Christian Zionism: Misguided Millennialism

1. The Historical Roots of Christian Zionism

1. Introduction

“Only one nation, Israel, stands between ... terrorist aggression and the complete decline of the United States as a democratic world power... If Israel falls, the United States can no longer remain a democracy. ...Arab money is being used to control and influence major U.S. Corporations, making it economically more and more difficult for the United States to stand against world terrorism.”[1]

Over the next three days we are going to examine the historical roots, the theological basis and political consequences of Christian Zionism. While many would not necessarily recognise themselves as such, nor go as far as Mike Evans in his claims, it is nevertheless assumed by a large proportion of evangelicals in Britain and America that being biblical is synonumous with being pro-Israeli. Dale Crowley, a Washington based religious broadcaster, however, describes this movement as the ‘fastest growing cult in America’:

> ‘It’s not composed of “crazies” so much as mainstream, middle to upper-middle class Americans. They give millions of dollars each week – to the TV evangelists who expound the fundamentals of the cult. They read Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye. They have one goal: to facilitate God’s hand to waft them up to heaven free from all the trouble, from where they will watch Armageddon and the destruction of planet earth.’[2]

1.1 Christian Zionism Defined

Christian Zionism is essentially Christian support for Zionism. Grace Halsell summarises the message of the Christian Zionist in this way: “every act taken by Israel is orchestrated by God,

and should be condoned, supported, and even praised by the rest of us."[3] Whether consciously or otherwise, Christian Zionists subscribe to a religious Jewish agenda best expressed by Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, who claims: 'We should not forget ... that the supreme purpose of the ingathering of exiles and the establishment of our State is the building of the Temple. The Temple is at the very top of the pyramid.'[4] Another rabbi, Yisrael Meida, explains the link between politics and theology within Jewish Zionism: 'It is all a matter of sovereignty. He who controls the Temple Mount, controls Jerusalem. And he who controls Jerusalem, controls the land of Israel.'[5] For the religious Zionist, Jewish or Christian, the three are inextricably linked. The Christian Zionist vision therefore is to work to see all three under exclusive Jewish control since they believe this will lead to blessing for the entire world as nations recognise and respond to what God is seen to be doing in and through Israel. [6]

1.2 The Significance of the Christian Zionist Movement

Dispensational Christian Zionism, which is the dominant form, is pervasive within mainline evangelical, charismatic and independent mega-churches. Crowley claims they are led by 80,000 fundamentalist pastors, their views disseminated by 1,000 Christian radio stations as well as 100 Christian TV stations.[7] Over 250 pro-Israeli organisations were founded in the 1980s alone.[8]

While critics like Dale Crowley claim, 'At least one out of every 10 Americans is a devotee', [9] advocates such as Robertson and Falwell claim the support of 100 million

Americans.[10] Pat Robertson's, Christian Coalition, for example, with an annual budget of $25 million and over 1.7 million members, is 'arguably … the single most influential political organisation in the U.S.'[11]

The National Unity Coalition for Israel, which brings together 200 different Jewish and Christian Zionist organisations including the International Christian Embassy, Christian Friends of Israel and Bridges for Peace, claims a support base of 40 million active members.[12] These leaders and organisations make up a broad coalition which is shaping not only the Christian Zionist agenda but also US foreign policy in the Middle East today.

So where did Christian Zionism come from? This first talk will focus on the historical development of the movement from its small beginnings in 19th Century rural England to its 21st Century power base on Capitol Hill. Tomorrow we will consider the biblical case for Christian Zionism and then on Saturday we will examine its political agenda.

2. The British Roots of Christian Zionism

The genesis of Christian Zionism lies within the Protestant Reformation which brought about a renewed interest in the Old Testament and God's dealings with the Jewish people. From Protestant pulpits right across Europe, the Bible was for the first time in centuries being taught within its historical context and given its plain literal sense. At the same time, a new assessment of the place of the Jews within the purposes of God emerged.

2.1 Puritanism and the Conversion of the Jews

Puritan eschatology was essentially postmillennial and believed the conversion of the Jews would lead to future blessing for the entire world. In 1621, for example, Sir Henry Finch, an eminent

lawyer and member of the English Parliament, published a book entitled, The World's Great Restauration (sic) or Calling of the Jews, (and with them) all the Nations and Kingdoms of the Earth, to the Faith of Christ. By the late 17th Century and right through the 18th Century, especially during the period of the Great Awakening, postmillennial eschatology dominated European and American Protestantism.[13] The writings and preaching of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758),[14] as well as George Whitefield, were influential in the spread of the belief that the millennium had already arrived and the gospel would soon triumph against evil throughout the world. God's blessings of peace and prosperity would follow the conversion of Israel, prior to the glorious return of Christ.[15]

2.2 Adventism and the End of the World

The late 18th and early 19th Centuries saw a dramatic movement away from the optimism of postmillennialism following a sustained period of turmoil on both sides of the Atlantic.[16] There was the American War of Independence (1775-1784), the French Revolution (1789-1793) and then the Napoleonic Wars (1809-1815). In 1804, Louis Napoleon had been crowned Emperor of the Gauls in the reluctant presence of the Pope. In 1807 he plotted the division of Europe with the Czar of Russia and began a blockade of British sea trade with Europe. Two years later he arrested the Pope and annexed the Papal States. He then began the systematic destruction of the Roman Catholic Church in France, seizing its assets, executing priests and exiling the Pope from Rome. By 1815, Napoleon's armies had fought, invaded or subjugated most of Europe and the Middle East, including Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland, Russia, Palestine and Egypt.

Napoleon appointed his brothers as kings of Holland, Naples, Spain and Westphalia in what is today Germany. He even gave his own son the title ‘King of Rome’. His plan was to create a United States of Europe, each state ruled by a compliant monarch, subject to himself as ‘supreme King of Kings and Sovereign of the Roman Empire’.[17] Numerous preachers and commentators speculated on whether Napoleon was indeed the Antichrist.[18] Charles Finney, for example, predicted the imminent end of the world by 1838. In 1835 he speculated that ‘If the church will do all her duty, the Millennium may come in this country in three years.’[19] William Miller narrowed the return of Christ down to the 21st March 1843, while Charles Russell more prudently predicted that Christ would set up his spiritual kingdom in the heavenlies in 1914. For many years, Russell’s popular sermons linking biblical prophecy with contemporary events were reproduced in over 1,500 newspapers in the USA and Canada.[20] This premillennial speculation came to be embraced by mainstream evangelicalism through the influence of J. N. Darby and the Brethren.

2.3 Premillennialism and the Restoration of the Jews

The development of Premillennialism in the 19th Century and the revolution in futurist prophetic speculation concerning the Church and Israel can be largely attributed to Edward Irving[21] and John Nelson Darby together with others associated with a series of prophetic conferences held in England and then Ireland between 1826 and 1833.[22]

On the first day of Advent, 1826, Henry Drummond (1786-1860), a city banker, politician, and High Sheriff of Surrey,

England,[23] opened his home at Albury Park to a select group of some twenty invited guests to discuss matters concerning ‘the immediate fulfilment of prophecy.’[24] Topics included speculation on the fulfilment of biblical prophecy, premillennialism, the imminent return of the Jews to Palestine and the search for the lost tribes of Israel. These conferences continued in the early 1830’s at Powerscourt in Ireland under the growing influence of John Nelson Darby.

2.4 John Nelson Darby and the Rise of Dispensationalism

John Nelson Darby is regarded by many as the father of Dispensationalism. He taught that God has two distinct and separate peoples : the Church his heavenly people and the Jews his earthly people. Darby was a charismatic figure with a dominant personality. He was a persuasive speaker and zealous missionary for his dispensationalist beliefs. From 1862 Darby spent more and more time in North America, making seven journeys in the next twenty years. During these visits, he came to have an increasing influence over evangelical leaders such as James H. Brookes, Dwight L. Moody, William Blackstone and C. I. Scofield. His ideas also helped shape the emerging evangelical Bible Schools and ‘Prophecy’ conferences, which came to dominate Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United States between 1875 and 1920.[25]

3. British Political Support for the Zionist Movement

3.1 Lord Shaftesbury and British Middle East Interests

Zionism would probably have remained simply a religious ideal were it not for the intervention of a handful of influential aristocratic British politicians who came to share the theological convictions of Darby and his colleagues and translated them into

political reality. One in particular, Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885) became convinced that the restoration of the Jews to Palestine was not only predicted in the Bible,[26] but also coincided with the strategic interests of Britain's foreign policy.[27] Ironically, this conviction was precipitated by the actions of an atheist, Napoleon, in the spring of 1799.

During the Syrian campaign of Napoleon's Oriental expedition, in which he sought to defeat the Ottoman rulers, cut off Britain from its Empire, and recreate the empire of Alexander from France to India,[28] he become the first political leader to propose a sovereign Jewish State in Palestine:

> 'Bonaparte, Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the French Republic in Africa and Asia, to the Rightful Heirs of Palestine. Israelites, unique nation, whom, in thousands of years, lust of conquest and tyranny were able to deprive of the ancestral lands only, but not of name and national existence ... She [France] offers to you at this very time, and contrary to all expectations, Israel's patrimony ... Rightful heirs of Palestine ... hasten!'[29]

Napoleon believed that with sympathetic Jews controlling Palestine, French imperial and commercial interests as far as India, Arabia and Africa could be secured.[30] Neither Napoleon nor the Jews were able to deliver. Nevertheless his proclamation 'is a barometer of the extent to which the European atmosphere was charged with these messianic expectations.'[31] The European Powers became increasingly preoccupied with the 'Eastern Question'. Britain and Prussia sided with the Sultan of Turkey against Napoleon. The necessity of preventing French control had led not only to the battles of the Nile and Acre, but also to a British military expedition in Palestine. With the defeat of Napoleon, Britain's main concern was then how to restrain

Russia from similar ambitions.[32] The race was on to control Palestine.[33]

Stirred by memories of the Napoleonic expedition, Lord Shaftesbury argued for a greater British presence in Palestine and saw this could be achieved by the sponsorship of a Jewish homeland on both religious and political grounds.[34] British protection of the Jews, he argued, would give a colonial advantage over France for the control of the Middle East; provide better access to India via a direct land route; and open up new commercial markets for British products.[35]

When Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, married Shaftesbury's widowed mother-in-law, he was 'well placed' to lobby for this cause.[36] His diary for 1st August 1840, Shaftesbury reads:

> 'Dined with Palmerston. After dinner left alone with him. Propounded my scheme which seems to strike his fancy… Palmerston has already been chosen by God to be an instrument of good to His ancient people, to do homage to their inheritance, and to recognize their rights without believing their destiny. It seems he will yet do more.'[37]

Fuelling speculation about an imminent restoration, on 4 November of 1840, Shaftesbury took out a paid advertisement in The Times to give greater visibility to his vision. The advertisement included the following:

> 'RESTORATION OF THE JEWS. A memorandum has been addressed to the Protestant monarchs of Europe on the subject of the restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine. The document in question, dictated by a peculiar conjunction of affairs in the East, and other striking "signs of the times", reverts to the original covenant which secures that land to the descendants of Abraham.'[38]

The influence of Lord Shaftesbury, therefore, in promoting the Zionist cause within the political, diplomatic, and ecclesiastical establishment in Britain was immense. Wagner claims, ‘He single-handedly translated the theological positions of Henry Finch, and John Nelson Darby into a political strategy. His high political connections, matched by his uncanny instincts, combined to advance the Christian Zionist vision.’[39] Indeed it was probably Shaftesbury who inspired Theodore Herzl to coin the phrase, ‘A land of no people for a people with no land.’ A generation earlier, imagining Palestine to be empty, Shafrtesbury had come up with the slogan, ‘A country without a nation for a nation without a country.’[40] Like Moses, however, Shaftesbury did not live to see his ‘Promised Land’ realised. Nevertheless, through his lobbying, writings and public speaking he did more than any other British politician to inspire a generation of Joshuas to translate his religious vision into a political reality. Of those Christian political leaders to take up the mantle of Shaftesbury and achieve the Zionist dream, a small number stand out. They include William Hechler (1845-1931), David Lloyd George (1863-1945) and probably most significant of all, Arthur Balfour (1848-1930).

3.2 William Hechler and Herzl’s Zionist State

By 1897, when the first World Zionist Congress met in Basle, Switzerland, Jewish leaders who favoured a Zionist State already had sympathetic support from many more senior British political figures. This was largely due to the efforts of one man, William Hechler. The son of LJS missionaries in France and Germany, Hechler was the Anglican chaplain to the British Embassy in Vienna in 1885, a position of strategic significance

for the Zionist movement.[41] 'Imbued with evangelical millenarianism, he even formulated his own exact date for the re-establishment of the Jewish State.'[42] As with Shaftesbury's slogan, so Hechler's booklet, The Restoration of the Jews to Palestine (1894), predated Herzl's Der Judenstaat by two years, and spoke of the need for 'restoring the Jews to Palestine according to Old Testament prophecies.'[43] Hechler became Herzl's chief Christian ally in realising his vision of a Zionist State, one of only three Christians invited to attend the World Congress of Zionists. Herzl was not religious but he was superstitious and records a meeting with Hechler on 10 March 1896 in his diary:

> 'The Reverend William Hechler, Chaplain of the English Embassy here, came to see me. A sympathetic, gentle fellow, with the long grey beard of a prophet. He is enthusiastic about my solution of the Jewish Question. He also considers my movement a 'prophetic turning-point' - which he had foretold two years before… He showed me where, according to his calculations, our new Temple must be located: in Bethel! Because that is the centre of the country. He also showed me models of the ancient Temple. 'We have prepared the ground for you!' Hechler said triumphantly ... He gives me excellent advice, full of unmistakable genuine good will. He is at once clever and mystical, cunning and naive.'[44]

Hechler kept his word and gained access to the German Kaiser William II, the Grand Duke of Baden as well as the British political establishment for Herzl and his Zionist delegation. Although sympathetic to the evangelistic ministry of the LJS, Hechler's advocacy and diplomacy marked a radical shift in Christian Zionist thinking away from the views of early restorationists like Irving and Drummond who saw restoration to the land as a consequence of Jewish conversion to Christianity.

Now, Hechler was insisting instead, that it was the destiny of Christians simply to help restore the Jews to Palestine.

David Lloyd George, who became Prime Minister in 1916, was another self-confessed Zionist, sharing similar views to those of Shaftesbury. In his own words, he was Chaim Weizmann's proselyte, 'Acetone converted me to Zionism'[45] He once said. This was because Weizmann had assisted the British government in the invention of a more powerful explosive using acetone and Palestine appears to have been the reward.

3.3 Balfour's Declaration and a Jewish Zionist Homeland

Probably the most significant British politician of all, however, was Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930), who pioneered the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Like Lloyd George, Balfour had been brought up in an evangelical home and was sympathetic to Zionism because of the influence of dispensational teaching.[46] He regarded history as 'an instrument for carrying out a Divine purpose.'[47] From 1905 Chaim Weizmann, then a professor of chemistry at Manchester University, began to meet regularly with Balfour to discuss the implementation of that goal. On the 2nd November 1917, Lord Balfour made public the final draft of the letter written to Lord Rothschild on the 31st October which became known as the Balfour Declaration:

> 'His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of that object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done, which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish Communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'[48]

Balfour was in fact already committed to the Zionist programme out of theological conviction and had no intention of consulting with the indigenous Arab population. In a letter to Lord Curzon, written in 1919, Balfour insisted somewhat cynically:

> 'For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country …the Four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires or prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land ... in short, so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate.'[49]

What the Balfour Declaration left intentionally ambiguous was the meaning of a 'national home'. Was this synonymous with sovereignty or statehood and if so what were to be the borders? Would it occupy all of Palestine or just a portion? What was to be the status of Jerusalem? Furthermore, while it stated that 'the civil and religious rights of the existing population' were to be safeguarded and the territory was designated 'Palestine', there was no reference to Palestinians. 'They were an actual, but awkward non-identity.'[50] It was clearly Balfour's opinion that 'the present inhabitants' need not be consulted, either before or after.[51] That 90% of the population of Palestine were Arabs of whom around 10% were Christian seemed irrelevant to the politicians and Zionists who had another agenda.[52] So the awkward questions were left unanswered and it is these ambiguities which have plagued Middle East peace negotiations

for the last hundred years, right up to the present ‘Road Map to Peace’.

This momentous declaration gave Zionism for the first time a ‘political legitimacy’ and provided the impetus for the colonization of Palestine.[53] From the mid 19th Century, a similar marriage between religious dogmatism and political expediency in the United States was to lead theologians and politicians alike to support the Zionist cause. However, while Dispensationalism became marginalized in Britain, limited to the sectarianism of the Brethren, in the United States it was to become a dominant influence within mainstream Evangelicalism.

4. The Rise of Dispensationalism in America

During the Colonial period and even beyond the Civil War (1861-1865), American Christianity, was essentially postmillennial in outlook. The Revolutionary War, however, provided a stimulus to popular apocalyptic speculation and by 1773, King George III was being portrayed as the Antichrist and the war a ‘holy crusade’ that would usher in the millennium.[54] In parallel with Britain, the late 18th and early 19th Century also saw an explosion of millennial sects including the Shakers, Mormons and Millerites. Influenced by the French Revolution and the destruction of the Papacy in France, historic Premillennialism gradually became more popular.

Between 1859 and 1872, resulting from his extensive tours throughout America, and reinforced by the trauma of the Civil War, Darby’s premillennial dispensational views about a ‘failing’ Church and revived Israel came to have a profound and increasing influence upon American Evangelicalism. It resulted not only in the birth of American Dispensationalism[55] but also influenced the Millenarianism associated with the Prophecy

Conference Movement, as well as later, Fundamentalism.[56] Kyle suggests Darby's influence on end-time thinking was 'perhaps more than that of anyone else in the last two centuries.'[57] In the absence of a strong Jewish Zionist movement, American Christian Zionism arose from the confluence of these complex associations, evangelical, premillennial, dispensational, millenarian, and proto-fundamentalist.[58] Those most closely influenced by and associated with Darby who contributed to the development of Christian Zionism in America were James Brookes, Arno Gaebelein, D. L. Moody, William E. Blackstone and C. I. Scofield.[59] Tonight I am simply going to focus on Blackstone and Scofield. The contribution of the others is covered in my CD book.

4.1 William Blackstone: Recognition of Zionism (1841-1935)

William E. Blackstone was an influential evangelist and lay worker for the Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as a financier and benefactor. He also became an enthusiastic disciple of J.N. Darby.[60] In 1887 he wrote a book on biblical prophecy entitled Jesus is Coming, which by 1927, had been translated into thirty-six languages. The book took a premillennial dispensational view of the Second Coming, emphasizing that the Jews had a biblical right to Palestine and would soon be restored there. Blackstone became one of the first Christian Zionists in America, like Hechler in Britain, to actively lobby for the Zionist cause. Blackstone took the Zionist movement to be a 'sign' of the imminent return of Christ even though its leadership like Herzl were agnostic.

Blackstone, like Hal Lindsey a century later, interpreted Scripture in the light of unfolding contemporary events, something which Charles Spurgeon warned of as 'exegesis by current events'.[61] No longer were Christian Zionists expecting Jewish national repentance to precede restoration; it could wait until after Jesus returned during the millennium. Although popular with proto-fundamentalists, the book became more widely known in 1908, when a presentation edition was sent to several hundred thousand ministers and Christian workers, and again in 1917 when the Moody Bible Institute printed 'presentation copies' and sent them to ministers, missionaries and theological students.[62] Jesus is Coming was the most widely read book on the return of Christ published in the 20th Century until the publication of Hal Lindsey's Late Great Planet Earth superseded only by Tim LaHaye's fictional Left Behind series.[63]

In March 1891, Blackstone lobbied the US President, Benjamin Harrison with a petition signed by no less than 413 prominent Jewish and Christian leaders including John and William Rockefeller. The petition called for an international conference on the restoration of the Jews to Palestine. The petition, which became known as the Blackstone Memorial, offered this solution:

> 'Why not give Palestine back to them [the Jews] again? According to God's distribution of nations it is their home, an inalienable possession from which they were expelled by force… Why shall not the powers which under the treaty of Berlin, in 1878, gave Bulgaria to the Bulgarians and Servia to the Servians now give Palestine back to the Jews?'[64]

Although President Harrison did not act upon the petition, it was nevertheless pivotal in galvanising Christian and Jewish

Zionist activists in the United States for the next sixty years. Justice Louis Brandeis, the first Jewish Justice of the US Supreme Court, who led the Jewish Zionist movement in the US from 1914, became a close friend of Blackstone and for twenty years they laboured to convince the American people and in particular, successive Presidents, to support the Zionist agenda. During that time, Blackstone sent Brandeis 'very large sums of money for support of Zionist work.'[65]

In January 1918, Blackstone spoke at a large Jewish Zionist meeting in Los Angeles and declared that he had been committed to Zionism for 30 years. 'This is because I believe that true Zionism is founded on the plan, purpose, and fiat of the everlasting and omnipotent God, as prophetically recorded in His Holy Word, the Bible.'

During his lifetime, Jewish Zionists honoured Blackstone more times than any other Christian leader. On one occasion, Brandeis wrote, 'you are the Father of Zionism as your work antedates Herzl.'[66] What Blackstone expressed in his speeches, books and petitions, Cyrus Scofield was to systematise and canonise in his Reference Bible.

4.2 Cyrus Scofield: The Canonising of Zionism (1843-1921)

Scofield may be regarded as the most influential exponent of Dispensationalism, following the publication of his Scofield Reference Bible by the Oxford University Press in 1918.[67] Ernest Sandeen insists 'in the calendar of Fundamentalist saints no name is better known or more revered.'[68] Yet while biographical works on the early Brethren, such as J. N. Darby and dispensationalists like D. L. Moody abound, Scofield remains an elusive and enigmatic figure. Only two biographies have been published, one by a fellow dispensationalist eulogises

Scofield,[69] the other, from a Reformed perspective, portrays him as a charlatan, accused of perjury, fraud and embezzlement. He also deserted his wife and children and married again only three months after his divorce became final.[70]

As a young and largely illiterate Christian, Scofield was profoundly influenced by J. N. Darby's writings. Scofield popularised Darby's distinctive futurist Dispensationalism, basing his reference notes on Darby's own distinctive translation of the Bible. Bass notes, 'the parallel between Scofield's notes and Darby's works only too clearly reveals that Scofield was not only a student of Darby's works, but that he copiously borrowed ideas, words and phrases.'[71] The combination of an attractive format, illustrative notes, and cross references has led both critics and advocates to acknowledge Scofield's Bible to have been the most influential book among evangelicals during the first half of the twentieth Century.[72] Craig Blaising, professor of Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary and a dispensationalist, similarly acknowledges, 'The Scofield Reference Bible became the Bible of Fundamentalism, and the theology of the notes approached confessional status in many Bible schools, institutes and seminaries established in the early decades of this Century.'[73]

In the 1890s during Scofield's pastorate in Dallas he was also head of the Southwestern School of the Bible, the forerunner to Dallas Theological Seminary, which became Dispensationalism's 'most scholarly institution'.[74] The Seminary was founded in 1924 by one of Scofield's disciples, Lewis Sperry Chafer, who was Scofield's most influential exponent. Chafer wrote the first systematic pro-Zionist dispensational theology running to eight large volumes. Shortly

before his death, Chafer described his greatest academic achievement. ‘It goes on record that the Dallas Theological Seminary uses, recommends, and defends the Scofield Bible.’[75] It is perhaps therefore not surprising that Dallas Theological Seminary has since then, especially through the writings of Charles Ryrie[76] and John Walvoord,[77] continued to be the foremost apologist for and proponent of, Scofield's classical dispensational views and of Christian Zionism in particular.

5. Contemporary American Evangelical Christian Zionism

For Christian Zionists, the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 naturally came to be seen as the most significant fulfilment of biblical prophecy,[78] ‘the greatest piece of prophetic news that we have had in the 20th Century.’[79] Following the war of 1967, Billy Graham’s father-in-law Nelson Bell, then editor of Christianity Today, expressed the sentiments of many American evangelicals when, in an editorial for the magazine he wrote, ‘for the first time in more than 2,000 years Jerusalem is now completely in the hands of the Jews gives a student of the Bible a thrill and a renewed faith in the accuracy and validity of the Bible.’[80]

In 1976 a series of events brought Christian Zionism to the forefront of US mainstream politics. Jimmy Carter was elected as the ‘born again’ President drawing the support of the evangelical right. In Israel, Menachem Begin and the right wing Likud Party came to power the following year. A tripartite coalition slowly emerged between the political Right, evangelicals and the Jewish lobby. In 1978, Jimmy Carter acknowledged how his own pro-Zionist beliefs had influenced his Middle East policy.[81] For

example, he described the State of Israel as, ‘a return at last, to the biblical land from which the Jews were driven so many hundreds of years ago ... The establishment of the nation of Israel is the fulfilment of biblical prophecy and the very essence of its fulfilment.’[82] However, when Carter vacillated over the aggressive Likud settlement programme and proposed the creation of a Palestinian homeland, he alienated the pro-Israeli coalition of Jews and evangelicals who switched their support to Ronald Reagan in the 1980 elections. Reagan’s election as President gave a considerable boost to the Christian Zionist cause:

> ‘The election of Ronald Reagan ushered in not only the most pro-Israel administration in history but gave several Christian Zionists prominent political posts. In addition to the President, those who subscribed to a futurist premillennial theology and Christian Zionism included Attorney General Ed Meese, Secretary of Defence Casper Weinberger, and Secretary of the Interior James Watt.’[83]

‘White House Seminars’ became a regular feature of Reagan's administration bringing leading Christian Zionists like Jerry Falwell, Mike Evans and Hal Lindsey into direct personal contact with national and Congressional leaders. In 1982, for instance, Reagan invited Falwell to give a briefing to the National Security Council on the possibility of a nuclear war with Russia.[84] Hal Lindsey also claimed Reagan invited him to speak on the subject of war with Russia to Pentagon officials.[85] In a personal conversation reported in the Washington Post two years later in April 1984, Reagan elaborated on his own personal convictions to Tom Dine, one of Israel’s chief lobbyists working for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC):

> ‘You know, I turn back to the ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if - if we're the generation that is going to

> see that come about. I don't know if you've noted any of these prophecies lately, but believe me they certainly describe the times we're going through.'[86]

While George Bush Snr., Bill Clinton and George W. Bush do not appear to share the same dispensational presuppositions of either Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan, they nevertheless have maintained, however reluctantly, the strong pro-Zionist stance of their predecessors.[87] This is largely due to the influence of the Zionist lobby considered by many to be the most powerful in the United States.[88] Three Christian leaders, in particular, each given a White House platform by Reagan, have probably achieved more than any other in the last forty years to ensure American foreign policy remains pro-Zionist. They are, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and Hal Lindsey. I will focus on the influence of Jerry Falwell tonight since he is representative of the movement. Tomorrow we will examine the views of Hal Lindsey in more detail.

5.1 Jerry Falwell : A Case Study

As you may know, Jerry Falwell is the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church and the Founder and Chancellor of the 10,000 student independent Baptist Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia.[89] Jerry Falwell Ministries sponsor the Liberty Broadcasting Network TV channel and syndicated Old Time Gospel Hour programme which is broadcast on 350 stations in the USA and has a budget of $60 million.[90]

In his early ministry, Falwell shunned politics.[91] Falwell's change of mind came in 1967 after Israel's Six Day War. He

entered politics and became an avid supporter of the Zionist State. Grace Halsell describes Falwell's conversion:

> 'The stunning Israeli victory made a big impact not only on Falwell, but on a lot of Americans ... Remember that in 1967, the United States was mired in the Vietnam War. Many felt a sense of defeat, helplessness and discouragement. Many Americans, including Falwell, turned worshipful glances toward Israel, which they viewed as militarily strong and invincible. They gave their unstinting approval to the Israeli take-over of Arab lands because they perceived this conquest as power and righteousness ... Macho or muscular Christians such as Falwell credited Israeli General Moshe Dayan with this victory over Arab forces and termed him the Miracle Man of the Age, and the Pentagon invited him to visit Vietnam and tell us how to win that war.'[92]

In 1979, the same year Falwell founded Moral Majority, the Israeli government gave Falwell a Lear jet to assist him in his advocacy of Israel. A year later in 1980, Falwell also became the first Gentile to be awarded the Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky medal for Zionist excellence by Israel's Prime Minister, Menachem Begin. Jabotinsky was the founder of Revisionist Zionism and held that Jews had a divine mandate to occupy and settle 'on both sides of the Jordan River' and were not accountable to international law.[93] When Israel bombed Iraq's nuclear plant in 1981, Begin phoned Falwell before he called Reagan. He also asked Falwell to 'explain to the Christian public the reasons for the bombing.'[94] During the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Falwell defended Israel's actions:

> 'When the massacres occurred at the two Palestinian camps, Falwell just mimicked the Israeli line: "The Israelis were not involved." And even when The New York Times was giving eyewitness accounts of Israeli flares sent up to help the Phalangists go into the camp, Falwell was saying, "That's just propaganda".'[95]

In March 1985, Falwell spoke to the conservative Rabbinical Assembly in Miami and pledged to 'mobilize 70 million conservative Christians for Israel.'[96] In January 1998, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Washington, his first meeting was with Jerry Falwell and with The National Unity Coalition for Israel, a large gathering of more than 500 fundamentalist Christian leaders, rather than with President Clinton. According to Donald Wagner, the crowd hailed Netanyahu as 'the Ronald Reagan of Israel.' This time Falwell promised to contact 200,000 pastors and church leaders who receive his National Liberty Journal[97] and ask them to 'tell President Clinton to refrain from putting pressure on Israel' to comply with the Oslo accords.[98] In an interview with The Washington Post in 1999, Falwell described the West Bank as 'an integral part of Israel.' Pressing Israel to withdraw, he added, 'would be like asking America to give Texas to Mexico, to bring about a good relationship. It's ridiculous.'[99] Falwell has succeeded, probably better than any other contemporary Christian leader, to ensure his followers recognise that their Christian duty to God involves providing unconditional support for the State of Israel.

While Jerry Falwell may be one of the most influential Christian Zionists, he is also a figurehead, along with Pat Robertson, for a much wider alliance of influential fundamentalist Christian leaders including Zola Levitt, Oral Roberts, Mike Evans, Tim LaHaye, Kenneth Copeland, Paul Crouch, Ed McAteer, Jim Bakker, Chuck Missler and Jimmy Swaggart who have all taken a pro-Zionist stance in their writings or broadcasts.[100] These Christian leaders and their organisations have regular access to over 100 million American

Christians, more than 100,000 pastors and combined budgets of well in excess of $300 million per annum. They form a broad and immensely powerful coalition which is both shaping and driving US foreign policy on the Middle East as well as Christian support for Israel. Tomorrow we will appraise the distinctive theological emphasis of Christian Zionism and then on Saturday assess its political agenda and apocalyptic consequences.

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[1] Mike Evans, *Israel, America's Key to Survival*, (Plainfield, NJ: Haven Books), back page, p. xv.

[2] Dale Crowley, 'Errors and Deceptions of Dispensational Teachings.' Capital Hill Voice, (1996-1997), cited in Halsell, op.cit., p5. Grace Halsell herself defines Christian Zionism as a cult. See Halsell, op.cit., p31.

[3] Grace Halsell, 'Israeli Extremists and Christian Fundamentalists: The Alliance', Washington Report, December (1988), p31.

[4] Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Hacohen Aviner, cited in Grace Halsell, Forcing God's Hand, (Washington, Crossroads International, 1999), p71.

[5] Yisrael Meida, cited in Halsell, Forcing, op.cit., p68.

[6] 'Biblical Zionism, Cutting Edge Theology for the "Last Days"' Word from Jerusalem, International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, September (2001), p9.

[7] Halsell, Forcing, op.cit., p50.

[8] Grace Halsell, Prophecy and Politics, (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), p178.

[9] Halsell, Forcing, op.cit., p50.

[10] 'Christians Call for a United Jerusalem' New York Times, 18 April (1997), http://www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/united.html

[11] Robert Boston, The Most Dangerous Man in America? Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition, (New York, Prometheus, 1996).

[12] http://www.israelunitycoalition.com

[13] Cornelis P. Venema, The Promise of the Future, (Edinburgh, Banner of Trust, 2000), pp219-229.

[14] Jonathan Edwards, 'The History of the Work of Redemption', The Complete Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 2 (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1974).

[15] Other leading theologians to espouse this view included J. A. Alexander, Robert Dabney, Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, Loraine Boettner and Charles H,. Spurgeon. See also 'Postmillennialism' in The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views, edited by Robert G. Clouse, (Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity, 1977), pp17ff.

[16] A small number of 19th Century Postmillennial theologians did continue to espouse a form of Jewish Restorationism but only as a consequence of Jewish people coming to faith in Jesus and being incorporated within the Church. These include Charles Simeon (1759-1836) and David Brown (1803-1897), who was Edward Irving's assistant at Regent Square and who wrote The Second Advent (1849) and The Restoration of Israel, (1861). Erroll Hulse also identifies with this position, The Restoration of Israel, (Worthing, Henry Walter, 1968). Since the Restorationist movement became dominated by Covenant premillennialists and dispensationalists from the early 19th Century, this thesis has concentrated on their contribution. The previous chapter has explored the early intimations of proto-Christian Zionism within the Reformation and Puritan period which was dominated by Postmillennialists. See Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Israelology, The

Missing Link in Systematic Theology, (Tustin, California, Ariel Ministries, 1989), pp14-122.

[17] G. H. Pember, The Great Prophecies of the Centuries concerning Israel and the Gentiles, (London, Hodder, 1902), pp236-241.

[18] J. N. Darby, 'Remarks on a tract circulated by the Irvingites', Collected Writings, edited by William Kelly (Kingston on Thames, Stow Hill Bible and Trust Depot, 1962), Doctrinal. IV, 15, p2; Andrew Drummond, Edward Irving and His Circle (London, James Clarke, n.d.), p132; Janet M. Hartley, 'Napoleon in Russia: Saviour or anti-Christ? History Today, 41 (1991); Richard Kyle, The Last Days are Here Again, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker, 1998), p71.

[19] Charles Finney, Lectures on Revival, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960), p306.

[20] Clouse, Hosack & Pierard, op.cit., p116.

[21] Murray, op.cit., p188. Irving was also one of the forerunners of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. Arnold Dallimore, The Life of Edward Irving: The Fore-runner of the Charismatic Movement, (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1983); Gordon Strachan, The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving, (Peabody, Massachusetts, 1973). George Eldon Ladd, however, attributes the revival of 'futurist' or historic Premillennialism in the 19th Century to S.R. Maitland, James Todd and William Burgh. See George Eldon Ladd, The Blessed Hope, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1956), pp35-40. Maitland's first publication is dated 1826, James Todd's 1838, and William Burgh's 1835. While they may indeed have been influential, since Irving acknowledges his indebtedness to Hatley Frere and his own premillennial sermons are dated as early as 1824, it is still appropriate to regard Irving as the earliest proponent of this view in the 19th Century.

[22] Rowland A. Davenport, Albury Apostles, (London, Free Society, 1970).

[23] Twelve elders called 'angels' were appointed to pastor the congregation and administer the church in the expectation that the Lord would return to Albury in their life time. Consequently, as each elder eventually died they were not replaced until there were none to pastor the congregation.

[24] Edward Miller, The History and Doctrines of Irvingism, volume 1 (London, Kegan Paul, 1878), p36.

[25] Wagner, op.cit., p. 89.

[26] Wagner, op.cit., p91.

[27] Barbara Tuchman, Bible and Sword, (London, Macmillan, 1982), p115.

[28] Merkley, op.cit., p38.

[29] Cited in Franz Kobler, Napoleon and the Jews, (New York, Schocken Books, 1976), pp55-57. See also: http://www.napoleonicsociety.com/english/scholarship98/c_jews98.html

[30] See Albert M. Hyamson, Palestine: The Rebirth of an Ancient People, (London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1917), pp162-163; Salo W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1937), 2. p327, cited in Sharif, op.cit., p52.

[31] Baron, ibid.

[32] Sharif, op.cit., p54.

[33] John Pollock, Shaftesbury, (London, Hodder, 1985), p54.

[34] Lord Shaftesbury, cited in P. C. Merkley, The Politics of Christian Zionism 1891-1948, (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p14.

[35] Wagner, op.cit., p91.

[36] Pollock, op.cit., p54.

[37] Anthony Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury. Diary entries as quoted by Edwin Hodder, The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, (London, 1886), 1, pp310-311; See also Geoffrey B.A.M. Finlayson, The Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, (London, Eyre Metheun, 1981), p114; The National Register Archives, London, Shaftesbury (Broadlands) MSS, SHA/PD/2, 1 August 1840.

[38] Wagner, op.cit., p91.

[39] Wagner, op.cit., p92.

[40] cited in Wagner, op.cit., p92; also Albert H. Hyamson, Palestine under the Mandate, (London, 1950), p10, cited in Sharif, op.cit., p42.

[41] David Pileggi, 'Hechler, CMJ & Zionism' Shalom, 3 (1998).

[42] Sharif, op.cit., p71.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Merkley, op.cit., pp16-17; Pileggi, op.cit.

[45] Weizmann had discovered how to synthesize acetone, a solvent used in the manufacture of explosives.

[46] Wagner, op.cit., p93.

[47] Sharif, op.cit., p78

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ingrams, op.cit., p73.

[50] Kenneth Cragg, The Arab Christian, A History in the Middle East, (London, Mowbray, 1992), p234.

[51] Edward W. Said, The Question of Palestine, revised edition, (London, Vintage, 1992), p19.

[52] A report to the British Foreign Office in December 1918 revealed that Palestine consisted of 512,000 Muslims, 61,000 Christians and 66,000 Jews. Ingrams, op.cit., p44.

[53] Wagner, op.cit., p94

[54] Ibid. p81.

[55] Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1966).

[56] Ernest R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1970); Reuben Archer Torrey, The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith, (New York, Doren, 1918); The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth, (Chicago, Testimony Publishing Co., 1910-1915).

[57] Kyle, op.cit., p104.

[58] David Rausch, Zionism within Early American Fundamentalism 1878-1918, a Convergence of Two Traditions, (New York, Edwin Mellen, 1979), p2.

[59] Wagner, op.cit., p89.

[60] Beth M. Lindberg, A God-Filled Life: The Story of William E. Blackstone, (Chicago The American Messianic Fellowship, n.d.).

[61] Charles H. Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, (London, Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), p100.

[62] Rennie, op.cit., p48; Rausch, op.cit., p264.

[63] W. M. Smith, 'Signs of the Times', Moody Monthly, August (1966), p5; Tim LaHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins, Left Behind, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1995); Tribulation Force, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1996); Nicolae, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1997); Soul Harvest, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1998); Apollyon, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1999); Assassins, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1999); The Indwelling, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 2000); The Mark, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 2001): Desecration, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 2002): The Remnant, (Wheaton, Tyndale House, 2002). Sales of the Left Behind series now exceed 32 million copies. See Nancy Gibbs, 'Apocalypse Now' Time, 1 July 2002, p45. Hal Lindsey's Late Great Planet Earth (London, Lakeland, 1970) has reputedly sold over 18 million copies in English.

[64] Reuben Fink, America and Palestine, (New York, American Zionist Emergency Council, 1945), pp20-21, cited in Sharif, op.cit., p92.

[65] Merkley, op.cit., p92.

[66] Currie, op.cit.

[67] C. I. Scofield, The Scofield Reference Bible, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1917); The New Scofield Reference Bible, edited by E. Schuyler English (New York, Oxford University Press, 1967); The Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition, (Chicago, Moody Bible Institute, 1994); The New Scofield Study Bible, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1984); Scofield Study Notes, (QuickVerse, Parsons Technology, 1994).

[68] Sandeen, op.cit., p222.

[69] Charles G. Trumball, The Life Story of C. I. Scofield, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1920).

[70] Joseph M. Canfield, The Incredible Scofield and his Book, (Vallecito, California, Ross House Books, 1988). Canfield refers to a third source by William A. BeVier, A Biographical Sketch of C.I. Scofield: A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate

School of Southern Methodist University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Master of Arts with a Major in History. May 1960; See also Albertus Pieters, A Candid Examination of the Scofield Bible, (Grand Rapids, Douma Publications, n.d.). Scofield's wife Leontine divorced him in 1881 while he was pastor of Hyde Park Congregational Church, St. Louis. Her divorce papers charged Scofield with, 'gross neglect of duty' having, 'failed to support this plaintiff or her said children, or to contribute thereto, and has made no provision for them for food, clothing or a home...' The court decided in favour of Leontine after some delay in 1883 and issued a decree of divorce in December of that year, describing Scofield as, '...not a fit person to have custody of the children.' From the papers in case No. 2161, supplied by the Atchison County Court, cited in Canfield, op.cit., p89. He married Hettie Van Wark on 11th March 1884. Ibid., p100.

[71] Bass, op.cit., p18. See also Loraine Boettner, The Millennium, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1958), p369.

[72] Dwight Wilson, Armageddon Now!, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1977), p15; Sandeen, op.cit., p222.

[73] Craig A. Blaising 'Dispensationalism, The Search for Definition' in Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, The Search for Definition, edited by Craig A. Blaising & Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1992), p21.

[74] Gerstner, op.cit., p46.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Charles C. Ryrie, The Basis of the Premillennial Faith, (Neptune, New Jersey, Loizeaux Brothers, 1953); Dispensationalism Today, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1965); Dispensationalism, (Moody Press, Chicago, 1995).

[77] John Walvoord, Israel in Prophecy, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1962); The Nations in Prophecy, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1967); The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1975); The Rapture Question, rev. edn. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1979); The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1988); Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1990); Major Bible Prophecies, (New York, Harper Collins, 1991).

[78] Stanley J. Grenz, The Millennial Maze, (Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity, 1992), p92; Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, (London, Lakeland, 1970), pp43, 53-58; Hannah Hurnard, Watchman on the Walls, (London, Olive Press, 1950), pp11-12.

[79] Louis T. Talbot & William W. Orr, The Nation of Israel and the Word of God!, (Los Angeles, Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1948), p8.

[80] Donald Wagner, 'Evangelicals and Israel: Theological Roots of a Political Alliance' The Christian Century, November 4, (1998), pp1020-1026.

[81] Jimmy Carter, The Blood of Abraham, (London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985).

[82] Speech by President Jimmy Carter on 1 May 1978, Department of State Bulletin, vol. 78, No. 2015, (1978), p4, cited in Sharif, op.cit., p136.

[83] Donald Wagner, 'Beyond Armageddon', The Link, New York: Americans for Middle East Understanding; October-November, (1992), p5.

[84] Halsell, Prophecy., op.cit., p47

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ronnie Dugger, ‘Does Reagan Expect a Nuclear Armageddon?’ Washington Post, 18 April (1984).

[87] George Bush, Speech to the American Jewish Committee, May 3, (2001), http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/presquote.html

[88] Michael Lind, ‘The Israel Lobby and American Power’ Prospect, April (2002), pp22-29; Halsell, Prophecy., op.cit.

[89] http://falwell.com

[90] Iwan Russell-Jones, ‘Give me that prime time religion’ New Internationalist, 133, March (1984).

[91] James Price and William Goodman, Jerry Falwell, An Unauthorized Profile, cited in Grace Halsell, Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War, (Westport, Connecticut, Lawrence Hill, 1986), p72-73.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Allan C. Brownfeld, ‘Fundamentalists and the Millennium: A Potential Threat to Middle Eastern Peace’ The Washington Report, June (1999), pp82-84.

[94] Donald Wagner, ‘Evangelicals and Israel: Theological Roots of a Political Alliance.’ The Christian Century, November 4, (1998), pp1020-1026.

[95] Brownfeld, op.cit., pp82-84.

[96] Wagner, ‘Evangelicals’, op.cit., pp1020-1026.

[97] http://www.nljonline.com/feb02

[98] Wagner, ‘Evangelicals’, op.cit., pp1020-1026.

[99] Brownfeld, op.cit., pp82-84.

[100] Regular meetings between Christian Zionist leaders and Israeli officials take place such as at Harvard Business School. At one held in early 2002, participants included Avigdor Itzchaki, the Director General of the Israeli cabinet, James Watt, former Secretary of the Interior, Mike Evans and Richard Hellman of CIPAC. Those invited also included Tony Campolo, James Dobson, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Schuller, Chuck Smith, Joyce Meyers, E.V. Hill and Marlin Maddoux.