

## **Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?**

### **Part 3. The Political Consequences of Christian Zionism**

I want to highlight six ways in which Christian Zionist theology has been translated into political action: blessing Israel; facilitating Jewish emigration; supporting the settlement programme; lobbying for international recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; funding the rebuilding of the Temple; and opposing the peace process, exacerbating relations with the Arab world and hastening Armageddon.

<b>Theology</b>	<b>Politics</b>
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

*The correlation between Christian Zionist theology and politics*

#### **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% believe 'the biblical mandate for Christians is to support the State of Israel.'<sup>1</sup> This is expressed in a variety of ways:

## 1.1 Standing with Israel

Based on Isaiah 40, Christian Zionists see their role as obeying God's command to, 'comfort, comfort my people, says your God.' This is interpreted as standing with Israel and defending her when criticised or attacked.

In October 2000, for example, just days after Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Haram Al-Sharif, which it appears was deliberately timed to undermine the government of Barak for negotiating with Arafat over a shared Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> 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*

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Prior, op.cit., p143.

<sup>2</sup> 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).

*survival of Israel in this dark hour be irrevocable. Now is the time for Christians to stand by Israel.'*<sup>3</sup>

## **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 hegemony. The 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 Saddam Hussein, the US has significantly increased its influence in the Middle East. At the same time there has been an increase in the impact of the pro-Israeli lobby. As a consequence, the Middle East, and Israel in particular, has become central to US foreign policy, not least because of the al Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington.

In 1980, the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, was founded with the purpose of coordinating '*direct political lobbying activities in cooperation with the Israeli government.*'<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 'Open Letter to Evangelical Christians from Jews for Jesus: Now is the Time to Stand with Israel.' The New York Times, 23 October (2000).

<sup>4</sup> Wagner, Anxious., op.cit., p107.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p108.

At the February 1991 National Prayer Breakfast, Ed McAteer, President of the Religious Roundtable, launched the Christian Israel Public Affairs Committee (CIPAC), which was modelled on the powerful American Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which for over twenty years has lobbied on behalf of the right-wing Israeli Likud party.<sup>6</sup> The goals of CIPAC were identical to AIPAC but are also motivated by dispensational Christian Zionism. One of the first objectives of CIPAC was to lobby the Congress to make \$10 billion available in US loan guarantees to fund the resettlement of Jews from the former Soviet Union in Israel and the West Bank. The Bush administration linked the loan guarantees to the halting of Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Jan Willem van der Hoeven of the ICEJ told the *Jerusalem Post*, the '*Christian community finds the Bush administration's policy on loan guarantees totally unacceptable.*' He claimed that 80% of America's evangelical Christians supported the loan guarantees.<sup>7</sup>

The Unity Coalition for Israel (UCFI) founded in 1994, comprises a broad coalition of 200 different and autonomous Jewish and Christian organisations representing 40 million members who are 'dedicated to a secure Israel.'<sup>8</sup> Their principal strategy is to lobby the US media and political establishment, to challenge what they term '*disinformation and propaganda*' and to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p108.

<sup>7</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, 11 October (1991), cited in Wagner, op.cit., p108.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.israelunitycoalition.com>

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.

This coalition has a significant influence in both the Republican and Democratic parties, providing a large proportion of campaign funding to both sides. Ten years ago, Aluf Ben, Diplomatic Editor of the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* claimed *'60 percent of all financial help to Democrats came from Jewish sources.'*<sup>9</sup> According to the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, *'most pro-Israel fund-raisers estimate that at least 60 to 90 percent of Democratic campaign funding comes from Jewish sources, which also supply perhaps 40 percent of Republican funding.'*<sup>10</sup> I assume both statistics are referring to individual campaign donations and include both pro-Israeli Christians as well as Jews.

According to Zev Chafets, writing in the New York Times,

*"In the last eight years alone, an estimated 400,000 born-again donors have sent Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein about a quarter of a billion dollars for Jewish causes of his personal choosing. No Jew since Jesus has commanded this kind of gentile following."*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Israel Shahak, "Ability of US Jewish Groups to set Clinton Agenda Depends on Media." *Washington Report*, June 1995, pp10, 94.

<sup>10</sup> Publisher's Page, *Washington Report*, June 1995, pp122.

<sup>11</sup> Zev Chafets, "The Rabbi Who Loved Evangelicals (and Vice Versa)" Published: July 24, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/24/magazine/24RABBI.html?ex=1279857600&en=39611e7736234493&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss>

The power of the pro-Israeli lobby, which ensures Israel continues to receive billions of dollars 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 them in public. During the Gulf War, he enraged the Israeli lobby by pressurising Israel not to retaliate against Iraqi attacks and by promising 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.'*<sup>12</sup>

Michael Lind points out that the pro-Israeli lobby was 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.'*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lind, op.cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

With the formation of the UCFI 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 pilgrimages and educational tours to the Holy Land.

## **2. Restorationism : Facilitating Aliyah from the Former Soviet Union**

With the fall of Communism in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Eastern Europe, 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, director of the Good News Travels Bus Company, based in Hull, England, Exobus was formed for the purpose of facilitating the transportation of Jews from the FSU to Israel. The first Exobus team was sent to the Ukraine in 1991 and since then they have assisted over 56,000 Jewish people to emigrate to Israel in close cooperation with the Jewish Agency. Exobus is now probably the largest Christian agency facilitating aliyah, comprising 80 team members, drawn from 13 countries and operating 40 vehicles. Exobus transports approximately 1,200

Jews overland from 16 different bases in the FSU each month.<sup>14</sup>

The main financial support for Exobus comes from a sister agency, Christians for Israel International, who promote Exobus in the US.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> ICEJ Russian team members are especially active in the more remote regions of the FSU. Like Exobus, the ICEJ and Bridges for Peace describe their ministry in terms of 'fishing' for Jews, based on Jeremiah 16:16. 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 while their applications are processed by the Jewish Agency in the larger Russian cities.<sup>17</sup> 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, if needed.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.christiansforisrael.org>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia Golan, 'On Wings of Faith' Jerusalem Post, 20 December 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Wagner, op.cit., p108; Golan, op.cit.

### **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.

At the Third International Christian Zionist Congress, for example, held in Jerusalem in February 1996 under the auspices of ICEJ, some 1,500 delegates from over 40 countries unanimously affirmed a proclamation and affirmation of Christian Zionism including the following beliefs,

*“The Lord in His zealous love for Israel and the Jewish People blesses and curses peoples and judges nations based upon their treatment of the Chosen People of Israel.... According to God's distribution of nations, the Land of Israel has been given to the Jewish People by God as an everlasting possession by an eternal covenant. The Jewish People have the absolute right to possess and dwell in the Land, including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan.”<sup>19</sup>*

Christian Zionists therefore invariably oppose the dismantling of the Jewish settlements in Gaza and the Palestinian Territories. This conviction that the entire West Bank is integral to Israel has led many Christian Zionists to ‘adopt’ exclusive Jewish settlements to strengthen their claim to the land.

## **Adopting the Settlements**

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.'*<sup>20</sup>

So far, CFOIC's 'progress meter' shows that 39 illegal Israeli settlements have been adopted by 50 denominational as well as independent churches in the USA, South Africa, Germany, Holland and the Philippines.

## **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.<sup>21</sup> ICEJ's 'Bulletproof Bus for Efrat' appeal, for example, is also raising \$150,000 to purchase an armour plated bus to transport settlers in and out of the West

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1 <sup>19</sup> *International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation*, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February 1996.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.cfoic.com>

Bank from Efrat settlement.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

The effect of the pro-Israeli lobby on American foreign policy concerning the settlements appears to be working. Lind observes that during the Carter administration, the settlements were regarded as 'illegal'; under Reagan they became an 'obstacle' to peace; while now they have simply become a 'complicating factor.'<sup>24</sup>

#### **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.

Senator Bob Dole later introduced legislation in the American Senate which required the US Embassy to be rebuilt in Jerusalem

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<sup>21</sup> Wagner, Anxious, op.cit., p108.

<sup>22</sup> International Christian Embassy, 'Bulletproof Bus for Efrat' appeal, Word from Jerusalem, May (2002).

<sup>23</sup> Bridges for Peace, 'New Life on the Farm' Despatch from Jerusalem, January (2000), p5.

<sup>24</sup> Lind, op.cit.

by 31 May 1999, and authorised \$100 million for 'preliminary' spending.<sup>25</sup> 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.'*<sup>26</sup> Lamenting the failure of the US President to ratify the Senate decision, Dole commented:

*'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.'*<sup>27</sup>

In 1992, the ICEJ sponsored various receptions marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what they referred to as the 'Reunification of Jerusalem.'<sup>28</sup> In 1996, at the International Christian Zionist Congress, this position was reiterated when the 1,500 participants signed a declaration insisting:

*'Because of the sovereign purposes of God for the City, Jerusalem must remain undivided, under Israeli sovereignty, open to all peoples, the capital of Israel only, and all nations should so concur and place their embassies here ... the truths of God are sovereign and it is written that the Land which He promised to His People is not to be partitioned.'*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 'Bill to re-locate the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem', <http://www.usdoj.gov/olc/s770.16.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Middle East Realities 'Lie of the Week' MiddleEast@aol.com, 01/11/95

<sup>27</sup> Donald Neff, 'Congress has been irresponsible on the issue of Jerusalem', Washington Report, January (1998), pp90-91.

<sup>28</sup> International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (Jerusalem, ICEJ, 1993), p24.

<sup>29</sup> 'International Christian Zionist Congress Proclamation' International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem. 25-29 February (1996).

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 support Israel's efforts to reach reconciliation with its Arab neighbors, but we believe that Jerusalem, or any portion of it, shall not be negotiable in the peace process. Jerusalem must remain undivided as the eternal capital of the Jewish people.'*<sup>30</sup>

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.'*<sup>31</sup>

However, even more critical to a Christian Zionist reading of prophecy is the necessity for the Jewish Temple to be rebuilt.

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<sup>30</sup> 'Christians Call for a United Jerusalem' *New York Times*, 18 April (1997), <http://www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/united.html>

## 5. The Temple : Identifying with Religious Zionism

Contemporary Christian Zionists have been active in assisting Jewish organisations dedicated to rebuilding the Jewish Temple by publicizing the Temple Mount organisations; searching for the Temple site; facilitating the building programme; breeding the red heifers and funding the Treasury. 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 and addresses of all the Jewish organisations involved in facilitating the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple.<sup>32</sup> Gershon Salomon is the controversial figurehead of the movement and founder of The Temple Faithful 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.'*<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Randall Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple*, (Eugene, Oregon, Harvest House, 1999), pp616-644; Randall Price, 'Time for a Temple? Jewish Plans to Rebuild the Temple.' *Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry* <http://www.foigm.org/img/timetemp.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Nadav Shragai, 'Dreaming of a Third Temple', *Ha'aretz*, 17 September (1998), p3, cited in Price, *Coming*, op.cit., p417.

Sam Kiley writing in *The Times*, however, gives another perspective. He claims Salomon represents the ‘almost acceptable face of millennial cults.’ In an 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.’<sup>34</sup>*

According to Grace Halsell, between 1967 and 1990 there have been over 100 armed assaults on the Haram Al-Sharif by Jewish militants, often led by rabbis. She regrets that ‘in no instance has any Israeli Prime Minister or the chief Sephardic rabbi or the chief Ashkenazi rabbi criticized these assaults.’<sup>35</sup> However, even if Jewish and Christian Zionists are successful in destroying the Al Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock, one of the unresolved difficulties they would still face is deciding where to rebuild the Jewish Temple.

### **Facilitating the Building Programme**

In order to sustain a fully functioning Temple rather than simply creates a tourist attraction or museum, it is also necessary to identify, train and consecrate priests to serve in the Temple. The dilemma facing prospective priests is how to become ritually pure before they can offer sacrifices for others. According to the Book

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<sup>34</sup> Sam Kiley, ‘The righteous will survive and the rest will perish’ *The Times*, 13 December (1999), p39.

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 perpetually unclean ever since. The search for the ashes of the last red heifer have so far proved unsuccessful. 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.<sup>36</sup> According to *Newsweek*, in 1997, the first red heifer for 2000 years was born at the Kfar Hassidim kibbutz near Haifa and named 'Melody'.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> As Lawrence

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<sup>35</sup> Grace Halsell, 'The Hidden Hand of the Temple Mount Faithful' *The Washington Report*, January (1991), p8.

<sup>36</sup> 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*, op.cit., p375. 'Red Heifers' *New York Times*, 27 December (1998), cited in Halsell, *Forcing*, p65.

'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, April 6, (1997), pp1, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Kendall Hamilton, Joseph Contreras & Mark Dennis, 'The Strange Case of Israel's Red Heifer,' *Newsweek*, May 19, (1997).

<sup>38</sup> Jeremy Shere, 'A Very Holy Cow' *Jerusalem Post*, May 25, (1997).

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.*'<sup>39</sup>

## **6. The Future : Opposing Peace and Hastening Armageddon**

The hostility Christian Zionists show towards any compromise over sharing the Land, or Jerusalem, or the holy sites, makes for an ominous future, not least because of the inherent pessimism of their eschatology.

### **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 offered a simple explanation. God has been kind to America because '*America had been kind to the Jew.*'<sup>40</sup>

Mike Evan's is the Director and Founder of the *Jerusalem Prayer Team*. The JPT is made up of over 300 church leaders including Tim LaHaye, Anne Graham Lotz, Pat Robertson, Pat Boone, John Hagee and Bill McCartney who are committed "*to guard, defend and protect the Jewish people and Eretz Yisrael until Israel is*

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<sup>39</sup> Lawrence Wright, 'Forcing the End', Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/readings/forcing.html>

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Halsell, Forcing, op.cit., p100.

secure.” In 1980, Evans wrote a book, *Israel, America’s Key to Survival*, in which he claimed,

*‘Only one nation, Israel, stands between ... terrorist aggression and the complete decline of the United States as a democratic world power... God is going to bless America and Israel as well ... If Israel falls, the United States can no longer remain a democracy ... Arab money is being used to control and influence major US Corporations, making it economically more and more difficult for the United States to stand against world terrorism.’<sup>41</sup>*

Mike Evans has caused an even bigger splash with his latest offering, *The American Prophecies*. It reached the *New York Times* bestseller list three weeks before publication. How? Evan’s emails his supporters asking them to buy three copies from the leading suppliers and mail them back to him to give away. Apparently enough of them complied and it is now the number one five-star reviewed Christian book on Amazon.com. This may give you a clue as to why.

*“Is America in prophecy? Yes, it is. As a Middle East analyst and minister who has worked closely with leaders in that region for decades, I tended to be sceptical of attempts to come up with schemes to plug America into prophetic interpretations. I have often referred to such teachers as "Pop Prophecy Peddlers." But, after thousands of hours of research, I am totally convinced that America is found in prophecy, and I believe you will, too, after reading [my] book.”<sup>42</sup>*

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<sup>41</sup> Mike Evans, *Israel, America’s Key to Survival*, (Plainfield, New Jersey, Haven Books, 1980), back page, xv.

<sup>42</sup> Mike D. Evans, *The American Prophecies: Ancient Scriptures reveal our nation’s future* (New York, Warner, 2004), pp. 5-7.

Amazon's editorial review observes that actual quotes from Scripture are rather sparse.<sup>43</sup> But controversially, Evans goes on to claim

*September 11 would never have happened if America had fought the same bigotry in the 1990's rather than trying to appease it. Millions of Jews would be living today if anti-Semitism had not been ignored in the 1920s and 1930s. The Great Depression, as well as other American tragedies, happened because of America's pride and challenge to God Almighty's plan.*<sup>44</sup>

For Christian Zionists such as John Hagee and Mike Evans, America is seen as the great redeemer, her super-power role in the world predicted in scripture<sup>45</sup> and providentially ordained.<sup>46</sup> Critics warn of the danger of this kind of logic for its, '*dualistic, Manichaeian view of global politics. America and Israel together against an evil world.*'<sup>47</sup>

## 6.2 Antipathy Toward Arabs

Christian Zionists, while lovers of Israel, rarely show the same

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<sup>43</sup> Gail Hudson, Editorial Review, Amazon, <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/044652252X/103-5325893-4368626?v=glance&n=283155> [Accessed August 2006]

<sup>44</sup> Evans, *The American Prophecies*, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Noah Hutchings, *U.S. in Prophecy*, (Oklahoma City, Hearthstone Publishing, 2000); Arno Froese, *Terror in America, Understanding the Tragedy*, (West Columbia, Olive Press, 2001); Mark Hitchcock, *Is America in Prophecy?* (Portland, Oregon, Multnomah, 2002); Hal Lindsey, *Where is America in Prophecy?* video (Murrieta, California, Hal Lindsey Ministries, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina, 1993), p197.

<sup>47</sup> Rosemary Reuther & Herman J. Ruether, *The Wrath of Jonah, The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, (San Francisco, Harper, 1989), p176.

feelings toward Arabs, indeed their antipathy is often in inverse proportion to their empathy for Israel. Anti-Arab prejudices and Orientalist stereotypes are common in their writings.<sup>48</sup> For the Orientalist the West is seen as liberal, peaceful, rational and capable of embracing 'real' values, whereas the Middle East is not.

Ramon Bennett illustrates how such prejudices remain common today describing the modern Arab nations as 'barbarous'.<sup>49</sup> '*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.*'<sup>50</sup> Citing John Laffin, Bennett argues that the Arab '*is neither a vicious nor, usually, a calculating liar but a natural one.*'<sup>51</sup>

Franklin Graham, President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, made similar but unguarded remarks in a 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.*'<sup>52</sup>

Michael Lind observes that while anti-Semitism is taboo in America, 'the taboo against anti-Arab bigotry, however, is weak.'

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<sup>48</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, Vintage, 1978); Ramon Bennett, *Philistine, The Great Deception*, (Jerusalem, Arm of Salvation, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> Bennett, op.cit., p23.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p21.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p23; John Laffin, *The Arab Mind*, (London, Cassell, 1975), p70.

<sup>52</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, 16th October (2000).

### 6.3 The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

Dick Arme y, the former Republican Senate leader, made ground breaking news by justifying the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. In an interview with Chris Matthews on CNBC on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2002, Arme y stated that:

*'Most of the people who now populate Israel were transported from all over the world to that land and they made it their home. The Palestinians can do the same and we are perfectly content to work with the Palestinians in doing that. We are not willing to sacrifice Israel for the notion of a Palestinian homeland ... I'm content to have Israel grab the entire West Bank ... There are many Arab nations that have many hundreds of thousands of acres of land, soil, and property and opportunity to create a Palestinian State.'*<sup>53</sup>

Matthews gave Arme y several opportunities to clarify that he was not advocating the ethnic cleansing of all Palestinians from the West Bank, but Arme y was unrepentant. When asked,

*'Have you ever told George Bush, the President from your home State of Texas, that you think the Palestinians should get up and go and leave Palestine and that's the solution?'*,

Arme y replied,

*'I'm probably telling him that right now ... I am content to have Israel occupy that land that it now occupies and to have*

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<sup>53</sup> Dick Arme y, 'Hardball with Chris Matthews', CNBC, 1<sup>st</sup> May (2002), cited in 'Republican Party Leader calls for Ethnic Cleansing of Palestinians on Prime Time Talk Show' The Electronic Intifada, <http://electronicintifada.net/actionitems/020502dickarmey.html>

See also 'Rep. Dick Arme y calls for Ethnic Cleansing of Palestinians' Counterpunch edited by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, <http://www.counterpunch.org/armey0502.html>. Dick Arme y and his family are members of Lewisville Bible Church, Lewisville, Texas.

*those people who have been aggressors against Israel retired to some other arena.*<sup>54</sup>

Armey's view that Palestinians should be 'retired' is only the latest in a series of calls in the mainstream US and UK media for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories.<sup>55</sup>

## **6.4 Opposing the Peace Process**

While Christian Zionists invariably recognise Israel's unilateral claim to the Occupied Territories, they also oppose Palestinian aspirations to self determination since the two are intrinsically incompatible. Many see the peace accords as a betrayal of God's intentions for the Jewish people. *'The peace ... is a false one and there are those who believe its roots are from the evil one.'*<sup>56</sup> In 2003, on his World Net Daily, Hal Lindsey expressed his feelings toward President Bush's involvement in the Middle East Peace Process.

*"I am heartbroken over the latest stage of "the road map to peace." This "Odyssey to Holocaust" ... I was sickened to watch a well-meaning, Christian American president talk incessantly about his vision for a Palestinian and Jewish state living side by side in peace."*<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'Mideast Violence: The Only Way Out', Washington Post, 15 May (2001); Emmanuel A. Winston writing in USA Today called for the 'resettling the Palestinians in Jordan' USA Today, 22 February (2002); John Derbyshire, 'Why don't I care about the Palestinians?', National Review, 9 May (2002); Clarence Wagner, 'Apples for Apples, Osama Bin Laden and Yasser Arafat', Dispatch from Jerusalem, May (2002), p1, 6, 17.

<sup>56</sup> Walter Riggans, 'The Messianic Community and the Hand Shake' Shalom, 1, (1995), including a quote from Benjamin Berger, elder at Kehilat HaMashiach, Jerusalem.

<sup>57</sup> Hal Lindsey, "If the Blind lead the Blind" World Net Daily 5 June 2003, [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=32923](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=32923)

Clarence Wagner of BFP shares this perspective. He is equally dismissive of the peace negotiations:

*'We need to encourage others to understand God's plans, not the man-inspired plans of the UN, the US, the EEC, Oslo, Wye, etc. God is not in any plan that would wrestle the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount area and the Mount of Olives, and give it to the Moslem world. Messiah is not coming back to a Moslem city called Al-Quds, but to the regathered, restored Jewish city of Jerusalem.'*<sup>58</sup>

Peace talks are therefore not only a waste of time, they demonstrate at best a lack of faith and at worst a rebellious defiance toward God's plans.

## **6.5 Forcing God's Hand**

Christian Zionists often attempt to silence critics with the threat of divine retribution. On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002 edition of the CBN 700 Club, Pat Robertson warned that if the US

*'wants to interfere with Bible prophecy and wants to move in and wrest East Jerusalem away from the Jews and give it to Yasser Arafat ... heaven help this nation of ours ... If the United States takes East Jerusalem back and makes it the capital of the Palestinian State, then we are asking for the wrath of God.'*<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Wagner, 'Driving', op.cit., p9.

<sup>59</sup> Howard Mortman, 'Don't ignore Pat Robertson', *The Frontline*, 7 January (2002).  
<http://www.hotlinescoop.com/web/content/columns/extrememortman/020107.htm>

Such pronouncements coming from highly influential Christian leaders appear little different from those of Muslim fundamentalists who call for a ‘*holy war*’ against the West.

At the July 19th, 2006 Washington DC inaugural event for Christians United for Israel, after recorded greeting from George W. Bush, and in the presence of four US Senators as well as the Israeli ambassador to the US, John Hagee stated :

*“The United States must join Israel in a pre-emptive military strike against Iran to fulfill God's plan for both Israel and the West... a biblically prophesied end-time confrontation with Iran, which will lead to the Rapture, Tribulation, and Second Coming of Christ.”<sup>60</sup>*

The danger of such a theology is not so much that it is fatalistic, but that like the ‘chicken little’ story, it appears so contagious.<sup>61</sup>

## **7. The Politics of Christian Zionism: Conclusions**

Clearly, Christian Zionism as a movement has profound and lasting political consequences. Christian Zionists have shown varying degrees of enthusiasm for implementing six basic theological convictions that arise from their literal and futurist reading of the Bible. We have seen how Christian Zionism as a movement has profound and deeply destructive political consequences. Christian Zionists have shown varying degrees of

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<sup>60</sup> Sarah Posner, “Pastor Strangelove” The American Prospect Online, <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.wv?section=root&name=ViewPrint&articleId=11541> <Accessed March 2007>

<sup>61</sup> Dave MacPherson, cited in Halsell, *Forcing*, op.cit., p10.

enthusiasm for implementing six basic theological convictions that arise from their literal and futurist reading of the Bible:

1. The belief that the Jews remain God's chosen people leads Christian Zionists to a justification for Israel's military occupation of Palestine.
2. As God's chosen people, the final restoration of the Jews to Israel is therefore actively encouraged and facilitated through partnerships between Christian organisations and the Jewish Agency.
3. Eretz Israel, as delineated in scripture, belongs exclusively to the Jewish people, therefore the land must be annexed and the settlements adopted and strengthened.
4. Jerusalem is regarded as the eternal and exclusive capital of the Jews, and cannot be shared with the Palestinians. Therefore, strategically, Western governments are placed under pressure by Christian Zionists to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem and thereby recognise the fact.
5. The Third Temple has yet to be built, the priesthood consecrated and sacrifices reinstated. As dispensational Christian Zionists, in particular, believe this is prophesied, they offer varying degrees of support to the Jewish Temple Mount organisations committed to achieving it.
6. Since Christian Zionists are convinced there will be an apocalyptic war between good and evil in the near future, there is no prospect for lasting peace between Jews and Arabs. Indeed, to advocate Israel compromise with Islam or coexist with

Palestinians is to identify with those destined to oppose God and Israel in the imminent battle of Armageddon.

Clearly, not all Christian Zionists embrace each of these six tenets, or with the same degree of conviction or involvement. Nevertheless, as has been argued, the overall consequences of such uncritical support for the State of Israel is inherently and pathologically destructive, both to the future of Israel and the security of the United States.

Dr Gilbert Bilezekian has kindly written this review of my new book, *Zion's Christian Soldiers*. It aptly summarises the stark ramifications of Christian Zionism.

*“Thank God, here comes at last a book that challenges the pseudo-theology which, by giving precedence to the Old Covenant over the New, relegates the Church to the status of concubine in order to make Israel the Bride of Christ. In clear and measured terms, the author demonstrates from Scripture that God's purposes for history are not driven by a narrowly selective racist obsession but rather by his eternal design to create the Church, the new community dearly secured through the cross for all Christ-followers, both Jews and Gentiles.”*

Like Isaac's children Jacob and Esau, it is time to stop fighting over the birthright and start sharing the blessings.<sup>62</sup> Garth Hewitt has written many songs about the plight of the Christian community in Israel and Palestine. One of them, based on some verses from the Jewish Talmud, is called ‘Ten measures of beauty

God gave to the world'. I would like to close by using it as a prayer.

May the justice of God fall down like fire  
and bring a home for the Palestinian.  
May the mercy of God pour down like rain  
and protect the Jewish people.  
And may the beautiful eyes of a Holy God  
who weeps for His children  
Bring the healing hope for His wounded ones  
For the Jew and the Palestinian.

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1 <sup>62</sup>Yehezkel Landau. An illustration given at St George's, Jerusalem, December 1998.