
Introduction

The Two Zionisms

We think of Zionism as a Jewish political cause, one to which an occasional "Righteous Gentile" might have lent support. The standard presentations of Zionism, whether written by its proponents or opponents, serve to reinforce this view. They enumerate and describe the movement's Jewish founders, supporters, and adversaries. If there is diversity in these descriptions, it is in the descriptions of the variety of opinions held by Jewish Zionists, and Jewish non-Zionists, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the most part, Christians do not feature in this narrative except as antagonists. For it was implicit in Zionism's self-understanding that Christian anti-Semitism generated the need for a Jewish state as a refuge from persecution. Once that state comes into being, Jews, separated from Christians, could live free and independent lives. Histories of Zionism therefore focus on the Jewish proponents of Jewish territorial nationalism and the unity that Jews achieved through support of Zionism. *Zeal for Zion*, in contrast, makes the case for a wider and more inclusive history, one that takes the Christian involvement with Zionism into account.

Zeal for Zion tells the story of Christian engagement with Zionism through six narratives set in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each narrative is framed around political, cultural, and religious interactions between Christian Zionists and Jewish Zionists. The first three chapters, set before the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, relate the stories of three personal and political relationships: poet Naphtali Herz Imber and British diplomat and journalist Laurence Oliphant, Zionist leader Theodor Herzl and Anglican cleric Rev. William Hechler, and Hebrew University professor Joseph Klausner and Hebraist Rev. Herbert Danby. The next three chapters, set in the second half of the twentieth century, widen the focus from the individual to the organizational level. Chapter 4 relates the remarkable story of the Vati-

can's engagement with the State of Israel. In that chapter I demonstrate that despite the Vatican's initial hostility to political Zionism, individual Catholics, among both the clergy and the laity, were supportive of Zionist aims. Their advocacy for Zionism played a part in the church's eventual acceptance of the State of Israel. Chapter 5 tells of three modern literary masters, Jorge Luis Borges, Robert Graves, and Vladimir Nabokov, and their enthusiastic support of the State of Israel. The final chapter chronicles a recent political alliance that some observers of current Middle East affairs praise as "a match made in heaven" and others fear as "the road map to Armageddon." In this chapter I focus on the group that is now popularly designated as "Christian Zionist," the members of conservative evangelical churches who are influenced by fundamentalist views. But as the reader will discover, the term "Christian Zionist" has a much longer history and a much wider connotation. Over the past century, it has been used to describe Catholics and Protestants, liberals and conservatives, reformers and traditionalists. Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, used the term to describe Christian associates who supported the cause. In each of the book's chapters, we encounter different and changing forms of Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism, and different and changing forms of Judaism and Christianity. Like the religious and cultural movements from which it emerged, the Zionist movement was in a constant dynamic flux, and this makes the story of Zionism's encounter with the Jewish and Christian religious traditions all the more rich and complex.

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the number of books on Israel and Zionism increased dramatically. The extensive bibliography of Walter Laqueur's *History of Zionism*, published in 1972, opens with the observation that "there are many thousands of books and pamphlets on Zionism." By 2008, the bibliography of Zionism had grown exponentially, and today there are large libraries and archives devoted to the topic. Why, then, this, another book on Zionism? Because in that vast list of books, there was, until recently, comparatively little on Christians and Zionism. The focus of most broad histories and detailed studies of Zionism has been on its Jewish leaders and their Jewish followers, and for the most part the books were directed toward a Jewish audience. This emerging literature emphasized the persistent Jewish millennial hope for a return to the Land of Israel. The focus in this emerging "official" presentation of Zionism was on the continuity of Jewish aspirations for a renewed Jewish commonwealth. The website of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs presents this long complex history in capsule form that seamlessly joins Jewish history to Zionism: "Yearning for Zion and Jewish immigration continued throughout the long period of exile, following the Roman

conquest and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. This yearning took on a new form in the nineteenth century, when modern nationalism, liberalism and emancipation forced the Jews to contend with new questions, which the Zionist movement tried to answer."¹ There is, of course, no denying the power and continuity of the aspiration to return to Zion; it is emphasized in the daily and holiday prayers of the Jewish tradition. But, as historian of ideas Richard Popkin has pointed out, "one has to distinguish between two views: one, the hope of the Jewish people to return some day to their homeland; and the other, setting forth a program to accomplish this end."² For two thousand years the hope for a return to Zion was Jewish. But this hope was neither political nor military. Jews in the dispersion were powerless, and they did not come to any consensus about the need for a homeland. Rising anti-Semitism in nineteenth-century Europe, particularly in Russia and Romania, as well as in France and Germany, helped shape a nationalist consensus to which many Jews soon subscribed. Until the late nineteenth century, most plans for a Jewish entity in Palestine were Christian. These plans were predicated on the perception that geographical Palestine was the ancient homeland that "belonged" to Jews. This perception, rooted in a biblical worldview, influenced wide sectors of Christendom. It was a pre-modern perception that persists into modernity, and it continues to influence many Christians to this day, especially, but not exclusively, in the United States.

A related perception, that Jews are a religiously observant people, was equally influential in the formation and growth of Christian Zionism. Here, too, American Christians led the way. This presumption clashed with the realities of Jewish Zionism—that political Zionism was founded and led by secular Jews, and that Israel's ruling elites are to this day secular. If one seeks a measure of "religiosity"—one measure might be the frequency with which citizens attend weekly worship services—the United States is today the most "religious" nation in the Western world. Over 40 percent of Americans attend weekly services. In contrast, only 20 percent of Israeli Jews report that they attend a synagogue weekly. Furthermore, with a flourish uniquely Israeli, 20 percent told pollsters that they would never attend religious services, so assertive is their right to a secular Israeli Jewish identity.

From the seventeenth century onward, programs for the restoration of the Jews to their land were suggested and publicized by Christians, many of them American Protestants. Jews of the pre-modern period did not have the ability to influence international public affairs and were in no position to work for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. From the eighteenth century onward, small groups of European and Middle Eastern Jews began emigrating

to Ottoman Palestine. Their motives were religious, and not political. They did not seek to establish a Jewish state. Rather, they wished to fulfill their religious obligations in the land of their fathers. When Jewish political Zionism emerged in the late nineteenth century, an emergence heralded, though not originated, by the publication of Theodor Herzl's *The Jewish State* in 1896, that new political movement quickly forged alliances with Christian proponents of Zionism. Herzl, once he became aware of potential Christian allies, was particularly prescient and active in garnering Christian support for his cause. His successors continued to cultivate that support. They understood, as did Herzl, that assistance was most likely to come from Protestants, and that it was essential to the success of Zionist political aspirations that Christians join Jews in the international campaign to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

The Promised Land

Central to all forms of Zionism, both Jewish and Christian, is the idea of the Promised Land. Within the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, God's promise to Abraham that his seed will inherit Canaan is fulfilled in the settlement and conquest of Canaan by the tribes of Israel. The scholarly consensus is that the Israelites entered Canaan about 1200 B.C. Israel's long sojourn in the land was interrupted by the Assyrian exile of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom ("Israel") in 722 B.C. (these exiles, "the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel" were never to return) and by the Babylonian exile of the people of the Southern Kingdom ("Judah") in 586 B.C. It was during that Babylonian invasion that the First Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. Under the Persian conquerors of Babylon, some of the Judeans returned in 500 B.C. and built the Second Temple. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible spoke of a future time when all of the exiles, both those of the north ("Israel") and those of the south ("Judah") would be reunited in a rebuilt Zion. With the Roman destruction of the Temple and the city in A.D. 70, the Jews again went into exile. In the rabbinic tradition, this cycle of exile and return was understood as a divinely ordained cycle of reward and punishment. The destructions of Jerusalem and its Temple were therefore read as the consequences of Israel's sins. According to the rabbis, the First Temple was destroyed because the Hebrew people engaged in idolatry, murder, and sexual license. Concerning the Roman destruction of the Second Temple, the Talmud focuses on less dramatic but equally serious infractions of the law. The Jews of the Second Temple period

were driven by factionalism and the "hatred of brother for brother." To illustrate this situation, the Talmud tells the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, the Jerusalemites whose bitter feud precipitated the fall of the city. It was their mutual enmity that turned "brother against brother" and brought the Romans to intervene in an ongoing feud between Jewish factions. The dire unexpected consequence was the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple and the subsequent exile.³

The rabbinic tradition, which developed in the aftermath of the Roman sacking of the Holy City and was recorded in the Mishnah (A.D. c. 200) and the Talmud (A.D. c. 600), foresaw a messianic redemption that would recover and restore what had been lost in Jerusalem's destruction. This idea had first been adumbrated in the visions of the Hebrew prophets. The Messiah, "the anointed," descendant of the Davidic line, would preside over the ingathering and restoration of the people of Israel. The Temple of Jerusalem would be restored to its original glory. This concept was based on the biblical prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Micah, and it was amplified and elaborated in the teachings of the rabbis. Jerusalem, in the messianic era, would be a place of prayer for all of the nations. A classical Jewish statement on the universal religious significance of Jerusalem and the Land of Israel is that of Rabbi Judah Halevi, the twelfth-century poet and philosopher, in his book *The Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*:

Moses prayed to see it, and when this was denied to him, he considered it a misfortune. Thereupon it was shown to him from the summit of Pishgah, which was to him an act of grace. Persians, Indians, Greeks, and children of other nations begged to be allowed to offer up sacrifices, and to be prayed for in the holy temple; they spent their wealth at the place, though they believed in other laws not recognized by the Torah. They honor it to this day, although the Shekhinah (the divine presence) no longer appears there. All nations make pilgrimages to it, long for it, excepting we ourselves, because we are punished and in disgrace.⁴

That Jerusalem and its Temple would be restored by divine intervention and not by human endeavor became a tenet of Rabbinic Judaism. Only the Messiah, sent by God, could restore the people of Israel to its land. And it was the Messiah who would rebuild the Temple. The most explicit statement to this effect is the legend of the Three Oaths, recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Ketubot, 11a): "What are the three oaths? One, that Israel not ascend the wall (to go as one to the Holy Land), one, that they not rebel against the

nations of the world, and one that nations swear that they would not oppress Israel too much." This text provided support for early Orthodox Jewish opposition to political Zionism, an opposition that was vociferously expressed in the early decades of the movement. For nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Zionist leaders, the majority of whom were secularists, the Three Oaths represented a tradition of Jewish passivity that had to be overcome in order for a modern Jewish state to come into being.⁵

For Christians, in contrast, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem was understood as the consequence of the Jewish rejection of Jesus. The Gospels and Letters address this issue early on. The Gospel of Luke tells of Jesus's ascent to Jerusalem in the company of the disciples: "When he came in sight of the city, he wept over it and said, 'If only you had known this day the way that leads to peace! But no; it is hidden from your sight. For a time will come upon you, when your enemies will set up siege-works against you, they will encircle you and hem you in at every point; they will bring you to the ground, you and your children within your walls, and not leave you one stone standing on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's visitation'" (Luke 19:21-24). According to the classical Christian commentators, what the people did not recognize was Jesus's divine mission.

The church fathers Eusebius and Origen make the explicit point that the Temple was destroyed because of the Crucifixion. This point is based on verses in Luke (13:34): "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city that murders the prophets and stones the messengers sent to her. How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings; but you would not let me. Look! There is your temple, forsaken by God. I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord." If the Temple is "forsaken by God," then its fate is destruction. Early Christian ideas of redemption developed within the framework of Jewish messianism. Jesus, the "Christos," or anointed, was presented in the Gospel of Matthew as the descendant of the Davidic kings. A variety of Christian understandings of the Messiah's role were expressed in the books of the New Testament. Some of these understandings were based on new readings of the Hebrew prophets, particularly of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Other more visionary ideas about the Messiah were expressed in the New Testament's final and most enigmatic book, Revelation.⁶

Just as the Hebrew Bible underwent what Christians understood as a process of "spiritualization" to become the Christian "Old Testament," the biblical Land of Israel was transformed in the Christian imagination into the Holy Land in which Jesus had lived, died, and was resurrected. Thus, in the first

Christian centuries, while the Jewish tradition continued to express the yearning for Zion in its liturgical and other ritual practices, Christians developed the idea of Palestine as a Christian Holy Land that pilgrims were obligated to protect and visit. Pilgrims to that land could walk in Jesus's footsteps.⁷

That idea is still very much alive today, when more than half of the annual visitors to Israel are Christian. Against the background of the centuries-long transformation of the Land of Israel into the Christian Holy Land, Jewish Zionism offered a considerable challenge to Christian ideas. For it presented a set of political and religious alternatives to Christian understandings of the sanctity of the Holy Land. These understandings were varied and often conflicting. Catholic and Orthodox Christian thinkers were more reluctant than their Protestant counterparts to countenance the possibility of a Jewish state in the Holy Land. The ways in which the challenge of Zionism was met and understood by Christians of different denominations is one of the underlying themes of this book.

The Anglican Communion, the Protestant Churches, and the Return to Zion

Since the Reformation, an interest in the restoration of the Jews to their land has been a factor in Anglican and Protestant thought. Among the first English Christian advocates of this restoration were the seventeenth-century theologians Henry Finch and Thomas Brightman. Finch's tract *The Calling of the Jews* predicted that the Jewish people would return en masse to Palestine. Brightman's 1614 commentary on the Book of Daniel was subtitled "The restoring of the Jews and their calling to the faith of Christ after the overthrow of their enemies." Brightman saw Jewish restoration in religious and political terms. Jews would accept Christianity, the Ottoman Turks would be defeated, and Jerusalem would become the new center of a revived Christian faith. Thus, from the early seventeenth century onward, there were English Christian proponents of the Jewish return to Zion. There also were many Christian opponents of the idea. For the proponents, Jewish return was inextricably linked to hopes of the Jews' conversion to Christianity at the end of times. For the opponents, the Jews of their time were not "the true Israel," the beloved of God. The church was "the true Israel"; the Jewish people no longer had a part to play in history. This form of "replacement theology," in which the historical or "carnal" Israel is replaced by the "spiritual" Israel, was articulated forcefully in the Anglican tradition, which, on this point, agreed with Catholic doctrine.

The larger context in which we may situate these restorationist ideas is that of millennialism. Inspired by the vivid visions of the Book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse of John, this belief asserts that God's plan for the End Time is knowable and predictable. The divine plan as described in Revelation predicts a series of catastrophes, but it also promised a thousand-year reign of peace. For much of Christian history, millennialist ideas were tamed, or domesticated, and the predictions of Revelation were understood metaphorically, not historically. From the twelfth century onward, when the Christian mystic Joachim of Fiore offered a literalist reinterpretation of Revelation, many millennialist movements have based their expectations and actions on a more historicized reading of the enigmatic text of the Apocalypse of John. As the text of the Apocalypse is replete with allusions to the Hebrew Bible, the messianic idea, and the city of Jerusalem, the situation and fate of the Jews became a central element in millennialist speculation. Joachim of Fiore wrote of the return of the Jews to Zion as an essential element of the unfolding of the Eschaton, the End Time. He predicted that the events of the End Time would proceed in a well-ordered sequence: the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches would be reunited, Jews would see the Christian truth, and Christ's eternal reign would commence. Subsequent End Time enthusiasts would offer other scenarios, but common to all Apocalypse-based predictions was the insistence that events would unfold in a very specific and unalterable sequence.

Four centuries later, some Calvinist Reformers also read Revelation in a very literalist manner, most famously in identifying Rome and the papacy with the Antichrist. The English scholar Joseph Mede (1586–1638) went so far as to predict the imminent end of the papacy on the basis of the predictions of Revelation and the Book of Daniel. Prophecy was thus linked powerfully to a new Christian understanding of the unfolding of history according to God's plan.

Interest in the restoration of the Jews was also linked to Luther's concept of "Sola Scriptura" (by scripture alone); the Bible is the primary source of authority. This was one of the theological pillars of the Reformation, and it would have a profound effect in shaping the diverse phenomenon we now refer to as Evangelicalism. The Reformers emphasized the authority of the biblical texts, in contrast to the authority of the pope and the Catholic hierarchy. This shift in emphasis to biblical authority encouraged Anglicans and Protestants to ground their arguments in scripture.

For this reason, many Christian scholars undertook the study of Hebrew. This resulted in the tradition of Christian Hebraism, a tradition that still lives

on today. This intellectual endeavor was particularly strong in England; in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it took hold in the American colonies. In each of the ten American colleges founded before the American Revolution, biblical Hebrew was an essential part of the curriculum. Hebraism strengthened the American familiarity with—and identification with—the biblical narratives. One quite recognizable vestige of American Hebraism is the presence of Hebrew words on American college seals, most famously on the seals of Yale, Columbia, and Dartmouth.

Among Protestants generally, and American Protestants particularly, a key biblical theme, that "Israel" is a living people to whom "the Promised Land" was granted, was thus given a new emphasis and grounding. For centuries before the Reformation the dominant view in Catholic theology concerning the Jews had been that the church had replaced Israel in God's affections. For the most part, the theologians of the Anglican Church accepted this view. Scriptural references to "Israel" were therefore understood as allegorical references to the church of Christian believers. For some Protestant churches, however, the heretofore abstract idea of "Israel in its Land" took on a concrete meaning. In this new view, Jews, the descendants of the Hebrews of the Bible, should be restored to the Land of Israel. This was particularly true for those Protestants influenced by the dispensationalist ideas of the mid-nineteenth century. Following the teachings articulated most forcefully by John Nelson Darby, these biblical literalists asserted that history was divided into eras or "dispensations," the last of which would soon begin. "Israel" of the Bible was understood by dispensationalists as the actual Jewish people of present times, and the return of "Israel" to their land was a prerequisite of Redemption. As Joel Carpenter has noted, "Premillennialists believe that Jesus Christ will personally and bodily return to earth to defeat the forces of evil and establish the millennium, the age during which, many Christians have affirmed, God's kingdom of holiness, justice, peace and prosperity will prevail on earth for a thousand years."⁸ While earlier Christian writers had sought to sunder the ties between biblical Israel and the Jews of their own time, and Reformation theologians struggled with the ramifications of believing in a prophesied restored Israel, Darby and his dispensationalist followers sought to reaffirm the connection between Israel of the Bible and the Jewish people. This effort dovetailed with emerging Jewish Zionist thought, which emphasized the unbroken continuity of the relationship between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel. It also foreshadowed the Zionist call for a renewed emphasis on the Bible, and a decreased emphasis on rabbinic authority.

These historical and theological developments provide the background

necessary to understand a fascinating and little-known phenomenon: Between the early seventeenth century and the stirrings of political Zionism in the last decades of the nineteenth century, scores of Christians advanced plans for settlement in Palestine. Not all were obsessed with millennialist speculation. They were driven by a variety of motives, including sympathy for Jews suffering oppression and discrimination. Some Christians actually tried to implement these restorationist plans; among them were British adventurers such as Laurence and Alice Oliphant, American visionaries such as George Washington Adams, and the American Adventist prophetess Clorinda Minor. In the last years of the nineteenth century, as the Ottoman Empire weakened, some leaders of American Protestant denominations were deeply engaged in the question of how the Holy Land would be settled and governed. Their engagement was influenced by their ideas on the unfolding of history and the advent of the millennium. As Kenneth Ray Bain has noted, "Details of the belief varied considerably, but the basic approach centered on the notion that the return of the Jews to power in the Holy Land was a sign from God that time was coming to an end . . . wars and rumors of wars, social turmoil and violence, corruption and growing materialism all combined to convince many that the dire predictions from the Revelation were true."⁹

In a striking parallel to these Christian "yearnings for Zion," Jewish thinkers, beginning in the eighteenth century, were also moved by visions of divine redemption and advocated the "ascent" to Israel of small groups of Jews. Some of these Jewish visionaries embarked on small-scale settlement. For example, three hundred rabbis and their families "ascended" from Europe to Ottoman Palestine in the late eighteenth century. Along with other pious Jewish immigrants, they settled in the four holy cities: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias. Among both Jews and Christians these settlement attempts increased at times of intense messianic speculation, such as in the year 1840. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, as political Zionism emerged and Jews were able to actively participate in the public life of the United States and some countries in Western Europe, Jewish plans for Jewish settlement in Palestine were publicized and implemented.

These plans had their opponents. Most, but not all, European Orthodox rabbinical authorities opposed Zionist plans for a Jewish political entity in Palestine. Individual or small group settlements were acceptable to these Orthodox rabbis, but any larger political plans contravened the idea that Jewish redemption would come only through divine intervention. The most religiously conservative of these rabbis invoked the Talmudic legend of the Three Oaths as a way of expressing their opposition to modernity in general

and Zionism in particular. Reform rabbis were wary of Jewish nationalism for different reasons. They feared that plans for a Jewish state would undercut the political and social progress Jews had achieved in Western Europe and the United States.

The founders of the Zionist movement were keenly aware of sympathy for Zionism among some influential Catholics and Protestants. Zionist publicists wrote in *Hamaggid* and other Hebrew-language Zionist journals of earlier Christian settlement attempts, and they exhorted Jewish readers to act as bravely and resolutely as Christian Zionists had in their attempts to settle in the Land of Israel. The Adams colony of Jaffa, Clorinda Minor's colony in Artas, and the German Templer colonies of Haifa, Jaffa, and Sarona were held up as examples of courage and industriousness by Zionist writers. The seven Templer colonies, built by German Christian Pietists between 1869 and 1907, were models of efficiency and productivity. As the Israeli historian Yossi Ben-Artzi has noted, these colonies, "as the first truly planned settlements in modern Palestine, were exemplary models that inspired the local Arabs, the Turkish rulers, and most of all the Jews, who in 1882 began reaching Palestine in large numbers with a goal similar to that of the Germans: settlement in agricultural colonies."¹⁰

The United States and the Restoration of the Jews

American Protestants, from the colonial period onward, had a particular interest in plans to restore the Jews to their Promised Land. The biblical self-image of the early American colonists, a self-image reflected in the over two hundred biblical place names on the map of the United States, had a profound effect on American attitudes toward the Holy Land. By naming their towns and cities Salem, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Pisgah, Americans were declaring the New World a "biblical" area. They were also asserting an American connection to the places where Christianity originated. American scholars, foremost among them nineteenth-century biblical scholar Edward Robinson, were among the pioneers of discovery and archaeology in Palestine. Robinson, professor of sacred literature at New York City's Union Theological Seminary, traveled to Palestine in 1836 and 1852. He was convinced that one could not fully understand the Old and New Testaments without a thorough study of the land of the Bible. Robinson's five-volume opus, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mt. Sinai and Arabia Petraea*, was widely read by American and European scholars and laymen. For Robinson and his readers, the Holy Land

was a "Third Testament" without which the other Testaments could not be fully understood. Robinson, a tireless "biblical researcher," as he styled himself, articulated an American Christian yearning to study that "Third Testament" firsthand. In the introduction to his book, Robinson wrote, "As in the case of most of my countrymen, especially in New England, the scenes of the Bible had made a deep impression on my mind from the earliest childhood, and afterwards in riper years this feeling had grown into a strong desire to visit in person the places so remarkable in the history of human race."¹¹

Among Edward Robinson's discoveries was the site of Masada, the Herodian fortress described by the historian Josephus. That the mountain Robinson saw from Ein Gedi was Masada was suggested to him by his translator and traveling companion, Eli Smith. Smith, a fellow biblical researcher, was a longtime American missionary in the Levant and translator of the New Testament into Arabic. Robinson and Smith did not climb Masada, though. That honor went to another American Christian missionary, S. W. Wolcott, who investigated the site in 1842. In the 1930s, a century after Robinson's first visit to Palestine, Masada was promoted as a site of great importance for the Zionist movement. A key figure in that effort was Zionist youth movement leader Shmaria Guttman (1909–96). Guttman climbed Masada in 1933 and became convinced of the site's potential as a signifier of Zionist strength and determination. Masada, the fortress (Hebrew "Metzudah") in which Jewish zealots in rebellion against Rome committed mass suicide rather than surrender to the Tenth Roman legion, became a potent symbol of Zionism both before and after the 1948 establishment of Israel. In 1983, fifty years after Guttman climbed Masada, Israeli defense minister Moshe Dayan wrote, "Today we can point to the fact that Masada has become a symbol of heroism and of liberty for the Jewish people to whom it says: Fight to death rather than surrender; prefer death to bondage and loss of freedom."¹² In June 2008, Masada was one of the Israeli sites visited by President George W. Bush. In his address to the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, Bush quoted the Israeli maxim that "Masada shall not fall again."

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, thousands of Americans of various Christian denominations traveled to the Holy Land. Mormons and Catholics were among the most active and enthusiastic of these travelers. In 1836, the prophet and founder of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith, mentioned the actual physical return of the Jews to Zion in his dedicatory prayer at the Kirtland Temple in Ohio. Smith prayed that "Jerusalem, from this hour, may begin to be redeemed; and the yoke of bondage may begin to be broken off from the house of David." Smith understood "Zion" as both the

spiritual designation of a new American sacred space and a reference to the Zion of biblical Israel, a city that would soon be renewed. The East had its Zion, and now the West, in the United States, would have its Zion. Both Zions would experience "the literal gathering of Israel and the restoration of the ten tribes."¹³ Mormons were eager to visit Jerusalem, to which Joseph Smith had sent his emissary Orson Hyde. For centuries, Catholics had visited the Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the many other holy places throughout the Holy Land. Many of the Christian pilgrims kept diaries of their journeys, and hundreds of Palestine travel accounts were published and eagerly read by nineteenth-century audiences.

Especially influential were the nineteenth-century books about Palestine written for North American children. Titles such as Henry Osborn's *The Little Pilgrims in the Holy Land* (1861) and Hester Douglas's *The Land Where Jesus Christ Lived* (1890) were extremely popular, as was Mrs. Annie Johnstone's *Joel: A Boy of Galilee: A Story of the Time of Christ* (1895). In these accounts, entertainment went hand in hand with edification. The geography and history of biblical tales were also taught to schoolchildren in a more straightforward manner. As Edward Robinson's five-volume *Biblical Researches in Palestine* was too daunting for many teachers and students, Robinson published a more accessible work, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible, for the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (1833).¹⁴ A decade later the biblical scholar and Swedenborgian mystic Professor George Bush of New York University published *Valley of Vision; or, The Dry Bones of Israel Revived: An Attempted Proof of the Restoration and Conversion of the Jews*. Bush, in a polemic against millennialist ideas, argued that the restoration of the Jews to Palestine would occur naturally, as the result of "the affairs of the nations, or the progress of civilization." Restoration would result not from miraculous divine intervention but rather from natural developments within the divine plan. Speaking of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones of Israel revived, Bush wrote, "Nothing more is implied that it will be so ordered in Providence that motives will be furnished for such a return, appealing it may be to the worldly and selfish principles of the Jewish mind."¹⁵

The American experience of the Holy Land was not limited to reading travel accounts, whether written for children or adults. After the Civil War, the development of long-range steamship travel enabled large-scale tourism to Europe and the Middle East. Mark Twain's account of one of these early tours, told in his raucous best-selling book *The Innocents Abroad*, both publicized and satirized these "pilgrimages."

Pilgrimage and tourism were joined in grand excursions. In March of 1904, over eight hundred American Sunday school teachers embarked on the North

German Lloyd steamer *Grosser Kurfurst* for a journey to Palestine and other "mission fields" of the Middle East. The high point of the voyage was "The World Sunday School Convention in Jerusalem" held over the Easter holiday. There the American pilgrims met with their counterparts from Europe, from which six hundred delegates came to the convention. This journey left a profound impression on the visitors and on their associates back in the United States, who heard and read detailed accounts of their journey.¹⁶ Many photographs of this pilgrimage were circulated in American churches and Sunday schools.

To this day the American fascination with the Bible and the "Bible Lands" continues in many forms. Americans unable or unwilling to travel to Israel can visit the Holy Land Experience theme park in Orlando, Florida, or they can visit other Holy Land models throughout the United States. The first of these American Holy Land substitutes was built in Chautauqua, New York, in 1874. Known as Palestine Park, it drew visitors from all over the United States. Thirty years later, at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, a model of Jerusalem's Old City was constructed on the fairgrounds. To lend the exhibit an air of authenticity, hundreds of craftsmen and guides from Jerusalem were brought to St. Louis to staff the Old City replica. The model of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was among the most popular of the fair's exhibits.¹⁷ Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, hundreds of thousands of American evangelicals visit Israel annually. American Christian tourism accounts for a large part of Israel's "pilgrimage economy" (in 2007, it accounted for half of Israel's tourism), and American evangelical Christian political support is highly prized by the Israeli government.

Earlier Scholarship on Christians and Zionism

What has been the scholarly understanding of the relationship between these seemingly distinct movements, Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism? In the mid-twentieth century a few scholars began to grapple with this question. In 1953, English historian Christopher Sykes, in examining the religious background of the Balfour Declaration, noted that "so much has been written on Zionism within the last thirty years that, when producing a new essay, some apology may be thought necessary." Sykes's essay, in *Two Studies in Virtue*, was "primarily addressed to Gentile readers," for, in his words, "a very high proportion of the best Zionist books in Great Britain and America are addressed to Jewish audiences and assume a knowledge of Jewish history rare among

Gentiles who have not made detailed studies."¹⁸ From Sykes's essay we learn how deeply British foreign secretary Lord Balfour's religious beliefs influenced his political decisions, particularly on the question of a Jewish return to Palestine, which he felt would be the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Many of Zionism's supporters expressed similar sentiments. For when the Balfour Declaration was issued, Jews and Christians in large numbers responded to its support for a "Jewish national home" in Palestine with modern forms of messianic expectation. Sykes thus opened up the question of the relationships between the two Zionisms, Christian and Jewish, but in the decades that followed, the trajectory of scholarship on Zionism was in the opposite direction. It focused on Jewish Zionism. When Christian Zionism was mentioned in the emerging large body of literature on Zionism, it was assigned a peripheral role.

Two early and important exceptions to the initial scholarly neglect of Christian Zionism were the opening chapters of Nahum Sokolow's *The History of Zionism, 1600–1918*, published in 1919, and N. M. Gelber's *Zur Vorgeschichte des Zionismus* (On the prehistory of Zionism), published in 1927. Both Sokolow and Gelber were ardent Zionists who devoted their professional lives to the cause. Sokolow, and following him Gelber, lauded and described the many Christian "precursors of Zionism" who advocated the restoration of the Jews to their land. Three decades later, Franz Kobler's *The Vision Was There: A History of the British Movement for the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine* was published. But while Kobler gathered much information, he supplied little analysis. In 1978 Israeli scholar Yona Malachy published *American Fundamentalism and Israel: The Relation of Fundamentalist Churches to Zionism and the State of Israel*. Malachy's introduction notes, "No one has so far dealt with the history of Christian Zionism in a comprehensive manner."¹⁹ This was framed as the rationale for his short book, but it was a mandate his book did not fulfill, for he focused on one particular subset of fundamentalist evangelical Protestants. Among specialized studies of Protestant denominational aspects of American Christian Zionism are *American Protestantism and a Jewish State*, Hertzell Fishman's 1973 study, and Yaakov Ariel's 1991 authoritative work on dispensationalism, *On Behalf of Israel: American Fundamentalist Attitudes toward Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, 1865–1945*. Today a comprehensive study of the topic is more important than ever, especially as Christian Zionism in its various forms is now a major force in American political life.

The most detailed description of English Christian "proto-Zionism" was Barbara Tuchman's *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour*, published in 1956. Tuchman's highly influential book left its many

readers with the impression that the majority of pre-modern English churchmen were supporters of restoring the Jews to Palestine. We read little in Tuchman of opposition to such plans. But there was considerable opposition, especially in High Church circles. Among church missionaries to the Jews there was considerable opposition to a "national restoration." In 1849 the Reverend William Withers Ewbank addressed the annual meeting of the Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews. In a speech titled "The National Restoration of the Jews to Palestine Repugnant to the Word of God," Ewbank descried any tendency within the church to distinguish between Jew and Gentile. True restoration, said Ewbank, was "to restore the Jews to the true Church of God, to their own olive tree. For God's Church was once their Church. . . . It pleased Him, in his great goodness, to abolish its old Covenant by giving it a new and better one." In Ewbank's view, a national home for Jews would only encourage their resistance to the Christian message: "Let us rather beseech him . . . to restore himself to that Church which may again be his own as well as ours. We will all welcome him as a brother in Christ."²⁰ Tuchman's book, published during Israel's first decade, was itself a work of advocacy for Zionism and as such left students of the topic with the impression that advocates of Jewish restoration represented a majority opinion within what would later be known as "the chattering classes" of the English-speaking world.

Arthur Hertzberg's influential 1959 anthology *The Zionist Idea* makes no mention of Christian precursors of the Zionist idea. His "precursors" are the nineteenth-century Jewish thinkers Alkalai, Kalischer, and Hess. In his 1969 introduction to a reprinting of Sokolow's *History of Zionism*, Hertzberg pointed out that Sokolow, a representative of the Zionist movement who was hopeful of fulfilling Zionist aspirations with British imperial assistance, "set out to prove that there had been a long and previously little known tradition of British, and to some degree, of French interest in the restoration of a Jewish state in Palestine. He thus presented the Zionist demands from the Jewish side as no new idea, but rather, as a response to earlier religious and political thinking by Christians."²¹ Hertzberg thus implies that there were no actual Christian precursors; Sokolow was overstating their importance. Zionism, for Hertzberg, and most other twentieth-century historians, was a thoroughly Jewish movement, and it should be studied and analyzed as such.

This insistence on the exclusively Jewish origins of Zionism is related to the dominant trends in Zionist historiography. In an 1897 diary entry Herzl predicted that a Jewish state would come into being, "perhaps in fifty years." Herzl's startling prediction of 1897 was fulfilled, and a Jewish state was

THE
NATIONAL RESTORATION OF THE JEWS

TO

PALESTINE

REPUGNANT TO THE WORD OF GOD;

A SPEECH,

DELIVERED IN THE LECTURE HALL OF THE COLLEGIATE
INSTITUTION, IN LIVERPOOL, AT THE
ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE AUXILIARY SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIANITY AMONGST THE JEWS, OCT. 21, 1849.

The Lord Bishop of Chester

IN THE CHAIR:

BY WILLIAM WITHERS EW BANK, M.A.

MINISTER OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, IN EVERTON.

Ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα "EN.

Who hath made both ONE.—Eph. ii. 14.

LIVERPOOL: DEIGHTON AND LAUGHTON.

LONDON: F. AND J. RIVINGTON.

CAMBRIDGE: JOHN DEIGHTON.

1849.

Title page of William Withers Ewbank's speech "The National Restoration of the Jews to Palestine Repugnant to the Word of God" (Emory University Libraries)

established within fifty-one years of his envisioning it. In telling the story of the establishment of the state, Israeli historians, politicians, and educational leaders have for the most part reinforced a sense of Jewish accomplishment and separateness. That ubiquitous Israeli phrase, "After two thousand years," conveys the idea that, with a state of their own, Jews had separated from the European and Middle Eastern cultures in which they had originated and were now free to develop institutions that reflected their newfound independent Jewish identity. For this reason Zionist educators found it imperative to emphasize that the separation from "exile" and the creation of a "national home" were solely Jewish accomplishments. Furthermore, for Zionists, the State of Israel was seen as the culmination of Jewish accomplishment; it was the goal toward which Jewish history had been marching for two millennia. Separation from Christians and Christianity was the only way to insure Jewish survival. Therefore, in the prevailing ideology of the first decades of Israeli culture, Gentiles were actors in the history of Zionism only insofar as they had persecuted Jews and thereby generated the need for a Jewish state. If some Gentiles had helped pave the way, they were marginalized as rare exceptions. Their contributions were seldom mentioned and less often praised.

Overlooked in this analysis was the fact that Bible-reading Christians all over the world had for centuries thought of Palestine as the Land of Israel, as had Jews throughout the Diaspora. It was this identification that had enabled Jewish Zionists, with the help of some Christians, to turn that perception into a political reality in the half century between the First Zionist Congress and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Zionism and the Jewish-Christian Relationship

Some scholars would agree with the opinion expressed by historian Evyatar Friesel in a 2006 essay titled "Zionism and Jewish Nationalism": "The author is aware of the historical interest in certain non-Jewish quarters, especially in nineteenth-century England, toward the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land. An examination—admittedly not systematic enough—regarding the relationship between these ideas and the emergence of Zionism suggests only a very marginal and indirect influence."²² Other scholars, myself among them, have found a more direct and powerful connection between Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism. As historian of ideas Richard Popkin noted in the early 1990s, "Much of Zionism has its roots in Christian rather than Jewish doctrine."²³ Among those doctrines is the tendency in the Protestant churches

to read biblical narrative and prophecy in a more literal and historical manner than had been the tradition in either Rabbinic Judaism or in the Orthodox or Catholic Churches. Equally relevant is the millennialist trend in Protestant history. By the mid-twentieth century, three centuries of Christian enthusiasm for a return of the Jews to their land created an atmosphere in the West in which previously inchoate and unrealizable Jewish aspirations for a revived national home could take shape and find direction.

Gideon Shimoni's 1995 study *The Zionist Ideology* briefly surveys "Christian Ideas of Jewish Restoration." Shimoni points out, "No doubt, the cumulative weight of Christian restorationist ideas, particularly those appealing to the political interests of European powers, contributed to the intellectual and political atmosphere that accorded a degree of credibility to various 'proto-Zionist' proposals by Jews in the course of the nineteenth century. By the same token, they had a bearing on the history of Zionism as a movement, for they endowed some leading statesmen—Arthur James Balfour is the most famous example—with a predisposition favorable to Zionism." Shimoni's summation ends with a note of caution about overall conclusions on the significance of Christian restorationist ideas in the implementation of Zionist aims. "This is a subject," writes Shimoni, "that still awaits definitive research."²⁴

In the late nineteenth century, Theodor Herzl's vision of "a state for Jews" resonated powerfully with Christian scholars, churchmen, and diplomats. Through the good offices of Rev. William Hechler, Anglican chaplain of the British embassy in Vienna, Herzl made his first diplomatic contacts with Kaiser Wilhelm and other European rulers. Through the intervention of another prominent Christian, Professor Arminius Vambery of Budapest, Herzl met with the Turkish sultan Abdul Hamid II. On the 1997 centenary anniversary of the First Zionist Congress, Israeli historian Alex Carmel called for the reinstatement of Hechler and other Christian Zionists into Zionist history. Carmel described the absence of William Hechler from standard Zionist histories as "astonishing."²⁵

What, we might ask, was so significant about Rev. William Hechler's philo-Semitic and Zionist activities, and why are they worth recovering and recounting? In 1881 he joined Laurence Oliphant and other British notables in collecting and distributing funds for Russian and Romanian Jews victimized by the pogroms. In 1883 Hechler wrote a one-page broadside titled "The Restoration of the Jews to Palestine." He had hundreds of copies of this tract distributed in the churches and streets of London. This was over a decade before Herzl wrote *The Jewish State*. Accompanying his friend Theodor Herzl, William Hechler attended each of the early Zionist Congresses, and Hechler

continued to serve the movement for twenty-five years after Herzl's death. As Alex Carmel has suggested, "One hundred years after the First Zionist Congress, the time has come to honor all of Herzl's numerous Christian friends, especially Hechler."²⁶ Through the stories of Laurence Oliphant, William Hechler, Herbert Danby, and other Christian "lovers of Zion," *Zeal for Zion* chronicles and analyzes the relationship between "the two Zionisms," Jewish and Christian, and makes the case that they have always been inextricably bound.

Many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century English and American literary figures expressed sympathy for the rebirth of Jewish life in Palestine. Perhaps the most influential of them was George Eliot, whose novel *Daniel Deronda* had an enormous effect on British and American public opinion. When Eliot's novel was published in the United States—and soon afterward translated into Russian, German, French, Yiddish, and Hebrew—it influenced Christian and Jewish readers throughout the world. In the novel, Mordecai, Daniel Deronda's teacher, says that when Jews have a state, "our race shall have an organic center, a heart and brain to watch and guide and execute; the outraged Jew shall have a defense in the court of the nations, as the outraged Englishman or American. And the world will gain, as Israel gains. . . . Difficulties? I know there are difficulties. But let the spirit of sublime achievement move the great among our people, and the work will begin."²⁷ Among the young European Jews who were deeply influenced by *Daniel Deronda* were Eliezer Perlman (later Eliezer Ben-Yehuda), pioneer of the revival of the Hebrew language, and David Green (later David Ben-Gurion), Israel's first prime minister. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, in his autobiography, *A Dream Come True*, tells of the rabbinic education he rejected and of the secular Jewish nationalist vision that replaced it. His life task, as he saw it, would be "the restoration of Israel and its language on the land of its ancestors." To his dismay, Perlman/Ben-Yehuda's Orthodox yeshiva teachers and fellow students rejected his Zionist ideas. One yeshiva friend, though, did not reject him. Rather, he told Perlman of "an English story he had read in the monthly Russian journal 'Vestnik Evropi' in which a man was described who had a vision similar to [Perlman's] own. . . . It was the novel *Daniel Deronda*, by George Eliot." "After I read the story a few times," Perlman wrote, "I made up my mind and I acted: I went to Paris, to the source of light and the center of international politics, in order to learn and equip myself there with the information needed for my work in the Land of Israel."²⁸ George Eliot's "Zionist novel" was enthusiastically received in the small Jewish agricultural colonies in Palestine. Avshalom Feinberg, born in Gadera in 1889, read *Daniel Deronda* as a boy. It

THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS

TO PALESTINE.

אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁׁרָאֵל יִשְׁׁרָאֵל

pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

"They forget a main part of the Church's glory, who pray not daily for the Jew."—*Archbishop Leighton.*

Some points to be remembered in connection with this most important question.

I. Precursory Signs.

1. When we speak of the Restoration of Israel, we mean an event which will *not* be the future, when the Jews will confess and receive Jesus as their true Messiah, and be again in their own land. And we believe the time is *close at hand*, when God will restore His ancient people to their own land, Palestine; because—(a) there are many signs gathering quickly around us, which lead to the belief that
the Lord's coming is near; Rev. x. 23.
 "These shall be . . . signs of the latter day, which shall precede the Lord's coming, and shall be the signs of the latter day." Luke xii. 28, 29.
 and our Lord added,
 "When ye shall see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is at hand." Luke xxi. 20.
 (b) especially there is an increasing interest shown on the part of Christians and others in the land, the progress, and hopes of the Jewish people. Palestine was a land that no man could forsake, and it is not so now. "The Christian, and here every one who, for the sake of Jesus Christ, has the same aim, will be drawn to the land of the Jews, and the land shall be built up again." Ps. cii. 12, 14, 15.

II. Dispersion Fulfilled.

2. The present dispersion of the Jews among all nations, and the *destruction* of their land, are *literally foretold* in the Bible by Moses and the prophets. (Compare Lev. xxvi. 33) Deut. xxxii. 42, 43. Jer. li. 12, 13, 17, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100. Isa. lvi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100. 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was one of the books, along with Laurence Oliphant's *Land of Gilead*, that fired his young imagination and convinced him of the need for an independent and self-sufficient Jewish state. Feinberg, as a young man, was one of the heroes of *Nili*, the Jewish spy network that worked against the Turks during the First World War.

The influence of *Daniel Deronda* was not limited to Christian Zionists and Jewish secularists. When Theodor Herzl visited the Jewish community of London he was introduced to the British chief rabbi, Nathan Adler. After Herzl presented his political program to Rabbi Adler, the rabbi said to him, "That is the fundamental idea of the novel *Daniel Deronda*." Herzl said in reply, "The idea is two thousand years old, but I shall bring about its realization."²⁹ Seventy years later, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the ideological founder of Gush Emunim, the religious Zionist settler movement, told an interviewer that George Eliot was one of the few Christians who understood the religious roots of Zionism.³⁰

In the United States *Daniel Deronda* was enthusiastically received by Jews and Christians. Prestigious literary journals reviewed the novel and *Harper's* magazine serialized sections of the novel in its pages. These many examples from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show that there was strong sympathy among American Christians (primarily, but not exclusively, among Protestants) for the Zionist cause. The grounds for this sympathy was the biblically influenced perception that Palestine "belonged" to the Jewish people, even if another people, the Arabs of Palestine, were living in the land. In the United States, *The Fundamentals*, a series of essays published between 1910 and 1915 by conservative evangelical theologians, emphasized the necessity to believe in the literal truth of scripture. This helped reify the relationship between the Jews of the present and the Israelites of old. In the view of many in the Christian West, Palestine was understood to be "empty," and this emptiness should be filled by Jews, the descendants of the land's ancient biblical inhabitants. The phrase "a land without a people for a people without a land" conveyed this view in a very concise and pithy manner. The idea was first promoted by Christians. In 1853 Lord Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley-Cooper) wrote that Palestine was "a country without a nation" in search of "a nation without a country." He made this observation during the Crimean War, when the continued viability of the Ottoman Empire came into question. With the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, continued Turkish rule in Palestine came into question. In Shaftesbury's view, first expressed two decades before the Crimean War, Christians needed to support a Jewish restoration so as to prepare the stage for the Second Coming. As Shaftesbury was a

friend and relative of Henry John Temple Palmerston, the British foreign minister, his views had considerable weight. Palmerston opened a British consulate in Jerusalem in 1838. Two years later, Shaftesbury wrote that "Palmerston has already been chosen by God to be an instrument of good to His ancient people." A half century later, the phrase "a land without a people for a people without a land" was popularized by Anglo-Jewish novelist Israel Zangwill.³¹ From Zangwill's writings the phrase, translated into many languages, became a mainstay of Zionist polemics. The phrase was utilized in a number of ways, some more sophisticated than others. While some advocates of Zionism used it to imply that Palestine was empty of people, that suggestion was contradicted by the reports of many Western visitors. The phrase was most pointedly used to claim that the Arabs of Palestine had no distinct Palestinian identity. They were "Arabs," not a cohesive national group. That Palestine was not "empty" (in either the demographic or political sense) soon became clear to some Jewish observers. This was ruefully acknowledged in the telegram sent home by two rabbis from Vienna who visited Palestine in 1898, the year after the First Zionist Congress: "The bride is beautiful, but she is married to another man."³²

More explicit Jewish warnings about the presence of the Arabs of Palestine were offered by the Zionist philosopher Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginzburg) and his disciple Isaac Epstein. In his Hebrew-language essay "The Truth from the Land of Israel," Ginzburg wrote that "we tend to believe that Palestine is nowadays almost completely deserted, an uncultivated wilderness, and anyone can come there and buy as much land as his heart desires. But in reality this is not the case. It is difficult to find anywhere in the country Arab land which lies fallow." Isaac Epstein, in a 1907 article in the Hebrew-language periodical *Hashiloah*, called the Arab presence in Palestine "The Hidden Question." Epstein had settled in Palestine in 1886. After twenty years in Palestine he warned his fellow Zionists that they would have to confront a painful reality: "There resides in our treasured land an entire people which has clung to it for hundreds of years . . . the Arab, like all other men, is strongly attached to his homeland." But Epstein's project was not to assign blame. He wrote, "The Zionists' lack of attention to an issue so basic to their settlement is not intentional; it went unnoticed because they were not familiar with the country and its inhabitants, and furthermore, had no national or political awareness." Now that Zionist settlement had grown (in the twenty-five years preceding his 1907 essay), Epstein called on the movement to "distance itself from every deed tainted with plunder. . . . When we come to our homeland, we must uproot all thoughts of conquest or appropriation. Our motto must be:

Live and let live! Let us not cause harm to any nation, and certainly not to a numerous people, whose enmity is very dangerous.”³³

These expressions of concern for the future of Jewish-Arab relations did not have much resonance at the time, either among Jews or among Christians. Jewish Zionists were for the most part refugees from persecution who were engaged in building the infrastructure of a future state. Few of them paid attention to the claims of the majority population. Christian Zionists, whose motivations were more theological than practical, did not address the “Arab Question.” For the more politically and religiously conservative among these Christians, the Arabs were the interlopers in Palestine, even if they were Christian Arabs. They had no part to play in God’s plan for the Holy Land and should therefore be encouraged to emigrate. The perception that Palestine belonged to the Jewish people outweighed the reality of an Arab presence. At the beginning of the twentieth century less than 10 percent of Palestine’s population was Jewish, but many Christians, especially in the United States, thought of it as a Jewish land.

A remarkable expression of American Christian Zionist sentiment was the Blackstone Memorial, a petition sent to President Benjamin Harrison in March of 1891. Its organizer, evangelical missionary William Blackstone, was a wealthy Chicago businessman with a passion for organizing missions to Jews of his native city. Blackstone had visited Palestine in 1888 and was there convinced that the return of the Jews to Zion was ordained in God’s plan. In his understanding, it was only after the return of Jews to Zion that the stage would be set for the Second Coming. Blackstone called the Jewish people “God’s sun-dial.” “If anyone desires to know our place in God’s chronology, our position in the march of events, look at Israel.”³⁴ Signed by 413 American clergymen, business leaders, politicians, and newspaper editors, Blackstone’s petition called on President Harrison to convene an international conference in support of Jewish claims to Palestine. It called on the president to act as “a modern Cyrus to help restore the Jews to Zion.” Like the Persian king who enabled Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple in 500 B.C., the American president should act as God’s instrument to redeem the people of Israel. The Blackstone Memorial asked: “Why not give Palestine back to them again? According to God’s distribution of nations, it is their home, an inalienable possession from which they were expelled by force.”³⁵ Among the signatories were the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Melville Fuller; the heads of many major American corporations and banks (including J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller); and the editors of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times*.

A group of fifteen rabbinic and Jewish lay leaders from Chicago (where the petition was organized) asked Blackstone to add this note above their names. “Several petitioners wish it stated that the Jews have not become agriculturists because for centuries they were almost universally prohibited from owning or tilling land in the countries of their dispersion.”³⁶ Some Reform rabbis, uneasy with Zionist claims, not only refused to sign the petition but called on their coreligionists to boycott the effort. Led by Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Chicago, these rabbis felt that Zionism might weaken the claims of recently arrived Jewish immigrants to full participation in America public life. In this spirit, one Reform rabbi declared, “American is our Zion.” Rabbi Hirsch wrote, “We modern Jews do not wish to be restored to Palestine. We have given up hope in the coming of a political personal Messiah. We say, ‘the country wherein we live is our Palestine and the city wherein we dwell is our Jerusalem.’”³⁷ Hirsch warned the members of his Chicago congregation that he would brook no opposition on this issue: “As long as I am in this pulpit Sinai Congregation will be unalterably opposed to Zionism. There is no cause for Zionism in America. Let those who favor a return to Jerusalem go there if they will.”³⁸ By the 1940s this Reform unease with Zionism would weaken and for the most part disappear.

One of the most vocal opponents of the Blackstone Memorial was Selah Merrill, the U.S. consul in Jerusalem. In an 1891 report to the assistant secretary of state, Merrill dubbed Blackstone’s plan “one of the wildest schemes ever brought before the public.” According to Merrill, the memorial’s signatories “appear to be ignorant of two great facts, 1) that Palestine is not ready for the Jews and 2) that the Jews are not ready for Palestine.”³⁹

Five years after he organized the memorial, William Blackstone read Theodor Herzl’s *The Jewish State*. In the following year, 1897, Blackstone heard reports of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Blackstone was very enthusiastic that Jews were organizing a political movement, but he was dismayed that the movement’s leadership and ideology was assertively secular. Blackstone’s Zionism was based on his reading of biblical prophecy; Herzl’s was based on the need to find a refuge for the persecuted Jews of Europe. Blackstone sent Herzl a Bible in which he had underlined the passages that referred to the divine promise of the land to Israel. For many years this Bible was on display at the Herzl Memorial in Jerusalem.

Blackstone, in his criticism of secular Zionism, was expressing an attitude common among many of his conservative Christian Zionist contemporaries and successors. He saw “true Zionism” as rooted in Orthodox Judaism, not in the Conservative or Reform denominations of Judaism, and surely not in

Jewish secularism. As a missionary to the Jews, Blackstone targeted Orthodox Jewish immigrants to Chicago and other large urban centers; he felt that their deeply rooted beliefs in messianic redemption would make Orthodox Jews more open to conversion to Christianity.⁴⁰ During World War I, Blackstone joined with American Jewish Zionist leaders, foremost among them Louis Brandeis, to issue a new call for support for a Jewish state in Palestine. The 1916 the Blackstone Memorial was signed by hundreds of prominent Americans and sent to President Wilson. Among the signatories were the heads of the large Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian ministerial associations. In contrast to the 1891 memorial, of which there were few Jewish signatories, the 1916 memorial included the names of scores of Jewish public figures. In the quarter century since Blackstone first penned his call for international support for a Jewish state, some Jews had entered American public life, and Zionism had moved into the Jewish mainstream. But it would be decades before Zionism actually became that mainstream; that would only happen in the aftermath of World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel.

The gratitude that Zionist leaders felt toward the organizer of the memorial was expressed in a 1916 letter from philanthropist Nathan Straus to William Blackstone. Straus conveyed to Blackstone the thanks of Louis D. Brandeis, Zionist leader and later U.S. Supreme Court justice: "Mr. Brandeis is perfectly infatuated with the work you have done along the lines of Zionism. It would have done your heart good to have heard him assert what a valuable contribution to the cause your document is. In fact he agrees with me that you are the Father of Zionism, as your work antedates Herzl."⁴¹ Blackstone remained active in missionary work—and in Zionist activities—until his death at age ninety-four in 1935. In his writings he continued to criticize Jewish secularism, which he saw as an impediment to both full Zionist success and eventual Jewish conversion to Christianity.

In the 1930s, the Nazi rise to power and the subsequent worsening situation of the Jews of Europe made the implementation of Zionist aims all the more urgent. Protestant groups in the United States reacted in different ways to this threat. The leading Protestant intellectual journal the *Christian Century* was skeptical about reports of German atrocities against Jews. Once the proof of these atrocities was demonstrated in 1943, the journal still withheld its approval for a refuge in Palestine for the Jews of Europe. Among the most eloquent and forceful voices for the establishment of a Jewish state was liberal Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr argued against the *Christian Century's* critique of Zionism, a critique endorsed by many of his colleagues in the clergy. Niebuhr was one of the leaders of the American

Christian Palestine Committee, a pro-Zionist group that had hundreds of members. His support for Zionism was couched in decidedly nontheological terms. He wrote, "I belong to a Christian group in this country who believe that the Jews have a right to a homeland. They are a nation, scattered among the nations of the world. They have no place where they are not exposed to the perils of minority status."⁴² After World War II and the shocking revelations about the murder of two-thirds of Europe's Jews, there was a great surge of American public support for Zionism, support expressed in the public reaction to the United States' immediate diplomatic recognition of Israel. A 1948 opinion poll concluded that 80 percent of the American public favored the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. But the editors and readers of the *Christian Century* were not among that 80 percent. Rather than recognize that there was grassroots American Protestant sympathy for Zionism, the journal attributed President Truman's decision to recognize Israel to "the New York vote"—code for the Jewish vote.⁴³

Reading the *Christian Century's* articles in the light of later developments, it seems that these reservations about creating a Jewish state were the opinions of a small elite. As Truman biographer David McCullough has noted, Truman's motives in granting Israel diplomatic recognition were both political and religious. Writing of the 1948 elections, McCullough noted that "beyond the so-called 'Jewish vote' there was the country at large, where popular support for a Jewish homeland was overwhelming. As would sometimes be forgotten, it was not just American Jews who were stirred by the prospect of a new nation for the Jewish people, it was most of America."⁴⁴

In 1948 President Truman, in keeping with American public opinion, granted Israel diplomatic recognition despite the protestations of many senior officials in the U.S. State Department, Secretary of State George Marshall among them. Though historians are divided on the reasons for Truman's decision, they are agreed that among the deciding factors was Truman's sincere belief in the accuracy and historicity of biblical narrative and prophecy. In 1953, only a year after he left the presidency, Truman affirmed explicitly his biblical understanding of the United States' recognition of Israel. In a conversation at New York City's Jewish Theological Seminary, the rabbinical school of Conservative Judaism, Truman was introduced as "the man who helped create the State of Israel." Truman, visibly moved by that statement, said in response, "What do you mean helped create? I am Cyrus, I am Cyrus."⁴⁵

Truman's response evoked the words of the Blackstone Memorial of 1891, which called on President Harrison to act as "a modern Cyrus to help restore the Jews to Zion." Truman's successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was not

known as an enthusiastic supporter of the State of Israel, but it is clear that he, too, thought of modern Israel in biblical terms. Both in private conversation and in his diary, Eisenhower referred to Israelis as “Israelites,” and it seems that he imagined that these modern Israelites were deeply religious. When an aide explained to the president that the Israeli leadership was assertively secular, he was astonished.⁴⁶ This “biblical” reading of modern Israel also surfaced in American popular culture. Ten years after Israel’s establishment and five years after Truman’s Cyrus comment, Leon Uris published his novel *Exodus*, which became a great American bestseller. Within two years of its publication, *Exodus* was made into a successful Hollywood film by director Otto Preminger. One of the novel’s two central protagonists, Kitty Fremont, is an American Christian woman whose Zionist sympathies stemmed from an encounter with Jewish survivors of World War II. She serves as a nurse on the refugee boat *Exodus* and later, in 1948, in British Mandate Palestine. There she falls in love with Zionist leader Ari Ben Canaan. When Kitty meets members of the newly organized Jewish army, she has “an electrifying revelation”: “This was no army of mortals. These were the ancient Hebrews! These were the faces of Dan and Reuben and Judah and Ephraim! These were Samsons and Deborahs and Joabs and Sauls. It was the army of Israel, and no force on earth could stop them for the power of God was within them!”⁴⁷ This fictional evocation of the idea that Israel’s nascent army was the army of biblical Israel reborn had its real-life counterpart in the career of Orde Wingate, a British officer who helped shape the ethos and tactics of the Haganah. This was the Jewish fighting force that would become the formative element in the Israel Defense Forces. Thus Christian Zionism’s contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel went beyond “theological support” to encompass concrete, practical contributions, such as military planning and assistance, as well as providing models of successful agricultural settlement and technological innovation.

Jewish Self-Defense

Along with the idea of the Promised Land, another essential element of political Zionism was the idea of Jewish self-defense. This idea was shaped by the experience of the victims of the Russian pogroms of the 1880s. A rallying call of the early Zionists was that a Jewish territory in Palestine would enable Jews to defend themselves against their enemies. Herzl, though, did not feature this call in his writings. In his utopian view, the future Jewish state

would have no need for a standing army; a police force would suffice. The Arabs of Palestine, benefiting from the Jewish presence in their land, would find no cause for hostility toward Jews. In Herzl’s 1902 novel *Old-New Land*, he envisioned the Jewish state as it would be in 1923. In that state, Arabs would be satisfied, prosperous citizens. In the novel, the Arab leader Rechid Bey tells a visiting Englishman that his people are “better off than at any time in the past. They support themselves decently, their children are healthier and are being taught something. Their religion and ancient customs have in no way been interfered with. They have become more prosperous—that is all. . . . The Jews have enriched us. Why should we be angry with them? They dwell among us like brothers. Why should we not love them?”⁴⁸

The actual situation was much harsher. Armed conflict between Arabs and Jews escalated in the first decades of the twentieth century, culminating in large-scale Arab attacks on Jewish colonists in 1921, 1929, and 1936. These attacks were the stimulus for the formation of a succession of Jewish self-defense forces. The rhetoric of Jewish self-defense tied the Arab attackers to the Christian attackers in the Russian and Romanian pogroms. The Kishinev pogrom of 1903, which surfaces in the narratives of *Zeal for Zion* a number of times, was a formative event in the development of the movement for Jewish self-defense. Kishinev’s Jews had been helpless in the face of the attacks; Palestine’s Jews would not remain helpless, they would fight off their attackers and protect those parts of Palestine that had been “redeemed.”

In the late 1930s, Orde Wingate, a charismatic Christian Zionist, catalyzed and modernized the self-defense of the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine. Wingate tied the concept of Jewish self-defense to the biblical narratives of conquest and settlement. Just as Joshua and the Israelites conquered Canaan, and Joshua’s successors, the Judges, defended the Israelites against enemies within and without, the modern “Israelites” would take back and then defend their ancestral patrimony. Called “Hayedid,” “the friend,” by Chaim Weizmann and other Zionist leaders, Orde Wingate is memorialized in a number of Israeli institutions, among them the Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sports, in Netanya.

In 1936 Wingate was a high-ranking intelligence officer in the British army. His grandfather, William Wingate, had dedicated his life to missions to the Jews. Orde was born in India, where his parents, members of the Plymouth Brethren, were Christian missionaries, and as a youngster he had been imbued with an intense sense of identification with the Hebrews of the Bible. But, as he noted when he was first assigned to British forces in Palestine, he had never met a Jew before arriving there. In the British army, the young

Wingate was an excellent soldier and linguist, mastering Arabic before he was thirty. In contrast to other Arabists in British intelligence, Wingate favored the Jews of Palestine over the Arabs. “Long before I reached Palestine,” Wingate said in the early 1940s, “I knew what the Jews were seeking, understood what they needed, sympathized with their aims, and knew they were right.”⁴⁹ Wingate’s training in Arabic enabled him to learn Hebrew quickly. He soon read the Bible, with which he was deeply familiar, in Hebrew. He befriended the Zionist leadership and was introduced to the leaders of its clandestine military wing. Wingate set up a training program for the commando units of the Jewish military force, the Haganah. He trained the force’s “night squads.” These units developed into the Palmach, a force much feared by Israel’s Arab enemies. Wingate addressed his trainees as if they were the warriors of the ancient Israelites. As his biographer noted, at these training sessions for Jewish sergeants, “it is no exaggeration to say that Wingate felt like a soldier of the Old Testament too.”⁵⁰ Moshe Dayan, defense minister during the 1967 war, was a trainee in Wingate’s “Course for Jewish Sergeants” held at Kibbutz Ein-Harod in the late 1930s. In 1954 Dayan said to Wingate’s biographer Leonard Mosley, “There were many men who served with him in Ein Harod who later became officers in the Israeli Army which fought and defeated the Arabs, but they were not the only ones who benefited from this training. In some sense, every leader of the Israeli Army, even today, is a disciple of Wingate. He gave us our technique, he was the inspiration of our tactics, he was our dynamic.”⁵¹

THE CHRISTIAN ZIONIST roots of Wingate’s commitment to Jewish self-defense were not obscured or forgotten, either by Wingate or by others. Wingate, brought up in a Plymouth Brethren family, attributed these ideas to childhood influences. He said of his mother: “She taught me that I must live by the Bible, and that I must help the prophecies of the Bible to come true. It was she who told me to befriend the Jews, and help them to fulfill the biblical prophecy and return to Palestine.”⁵²

Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, and Israel

Support for Israel is strong among evangelical Christians generally; among churches self-described or described by outsiders as “fundamentalist,” that support is often quite passionate and unambivalent. The meanings of both the terms “evangelical” and “fundamentalist” are open to constant reinterpretation

and reevaluation. The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals notes that “the term ‘Evangelicalism’ is a wide-reaching definitional ‘canopy’ that covers a diverse number of Protestant groups.”⁵³ One prominent scholar of American religion, while pointing out that “defining evangelicalism has become one of the biggest problems in American religious historiography,” goes on to describe those beliefs and practices that bind evangelicals together. “I see Evangelicalism as a movement of spiritual renewal which is grounded in certain theological convictions . . . and a commitment to the basic teachings of the Protestant Reformation: the scriptures are true, Jesus is the Son of God, salvation is rooted in grace (not works), and conversion implies a commitment to a life of holiness. All (are) linked to a spirit of renewal—of the individual, the church and the world.”⁵⁴

The first of these commitments, that “the scriptures are true” is the bedrock of evangelical support for the State of Israel. As approximately 30 percent of the American public may be identified as evangelical, one can see how belief in the historical accuracy of scripture might affect perceptions of foreign policy, especially on issues related to the Middle East in general and to Israel and the Palestinians in particular. The influence of these ideas on the American public is suggested in the results of national surveys of religious belief. According to a July 2005 survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 78 percent of Americans view the Bible as God’s word, while 35 percent say that everything in the Bible is literally true. Over 40 percent of Americans believe that Israel was given to the Jewish people by God. Most significantly for the study of Christian Zionism is that “more than one-in-three Americans (thirty-five percent) say that Israel is part of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy about the second coming of Jesus.” That American political attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict are related to this biblical worldview is further suggested by the Pew Center’s overall findings concerning support for Israel: “Fifty-two percent said they sympathized more with Israel, compared with eleven percent who sympathized more with the Palestinians.”⁵⁵

Thus, while some evangelicals might support Israel out of a worldview influenced by a literal reading of the biblical narratives, the subcategory of fundamentalists, particularly those under the sway of dispensationalism, link the fate of the State of Israel to the unfolding destiny of all humanity, a destiny in which, in their understanding, the State of Israel has a pivotal role to play. Both Evangelicalism, with its origins in the eighteenth century, and its subset, Fundamentalism, with its origins in the early twentieth, were tied in their earliest forms to a belief in the literal fulfillment of biblical prophecy, espe-

cially as regards the millennium. The eventual conversion of a remnant of the Jews to Christianity and the reestablishment of a Temple in Jerusalem were essential elements in a wide array of prophecy beliefs.

The term “fundamentalism,” first coined in 1920, was borrowed from a twelve-volume set of essays, *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, published between 1910 and 1915. The essays, written by a group of conservative Protestant theologians, represented a reaction against the “threats” of modernity. Among these perceived threats were the teaching of the theory of evolution, the increasing acceptance of biblical criticism, and the rise of liberal theologies in the mainstream Protestant denominations. In response, the writers of *The Fundamentals* “criticized liberal theological beliefs, defended cardinal evangelical doctrines, upheld older models of Protestant spirituality, and reaffirmed evangelism’s preeminence among the church’s tasks.”⁵⁶ Copies of each volume were widely distributed throughout the United States.

The Fundamentals called on Christians to accept the historical accuracy of all of scripture:

[I]t is an essential element in a tenable doctrine of Scripture, in fact the core of the matter, that it contains a record of a true supernatural revelation; and that is what the Bible claims to be—not a development of man’s thoughts about God, and not what this man and that one came to think about God, how they came to have the ideas of a Jehovah or Yahveh, who was originally the storm-god of Sinai, and how they manufactured out of this the great universal God of the prophets—but a supernatural revelation of what God revealed Himself in word and deed to men in history.⁵⁷

As Genesis records God’s promise of Canaan to the Hebrew people, and as the Hebrew prophets predicted the return of that people to their land, believers were to accept these promises in the most literal fashion. As *The Fundamentals* state, “The Book of Genesis is not authoritative if it is not true. For if it is not history, it is not reliable and if it is not revelation, it is not authoritative.”⁵⁸ Since the New Testament emphasizes these Old Testament promises of a restored Israel, and links their fulfillment to the Second Coming, believers in a literalist understanding of scripture felt called upon to support Zionism. Evangelicals influenced by this body of fundamentalist ideas saw in the history of the twentieth century the fulfillment of biblical promise and prophecy. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration, stating that the British government “supports the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine,” and the subsequent conquest of Jerusalem were understood by many

American evangelicals as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Thirty years later, the British departure from Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of Israel in 1948 were viewed in a similar light. Twenty years after that, the 1967 war was read in the same circles as the culmination of a series of modern-day “miracles.”

The resurgence of European anti-Semitism in the 1930s was understood by fundamentalists as a sign of the imminent End Time. As one astute observer of American fundamentalism has noted, “The most astonishing sign of the times for fundamentalists, and the one which they were most ready to explain in prophetic terms, was the rise of anti-Semitism and the widespread persecution of the Jews.”⁵⁹ Fundamentalists generally and dispensationalists most particularly read rising anti-Semitism as the sign of “Jacob’s Tribulation,” a reference to the prophecy of Jeremiah on the reunification of Israel and Judah and their restoration to their land: “I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their ancestors and they shall take possession of it” (Jeremiah 30:3). That return, Jeremiah goes on to prophesy, will entail great suffering. In a vivid image, the Hebrew prophet sees Israel suffering like a woman in labor: “Alas! That day is so great that there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be rescued from it” (30:7). As we shall see in Chapter 6, Jacob’s trouble, or “tribulation,” would assume a central place in the Book of Revelation and in End Time predictions and speculation based on that book. In the dispensationalist predictions that stemmed from the teachings of John Nelson Darby and were popularized in the immensely successful *Left Behind* series, a set of twelve novels published in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, “Jacob’s Trouble,” or the Tribulation, is preceded by the Rapture to heaven of true believers in Jesus. During the seven years of Tribulation, Israel will form an alliance with the Antichrist, the representative of evil. But some Jews will see through the Antichrist’s plans, evangelize for Jesus, and facilitate his return. Jesus’s return will signal the end of evil and Satan, its representative, and will inaugurate the thousand-year reign of peace.

Particularly devoted to political Zionism were those conservative Protestants influenced by the emergence of fundamentalist ideas in the first decades of the twentieth century. As Alan Wolfe noted in the October 2000 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, “The terms ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘evangelical’ are sometimes conflated, because the movements have common origins.”⁶⁰ In 1963 historian of ideas Richard Hofstadter had challenged the leaders of the fundamentalist movement to become more engaged with intellectual pursuits. He wrote of “the intellectual disaster of fundamentalism.”⁶¹ In the past half century scholars educated in the conservative evangelical traditions have risen to Hof-

stadter's challenge and have situated the study of American Evangelicalism within the highest reaches of American academic life. Three generations of scholars have now fully entered into and engaged with American academia, and they have produced an important body of work that represents the diversity and richness of evangelical beliefs. *Zeal for Zion* draws on the best of that scholarship. These scholars describe fundamentalists as a subset of evangelicals, and they caution us against ascribing fundamentalist beliefs to all who are affiliated with the very wide, diverse groupings of American evangelicals, who comprise a third of the American population.

Of the eighty million or so American evangelicals, between nine and ten million adults are fundamentalists influenced by dispensationalism.⁶² Dispensationalists understand all of history as a progression of "dispensations," or eras. The Old and New Testaments told the story of the first dispensations. Subsequent world history was mapped by the preachers of this tradition onto an unfolding historical schema that would inaugurate the millennium—the thousand-year reign of Christ. Dispensationalists are premillennialists; they believe that Jesus will return *before* the millennium. Therefore, his return may be expected at any moment. This distinguishes dispensationalists from postmillennialists, who believe that it is humanity's role to bring the millennium through personal and social change and that at the millennium's end, Jesus will return to a world already on the path to redemption. Thus, broadly speaking, we might characterize premillennialists as pessimistic about the perfectibility of human society, while postmillennialists are decidedly optimistic about our capacity to improve ourselves and our societies.

The origins of dispensationalism lie in nineteenth-century English religious history, when a dissenting group, the Plymouth Brethren, sought the key to unfolding historical events in a hyper-literal reading of biblical prophecy. Their most influential preacher was John Nelson Darby (1800–1882). Darby, building on earlier Protestant millennialist ideas, taught that all history was divided into periods or "dispensations" and that in each period Christians had thus far failed to redeem themselves, despite God-given opportunities to do so. According to Darby, humanity was soon to face the final period of history, "the kingdom"; this was its ultimate chance for redemption. The unfolding of history would reveal that God's plan for humanity had two aspects. One plan concerned Christians; the other concerned Jews, who retained a degree of chosen-ness in God's eyes. In the final judgment, the remaining Jews would be "brought to Christ." And they would act as agents of evangelization for all humanity. The parents of Orde Wingate, the British officer who helped shape the future Israeli army, were members of the Ply-

mouth Brethren. In the United States, Darby's ideas were popularized and spread in Cyrus Scofield's *Scofield's Reference Bible*. First published by Oxford University Press in 1909, this Bible, of which millions of copies have been sold, became "the most significant premillennialist publication in the twentieth century."⁶³ In the early editions of this Bible, each event of the narratives was assigned a precise date. Next to the first verses of Genesis was the date 4004 B.C., the date calculated by Bishop James Ussher in the seventeenth century as the "beginning of the world." Scofield emphasized the importance of the Jewish restoration to Palestine in both his edition of the Bible and his prophetic writings. In the first edition of his *Reference Bible*, Scofield wrote that "Israel regathered from all nations, restored to her own land and converted, is yet to have her greatest earthly exaltation and glory." In his *Addresses on Prophecy* Scofield wrote, "Upon the sacred soil of Palestine God has decreed the reconstitution of the nation of Israel."⁶⁴ In editions published since 1948, the *Scofield Reference Bible's* notes emphasized the connection between biblical prophecy and its "fulfillment" in the State of Israel. Tim LaHaye, coauthor of the *Left Behind* series, has acknowledged Scofield's influence on his own work. The opening paragraph of LaHaye's 1999 *Revelation Unveiled* notes, "Almost one hundred years ago the author of the *Scofield Reference Bible* said in his notes on Revelation, 'Doubtless, much which is designedly obscure to us will be clear to those for whom it was written as the time approaches.' Most prophecy scholars believe that time is at hand, and many things are clearer today than they were in Dr. Scofield's day."⁶⁵

Yaakov Ariel has noted that dispensationalism "meshed well with the fundamentalist view, which criticized the prevailing cultural trend in society and offered an alternative philosophy of history to the liberal postmillennialist notions that prevailed in American Christianity at the time."⁶⁶ For dispensationalist Christian "prophecy believers," Zionism was as important to Christians as it was to Jews, for the unfolding events of the End Time were, according to prophecy, linked to the Jewish return to Zion and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.

In mid-twentieth-century America, belief in the imminent End Time, a belief that crossed the denominational boundaries between the Protestant churches, was spread by radio and television broadcasts. As Paul Boyer has noted in *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, "Prophetic belief was disseminated in these years by American's omnipresent religious broadcasters, including luminaries such as Jerry Falwell of Virginia, Michigan's Jack van Impe, Oral Roberts of Tulsa, and schools of Southern California electronic preachers."⁶⁷ The 1948 establishment of the

State of Israel and the 1967 war (known in Israel as the Six-Day War) were understood by many American evangelical preachers as the fulfillment of prophecy. In the early 1980s, as the American Christian Right gained political influence and power in the halls of government, the leaders of the movement articulated their vigorous support for Israeli government policy. The 1979 founding document of the Moral Majority, established by Jerry Falwell, highlighted support for Israel. For large groups of evangelical Christians, support for Israel was thus framed as a moral and religious cause as much as a policy issue. As *Zeal for Zion* demonstrates, a similar, though surely not identical, process took place in the American Jewish community. The proclamation and consolidation of Israeli statehood was thought of as a “miracle” by many American Jews, though one would be hard-pressed to say that the word “miracle” was used with theological intent or precision. In the second half of the twentieth century, and especially since the 1967 and 1973 wars, a more religious Jewish understanding of Israel’s “miracle” has emerged. Among American Jews, support for the State of Israel has long been thought of as a Jewish obligation; more recently that support has taken on a religious aspect.

Within the Jewish population of the State of Israel, the euphoric and religiously inflected response to the 1967 victory brought about a new political-military situation in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the war, the pre-1967 pragmatic approach of Israel’s leadership was challenged by a resurgent Jewish messianism. The extended post-1967 stalemate between Israel and its Arab enemies enabled the rapid empowerment of the settler movement. As historian Arye Naor noted in the *Journal of Israeli History*, “The longer the stalemate continued the more difficult it became to detach Israelis from the romantic, mystical experience of reunification with their past as expressed in the holding and settling of biblical lands.”⁶⁸ Many American Jews, especially those belonging to Orthodox communities, were inspired by these religious ideals and were moved to support or join the activities of the settler movement.

Among evangelical Christians as among American Jews, a religious understanding of current events, and especially of Middle Eastern events, seemed to cross denominational and regional lines. As Paul Boyer has noted, “While prophecy belief may be somewhat more pervasive in the South, in the post-World War Two years and certainly since 1970 it was clearly a national, not a strictly regional phenomenon. . . . These beliefs pervaded the United States culture. As the twentieth century drew to a close, many millions of Americans of all races, regions, and socioeconomic levels embraced them.”⁶⁹

Today, early in the twenty-first century, the most widespread expression of dispensationalist ideas is to be found in the books, films, and internet sites of

the *Left Behind* series. The series has sold over sixty-five million copies. The appeal of these books is widespread; they speak to a very diverse readership, a readership that extends far beyond the ranks of dispensationalist believers. A survey by the Barna Group found that one in four Americans was aware of the *Left Behind* books and that 9 percent of the American general public had read at least one of the novels in the series.⁷⁰ The dispensationalist ideas expressed in these books represent the beliefs of a small group of conservative fundamentalist thinkers. But the appeal of these End Time narratives seems so powerful as to overcome theological differences. In each of the *Left Behind* novels, Israel, Israelis, and American Jews play a pivotal role. In the final chapter of *Zeal for Zion*, we take a closer look at the *Left Behind* novels.

But End Time speculation is only one aspect of Christian Zionism; American Christians, like American Jews, have a wide variety of attitudes toward Israel. The majority of evangelicals do not subscribe to dispensationalism; nevertheless they are moved to support Israel, for they see its establishment as the fulfillment of the biblical promise. The State of Israel is for many Christians of all denominations a proof that God continues to act in history. As *Zeal or Zion* demonstrates, this attitude can also be found among those American Christians who are critical of Israeli government policies. For Christian criticism of Israel is often couched in religious, moralistic terms. While Israeli government policies in the Territories may have earned the criticism they have attracted, the tone of such criticism is markedly different from that used in condemnations of other international policies. For, among Christians, a people representing God’s hand in history are expected to act morally. If Israel does not do so, it must be chastised and challenged to improve its political behavior. This sensitive issue has come to the fore in discussions between American Jewish leaders and the heads of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). A June 2008 document published by that church identified the State of Israel as “the oppressive force in the Israeli-Palestinian situation.” This led to a statement by the leaders of three Jewish denominations—Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist—dubbing the Presbyterian document “a new low-point in Presbyterian-Jewish relations.”⁷¹

After 1967 and especially since the outbreaks of the first and second intifadas, the more liberal Protestant denominations became increasingly critical of Israeli policies, and some Protestant denominations have initiated campaigns to divest from American companies that work with Israel, particularly from American corporations that sell equipment used by the Israeli military in the West Bank and Gaza. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Methodist Church have been particularly active in this area. More recently, the

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America has taken up this cause. Similarly, there are politically liberal evangelicals who have condemned Israeli policies in the Territories. In July of 2002, Jim Wallis, editor of the liberal journal *Sojourners*, published a letter to President Bush calling on the president “to provide the leadership necessary for peacemaking in the Middle East by vigorously opposing injustice, including the continued unlawful and degrading Israeli settlement movement.” Signed by over forty evangelical pastors, the letter pointed out that “the American evangelical community is not a monolithic bloc in full and firm support of present Israeli policy.”⁷² But as the political trends of the George W. Bush years demonstrated, this was a minority political opinion, and one that did not gain much traction among American evangelicals.

In October 2008, the National Council of Churches of Christ, which includes more than 100,000 churches belonging to thirty-five different church groups and denominations, published a brochure titled “Why We Should Be Concerned about Christian Zionism.” The brochure offers reasons why Christian Zionism, “as narrowly defined . . . in beliefs which consider the state of Israel to be divinely ordained and scripturally determined with a central role in ushering in the end of history,” causes immediate concern. The first reasons given are that Christian Zionism “is a movement with negative consequences for Middle East peace” and that the movement “fosters fear and hatred of Muslims and non-Western Christians.”⁷³

Since Vatican II, the American Catholic community, especially its hierarchy, has been generally supportive of Israel. As I point out in Chapter 4, many American Catholics opposed the Vatican’s decision to withhold diplomatic recognition from Israel, a reluctance that was not overcome until 1994. (By that time, Israel had been recognized by 144 states.) The Catholic legal scholar Father Robert Drinan, author of *Honor the Promise: America’s Commitment to Israel*, was one of the Jewish state’s most enthusiastic supporters during his tenure in the House of Representatives in the 1970s. The Vatican opposed his activism on this and other issues. The Drinan case served to highlight the tensions between the Vatican and American Catholics.



Ambivalence and Enthusiasm

The Jewish Zionist–Christian Zionist relationship, like the Jewish-Christian relationship of which it is a part, has always been fraught with ambivalence. British foreign secretary Lord Balfour, who described himself as “an ardent

Zionist,” was not an admirer of Jews in general or of the British Jewish community in particular. As one of his biographers noted, “In common with many Zionists of his time, both Jew and Gentile, he accepted many of the allegations made against Jews by anti-Semites.”⁷⁴ Other Christian Zionists, including some in the leadership of fundamentalist churches influenced by dispensationalism, had a darker, more conspiratorial view of the Jewish role in history. In the early 1930s the popular American evangelical preacher Arno Gaebelein cited the infamous forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as proof of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy poised to control world affairs. This forgery, circulated in 1902 by the Russian intelligence services, claimed to be a secret record of meetings of Jewish leaders. Here Gaebelein clashed with the view of William Blackstone, who had earlier asserted that the *Protocols* were a forgery. Gaebelein’s fear of a “Jewish conspiracy” did not stop him from preaching that the aims of the Zionist movement were divinely ordained and directed, as the imminent return of Jesus was dependent on the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy that the Jews return to their land. But Gaebelein felt that while the aim of Zionism was commendable, the Zionist movement, assertively secular, was “displeasing to God.” Gaebelein devoted his considerable financial and organizational resources to converting Jews to Christianity. Like William Blackstone, he felt that Orthodox Jews were the best candidates for conversion to Christianity. They would, he was sure, at the time of “Jacob’s Tribulation” be witnesses for the Christian truth. Until that time comes, efforts should be made to “bring them to Christ.” His conviction that John Nelson Darby’s prophecy teachings were true led Gaebelein to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church, which, he asserted, had become too liberal. Gaebelein was one of the seven consulting editors of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, and in this way he influenced fundamentalist perceptions of the relationship between biblical history and current events. At the same time, he was for a time America’s most vocal and prominent Christian supporter of Zionist aims.⁷⁵ For observers of today’s fundamentalist evangelical Christian Zionism, this stark ambivalence toward Jews, an ambivalence still apparent in the writings and sermons of some of today’s American fundamentalist preachers, is troubling. Despite the impassioned and highly organized advocacy of fundamentalist Christian Zionism’s supporters, many in the American Jewish community are still unsure about the religious and political implications of fundamentalist support for Israel—and many Americans of all religious denominations and secular persuasions want to know more about it.

The six narratives in *Zeal for Zion* relate the histories of the two Zionisms while at the same time reflecting on the complexities of the Christian-Jewish

relationship. In each chapter we encounter varying forms of Zionism, and changing forms of Judaism and Christianity. The narratives are presented in chronological order and draw on literary, religious, and historical materials. Chapter 1, on the encounter between Naphtali Herz Imber, the author of *Hatikvah* (which became the Israeli national anthem), and Laurence Oliphant, British novelist, diplomat, and journalist, is set in Ottoman Palestine in the 1880s. Chapter 2, on Theodor Herzl and his friend Rev. William Hechler is set in the European salons, embassies, and diplomatic missions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Canon Herbert Danby of Jerusalem's St. George's Cathedral (and later professor of Hebrew at Oxford) is the central figure of Chapter 3. Danby moved to Jerusalem in 1919 and lived in the Holy City until 1936. His professional and personal relationship with Hebrew University scholar and Revisionist Zionist thinker Joseph Klausner exemplifies many of the issues that beset Christians and Jews attempting to work together in British Mandate Palestine.

The remarkable change in the Vatican's attitude toward Zionism and the State of Israel is the focus of Chapter 4. That chapter examines the writings on Zionism of two prominent Catholic thinkers, G. K. Chesterton and Jacques Maritain, and describes the pilgrimages to the Holy Land of two popes, Paul VI in 1964 and John Paul II in 2000. One of the themes that arises in that chapter is the difference between the Vatican's often inimical official stance toward the State of Israel and the positive attitudes of individual Catholics toward the Jewish state. Chapter 5 tells of three modern literary masters, Jorge Luis Borges, Robert Graves, and Vladimir Nabokov, each of whom were deeply interested in the modern history of the Jews and the emergence of the State of Israel. Borges and Graves made pilgrimages to Jerusalem; Nabokov yearned to visit Israel, but it was a journey he was never to make; his plan to visit Jerusalem was cut short by his final illness. Chapter 6, on the Jewish settler movement and American Christian fundamentalists, takes the reader up to the present time. Within the context of both American and Israeli religious history it tells the story of this unexpected relationship between "fundamentalists" of two different religions.

The areas of study that *Zeal for Zion* touch on—Christian-Jewish relations, the history of Zionism, and the clashing narratives of the Arab-Israeli conflict—are fraught with controversy. The emotions about these subjects run high; a book that touches on all three of these topics will no doubt generate strong responses. The public controversy surrounding the publication of Walt and Mearsheimer's *The Israel Lobby* (2007) is a recent example. That book fails to take into account the degree to which American perceptions of the Arab-

Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts are influenced by the centrality of the Bible's place in American culture. Walt and Mearsheimer refer to an earlier American "biblically inspired fascination with the Holy Land and the role of Judaism in its history." Surprisingly, the authors then proceed to dismiss this central factor: "It is a mistake to see this history of modest and for the most part private engagement as the taproot of America's role in the region since World War II, and especially its extraordinary relationship with Israel today."⁷⁶ In contrast, *Zeal for Zion* aims to uncover the deep Jewish and Christian backgrounds of Zionism and place them in historical context.

Zeal for Zion, which focuses on the Jewish and Christian understandings of Zionism and Israel seeks to be nuanced in its portrait of the history of modern Israel. In this sense it is closest in spirit to Mark Tessler's 1994 book, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Tessler notes that "many on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict find it difficult to take the opposing side seriously, not in military or political terms, of course, but as a people with legitimate rights and valid aspirations. On both sides there are those who insist on delegitimizing or even demonizing their adversary, as if the rightness of their cause were justified primarily by the villainy of the opposing party and only secondarily by their own ideals and achievements."⁷⁷ Concerning the last century of Holy Land history, Tessler and other observers have noted that there are two conflicting narratives, one Israeli Jewish and the other Palestinian Arab. *Zeal for Zion* adds another dimension to the story: a description and analysis of Christian narratives about the same contested and "much promised" land. As I have pointed out in a review essay in *American Jewish History*,⁷⁸ books on Christian Zionism, like much of the large bibliography on Israel, are quite partisan, with supporters of Israel praising Zionism and Israel's critics vilifying it. In *Zeal for Zion*, I aspire to describe and analyze the Christian encounter with Zionism in a nonpartisan, engaging, and illuminating manner.