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Introduction

This is the fifth and final article in a series on Christian Zionism in the United States. In Part One, we explored the origins of this heretical doctrine from its seeds in the early days of Protestant England to the radical seventeenth century Puritans in New England. In Part Two , we surveyed the founding fathers of Christian Zionism as it exists today, notably the Anglo-Irishman John Nelson Darby and his American disciples Cyrus Scofield (editor of the *Scofield Reference Bible*), Dwight Moody, and William Blackstone. In Part Three, we addressed the intriguing relationship between Christian Zionism as a theological system and its motivation for political activism among American evangelicals after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. We focused in particular on the explosion of Christian Zionist popular writings through the work of Hal Lindsey and the birth of political advocacy for Israel as pioneered by the late Baptist minister Jerry Falwell. By the 1980's, as we have seen, America's dance with the devil that is Christian Zionism was in full swing. In Part Four, we looked at well-known evangelists Pat Robertson and Chuck Missler and the perversion of prophecy by Christian Zionism, to include its bizarre fascination with the construction of a third Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Here in our final installment, we will offer a disturbing profile of Protestant pastor John Hagee, examine how Christian churches have variously perceived Christian Zionism, and address its impact on American politics and foreign affairs. As mentioned previously, this article is written as a companion piece to the three-part article entitled "Why is There a Gaza Strip?" published in *Catholic Family News*, which addressed the relationship between the Jews and the land, from the time of Abraham through the current day.[1]

John Hagee

We will conclude our look at Christian Zionist leaders with John Hagee, the 76-year old pastor of the charismatic Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. With the passing of Jerry Falwell and the aging of Pat Robertson, the mantle of Christian Zionist leadership has effectively passed to Hagee, whose ministry is carried via radio and television throughout the United States and around the world. His church boasts 19,000 members and his personal wealth is estimated in the millions. Early in his ministry, Hagee was involved in a

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presumed extramarital affair and subsequently divorced and remarried, while admitting to his congregation that he had been guilty of "immorality."[2] Unlike other Christian Zionist leaders who at least appear to have buried the hatchet with Catholicism, Hagee is a throw-back to the days of rabble-rouser Jack Chick (also a premillennial dispensationalist). In 1987, for example, Hagee described Catholicism as a "Godless theology of hate that…produced a harvest of hate."[3] In later works, including *Jerusalem Countdown*, Hagee regurgitated the standard anti-Catholic fabrications of the past – the Catholic Church "plunged the world into the Dark Ages," Adolph Hitler's anti-Semitism was derived from his Catholic upbringing, Pope Pius XII encouraged Nazism, etc.[4] Incidentally, Hagee dedicated his book to recently deceased Christian Zionist Derek Prince, who claimed to have been instrumental in raising two persons from the dead while in Kenya.[5] Additionally, Hagee has stated that Hitler was accomplishing God's will through the Holocaust because the Jews had not followed the call of Theodore Herzl to Palestine in fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.[6]

The danger of Hagee's rhetoric, however, extends beyond the Catholic Church to the entire Middle East. As one wag has quipped of Hagee, "If there's anything worse than Elmer Gantry, it's Elmer Gantry with a foreign policy." Hagee's eschatology has linked the United States with Israel, both with regard to the ownership of territory and the threat from Iran. He believes that Israel has a divine right to not only the West Bank and the Gaza Strip but also to land east of the Jordan River.[7] In a speech to the Israeli Knesset, Hagee declared that, "If America forces Israel to give away part of the land of Israel to the enemies of Israel, then judgment will come to America."[8] As for Iran, Hagee laid out his views before a 2007 assembly of Christians United For Israel, an organization which he founded to promote his pernicious beliefs. Drawing on language from the Book of Revelation, Hagee pointed to Iran as the incarnation of evil. *"The head of the beast of radical Islam in the Middle East is Iran and its fanatical president Ahmadinejad…We want you to recognize that Iran is a clear and present danger to the United States of America and Israel…It's time for our country to consider a military pre-emptive strike against Iran if they will not yield to diplomacy. And if they continue the pursuit of nuclear weapons we must not allow them to manipulate the economy of the world because they have a nuclear weapon."*[9] In response, Presbyterian minister and theology professor Gary Burge has noted, "Rev. John Hagee, a spokesperson for Jesus Christ, a man with no diplomatic credentials, a man with no training in history or political science, [is] calling for an American military strike against Iran based on what the Bible teaches."[10]

To compound his errors, Hagee has taken the politically correct road with the government of Israel by refraining from "witnessing" about Jesus to Jews during his frequent trips to the Holy Land. Further, he will not engage with Messianic Jews, those who have embraced

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Jesus as the Messiah. Asked why by author Victoria Clark, Hagee replied that "the Israelis see those people as traitors" and that bringing Jews to Jesus would "muddy the waters in what we're trying to accomplish."[11] Hagee might also have replied that since 1978, Israeli law has prohibited Christians from proselytizing to Jews. The law, enacted over the Christmas season of 1977, "made missionaries liable to five years' imprisonment for attempting to persuade people to change their religion, and three years' imprisonment for any Jew who converted."[12] The law has apparently never been enforced because of three factors – fear of antagonizing the outside Christian world, leverage which the Israeli government has over Christian Zionist leaders through generous pilgrimage "packages," and the willing compliance of many "pastors" such as Hagee.[13] Protestant pastor Ted Pike has courageously commented on this tragic situation*: "By forbidding proclamation of the gospel to Jews, Hagee commits three of the worst sins imaginable: He forbids witnessing to the lost. He forbids using the name of Jesus in public. And he frustrates the Holy Spirit's attempt to save souls…Instead of passively obeying Israel's anti-Christ laws and leaders, the very least every Christian and "Christian" travel group should do is boycott travel to Israel. Evangelicals should dry up Israel's multibillion-dollar "Christian" travel industry until our supposedly democratic ally honors free speech…Christ said of Israel that the fields of evangelism are 'white unto harvest,' 'but the laborers are few.' (John 4:35; Luke 10:2). They are much fewer because Hagee tells the 'laborers' not to bother with a Jewish harvest. Heretically, he claims they have their own covenant of salvation, apart from Christ."*[14] Finally, Christian Zionists, who continue to vilify Russia, conveniently fail to note that evangelist Billy Graham has been permitted to conduct two "crusades" in Russia (1984 and 1992) but none in Israel.

The Circus Comes to Town

Hagee's creation, Christians United For Israel (CUFI), celebrated its tenth birthday in early 2016, but it has already surpassed numerous older groups in becoming the premier Christian Zionist activist organization. The homepage of the CUFI website cites this paean from Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu – "I consider CUFI to be a vital part of Israel's national security" – which is no overstatement. CUFI is incessant and aggressive in its primary missions – educating the Christian Zionist faithful, raising funds, lobbying the Congress, and other activities. It also features a highly professional roadshow, a "Night to Honor Israel" which makes appearances across the United States at the frenetic rate of about 40 per month. The author took advantage of the CUFI roadshow playing in Dayton, Ohio August [2015] to gain a first-hand look at Hagee's organization.

Our "Night to Honor Israel" began with the sounding of the *shofar*, the ancient ram's horn, which remained prominently on display for the rest of the evening. Next, a message of

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support from the local United States congressman (a conservative Republican) was read to the assembled audience of nearly 2,000 faithful. A 25-piece orchestra and a family singing group provided the music. The seats in the venue were decorated with hundreds of alternating American and Israeli flags. At one point, when the audience was asked to "show the flags" for a video camera, almost all the flags which appeared were Israeli, as if the assembled faithful knew the preference of the organizers. Featured speakers included Hagee's associate Gary Bauer (former Republican presidential candidate), a Jewish Holocaust survivor, and the Israeli consul general from New York. Also highlighted was a U.S. Army veteran who lost both legs in Afghanistan but, undaunted, volunteered with the Israeli Defense Forces in Israel last year before beginning his 2016 race for a Florida Congressional seat. One speaker declared that for the last 2000 years the Jews have been persecuted under the sign of the cross, a patently false statement. Another speaker made the observation that, "Jews are beautiful, Christians are beautiful. Together, that's when the magic happens," a phrase not exactly reminiscent of the writings of Paul or the words of Christ. In fact, in a two-and-a-half hour event, not one quotation of Christ was cited and the name of Jesus was mentioned only twice by a speaker in a final prayer. The event included a collection by which the audience could "bless" Israel. Before the end of the program, it was announced that we had "blessed" Israel to the tune of some $25,000. ("Blessing" in Christian Zionist parlance has taken on a corrupted meaning, similar to the word "redemption" for Zionists; in Zionist terms, land in Palestine is "redeemed" when it passes to Jewish control). All in all, the CUFI circus was a highly impressive event for the poorly catechized and for those who rely on the mainstream media for their news.

Christian Zionism and the Churches

American Christians are hardly of one mind about Christian Zionism and the state of Israel. In this regard, a 2006 political science survey of pastors and clergy from nineteen Christian denominations illustrated the wide gap among Christian clergy on this issue. Not surprisingly, the most "pro-Israel" clergy in the survey were those in the evangelical Protestant ranks, with the Assemblies of God, the Evangelical Free Church, and the Southern Baptist Convention topping the list. All three are imbued with the doctrines of pre-millennialism and dispensationalism. In the survey, each scored in percentages that favored Israel over the Palestinians by a margin of more than two-to-one. On the other hand, mainline Protestant sects tended to be strongly "pro-Palestinian," headed by the Evangelical Lutherans, the Reformed Church in America, and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Intriguingly, the Catholic Church scored the most overwhelmingly "pro-Palestinian" rating, virtually identical to that of the Unitarians. However, the "pro-Israel" clergy surveyed were more likely to emphasize the issue and address it more frequently to their congregations. Recognizing that there may be other variables that may prompt these

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political leanings, the survey nevertheless concluded that Christian Zionist theology was far and away the primary motive for the pro-Israel position, while "liberation theology" was the top factor influencing the "pro-Palestinian" clergy. The survey concluded that, "*the large numbers of evangelical clergy who have an intense interest in Middle East issues and a fervent attachment to the success of Israel provide fertile grounds for recruitment by Christian Zionist organizations, constantly proliferating in recent years. Biblical interpretation and exposition by these clergy in their congregations – and sometimes beyond through local Christian radio and TV stations – is likely to have a considerable cumulative impact on their listeners.*"[15] The fact that the survey was conducted about clergy opinions on the state of Israel, rather than the Jewish people, speaks volumes about the influence of Christian Zionism in the political realm.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is an example of the relatively few denominations which have formally spoken against Christian Zionism. In 2004, its General Assembly released a statement that *"Christian Zionism is not consistent with the basic values of Reformed theology because it makes use of idiosyncratic interpretations of scripture to undergird a certain reading of current events, and to generate support for specific political goals that do not bolster work toward peace and potentially endanger Palestinian and Israeli people."* ***[16]*** Predictably, the Presbyterians were charged with anti-Semitism as a result of this position."[17] Likewise, the National Council of Churches (NCC), with its 37 constituent communions, has criticized Christian Zionism, calling it "*a dangerous movement that distorts the teachings of the Church, fosters fear and hatred of Muslims and non-Western Christians, and has negative consequences for the entire Middle East.*"[18]

In sharp contrast to the NCC, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has apparently been silent on the issue. A recent search of the USCCB website yields no "hits" for the term "Christian Zionism." The USCCB maintains ecumenical outreach with more than a dozen Christian denominations as well as a "Catholic-Jewish dialogue," yet the bishops apparently use none of these forums to convey Catholic concerns about Christian Zionism to their dialogue partners.[19]

This situation begs the obvious question – do the American bishops, who have felt obliged over the years to speak out on issues ranging from cultural diversity to the environment, not see the dangers of Christian Zionism? As for conversion of the Jews, the USCCB website is silent, although it notes that the 25-year dialogue with the Jewish community has addressed such issues as "holocaust revisionism, the death penalty, religious hatred, children and the environment…"[20] In contrast, at least one evangelical denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, with some 50,000 churches and missions, announced unashamedly in 1996 that it would commit itself to prayer for the Jewish people and for their conversion to the

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gospel.[21]

If the American Catholic bishops are not disturbed by Christian Zionism, that is certainly not true of the Catholic Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. In 2006, then Patriarch Michel Sabbah joined his three local counterparts (heads of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, the Episcopal Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church) in roundly condemning Christian Zionism. Their joint statement (known as the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism) declares that it is "a false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice, and reconciliation." The text continues: *"We further reject the contemporary alliance of Christian Zionist leaders and organizations with elements in the governments of Israel and the United States that are presently imposing their unilateral pre-emptive borders and domination over Palestine. This inevitably leads to unending cycles of violence that undermine the security of all peoples of the Middle East and the rest of world. We reject the teachings of Christian Zionism that facilitate and support these policies as they advance racial exclusivity and perpetual war rather than the gospel of universal love, redemption and reconciliation taught by Jesus Christ. Rather than condemn the world to the doom of Armageddon we call upon everyone to liberate themselves from ideologies of militarism and occupation. Instead, let them pursue the healing of the nations!"*[22]

The 2006 declaration was not the first by Middle East Christians to decry the "menace" of Christian Zionism (Dr. Stephen Sizer's term). In 1986, the Middle East Council of Churches addressed the issue in a letter written to members of the World Council of Churches. The letter stated, "*In the Middle East where religion plays an increasingly significant role in determining the future relationships between peoples and nations, there is no room for ill-informed and biased 'Christian Zionist' ideologies that are dangerous distortions of the Christian faith. Christians everywhere must reject all concepts of superiority of particular people over other people within God's creation … (This is) … a fundamental disservice also to Jews who may be inspired to liberate themselves from discriminatory attitudes and thereby rediscover equality with the Palestinians with whom they are expected to live God's justice and peace in the Holy Land…For Christian Zionists the state of Israel and its policies enjoy the privilege of being beyond any form of human sanction."*[23]

Indeed, no one knows the damage created by Christian Zionism better than the Palestinian Christians. In an interview with author Victoria Clark, the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, Riah Abu al-Assal, referred to Christian Zionism as "*close to being a heresy…Christian Zionists are not serving Israel at all but causing great harm to the Jews and Judaism by supporting them to continue doing the injustices they're doing…Second, it's a business! They're making money out of this. You need to ask them how many Christian Zionist preachers they've offered free tickets to Israel to if they will bring groups here.*" In the

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same interview, Bishop Riah conveyed the story about the recent offer of a free ticket to Israel, complete with five-star accommodations, for the Dean of Washington's Episcopalian National Cathedral. The only *quid pro quo* was that the dean must accept the gift of a stone from the Wailing Wall that had been inscribed with a text from Psalm 137 ("By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion") and mount it in the cathedral in Washington. Such are the political perversions of sacred scripture in the world of Christian Zionism."[24]

A final organization that has been coopted by Christian Zionism is the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB). In 2015, prior to the visit of Prime Minister Netanyahu to Washington, its board of directors unanimously approved a resolution urging solidarity with Israel. It stated, *"NRB calls on its members to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and for God's protection over all of Israel, and for all people of good will who seek true peace in the Holy Land; furthermore, while other nations and international bodies may alienate or abandon Israel, NRB calls on the United States to continue to stand steadfast by Israel in its time of need."* There was no mention of the fate of Palestinians, including Christians.[25]

The Political Impact of Christian Zionism

In Part Three, we cited Timothy Weber, who noted that since the creation of Israel, but especially since 1967, American Christian Zionists have not been content to be mere observers of Israel but participants in its affairs. The United States is the one super-power with commanding influence in the Middle East and the only nation with any significant leverage over Israel, although it rarely exercises it. In view of these factors, Christian Zionists – normally in concert with America's Jewish lobby – have been able to exercise a huge degree of control over American foreign policy by pressuring both the executive branch and the Congress. Indeed, Christian Zionists can claim much of the credit for electing three presidents over the years – Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush. Carter, the only "evangelical" of the three, lost the backing of Christian Zionists – and possibly a second term in the White House – because of his pressure on Israel to return the Sinai to Egypt through the 1978 Camp David Accords. Despite a largely failed presidency, Carter does retain one distinction – he is the only president to preside over an enduring advancement of the so-called "peace process" in the Middle East. Largely ostracized by the Democratic Party since his departure from the White House, Carter is also the only president to strike a diplomatic balance in his Middle East foreign policy and recognize the real roots of the problem, as documented in his 2006 book *Palestine: Peace, not Apartheid*.
Ronald Reagan's presidency largely coincided with the surge in popularity of Christian Zionism, corresponding to the heyday of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. Reagan is known to have read Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* shortly after its 1970 publication

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and to have discussed end-time prophecy with intimate friends. As a presidential candidate, Reagan did not shy away from the issue, commenting to evangelist Jim Bakker, "We may be the generation that sees Armageddon."[26] As Protestant Pastor Donald Wagner notes, *"The election of Ronald Reagan ushered in not only the most pro-Israel administration in history but gave several Christian Zionists prominent political posts. In addition to the President, those who subscribed to the futurist premillennial theology and Christian Zionism included Attorney General Ed Meese, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, and Secretary of the Interior James Watt. Several second-level personnel held the Christian Zionist perspective and had considerable influence* [author's note: Oliver North comes to mind]*. Once the Reagan Administration opened the door, leading Evangelical Christian Zionist televangelists and writers were given direct access to the President and cabinet members. Rev. Jerry Falwell, Christian Zionist televangelist Mike Evans, and author Hal Lindsay were among them. In addition, annual 'Prayer Breakfasts for Israel' and frequent 'White House Seminars' brought Evangelicals of the Christian Zionist persuasion face to face with the Reagan Administration and Congressional leadership."*[27] Further, in 1983, Reagan arranged for Jerry Falwell to "attend National Security Council briefings and discuss with America's top officials plans for a nuclear war with Russia." According to Hal Lindsey, Reagan gave him approval to speak to Pentagon strategists on a nuclear war with Russia.[28] The legacy of the Reagan Administration proved that dispensationalism and its corollary – the "rapture" – are not merely arcane theological positions. They may have a deep impact on politics, governance, and diplomacy and may extend well beyond the Middle East. For example, Reagan's Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, once told a House of Representatives committee that he did not worry much about the fate of the world's resources because "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns." Correctly or not, Watt was widely perceived as anti-environmentalist; was he implying that we need no longer act as stewards of God's creation?[29]

Reagan's successors in the White House have not deviated significantly from his policies. As noted by Stephen Sizer, while subsequent administrations "have not appeared to share the same dispensational presuppositions of Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan, they have maintained, however reluctantly, the strong pro-Zionist position of their predecessors."[30] The remarks of George W. Bush on a 2008 visit to Israel (see picture and caption) are surely indicative of a man imbued with a Christian Zionist view of the world. Indeed, the Bush Administration was peppered with high-flying "neo-conservatives" (neo-cons) whose view of Israel was virtually identical to those of Christian Zionists, without bothering themselves with the pesky issues of theology. Even Barak Obama, who has certainly had a strained relationship with Israel and whom some consider anti-Semitic, has not attempted to alter America's long-established pro-Israel policies.

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As noted above, Christian Zionist leaders have frequently been wrong in their predictions about events and developments. However, a statement by Jerry Falwell during an address in Israel in the early 1980's has proven almost unfailingly true over the last three decades. Falwell remarked, "The day is coming when no candidate will be elected in the United States who is not pro-Israel."[31] Falwell was referring not only to the White House but to the Congress, which, if anything, has been even more "pro-Israel" than the executive branch over the years, thanks principally to Christian Zionist members and constituents. We will cite just two instances of Christian Zionist sentiment from within the Congress, among numerous examples. In 2002, Oklahoma Republican Senator James Inhofe spoke about the state of Israel, enumerating seven reasons why the land of Palestine "rightfully" belongs to the Jews. His speech cited reasons that are largely irrelevant, factual mistakes, or are violations of accepted international law. In his address, however, Inhofe made two revealing remarks which trump other factors: First he declared, "[Israel] has a right to the land. This is the most important reason: Because God said so…This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God [to Abraham] is true." Secondly, Inhofe referred to the 9-11 terrorist strikes of the previous year, stating that the "spiritual door was opened for an attack on the United States" because of American pressure on Israel to not respond to terrorism.[32] In short, the Israelis, who demanded a secular state, are not responsible to secular norms of legality and justice, while the United States is punished by God for being insufficiently zealous in its support of Israel. Our second example of Christian Zionism prevailing in the top ranks of the Congress comes from Republican House Majority Dick Armey. In a 2002 interview on MSNBC's *Hardball*, Armey stated that "I'm content to have Israel grab the entire West Bank" and proceeded to endorse the ethnic cleansing of its Palestinian residents.[33]

A final point on Christian Zionist influence in the U.S. Government concerns the 2016 presidential election. As mentioned in Part One of this article, Christian Zionists long ago gravitated to the Republican Party, although the Democrats have never been outdone in promoting "pro-Israeli" policies, at least since the Carter Administration. Virtually every one of the sixteen original Republican candidates had early and often burnished their pro-Israel credentials. Mike Huckabee stated that the United States should not "berate" Israel for "building houses on the land given to Abraham." Carly Fiorina stated that after her election, her first phone call would be to Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu. Chris Christie was forced to apologize for his use of the politically inconvenient term "occupied territories." Donald Trump opted to skip a long-scheduled presidential debate in March in order to speak to a pro-Israeli lobby in Washington. Uncharacteristically for Trump, his remarks were allegedly carefully scripted. The websites of both Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz proudly display the banner "Stand With Israel" In the case of Cruz, "Stand With Israel" ranks as one of only nine listed issues on his website, which also carries the enthusiastic

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endorsement of the controversial, self-promoting rabbi Shmuley Boteach. (Among other bizarre things, Boteach is noted for acting as "spiritual advisor" to the late Michael Jackson and declaring that "there is nothing immoral about [homosexuality], but it violates the divine will."[34] Catholic ex-Senator Rick Santorum, whose zeal for Israel has long been second to none, lamented curiously last fall that American evangelicals care more about the future of Israel than do American Jews, which he called a "tragedy." Santorum would have done better to have lamented the Israeli policy against Christian proselytizing, although that sentiment would likely not have attracted as many votes.[35] Even if Santorum does not subscribe to Christian Zionist theology, his stance is proof of the deep penetration of Christian Zionist dogma and rhetoric in Catholic circles.[36]

Astute political observers have long noted the detrimental impact of Christian Zionism on American foreign policy. We will note just two recent examples. In 2009, a former senior staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee authored a book (*Dark Crusade*) in which he contended that Christian Zionism has adversely affected United States' relations with not only Arab and Muslim states but even Russia and China.[37] Secondly, a long-time Under Secretary of State, George Ball, co-wrote a book with his son in 1992, entitled *The Passionate Attachment.* The title stems from George Washington's so-called farewell address to the nation in 1796 when the young United States was being pressured to take sides in the ongoing struggle between England and revolutionary France. Washington counseled America to avoid "a passionate attachment" with other nations and cautioned that such a policy would produce "a variety of evils." Although the United States heeded Washington's advice at that time, Ball notes that we have indeed cultivated a "passionate attachment" to Israel today, to our detriment in most respects, resulting in the very dangers which Washington had warned against. Obviously, the "passion" in the relationship is largely provided by Christian Zionism.[38]

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Final Thoughts

The conversion of the Jewish people to the one, true church of Jesus Christ is surely something to be hoped and prayed for by all Catholics. As Father Denis Fahey describes in his tract "The Kingship of Christ and the Conversion of the Jewish Nation" (available online), both the Old and New Testaments, in addition to the church fathers, testify to the fact that the conversion of the Jews is assured in the divine plan.[39] But it will certainly not happen through the heretical and pernicious promptings of Christian Zionism. (A minor variant of Christian Zionism has at least been helpful in converting the so-called Messianic Jews to a form of Christianity through the organization Jews for Jesus.)

There is also a great irony between Christian Zionist eschatology and the teachings of the Talmud, a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. Christian Zionism maintains that the ultimate

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destiny of the Jews remains here on earth while the "church" of Christ is "raptured" into heavenly glory. However, the Talmud considers the Jewish race superior to the Gentiles. The Jewish author Bernard Lazare, writing on the influence of the Talmud, has noted, *"The men of the other nations are in His eyes on a plane inferior to the Hebrews. It is only by a concession that they have a share in the divine munificence, since only the souls of the Jews descend from the first man. The possessions that are assigned to the other nations in reality belong to Israel."*[40]

A second irony can be found in the comparison of Christian Zionism to classic Islamic theology. For Muslims, the reward of the virtuous in paradise is an entirely sensual environment consisting of flowing waters, wine, choice foods, and the company of *houris,* the legendary perpetual virgins. In Christian Zionism, there is little emphasis on the joys of heaven; rather, the emphasis is on the moment of "rapture" by which believers escape the great tribulation on earth. Commenting a century ago on the fate of the Jews, William Blackstone wrote, *"The detail of the manner of their restoration, and of their repentance and acceptance of Christ, is not so important to us. For those who are of the Church are to be taken away first, in the Rapture, and escape all these things through which Israel must pass."*[41] Both notions are wrong, even juvenile – Islam emphasizes the physical, self-gratifying aspects of paradise at the expense of the spiritual, while Christian Zionism focuses on the evasion of pain and suffering in the *great tribulation,* irrespective of the fate of others. Indeed, the ministries of the likes of Chuck Missler and John Hagee seem almost totally devoid of prayer and repentance. For them, there is no *church penitent*, only a *church imminent,* awaiting the panacea of the "rapture." Yet another irony is the manner in which Christian Zionism skews the relationship between Christians and Jews. As former Congressman Paul Findley notes, "mainline Christians who accept the legitimacy of the Jewish faith but question some policies of the Jewish state are branded anti-Semitic, while evangelical Christians who back Israel but doubt the theological validity of Judaism are welcome as allies."[42] Finally, it is ironic that Christian Zionists come principally from the ranks of conservative, "evangelical" Protestants – those whose churches cite the Bible for their opposition to homosexuality and abortion, for example. Certainly Jerry Falwell, for all of his obsession with Israel, spoke more frequently and insistently against homosexuality than any Catholic bishop of his era. Yet without the guiding authority of the Catholic Church in interpreting the Bible, the misguided zeal of Christian Zionism has caused many to go astray both in their theology and their fallacious linkage of spiritual and secular issues.[43] Indeed, the only Christian leaders who are standing up to warn about the dangerous errors of Christian Zionism are a handful of courageous and astute Protestants such as Donald Wagner, Gary Burge, and Stephen Sizer. The Catholic Church, outside the local leadership in the Holy Land, has totally ignored the problem, an unfortunate position which will be exacerbated as the Church abandons any institutional efforts to convert Jews

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to Catholicism under Pope Francis.

A comment is also necessary on the statement that the Jews are our "elder brothers in the faith," a phrase used repeatedly by Pope John Paul II. In truth, it is one of those equivocal statements which have proliferated in the post-Vatican II church and which is dangerously ambiguous. Surely the statement is true in the sense used by Christ to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). But if the patriarchs and the prophets were our elder brothers, the same cannot be said for other Jews, as Paul wrote in Romans 11:28: *"As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs."* A secular variant of this ambiguity was provided by Israeli writer Gershom Gorenberg to Bob Simon of the CBS News program *60 Minutes* in a 2002 interview:

GORENBERG, referring to Christian Zionists: *"They don't love the real Jewish people. They love us as characters in their story, in their play, and that's not who we are. And we never auditioned for that part, and the play is not one that ends up good for us."*

SIMON: *"It ends up with salvation for the Christians, for the people who wrote the play, but not for you."*

GORENBERG: *"Correct. If you listen to the drama that they are… describing, essentially, it's a five-act play in which the Jews disappear in the fourth act."*[44]

Christian Zionism has been complicit in a grave social injustice in Palestine for at least half a century, including the persecution of Middle Eastern Christians. The "living stones" of the Holy Land, as the local Christians refer to themselves, are in danger of disappearing as their residences, jobs, farms, and opportunities gradually cease to exist while Israel "redeems" the land and Christian Zionists "bless" Israel. Meanwhile, Christian Zionists have adamantly opposed the Oslo Accords and other attempts at compromise between Israel and the Palestinians over what is admittedly a difficult issue. Perhaps even worse is the distortion of Christianity conveyed to millions of Muslims in the Middle East and around the world. In the words of Protestant Pastor Donald Wagner, "What [Christian Zionists] are projecting is a Western white, militant Zionist image of Christianity into the region. And what this does is give global Muslims, and global Christians, the impression that Christianity is really a militant, Crusader type of religion."[45] One must wonder to what extent this skewed notion of Christianity has been instrumental in the success of ISIS in recruiting and radicalizing young Muslims today. As noted by Stephen Sizer, "Since Christian Zionists are convinced there will be an apocalyptic war between good and evil in the near future, there is no prospect for lasting peace between Jews and Arabs. Indeed, to advocate that Israel compromise with Islam or coexist with Palestinians is to identify with those destined to

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oppose God and Israel in the imminent battle of Armageddon."[46]

We close with this observation of Victoria Clark:*"Armed with their selected Bible chapters and verses, these Christians are engaged in a war against Evil, working to another code of conduct entirely. When the stakes are this high, when it has to do with Israel and God's plan for the end of the world, man-made laws about the ethics of just wars and the proportionate use of force, the Sermon on the Mount's 'blessed are the peacemakers', are utterly null and void. That, and diplomacy, nuance, empirical evidence, human rights and the art of compromise count for nothing."*[47] Of the many heresies to permeate Christianity in the last century, few have been more pernicious than Christian Zionism, but the United States shows no sign of halting its dance with the devil.

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[1] See *Catholic Family News*, Vol. 22, Issues 2-4 (February-April 2015).

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Hagee

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. Hagee's remarks eventually prompted a public feud with Catholic League president William Donohue.

[5] http://www.mgmministry.org/derek-prince/

[6] http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/13/hagee-apologizes-for-holocaust-comments/?_r=0

[7] Amy Frykholm, "Calculated Blessings," Christian Century 7 Oct. 2008 : 36.

[8] Clark, op. cit., p. 274.

[9] Gary M. Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2013), p. 287.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Clark, op. cit., p. 276.

[12] http://www.ifamericansknew.org/history/rel-christians.html. See also

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http://www.truthtellers.org/hate%20crimes/proselyte.html

[13] http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/10/christian-embassy-missionary-ultra-orthodox-jerusalem.html#

[14] http://www.rense.com/general81/dhag.htm

[15] http://www.furman.edu/academics/politicalscience/meet-our-faculty/Documents/Guth-Papers/New%20Orleans%20Paper.pdf

[16] http://www.wrmea.org/2004-october/christianity-and-the-middle-east.html

[17] http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2006/03/the_antisemitism_of_the_presby.html

[18] http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us/news/middleeastjuly2013.php

[19] http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/index.cfm

[20] http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/index.cfm

[21] http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/655

[22] http://stephensizer.blogspot.com/2011/09/jerusalem-declaration-on-christian.html

[23] https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/holy_land_studies/v005/5.2sizer.html

[24] Clark, op. cit., p. 226.

[25] http://nrb.org/news_room/press_center/nrb-urges-solidarity-with-israel/

[26] Halsell, op. cit., p. 47.

[27] Donald Wagner, *Beyond Armageddon* (*The Link*, Vol. 25, Issue 4, Oct-Nov 1992), p. 5. Available online at http://www.ameu.org/The-Link/Archives.aspx

[28] Halsell, op. cit., p. 47.

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[29] Ibid., p. 8.

[30] Sizer, op. cit., p. 89.

[31] Paul Findley, They Dare To Speak Out (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1985), p. 244.

[32] http://www.inhofe.senate.gov/newsroom/speech/peace-in-the-middle-east-speech

[33] http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/677515/posts

[34] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shmuley_Boteach

[35] http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/santorum-tragedy-american-jews-dont-care-about-israels-survival

[36] Santorum wrote a piece on Israel c. 2005 for a prominent Catholic journal reflecting the Christian Zionist perspective. A rebuttal submitted by the author was enthusiastically received by the managing editor, who promised publication in the next edition. The rebuttal never appeared, presumably for "policy" reasons.

[37] Clifford A. Kiracofe, Jr., Dark Crusade: Christian Zionism and US Foreign Policy (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2009)

[38] George W. Ball and Douglas B. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992). Washington's farewell address is available online at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp

[39] http://www.catholicapologetics.info/apologetics/judaism/conversion.htm

[40] Ibid., Chapter VII.

[41] Sizer, op. cit., p. 192.

[42] Findley, op. cit., p. 249.

[43] The author is acquainted with a surprising number of pro-life activists who are also Christian Zionists.

[44]

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http://www.wrmea.org/2002-december/zion-s-christian-soldiers-the-60-minutes-transcript.html

[45] http://www.wrmea.org/2007-april/the-dangerous-potent-elixir-of-christian-zionism.html

[46] Sizer, op. cit., 252.

[47] Clark, op. cit., p. 205.

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