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AN UNEXPECTED ALLIANCE: CHRISTIAN ZIONISM AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In 1840, the leader of the evangelical party in Britain, Lord Ashley Cooper, the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, petitioned the British foreign minister, requesting that Britain initiate the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.¹ Fifty years later, an American evangelist, William Blackstone, organized a petition to the president of the United States, urging him to convene an international conference that would decide to grant Palestine to the Jews. Shaftesbury and Blackstone, whose attempts to create a Jewish state in Palestine antedated the rise of political Zionism, were among the more well-known proto-Zionists in the English-speaking world. A large number of clergymen, writers, businessmen, and politicians supported, and at times labored actively for, the restoration of the Jews to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state. Motivated by a biblical messianic faith and the belief that a Jewish commonwealth in the Land of Israel was a necessary stage in the preparation of the way for the return of Jesus of Nazareth to earth, Christian Zionists have, at times, been more enthusiastic than Jews over the prospect of a Jewish state. When Jews launched the Zionist movement, Christian protagonists offered support. Christian political backing accompanied the birth of the State of Israel and its history ever since, gaining special momentum after the Six-Day War in 1967.

CHRISTIAN MESSIANISM AND ZIONISM

The messianic hope, which has served as the incentive for the rise of Christian Zionism, draws on a long Christian messianic tradition.² In its early generations, Christianity was a messianic faith, its followers expecting the imminent return of Jesus of Nazareth to establish the kingdom of God on earth.³ Since the turning of Christianity into the dominant religion in the Mediterranean world in the fourth and fifth centuries, the predominant Christian trends became amillennial, expecting the return of Jesus in a remote future and interpreting

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biblical passages with messianic overtones as allegorical. According to that view, the church has replaced Jesus on earth and has a mission to instruct its followers and ensure their salvation. However, millennial groups, which expected the return of Jesus to earth, came about during the Middle Ages, drawing on messianic passages in biblical tracts, such as Daniel and the Revelations of John, and predicting the imminent end of the world-as-we-know-it.⁴

A burst of apocalyptic expectations came about in the wake of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century.⁵ Reading the Old Testament in a new manner, a number of the messianic groups expected the Jews to play an important role in the imminent events of the End Times. The English Revolution in the mid-seventeenth century also stirred the messianic imagination and gave rise to premillennialist groups that took interest in the Jewish people and the prospect of their return to Palestine. Messianic hopes played a part in the deliberations on the return of the Jews to England in the 1650s.⁶ Likewise, premillennialist Christians in Britain and Holland followed with interest the Jewish messianic movement stirred by Shabbatai Zvi in the mid-seventeenth century, hoping that it would bring about the return of the Jews to Palestine.⁷

The roots and early beginnings of Christian Zionism can be tracked to the seventeenth-century Protestant messianic groups. It was already at this stage that one could notice characteristics of Christian interest in the Jewish return to Palestine. Such Christians tended to read their sacred scriptures in a more literal manner. In contrast to other branches of Christianity, they saw the Jews as continuers of the biblical sons of Israel, heirs to the covenant between God and Abraham, and the object of biblical prophecies about a restored Davidic kingdom in the Land of Israel. In their messianic scenarios, the return of the Jews to Palestine was the first step in the advancement of the messianic timetable. Such Christians often envisioned the Jews and their role in history without encountering Jews and with no knowledge of the realities of Jewish life and Jewish aspirations. Their image of the Jews was often mixed and ambivalent, based on the scriptures, not on encounters with actual Jews.

Christian Zionism resurfaced with much vigor in the early decades of the nineteenth century, with the rise of the evangelical movement in Britain and a new wave of fascination with prophecy and the prospects of the arrival of the messianic times.⁸ Two brands of Christian messianic faiths gained prominence in the nineteenth century, “historical” and “futurist,” differing as to when the events of the End Times were to begin. For the most part, both messianic schools shared ideas on the role of the Jews and the Holy Land in God’s plans for humanity.⁹ Adherents of both schools became supporters of Zionist

initiatives, as well as of missionary activity among the Jews.¹⁰ In Europe, the predominant messianic school was “historical,” identifying current events with biblical passages, while the premillennialist faith, in its “futurist,” dispensationalist form, became widely accepted in America in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Dispensationalism has become part and parcel of a conservative evangelical creed, serving as a philosophy of history for conservative Christians because it meshes well with their outlook on contemporary culture. It has also served to provide hope and reassurance in the face of uncertainty, for example, during the 1950s–1980s, when a threat of a nuclear war between the two global powers seemed very plausible.¹¹

In the premillennialist understanding of the course of human history, God has a different plan for the Jews, the church, and the rest of humanity. Premillennialist Christians define the church as the body of the true believers, composed of those who have undergone inner experiences of conversion, have accepted Jesus as their personal Savior, and have taken it upon themselves to live saintly Christian lives. They alone will be saved and spared the turmoils and destruction that will precede the arrival of the Messiah. According to the dispensationalist school of Christian messianic thought, which has become predominant in our era, the messianic times will begin with the Rapture of the church. The true believers will be snatched from earth and meet Jesus in the air. Those believers who die prior to the Rapture will rise from the dead and will also join the living in heaven. These saintly persons will remain with Jesus for seven years (according to some versions, for three and a half years) and thus be spared the turmoils and miseries that will be inflicted on those who remain on earth during that period. For the latter, this period will be marked by natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and famines, as well as wars and murderous dictatorial regimes. By the time Jesus returns to earth, about two-thirds of humanity will have perished.¹²

For the Jews, the seven years that stand between the current era and the messianic times will be known as the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble” (based on Jeremiah 30:7). The Jews will return to their ancient homeland “in unbelief,” without accepting Jesus as their Savior. They will establish a political commonwealth there, not the millennial Davidic kingdom but, still, a necessary step in the advancement of the messianic timetable. Living in spiritual blindness, the Jews will let themselves be ruled by Antichrist, an impostor posing as the Messiah. Antichrist will inflict a reign of terror, directed, among others, against Jews who will accept the belief in Jesus during this period.

The arrival of Jesus at the end of the Great Tribulation will end Antichrist’s rule. Jesus will crush this Satanic ruler and his armies and will establish the millennial kingdom. Those Jews who survive the

turmoils and terror of the Great Tribulation will accept Jesus as their Savior. There will follow a period marked by the righteous rule of Christ on earth, with the Jews inhabiting David's ancient kingdom, and Jerusalem serving as the capital of the entire world.

CHRISTIAN SUPPORT FOR THE ZIONIST CAUSE

The special place Jews occupy in Christian Protestant messianic faith can well explain the interest those holding such beliefs have shown in the Jews and the prospect of their national restoration. Beginning in the nineteenth century, premillennialist Christians have come up with a series of initiatives intended to bring about or promote the national restoration of the Jews in Palestine. Such efforts predated the rise of political Zionism. A number of evangelical Christians in Britain came out with initiatives to restore the Jews to Zion, trying to persuade the British government to intercede with the Ottoman Turks and propose the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.¹³

American Christian Zionists have come up with similar initiatives. The most outstanding of them was that of William Blackstone at the end of the nineteenth century. An evangelist and promoter of the dispensationalist messianic faith, Blackstone visited Palestine in 1889 and was deeply impressed by the developments that the first wave of Zionist immigration had brought about in a country he had considered to be a desolated land. He viewed the agricultural settlements and the new neighborhoods in Jerusalem as "signs of the time," indicating that an era was ending and the great events of the End Times were to occur very soon.¹⁴ Blackstone decided to take an active line and help bring about Jewish national restoration to Palestine. In 1891 he organized a petition urging the president of the United States to convene an international conference of the world powers that would give Palestine back to the Jews. More than four hundred prominent Americans signed Blackstone's petition—congressmen, governors, mayors, publishers and editors of leading newspapers, notable clergymen, and leading businessmen. Although it failed to bring the American government to take a meaningful action regarding its request, the petition reflected the warm support that the idea of the Jewish restoration to Palestine could receive among American Protestants influenced by a biblical messianic outlook on the Jews and Palestine.¹⁵

Blackstone devised a theory that has become a cornerstone of American Christian Zionists ever since. The American evangelist asserted that the United States had a special role and mission in God's plans for humanity: that of a modern Cyrus, to help restore the Jews

to Zion. God has chosen America for that mission on account of its moral superiority over other nations, and America is judged according to the way it carries out its mission.¹⁶ This theory enabled American evangelicals to combine their messianic belief and understanding of the course of human history with their sense of American patriotism. Although they have often criticized contemporary American culture, they have remained loyal citizens of the American commonwealth.

When Theodore Herzl, the father of political Zionism, began his efforts in the mid-1890s to secure international recognition for the idea of a Jewish state, Christian Zionists showed much interest in the new movement and offered support. William Hechler, a German British believer in the imminent Second Coming of Jesus, became an adviser to Herzl and his liaison to the Protestant Christian rulers of Europe.¹⁷ Hechler introduced Herzl to the Grand Duke of Baden, who reacted sympathetically and promised to support the Zionist cause. The Grand Duke of Baden introduced Herzl to the German emperor, whom Herzl wished to turn into a patron of the Zionist cause. When the first Zionist congress convened in Basel in 1897, a number of Christians came as guests to show support.

The characteristics of the relationship between Christian supporters and the Zionist leadership were laid down at that time. Herzl did not comprehend at first what motivated Christians such as Hechler to become supporters of the fledgling Zionist movement. He became satisfied that Hechler was genuinely a friend, and that was all that mattered. The Zionist leaders did not take the premillennialist theology seriously, viewing it as a somewhat eccentric conviction and focusing instead on the support it provided for their cause.¹⁸ Christian Zionists, on their part, had mixed feelings about the Zionist movement. Their immediate reaction to the Zionist endeavor was enthusiastically supportive, and their reports on the rise of the Zionist movement and the developments in Palestine were reminiscent of those of Jewish supporters of the Zionist cause. They were, however, disappointed by the secular character of the movement and saddened that the Zionists were unaware of what they considered to be the real significance of their wish to return to Palestine.

Christian Zionists began coordinating their work with that of the Jewish Zionist movement. Receiving endorsement for his plan from major Protestant churches, and coordinating his efforts with those of the American Zionist leadership, William Blackstone organized a second petition in 1916 calling upon the president of the United States to help restore Palestine to the Jews. American Zionist leaders, such as Louis Brandeis, Steven Wise, Jacob de Haas, and Nathan Straus, saw the Christian efforts as beneficial to the Zionist cause and established a warm relationship with Blackstone. Blackstone did not keep his

premillennialist motivations secret from his Jewish friends, but the Zionist leaders were not bothered by his prediction that great turmoils were awaiting the Jews when the events of the End Times would begin to unfold. They did not expect the Rapture to take place and saw the help that Blackstone was providing them as the only concrete outcome of his messianic faith.

Historians have pointed out that the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, in which Britain expressed its support for the building of a Jewish national home in Palestine, resulted from a mixture of political calculations and Christian support in Britain for Jewish restoration in Palestine.¹⁹ Few, however, have taken notice of the efforts of Christian Zionists in America to convince Woodrow Wilson to allow the British to issue the declaration. Wilson himself did not wish that his negotiations with Zionist leaders and their Christian supporters become public knowledge and preferred to make pro-Zionist moves behind closed doors.²⁰

Christian Zionists welcomed the Balfour Declaration and the British takeover of Palestine, interpreting these developments as further indications that the ground was being prepared for the arrival of the Messiah. Their joy over the new regime in Palestine dominated two "prophetic conferences" that took place in Philadelphia and New York in 1918.²¹

Evangelical and pietist Christians maintained a profound interest in the events that were taking place in the life of the Jewish people and especially in the development of the Jewish community in Palestine. They saw the struggles and turmoils that befell the Jewish nation in the period between the two world wars in light of their eschatological beliefs. Evangelical and pietist journals with pro-Zionist leanings, such as *Our Hope*, *The King's Business*, *The Moody Monthly*, and the *Pentecostal Evangel*, regularly published news on developments that took place in the life of the Jewish people, the Zionist movement, and especially the Jewish community in Palestine. Christian Zionists were encouraged by the new wave of Zionist immigration to Palestine in the years of the British administration of the country, and events, such as the opening of the Hebrew University in 1925 and the new seaport in Haifa in 1932, were publicized in their periodicals. They interpreted these developments as signs that the Jews were energetically building a commonwealth in their ancient land and that the great events of the End Times were to occur very soon.²² Excited by the prospects of an imminent Second Coming of Jesus to earth, they expressed dismay at the restrictions on Jewish immigration and settlement that the British were imposing. They also criticized the Arabs for their hostility toward the Zionist endeavor and for their violence against the Jews. They saw attempts at blocking the building of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine

as equivalent to putting obstacles in the way of God's plans for the End Times. Such attempts, they asserted, were futile, and the Arabs would pay dearly for their rebellious attempts.²³

Christian Zionist efforts and protests did not shape British policy in Palestine, although they might have had some influence on modifying it as they counterbalanced other points of view. During that period conservative evangelical and pietist political power was on the decline, and their political influence, both in Britain and in America, weakened considerably. In Britain, the evangelical movement was just a shadow of what it had been a century earlier, and in America, after the Scopes trial in 1925, conservative evangelicals withdrew, to a large degree, from the public arena. Evangelical leaders did not see themselves as influential national figures whose voices would be heard by the policy makers in Washington or as people who could advance a political agenda on the national or international level. On the European continent, the rise of the Nazis to power subdued, if not completely crushed, pro-Zionist pietist activity. In a very crucial moment in the life of the Jewish people, its Christian supporters were weak. Although Christian sympathizers could not prevent the Holocaust and failed to persuade the British to open Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration, they would resurface after World War II and the birth of the State of Israel and would play again an important role in mustering political support, especially in America, for the Jewish state.

CHRISTIAN ZIONISTS AND A JEWISH STATE

Christian Zionists' response to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was enthusiastic. Evangelical journals published sympathetic articles and followed the young Jewish state with great interest in an attempt to interpret its significance for the advancement of God's plans in the ages. While they were not happy with the secular character of Israeli government and society, some of the things they saw, such as the mass emigration of Jews to Israel in the 1950s, from Asian, African, and East European countries, enhanced their messianic hopes.²⁴ In their eyes, this was a significant development, one that had been prophesied in the Bible, and a clear indication that the present era was terminating and the events of the End Times were beginning to occur.

Contrary to the common perception, Christian Zionists did take notice and showed concern over the fate of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs who lost their homes in 1948 and became refugees in Arab lands. Although they criticized the Arab hostility against Israel and supported the Israeli state in its struggles with its Arab neighbors,

they expressed a belief that the Land of Israel could maintain an Arab population alongside its Jewish population and that Israel had an obligation to respect human rights and treat the Arabs with fairness.²⁵ A few conservative Protestant churches, such as the Southern Baptists, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Assemblies of God, and the Plymouth Brethren, have worked among Palestinians, offering relief and educational services. In striving to reconcile premillennialist teachings with the hopes and fears of Arab congregants and potential converts, they emphasized that the ingathering of the Jews in the Land of Israel and the eventual reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom did not necessitate the banishment of Arabs from that land. In spite of such reassurances, only rarely did pietist or evangelical Arabs become Christian Zionists.²⁶

The Six-Day War had a dramatic effect on evangelical and pietist theologies. Since the French Revolution in the last years of the eighteenth century and the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there has not been a political-military event that has provided so much fuel to the engines of Christian prophetic belief as did the war between Israel and its neighbors in June 1967, which led to the taking over by the Jews of the historical sites of Jerusalem. The dramatic Israeli victory, and the territorial gains it brought with it, strengthened the premillennialists' conviction that Israel was created for a mission in history and was to play an important role in the developments that were to precede the arrival of the Messiah.²⁷

During the 1970s–2000s, conservative evangelicals have been counted among Israel's most ardent supporters in the American public arena.²⁸ Likewise, the growing evangelical population in Latin America has turned, at the turn of the twenty-first century, into a powerful Christian Zionist constituency. In addition, evangelical and pietist groups in countries such as Holland and Finland have served during that period as pro-Zionist lobbies, counterbalancing anti-Israeli sentiments in their countries. The growth of the evangelical community in Korea has also turned that country into a Christian Zionist stronghold. Christian Zionists all around the globe involved themselves, in the 1970s–2000s, in such Jewish issues as the demand to facilitate Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union.

Especially in America, Christian Zionists have turned into a pro-Israel lobby that uses its political power to promote policies favorable to the interests of the Jewish state. The decades following the Six-Day War were marked by massive American support for Israel in terms of money, arms, and diplomatic backing. For many conservative Christians in America, their pro-Israeli stand was an appreciation of the importance of the State of Israel for the advancement of history. It

was, at the same time, a fulfillment of America's historical role, as well as going hand in hand with American interests.

The years following the 1967 Middle East war saw a dramatic rise in evangelical influence in America. Growing in numbers and self-confidence, evangelicals have become more visible and aggressive. In 1976, when Jimmy Carter was elected president, many Americans who identified with liberal causes discovered in surprise that evangelicalism had grown considerably and is much more influential than they had assumed. The liberal Carter was, however, a disappointment to conservative evangelicals. Carter did take an interest in the Middle East and brought Egypt and Israel together to sign a peace treaty, but the role he played was that of an American statesman rather than an evangelical Christian. The messianic hope of paving the way for the Davidic kingdom was not his concern, and he did not give preference to Israeli interests over and against Arab ones.

Ronald Reagan, who replaced Carter as president in 1981, was influenced in forming his Middle East policy by Christian Zionist pressure, if not by his own premillennialist understanding of the course of history.²⁹ Reagan's policy toward Israel was adopted by his successor, George Bush, who was also close to the Christian Zionist evangelicals and relied on their support. A friendly attitude toward Israel has been part and parcel of the evangelical vision for America's global policy. While other considerations, too, determined Reagan's and Bush's policy toward Israel, the favorable evangelical attitude toward that country and the Christian Zionist insistence that America should assist the Jewish state played an influential part.³⁰

Bill Clinton's relationship with Israel has to be judged very differently from that of Reagan or Bush. Although nominally an evangelical Christian himself, Clinton did not receive much support from evangelicals, who have seen him as representing liberal values to which they have been opposed. While in Arkansas, Clinton had remained, however, a member of a Southern Baptist church. Upon his election as president, his pastor delivered a sermon that included the message that the newly elected president should not neglect his obligation to protect Israel. This tells us perhaps more about the effect of premillennialist thinking on Baptists in Little Rock, Arkansas, than it does about Clinton's personal faith. Yet it is important to be aware of the fact that the roots and cultural background of the American president who opened his administration to Jews more than any president before, in addition to showing deep concern for Israel, were in the Bible Belt and strongly influenced by a messianic biblical vision of Israel.

Even more than those of previous presidents, George W. Bush's administration has been strongly influenced by evangelical, pro-Israeli

sentiment. A committed conservative Christian himself, Bush has relied heavily on conservative support and, in addition to extending political and financial support to the Jewish state, has been reluctant to initiate diplomatic moves that might upset premillennialist supporters of Israel.

The evangelical premillennialist understanding of Israel has influenced, at times more openly, the attitudes of other prominent American public figures toward Israel. One noted example is that of Jesse Helms from North Carolina, who served as a U.S. senator during the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. A convinced premillennialist, Helms, who, as the powerful chair of the Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee, labored to limit American financial support abroad, at the same time approved of the extensive financial support that the United States offered Israel.

Helms's supportive attitude toward Israel was not unique. In the 1970s–2000s, dozens of pro-Israeli Christian Zionist organizations emerged in the United States. Besides mustering political support for Israel, their leaders have also lectured in churches, distributed material on Israel, and organized tours to the Holy Land. Numerous such groups have also been engaged in evangelization efforts among the Jews.

The years following the Six-Day War also saw an increase in the actual presence and activity of Christian Zionists in Israel. Tours of evangelical and pietist groups to that country increased, as did the numbers of field study seminars and of volunteers coming to kibbutzim. Evangelical Christians even established institutions of higher education in Israel, one of these being the Holy-Land Institute set up by Douglas Young, a premillennialist with a pro-Zionist orientation.

The most visible and better known Christian Zionist organization in Israel is the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ). Its story tells us a great deal about conservative Christian interest in the Jews and Israel, about Christian Zionist activity, and about the relationship that has developed between the Christian Zionist community and Israeli society and government. In the 1970s, Christian Zionist activists in Jerusalem founded a local fellowship that saw its aim in mustering support for Israel. The participants met weekly, prayed, sang, and discussed means to promote Christian support for Israel in order to counterbalance anti-Israel sentiments in the Christian world. One of the leaders of the group, the Dutch minister Jan Willem van der Hoeven, suggested organizing large annual gatherings of Christian supporters of Israel from all over the world during Sukkoth, the Jewish harvest festival commemorating the tent sanctuaries, or tabernacles, used during the Exodus. His theological rationale was that according to the Bible (Zechariah 14:15) Gentiles were also commanded to gather in Jerusalem during the festival. In 1979 the group

launched its first yearly Tabernacles festival, a weeklong assembly of Christian supporters of Israel, highlighted by a march through the streets of Jerusalem.

In 1980, the Israeli Knesset passed the “Jerusalem Law,” which declared the whole of the city to be the capital of the State of Israel. In protest, almost all countries with embassies and consulates in Jerusalem moved their diplomatic staffs to Tel Aviv. This evacuation provided a dramatic point at which the Christian Zionist activists announced the creation of the International Christian Embassy, as an act of sympathy and support for Israel on the part of Christians.³¹ The embassy chose as its logo two olive branches hovering over a globe with Jerusalem at its center. “This symbolizes the great day when Zechariah’s prophecy will be fulfilled, and all nations will come up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles during Messiah’s reign on earth,” the embassy’s leaders announced.³² Israeli officials, including the Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, noted the propaganda value of the embassy’s creation and welcomed the new organization. It made the point, they believed, that even though many countries had removed their embassies and consulates from Jerusalem due to Arab pressure, the Christian world backed Israel.³³

The embassy’s major work has been to promote support for Israel among evangelicals worldwide and to initiate various philanthropic programs in Israel. The two tasks are closely related: its promotional efforts are also fund-raising opportunities. The embassy has wished to represent “true Christianity” worldwide and has made a great effort to open branches and gain supporters in as many countries as possible. In the United States, its branches are mainly situated in the Bible Belt, while in Europe, representatives of the embassy can be found in Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. There are also volunteers for the embassy in predominantly Catholic countries—Spain, Portugal, France, and Belgium. In recent years, representatives have also worked for the embassy’s interests in Eastern Europe—Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania.³⁴ There are also representatives in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Zaire, and Nigeria, enhancing the international image of the embassy. ICEJ has received support from Latin American countries, including Mexico, Guatemala, Columbia, Brazil, El Salvador, and Costa Rica, garnering support from the growing number of Latin American premillennialists, thousands of whom participate in the annual tours of the Holy Land sponsored or initiated by the embassy. There has also been an attempt to attract supporters in South Asia.

The embassy's international work focuses on lecturing, mostly in churches, about Israel's role in history and the work of the embassy on behalf of Jewish immigration and settlement. "Embassies" around the globe distribute ICEJ journals, brochures, leaflets, and cassettes of "Davidic music" and sermons. Embassy representatives also recruit pilgrims for the annual Tabernacles gatherings and collect money for the embassy's philanthropic enterprises in Israel. The day-to-day work of the embassy in Israel is devoted to this international mission. The Jerusalem headquarters supervises the work of the representatives in various countries, administers the finances, maintains public relations and publications departments, and oversees the production of video and audiocassettes in a number of languages, including English, German, Dutch, Finnish, and Russian. A special department produces material for Latin American countries in Spanish and Portuguese. The radio department prepares a special program, *A Word from Jerusalem*, which is broadcast to evangelical radio stations. The embassy also provides welfare services in Jerusalem, distributing money and goods to new immigrants as well as other needy Israelis. Aware that many Jews are suspicious of Christian charitable enterprises, ICEJ often distributes its parcels through Israeli public agencies.³⁵

The embassy leaders have spent much of their time fund-raising in evangelical communities around the globe. A considerable amount of funding has come from Germany.³⁶ Along with the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, the embassy has been the first Christian institution that has systematically donated money to Zionist enterprises. Most Christian Zionists, by contrast, have supported missionary agencies that have aimed at converting Jews. The embassy has thus set new norms in the relationship between Christians and Israel.

The Feast of Tabernacles serves as the focal point of the year for the International Christian Embassy. A major convocation of thousands of supporters from around the world, it provides an opportunity to present the embassy and its message to the Israeli public. Activities include tours of the country for the pilgrims, a march through Jerusalem's main streets, a "biblical meal" served and celebrated on the shore of the Dead Sea, and assemblies in Jerusalem. Some of the gatherings take place in Binyanei Ha'Uma, the largest convention hall in Jerusalem; booths exhibit publications and feature programs and enterprises promoted by the embassy.

During the 1980s–2000s, Jan Willem van der Hoeven, who was the embassy's ideologue, emerged as one of the better-known spokesmen on Israel and its role in history in the Christian Zionist camp.³⁷ His ideas are therefore worthwhile taking notice of. Van der Hoeven has shared the premillennialist vision of Israel as a transitory but necessary vehicle on the messianic road. According to that view, the Jewish

political entity will exist in rebellious unbelief until the arrival of Jesus. At the same time, its existence and security are a positive, even reassuring development in the unfolding of history, and it is therefore pertinent to protect Israel against forces that would undermine it. Many conservative Christians have seen Arab hostility toward the Zionist enterprise as an attempt to jeopardize the advancement of God's plans. In van der Hoeven's view, the Palestinian resistance organizations have been instruments of Satan, and he has insisted that there is no room in the Holy Land for Arabs who militate against Israel's existence. Arabs who are "true Christian believers" support the Israeli cause, he has claimed.³⁸

Like that of many Christian Zionists, van der Hoeven's attitude toward the Jews has been ambivalent. He has firmly believed that the Jews are the heirs of biblical Israel, God's chosen people, destined for a glorious future in the messianic age, but he also has harbored negative attitudes toward Jews, including feelings of frustration, disappointment, and anger. He has expressed bitterness, for example, that so many Israelis have been unwilling to support a more firm, right-wing political agenda. In order to be accepted by the liberal, decadent West, he complained, they were willing to compromise their national aspirations and, in so doing, betray their historical role, their purpose in God's plans for the End Times.³⁹ In a speech delivered during the embassy's 1989 Tabernacles celebration, he attacked moderate and left-wing Israeli politicians, declaring that giving up the territories Israel had occupied since 1967 would mark the second time the Jews rejected God.⁴⁰

For him, "land for peace" is not a pragmatic political decision aimed at enhancing the well-being of the region; such a decision could have disastrous cosmic implications and would impede the divine plan for human redemption. The Jews are not just another people who can make choices according to their political needs; they have a burden to carry, a duty and purpose in history. For the Jews to refuse to play their role would constitute unforgivable treachery toward all humankind. Van der Hoeven's words convey the bitterness felt by many Christian Zionists regarding the Jewish refusal to accept Jesus as the Savior. In their view, the Jews should have been the first to recognize him as Messiah. A second refusal to accept him, or to prepare the ground for his arrival, would be even worse than the first, for the Jews would miss their second opportunity for redemption.

Over the years the International Christian Embassy has become one of the more controversial of the Christian groups and agencies that work in the Middle East or take an interest in its fate. Middle Eastern churches, as a rule, have no contact with the embassy and reject its message and its activities. Middle Eastern Christianity generally

holds to “replacement theology,” the claim that the Christian church is the continuation and heir of biblical historical Israel and that Judaism has no further purpose in God’s plans for humanity. Most of these churches have Arab constituencies, are sympathetic to Arab national feelings, and have expressed support for the Palestinian uprising. They see the embassy as an institution offering one-sided support for Israel and, as members of the Middle East Council of Churches, have signed petitions condemning its activities.⁴¹

The ICEJ has also aroused resentment among many liberal Protestants, who have little patience for conservative Christianity and the premillennialist messianic conviction. Mainline Protestant churches are committed, in principle, to social and political justice, supporting movements of national liberation and expressing sympathy for the Palestinians’ quest for independence from Israeli rule. In their opinion Israel should be judged, like all other countries, on the basis of political justice and morality.⁴²

The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), an institution affiliated with the World Council of Churches, represents both mainline Protestant and Middle Eastern churches. It has opposed the embassy’s Christian Zionist agenda, fearing that the ICEJ might succeed in raising support for Israeli political causes. In its May 1998 meeting in Cyprus it discussed ways to combat the embassy. In denouncing one-sided Christian supporters of Zionism, the MECC declared, “The consultation was referring here especially to the western fundamentalist Christian Zionist movement and its political activities conducted through the self-declared International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem.”⁴³ While Arabs and pro-Arab Christian churches have resented Christian Zionist activity, the Israeli leadership has welcomed its unexpected allies with open arms.

ISRAELIS AND CHRISTIAN ZIONISTS

In general, the Israeli leadership has not fully comprehended the nature of the special attitudes of Christian Zionists toward the new state and has therefore overlooked elements in the Christian Zionist theology and activity to which, in principle, it objects. Israeli officials could not tell the difference between its mainline Christian supporters, who showed sympathy for Israel on the basis of political or humanitarian considerations, and its conservative evangelical supporters, whose attitudes have been rooted in a biblical messianic faith.⁴⁴ They were certainly unaware of the details of the Christian eschatological hopes and had never heard of such terms as “the Great Tribulation” or the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble.”

Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, is a case in point. Ben-Gurion believed that Christian supporters viewed the establishment of the State of Israel as the ultimate fulfillment of biblical prophecies rather than as a step toward the realization of that millennial kingdom, and he gave expression to such views in an address he wrote for the opening of an international Pentecostal conference that convened in Israel. Israeli officials who sat at the opening session were puzzled by the coolness of the Pentecostal reaction to the prime minister's speech.⁴⁵ They certainly were not aware that messianic hopes encouraged not only support for Zionism and for Israel but also aggressive missionary activity among the Jews.

A major feature of the Christian Zionist relation to the Jews has been the mission. Since the rise of the pietist movement in central Europe at the turn of the eighteenth century, and the evangelical movement in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century, missions to the Jews have occupied an important place on the premillennialist Christian agenda and have come to characterize the messianic-oriented Christian interaction with the Jews even more than pro-Zionist activity. Its meaning for evangelicals and pietists has gone far beyond attempts to capture souls. They have seen missionizing the Jews as taking part in the divine drama of salvation. Propagating Christianity among the Jews meant teaching the people of God about their role and purpose in history, as well as saving some of them from the turmoils of the Great Tribulation.

When at the turn of the nineteenth century a strong evangelical premillennialist movement came into being, it gave rise not only to Zionist initiatives but to a large missionary movement as well. Throughout the nineteenth century, evangelicals established numerous missions to the Jews, operating all around the Jewish world.⁴⁶ Often, the same persons would be active on both fronts, promoting support for Zionism and evangelism of Jews at the same time. The best-known of today's missions, Jews for Jesus, also works to promote pro-Zionist sentiments, calling its music band the "Liberated Wailing Wall."⁴⁷ The rise of Jews for Jesus took place in the same years that another Christian Zionist movement associated with the missionary movement came into being: Messianic Judaism. A movement of Jewish converts to evangelical Christianity, Messianic Jews see themselves as overcoming the historical differences between Judaism and Christianity and amalgamating the Christian faith with the Jewish tradition. They have strongly influenced the missionary movement, transforming its ideology and rhetoric. Missions to the Jews have emphasized since the 1970s that becoming Christian does not work to eradicate Jewish identity. On the contrary, it turns Jews into "complete Jews," true to the real goal and purpose of the Jewish people. During the 1970s–2000s,

more than four hundred messianic congregations were established in Israel, Britain, Argentina, South Africa, and other Jewish communities. Like missions to the Jews, messianic Jews see it as their duty to promote support for Israel in Christian circles.

Missions to the Jews have seen it as their goal to increase support in the Christian community for the premillennialist idea of the centrality of the Jews in God's plans for humanity, as well as the need to evangelize that nation. For institutions such as the American Messianic Fellowship or the Friends of Israel, the two aims are inseparable.⁴⁸ Their premillennialist convictions motivate both their Zionism and their zeal to evangelize God's chosen nation. An important part of their work is lecturing in churches and distributing written or recorded material in which they advocate their outlook on the Jewish people and Israel's historical role and the importance of supporting Israel and evangelizing the Jews.

Secular Israeli leaders, however, were not particularly bothered by Christian missionary activities. Their view of such activities was often cynical, as they believed that such activities were doomed to futility.⁴⁹ The Israeli government has tried to build good relations with Christian groups and considered it essential to assure them that the government would not interfere with their work. Christian missionaries continued their operations in Israel without interruption.⁵⁰ Orthodox Jewish activists protested against the missionaries' work in Israel, and some Jews occasionally attempted to harass missions, but the government refused to change its policy, and the police were given the task of protecting missionary centers.⁵¹

Since the late 1970s, as the evangelical pro-Zionist influence on American political life has become more and more apparent, the Israeli government has taken more notice of this segment of Christianity and has taken measures to establish contact with it.⁵² Among other things, Menachem Begin appointed a special liaison for evangelical Christians. Israeli officials spoke at evangelical conferences, and evangelists met with Israeli leaders as part of their touring schedules in Israel. After the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi atomic plant in 1981, Begin called Jerry Falwell, leader of the conservative Christian group the "Moral Majority," and asked him to back Israel. During the 1980s–2000s, Israeli officials relied on the International Christian Embassy as a vehicle to reach the Protestant Christian community, believing that it represents a large segment of Christianity.⁵³ Israeli leaders met frequently with embassy leaders and granted the ICEJ permission to hold gatherings in the courtyard of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, as part of its Tabernacles celebrations.⁵⁴ In April 1990, the speaker of the Knesset presented the embassy with the Quality of Life Award, for its positive role in Israeli life.

Ironically, many of the more enthusiastic allies of the Christian Zionists are in the nationalist-religious wing of Israeli society. In 1988 the magazine *Nekuda* (*Settlement*), an organ of the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria, published a favorable article on the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem entitled “Without Inhibitions: Christians Committed to Judea and Samaria.” Emphasizing that the embassy had no missionary intentions, *Nekuda* described it as a Christian pro-Israel group that, unlike many Jews, realized that the Bible authorized the Jews to settle their land.⁵⁵

One example of the Israeli ignorance of the nature of Christian interest in Zionism is the reaction to attempts by Christian supporters of Israel to evangelize Jews in Israel. One of the Begin government’s earliest acts of legislation, in the late 1970s, was intended to restrict missionary activity, not realizing that this activity was carried out by the same elements in Christianity with whom it was trying to establish a friendly relationship. When the proposed law was being debated, prior to the enactment of the legislation in 1978, many evangelists were worried that it might bring their activity to an end. They were relieved when they saw the wording of the law, which forbade the offering of economic incentives in exchange for conversion, since it clearly did not place restrictions on the sort of work they did. Contrary to Jewish myths, missionaries were not “buying” converts, and at any rate, the Israeli government was reluctant to enforce the law.⁵⁶

In the 1990s, antimissionary sentiments were again running high, and a number of Orthodox and non-Orthodox members of the Knesset came out with initiatives to outlaw missionary activity.⁵⁷ In 1996, an initial, first-round proposal to curtail missionary activity passed the Knesset vote. But then the complex and paradoxical nature of the relationship between the evangelical community and Israeli society became unprecedentedly clear. Missionaries operating in Israel called upon their supporters around the globe to raise their voices against the impending law. “We call upon the international Christian community to join us in our opposition to this law,” reads one of the appeals: “As Christian believers in the God of Israel and in Jesus the Messiah and Savior of the world, we have a special respect and appreciation for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. We seek and pray for the welfare of all of God’s people in the land. We view with grave concern the erosion of Israel’s democratic freedom by this proposed law.”⁵⁸ Israeli embassies and consulates in countries with evangelical populations were virtually flooded with letters of protest against the law. Many wrote directly to the prime minister in Jerusalem. The standard letters emphasized that they were written by friends of Israel who wished the country well and were writing to warn the government that the passing of such a law would turn its current supporters

against it. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who at first offhandedly supported the bill, changed his mind and promised evangelical activists he would oppose it.⁵⁹ The aborted attempts at curtailing missionary activity in Israel highlight the paradoxical nature of the relation of evangelical Christians toward Jews: the evangelization of a people they see as chosen and whose country they strongly support. It also points to the nature of Israeli realpolitik: accepting help from Christians whose values and agendas differ from their own.

CHRISTIAN ZIONISTS AND THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

One of the important outcomes of the Six-Day War for Christians expecting the Second Coming of Jesus was the Israeli takeover of the territory on which the Temple could be rebuilt and the priestly sacrificial rituals, reinstated. The Temple, or rather the prospect of its building, excited premillennialist Christians as the one event standing between this era and the next.⁶⁰

A striking demonstration of the prominence of the Temple in Christian messianic thought can be found in Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, an evangelical Christian best-seller of the 1970s. Lindsey, like other premillennialist Christians, was strongly impressed by the Six-Day War and its consequences and placed Israel at the center of the eschatological drama.⁶¹ For him, the rebuilding of the Temple and the rise of Antichrist to power were major components of the Great Tribulation, without which the coming of the Messiah could not take place. There remained, however, a number of obstacles to the advancement of this stage in the prophetic timetable, the most striking one being a lack of interest among the Jews in building the Temple. Many Israelis understood the outcome of the Six-Day War in messianic terms, but most of them did not wish to rebuild the Temple.⁶² There was the unavoidable reality that the Temple Mount was a Muslim site, complete with magnificent mosques and administered by the Muslims. The Israeli minister of defense at the time, Moshe Dayan, designed a policy that insisted on maintaining the status quo on the Temple Mount as well as in other Muslim and Christian sites. In addition, a number of rabbis declared that Jews were forbidden to enter the Temple Mount. Most rabbinical authorities have viewed the Temple Mount as being as sacred as it was when the Temple was standing. The Mishnah, the postbiblical compilation of law, outlines the various degrees of sanctity of areas on the Temple Mount and the rituals of purification people need to perform in order to enter these areas.⁶³ All Jews are required to purify themselves with the ashes of the red heifer before entering the Mount, and there are no red heifers to be found.⁶⁴

Rabbis also feared that Jews might step on restricted sacred ground, such as the Holy of Holies, into which ordinary Jews, and even ordinary priests, are not allowed to enter. Most observant Jews at the time accepted the rabbinical ban and saw entrance to the Temple Mount as taboo.⁶⁵

An Australian premillennialist Christian, Dennis Michael Rohan, decided to change the existing reality. After spending some time as a volunteer in an Israeli kibbutz, Rohan visited Jerusalem in July 1969 and there, convinced that God had designated him for that task, planned and executed the burning of the El-Aksa Mosque on the Temple Mount in an attempt to secure the necessary ground for the building of the Temple.⁶⁶ The mosque was damaged, and Arabs in Jerusalem rioted. Rohan was arrested, put to trial, found insane, and sent to Australia to spend the rest of his life in an asylum.⁶⁷

Most premillennialist Christians have not taken the law into their own hands but, rather, have sought legal and peaceful means to advance their agenda. Numerous Christian premillennialist groups and individuals in the 1970s–2000s have promoted the building of the holy Jewish shrine through a variety of activities, most of them centered on encouraging Jews to prepare for the building of the Temple. During the 1970s and 1980s, premillennialist Christians discovered groups of Orthodox Jews interested in the building of the Temple. Some of these groups were advocating their agenda publicly, while others were preparing more quietly for the reinstatement of the sacrificial system in a rebuilt Temple.⁶⁸ Such Jews, who were studying the Temple rituals, manufacturing utensils to be used for sacrificial purposes according to biblical or Talmudic measures, or trying to breed a new brand of heifers, served to sustain the Christian messianic imagination. Premillennialist Christians marveled at such groups and their activities, viewing them as “signs of the time,” indications that the current era was ending and the apocalyptic events of the End Times were near.⁶⁹

Chuck Smith, a noted minister and evangelist whose Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California, has, since the 1970s, been one of the largest and most dynamic Charismatic churches in America, supported the Jewish group, the Temple Foundation, and invited its leader, Stanley Goldfoot, to come to California to lecture in his church. Smith secured financial support for exploration of the exact site of the Temple.⁷⁰ An associate of Smith’s, Lambert Dolphin, a California physicist and archaeologist and the leader of the “Science and Archeology Team,” took it upon himself to explore the Temple Mount.⁷¹ Dolphin used sophisticated technological devices and methods, such as wall-penetrating radar and seismic sounding, in his search for the ruins of the previous Temples. In both bringing his sophisticated instruments into Israel and preparing to explore the

Temple Mount, Dolphin worked in cooperation with and received help from Goldfoot. His attempts to research the Temple Mount to find conclusive evidence regarding the Temple's exact location were frustrated by the Israeli police, who, confronted by Muslim protests, refused to allow the use of such devices on or under the Mount.⁷² Many premillennialists have not waited for conclusive findings by Dolphin and have embraced the theory that the location of the Temple is between the two major mosques, El-Aksa and the Dome of the Rock. The Temple, they have concluded, could therefore be rebuilt without destroying the existing mosques, thus providing a "peaceful solution" to the dilemma of how to build the Temple at a site that is holy to the Muslims.⁷³

Christian proponents of building the Temple have not limited their efforts to discovering the exact site of the Temple. Some have searched for the lost ark, a quest that inspired a number of novels and a movie based in part on a real-life figure.⁷⁴ Some premillennialists have also searched for the ashes of the red heifer, necessary in order to allow Jews to enter the Temple Mount, while others have supported attempts at breeding red heifers.⁷⁵ A new interest has arisen in Christian conservative circles in the Temple building, its interior plan, and its sacrificial works, as well as in the priestly garments and utensils.⁷⁶ The rebuilt Temple has also played an important role in novels and other fiction. The most popular of them has been the series *Left Behind*, which was published in the late 1990s and early 2000s and has sold millions of copies. The novel takes place in the aftermath of the Rapture. It describes the struggles of those left behind, not least of them the rise to power of the Antichrist, one of whose "achievements" is orchestrating the removal of the mosques to New Babylon.⁷⁷

Another Israeli group that has established a working relationship with premillennialist Christians is the Temple Mount Faithful. Since its inception in the 1970s, the Temple Mount Faithful has been the best known of all the Jewish groups aiming at rebuilding the Temple. Its periodic attempts to organize prayers on the Temple Mount, not to mention its plans to install a cornerstone for the rebuilt Temple, have enjoyed much media coverage. The relationship between the group and Christian supporters has advanced more slowly than in the case of the Temple Foundation. Yet, by the early 1990s, the group's leader Gershon Solomon had carved a niche for himself and his group among premillennialist Christians. Pat Robertson, the renowned leader of the 700 Club and a onetime presidential hopeful, offered his support and hospitality to Solomon. In August 1991, the 700 Club aired an interview with Solomon. Robertson described Solomon's group as struggling to gain the rightful Jewish place on the Temple Mount. "We will never have peace," Robertson declared, "until the Mount of the

House of the Lord is restored.”⁷⁸ Solomon, for his part, described his mission as embodying the promise for a universal redemption of humanity. “It’s not just a struggle for the Temple Mount, it’s a struggle for the . . . redemption of the world,” he declared.⁷⁹

The peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians and the Oslo peace agreement have caused alarm among some premillennialist Christians, but for most Christians expecting the Second Coming of Jesus, their hopes for the rebuilding of the Temple have remained just as strong at the beginning of the new millennium as before.⁸⁰ One cannot tell what would happen if Israel were to give up its official control of the Temple Mount. Some fear that such a prospect might stir Jewish and Christian extremists to take steps that would “secure” the Jewish presence on the mountain.

CONCLUSION

Christian Zionism has been an extraordinary development in the history of the relationships between religious communities. In no other case have members of one religious community considered members of another religious tradition to hold a special role in God’s plans for human redemption and to be God’s first nation. The unique nature of Christian Zionism is highlighted when one bears in mind the bitter history of the relationship between the two religious communities. For most of its history, the major trends in Christianity, almost unanimously, have seen Judaism as replaced by the church.

To comprehend the almost incredible relationship that has developed between Christian Zionists and Jews, one should compare the relationship to “a marriage of convenience.” Premillennialist Christians have perceived the rebuilding of the Jewish state and the Temple by the Jews as necessary stages toward the realization of the messianic age. Similarly, Jewish statesmen do not care for the Christian messianic faith more than Christian premillennialist groups appreciate the Jewish faith, but they see such details as being beside the point. The important thing for them has been the Christian willingness to support their cause.

The phenomenon of Christians supporting the Jewish Zionist cause on behalf of their faith is full of paradoxes. Being committed, indeed fervent, evangelicals or pietists, Christian Zionists have insisted on the exclusivity of their faith as the only true fulfillment of God’s commands and as the only means to assure salvation. The Christian Zionist relations to the Jews have therefore been characterized by two conflicting sentiments: one, supportive and appreciative, and the other, dismissive and patronizing.

While evangelical and pietist Christians have enthusiastically supported Zionist initiatives, they have viewed the Jews as the people who fail to recognize and accept the true Messiah and have thus deprived themselves of both eternal life and sound moral guidelines. Christian Zionists have held, therefore, many of the stereotypes of Jews in Western Christian culture at the same time that they have expected Jews to regain their ancient position as the leading nation in the millennial kingdom. Such mixed, dual opinions have characterized the attitudes of pro-Zionist Christian activists who, while supporting Jewish causes politically and genuinely claiming to show love and kindness toward the Jews, have also expressed unfavorable opinions on that people.⁸¹ Viewing the Jews as a people in need of improvement, Christian Zionists have been active in the building of missions to the Jews, busily spreading the Gospel among the children of Israel. Missions to the Jews have become the twin sister of Christian Zionist activity, deriving from the same theological roots. The missions themselves have become Christian Zionist agencies par excellence, promoting support for the Christian Zionist cause.

In no other realm has the paradoxical nature of the relation of Christian Zionists to Jews demonstrated itself as in the Christian attempts to help traditionalist Jews rebuild the Temple. Christians expecting the Second Coming of Jesus have formed historically unprecedented friendships and alliances with Jews that would have been difficult to imagine at other times and places. There is, therefore, something surreal about Christian Zionists, as their actions transcend the historical dynamics of Jewish-Christian interaction. The unique relationship that has developed between Jews and Christians, over the building of a Jewish state in Palestine and the hopes that such Christians have placed on Jews preparing the ground for the arrival of the Messiah, has brought about scenes that are almost in the realm of the fantastic, including Christians marveling at and receiving reassurance for their messianic faith from Orthodox Jews taking steps toward the reinstatement the sacrificial system. Although each of the groups has had a different vision for the messianic times, they have both shared the same agenda for the near future.

One has to conclude that the Christian interest in the Jewish resettlement of Palestine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and their support of the Jewish Zionist cause have derived first and foremost from their messianic hope and their mode of interpreting biblical passages. Their support of Jewish causes represents an attempt to promote their own agenda. Pro-Israel sentiments and concern for the physical well-being of Jews derive from the function of the Jews in the advancement of history toward the arrival of the Lord. Christians advocating and acting on such views see themselves as supporting and

working toward a great cause, the greatest of all, the unfolding of the messianic age and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

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NOTES

1. On Ashley Cooper, the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, and his proto-Zionist efforts, see Barbara Tuchman, *Bible and Sword* (London, 1983), pp. 175–207.

2. Cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York, 1970).

3. Cf. Bart Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (New York, 1999).

4. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*.

5. George Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, 1970).

6. David Katz, *Philosemitism and the Return of the Jews to England* (Oxford, 1982).

7. Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Shabbatai Zvi: The Mystical Messiah* (New York, 1970).

8. Cf. Yaakov Ariel, “The French Revolution and the Reawakening of Christian Messianism,” in *The French Revolution and Its Impact*, ed. Richard Cohen (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 319–338.

9. Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1978).

10. For example, Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*.

11. A. G. Mojtabai, *Blessed Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas* (Boston, 1986).

12. For details on this eschatological hope, see, for example, Hal Lindsey’s best-seller, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1971).

13. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, pp. 175–207.

14. See William Blackstone, *Jesus Is Coming*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, 1908), pp. 211–213, 236–241.

15. See Yaakov Ariel, “An American Initiative for a Jewish State: William Blackstone and the Petition of 1891,” *Studies in Zionism*, Vol. 10 (1989), pp. 125–137.

16. William Blackstone, letter to Woodrow Wilson, November 4, 1914; and telegram to Warren G. Harding, December 10, 1920, Blackstone Personal Papers, Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, IL.

17. On Hechler and his relationship with Herzl, see Amos Elon, *Herzl* (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 212–219, 296, 321–323, 438; and Paul Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891–1948* (London, 1998), pp. 3–43.

18. See Yaakov Ariel, “William Blackstone and the Petition of 1916: A Neglected Chapter in the History of Christian Zionism in America,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 7 (1991), pp. 68–85; Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism*, pp. 75–96.

19. Cf., for example, Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*.

20. Cf. Ariel, "William Blackstone and the Petition of 1916."
21. William L. Pettingill, J. R. Schafler, and J. D. Adams, eds., *Light on Prophecy: A Coordinated, Constructive Teaching, Being the Proceedings and Addresses at the Philadelphia Prophetic Conference, May 28–30, 1918* (New York, 1918); Arno C. Gaebelein, ed., *Christ and Glory: Addresses Delivered at the New York Prophetic Conference, Carnegie Hall, November 25–28, 1918* (New York, 1919).
22. See, e.g., George T. B. Davis, *Fulfilled Prophecies That Prove the Bible* (Philadelphia, 1931); and Keith L. Brooks, *The Jews and the Passion for Palestine in Light of Prophecy* (Los Angeles, 1937).
23. James Gray, "Editorial," *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, Vol. 31 (1931), p. 346.
24. Louis T. Talbot and William W. Orr, *The New Nation of Israel and the Word of God* (Los Angeles, 1948); M. R. DeHaan, *The Jew and Palestine in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1954); Arthur Kac, *The Rebirth of the State of Israel: Is It of God or Men?* (Chicago, 1958); George T. B. Davis, *God's Guiding Hand* (Philadelphia, 1962).
25. John Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1962), p. 19.
26. On Palestinian Arab Christian Zionists, see Sahri Huri, *Udat al Masiah* (Jerusalem, 1939).
27. For example, L. Nelson Bell, "Unfolding Destiny," *Christianity Today* (1967), pp. 1044–1045.
28. See, e.g., Peter L. Williams and Peter L. Benson, *Religion on Capitol Hill: Myth and Realities* (New York, 1986); Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington* (Knoxville, 1988); Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics* (New York, 1989); and Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, 1993).
29. See Martin Gardner, "Giving God a Hand," *New York Review of Books* (August 13, 1987), p. 22.
30. Cf. Lienesch, *Redeeming America*; Silk, *Spiritual Politics*.
31. James McWhirter, *A World in a Country* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 160–174; Marvin Watson and Merla Watson, interview by the author, Jerusalem, October 16, 1992; Menahem Ben Hayim, interview by the author, Jerusalem, October 14, 1992.
32. Jan Willem van der Hoeven, "If I Forget Thee O Jerusalem," in *A word From Jerusalem, (Jerusalem, 1991)* p. 4.
33. Haim Schapiro, correspondent for religious affairs of the *Jerusalem Post*, interview by the author, Jerusalem, October 6, 1992.
34. A typewritten list of ICEJ international representatives, February 1992, included representatives in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Maryland, California, and Wyoming.
35. On the various activities of the ICEJ, see its brochure, "The Ministry of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem" (Jerusalem, 1992). Arlynn Nellhaus, "Go Tell It on the Mountain," *Jerusalem Post Magazine* (October 9, 1992), pp. 6–7.
36. In 1991, for example, Germans offered more financial support for bringing Russian Jews to Israel than supporters in any other country. "Wohnungsbau for Sowjetische Juden," *Ein Wort aus Jerusalem* (March–April 1992). p. 6. As premillennialism and messianism are not strong among German Protestants, this may be attributed to guilt and a wish to help the Jewish state, regardless of its role in the events that precede the arrival of the Messiah.

37. On van der Hoeven's views on Israel, see his book, Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Babylon or Jerusalem* (Shippensburg, PA, 1993).

38. Jan Willem van der Hoeven, *Le Maan Tzion Lo Echeshe* (Heb.; Jerusalem, 1990), p. 13.

39. Jan Willem van der Hoeven, interview by the author, Jerusalem, August 19, 1991.

40. The Reverend Michael Krupp, interview by the author Jerusalem, August 20, 1991. See also Michael Krupp, "Falsche Propheten in Jerusalem," October 3, 1988, sent to the Protestant religious press in Germany.

41. On Middle Eastern churches and their relation to Zionism and Israel, see Dafna Tsimhoni, "The Arab Christians and the Palestinian Arab National Movement," in *The Palestinians and the Middle East Conflict*, ed. Gavriel Ben Dor (Ramat Gan, 1978) pp. 101–128; Paul Charles Merkley, *Christian Attitudes towards the State of Israel* (Montreal, 2001), especially pp. 9–102, 161–194; and Gabriel Zeldin, "Catholics and Protestants in Jerusalem and the Return of the Jews to Zion," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1992.

42. In some cases, such as in Holland, mainline Protestant church members often have more positive attitudes toward Israel than their leadership; consequently the embassy, which is regarded as representing pro-Israel sentiments, enjoys support even when the church establishment is hostile toward its activities. The Reverend Simon Schoon and the Reverend Geert Cohen-Stuart, the Dutch Reformed Church, interview by the author, Southampton, July 14, 1991.

43. Middle East Council of Churches, "Signs of Hope," 1988 annual report (Limasol, Cyprus, July 1989). See also Middle East Council of Churches, *What Is Western Fundamentalist Christian Zionism?* (Limasol, Cyprus, April 1988; rev. ed., August 1988). The second, revised edition is somewhat more moderate than the first.

44. A striking example of this failure to understand can be found in Michael Pragai's *Faith and Fulfillment* (London, 1985). The author, who served as the head of the department for liaison with the Christian churches and organizations in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs for many years, demonstrates a complete lack of knowledge of the nature of the evangelical support of Zionism and of the differences between conservative and mainline/liberal churches.

45. Yona Malacy, *American Fundamentalism and Israel* (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 106–111.

46. A. E. Thompson, *A Century of Jewish Missions* (Chicago, 1905).

47. Cf. Yaakov Ariel, "Counterculture and Missions: Jews for Jesus and the Vietnam Era Missionary Campaigns," *Religion and American Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (summer 1999), pp. 233–257.

48. The Reverend William Currie, former head of the American Messianic Fellowship, interview by the author, Jerusalem, September 1991. Currie had little appreciation for the embassy.

49. For example, David M. Eichorn, *Evangelizing the American Jew* (Middle Village, NY, 1978).

50. For example, Robert L. Lindsey, *Israel in Christendom* (Tel Aviv, 1961).

51. Per Osterlye, *The Church in Israel* (Lund, 1970).

52. "Israel Looks on U.S. Evangelical Christians as Potent Allies," *Washington Post* (March 23, 1981), p. A11.

53. "Israel's Leaders Greet the Embassy," in *Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord* [A publication of the International Christian Embassy, no author given] (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 4–5.

54. For a photograph of such a gathering, see Tzipora Luria, "LeLo Tasbichim: Notztim Mechuiavim LeYesha" [Without inhibitions: Christians committed to Judea and Samaria], *Nekuda*, No. 128 (March 17, 1989), p. 31.

55. Luria, "LeLo Tasbichim," pp. 30–34.

56. Cf. Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America 1880–2000* (Chapel Hill, 2000), pp. 277–278.

57. Daniel Ben Simon, "Doing Something for Judaism," *Haaretz*, English ed. (December 18, 1997), pp. 1–2.

58. For example, Noam Hendren, Baruch Maoz, and Marvin Dramer, letter circulated through the Internet.

59. Hendren, Maoz, and Dramer, letter, March 1997.

60. Raymond L. Cox, "Time for the Temple?" *Eternity*, Vol. 19 (January 1968), pp. 17–18; Malcolm Couch, "When Will the Jews Rebuild the Temple?" *Moody Monthly*, Vol. 74 (December 1973), pp. 34–35, 86.

61. Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, pp. 32–47.

62. Cf. Gideon Aran, "From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: The Roots of Gush Emunim," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 2 (1986), p. 118.

63. *Mishna, Kelim* 1, 8. Cf. "Har Ha Bayit," in *HaEncyclopedia HaTalmudit*, Vol. 10, pp. 575–592.

64. Cf. Numbers 19.

65. Cf. Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (New York, 1991), pp. 279–288.

66. I am indebted to Avinoam Brog for sharing with me information and impressions on Rohan's stay in the kibbutz and his motive for burning the mosque.

67. See Jerusalem District Court Archive, Criminal File 69/173.

68. On the Jewish groups aiming at building the Temple, see Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, pp. 264–269, 279–288.

69. Cf. Grant R. Jeffrey, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny* (New York, 1990), especially pp. 108–150. See also, for example, Don Stewart and Chuck Missler, *The Coming Temple: Center Stage for the Final Countdown* (Orange, CA, 1991), pp. 157–170.

70. On Chuck Smith, see Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism* (Berkeley, 1998).

71. On Dolphin and his premillennialist thinking and connections, see his extensive Web site, www.Ldolphin.org; see also a series of tracts the Californian physicist has published, copies of which are in my collection.

72. Stewart and Missler, *The Coming Temple*, pp. 157–170.

73. See Yisrayl Hawkins, *A Peaceful Solution to Building the Next Temple in Yerusalem* (Abilene, TX, 1989).

74. On the premillennialist fascination with the lost ark, see Doug Wead, David Lewis, and Hal Donaldson, *Where Is the Lost Ark?* (Minneapolis, n.d.); Don Stewart and Chuck Missler, *In Search of the Lost Ark* (Orange, CA, 1991).

75. Lawrence Wright, "Forcing the End," *New Yorker*, Vol. 74, No. 20 (July 20, 1998), pp. 42–53; "Christian Help Jews Build the Temple" Jewish Telegraphic Agency, September 2, 1999, available at www.jta.org/sep99/02-cows.htm.

76. See, for example, C. W. Sleeming, *These Are the Garments* (Fort Washington, PA, n.d.); Wead, Lewis, and Donaldson, *Where Is the Lost Ark?*; Stewart and Missler, *In Search of the Lost Ark*; Thomas Ice and Randall Price, *Ready to Rebuild* (Eugene, OR, 1992).

77. Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind* (Wheaton, IL, 1995). The series has sold more than twenty million copies. On the Temple, see, for example, LaHaye and Jenkins, *Left Behind*, p. 415; Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Nicolae: The Rise of Antichrist* (Wheaton, IL, 1997), p. 369; and Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Tribulation Force* (Wheaton, IL, 1996), pp. 208, 277.

78. Quoted in Robert I. Friedman, *Zealots for Zion* (New York, 1992), p. 144.

79. Friedman, *Zealots for Zion*, pp. 144–145.

80. See articles in the *Middle East Intelligence Digest*, a publication of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem in the 1990s; cf., for example, the series *Left Behind*.

81. Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Antisemitism* (New York, 1966); L. Ianniello, Anti-Defamation League press release, New York, January 8, 1986.