 'interlopers', 'sojourners' and obstacles to the divine plan, carried no conviction. Indeed, most of the religious establishment in Israel and outside is at the forefront of the opposition to political 'compromise' with the Palestinians. Thus, the hitherto secular enterprise of Zionism has been metamorphosed into an ideology which the majority of religious Jews regard as of divine origin.

Western Religious Establishment Jews and Zionism

According to a former Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Lord Sir Immanuel Jakobovits, the state has 'its religious significance as an extraordinary manifestation of Divine favour.'⁹ Moreover, despite the anti-religious stridency of Political Zionism, the late Chief Rabbi could say,

The origins of the Zionist idea are of course entirely religious. The slogan, 'The Bible is our mandate' is a credo hardly less insistently pleaded by many secularists than by religious believers as the principal basis of our legal and historical claim to the Land of Israel ... Modern Political Zionism itself could never have struck root if it had not planted its seeds in soil ploughed up and fertilised by the millennial conditioning of religious memories, hopes, prayers and visions of our eventual return to Zion ... No rabbinical authority disputes that our claim to a Divine mandate (and we have no other which cannot be invalidated) extends over the entire Holy Land within its historic borders and that halachically we have no right to surrender this claim.¹⁰

Jakobovits' successor, current Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, considers that the State of Israel is for many religious Jews 'the most powerful collective expression' of Jewry, and 'the most significant development in Jewish life since the Holocaust'.¹¹ In the course of his speech at the Service for Israel's Fiftieth Anniversary, Sacks portrayed the birth of the state as a coming to the promised land in line with the biblical

⁶ David Vital, *A People Apart. The Jews in Europe 1789-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 625.

⁷ I trace the metamorphosis in both Orthodox and Reform Jewry on the question of Political Zionism in Michael Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 67-102.

⁸ For many religious Jews in Israel and elsewhere, *Eretz Yisrael* is the normative context for the observance of the *Torah*. The land, therefore, has fundamental *halakhic* significance. Not only are certain laws (e.g., the sabbatical year and the tithes) applicable only in *Eretz Yisrael*, but the entire *Torah* is designed for the people in *Eretz Yisrael*. For such people, observing *halakhah* in the *galut* (exile) is only preparing one to do so in *Eretz Yisrael* (see Nahmanides, Commentary on Lev 18.25). For other religious Jews in Israel and elsewhere, the Zionist movement is seen as an expression of God taking his people out of the house of bondage, and with fire and cloud leading them to the promised land. *Aliyah* and the determination to build a just society, then, are religious ideals. The *Shoah* (Holocaust) itself can be interpreted within this matrix as promoting redemption: it constitutes 'the birth pangs of the Messiah'. The War of Independence and the 1967 war, for their part, are moments of salvation: acts of God's intervention (adapted from Michael Rosenak, 'State of Israel', in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr [eds], *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought. Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements and Beliefs* New York: The Free Press/London: Collier Macmillan, 1987, pp. 909-16). Despite such rhetoric, however, 'working the land' has seldom been high on the list of priorities of religious, or even secular Jews, in Israel, who invariably employ non-Jews to do such redemptive work.

⁹ Jakobovits, *The Attitude to Zionism* ..., p. 20.

¹⁰ *The Attitude to Zionism* ... Jakobovits goes on: 'But what is questionable is whether we must, or indeed may, assert it at the risk of thousands of lives, if not the life of the State itself. ... We are halachically compelled to leave the judgment on what provides the optimum security for Jewish life in Israel to the verdict of military and political experts, not rabbis. Included as a major factor in this difficult judgment must also be the overriding concern to preserve the Jewish character of Israel which may clearly depend on the proportion of Jews within the State' (pp. 20-21). Jakobovits asserts the unique Jewish title to Jerusalem, and accepts the need for an eventual withdrawal 'on Israeli terms' from territories occupied (p. 21).

¹¹ *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 December, 1993: 21.

stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the Exodus, Ezra and Nehemiah. His speech reflected also the core elements of the canonical Zionist reading of Jewish history.¹² Within a few generations of Chief Rabbis, then, Political Zionism had been metamorphosed from being an anathema, and a repudiation of Judaism and the Scriptures (Hermann Adler), to becoming a core ingredient of Jewish religious life (Immanuel Jakobovits and Jonathan Sachs): it had moved from the secular to the sacred. These views represent only those of two recent religious leaders firmly rooted in the respectable classes of British society, but their general tone is widely shared in liberal circles.

More recently, the otherwise forward-looking and ecumenically eirenic statement *Dabru Emet* (Speak the Truth), signed by 150 prominent Jews in the USA (12 September 2000, and by more since), promotes exclusively Jewish claims to Palestine, clothing the Zionist enterprise in the garment of piety, even though its determination to create a state for Jews would require the 'ethnic-cleansing' of the indigenous Arab population. Acceptance of these claims and its contemporary implications is a requirement of the conventional Jewish-Christian dialogue:

Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. The most important event for Jews since the Holocaust has been the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Promised Land. As members of a biblically-based religion, Christians appreciate that Israel was promised—and given—to Jews as the physical centre of the covenant between them and God. Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics. As Jews, we applaud this support.

Virtually everything, then, rests on the authority of the Bible. While other factors, such as 'endemic', 'irridentist' antisemitism in nineteenth-century Europe, the barbarism of the *Shoah* in the twentieth, etc., could be invoked as justifications for establishing a state, they might not be considered adequate to warrant ethnically cleansing Palestine of its indigenous non-Jewish population. The Zionist conquest would need an even bigger 'idea' to redeem it, and the Bible was to hand.¹³

The link between Jewry, the State of Israel and the Bible is reflected in a very focused form recently by Edward Kessler:

For most Jews, the creation of the State of Israel is an ancient promise fulfilled—the ingathering of exiles and the creation of a vi-

brant nation-state, guaranteeing physical and spiritual security. Yet, for many Muslims, the permanent existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East is a religious and political anomaly. It is a common view that Islamic rule must be returned to the Land of Israel ... Jews view the creation of the State of Israel as an act of national liberation following nearly 2,000 years of powerlessness and homelessness. Muslims term the same events 'The Disaster', a time when an Islamic society was uprooted and became a minority in a land that was once dar al-Islam. Most Jews do not separate Zionism from its deep religious roots within Judaism. However, many Muslims make a distinction between Zionism and Judaism, failing to recognise that Zionism is an integral component of Judaism and not a 'racist' ideology'.¹⁴

Israeli Religious Jews and Zionism

The mood in Israel itself is even more uncompromising. Much of it derives from the ideological legacy of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook (1865-1935), the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine (1921-35), and his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, and the graduates of Merkaz HaRav, a centre for the training of rabbis established by the elder Kook. The younger, the spiritual mentor of Gush Emunim, produced doctored versions of his father's writings, reducing them to collections of articles that distilled Judaism to Zionism by means of messianism.¹⁴

On the more extreme wing we have the actions perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir, both of which derived their primary inspiration from religious idealism and help from some of the narratives of the Bible. Dr Goldstein, a religious settler and a graduate of the most prestigious *yeshiva* (a Jewish seminary or Talmudic college) in the USA, massacred twenty nine worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, and chose the feast of Purim (25 February 1994). Amir assassinated Yitzhak Rabin the following year. Goldstein was steeped in the Book of Esther, whose legends are interwoven into the prayers for the feast: 'Blessed are you YHWH, our God, King of the universe, who takes up our grievance, judges our claim, avenges our wrong; who brings just retribution upon all enemies of our soul, and exacts vengeance for us from our foes ... Accursed be Haman who sought to destroy me.'¹⁵

The case of Amir is particularly apposite. As well as being fully conversant with the Bible in general and Jewish morality Amir acknowledged later that the very night before he had assassinated Rabin he had re-read the account in the Book of Numbers of how Phinehas had killed a fellow Israelite for consorting with a Midianite woman. According to the account in Numbers 25.7-15, rather than chastising him for killing his clansman Yahweh showed his favour by

¹² Speech at the Service for Israel's Fiftieth Anniversary in the Presence of HRH The Prince of Wales, at St John's Wood Synagogue, London, 29 April 1998.

¹³ See Michael Prior, 'The Bible and the Redeeming Idea of Colonialism', in Marcella Althaus-Reid, and Jack Thompson (eds), in *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 5 (2, *Postcolonialism and Religion*) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), pp. 129-55.

¹³ Edward Kessler, 'A Jewish approach to Dialogue', *Priests and People* 18(no. 1, January 2004): 13-18, pp. 17-18.

¹⁴ Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel*, 73.

¹⁵ See further Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel*, p. 68.

putting a stop to the plague that had already ravaged 24,000, and by elevating Phinehas to the eternal priesthood. Amir told his questioners that, on re-reading about Phinehas he determined to kill Rabin, to ensure that it was a Jew, and not an Arab, who did it.¹⁶

Although these two dramatic incidents are altogether unique instances they do reflect the more extreme side of the Israeli religious estimation of the conflict. Goldstein is revered as a hero-martyr within some sections of the religious-settler community, not least in his own settlement in Kiryat Arba, adjoining Hebron, which was founded by Rabbi Moshe Levinger. His burial-place in the settlement, called Kahane Park in memory of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, has the character of both a garden of remembrance and a shrine, equipped for prayer services for pilgrims. Admirers kiss his tomb, and pray over the grave of what the inscription describes as an upright martyr—a mourner explained to me that all those killed simply because they were Jews were martyrs. On the occasion of the *bar mitzvah* of Goldstein's son, Kiryat Arba's Chief Rabbi Dov Lior addressed him: 'Ya'akov Yair, follow in your father's footsteps. He was righteous and a great hero' (*Jerusalem Report* 12 December 1996, p. 10). For his part, Amir had a wide following and received a considerable amount of fan mail from ideological supporters and teenage girls in the religious camp in Israel. The most recent report indicates that Amir, now 33 and in jail for life, is to marry a certain Larisa Trimbobler—who has a doctorate in philosophy from the former USSR—a mother of four who divorced her husband after she started correspondence with Amir. Amir has spent most of his time in prison studying the Talmud and answering letters (Toby Harnden, in *The Daily Telegraph* 20 January 2004, p. 13). Although the activities of Goldstein and Amir evoked widespread revulsion in Israel and among Jews world-wide, there was considerable support for them within the most zealous and uncompromising wing of religious Zionism. The secular left laid the collective blame for Rabin's assassination at the feet of the religious nationalist camp.

Nearly all the religious parties, and the overwhelming majority of Orthodox rabbis in Israel, have denounced the 'peace process'. In the midst of the prolonged *halakhic* debates on whether one may or may not cede Jewish land (i.e., land taken from the Arabs) to non-Jews, consideration of the human rights of non-Jews is seldom invoked. Some of the most vociferous and extreme opponents of 'territorial compromise' come from the Orthodox religious camp.

Fearing that the new, Labour-led government of Yitzhak Rabin (1992) might compromise with the PLO, and disengage from parts of the Occupied Territories, the rabbis of the religious settler community formed 'The Union of Rabbis for the People and Land of Israel', with a presidium which included rabbis Aviner, Druckman, Melamed, Levinger, Lior and Waldman. The Union issued the following rabbinic judgement:

According to Torah law, it is a positive commandment to move to the Land of Israel, to settle there, to conquer it and to take possession of it ... Any directive to cancel out Jewish settlements in the land of Israel is both a sin and bad counsel, and this is the Rabbinic opinion, of Rabbis in the Land of Israel and in the United States, against the Oslo accords.¹⁷

Ironically, Orthodox Jewry had earlier designated Zionism 'bad counsel'.

The Union presented its opposition to the Oslo Accords as a *pikuach nefesh* ('threat to life'), a principle of Jewish law which abrogated many others. In a 1994 address to the Union, former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapira argued that it was sinful to relinquish land given by God to Jews. The successor of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook as head of the *Merkaz HaRav*, Shapira deviated fundamentally from the Kooks who had insisted that the secular leaders of Zionism were acting on behalf of God. The secular leaders, now, were 'bad counsellors', 'traitors', etc. He went on,

There are Jews that agree to the goyim's claim that we are thieves ... Unfortunately, many of these Jews are part of the government ... They don't believe in the Tenach and claim that the book of Joshua which describes how Joshua conquered Eretz Yisrael, should be expunged from the Tenach that is taught in the schools ... [In contrast we are] observant G-d fearing Jews that keep the whole Torah, oral and written, from beginning to end. We are willing to sacrifice our lives for every single Jewish custom. Thus we cannot agree to forgo even one square inch of our holy land.¹⁸

At its meeting of 11 November 1993, a couple of months after the Oslo Declaration of Principles, the Union of Rabbis issued a binding rabbinic judgement based on *halakhah*, that,

According to the laws of the Torah, it is forbidden to relinquish the political rights of sovereignty and national ownership over any part of historic Eretz Yisrael to another authority or people. All of historic Eretz Yisrael which is now in our possession belongs to the entire Jewish people past, present and future, and therefore no one in any generation can give away that to which he does not have title. Therefore any agreement to do so is null and void, obligates no one, has no legal or moral force whatsoever.¹⁹

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that Oliver Cromwell, that serial genocidist and war criminal, and the Patron Saint of Ethnic Cleansing, justifying the brutality of his conquest, wrote from Ireland to an estranged friend in 1650: 'be not offended at the manner of God's working. Perhaps no other way was left. What if God accepted their zeal as he did that of Phineas whom reason might have called before a jury.' Carlyle, Letter 118 (to Lord Wharton: 1 Jan 1650).

¹⁷ Samuel C Heilman, 'Guides of the Faithful: Contemporary Religious Zionist Rabbis', in R. Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised. Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 328-62, p. 347.

¹⁸ Heilman, 'Guides', p. 349.

¹⁹ Heilman, 'Guides', pp. 350-51.

The Union supported the continuation of protests, demonstrations, and strikes within the framework of the law, to educate the masses about the falseness of this 'peace', and prevent the government from carrying out damaging policies.²⁰ The Rabin government saw in the statement a clarion-call to insurrection.

Rabbi Schlomo Goren (1917-94), Rabbi Shapira's predecessor as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi (1973-83) also typified the fusion of Orthodoxy and politics, calling on soldiers to disobey any orders they might receive to dismantle Jewish settlements. Already in 1967, Chief army chaplain Goren wrote to General Uzi Narkiss, requesting permission to use the heat of battle as a screen to blow up the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque on the 'Temple Mount', on which he later promised to build a synagogue.²¹ He had leaflets distributed to synagogues throughout the Occupied Territories on 18 December 1993 reiterating that Jews had a God-given right to the biblical land of Israel. Denying that he was inciting rebellion, he justified his action:

Any other orders contradictory to the orders of Moses [are] a rebellion against Moses, against the Torah, against Judaism. There does not exist any kind of rebellion if the refusal is based on obeying the laws of Moses (Derek Brown, *The Guardian*, 20 December 1993).

Goren also wrote that Yasser Arafat deserved death (from David Landau's Obituary of Rabbi Goren, *The Guardian*, 22 November 1994).

The Union of Rabbis contended in May 1994 that the government-PLO agreements were creating an atmosphere of civil war, and called for protests against 'the criminal act of signing this agreement.' In July 1995, the most definitive rabbinic ruling, handed down by Rabbi Shapira and fourteen of his associates on the executive, decreed that 'there was a prohibition from the Torah to evacuate [army] camps and transfer the location into the authority of Gentiles.' This call to soldiers to disobey the orders of the state brought an immediate response from President Weizman, who said that the ruling could invalidate the foundations of the state. Clearly these rabbis had gone beyond the 'Kookist' doctrine that the army and the government were holy instruments of God's will.

Debate raged in religious settler circles, including Ramat Gan's Bar Ilan University, as to whether Rabin was a *rodef* (one who puts the life of a Jew in danger, and who may legitimately be killed), or a *moysen* (one who hands Jews over to their enemies, and must be punished). Ya'akov Ariel, chief rabbi of Ramat Gan, concluded that Rabin was an 'indirect *rodef*', whom it was permissible to hurt, if doing so prevented danger. However, he judged that it would not (*Hatzofeh*, 31 December 1993). Rabin's killer, Yigal Amir, former student at the *hesder yeshiva* in Kerem Beyavneh, army veteran, and student at Bar Ilan, professed that the law permitted him to kill the

Prime Minister. He sat through his trial with an eerie calm self-confidence, and a self-satisfied grin that perplexed most TV viewers. Amir's action was doubly reprehensible in that it involved a Jew killing another Jew: 'It was so abhorrent, so unbelievable, so much against our ethos, our tradition and our values ...'²² However, there were precedents for Jew slaying Jew, in the late biblical period,²³ the pre-state period,²⁴ and after the foundation of the state.²⁵

Speculation was rife that, despite his statement to the contrary, the assassin had not acted alone. There was 'moral complicity' in the murder, or, as Rabin's widow claims, at least an 'intellectual conspiracy'.²⁶ Moreover, people wondered which rabbi had given Amir the green light: a headline in *Yediot Aharonot* (17 November 1995) read, 'Provide for yourself a rabbi and acquire for yourself a gun,' satirising a well-known talmudic adage.²⁷ Moreover, Muli Peleg argues that there was a direct connection between the ideology and practices of *Gush Emunim* and the murder of the Premier,²⁸ while Michael

²² Moshe Raviv, *Israel at Fifty: Five Decades of Struggle for Peace* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p. 257.

²³ Matthias slaughtered a Jew offering sacrifice on the altar in Modein (1 Macc 2.23-24).

²⁴ After the Sixth Zionist Congress (1903) voted in favour of accepting the offer of Uganda, a Russian Jewish student fired two pistol shots at Max Nordau, exclaiming, 'Death to Nordau, the East African' (Martin Gilbert, *Israel. A History*, London/New York: Doubleday, 1998, p. 22). Other murders of Jews by Jews followed. On 24 June 1924, the Haganah murdered Israel de Haan, the ultra-Orthodox leader, who was about to persuade the British government that the Orthodox Jewish community in Palestine should not be under the authority of the secular Jewish institutions of the Jewish National Council. Moreover, Chaim Arlosoroff, the Mapai leader in Palestine, whose proposed deal with the Nazis led the Revisionists to portray him as a collaborator, was murdered on 16 June 1933—three Revisionist suspects were acquitted of the assassination. Again, during the underground struggle against the British, the Irgun and Stern Gang killed suspected Jewish informers. Also, on 25 November 1940, the Haganah sank the *Patria* off Haifa, as it was preparing to receive the transfer of illegal immigrants, drowning more than 250 Jewish refugees.

²⁵ On 20 June 1948, Ben-Gurion ordered the confiscation of an assignment of weapons destined for the Irgun, from the ship *Altalena*. In the ensuing exchange of fire two Israeli soldiers and six Irgunists were killed. The boat sailed southward toward Tel Aviv, where Menachem Begin boarded it the following morning, broadcasting from the ship that army snipers had been given orders to assassinate him. Ben-Gurion demanded that the arms be turned over to the officials of the state. The Irgunists on board opened fire on the troops on the beach, who returned it, setting the ship ablaze. Most of those on board swam ashore, but among the forty Irgunists killed was one who had been charged with the murder of Arlosoroff (Gilbert, *Israel*, pp. 211-12). There was a real prospect of an inter-Jewish war between the State and the Irgunists before the Irgun capitulated on 20 September 1948. In 1957, three right-wing Israelis murdered government official Rudolph Kastner, accused of collaboration with the Nazis in wartime Hungary—the first assassination of a Jew by a Jew in the history of the state—and in 1982, Yohan Avrushmi threw a grenade into a Peace Now rally, killing Emil Grunweig.

²⁶ Leah Rabin, *Rabin: Our Life, His Legacy* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1997). Margalit Har-Shefi, a Bar-Ilan student and friend of Amir, was convicted in June 1998 of failing to inform the police of Amir's murderous intentions. He had boasted to her that he would murder Rabin to stop the 'peace process' and the 'handing over' of land to the Palestinians. She was acquitted of a second charge of aiding and abetting him to obtain arms illegally.

²⁷ Heilman 1997: 352.

²⁸ Muli Peleg, *Lehafitz et Za'am Hael* ('Spreading the Wrath of God') (Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1997).

²⁰ Heilman, 'Guides', p. 351.

²¹ Robert I Friedman, *Zealots for Zion. Inside Israel's West Bank Settlement Movement* (New York: Random House, 1992), pp. 125-26.

Karpin contends that there was a formal connection between the leadership of the right wing in the Knesset, the *Yesha* council of settlers, and an alliance of extremists who explicitly preached hatred, anti-Arab racism and violence.²⁹

In December 1995, The Union of Rabbis issued another reminder that withdrawal from the Occupied Territories was a sin, and placed the Jewish people in mortal danger (*pikuach nefesh*). Opposition between the rabbis and the state grew, to a point where just before his death in December 1995, Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neria, the former head of the *K'far Haroeh yeshiva* high-school, who had received the Israel Prize in 1990, urged a change in the standard prayer for the State of Israel recited in synagogues world-wide: instead of praying for the protection of its leaders, the text should invite Jews to pray for protection from its leaders.³⁰

Moderate Israeli public opinion was shocked by a report on Channel 1 of Israel TV (9 August 1996) showing three high-school girls who admired Yigal Amir, Rabin's assassin. Although the Education Minister described them as only 'weeds', Dr Nilly Keren's research illustrates that such a judgement is not altogether inconsistent with the world view and extremist ideas of children in the Israeli educational system, particularly in the religious sector. Moreover, a few months before the assassination of Premier Rabin, an Israeli army radio station broadcast a report by a teacher that some students in their examination papers had added slogans like, 'Death to Rabin', and 'Death to Peres' (Josef Algazy, *Ha'aretz* 15 August 1996).

The Embrace of the canonical Zionist narrative

While the more strident wing of religious Zionism espouses views that offend the pious ears of religious Jews who rejoice in Western education, usually in the US, the more 'cultivated' and less 'extreme' exponents of religious Zionism in Israel today construct a discourse which has two outstanding features. In the first place, it clothes the Zionist enterprise in the garment of piety, and in the second, it propagates its discourse without making any reference to the ethnic

cleansing imperative of the Zionist enterprise, carried out with ruthless efficiency in 1948, in conformity with its aspirations and planning since the mid 1930, at latest, during which the first of three Population Transfer Committees were established by the Zionist leadership within the Yishuv.

The lines along which the 'cultivated' Religious Zionist proceeds can be gauged from my own experience while researching in Jerusalem. On 6 March 1997, I attended the Tantur Public Lecture on 'The Future of Religious Zionism' by the Jewish philosopher, Professor David Hartman. After a more than fulsome *captatio benevolentiae*—how honoured he was to be chaired by his friend, the Rector of Tantur; how indebted he was to his Jesuit teachers and Fordham, etc.—Hartman got down to business and gave a dazzling exegesis on the theme of covenant, from the Bible through the Rabbis to Zionism. God had made the covenant of land with Abram and the children of Israel. Rabbinic Judaism engaged with the question of living out the terms of the covenant on a day-to-day basis. And then, for the climax which the evolving rhetoric promised: Zionism was 'the high point of biblical covenantal spirituality'. That all of this was being said in illegally annexed Jerusalem, overlooking a checkpoint preventing Bethlehemites from going to Jerusalem, and across the valley from Gabal Abu Ghneim (Har Homa) which was right then being denuded of its forest for a Jews-only settlement, to play its part in the encirclement of Jerusalem. This was one particular mode of expression of the typical religious Zionist narrative, in its 'cultivated' tone.

After the tea-break the audience reconvened for questions. The first was from a professor of Scripture in a catholic seminary in the US—full of praise—and the second equally admiring one was from a Protestant professor of history in a German university, who, I knew from many conversations with her, was so filled with guilt that one might have concluded that she held herself personally responsible for the killing of each of the six million Jews in the Nazi reign of terror. The third question was from a Palestinian peace activist who asked about sharing the land, alluding in particular to the destruction of Gabal Abu Ghneim. The answer was not altogether satisfactory. My journal continues:

I made the fourth intervention, to the effect that in being brought through the stages of understanding of the covenant, from the Bible to Rabbinic Judaism, I was enchanted, and much appreciative. However, I was shocked to hear Zionism described as 'the high point of covenantal spirituality'. Zionism, as I saw it, both in its rhetoric and in its practice, was not an ideology of sharing, but one of displacing. I was shocked, therefore, that what others might see as an example of 19th century colonial plunder was being clothed in the garment of spirituality.

Visibly shaken, Professor Hartman thanked me for my question, and set about putting the historical record straight. The real problem was that the Arabs had not welcomed Jews back to their homeland. Moreover, the displacement of the Arabs was never intended, but was forced on the Zionist

²⁹ Karpin presented his case in a 60-minute film ('The Road to Rabin Square') on Israeli Channel 2's *Fact* programme on 13 May 1997. It included footage of demonstrators chanting 'Rabin is a traitor, a murderer', with Netanyahu, Sharon and others rousing the crowd, and portrayals of Rabin in the uniform of a SS officer and as a dog, and footage of demonstrators leaping up and down shouting, 'Death to Rabin', and burning posters reading 'The Traitor', with a bullseye over his face. Netanyahu is shown pausing in his speech at one Jerusalem rally, while the chant, 'Rabin is a traitor' grew louder. Karpin submits that the current Israeli Justice Minister, Tzahi Hanegbi was the Likud's operations officer against Rabin, who made links with religious and other extremists. He submits that Netanyahu and MKs Michael Eitan of Likud and Hanan Porat of the NRP—both of whom express regret and accept a share of responsibility for not ousting extremists from the protest camp—sat on the Knesset's right-wing political directorate. After his visit to Yigal Amir's parents, Karpin shows his mother saying that 'Gali was just the messenger' of God's will, and using *gematria* to argue that a passage in the book of Job foretells the advent of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the leftist parties of Labour, Meretz and Rabin himself. The passage, she claims, shows that Rabin 'will die, like this is his destiny.' A fifteen-minute segment of Karpin's work, focusing on the incitement of American Jewish extremists was not shown in Israel.

³⁰ In Heilman 1997: 352.

leadership by the attack by the Arab armies in 1948. Nevertheless, great developments in history sometimes require initial destruction: consider how the USA had defeated totalitarianism, although this was preceded by the displacement of the Indians—the no omelette without breaking an egg rhetoric.³¹

People of Professor Hartman's ilk are wheeled out at any number of colloquia organised by Christians.³² They are intelligent, very well-educated, and most important of all they know how to comport themselves with Western audiences. They flatter their hosts, and set about immediately to captivate their audience. Not surprisingly, they are listened to with not only respect, but almost with a certain awe. Anyone of a mind to ask a hard question is easily intimidated: to do so is akin to violating a sanctuary of almost sacral rhetoric. When someone dares to violate the Grand Silence the response invariably takes the form of evading the hard truths, or positively denying the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian Arabs in 1948, and the Zionist intention to do so from the beginning. The failure to face up to the facts of 1948, and to the ethnocentric nature of the whole Zionist project, is a feature also of mainstream Western discourse, and is particularly prominent in both academic and Church circles.

What is very striking about the affirmation of the State of Israel on the part of liberal Western thinkers is the total absence of any engagement with the underside of the creation of the state. Invariably, commentators altogether bypass the moral problem of the ethnic-cleansing of Palestine in their own lifetime. One detects in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, in particular, virtually unconditional support for the State of Israel, irrespective of the foundational injustice its establishment visited on the indigenous Arab population of Palestine and the challenges to international legality and human rights its behaviour since offers. Indeed, some participants in the Jewish-Christian dialogue continue to propagate the core ingredients of the canonical Zionist narrative, even when scholarship has long since invalidated them.

Moreover, those who dissent from the prevailing presuppositions of this rather carefully-controlled dialogue, or who contradict its political analysis and preoccupations are excluded, and no effort is spared to ensure that their voice of protest does not disturb the ideological harmony of the discourse, or break its *Grand Silence* on the intentions and effects of Political Zionism. Methods used include attempts to discredit their persons, the intimidation of potential publishers, and the orchestration of *post factum* objection to their pronouncements and publications.

Invariably, alas, such censors seldom address the substantive issues raised in the critiques of Political Zionism, as would be customary in normal discourse, but merely protest at any criticism of Israel. It is surely a service to truth to unmask untruths and injustices. Unless the dialogue addresses rather more carefully than hitherto the moral problematic of the Zionist enterprise the noble ideal of interfaith discourse might become little better than 'a monologue in two voices', with the unenviable additional characteristic that the monologue is also dependent upon a distortion of historical truth and a denial of natural justice.

Conclusion

The process of graduating from being an altogether secular enterprise in the spirit of 19th European settler colonialism to becoming a sacred one demands engagement with a number of significant realities and assumptions that have considerable implications. These relate not only to questions of historical truth, but also to significant theological ones concerning nothing less than the moral integrity of God. In blunt terms, and confining my remarks in the first instance to the Bible: is the God of the Bible, or of some of its narratives at least, a militaristic, ethnocentric, ethnic-cleanser whose morality would not embrace even conformity with the Fourth Geneva Convention, or the variety of Human Rights protocols that set limits to barbarism? Ought not the worshippers of such a god have to face into some hard questions about the moral integrity of the divinity.

Related questions arise about the nature of the biblical narrative. In simple terms, does every occurrence of verbs in the past tense imply that the narrative is essentially history, as we broadly understand that term as giving insight into the period described in the narrative? And, is every use of the future tense in the biblical narrative indicative of prophetic texts which will be fulfilled in a literalist way in our present, or in some future? Christian Zionists, and many evangelical Christians, would answer both questions affirmatively. As well as presenting moral problems, such predispositions in reading the biblical text conflict with general principles of literary criticism, and ignore critical evidence. I comment elsewhere on current developments in biblical scholarship, that make a simplistic reading of the biblical narrative unsustainable, not only on moral grounds, but on grounds of literary criticism also.³³

Then there is the whole panoply of questions about the way in which the variety of Jewish historical experience has been manipulated into a Zionist framework.

³¹ See further, my 'Studying the Bible in the Holy Land', in Prior (ed.), *They Came and They Saw. Western Christian Experiences of the Holy Land* (London, Melisende, 2000), pp. 104-27.

³² E.g., The Second Colloquium of Jesuits in Jewish-Christian Dialogue Colloquium held in Jerusalem (27 June-2 July 2000), at which Rabbi David Hartman lectured on 'Israel: the Rebirth of a People'. Nowhere in the text is there any reference to the consequential death of another people. There is no mention of Palestinian displacement, and no question of covenantal sharing: theologically, Jerusalem is for Jews only, as is the land. What some might find shocking is that invariably such ethnocentric views are not questioned.

³³ For further discussion on reinterpreting the biblical evidence, and on the relevant literary and historical questions concerning the Patriarchal Narratives, the Pentateuchal Narratives, and the Israelite Conquest-Settlement Narratives, see Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism. A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 216-52 and pp. 253-86 for comments on 'Towards a Moral Reading of the Bible'. See also Prior, 'A Moral Reading of the Bible in Jerusalem', in Thomas L Thompson with the collaboration of Salma Khadra Jayyusi (eds), *Jerusalem in Ancient History and Tradition* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), pp. 16-45.