

*Israel,
the Land, and
Christian Zionism*



MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 55/ 2008*



MISHKAN

A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

ISSUE 55 / 2008

General Editor: Kai Kjær-Hansen

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Kai Kjaer-Hansen	3
Two Statements Kai Kjær-Hansen	4
Israel and the Land - Continuity and Transformation in Christ Jan Mortensen	6
A Critique of Christian Zionism Tony Higton	18
A Reponse to Tony Higton's "A Critique of Christian Zionism" J. Randall Price	30
Stephan Sizer and Anti-Zionism Mike Moore	39
Concerns and Hopes for Our Messianic Movement David Brickner	49
First "Organized" Bible-work in 19th Century Jerusalem, Part VII: Five Bible- men in Jerusalem (1823-1824) Kai Kjær-Hansen	55
Book Review: <i>Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries</i> Markus Bockmuehl	70
Book Review: <i>Yet I Loved Jacob</i> (Joel S. Kaminsky) Richard A. Robinson	73
Book Review: <i>Inventing Jewish Ritual</i> (Vanessa L. Ochs) Richard A. Robinson	74

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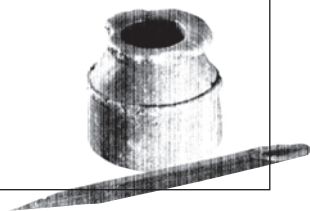
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Mishkan is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The Land and Different Interpretations

By Kai Kjær-Hansen



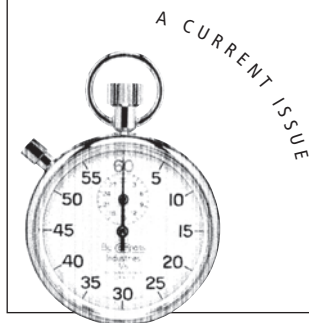
I am genuinely pleased the Jews got a national homeland in 1948 – and still have it. Like so many others, I wish that there was peace between Israel and her neighbors, and although there is not much cause for optimism, I have not given up the hope of an improved relationship between the two parties. But I do not believe in an improved situation without political concessions from both sides.

I do not believe in paradisiacal conditions; we shall have to settle for less. The State of Israel has a responsibility to find a solution in this ongoing conflict; the Arabs/Palestinians have theirs. I have a fundamental solidarity with Israel, which I share with most Jews. This solidarity is not uncritical, however, but also in this I am no different from many Jews.

In this issue of *Mishkan*, the land of Israel is brought into focus and viewed from a Bible-theological perspective. Rather divergent views are expressed in the articles. One of the contributors, Jan Mortensen, reflects on the background of such disagreement:

"If the disagreement had only followed the fault lines that separate the conservative and liberal camps of the church, it would somehow be easier to deal with, but the truth is that the split runs straight through the evangelical camp. The subject is highly charged, but we can't and must not avoid it. It is of utmost importance. And we must strive to let 'Scripture alone' answer the question for us – rather than deducing divine truth from 'facts on the ground,' political preferences, emotional attachment, or self-declared prophetic voices beyond the word of God in the Bible."

I believe that this, in principle, is a good starting point. And then we have to come to terms with the fact that shared presuppositions may result in different interpretations. That is the way it is in this world.



Two Statements

By Kai Kjær-Hansen

In less than one month, we have seen two new statements with relevance for Jewish evangelism and Messianic Jews in Israel.

March 28 – A Statement from the World Evangelical Alliance

On Friday, March 28, the *New York Times* carried a full-page ad about the gospel and the Jewish people, sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA):

The Gospel and the Jewish People – An Evangelical Statement

As evangelical Christians, we want to express our genuine friendship and love for the Jewish people. We sadly acknowledge that church history has been marred with anti-Semitic words and deeds; and that at times when the Jewish people were in great peril, the church did far less than it should have.

- We pledge our commitment to be loving friends and to stand against such injustice in our generation. At the same time, we want to be transparent in affirming that we believe the most loving and Scriptural expression of our friendship toward Jewish people, and to anyone we call friend, is to forthrightly share the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ.
- We believe that it is only through Jesus that all people can receive eternal life. If Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jewish people, He cannot be the Savior of the World (Acts 4:12).
- We recognize that it is good and right for those with specialized knowledge, history and skills to use these gifts to introduce individuals to the Messiah, and that includes those ministries specifically directed to the Jewish people (1 Corinthians 9:20–22).
- We deplore the use of deception or coercion in evangelism; however, we reject the notion that it is deceptive for followers of Jesus Christ who were born Jewish to continue to identify as Jews (Romans 11:1).

We want to make it clear that, as evangelical Christians, we do not wish to offend our Jewish friends by the above statements; but we are compelled by our faith and commitment to the Scriptures to stand by these principles. It is out of our profound respect for Jewish people that we seek to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, and encourage others to do the same, for we believe that salvation is only found in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the World.

Jews for Jesus had this to say about the ad:

We applaud the WEA and those who signed the document for recognizing the need for the gospel to be lovingly brought to all people, including our Jewish people. And we are particularly encouraged to see our evangelical family acknowledge that those of us who are followers of Y'shua (Jesus) who were born Jewish have every right to continue to identify as Jews.

April 16 – A Statement from the Jerusalem Institute of Justice

On Wednesday, April 16, Israel's Supreme Court issued a ruling of great importance for the Messianic Jewish community in Israel. The statement about the case, issued by the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, follows here.

Important Legal Victory

In a landmark decision today, the Supreme Court of Israel ratified a settlement between twelve Messianic Jewish believers and the State of Israel, which states that *being a Messianic Jew does not prevent one from receiving citizenship in Israel under the Law of Return or the Law of Citizenship*, if one is a descendent of Jews on one's father's side (and thus not Jewish according to halacha).

This Supreme Court decision brought an end to a legal battle that has carried on for two and a half years. The applicants were represented by Yuval Grayevsky and Calev Myers from the offices of Yehuda Raveh & Co., and their legal costs were subsidized by the Jerusalem Institute of Justice.

All twelve of the applicants were denied citizenship solely based on grounds that they belong to the Messianic Jewish community. Most of them received letters stating that they would not receive citizenship because they "*commit missionary activity.*" One of the applicants was told by a clerk at the Ministry of Interior that because she "*committed missionary activity,*" she is "*acting against the interests of the State of Israel and against the Jewish people.*" These allegations are not only untrue, but they also do not constitute legal grounds to deny one's right to immigrate to Israel.

This important victory paves the way for persons who have Jewish an-



cestry on their father's side to immigrate to Israel freely, whether or not they belong to the Messianic Jewish community. This is yet another battle won in our war to establish equality in Israel for the Messianic Jewish community just like every other legitimate stream of faith within the Jewish world.

Meno Kalisher from congregation Beit Geula in Jerusalem congratulates the twelve Messianic Jews who have now received their citizenship – and their lawyers – and says: "Any person with a minimal sense of logic would say: 'Did you need to go to court [to get] what you logically and rightfully deserve?'" Baruch Maoz of Grace and Truth Christian Assembly in Rishon Letzion states: "The recent Supreme Court ruling constitutes a breakthrough only in the sense that it forbids administrative action against Jewish Christians due to their faith ... The Court has required the State to act in accordance with its existing laws."

Israel and the Land

- *Continuity and Transformation in Christ*

by **Jan Mortensen**



The discussion about Israel and the land in biblical theology is highly charged. Many believers have deposited a lot of faith, emotions, and even earthly belongings in what they perceive as (the beginning of) the physical restoration of Israel. At the other end of the spectrum, some believers see Christian Zionist support for the modern state of Israel as theologically and politically misguided, and identify with the plight of the Palestinians. If the disagreement had only followed the fault lines that separate the conservative and liberal camps of the church, it would somehow be easier to deal with, but the truth is that the split runs straight through the evangelical camp. The subject is highly charged, but we can't and must not avoid it. And we must strive to let "Scripture alone" answer the question for us – rather than deducing divine truth from "facts on the ground," political preferences, emotional attachment, or self-declared prophetic voices beyond the word of God in the Bible. In the following I will try to outline some of the most central perspectives in this endeavor, as I see them.

The Hermeneutical Platform

"The Scripture Says"

The very fact that it is possible to share the same theological basis affirming the absolute authority of the Bible, and yet end up with different views on such important issues, raises the question of hermeneutics. It is possible to get the Scriptures to say just about anything, depending on what "hermeneutical keys" we use: "Different keys open different doors," and more often than not, we are inclined to look for keys that will open the doors we want to see opened.¹ If we really want the Scriptures to answer the question for us, we can't select our starting point just anywhere in the Scriptures and claim, "the Scripture says." First of all, the

¹ Lisa Loden discusses various hermeneutical approaches to the land in *The Bible and the Land: An Encounter*, ed. Lisa Loden, Peter Walker, and Michael Wood (Musalaha, 2000), and the articles presented give a helpful insight into various "keys" applied. I refer to *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991) for a comprehensive introduction to biblical hermeneutics.

Scriptures contain passages and even books that are rather ambiguous in nature (like the Book of Revelation). They must be interpreted in historical and biblical context, and in the light of clearer passages. Secondly, the Scriptures operate with a progressive history of revelation and salvation, so that we can't simply apply any given passage directly to our time. The categories of this progression are expressed in both the Old and the New Testaments: from promise toward fulfillment, from hidden toward revealed, from shadow toward reality. And although this progression is in a way an ongoing reality, since it will only end on the day when Christ comes to restore everything, the claim of the New Testament is that with the first coming of Christ we have already entered into the category of fulfillment, conclusive revelation, and realization of the promises.

The Relation between Old and New

This means that the question of the precise relation between the Old and New Testaments moves to the forefront, and that, as much as "revelation" must be given precedence over "hidden" and "reality" over "shadow," the New Testament interpretation must be given priority as we try to understand the nature of the promises of the land given to Abraham and his seed and their application today. Jesus and the New Testament writers confirm the authority of the Old Testament down to the last iota (Matt 5:17–18; cf. John 10:35; Acts 24:14), but they do so in a dynamic way – just like fulfillment and reality confirm promise and shadow, yet

at the same time succeed and transcend them (Luke 16:16; Heb 8:7ff). The coming of Christ doesn't only complete a level of fulfillment, but is in itself a new and conclusive revelation, which sheds new light on the true nature of the promise (Heb 1:1–3; John 1:14–18). Thus Peter says that the prophets

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were wondering about the "when" and "how" of the future salvation that they themselves were prophesying (1 Pet 1:10–12), and Paul explains that a central part of the plan of God concerning the Gentiles – "the mystery of Christ" – was not revealed earlier, but "hidden for ages in God" (Eph 3:1–13). This means that it is not recommended to perform a bypass operation on the Bible, where promises from the Old Testament are transferred directly to the time of the new covenant, without considering just how these promises are transformed in the light of the coming of Christ – as if the New Testament was nothing more than a commentary, "a Mishna," on the Old. In other words, we must find our hermeneutical key in Christ (John 5:36–39). This is what defines our hermeneutic as Christian: the belief that he is the promised Messiah, the word of God incarnate, who brings the promised new covenant kingdom of God.

The Land and the People between Promise and Fulfillment

The Land and People – and the Kingdom of God

The moment we begin to consider the New Testament connection to the promises of the Old, it becomes evident that the issue of land is by no means a minor one. And how *could* it be just a minor issue, given the fact that the Promised Land and the people it is promised to are the central focus of the Old Testament? The issue of the land and the people is at the very center of the gospel. The word “gospel” (*evangelion*) itself relates to the opening chapter of Isaiah’s “book of comfort” (chapters 40–66), promising *salvation and restoration to Judah* (Mark 1:1–15; Rom 1:1–3). The very notion of a “new covenant” (Luke 22:20; Heb 8:7ff) relates to the Old Testament promise of the new covenant, which God will establish *with Israel and Judah*, based on the forgiveness of sins, and securing the return of the exiled people to the land (Jer 30–31; Ezek 36–37). The idea of a “kingdom of God” is not a sudden invention of the New Testament, but it is *that* kingdom – the messianic kingdom, Israel restored, promised to the people of Israel (Matt 2:6; Luke 1:32–33; 54–55; 17:20; 22:28–30). The material concerning the Promised Land in the New Testament consequently *is massive*. On just about every page the New Testament deals with the nature of this promise fulfilled: the Messiah, the kingdom of God, and the new covenant people.

Three New Covenant “Surprises”

As already indicated, the land in the mode of fulfillment has its surprises as compared to the promise. The “mystery” of the Gentiles being included as heirs to the promises constitutes such a surprise (more about that below). Secondly, the coming of the kingdom of God is revealed to have an “already” and a “not yet” perspective. The kingdom is perceived as already established in and with Jesus Christ; it is a *spiritual* kingdom (Luke 17:20; John 18:36). Those who “are in Christ” through baptism and faith are already, spiritually speaking, on the restored Mount Zion, in the heavenly Jerusalem (Eph 2:6; Col 2:11–13; Heb 12). The “not yet” perspective relates to the second coming of Christ and the full establishment of the kingdom, and here a third surprise applies: the restored Israel, the New Jerusalem, the promised inheritance, doesn’t just relate to a piece of real estate in the Middle East, but to the physical regeneration of heaven and earth: Paradise restored (Rom 8:19–22; 2 Pet 3:12–13; Rev 2:7; 21:1). The land Abraham was waiting for in faith wasn’t really the physical Israel, but the “heavenly country” (Heb 11:16; cf. 4:1–11). The New Testament writers didn’t arrive at these conclusions via dubious exegetical maneuvers, but via the teaching and revelation of Christ himself, and with his death and resurrection as the prism through which the Old Testament promises are viewed. The main exegetical method applied to the Old Testament in this respect is *not* allegory (which was a common method in the early church as well as early rabbinical schools), but rather *typology* (Col 2:17;



Heb 8:5; 9:9; 10:1). The actual historical events, institutions, and salvation plan as experienced by the physical Israel of the old covenant are seen as precursors, types, "shadows" of the reality that has come in and with Jesus Christ – and as such themselves participants in this very reality in the form of anticipation (1 Cor 10:4).

Compatibility between Promise and Fulfillment

This method of interpretation isn't foreign to the Old Testament either, since it employs these categories to its promises, offices, and institutions itself: the future savior will be a new Moses (Deut 18:15), a new David (Isa 9:6; Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Hos 3:5), a king and priest of the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110); the future salvation will be like a new and more complete exodus (Isa 11:16; Ezek 20:33ff); and the future temple will be eclipsed by God himself dwelling among his people, and his spirit dwelling in their hearts, etc. (Ezek 36:27; 37:27–28; Isa 66:1). Even the typological, transcendental, and universal perspective on the Promised Land

The actual historical events, institutions, and salvation plan as experienced by the physical Israel of the old covenant are seen as precursors, types, "shadows" of the reality that has come.

is not foreign to the Old Testament. The covenantal promise of land and blessing to the offspring of Abraham must be understood on the backdrop of the loss of land in Genesis 3: the loss of Paradise. Thus, the election of Abraham doesn't happen to the exclusion of other sons of Adam; the blessing of his offspring doesn't imply a curse on others, but rather: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3; cf. 17:4–8; 22:18). The one is chosen for the sake of the many. This perspective becomes even more prominent in the outlook of the prophets: "It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make you a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isa 49:6). Indeed, the Lord will be king of all the earth (Zech 14:9; Dan 7:27). And so we are not surprised when Isaiah's vision of Jerusalem restored drifts into images of Paradise restored: a creation of a "new heaven and new earth" (Isa 65:17), where the "wolf will dwell with the lamb," "there will be no violence" (Isa 11:6–9), and "all the people will be righteous" (Isa 60:21).

The covenantal feasts of Israel reflect a similar direction. The three main feasts have two perspectives, celebrating God as creator and as savior. The last perspective would take the people of Israel on an annual journey through the founding history of God's salvation: how he redeemed the people out of Egypt, established his covenant with them on Mount Sinai, and lead them into the Promised Land. The interesting perspective in our connection is that the last feast, the climax of the Sabbath month, has a somewhat surprising content: it doesn't celebrate the climax, the entry into the land (the "rest"; Deut 12:9), but rather *the time in the desert*: "You shall live in booths for seven days ... so that your generations

may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt” (Lev 23:42–43). The point seems to be that the people should be reminded that *God*, not the land, is the true dwelling place of the people (cf. Ps 90:1). This feast, idealizing the time in the desert, in consequence points *beyond the possession of the physical Israel* to a time when God will dwell among his people in a more direct way, as he did in the desert (providing manna from heaven, water from the rock, shepherding the people by the pillar of light and cloud of smoke, etc. [cf. Deut 8:12–16]). The land thus becomes a “type” pointing forward to a future climax in God’s plan of salvation, and the feast of Sukkoth itself becomes a proclamation of this future. The prophets make use of this perspective when they dress their visions of this future climax in Sukkoth metaphors (Isa 4; Ezek 47; Zech 14).²

The concrete prophesies of impending judgment followed by restoration to the land did find a concrete fulfillment in exile and return, but didn’t meet a full match there. The Old Testament ends with an open question: just how and when will the messianic kingdom come? The New Testament claims to provide the answer.

This feast points *beyond the possession of the physical Israel* to a time when God will dwell among his people in a more direct way.

The Christological Binding of People and Land

The Question about the Gentiles

If we for a moment approach the question from the perspective of the expectations of the messianic kingdom at the time of Jesus, we might gain more clarity on the inner dynamic of the transformation that takes place between the old and new covenants. The perspective of the disciples of Jesus is informative. They obviously weren’t expecting a Suffering Servant of the Lord type of Messiah in the first place; only after the resurrection of Christ did they begin to understand the significance of the cross, and how the new covenant had been established by his blood. So far so good, but the new covenant was still a covenant for “Judah and Israel,” and we see how difficult it was for the disciples, now apostles, to grasp that the Gentiles would be able to enter into this covenant *as Gentiles*. We are surprised that it took a specific revelation to Peter and Paul for the apostles to realize this. They knew about the Old Testament outlook on the salvation of the Gentiles, and Jesus had just given them the great commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of *all nations*” (Matt 28:19). But it is not so strange if we consider their given assumptions: 1) The general expectation based on the Old Testament prophets was that *first* Israel would be

² The New Testament connects directly with the Sukkoth perspective in John 7–10 (minus 8:1–11) and Revelation 7 and 21–22, and further with the whole sequence of the feasts of the seventh month – from the Feast of Trumpets via Yom Kippur to Sukkoth – in (for example) Matthew 24:31; Revelation 20:11–15; 21–22.



restored out of judgment, and *then* the Gentiles would seek the restored Zion for teaching (Isa 2; Ezek 36:23), bringing their tributes and in effect becoming subjects of Israel (Isa 11; 14:1–2; 60). 2) The idea that Gentiles might enter this kingdom *without becoming Jews first* was next to unthinkable, as it would seem to blur the line between God's kingdom and the world, between clean and unclean (Acts 10:45; 15:1).

The "Kingdom for Israel" and Mission to the Gentiles

It is in this light we should understand the enigmatic dialogue between Jesus and the disciples on Ascension Day: "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus answers, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:6–8). The second part of the answer is not an appendix without connection to the question. The perceived precondition for the mission to the Gentiles was exactly that the kingdom for Israel had been established. Jesus' answer, in other words, implies that although there is a kingdom to come ("not yet"), it has already in some way been established ("already"). The same perspective is underscored at the renowned Jerusalem council in Acts 15. Can the Gentiles be allowed to join the kingdom of God without first joining the Jewish people through circumcision? James settles the issue with a reference to Amos 9 (LXX): "After this I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of David; from its ruins I shall rebuild it and raise it up again, so that the rest of humanity may seek out the Lord, even all the Gentiles on whom my name is invoked" (Acts 15:16–17). The validity of the argument rests on the fallen hut of David having been restored already. And we don't have to guess just how the kingdom has been restored; Luke provides the answer already in his first book.

Israel Restored in Three Days

In the first chapters of Luke, the hope of Israel – the expectation of the "redemption" of Israel – is put to the fore and confirmed, and linked to the births of John and Jesus: *now is the time!* (Luke 1:68–79; 2:38). At the transfiguration, Jesus meets with Moses and Elijah, speaking about the "exodus" Jesus will "accomplish" in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). As the story progresses, it becomes obvious that the redemption, however, is not going to follow the expected course. The *destruction* of Jerusalem ushers in the end time judgment and the coming of the Lord: "Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:20–28). The "exodus in Jerusalem" finds a rather different fulfillment:

"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel ..." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary

that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. (Luke 24:21, 25–27)

It is in other words, not only the temple that was "rebuilt in three days"; *Israel* was restored in three days, in and with Jesus.³

Christ Chosen for Israel – Israel Chosen in Christ

The key to this claim lies in the identity of Jesus: He is the new temple, God dwelling among his people, but he doesn't only represent God – he also represents the people. The baptism of Jesus communicates this. The righteous one is baptized with the baptism of the sinful people. He is baptized *to* his people. The words from heaven – "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" – confirm Jesus as the Messiah (Ps 2) and the Servant of the Lord (Isa 42:1), but also as the embodiment of the chosen people (Exod 4:23; Isa 41:8–9). Just like the people of Israel, he goes through the water and is tested in the desert, but in contrast to the people, he stands the test. Israel is the vineyard that God planted, but which didn't bear fruit (Isa 5). Jesus is the *true vine* that will bear fruit (John 15). The New Testament, however, takes this identification a step further: Israel was only elected *in him* in the first place. *He* is the true offspring of Abraham, to whom the promises belong: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, 'And to offsprings,' as of many; but it says, 'And to your offspring,' that is, to one person, who is Christ" (Gal 3:16). *He* is the one who was chosen for the sake of many. The election of Israel is narrowed down to one man, Jesus. The election of Israel in the old covenant hinges on the chosen one to come, not the other way round.

The election of Israel in the old covenant hinges on the chosen one to come, not the other way round.

And so we find the answer to the question about the Gentiles that the disciples were struggling with: 1) Israel is already restored by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He died in radical union with his people, and carried it with him through judgment into restoration. The fallen hut of David has been restored in him, and consequently it is time for the Gentiles to come in. 2) It is not the physical Israel which ontologically defines the people of God, but the *truly* "chosen one, in whom God is well pleased." This is why the Gentiles, by faith in Christ, can now be included into the restored Zion, the kingdom of God, *without* becoming Jews first. There is no need to go via the "shadow" into the "reality."

3 I depend to some degree on Peter Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City, New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 57–106. I find his conclusions convincing.



A New People and Land – in Christ

The very fact that the election of Abraham and his seed, as an election for the sake of the nations, anticipates and participates in Jesus as *the* chosen one requires that all nations must be considered part of the promise to Abraham. This is precisely the conclusion Paul draws: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus. *And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise*” (Gal 3:26–29; cf. Rom 4). Jesus is not only the true Israel, but he is also the *second Adam* (Rom 5:12ff). He doesn’t just die for the sins of his people (Isa 53), but the Lamb of God takes away the sins of *the world* (John 1:29). This line of thought is precisely what Paul, in Ephesians 3:4, calls the “mystery of Christ” that wasn’t clearly revealed in earlier times: “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph 3:6). By the death of Jesus, the old covenant separation between Jews and Gentiles is consumed and annulled. It dies with him and *one* new man is raised from the dead with him (Eph 2:12–16). The election of and promise to Abraham are centered on Christ and then expanded to those who are “in him” (Eph 1), “the body of Christ” (Eph 1:14), those who by baptism and faith have been “circumcised” to his death and resurrection (Col 2; Rom 6). A *new* people of God emerges (Tit 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9/Exod 19:1–6; Eph 1:14). The New Testament often uses the word *ekklesia* (“those who are called out”) for this new people, stressing the ontological unity with the congregation of the Old Testament (*qahal*, LXX: *ekklesia*). This word is often rendered “church” in English translations, and it is, if read in light of its Greek origin (the adjective *kyriakon*), in a way even more precise: “(those) belonging to the Lord.” The promised inheritance belongs to the church, the eternal people of Jews and Gentiles chosen in Christ (Eph 1:4). The inheritance is the kingdom of God, the “redemption” we wait for (Eph 1:14) and yet already possess (Eph 1:15–22). “For in him every one of God’s promises is a ‘yes’” (2 Cor 1:20), then, doesn’t just express a *confirmation* of God’s promises in him, but refers to the very site of their fulfillment: “in him” (cf. Eph 1:9–10, 23).

The Status of Physical Israel in the New Covenant

Israel Has Not Been Rejected

What are the consequences of this Christological binding of the people and the promises in regards to the status of “Israel of the flesh” and the physical land? Paul maintains that the Jewish people have *not* been rejected, and the promises still belong to them (Rom 9:4–5; 11:1–2). In fact, the gospel is for “the Jew first” (Rom 1:16). The Gentiles are grafted in as “wild branches,” the Jews are the “natural branches”; the new covenant *is* the covenant promised to *Israel and Judah*. It *is*, however, a *new* covenant, and the same principle applies as in the old covenant: those who might choose to stay “by the pots of meat in Egypt” would lose the

content of the promise. “The promises belong to Israel” is thus modified by “but not all Israelites truly belong to Israel” (Rom 9:6). This is why the apostle is grieving over a great number of his fellow Israelites (Rom 9:1ff) who did not want to step into the reality of the new covenant, but were clinging to the shadow, so to speak. They were broken off, but with the expectation that they may be grafted in again, “if they don’t remain in their disbelief.” In response to the Gentiles coming in, Paul anticipates a salvation of “all Israel” parallel to “the full number of Gentiles” (Rom 11). To Paul, this perspective calls for loving identification with and mission to the Jews (Rom 9:1ff; 10:14ff).

Romans 9–11 confirms that a transformation of the promises from the old to the new covenant has taken place, as already argued. But, since Israel of the old covenant was chosen in Christ, just as the church of the new covenant is, no real “replacement” is taking place. Christ is the “whom” of the election in both covenants. The form of the election has changed from a physical nation circumcised in the flesh to a spiritual people circumcised in their hearts (Rom 2:28–29; Gal 6:15), but it is the same eternal tree that Jewish and Gentile believers are grafted into (Rom 11:17–24): Christ. The transfer between old and new then isn’t a transfer from Jews to Gentiles, as replacement theology has it. The vineyard is taken, not from Israel as such, but from its *leaders*, and the kingdom of God is given to a people “which bears its fruit” (Matt 21:33–46). In the New Testament context, this people can’t be anyone other than those who are in Christ (John 15; cf. Rom 7:4). At first this people almost exclusively consisted of representatives from “the people of the promise,” and only later, in agreement with the promise itself, did it grow to include Gentiles as well. The “church,” as heir to the promises, applies to *this* people – *the body of Christ* – not to any given Gentile Christian structure.

**it is the same eternal tree that
Jewish and Gentile believers
are grafted into: Christ.**

No Separate Track for Israel in the New Covenant

The christological binding of the promises does not allow a dismantlement of the ontological continuity between Israel and the church, whether this is done in rejection or in affirmation of physical Israel. It is thus not possible to introduce *two tracks* in regards to the promises, where the church is seen as heir to the “spiritual” benefits and the descendants of Abraham to the “physical” benefits of the inheritance. The Gentiles, who are in Christ, *are* “Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29), and thus no longer “aliens to the commonwealth of Israel”; they are “citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” (Eph 2:12, 19). In Christ there is only *one new man* to whom the promises belong (cf. Eph 4:1–6). To insist on *two new men* (Messianic Jews with special land promises *and* Christians), or even two peoples of God (the church *and* physical Israel), either dismembers the body of Christ or elevates physical Israel to an election equal to and independent of



Christ. Both cases constitute a severe undermining of New Testament Christology.

When applied, this christological disconnect quickly translates into other areas of theology. Two examples: First of all, it introduces a strong ambiguity concerning the role of the law under the new covenant. If the promises of land to Israel are transferred into the time of the new covenant, then the laws constituting the people must surely also be transferred, and eventually the laws regulating the land as well. The old covenant is thus being snuck in through the back door, and “the law with its commandments and ordinances” dividing Jew and Gentile has not been “abolished” after all (Eph 2:15). Secondly, it introduces a strong ambiguity concerning God’s revelation. The old covenant status of Israel as “God’s demonstration people,” through which he reveals himself, is extended into the new covenant, in effect bypassing Christ as his conclusive revelation (which this people pointed forward to). This, in turn, invites a total chaos of “prophetic” interpretations of historical events in the Middle East (and beyond). A lot of energy is invested in cut-and-paste exegesis of the Scriptures, fitting them to this or that historical development, urging believers to take this or that action. We are told that we need to focus on political developments in the Middle East, whereas Jesus urges us to skip this kind of speculation and focus on the mission he has given us (Acts 1:7–8). It is in the fulfillment of this task that God, in the new covenant, demonstrates his glory, namely *through the church* (John 17; Eph 1:22–23; 3:10, 21), “built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20).

When the old and new covenants become categories dividing Jews and Gentiles, instead of categories dividing promise and fulfillment, shadow and reality, another more radical temptation enters the scene: the idea that Jews and Christians are two distinct peoples of God, each with their own special covenant by which they are saved. This theology ignores the fact that the new covenant is the covenant for *Israel and Judah*, and Jesus the promised Messiah of Israel; as Peter and John confessed before the Jewish council: “There is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12; cf. John 14:6). It is, in effect, just another kind of “replacement theology,” since it replaces Jesus’ and Paul’s call for mission to the Jews with no mission, in effect leaving the Jews without God and hope in this world, without their inheritance. The christological disconnect has matured into a Trinitarian disconnect, where God the Father is perceived to be at work where God the Son is *not* (as opposed to John 3:35–36; 5:23–24; 8:39–59; 10:38; etc). It is, in other words, not a Christian theology.

Israel and the Land – in Christ

The New Testament presents a christological binding of the Old Testament promises. The people and land find their continuation in Christ, and via him in the church and the new heaven and earth to come. A transformation has taken place – a transformation that was already anticipated in the Old Testament. The land is a type pointing forward to *The Land*.

In Christ, God *did* and *will* keep his promises to the seed of Abraham – but in pretty much the same way as a father who promises his son an apartment, yet in the end gives him an entire neighborhood to share with his friends (cf. Rom 4:14, 16–17). Already at the time of Jesus and the apostles, the legitimacy of this claim was at the very center of the discussion. There were those who would not let go of the shadow, the hope of a physical kingdom for ethnic Israel. The early Jewish believers were, however, called to cut the spiritual binding to the shadow, the temple, the city, and the land, and to follow Jesus: “Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Heb 13:13–14). In this way they would indeed follow the example of Abraham himself, for it was *this* city that he was truly hoping for (Heb 11:8ff). The “kingdom of God” *is* “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20, 31). There is no other hope. In Christ, Gentile believers have been grafted in as heirs to the same hope. Just like Abraham, they have been called out from *their* nations in order to join the journey to the Promised Land. With Jews and Gentiles united into one new man in Christ, sharing the same promises, a regression to the categories of the “shadow” in respect to the Jewish people is neither recommendable nor possible. This does *not* mean that the Jewish people or nation should be annulled. It only means that the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham is not to be sought, and cannot be found, in any development in the Middle East – only in Christ.

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A Critique of Christian Zionism

*Including a Response to Stephen Sizer's book
Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?*

by **Tony Higton**

After years of sparring, Stephen Sizer and I met up and found we had wide areas of agreement.

Having worked in Jewish ministry for seven years, half of them in Jerusalem, I have seen the best and the worst of Christian Zionism. Insofar as it combats anti-Semitism, defends the existence of a safe homeland for Jewish people, promotes evangelism among Jewish people, and supports reconciliation in the Holy Land, it is good.

However, Sizer is right to criticize the serious failings of some Christian Zionism. I agree with him in rejecting the following errors which are held by many Christian Zionists:

- Lack of godly compassion for the Palestinians, and of concern for their human rights and about their legitimate aspirations.
- A negative attitude toward Palestinians, and Arabs in general, to the point of racism.
- Uncritical support for Israel (a secular, sinful state like any other), justifying all its actions against the Palestinians.
- Neglecting or even opposing and forbidding evangelism of Israelis, sometimes believing that Jewish people can experience salvation through Judaism.
- Being more interested in the fulfillment of prophecy than in application of kingdom principles such as justice and reconciliation.
- Opposing the peace process.
- Sometimes advocating the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the Holy Land.
- Sometimes supporting the rebuilding of the temple regardless of the problematic theological implications and the danger of provoking extreme violence.

Danger of Unbiblical Views

Heresy has often been caused by people not seeing the bigger picture. Christians have concentrated on one issue or a narrow range of issues to the exclusion of balancing truths. This attitude is often found on both



sides of the Christian Zionism debate. The more passionate the convictions, the more likely that inconvenient truth will be minimized or even ignored.

When we lived and worked in Jerusalem, I became tired of hearing the comments of polarized Christians. Some seemed almost to think that Israel could do nothing wrong, and others that she could do nothing right. It is because of this that, when I started to produce my email newsletter about the needs, pain, and fears of both Israelis and Palestinians, I called it *Paradox*.¹

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I was brought up in a fundamentalist, dispensational premillennialist tradition (Scofield Reference Bible and all!), and, as so often in fundamentalism, that tradition was steeped in both passion and fear. I know the excitement of passionate belief in an imminent secret Rapture (which I no longer believe to be biblical²). I know the intense emotion that initiation into Christian Zionism can produce. I also know the fear that fundamentalists have, which is of their whole theological house of cards collapsing if any concession and compromise is made. Christian Zionists need to be self-critical of all this. Christian Zionists are falling into unbiblical attitudes if they hold to one or more of the eight points listed above.

At the same time, gone-off fundamentalists (including gone-off dispensational premillennialists and gone-off Christian Zionists) can be equally passionate and also dismissive of inconvenient biblical truth. Sizer and other strong critics of Christian Zionism need to be aware of that.

We need to approach the issue of Christian Zionism as objectively and dispassionately as possible. It is important to keep standing back to see the whole theological picture and to ensure that our position does not conflict with all the relevant principles.

A good test of our sense of balance is to check our reaction to Sizer's book. If it is one of feeling threatened, annoyed, and upset, that is not a good sign. Equally, if it is one of glee that Zionism gets a good thrashing, that too is not a good sign.

I am grateful for Sizer's book because it stimulates thought and, in my case, underlines many of the questions I have been asking about Christian Zionism in recent years. And I speak currently describing myself (provocatively) as a pro-Palestinian Christian Zionist!

Having said that, I am unhappy about calling myself a Zionist because of the prevalence of extreme Christian Zionism which Sizer describes. I attended a week-long conference on Christian Zionism held in Jerusalem by the Sabeel Palestinian Liberation Theology Center. Initially, I was quite irritated by what I felt was their extreme model of Christian

1 *Paradox* is available from tony@higton.info.

2 See my article "Dispensing with Dispensationalism," *Paradox Ministries*, <http://www.prayerfortheholylan.org>.

Zionism. I thought it was a caricature and that the moderate view I held was the majority view. But one of the main things I learned from that conference was that it is American Christian Zionism (which is very influential among Messianic believers in Israel) which is dominant, and it is very extreme. British (and other moderate) Christian Zionists need to understand this.

I want to say to the thoughtful Christian Zionist that it is possible to remain a Zionist whilst avoiding all these faults. Unfortunately, many Christians Zionists believe that the above eight attitudes, which I have criticized, are essential to supporting God's purposes for the Jewish people and Israel. But this is a simplistic leap from eschatology to modern politics and an inadequate view of God's sovereignty. His sovereignty is complex. He will work out his sovereign purposes even through actions (good or bad) which appear to hinder his eschatological (end times) purposes. He will work them out through the mistakes and even sinful actions

of human beings. That does not mean Christians should support such actions.

This is a simplistic leap from eschatology to modern politics and an inadequate view of God's sovereignty.

Do we really believe that God needs the Israeli political hawks to work out his purposes? For the sake of argument, just suppose God wanted Israel

ultimately to include the West Bank, but Israel, for good motives, does in fact give it away to a Palestinian state. Do we fondly imagine that this would permanently frustrate God's purpose for a larger Israel? I don't. How big is our God? I sometimes think there are Christians who feel we have to help God out in fulfilling his eschatological purposes. Such a thought is ludicrous. We are called to obey the whole of biblical moral teaching, however inconvenient and costly it might be to us. We can leave the eschatological consequences and purposes to God. To live with a rather narrow view of eschatology as our guide could lead us into all sorts of unethical behavior. It is important that we judge each event and action in the Holy Land by the whole teaching of Scripture – especially the call to justice – not just by the criterion of what appears to suit our personal eschatology.

The end does NOT justify the means. We shall never further God's purposes by acting in a way which is contrary to the kingdom principles of love, justice, reconciliation, peace-making, etc. In fact this view also shows a lack of faith. The way of faith is to do the right thing by other people, even to one's own cost and disadvantage. Which is right: obeying the God of love and justice in dealing with others, or grabbing what we think is ours by divine right? Clearly the right thing is to follow God's ways in dealing with others and to leave the consequences to God.

I am well aware of the security issues of such a small country and the dangers of Palestine being ruled by extremists. But Israel has defended itself effectively for six decades and no doubt can continue to do so. In fact, God is more likely to help Israel if she keeps his commandments.



Some Important Biblical Principles

Here are some principles which must not be forgotten when we approach the issue of Christian Zionism.

God Is the God of Love

The first is that God is love. He loves the Palestinian as much as the Israeli. He loves the Arab as much as the Jewish person. That is so basic, and so obvious, but also often forgotten. There is no place in Christianity for racism, which includes the idea that Jewish people are superior. If our theology, our practice, or our politics are, in any sense, unloving to the Palestinian or the Israeli, they are ungodly. To dismiss the needs, pain, or fears of either people group is ungodly. To support the Israelis or the Palestinians in attitudes and actions which are less than loving to their neighbors is ungodly. This means that a good deal of Christian Zionism is ungodly. So is a good deal of “pro-Palestinianism.”

God Is the God of Justice

The second is that God is a God of justice. In their eschatological excitement, many Christian Zionists fail to notice that the same prophets who foretell the return to the land also call passionately for justice, including for the non-Jewish resident in the land. God is a God of justice who hates injustice and warns Israel that their control of the land depends on their obedience to him. Scripture teaches that God is a God of justice; he loves justice. The kingdom of God, established through Christ, is a kingdom of love, faithfulness, justice, and righteousness. He will bring justice to the nations and particularly to the poor. He defends, sustains, and secures justice for the fatherless, widows, foreigner, oppressed, weak, needy, and poor.³

God hates injustice, oppression, extortion, dispossession, dishonest business, and bribery, and commands us to avoid them.⁴ He commands us to defend the rights of the weak, needy, fatherless, poor, and oppressed, to rescue the oppressed, and to administer justice.⁵

God watches over foreigners (people from another tribe, race, social, or religious background) and condemns those who ill-treat or withhold justice from them. All human beings are equal in God’s sight (Gen 1:26–27; Gal 3:28). He commands us to love the foreigners as ourselves, to treat them as our native-born and help them where necessary (Lev 19:33f). Even the offender is to have humane punishment and is not to be degraded (Deut 25:2f).

Hence he hates the injustice which Israel perpetrates against the Palestinians. Many Palestinians have lost their ancestral homes and continue to experience military occupation. Sometimes they suffer oppression,

³ See Isaiah 9:7; 11:4; 16:5; 30:18; 33:5; 42:1, 4; Psalm 11:7; 33:5.

⁴ See Deuteronomy 27:19; Proverbs 20:10, 23; Isaiah 10:1–2; Amos 8:4–7.

⁵ See Leviticus 19:33–34; Psalm 82:1–4; Isaiah 56:1; Jeremiah 22:3; Micah 6:8.

humiliation, violence, and the destruction of their homes. They also experience economic disaster and lack of infrastructure, partly through Israeli policies and partly through the failures of the Palestinian Authority. God hates the injustices involved and to justify them is ungodly. An uncritical support for Israel (or any other state, for that matter) is not a godly attitude, and ultimately does not bless Israel. To love one's neighbor includes constructively criticizing him when necessary.

Some Christian Zionists claim that the Palestinians have never been a distinct people.⁶ Be that as it may, they are clearly a distinct people now, with legitimate national aspirations. Such developments have taken place many times in history. Divine justice therefore requires that Christians take seriously these national aspirations and support their being fulfilled in the most helpful way possible.

God Is the God of Mission

God is a missionary God, and so Christianity is a missionary religion. This mission will include responding to human need by loving service and seeking to transform unjust structures of society. But it will also include evangelism: proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. There may be particular occasions when sensitivity makes it better not to speak evangelistically, but for Christian organizations to have policies which discourage or even forbid evangelism is a serious departure from the *raison d'être* of the church. Ultimately, Israelis (and Jewish people in general) don't need friendship, support, and comfort. They need Jesus. That is why I was happy to become General Director of CMJ and consistently tried to draw it back to its original purpose as the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. Christian Zionism per se is very secondary to sensitive evangelism. In fact, it can even be a hindrance to evangelism if the impression is given that the gospel is unimportant. Just before I moved to Jerusalem, a Christian leader working there warned me not to be overtly evangelistic or I might be thrown out of the country, as others had been. I couldn't see the point of being in Israel if I wasn't able to evangelize with wisdom (amidst all the other responsibilities of my job).

God Is the God of the New Covenant

This covenant is sealed in the blood of Christ. There is no other way of salvation. No-one comes to God ("the Father") except through Jesus. Judaism doesn't save (and neither does Islam, or even Christianity as a religious system). Only Jesus saves. There is only one covenant of salvation, and that is in Christ, and him crucified. The Christian Zionist love affair or obsession with Judaism is on dangerous ground. It should never be forgotten that modern Judaism is specifically antagonistic to our Lord and Savior. A new temple may well be built in Jerusalem (although the consequences of building on the Temple Mount could be apocalyptic). I have

⁶ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 244f.

done a little research in Israel on the Jewish groups aiming to rebuild it. But, if it involves renewing animal sacrifices, what on earth are Christians doing supporting it? The writer to the Hebrews would turn over in his grave! Someone said they would be memorial sacrifices pointing back to Calvary. But we already have one such. It's called Holy Communion.

God Is the God of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel and of the Christian faith. "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19). With respect to Jewish people and Gentiles, he aims "to reconcile both of them to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16).

God has an even greater purpose, namely through Christ "to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col 1:20). Paul writes that God "made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph 1:9–10). So God's intention for the universe is unity and harmony under Christ. True, this is speaking of an eschatological unity under the direct lordship of Christ. However, we are to be peacemakers or reconcilers now, not just wait for eschatological peace to be inaugurated by Jesus at his return. Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matt 5:9).

Peacemaking is therefore a Christian responsibility. We should therefore be at the forefront of supporting the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. True, there are difficult issues and some political proposals may not be helpful for good reason. But any criticism we make should be in the context of a deep commitment to peace.

Putting Principles into Practice

The above principles are fundamental, and they rule out much which is tolerated and even promoted in Christian Zionism. But it is one thing to outline principles and another to work them out in the real world.

- God is the God of love, but how, in practice, does one love both the Israelis and the Palestinians?
- God is the God of justice, but how, in practice, does one provide justice for both the Israelis and the Palestinians?
- God is the God of mission, but how, in practice, does one sensitively evangelize Jewish people, who are hypersensitive because of centuries of Christian anti-Semitism, and Muslims, who remember the Crusades as if they happened last year? (I shall not deal with this issue in this paper except to say that it is possible to evangelize these people groups sensitively.)



- God is the God of the New Covenant, but how does this relate to God's purposes for the Jewish people as referred to in the New Testament?
- God is the God of reconciliation, but how, in practice, does one further reconciliation between the Israelis and the Palestinians?

How, in practice, does one love both the Israelis and the Palestinians?

This is a heart-searching question. We need to check ourselves for any latent anti-Semitism (perhaps hiding behind legitimate criticisms of Israel). Similarly, we need to check ourselves for any anti-Arabism (perhaps hiding behind Christian Zionism). Do we want the best for both people groups? Do we feel for the needs, pain, and fears of both people groups? Do we want to play a small part in alleviating those needs, pain, and fears?

How, in practice, does one provide justice for both sides?

For most of us, the main (but surely the most important) contribution we can make to furthering justice is in prayer.

After centuries of terrible anti-Semitic persecution culminating in the Holocaust, the Jewish people need their own safe homeland. It is easy for those of us who live in a high degree of security in the leafy lanes of England (whether Surrey in Sizer's case or North Norfolk in mine) to call Israel's commitment to a Jewish state racist. But after the dreadful history of anti-Semitism, the persecutions, the exiles, and the Holocaust, I have no difficulty in understanding this commitment. Israelis are threatened by the demographic implications of allowing many new Arab citizens into their democracy. An Arab majority would effectively mean the Jewish people had lost their safe homeland. This is not racism (as Sizer thinks⁷) but an understandable concern for self-preservation. That is not to say there is no racism in Israel. There is and it must be tackled. But there is racism in our own countries, and we must be careful before we throw stones at Israel.

The two-state solution, though fraught with serious difficulties and dangers, seems the only way of affording justice to the Palestinians. The two states need to cooperate fully, and Israel should do all it can to facilitate stability and economic growth in a Palestinian state. Israel also has to face up to the issue of settlements in the West Bank and the issue of Jerusalem, which are a great hindrance to peace and to the welfare of a Palestinian state. Some compromise, for genuine security reasons, will doubtless be necessary, but the end result should be equality between the two states.

Sizer seems not fully to understand the Israeli need for security. We once stood together in Abu Dis, just outside Jerusalem, at the foot of the security wall – ten meters of concrete towering above us. He asked me: "Well, what do you think of the wall, Tony?" I replied: "I think it is obscene. But terrorism is even more obscene." Terrorism has deeply traumatized the Israelis, and they are deeply aware of the need to protect themselves against it, especially in a country which is only eight or nine

⁷ Sizer, 208–11.

miles across in places. In some places, Israel will want to encroach on West Bank land for strategic security reasons. At the same time, they should convey an equal amount of land from Israel to the Palestinians where this is strategically safe. They should also seek to ensure that Palestinian farms and families are not divided by the border.

How, in practice, does one further reconciliation between both sides?

This is where Christians could have some influence, mainly by doing anything in their power to minimize the damaging polarization between Christian Zionists and Christian supporters of the Palestinians. If we can strongly affirm that God loves both people groups and wants justice for them, this would undermine the current uncritical support for either side, which is ungodly and encourages entrenched attitudes.

Reconciliation requires opponents to talk to one another. In addition to what the politicians do, I know for a fact that it is possible for mature, experienced Christian intermediaries to achieve some remarkable results.

Tragically, it seems to me that the Christian community can currently be seen as part of the problem, rather than part of the answer. We often seem to be as polarized as the Israelis and the Palestinians, and along the same lines. The Israelis foster the strong, if naive, support from Christian Zionists. The Palestinians, on a lesser scale, foster the strong support of pro-Palestinian Christians. Whatever good may be achieved by this, it reinforces each side in its suspicion of or antagonism toward the other.

If the majority of the church expressed publicly its commitment to reconciliation between the Israelis and Palestinians and made clear its sensitivity to the needs, pain, and fears of both people groups, who knows what impact that would have?

Moderate Biblical Zionism

Is there any biblical foundation for Christian Zionism? And if there is, how does giving up land for a Palestinian state square with God's promises of land to the Jewish people?

It seems to me that Sizer, in his convert's passion for justice for the Palestinians, tends to throw the baby out with the bathwater with respect to Christian Zionism. One result is that he does not treat the biblical material seriously enough.

I hope I have said enough above to make it clear that I have a passion for justice for and the welfare of both the Palestinians and the Israelis. I also believe that many Christian Zionists are in serious error. But I still believe that a biblical case can be made for (balanced and moderate) Christian Zionism.

Sizer raises various criticisms of the biblical justification Christian Zionists claim. In particular he claims that Christian Zionism has an "ultra-literal" and futurist hermeneutic.

It is, of course, very simple to make out that all the prophecies referred to by Christian Zionists are not to be taken literally as referring to the



Jewish people. In one stroke it removes all sorts of questions and difficulties. But, as we shall see, there are difficulties with this view.

I am also aware that the New Testament radically develops the teaching of the Old Testament. The Old is the bud and the New is the flower. In rightly stressing the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, we must never forget this radical development, which Sizer stresses. So there are important developments of land to world, temple to Jesus, etc.

However, it must be noted that the New Testament is not as tidy as some would have us believe. It states things about the Jewish people and the land which complicate the picture. We have to take these seriously and not explain them away.

The New Testament clearly affirms that the Jewish people are not permanently rejected or simply replaced by the church

Such Replacement Theology or Supersessionism is rejected by many modern scholars. Paul writes, "Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew ... Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!" (Rom 11:1–2, 11).

He does refer to the Jewish people being rejected in verse 15, but this is clearly temporary and to be followed by acceptance: "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

He continues:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. (Rom 11:25–32)

However "untidy" it may prove, it seems to me that Paul is clearly teaching that:

- The Jewish people have not been rejected by God or replaced by the church.
- They are still chosen or elected as a people (loved on account of the patriarchs by God, whose call is irrevocable).

- God still has a purpose for the Jewish people which involves a massive turning to Christ.

I have to add that in the context of this whole passage, the word “Israel” in verse 26 surely must refer to ethnic Israel.

Now, of course, these passages do not refer to any return to the land. But they do contradict Sizer’s contention that the Jewish people are no longer chosen or have no distinct place in God’s purposes.

However, the preceding chapters in Romans argue that faith in Christ is the key to salvation and that Abraham was justified by faith and is the father of all who believe. So I want to affirm loud and clear that the purposes God has for the Jewish people are in Christ. Furthermore, no individual Jewish person will be saved other than through Christ. There is no other way of salvation. The election, therefore, is a reference to the fact that God has preserved the Jewish people as a people and will preserve them for some time into the future for the purpose of giving them an opportunity to turn to Christ. As I have already indicated, that does not require us to accept the idea of permanent distinction as in Dispensationalism.

Jesus seems to refer to a restoration of the Jewish people to the land

Let me say, to begin with, that I am going to refer to only two verses, which are inferential. It would be a mistake to rest a whole theology on such a small foundation. But, as I shall argue, I believe these verses are “tips of a large iceberg” in Scripture.

Jesus foretells the future of the Jewish people in the following words: “They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24).

First, Jesus foretells, “They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations.” This was literally fulfilled some forty years later.

Then he says, “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles.” Again this was fulfilled literally. Gentile power after Gentile power controlled Jerusalem over almost two millennia.

Finally, he says Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” The implication clearly seems to be that there will be a time when the Jewish people will regain control of Jerusalem. And it does not seem legitimate, knowing that 75% of this prophecy has been fulfilled literally, that this final part should be symbolical. The onus appears to be on those who deny Jesus was thinking of a restoration of the Jewish people and their control of Jerusalem.

Similarly, after the resurrection, the disciples ask Jesus, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus’ reply is very interesting. He does not correct or rebuke them for asking a mistaken question. He says, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:6–7). The natural reading is surely that Jesus accepts the question is still relevant – that the Jewish people



will regain sovereignty in Israel – but he does not wish to tell them when this will happen.

Then he goes on to say something some Christian Zionists need to hear, namely, stop speculating about when prophesied events will happen and get on with evangelism. His actual words were: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (v. 8).

These two statements of Jesus seem to be affirming that the Jewish people will regain sovereignty over the land.

Luke 21:24 seems to undermine the idea that prophecies in this area should not be taken literally. It is clear that at least 75% of that prophecy has been fulfilled literally. Christian Zionists would claim that the final part has also been fulfilled literally, namely the inference that the Jewish people would regain control of Jerusalem.

The State of Israel and the relevant prophecies

At the moment I am only considering the New Testament. When we read Luke 21:24 and Acts 1:6–7 in the light of the remarkable fact of the unique preservation of the Jewish people as a people over almost 2,000 years, together with the re-establishment of the State of Israel, it is difficult to dismiss a literal connection.

I am well aware of the controversies surrounding the establishment of Israel. It was established largely by secular Jewish leaders, through political pressure and military force (some of it used wrongly). It produced a huge trauma and a great deal of injustice for the Palestinian people. Also, the current state is largely secular, and the majority reject Jesus as Messiah, although a small and growing minority believe in him.

However, although one’s first reaction should be one of compassion and a desire to improve the situation, as we have already noted, it may also be said that Scripture indicates that God can and does work out his sovereign purposes through the mistakes and even sinful actions of human beings, as well as their good actions.

It is true that some, including some Orthodox Jewish people, think that such a re-establishment of the state is not the real thing prophesied in Scripture, which could only be established by Messiah. Others, including Sizer, think Israel, because of disobedience to God, could lose the land again.

In my view, the re-establishment of Israel as a safe homeland for the much persecuted Jewish people is, at best, only the beginning of a fulfillment.

How do we decide when Scripture is symbolical? Surely it is by relating to established facts of history, science, etc. In my view, historical facts suggest the relevant passages about the Jewish people and Jerusalem are basically literal.

We should approach the Old Testament through the New, and bearing in mind all the above, we can now turn to the Old Testament.



*The Old Testament does prophesy
Israel's return to the land*

Sizer writes: "Belief in the final restoration of the Jews to Zion is also based on a literal and futurist reading of selective Old Testament prophecies. However, the texts themselves indicate that such a return occurred under Ezra and Nehemiah and that no further return is to be anticipated. It may be argued that Jesus repudiated any such expectation. New Testament writers apply such Old Testament promises to both believing Jews and Gentiles."⁸

However, there are OT prophecies which scholars believe relate to a time much later than the return under Ezra and Nehemiah, and often are in a messianic context. I refer to Isaiah 11:11–12; 60:4, 9, 21–22; 61:4–5; Jeremiah 3:12–18; 23:7–8; Ezekiel 38:8, 16; 39:25–29; Joel 3:1–2, 17, 20; Amos 9:14–15; Zechariah 12:2–3, 10–11; and 14. Space forbids me to include what the commentators say of these passages, but the details may be found on my Paradox Web site (<http://www.prayerfortheholylan.org>). I believe prophecies such as these are the Old Testament iceberg of which Luke 21:24 and Acts 1:6–7 are the tips showing in the New Testament.

In conclusion, then, I agree with much of the criticism Sizer makes of Christian Zionism and particularly of its lack of commitment to justice and reconciliation. Like him, I too reject the extremes of Christian Zionism, seen particularly in the USA and Israel. However, I believe Sizer throws the baby out with the bathwater, particularly by not dealing seriously enough with the biblical material, which I believe forms a credible foundation for a balanced, moderate Christian Zionism.

Moderate Christian Zionists will:

- Pray for both the Israelis and the Palestinians, showing compassion for their needs, pain, and fears, and an awareness of their faults.
- Pray for and, where possible, take action to promote reconciliation, peace, security, and justice for both people groups and an end to violence on both sides.
- Pray for and support evangelism among both people groups.

Having read Sizer's book carefully, I remain a pro-Palestinian Christian Zionist who is passionate about justice and reconciliation and sensitive to the needs, pain, and fears of both Palestinians and Israelis.

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8 Sizer, 203.



A Response to Tony Higton's "A Critique of Christian Zionism"

by J. Randall Price

Christian Zionism has been in need of a critique by one of its own, and I commend Tony Higton for providing one. He is quite correct in calling "extreme Christian Zionists" to restore balance to their positions, both theologically and practically. This call for correctness has not only been needed by Christians, but has been requested by some Jewish scholars.¹ Mr. Higton wants to see parity in the relationship and response of Christian Zionists to Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs. While, as argued below, this must be better qualified in biblical terms, it is possible to agree that: (1) Christians who have become spiritual partakers of Israel's new covenant have an obligation to support the promises to the Jewish remnant (Rom 9:27; 11:5), which flow from the same root (the Abrahamic covenant) that supports them; and (2) Those who have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ (the Savior of Jews and Gentiles) have an obligation to pray for (1 Tim 2:1–2) and do good to (Gal 6:10) all men, and, where possible, to promote peace (Jas 3:18; 1 Pet 3:11) and justice (Col 4:1). This two-fold understanding provides the biblical basis for a support for *both* Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. Higton also rightly points out the error of an uncritical support for the secular Jewish state. However, just as Christian Zionists should not be uncritical in their response to Israeli ethical and moral violations, neither should any Christian ignore such violations when committed by Palestinians (or other people groups). This attitude is possible even when Christian Zionists' support of Israel is based on biblical texts with an unconditional promise of divine restoration. It must be remembered that there are *conditions* within unconditional texts. While these do not change the ultimate realization of promise (since the unconditional fulfillment depends on God), they clearly reveal that discipline will befall those who violate the covenant (cf. Jer 30:11; Rom 11:25–27). Even so, those Christian Zionists who identify themselves as evangelical must also judge the actions of the Jewish state – such as the practice of abortion,

¹ See Rabbi Yehiel Poupko, "Pro-Israel vs. Pro-Palestine: A Rabbi hopes for a better conversation," *Christianity Today* 52:2 (February 2008): 74. Rabbi Poupko is the Judaic Scholar of the Jewish United Fund/Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

prostitution, the slave trade, gay rights, and political corruption – by values they hold to be biblical. For this judgment to be just, however, it must be applied equally to the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Higton does well to further remind us that our foremost obligation as believers is spiritual, since both Jews and Gentiles (which includes Palestinians) stand in need of a personal relationship with Jesus as Messiah and Lord. Dr. Barry Horner, pastor of Christ's New Covenant Church in Arizona and author of *Future Israel* (and, incidentally, a dispensational Christian Zionist), echoes this concern, especially with respect to a Christian Zionism energized solely by eschatological motives:

Here is also exposed the very heart of carnal Christian Zionism. It is chiefly concerned with a prophetic agenda, the nation of Israel, as if it were merely playing a piece on a chess board. But there is no Pauline passion for the very soul of Israel after the manner of the Lord Jesus Christ weeping over Jerusalem (Matt 23:37–38).

By contrast, spiritual Zionism places a primary emphasis on circumcision of the heart ...²

This concern applies also to the Palestinians, whose eschatological significance is often viewed as only enemies of Israel, rather than as a part of the prophetic promises made to the nations. The Jewish people have also had their share of negative prophecies (Jer 25:9–11; Luke 19:42–44; 21:20–24), but like them, there is a bright prophetic future for those from among the nations who turn to the true worship of God through Christ (1 Thess 1:9) and adopt a proper conduct toward God's people, especially the Jewish people (Matt 25:32–46). There is simply no biblical ground for distinguishing any people for prophetic judgment (whether Jew or Gentile) in exclusion of a corresponding promise of salvation, as Paul explains: "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one'" (Rom 3:9–10). For this reason, Mr. Higton admirably stresses the Christian Zionist's spiritual obligation for outreach to both Israel and the Arab world.

Examining the Christian Zionist Litmus Test

Having stated these points of agreement, it is necessary to comment on the whole of the article, which this responder sees as an *unbalanced* critique of Christian Zionism. This imbalance can scarcely be avoided when Mr. Higton has put forth his own litmus test for Christian Zionism, one which has led him to brand American Christian Zionism as "very extreme." While admitting that extremes exist on both sides of the Zionism issue, and that he has adequately critiqued Stephen Sizer's monolithic

² Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (NAC Studies in Bible & Theology, vol. 3, ed. E. Ray Clendenen; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 220.



caricature of Christian Zionism and failure to deal with the biblical material, his own failure to provide a balanced critique appears in misrepresenting as unethical the views of one of the movement's major contributors, dispensational Christian Zionism. In part, this failure stems from the standard he has set forth for "error" (his eight points), which lacks the necessary qualification to make them applicable to any but what he defines as moderate Christian Zionists, Christians who accept the tenets of Liberation Theology. Before Christian Zionists in general can evaluate themselves by these "points," certain terms need to be explained such as "legitimate aspirations," "uncritical support," "kingdom principles," and "the peace process." This is necessary because Mr. Higton has apparently drawn ethical conclusions based on the perceived responses of Christian Zionists to political issues, which involve complex factors apart from theological interpretation. It is also necessary to define what constitutes a "negative attitude" and "racism" in a region where ethnic (Egyptian, Lebanese, Syrian, Jordanian, etc.) and religious (Sunni/Shi'ite) distinctions are replete among those who identify themselves as "Palestinians," much less as "Arabs" (which has a narrow ethnic and broader linguistic distinction). While it could be assumed that the general reader knows what "racism" means, Mr. Higton has implied that accepting the biblical teaching that the Jewish people are the chosen people is somehow tantamount to accepting the unbiblical "idea that the Jewish people are superior." Therefore, his understanding of "racism" in this context may involve his own theological interpretation and requires further clarification.

Evaluating the Biblical Principles

It is equally necessary to evaluate Mr. Higton's "important biblical principles" which are the basis for his practical application of a moderate Zionism. Because these principles are taken from Scripture, it would seem unwarranted to be critical of them. However, it is not the general principles that are problematic, but Mr. Higton's (narrow) interpretation and (personal) application of them. In the first principle, love is clearly a defined attribute of deity (1 John 4:8, 16), but this love is also revealed in Scripture as a distinguishing love. Mr. Higton believes God loves Arabs *in the same way* he loves Israel. This contradicts the biblical teaching that God "loved" the Jewish people in a way he did not "love" the other nations (Deut 4:37; Isa 43:4; Jer 31:1, 3). This "love" was demonstrated by making them a "chosen" people (Deut 7:6), yet, this select status did not constitute them as "superior" to other peoples, for they were in fact inferior ("the fewest") to other peoples (Deut 7:7). Therefore, while the Jewish people should not be viewed as superior, they should be viewed as a people who have had superior privileges: "Then what advantage has the Jew? ... great in every respect ..." (Rom 3:1-2). Even so, Israel's privileged status did not make it exempt from judgment, but all the more liable for it: "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). It is this divine (loving) distinction

that requires Christian support for Israel in a way it does not for all of the other oppressed peoples of the world with nationalistic aspirations. For example, as Christians we may support calls for justice and compassion for Kurdish or Armenian causes, but there is no specific biblical precedence that requires this, other than the general mandate to do good to all men. But with Israel, such a biblical precedent exists, which Christians believe has an additional compelling motive (Gen 12:3). Mr. Higton appears to be arguing more from sentimentality than scriptural sense when he implies that those who make such a biblical distinction are "racists." However, neither God who chose one people through which to work out his divine program, nor those who accept this choice, are racist, since the purpose of this choice is to bring blessing to *all of the families of the earth* (Gen 12:2-3). Rather than declare that "if our theology, our practice, or our politics are, *in any sense*, unloving to the Palestinian or the Israeli, they are ungodly," Mr. Higton should refine his theology and practice of love after Paul's prayer that Christian "love would increase still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent ..." (Phil 1:9-10a).

In the same way, Mr. Higton has failed to make a distinction in the biblical demonstration of God's love, so he has misunderstood God's concept of justice. This is because he has not made the biblical distinction between personal and national responses as well as the deserving condition of the object in his call for justice. The Christian's personal response to Israelis and Palestinians as individuals can only be with compassionate justice, regardless of their deserving condition. It was on this basis that Israelis were to treat the foreigner in their midst, "because you also were foreigners in Egypt" (Exod 23:9). For instance, it is the policy of Israeli medical centers to give equal treatment to individuals wounded in terrorist attacks, whether they be the Israeli victims of the terrorists or the terrorists themselves. However, one cannot expect the state of Israel to apply the biblical personal ethic to do good to your enemies (Prov 25:21) or the Christian ethic to "turn the other cheek" (Matt 5:39) on a national level with a terrorist entity such as Hamas, which seeks to eliminate it from the map of the Middle East. Likewise, one cannot expect the state of Israel to apply the biblical national ethic to "not oppress the foreigner who resides with you in your land" (Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:33-34; 24:22; et al.) to those Palestinians under the Palestinian Authority, when the latter exists in a state of declared war against the Jewish state.³ Under the

As Christians we may support calls for justice and compassion for Kurdish or Armenian causes, but there is no specific biblical precedence that requires this. But with Israel, such a biblical precedent exists.

³ A dispensationalist would also want to point out that some texts that invoke Israelis' equal treatment of the foreigner have their context in the future millennial kingdom (Ezek 47:21-22), a time in which war no longer exists (Isa 2:2-4) and when Israel's spiritual regeneration enables her to obey this condition of new covenant legislation.



law, as well as under the exhortation of the prophets, those “foreigners” who are due justice are those who are at peace with Israel, not those at war with her. Indeed justice, as well as biblical precedent (Neh 4:14), would demand that Israel defend its citizens against oppression and violence. Even so, the state of Israel still gives personal humanitarian relief to Palestinians within the Palestinian Authority (including Gaza), despite its undeserving condition (state of war) on a national level. Contrast this with those Palestinians who live at peace with their Jewish neighbors and are citizens of the state of Israel (formerly Israeli-Arabs). They receive the full benefits and privileges of citizenship and are afforded equal treatment under Jewish law, even allowing Islamic law to prevail where required. In this case, if injustice is done to the “foreigner,” the invectives of the prophets would apply, and indeed the Israeli government prosecutes Israelis who are convicted of injustices against its Palestinian citizens, including provocation of Islamic sensibilities (such as on the Temple Mount).

On a practical basis, as Christians, we also have the right to expect that those to whom we promote justice will practice justice with one another, and to measure our actions accordingly. In other words, we want to support justice where real justice is possible and not, as the result of an uninformed theology or unqualified compassion for individuals, ignore or empower injustice by a national entity. This is in accord with Jesus’ counsel to his disciples to “be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16; cf. Rom 16:19) and Paul’s admonition “no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:14–15a). This expresses the biblical balance between belief and behavior (whether evangelistic, social, or political) that is both founded in Scripture and fervent in spirit.

A Narrow Eschatology is Not Heretical or Unethical

Mr. Higton has a particular dislike of what he refers to as “narrow eschatology.” By this he means “gone-off” (whatever this truly includes) fundamentalists, but especially dispensationalists, whose form of extreme Christian Zionism cannot pass his litmus test, and is therefore “unbiblical.” The informed reader cannot avoid including the dispensational tradition in this censure, since two of his “eight points” used to define “error” are eschatological traits characteristic of (#5) or viewpoints unique to (#8) dispensationalism. This reflects a misunderstanding, as well as misrepresentation, of this tradition, which is the more egregious since Mr. Higton says that he was brought up in this tradition. On the practical application of his principles, he seems to question whether anyone in this tradition, which he claims is “steeped in both passion and fear,” is capable of balancing support for Israel with justice and compassion for the Palestinians (in this he finds affinity with Stephen Sizer). This, he contends, results from its narrow system of belief that is afraid its “theological house of

cards" will collapse "if any concession and compromise is made." He questions the ability of his former tradition to apply his principles when he states:

To live with a rather narrow view of eschatology as our guide could lead us into all sorts of unethical behavior. It is important that we judge each event and action in the Holy Land by the whole teaching of Scripture – especially the call to justice – not just by the criterion of what appears to suit our personal eschatology.

While it may be agreed that the whole teaching of Scripture should be the criteria for judging every action, it is unwarranted to suggest that the dispensational interpretation of eschatology cannot fit within this whole and practice Christian justice. However, it may well be that its biblical perspective of God's distinct program for Israel will not permit an unqualified answer to a call for justice from those who would oppose that program. Nevertheless, an understanding of the particulars of prophecy concerning the Middle East are a biblical means for discerning and determining our response to those people and events that occupy this stage of fulfillment. Christian Zionist leader Elwood McQuaid points this out when he says:

... there is a point where politics and biblical prophetic realities converge. This is not a matter of dictation but observation; and there is no doubt that current events, when compared with scriptural predictions, help us discern where we are and where history is heading.⁴

Of greater concern is Mr. Higton's understanding of "heresy" as having "often been caused by people not seeing the bigger picture." Historically, heresy has not been the result of people not seeing the bigger picture, but of a deviation from a particular (narrow) theological point. The Council of Nicea (AD 325) was convened to decide the degree to which Christ was divine, branding dissidents as heretics. The eastern church split from the western church over the minute theological question of the Son's filial procession. It might be argued this would not have happened had they seen the bigger picture, but if it had not happened, what today would constitute orthodoxy and what would define heresy? Of course, Mr. Higton does not have such narrow christological points in mind, but narrow *eschatological* points, which he believes should not get in the way of the bigger picture because they affect the political policies of those who hold them. Does

If we adopt Mr. Higton's definition of heresy, are we prepared to apply it also to those who hold to various theological forms of supercessionism?

4 Elwood McQuaid, "Where the Christian Left is Wrong," *The International Jerusalem Post* (January 18–24, 2008): 23.



this mean that christological controversy never resulted in polarized political policies that provoked oppression and war? If we adopt Mr. Higton's definition of heresy, are we prepared to apply it also to those who hold to various theological forms of supercessionism (Replacement Theology)? Surely they do not see the "bigger picture" when they uncritically condemn Israel for apartheid practices, and call for justice and compassion for the Palestinians despite the Palestinian Authority's rejection of Israel's right to exist and refusal to renounce terrorism.

I am also concerned that having abandoned a narrow (dispensational) eschatology as "extreme," he has failed to appreciate the insights it offers to resolving the theological and practical tensions he finds within Christian Zionism. Like Stephen Sizer, he believes that "the New Testament radically develops the teaching of the Old Testament," transforming "land to world, temple to Jesus, etc." Because of this, Mr. Higton has difficulty finding New Testament passages to justify a future return of Israel to the land, even though he believes this is to be a literal fulfillment. While he does not see a reference to a future restoration in Romans 11:25–27, the repentance and regeneration of national Israel predicted in this text are seen as a necessary prerequisite of national restoration in Acts 3:19–21. In this passage, nothing has changed with respect to the promises made to national Israel, despite the birth of the church in the previous chapter. The coming of the Messiah (verse 20) is not predicated on the church's fulfillment of the program outlined in the Old Testament, as though "land had become world" and "temple had become Jesus, etc.," but on a national repentance of the Jewish remnant (verse 19) with a consequent "restoration of all things" (i.e., promised to Israel; cf. Acts 1:6) in fulfillment of what was "spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient time" (verse 21). If a "radical development" were not presupposed, this national restoration could have been seen in the prediction of the salvation of "all Israel" (Jewish remnant) in Romans 11:26, which found its justification in the Old Testament promise in Isaiah that will be fulfilled in the future without theological transformation.

In this same vein, Mr. Higton rails against the "extreme" Christian Zionist's understanding of rebuilding the Jewish temple. Here his concerns are theological and political, the first with respect to the issue of the renewal of animal sacrifices, and the second with respect to Christian support for Orthodox Jews whose plans to rebuild the temple provoke Islamic acts of violence. Mr. Higton says that he has "done a little research in Israel on the Jewish groups aiming to rebuild it. But, if it involves renewing animal sacrifices, what on earth are Christians doing supporting it? The writer to the Hebrews would turn over in his grave! Someone said they would be memorial sacrifices pointing back to Calvary. But we already have one such. It's called Holy Communion." Had Mr. Higton extended his research to Christian scholarship on this subject, he would have discovered an established body of literature in journal articles, dissertations, and books that explain and defend the concept of the renewal of animal

sacrifices⁵ and even harmonize it with the Book of Hebrews.⁶ It should be understood that if the Bible predicts the literal rebuilding of the temple (see Isa 2:2–3; Ezek 40–48; Hag 2:5–9; Zech 6:12–15),⁷ it must include the literal restoration of the sacrificial system (see Isa 56:6–7; 60:7; 66:20–21; Jer 33:18; Zech 14:16–21; Hag 2:7; Mal 1:11; 3:1–3). However, these texts do not envision a restoration of the temple and sacrificial system in Israel under the old Mosaic covenant, but under the new covenant (Jer 33:16–18; Ezek 37:25–28). Just as the Jewish-Christian leaders of the early church saw no theological conflict with offering animal sacrifices while the temple remained standing (Peter and John in Acts 3:1; Paul in Acts 21:26, cf. 25:8), so believers in the age when the temple returns will again enjoy the atoning function of sacrifices for ritual purification (Ezek 43:18–27; 44:15; 45:15–25; 46:11–15; cf. Heb 9:13). It does not appear from these passages that the future sacrifices can be only memorial in function, however, it should be remembered that while Holy Communion is certainly the ordained method of remembering the work of Messiah during the present age, its function appears to cease with Messiah's coming (1 Cor 11:26).

There is a prediction of a rebuilding of the temple before Christ's second advent that many believe is being prepared for in the present age.

While there is little that a Christian Zionist can do to support the rebuilding in the future age after Christ has returned as King, there is a prediction of a rebuilding of the temple *before* Christ's second advent that many believe is being prepared for in the present age. This is understood of the temple that will occupy the "time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble" (Jer 30:7) or the period of "tribulation" spoken of by Jesus in his Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14), by Paul to the church in Thessalonica (2 Thess 2:4), and seen by John in his apocalypse (Rev 11:1–2). Most, if not all, of these passages appear to have been based on the interruption of the temple

- 5 See Randall Price, "Blasphemy or Blessing: Sacrifices in the Last Days Temple" in *The Temple in Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 533–58; "Ezekiel" in *Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary*, ed. Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2006), 170–218; John Mitchell, "The Question of Millennial Sacrifices," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 110 (1953): 250–59; Jerry Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (1995): 279–89; "The Divine Presence, Uncleaness, and Ezekiel's Millennial Sacrifices," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 405–22; John Whitcomb, "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel," *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 201–17; John W. Schmitt and J. Carl Laney, "The Temple Altar and Sacrifice," in *Messiah's Coming Temple: Ezekiel's Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishers, 1997), 111–20.
- 6 Jerry Hullinger, "Two Atonement Realms: Reconciling Sacrifices in Ezekiel and Hebrews," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 32 (2007): 33–64.
- 7 See Mark Rooker, "Evidence from Ezekiel," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 119–34; Charles Feinberg, "The Rebuilding of the Temple," in *Prophecy in the Making*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971), 91–112; Chaim Clorfene, *The Messianic Temple: Understanding Ezekiel's Prophecy* (Jerusalem: Menorah Books, 2005); Jerry Hullinger, "The Restoration of Ezekiel's Temple," in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, ed. Christopher Cone (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 375–95.



sacrifices during Daniel's seventieth week (Dan 9:27).⁸ Though some Christian Zionists believe that it is in keeping with the return of the temple in the prophetic program to support Israel's rebuilding of it today, I, along with many other dispensational Christian Zionists who have written about this matter, have discouraged Christians from doing so (other than in principle),⁹ since we understand its fulfillment lies beyond the Church Age and appears to be a Jewish endeavor connected with the affairs of the coming Antichrist. This, however, has nothing to do with Mr. Higton's reminder that "modern Judaism is specifically antagonistic to our Lord and Savior." Modern Islam, which controls the Temple Mount at present, is even more so, and an anti-Christian bias pervades the Palestinian Authority, whose agenda is to establish an Islamic state under *sharia* law. By contrast, as Mr. Higton knows, the state of Israel tolerates Christianity and even Messianic congregations who openly evangelize their fellow Israeli Jews under the freedoms enjoyed in the Jewish state. Nevertheless, it is the better part of wisdom for Christians not to financially endow Orthodox Jewish organizations that oppose and threaten their Jewish-Christian brethren. Likewise, it is foolhardy to provoke Muslims over the Jewish plans to rebuild the temple, since the violence that results will be directed toward the very people and state Christian Zionists seek to support.

In spite of the failure to establish the balance he seeks, in the final analysis, Mr. Higton's four-fold biblical defense and three-fold practical application of moderate Christian Zionism is quite acceptable to "extreme" dispensational Christian Zionists (even American ones), whose personal expressions of justice, peace, and reconciliation for both Israelis and Palestinians remain intact even while continuing to support the Jewish state in the land of Israel as an essential part of the fulfillment of God's prophetic plan to bless all mankind.

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8 See J. Randall Price, "Prophetic Postponement in Daniel 9:24–27," in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis of the Movement and Defense of Traditional Dispensationalism*, ed. Ron J. Bigalke, Jr. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 215–56; "Daniel," in *Popular Bible Prophecy Commentary*, ed. Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2006), 219–65; Charles H. Ray, "Daniel 9:24–27 Considered, Part II," in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, ed. Christopher Cone (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 323–42.

9 Thomas Ice and Randall Price, *Ready to Rebuild: The Imminent Plan to Rebuild the Last Days Temple* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1992); Randall Price, *The Battle for the Last Days Temple* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2004).

Stephen Sizer and Anti-Zionism

by **Mike Moore**



Since Colin Chapman's hugely influential *Whose Promised Land?*¹ was published in 1983, a number of books by evangelical authors from both sides of the Atlantic have addressed the issue of Israel and the Middle East from a stridently anti-Zionist viewpoint. Foremost among the evangelical critics of Israel is Stephen Sizer, the Anglican vicar of Christ Church in the leafy village of Virginia Water in Surrey, England. Rev. Sizer has made a name for himself both within and outside the church as an outspoken critic of the state of Israel and a champion of the Palestinian cause, and he is much in demand as a speaker on the subject of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. He is the author of numerous articles on Israel and Palestine, and his book *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (CZ),² which is ostensibly a history and critique of Christians who favor the Jewish state, has received the endorsement of a number of bishops and eminent Christian personalities including John Stott in the UK and Hank Hanegraaf in America. Some Jewish reviewers, including Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok, have also praised CZ. Sizer's most recent book, *Zion's Christian Soldiers*,³ is more moderate than CZ and offers a theological appraisal of the relationship between Israel and the church.

There is much to applaud in Sizer's criticism of extreme Christian Zionism in America, in particular his charge that many Christian Zionists have little, if any, concern for the spiritual wellbeing of the Jews. However, Sizer appears to go beyond legitimate criticism of what is an extreme and aberrant fundamentalist movement in order to eliminate any basis for Christian support of the state of Israel. If some Christian Zionists appear to believe that Israel can do no wrong, it seems that for Stephen Sizer Israel can do nothing good.

This article attempts to critique Sizer's major arguments and his method of presenting his case against Israel, particularly in his book *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* While acknowledging that there is

1 Colin Gilbert Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?* (Ann Arbor, MI: Lion Pub., 1983).

2 Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004).

3 Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007).

much that is rotten in the state of Israel (it is populated by Jewish and Arab sinners and governed by sons of Adam), this critique does not pretend to be even-handed. It is a response to an author whose writings are tendentious. Most of the criticisms in this article were presented to Sizer himself and the original correspondence, with sourced references, can be accessed at <http://www.cwi.org.uk>.

Misrepresentation and Misinformation

Sizer writes well and engagingly. However, he demonstrates a tendency to misrepresent those with whom he disagrees. On page 20 of *CZ*, for example, Sizer states that in *Israel and Zionism* Walter Riggans suggests: "Christians should not only support the idea of a Jewish State, *but also its policies*."⁴ However, in *The Covenant with the Jews*, Riggans twice states categorically that Christians should be free to disagree about the policies of the Israeli government.⁵ Elsewhere Riggans says, "... support for any given decision or action in Israel will need to be given in accordance with the full range of biblical principles, and not in some unconditional manner."⁶

Sizer has argued that his interpretation of Riggans was fair. That might have been the case had not Riggans stated in the sentence preceding the one quoted by Sizer, "... each Christian is *free to make their own judgement* about the decisions and performance of any Israeli government or agency" (emphasis added).⁷

On pages 241–44 of *CZ*, Sizer states that racist attitudes toward Arabs are common among Christian Zionists. While there may be some truth in Sizer's charge, it is a double-edged sword inasmuch as it could be argued that racist attitudes toward Jews are not uncommon among supporters

Israeli Messianic Jews are Zionists, yet many of them have a concern for the Arabs.

of the Palestinian cause. At any rate, the accusation is a gross overstatement and generalization. Israeli Messianic Jews are Zionists, yet many of them have a concern for the Arabs. Baruch Maoz, for example, is an impenitent Zionist who has worked long and hard to promote harmony between Jewish and Arab Christians in Israel and

has worked with other Israeli Messianic Jews to supply aid to persecuted Palestinian Christians. David and Lisa Loden, Evan Thomas, Gidon Shmuel, Erez Soref, and many other Messianic Jews, all of them Zionists, are involved with *Musalaha*, a ministry that seeks to promote reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. A Jewish Christian pastor travels to Jordan each month (this is very risky for an Israeli) to work with Arab Christian brethren. The Christian Student Movement in Israel, from its inception

4 Walter Riggans, *Israel and Zionism* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1988).

5 Walter Riggans, *The Covenant with the Jews: What's So Unique about the Jewish People* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), 71, 93.

6 *Ibid.*, 91.

7 *Ibid.*

in 1979, has been open to both Jewish and Arab members, and its Web site is in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. Even the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, possibly the most staunchly Christian Zionist organization in the world, has sought to help suffering Arabs as well as Jews in Israel.

Equally troubling is that Sizer sometimes makes claims which are false to the point of being ludicrous. A clear example of this can be seen in a letter to Irene Lancaster posted on his Web site in which he states, referring to the start of the Six Day War:

Regarding the fallacious assertion that Israel was attacked in 1967 – *I would refer you to the confessions of Prime Minister Moshe Sharett (in his personal diary), General Mordicai Hod, Commander of the Israeli Air Force, General Haim Herzog, former head of Israeli Military Intelligence and Head of State, and Foreign Minister Abba Eban that Israel precipitated the 1967 war for their own purposes (emphasis added).*⁸

Sizer's reference to Moshe Sharett's "personal diary" is most unfortunate inasmuch as Sharett died in July 1965, almost two years before the Six Day War!

For many months Sizer's Web site carried an article by Israel Shamir entitled "To the Angel of Canterbury Church." Shamir is a notorious anti-Semite and a Holocaust denier, and his article contained lies of the crudest sort. In Israel, claimed Shamir, "The New Testament is burned on stake [sic] in schools," and, "Churches are violated, ruined, shot at." Shamir claimed further that in Israel Christianity was "underground, clandestine, persecuted by the Jews."⁹ This in spite of the fact that every Shabbat thousands of Jewish and Arab Christians meet for public worship with no interference from the state, and that a *National Evangelistic Committee* exists to organize and promote public evangelistic outreaches. Moreover, every Friday Israeli Muslims meet in their mosques without fear of harassment.

Unreliable Sources

Sizer depends heavily on certain left-wing secular Jewish intellectuals, three of whom in particular – Noam Chomsky, Israel Shahak, and Uri Davis – he refers to as "leading Jewish academics." These "leading Jewish academics" are almost totally unreliable as sources of information on Israel, a fact that seriously undermines Sizer's case against Israel. Although Sizer's first academic, Noam Chomsky, has been hailed by *The New York Times*

8 Steven Sizer, "Responding to the 'Wolf in Sheep's Clothing' by Irene Lancaster," Christ Church, <http://www.cc-vw.org/articles/wolf.htm> [accessed April 24, 2008].

9 Israel Shamir, "To the Angel of Canterbury Church." The article is no longer on Sizer's Web site, and Shamir does not feature it on his own Web site.



as “arguably the most important intellectual alive,” Stefan Kanfer has dubbed him “America’s dumbest intellectual,” and a number of other critics, including Alan Dershowitz and Paul Bogdanor, have charged him with intellectual dishonesty.

Since the 1960s, Chomsky has defended the regimes of a number of dictators, including Mao Zedong and Pol Pot, while at the same time accusing America of being the worst of all possible regimes. In the words of Keith Windschuttle, Chomsky has “supported the regimes he admires by suppressing the truth and perpetrating falsehoods. He has endorsed universal moral principles but has applied them only to Western liberal democracies, while continuing to rationalize the crimes of his own political favorites.”¹⁰

Israel Shahak, Sizer’s second “leading Jewish academic,” is even more radical than Chomsky. In *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, Shahak claims, among other things, that “a pious Jew arriving for the first time in Australia, say, and chancing to pass near an Aboriginal graveyard, must – as an act of worship of ‘God’ – curse the mothers of the dead buried there.”¹¹

In the same book Shahak also states, “All modern studies on Judaism, particularly by Jews ... bear the unmistakable marks of their origin: deception, apologetics or hostile polemics, indifference or even active hostility to the pursuit of truth.”¹² Such outrageous claims must surely disqualify Shahak from being taken seriously as an academic.

On page 210 of *CZ*, Sizer describes *Israel, An Apartheid State*, by his third “leading Jewish academic,” Uri Davis, as “probably the most detailed work on racism in Israel.”¹³ Sizer neglects to inform his readers that Davis is also a PLO observer member and played an instrumental role in the production of the 1980s play *Perdition*, in which it was alleged that Zionists collaborated with the Nazis in perpetrating the Holocaust.

In order for Davis to sustain his indictment against “apartheid Israel,” he has to radically redefine the term, as do other critics of Israel.

Davis and others like him have been remarkably successful in their bid to make Israel the new South Africa. However, in order for Davis to sustain his indictment against “apartheid Israel,” he has to radically redefine the term, as do other critics of Israel such as former U.S. President Jimmy Carter in his 2006 book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*.¹⁴

In an interview on the Web site *From Occupied Palestine*, Davis makes plain his linguistic revisionism:

10 Keith Windschuttle, “The hypocrisy of Noam Chomsky,” *The New Criterion*, <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/chomsky-windschuttle-1733> [accessed May 28, 2008].

11 Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years* (London: Pluto Press, 1994). The entire book is available at the Historical Review Press Web site. This chapter can be accessed at <http://www.ety.com/HRP/racehate/shahak2.htm>.

12 *Ibid.*, 22.

13 Uri Davis, *Israel, An Apartheid State* (London: Zed Books, 1987).

14 Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).



... the situation in Israel is significantly different when compared to South Africa in one or more important senses. First, visitors to South Africa would have been hit in the face by apartheid immediately: benches for whites, benches for non-whites; toilets for whites, toilets for non-whites; parks for whites, parks for non-whites; transport for whites and transport for non-whites.

However, *the first impression of Israel to a lay-visitor would possibly be the impression of a standard liberal Western democracy: there are no buses for Jews, buses for non-Jews; parks for Jews and parks for non-Jews; beaches for Jews and beaches for non-Jews.* The core apartheid is veiled, and the Jewish National Fund plays an important part in the construction of this veil (emphases added).¹⁵

Stephen Sizer is a highly intelligent man who, according to his entry in Wikipedia, has visited Israel and the Middle East many times. He ought to be aware, therefore, that Israeli Arabs enjoy the same civic and legal rights as Israeli Jews. Israel's universities, for example, are multi-ethnic and multi-faith. At Haifa University one in five of the staff and students is Arab. Ha'Emek Hospital in Afula, which serves a half million people, has an Arab chief of cardiology, and in the 2006 Israel Independence Day celebrations, a Druze female entrepreneur was honored before the whole country. One of Israel's Supreme Court judges is an Arab, and Arabs serve as members of the Knesset. It would be impossible to envisage a similar scenario existing in pre-Mandela South Africa.

Rewriting History

On page 261 of CZ, Sizer states that it is his intention to "repudiate anti-Semitism." However, in pursuit of his stated intention he bases his arguments on the claims of anti-Semites, Holocaust deniers, and neo-Nazis. Sizer rightly condemns Christian and Jewish hostility to the Arabs and Palestinians, but at the same time he is silent about Arab and Palestinian atrocities against both Jews and Christians, while citing authors who are so virulent in their hostility to Israel and the Jews that the only appropriate label to pin on them is "anti-Semite." Israel should not be exempt from criticism when it is due, even serious criticism (and sometimes it is), but if Sizer wishes to repudiate anti-Semitism, why does he single out the Jewish state for criticism when it is the only constitutional democracy in the region?

Sizer repeatedly accuses Israel of treating the Palestinians with brutality, citing a number of revisionist historians such as Ilan Pappé, whose book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* he describes as "emotive ... but also accurate."¹⁶

15 Uri Davis and Jon Elmer, "Apartheid Israel: An Interview with Uri Davis," From Occupied Palestine, <http://www.fromoccupiedpalestine.org/node/1419> [accessed April 24, 2008].

16 Stephen Sizer, in an email to the author.

Pappé is a self-confessed post-modern, post-Zionist “relativist,” for whom historical research is “a backward-looking projection of political attitudes and agendas regardless of actual facts.” In the introduction to his book *A History of Modern Palestine*, Pappé admits to personal bias and political partisanship: “My bias is apparent despite the desire of my peers that I stick to facts and the ‘truth’ when reconstructing past realities. I view any such construction as vain and presumptuous.”¹⁷

Pappé is probably most infamous for supporting the claim of Teddi Katz, a graduate of Haifa University who, in a doctoral dissertation, claimed that on May 22–23, 1948, Israel Defense Forces killed more than 200 unarmed inhabitants of the Arab fishing village of Tantura after the village had surrendered to them.

When the story was questioned, Haifa University set up a committee to check the accuracy of Katz’s research and found he had “gravely and severely” falsified testimony at fourteen different places in his dissertation. Nevertheless, in the Spring 2001 issue of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Ilan Pappé published an article defending Katz’s paper, insisting that his conclusions were correct, even if his facts were not, *since historical research need not be based on facts!*¹⁸

Inaccuracies and Omissions

In support of his anti-Zionist agenda, Sizer cites several United Nations resolutions against Israel but provides little, if any, historical background. On page 208 of *CZ*, for example, Sizer endorses the infamous United Nations Resolution 3379, which ruled “that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.” Although Sizer appears to lament the revocation of Resolution 3379, something he attributes to American pressure on the UN, he supplies no context to the resolution, which historian Paul Johnson calls the greatest triumph of “professional anti-Semites” within the Soviet and Arab blocs.¹⁹

The first step toward the passing of Resolution 3379 was taken on September 12, 1972, when Ugandan President Idi Amin sent a telegram to Kurt Waldheim, the Secretary General of the UN, stating: “Germany is the right place where, when Hitler was the supreme commander, he burnt over six million Jews. This is because Hitler and all German people knew that the Israelis [sic!] are not people who are working in the interest of the people of the world, and that is why they burnt the Israelis alive with gas [sic!].”²⁰

17 Efraim Karsh, “A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples” [review], *The Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2006), <http://www.meforum.org/article/897> [accessed April 24, 2008].

18 See “The Academic Blacklisting of Israel, the Tantura Affair and Ilan Pappé,” Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, http://www.camera.org/index.aspx?x_context=22&x_article=991 [accessed April 24, 2008].

19 Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 578f.

20 Patrick Keatley, Obituary: Idi Amin, *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2003/aug/18/guardianobituaries> [accessed May 28, 2008].



Three years after Amin's bizarre anti-Semitic telegram, Uganda was appointed to the UN Commission on Human Rights. On October 1, 1975, Waldheim, who had worked with a German army unit that deported most of the Jewish population of Salonika to death camps during the Second World War, welcomed Idi Amin to the UN General Assembly and gave a dinner in his honor. Waldheim and other anti-Zionists applauded a speech by the genocidal Ugandan dictator in which he denounced the "Zionist-American conspiracy" against the world and called for Israel's expulsion from the UN and its "extinction" as a state.²¹

On page 209 of CZ, Sizer cites approvingly the denunciation of Israel as an apartheid state by the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism but, again, supplies no background context to the event or its denunciations of Israel. Israel and Israeli nongovernmental organizations were excluded from the Durban conference (was this not an act of apartheid?), during which Israel was accused of perpetrating "holocausts" against the Palestinians and of being an "original sin." According to Ann Bayesfky, copies of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and literature glorifying Adolph Hitler were freely available at the conference. A flyer carrying a picture of the German Führer asked the question, "What If I Had Won?" The flyer proclaims that two "good things" would have resulted: "there would be no Israel and no Palestinian blood shed."²²

The Durban conference declared Zionism to be "anti-Semitic," while Syrian representatives reputedly issued statements denying the Holocaust and Iranian representatives declared that anti-Semitism was not a form of contemporary racism and need not be dealt with at the conference. It is difficult to reconcile Sizer's stated intention to "repudiate anti-Semitism" with his unqualified approval of both the UN's 1975 defunct "Zionism is Racism" resolution and the grossly anti-Semitic 2001 Durban Conference against Racism.

In CZ, Sizer cites acts of "Jewish terrorism" against the British, but omits to say that these acts of aggression were carried out by unofficial Jewish groups such as the Irgun and the Stern Gang, and that they were almost always condemned by the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut, and Ben-Gurion. One searches in vain to find any reference to Palestinian terror. In the "Index of Subjects" to CZ, there are seven entries under "Ethnic Cleansing," four entries under "Apartheid," and twelve references to "Occupied Territories," but there are no entries for "Terror," "Terrorism," or "Terrorists." The term "global terrorism" appears on page 251, and there is a reference to "Jewish terrorism" on page 225.

In this connection, one of the most alarming elements in the entire book is footnote 170 on page 251, which reads:

21 Johnson, 578f.

22 Elihai Braun, "The UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, South Africa," Jewish Virtual Library, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/durban1.html> [accessed May 28, 2008].

For allegations of Israeli complicity in the 9/11 tragedy, see 'Five Israelis were seen filming as jet liners ploughed into the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001,' *Sunday Herald*, 2 November 2003, http://www.sundayherald.com/search/display.var.1032469.0.five_israelis_were_seen_filming_as_jet_liners_ploughed_into_the_twin_towers_on_september_11_2001.php.

The grossly bizarre allegation that Israel was behind the 9/11 attacks has been touted in various forms by anti-Semites the world over. Is Sizer seriously suggesting that there may be substance to this conspiracy theory? If he did not believe the story, why would he refer his readers to it? If he was giving credence to the theory, was he using the footnote as a smoke-screen to obscure the fact that "global terrorism" is an almost exclusively Arab Muslim phenomenon? Whatever his motive, the footnote seriously undermines any claim to objectivity on Sizer's part and lends no credibility to his assertion that he wishes to "repudiate" anti-Semitism.

Questionable Alliances

It should be a matter of concern that an evangelical Christian minister is prepared to share platforms with liberal churchmen, Jesuits, radical feminist theologians, fundamentalist Muslims, and the maverick Orthodox Jewish group Neturei Karta for the purpose of denouncing some of his fellow evangelicals – who at least hold to the authority of Scripture even if Sizer doesn't agree with their understanding of it – and the only state in the Middle East that upholds human rights and guarantees religious freedom to its citizens.

At the 2004 Sabeel conference in Israel, Stephen Sizer publicly denounced Christian Zionists even though almost every other speaker held to theologies far worse than the Christian Zionism they had gathered to condemn. Mitri Raheb, for example, director of the International Center of Bethlehem, described Christ's disciples as "nationalistic," "narrow-minded," and "blinded" to the future.²³

At the same conference, the late Rev. Dr. Michael Prior, who was chairman of the Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain and a member of the International Editorial Advisory Board of the *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies*, said, "It seems to me that [Christ's disciples] were very narrow minded, xenophobic, perhaps militaristic spin-headed bigots."²⁴ Prior also declared that the Bible should carry the warning: "This is a dangerous book. Reading it may damage somebody else's health."²⁵ He re-

23 Paul Wilkinson, "Challenging Christian Zionism: Theology, Politics, and the Palestine-Israel Conflict," Al-Brushra, http://www.al-bushra.org/ecu-inter/christian_zionism.html [accessed May 28, 2008].

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

ferred to Joshua as “the patron-saint of ethnic cleansers” and “a continuous genocidist,” and called the conquest of Canaan “an abomination.”²⁶

It is difficult to understand how a self-confessed conservative evangelical could make common cause with a modern Marcionite who categorically rejected the doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture and was ready to blaspheme the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. Whether he likes the charge or not, Sizer appears to be willing to make common cause with anyone as long as they are anti-Zionist.

Sizer has also spoken and written on the subject of Israel and Christian Zionism for Islamic groups. He has criticised a range of evangelical organizations, including Jews for Jesus and Christian Mission to the Jews. Given the radical outlook of some Islamic groups, it is fair to ask whether Sizer might not have endangered the ministries and possibly the lives of some Christian workers in the Middle East. This is no idle conjecture. Hamed Al-Tamimi of the Palestinian Authority’s Judicial Council has said, “Christians who support Israel are distorting their true faith, have adapted [sic] Satan as god [sic] and comprise the greatest danger to world peace ... Very few people know the truth about *this* [Christian Zionist] *movement*, which *unconditionally supports the Zionist enemy and unconditionally opposes Islam and the Muslims*” (emphasis added).²⁷

Endorsements from the Far Right

Last of all, it is deeply troubling to find that some very unsavory groups and individuals use Sizer’s articles to confirm their anti-Semitic attitudes. The Jewish Tribal Review Web site (<http://www.jewishtribalreview.org>), for example, which features numerous links to other rabidly anti-Semitic Web sites such as Jew Watch and from which *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* can be downloaded, also carries a link to Sizer’s Web site.

The revisionist Web site AAARGH features numerous PDF versions of anti-Jewish and revisionist writings, including David Irving’s *Nuremberg: The Last Battle*, Arthur Butz’s *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, Paul Rassinier’s *Debunking the Genocide Myth* and *The Real Eichmann Trial*, and Sizer’s *Christian Zionism: Its History, Theology and Politics*.

“The rev. [sic] Sizer,” says AAARGH, “has done an immense service to mankind, and to the peoples of the Middle East in particular [sic], in analyzing what is called, in the US, ‘Christian Zionism’, a purely American phenomenon, with a direct impact on the genocide practised in Palestine by the Israeli authorities.”²⁸

The Islamic Baheth Center Web site (<http://www.bahethcenter.net/E.W/>) carries Sizer’s article “The Political Agenda of Christian Zionism” on the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Aaron Klein, “Cleric says Christians ‘adopted Satan as God,’” World Net Daily, http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=50109 [accessed May 28, 2008].

²⁸ “Christian Zionism: Its History, Theology and Politics,” Association des Anciens Amateurs de Récits de Guerres et d’Holocaustes, <http://www.vho.org/aaargh/engl/engl.html> [accessed April 24, 2008].



same page as Henry Ford's *The International Jew*.

This is not to say that Sizer has sought the endorsement of neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and revisionists, or that he is sympathetic to their doctrines and aims, or that he could do much to prevent these people posting his articles on their Web sites or linking to his Web site.

Nevertheless, one wonders if a man whose stated intention is to repudiate anti-Semitism ever loses sleep knowing that his writings are being used as ammunition against the Jews by some of the most bigoted people on the planet.

Though Sizer is right to take some Christian Zionists to task for their lack of concern for the salvation of the Jewish people, Christian Zionist groups such as Christian Friends of Israel help send out a message to a people who have suffered at the hands of the church for almost two millennia: Evangelical Christians are their friends. Sizer's one-sided, pro-Palestinian stance serves only to reinforce the Jewish perception that Christians are against them, especially when there are far worse regimes in the world than the Israeli government. It is not wrong to criticize Israel, but to single out that nation for constant condemnation sends the wrong message. It serves to harden Jewish resistance to the very gospel he says he wants them to believe. Journalist and author Melanie Phillips, for example, is very clear-headed, well-informed, intelligent, and articulate, and she perceives Sizer's relentless attacks on Israel to be an expression of hatred toward her and her people. Melanie Phillips is not alone.

Although Stephen Sizer exposes some of the extreme elements within the Christian Zionist movement, his writings have the potential to do long-term damage to Jewish-Christian relations and, above all, to the cause of the gospel among the Jews.

Sizer has given an undertaking to revise *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* – but if he takes into account all the facts that have been presented to him, the second edition will no doubt be a very different book.

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Concerns and Hopes for Our Messianic Movement

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT



by **David Brickner**

In a well-known Peanuts cartoon comic strip, Lucy looks askance at her younger brother, Linus, as she confesses, “Whenever I look at you I feel a criticism coming on.” I confess that all too often I feel a criticism coming on when it comes to evaluating the ministry and movement to which I have devoted my life. I am keenly alert to whatever problems I see in our Messianic movement in general and with Jews for Jesus in particular. I can’t help raising questions and concerns that probably will be viewed as criticism. God’s promises point to the ultimate success of our movement. But in the meanwhile, we have our struggles.

Weariness of Soul

One problem that I struggle with, and I believe others do as well, was addressed by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:13: “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.” The admonition is proof of the temptation to weariness.

As we follow Jesus and seek to persuade other Jews to follow him, we are constantly swimming against strong currents. Our commitments require us to willingly endure misunderstanding, and often contempt, from those we care about the most. Then there is the current of public opinion, which condemns pretty much any truth claim as intolerant. Both currents press against us to produce a weariness of soul, as does the private pain of caring for the lost. Over time, weariness of soul wears down our faith.

A former Jews for Jesus missionary who renounced her faith confessed to me with a sigh, in a moment of candor, “I just became tired of viewing everyone through the lens of whether they were saved or unsaved.” I don’t believe we need to reduce people to being nothing other than saved or unsaved, but if we truly believe that apart from Christ people will go to hell, then we must care enough to try to help as many as possible to recognize him. That is a heavy burden – a pain that can either propel or paralyze us. Some have renounced their faith rather than allowing themselves to continue hurting over those who do not share it.

Another dangerous result of soul-weariness is not renouncing but rather reformulating the faith, looking beyond the orthodox view of soteri-

ology. Some who've been counted among the brightest and best of the movement are presenting what is referred to as "the wider hope," the idea that people can be saved by Jesus even if they never believe on him in this life.

A more benign but still problematic byproduct of soul weariness, especially in Jewish missions, is the tendency to lose sight of the highest purpose to which we have been called, which is evangelism. Many who start out wanting to tell Jewish people about Jesus end up telling the church about Jews and Israel. I understand this temptation as well. I recently spent ten days traveling to different churches talking about Christ in the Passover. The warm and enthusiastic welcome I receive at churches is so much more affirming than the reception I often get when telling unbelieving Jews about Jesus. Who wouldn't want to spend more time being affirmed than rejected?

But make no mistake: a retreat from talking to Jewish people about Jesus can kill our movement. We can inure ourselves to the pain of rejection by reconstituting our calling into something more comfortable. But if we try to avoid the scandal of identifying with the crucified Messiah (for scandal it will be until every knee bows to him), we lose our purpose and our hope.

Resisting the Antidote

If soul weariness is a major concern, then the way we tend to resist its antidote is another. The antidote can be found in a combination of spiritual renewal, accountability, and a sincere effort to encourage one another.

There is no shortcut to spiritual renewal. It requires the discipline of coming aside as Y'shua encouraged his own disciples to do (Mark 6:31). The busyness of our own lives and ministries and our own personal laziness work against this kind of discipline.

When I became executive director of Jews for Jesus, I instituted one full day and 3 half days of prayer ministry-wide, as well as a policy of paid time off for spiritual retreats for our missionaries. I hoped that building in these times of prayer and opportunities for retreat would promote spiritual renewal. The efforts might seem few, but I can tell you that the

I find that we can become so busy serving the Lord that we don't make time to just be still with him, to hear him speak into our lives.

majority of our staff has not shown great enthusiasm to make use of them. We do not gravitate toward such opportunities for renewal. Perhaps other organizations have a different experience, but I find that we can become so busy serving the Lord that we don't make time to just be still with him, to hear him speak into our lives. I

am turning 50 this year, but I don't think of myself as particularly mature in the Lord, and I don't want to pretend to be what I am not. Nor will I pretend that for the rest of our staff or many of the other people I know in the movement.

By accountability I mean holding one another to biblical standards. We need to remember that any organization or congregation of believers in Jesus, whether predominantly Jewish or predominantly Gentile, needs to measure up to the clear teaching of Scripture. As believers in Jesus, we need to hold one another to those teachings. We also need to hold one another accountable to the Great Commission.

When it comes to accountability, most of us resist because it not only offends our pride to be answerable to others, but it also requires a vulnerability that can be painful. I have seen incredible levels of defensiveness within the Messianic community. I am as sensitive to criticism as the next guy. Knowing that I should be more open to criticism than I am helps me to work on my ability to hear things I don't like, but which may be valuable. Who else is ready to admit that shortcoming? Because whether or not we admit it, it is very apparent in the way that we censure, castigate, and exclude one another over disagreements or unwanted criticism. That pattern hinders spiritual renewal and will weaken us all in the long run.

Of course, as difficult as it is to receive honest critique, we have not necessarily excelled in giving the kind of constructive criticism that can encourage and stir one another up to good works. It takes a certain transparency to come alongside and encourage someone in a way that shows we understand where a person is coming from because we ourselves have been there. None of us seem to believe we can trust one another with the sometimes less-than-impressive facts in our little patch of Jewish ministry or mission work. We remain unwilling to admit our failures to each other and be transparent enough to acknowledge, first to ourselves and then to each other, that we need one another.

If we can't admit our failures, how can we strengthen each other, so that as a united testimony we can move forward? We are all threatened by criticism when we should be looking for ways to be more effective, more faithful to our calling, and less committed to seeing ourselves as heroes.

Unnecessary Division

Believers in Jesus don't agree on everything – nor do we need to, as long as we agree on who Y'shua (Jesus) is and what he means to us. Missions and Messianic congregations don't need to agree on everything either, nor do we have to share the same approach or priorities. Nevertheless, we should do away with disagreements that cause division, especially when they are not based in truth.

For example, some people have heard that mission agencies in general, and Jews for Jesus in particular, are against Messianic congregations. Sadly, there are some who don't really understand our position, yet seem eager to draw dividing lines between our mission and Messianic congregations.

When it comes to accountability, most of us resist because it not only offends our pride to be answerable to others, but it also requires a vulnerability that can be painful.



gations. These individuals do us all a disservice by creating unnecessary division.

The simple fact is that Jews for Jesus is not against Messianic congregations, and I doubt that most other missions are. At times we have been critical, and we could be more affirming.

If you know Jews for Jesus, you know that our passion and primary commitment is the evangelization of our Jewish people. We do have other commitments which reflect a positive attitude toward Messianic congregations. Here are some facts that may help to clarify our support of Messianic congregations for those who wish to know where we stand.

- When Jews for Jesus founder Moishe Rosen began his ministry under the American Board of Missions to the Jews (now Chosen People Ministries) in the 1950s, he regularly preached at a Friday night congregation in Brooklyn.
- Many Jews for Jesus staff are members of Messianic congregations.
- We often refer new Jewish believers to Messianic congregations, and we often ask Messianic congregations to follow up with contacts who respond to our evangelistic campaigns.
- Jews for Jesus has given numerous financial grants to Messianic organizations and congregations to support their endeavors.
- We have planted a number of Messianic congregations.
- We have committed ourselves to the continuity of the Messianic community by investing a great deal of resources in Camp Gilgal and other programs designed to help Messianic children and young adults live as part of the remnant (Rom 11:5).

Added to these facts are my personal views, explaining why I am supportive of Messianic congregations:

- Messianic congregations can play a major role in helping Jewish believers maintain an important part of their identity. God promised that the Jewish people would survive, and Jewish survival is not merely a matter of escaping death. Jewish survival includes continuity: the desire to continue as part of the people descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Messianic congregations can also play an important role in helping children of Jewish believers understand how being Jewish and believing in Jesus go hand in hand, through children's curricula as well as life cycle events such as bar and bat mitzvahs.
- Messianic congregations can be the perfect place to send new Jewish believers in Jesus, particularly those who are fearful that believing in Jesus will rob them of their Jewish culture and heritage. For all these reasons and more, I support Messianic congregations.

I feel the need to clarify these things because I was asked about my hopes for the Messianic movement, and one of my hopes is that those healthy

congregations that function as described above will flourish and grow and reproduce. But I also take the occasion to clarify these things because of conflicts that exist, not only between congregations and congregational umbrella organizations but between Jews for Jesus and others, including Messianic congregational umbrella organizations.

Currently, Jews for Jesus is banned from the conferences of both the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America and the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations. I suppose this would qualify as one of my concerns regarding the Messianic movement. Despite the efforts of well meaning friends who have not taken sides in this conflict, there is deep division that frankly I don't know how to mend. This is a sad thing and doesn't do anything for the well-being of the Messianic movement.

I don't want to be unfair to these two organizations or misrepresent their views. I'm not sure that we would agree upon the real issues of what caused the division or what could heal it. Numerous member congregations of both these organizations are on friendly terms with Jews for Jesus, and we are glad to work with those who wish it.

Another type of division that concerns me is a tendency I've seen on the part of some in our movement to denigrate what is sometimes referred to as "the Gentile church." There is one body of Christ, which means there is one church. What we Jewish believers in Jesus need to remember is that no matter how much we identify with our own people-group and culture, we are part of the larger body of Messiah. We would lose much if we were to cut ourselves off from our non-Jewish brothers and sisters.

What we Jewish believers in Jesus need to remember is that no matter how much we identify with our own people-group and culture, we are part of the larger body of Messiah.

I've said a lot about my concerns and not much about my hopes. Clearly the greatest hope is that God is true to his promises and will preserve a faithful remnant of Jewish people who trust in him and follow our Messiah. But how? Are we seeing signs of that promise-keeping?

I believe we are. As times get tougher and some continue redefining their faith or resisting those things necessary for spiritual renewal, we can probably expect more divisions – but some of those divisions might serve as a kind of pruning. I think we are seeing some pruning taking place now, and while it is painful, those who are left may well undergo a sort of renaissance. If we are not paralyzed by the pain we feel, not only over divisions among us but over the lost, we can be propelled by it. In short, whatever we see that causes us concern can also cause us to humble ourselves before the Lord so that he can empower us to overcome.

I also think that we are seeing a new generation of Jewish believers in Jesus, many, if not most, of whom have no interest in perpetuating some of the divisions and disagreements that have plagued our movement in recent decades. We are also seeing signs of openness among Israelis, as well as a courageous crop of Israeli believers who are eager to meet that



openness with the love of Messiah. And whereas it would be easy to focus on all the people who have discouraged us in the work of Jewish evangelism, there have been so many who have encouraged us as well.

Thirty years or so ago, it was popular for Christians to wear a button that read "PBPGIFWMY." The letters stand for "Please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet." All of us in the Messianic movement could be wearing those buttons. We all need to be more humble and extend more grace to one another. If we really want the revival we talk about and pray for, we will emphasize the things that unite us. Those who are members of traditional evangelical churches should support and encourage those in Messianic congregations, and vice versa. Jewish missions should be supportive and encourage Messianic congregations, and vice versa.

The Bible says, "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess 5:21). I want to hold fast to what I know is good, and I want you, dear friends, to know that as far as I'm concerned, there is much that is good about our Messianic movement. And let's always remember that because God is committed to the salvation of Israel, we have a great hope for the future.

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First “Organized” Bible-work in 19th Century Jerusalem (1816–1831)

Part VII: Five Bible-men in Jerusalem (1823–1824)

by Kai Kjær-Hansen



In the spring of 1823, a trio consisting of Joseph Wolff and two American missionaries – Pliny Fisk and Jonas King – had worked as Bible-men in Jerusalem. Fisk and King had soon sold their rather limited supply of mainly non-Hebrew Scriptures. Throughout the period Wolff was in a position to supply Hebrew Scriptures, but he was only able to distribute a few to Jews in Jerusalem.

Four months after leaving Jerusalem, Fisk is back in the town, and a reorganization of the work is carried out. A Jerusalem Bible Society was not established, but at the turn of the year 1823–1824 a “Bible Society Room” is set up in Jerusalem.

A good many Scriptures are distributed over these five months. The present challenge is to uncover the relationship between the distribution of non-Hebrew Scriptures to Christians – be they residents of Jerusalem or pilgrims – and Hebrew Scriptures to Jews.

Pliny Fisk is the only one of these five Bible-men who remains in Jerusalem all through this period of five months, from November 21, 1823, to April 22, 1824.¹ The others are listed chronologically. William Jowett, a resident of Malta, is sent out by the Church Missionary Society (CMS); he arrives together with Fisk and stays in Jerusalem for approximately three weeks. Next is William Bucknor Lewis, sent out by the London Jews Society (LJS); he stays for six weeks. This article will focus on these three persons and their Bible work.

The other two individuals are the Americans Jonas King and William Bird. King’s main task is to accompany the newly-arrived American missionary William Bird to Jerusalem, where they arrive on January 21, 1824.² After just two weeks, on February 6, 1824, King leaves Jerusalem for Jaffa in order to study languages. During his journey to – and particularly from – Jerusalem, he distributes Scriptures.³

1 On Fisk’s and Jonas King’s first visit in 1823 together with Joseph Wolff, see *Mishkan* 54 (2008): 64–79.

2 With Isaac and Ann Goodell, William and Abigail Bird were anchored off Beirut on November 16, 1823; cf. *Missionary Herald* (1824): 214.

3 *Missionary Herald* (1824): 215, 245; (1825): 105–06.

The American mission base in Beirut sent Bird to Jerusalem so that Fisk should not be alone there. So by telling Fisk's story, Bird's as well as King's stays in Jerusalem in 1824 are basically covered.⁴

Bird and Fisk both leave Jerusalem on April 22, 1824.

Jowett in Jerusalem, Autumn 1823

William Jowett, CMS's missionary and mission researcher residing in Malta, makes his first journey to Syria and Palestine in 1823–1824.⁵

In the description of his visit to Jerusalem, Jowett gives much valuable information about Jerusalem's demography, about the Christian churches and their convents, about individuals mentioned by name, about church libraries, etc. He buys old Bible manuscripts and hires the learned local Arab Greek Orthodox priest Papas Ysa (Isa) Petros to translate some material, leaving Fisk one hundred dollars to pay Ysa.⁶

So Jowett does not really come to Jerusalem as a Bible-man. The main purpose for his visit is *not* to distribute Scriptures – he comes as a researcher. And yet he has a place, as we shall now see, in the story of “organized” Bible work in Jerusalem.

Jowett and the Bible Cause

On his arrival in Jerusalem, Jowett notes that people immediately come to Fisk “inquiring what Bibles and Testaments we had brought.”⁷ This signals that at least some people in the Holy City are receptive to the gospel. But who, and in what numbers?

Accompanied by Fisk, Jowett meets a few Jews, among them, on December 5, Rabbi Mendel Ben Baruch (Menahem Mendel),⁸ the chief rabbi of the Polish Jews residing in Jerusalem, and his disciple Rabbi Isaac. The visit with Rabbi Mendel seems to have been a courtesy call. At any rate, Jowett has nothing to report in the way of existential conversations of a religious nature with Rabbi Mendel. It was, furthermore, a handicap for Jowett that he was unable to communicate with them in German. But he tells about the oppression Jewish people are subjected to by the Muslim authorities and mentions, as an example, that one week earlier Rabbi Mendel was fined and, with a few other Jews, placed under arrest

4 In Isaac Bird, *Bible Work in Bible Lands* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1872), there are few details about his visit to Jerusalem that cannot be found in Fisk's journals.

5 On earlier failed plans, see *Mishkan* 41 (2004): 23.

6 *Missionary Herald* (1825): 10–11. Altogether, Papas Ysa (or Isa/Issa) and his interactions with the Protestant missionaries and the Bible cause in Jerusalem might deserve a paper of their own.

7 William Jowett, *Christian Researches in Syria and the Holy Land* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1825), 211.

8 See *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 48–49, 55–57; and 54 (2008): 64–79.

for twenty-four hours because his street door had been left open in the night (see below under Lewis).⁹

Young Rabbi Isaac accompanies the missionaries to the Western Wall one Friday afternoon.¹⁰ Later, Rabbi Isaac and another Jew come to see them. Jowett writes about this:

We gave Rabbi Isaac a Hebrew and an Arabic New-Testament. On my wishing to point out to him Stephen's Sermon in Acts vii. and particularly the application of it at verse 51, he was so fearful of my taking the books from him, that he would not let me have them to shew him the place. I therefore looked for another copy, and referred him to the page.¹¹

This experience clearly made an impression on Jowett. But if this incident gave some of Jowett's readers in 1825 the impression that Jewish people in Jerusalem in general were receptive to the gospel, they were mistaken!

Jowett also reports about the Christians in Jerusalem and their conditions, including the oppression they experience at the hands of the Muslim authorities. He visits the various convents and is received with kindness. The Greeks get the best marks when it comes to the Bible cause. "On this topic, it is peculiarly grateful to find the Greek Church favourable."¹²

This is written immediately after an interview, on December 8, with Daniel, the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Nazareth (who resided in Jerusalem). And yet Jowett says, "I retired from this interview with spirits unusually depressed." And he continues, "While Humanity pleads for them, Christian Faithfulness cannot acquit them as innocent." But not only that: "On reaching home, I unburdened my heart; and could not help explaining, 'I have not spent one happy day in Jerusalem.' My Missionary Brother [Fisk] readily sympathized with me."¹³ And yet, when Jowett later finishes his book about his visit to Syria and Palestine, there is nevertheless something joyful to tell about his visit to Jerusalem.

Jowett's Charter for a Bible Society in Jerusalem

Jowett's "Instructions" from 1815 contain a passage about looking into the possibilities for a Bible Society to be formed in Jerusalem.¹⁴

When he instructed Christoph Burckhart in Malta in 1818, before the latter's visit to Jerusalem as the first Protestant Bible-man there, everything seemed easy. Then it was said, in almost euphoric terms, that all they had to do was find a few persons who would say, "We are the Bible

9 Jowett, 231–33.

10 Ibid., 234–35.

11 Ibid., 247–48.

12 Ibid., 242.

13 Ibid.

14 See *Mishkan* 41 (2004): 23.



Society” – and then a Bible Society would be formed in Jerusalem. It was not going to be as easy as that.¹⁵

Jowett was to become wiser after that, and says that he did not, on his journey to Palestine in 1823, entertain “sanguine hopes of such an establishment”; nor was the objective much upon his mind. But a remark from Fisk, when they were traveling in Galilee, strongly reminded him about it. Experience had made him less optimistic and more realistic. The conversations with Fisk about this matter during their journey to, and stay in, Jerusalem “led them to suspend their expectations; believing that equal or much greater benefit would, under the present circumstances, be derived from measures less complex and less ostensible, than the term ‘Society’ implies.”

Jowett continues, referring to himself in the third person:

Christian co-operation is, in fact, little understood in Turkey;¹⁶ and, from the publicity of such a kind of union, the natives would shrink with trembling. Not to lose sight of the principles, however, in which it would be desirable that Christians, under more auspicious circumstances, should concur, the Author drew up, in short compass, a few leading topics; with the intention, had it been advisable, that they should be submitted to the Ecclesiastics of the different Communions at Jerusalem; and, if they should agree, be signed by them, and by Mr. Fisk, and others of the Missionaries from Europe and America. There appeared, however, sufficient reason for not circulating them; and they are now first presented to the eye of the English reader.¹⁷

The four “Articles” which Jowett commits to writing in Jerusalem “dwell,” as Jowett mentions, “more on fundamental principles than on the technical details of business.”

The first “Article” is about the duty of every man to communicate to his fellow-creatures the revelation of the will of God by making known the Scriptures by their general distribution.

The second “declares what Canonical Books are considered to be the Word of God” – leaving out the Apocrypha.

The third relates to the necessity of having Scriptures in vernacular languages.

The fourth, and last, “Article” says:

We will correspond with such countries, as shall furnish us with copies of the Holy Scriptures for distribution; and we will use our exertions to distribute them, in every place, to which our influence may extend. The Reverend Mr. Fisk, who is recommended to us by Letters and by his Christian Labours, will have under his charge, and will ren-

15 See *Mishkan* 42 (2005): 58.

16 I.e. in the Ottoman Empire, which includes Jerusalem.

17 Jowett, 411–12.

der an account of the manner of distributing, the Scriptures, which we shall thus receive.¹⁸

Jowett attaches the following words to this: "The FOURTH lays the foundation of actual labours, in such manner as the existing circumstances of Palestine would permit: this was virtually acted upon, when Mr. Fisk, on the receipt of several boxes of the Scriptures, established a Depôt in the Convent of Mar Michael."¹⁹

Jowett is just in time to meet with Lewis on December 13 and 14, before he himself leaves Jerusalem on December 15, 1823. The mood – or the spirit – is better now than on December 8 (see above). On Sunday, December 14, the missionaries hold a "Divine Service, in Italian." Jowett says about this:

If, however, the work now beginning here, be (as we would humbly trust it is) right in principle, and the workmen right in heart, we must not despise the day of small things. Two ministers of the Church of England, one to the Jews and another to the Gentiles [Lewis and Jowett] and a Minister from the distant shores of the New World [Fisk], uniting in prayer with a Native Minister of the Gospel in Jerusalem [Papap Ysa Petros], form but a small assembly; but it is such a congregation as I once never thought to see. May our prayers for an increase of Labourers be accepted and answered, by the Lord of the Sabbath, *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!*²⁰

If people in 1825 understood Jowett's words to say the Greek Orthodox Church, through the local Greek Orthodox priest Ysa, was formally ready to have joint services with the Bible-men, they were mistaken. Both parties, the Greeks and the Bible-men, are in agreement about the value of Bible distribution, but they do not ignore their differences of theology and tradition. Papas Ysa (and other local priests at Mar Michael) form an *unofficial* link between the Greeks and the Bible-men.

As the second Bible-man to visit Jerusalem, James Connor had, in 1820, made an agreement with Procopius, the *Locum Tenens* in Jerusalem (i.e. the superintendent of the Greek Orthodox Archbishop, residing in Constantinople).²¹ Compared to this agreement from 1820, the *local* element in the Bible cause in Jerusalem has now been weakened. Procopius had been the link between the Greeks and the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), with direct reference to Jowett in Malta. But the situation was quite different in 1823–1824. Procopius had died in the summer of 1822.²² The fact that he had undertaken the task and entered into an agree-

18 *Ibid.*, 412–13.

19 *Ibid.*, 413–14.

20 *Ibid.*, 266–67.

21 See *Mishkan* 44 (2006): 70–71, where the agreement between Connor and Procopius is printed.

22 See *Mishkan* 48 (2006): 73–74.



ment with Protestants was exceptional. His successor does not seem to have had the same vision and courage. In 1820, the parties involved agreed that it was not possible to form a Bible Society proper, due to the dissensions which existed among the different bodies of Christians in Jerusalem. This situation does not seem to have improved in the autumn of 1823.

It is against this background that Jowett and Fisk's reorganization of the Bible work – with Fisk as its leader – should be seen. Officially, a Jerusalem Bible Society has not been formed, but Fisk is now responsible for the Bible Society Room at the Greek convent Mar Michael. This Bible Society Room was to have a history of its own up until 1831, which will be covered in the last article in this series.

Before we take a closer look at Fisk's work in 1823–1824, we will focus on the LJS missionary Lewis and his work in Jerusalem.

Lewis and Way's Large-scale Bible Expedition in 1823

William Bucknor Lewis had arrived at Sidon, in Lebanon, together with Lewis Way on May 21, 1823.²³ Besides the task of accompanying Way, Lewis had been sent out "with a view of remaining in those parts as a missionary to the Jews."²⁴ In Malta they had helped to establish the Malta Jews' Society.²⁵

Way hoped to visit Jerusalem, indeed to establish "a Protestant chapel at Jerusalem"; the latter objective was, however, without any form of realism whatsoever, considering the political situation in the region.²⁶ Due to illness Way had to give up his plans to visit Jerusalem, and he left Lebanon on August 8, 1823.²⁷ Before then he had rented a building in Antoura, in the mountains of Lebanon, which had been "used as a school since it was abandoned by the Jesuits."²⁸ The building was to be a "College" for the Protestant missionaries. The tenancy met with rather strong opposition in Maronite quarters, and was cancelled after Way left Lebanon. This tenancy was one of the factors that sparked off several bans against the Protestant Bible-men.²⁹

Did Lewis Way Bring "10,000 Bibles"?

It cannot be denied that Way's expedition was planned on a grand scale. It had to be like this with a wealthy man like him. According to what he himself said, he brought "10,000 Bibles" on the ship the *Hebe*. After the

23 *Jewish Expositor* (1824): 24. For Way's description of the journey, see *Jewish Expositor* (1824): 41–53.

24 *Jewish Expositor* (1823): 101.

25 *Ibid.*, 307.

26 *Jewish Expositor* (1824): 48.

27 *Ibid.*, 243.

28 *Ibid.*, 46.

29 See, e.g., Lewis's account in *Jewish Expositor* (1824): 27–35, and (1825): 98–108, where various bans against the Protestant missions are printed in translation. More about this in the next article in this series.

expedition, he sends a report from Leghorn in Italy, dated October 22, 1823, in which he says:

I am therefore not surprised that on the landing of 10,000 Bibles on the shore of the Holy Land, there should be persons ready, as if prepared to prevent their distribution, or counteract their efficacy; and *such was the case*. I throw out this hint, because I conceive you will hear more on the subject hereafter, but for obvious reasons, I must be silent as to particulars and persons ...³⁰

Other things being equal, “10,000 Bibles” is such an unusually large number that it is justified to ask some critical questions, or at least to ask, “What is meant by ‘10,000 Bibles’?”³¹

It would have helped if Way had written “10,000 Bibles” and then added an “&c.” Such an “&c” must be presupposed, as it appears in the information about what Way received in the way of Scriptures in Malta. In Lewis’s words: “The Bible Society here [at Malta] is providing us with a large quantity of Arabic Bibles &c. at half the cost price, and which we intend to dispose of as well as we can.”³² LJS also sent supplies to Malta, which appears from the following letter of thanks, written by Cleardo Naudi on behalf of the Malta Bible Society: “The boxes you mentioned of Testaments, Tracts &c. forwarded to Malta for the use of Messrs. Way and Lewis, were duly received, and seven of which they took with them.”³³ The latter supply was presumably Hebrew Scriptures and tracts.

This information alone shows that when Way writes “Bibles,” he must mean *Scriptures* – not in the sense of “full Bibles” but also portions of the Bible, including New Testaments. If we take the figure 10,000 at face value, it would be tempting to include some thousand “Tracts” in this number.³⁴

It is, however, an unquestionable fact that Way and Lewis are well supplied with *Scriptures* &c. when they arrive at Sidon, although it can be difficult to determine what precisely is meant by “a large quantity.” The editor of the *Missionary Herald* recounts the following from the beginning of July 1823, when Fisk and King were on their way back from their visit to Jerusalem in the spring of 1823, where they had run out of Scriptures: “By Mr. Lewis they received letters, and Bibles, and tracts for distribution, from the missionaries at Malta.”³⁵ And immediately before Way’s departure from Lebanon in the beginning of August, it is said that Fisk, in Sidon, “received a large quantity of Bibles from the Malta Bible Society, which were with the baggage of Mr. Way at that place [Sidon].”³⁶

30 *Jewish Expositor* (1824): 51.

31 Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 18–19, accepts this information without asking critical questions about it.

32 *Jewish Expositor* (1823): 309.

33 *Ibid.*, 311.

34 The question is hereby passed on to others for further research.

35 *Missionary Herald* (1824): 109.

36 *Ibid.*, 243. In this quotation “Bibles” are also identical with Scriptures, i.e. including Bible parts.



In any case, Lewis has no shortage of Scriptures when, prior to his stay in Jerusalem, he visits other places that are inhabited by Jews. But what is the situation in Jerusalem? Has he, for example, enough “full Bibles” in Hebrew?

Lewis in Jerusalem, the Turn of the Year 1823–1824

Lewis arrives in Jerusalem on December 13, 1823, and leaves again on January 20, 1824, which means that his *first* visit to Jerusalem lasts approximately six *weeks* – not six *months*, as maintained by Sherman Lieber.³⁷

Lewis now involves himself in the social conditions of the Jews in Jerusalem; he even ventures to approach the governor of Jerusalem in order to call attention to the unfair treatment Rabbi Mendel and other Jews have been exposed to in connection with the charge brought against Rabbi Mendel, who had left his front door open one night.³⁸ Lewis receives a letter of thanks for his efforts from Rabbi Mendel and Rabbi Solomon Mendel Sapira, in which they ask him to use his influence abroad in order to improve the situation of the Jews in Jerusalem.³⁹ As he has seen the hardships the Jews are exposed to, and because he wants to secure them and the missionaries against unjust treatment at the hands of the Muslim authorities, Lewis becomes the first Bible-man who voices the necessity of having a British consul in Jerusalem.⁴⁰

Lewis and the Distribution of Bibles in Jerusalem

In the published report there is no detailed information about *how* Lewis distributed Scriptures in Jerusalem. But there are rather precise indica-

37 Sherman Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries: The Jews in Palestine 1799–1840* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 171–77. Lieber assumes that Lewis paid only one visit to Jerusalem, which is not correct. Lieber states correctly that Lewis arrives on December 13, 1823, two days before Jowett left Jerusalem (p. 171). But after this he does not distinguish between this visit and Lewis’s second visit in the spring of 1825 (see next article in this series). Having mentioned that Fisk and Bird left Jerusalem (on April 22, 1824), Lieber writes, “Lewis was now the only Protestant missionary in Jerusalem” (p. 173). But Lewis had left Jerusalem *before* King and Bird did, on January 20, 1824; i.e. *before* King and Bird had arrived there. In conclusion, Lieber writes about Lewis: “Forbidden to distribute Bibles by order of Ottoman and papal bans issued in 1824, he became completely disheartened ... and in the summer of 1824 he left Jerusalem after residing there for about six months” (p. 177). (More about these bans in the next article in this series. Suffice it here to say that the Ottoman ban from 1824 had probably *not* been issued while Lewis was in Jerusalem.)

38 *Jewish Expositor* (1824): 381–82.

39 In the rabbis’ letter, printed in the *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 108–09, *Jesus* is mentioned by name – and used as a positive example; the rabbis speak about the “deceivers who would lead the people to violence [against the Jews], contrary to the charge given by *Jesus* to his apostles.”

40 Voiced in a letter to LJS dated February 23, 1824 (cf. *Jewish Expositor* [1824]: 380). On June 21, 1825, he writes to LJS: “I hope the Committee and the friends to the general welfare and peace of Jerusalem, have determined before this to effect something, with the view of obtaining a resident consul or protector, in behalf of visitors and European settlers at Jerusalem, Jews as well as Gentiles” (*Jewish Expositor* [1825]: 427).

tions about the numbers. He has also acquired information about which editions of Hebrew Scriptures *not* to offer to Jews. It is clear that he has heard how copies of the Bible that had earlier been distributed were burned or otherwise destroyed by Jews because they contained "notes or marks with regard to the various readings"; even though "the little sign of the cross" is but a common reference symbol, it was considered by the Jews "to be intended as a sign (in the way of a charm it must be) to make Christians of them."⁴¹ Moreover, there are the three Hebrew letters (Yod, Shin, and Waw) which could be read as *Yeshu* in the notes to Psalm 3 – even in an edition "published by your Society" [LJS], as he says; these three letters have "given many of them great offence." And further, the mere fact that the Scriptures have been printed by Christians demonstrates "their very unreasonable prejudices against us," as "not a few among them" are "rejecting the Bible published in the simple Hebrew, without any of the Latin characters, or figures, &c."

Although there are many odds against the distribution of Scriptures among Jews, Lewis is not disheartened. He writes:

Although it is to be acknowledged, that the novelty of the things, as in Jerusalem was the case at first, must have attracted at that time a good number of the Jews to ask for books; and notwithstanding the report in the convent that the same were afterwards committed to the flames, still hopes must be entertained that some good was then effected, and that a few, at least of the Testaments, &c. were kept and read, and that God's Word will not return unto him void; and we must also hope, that the Hebrew Scriptures which I sold in Jerusalem for distribution among Sephardim Jews, as well as the Askenazim, will find their way, as waters descend, in spite of all impediments, from the lofty mountains into the gardens of the vallies [*sic*], and that they will be glorified.⁴²

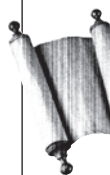
As to the number of distributed Scriptures in Jerusalem, Lewis gives the following figures:

I disposed of 40 Bibles, (five of them bound with the New Testament,) 12 Prophets and Testaments, 90 Prophets, and 1065 Psalters. I have received for the same, in favour of the Society, 63 Spanish dollars; a sum much less indeed than the same books would have brought, if sold in one of your bookseller's shops in Paternoster-row, or St. Paul's Church-yard.⁴³ But we are poor, very poor, in Jerusalem; and I have

41 This is probably a reference to what happened during Joseph Wolff's visit in 1822; see *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 55–57.

42 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 15.

43 For comparison, see King's specification of what he sold in Arimathea (Ramla), February 6, 1824: "In all, I sold here nine Bibles, twenty-three New Testaments, sixteen copies of Genesis, and four Psalters, all in Arabic, for about twenty Spanish dollars" (*Missionary Herald* [1825]: 106).



no doubt the Society will feel for us. If I had more Bibles I might dispose of them. Mr. Fisk has sold a good number belonging to his stock, in favour of the Malta Bible Society.⁴⁴

In this context, “Bibles” – which Lewis has run out of – means just that: Bibles, i.e. “full Bibles,” *Hebrew Bibles*, and probably also Hebrew Bibles *not* bound with the New Testament.⁴⁵

If we consider the total number of Hebrew Scriptures distributed by Lewis among *Jews* in Jerusalem during the six weeks he stayed there, he surpassed all the other Bible-men before him – Joseph Wolff included. More than 1,200 Scriptures! He says explicitly that these were sold or distributed to *Jews*.

Provided this is correct – and regardless of how many Scriptures were “disposed of” and how many “sold” – the sale of the more than 1,200 copies of Hebrew Scriptures comprises fewer than 20 copies of the Hebrew New Testament.

It would not be in keeping with the contemporary Bible-men’s understanding of their work to say that Lewis had sold “wrong” parts of the Scriptures to Jews. Lewis himself, however, makes it clear that he would have preferred to sell “other” parts than those he did. He writes: “The Prophets do not sell so well as the full Bibles amongst any of the Jews, so I have still a good number on hand, as well as of Testaments and Tracts. I rather, indeed, endeavour at first to put the prophets as much as possible into the hands of the people ... the more the true prophets are read and understood, the sooner will they be prepared to know, and to receive Him who is the great Prophet, Priest, and King.”⁴⁶

Although Lewis had disposed of a considerable number of Hebrew Scriptures in Jerusalem at the turn of the year 1823–1824, he was not quite satisfied with *which* parts of the Scriptures Jews had received from him.

This does not mean, as asserted by Sherman Lieber, that Lewis left Jerusalem “completely disheartened.” After his first visit to Jerusalem, Lewis is still prepared “according to the wish of the committee, to make Jerusalem my principal station,” as he says at the end of May 1824.⁴⁷

44 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 15–16.

45 This is one more indication that the “10,000 Bibles” which Lewis Way claims to have brought to Lebanon are not “full Bibles” (see above).

46 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 16.

47 *Ibid.*, 14. Sherman Lieber (cf. the critical remarks above in note 37) believes that Lewis came to Jerusalem in December 1823 with the *purpose* “to establish a permanent mission station” (p. 172). Lieber concludes that “Lewis was unsuccessful in his campaign to open a permanent mission station in Jerusalem ...” (p. 177). The truth is rather that LJS *in London*, on December 15, 1823 – at the beginning of Lewis’s stay in Jerusalem – decides that Lewis should make Jerusalem his “principal station” (cf. *LJS Committee Minutes*, Bodleian Library, Dep. CMJ, c. 11 # 262, December 15, 1823). Lewis does not receive this information till May 14, 1824 (cf. *Jewish Expositor* [1825]: 13), so he does not come to Jerusalem in December 1823 “to establish a permanent mission station,” as asserted by Lieber. He can therefore not be considered “unsuccessful” in that respect.

And now back to Fisk, who was in Jerusalem throughout the period with which we are dealing.

Fisk in Jerusalem, November 1823 to April 1824

As we shall soon see, Fisk and Bird are arrested on February 10, 1824. But before that, and before Bird's arrival, Fisk has distributed Scriptures in Jerusalem. His base is the Greek Orthodox convent Mar Michael, where four rooms have been rented. "Being furnished by the Malta Bible Society with a large supply of the Scriptures in various languages, I set apart one of our rooms as a 'Bible Society Room,'" writes Fisk. With the establishment of this "Bible Society Room," physical conditions have been created for the reorganization of the Bible work that had been agreed upon with Jowett.

How Fisk worked the first two months and who were the main recipients of Scriptures appear from the following words:

For about two months I sold only to such persons as came to my lodgings to purchase. During this period I think I sold about 200 copies. I then sent our Dragoman to offer the Scriptures for sale at the convents and in the market.⁴⁸ The Armenian pilgrims had now become numerous, and among them our books found a rapid sale.⁴⁹

It appears that the missionaries' dragoman, Joseph, is not given the task of selling Scriptures in the streets of Jerusalem until Bird has come to Jerusalem, on January 21, 1824. Before Fisk and Bird's arrest, a total of 300 or more copies of the Scriptures seem to have been sold. This *public* sale of Scriptures causes problems with the Muslim authorities.

Arrest of Fisk and Bird in February 1824

On February 10, 1824, Fisk and Bird are arrested by the Muslim authorities. These cannot deny that the missionaries have a valid *firman*, but they allege that this "is merely for travelling, and gives you no permission to sell books." According to the missionaries, it is really the Catholics who are behind this charge, since they have made the strange allegation that the missionaries sell neither Muslim nor Jewish nor Christian books, but *false* books.⁵⁰ Fisk and Bird are brought before the judge and the governor. A crier is sent "into the market, and to the doors of the convents, prohibiting all persons purchasing books from us, and ordering all who had any of our books to deliver them up to the Judge."⁵¹

48 Bird writes about this: "One day our young man Yoosef [Dragoman Joseph] went out with his books and in two or three hours' time returned, bringing us five or six dollars for the books he had sold. Still more books had been asked for, and he went out the next day with about the same success." Cf. Bird, 107.

49 *Missionary Herald* (1825): 33.

50 *Ibid.*, 34.

51 *Ibid.*



The authorities decide that the missionaries are to spend the night in the Roman Catholic convent. Bird later writes, not without sarcasm: "Our enemies at the Latin convent, it was thought, would take excellent care that we should not escape."⁵² But the Catholic convent refuses to accommodate the missionaries. After this they are escorted back to their own rooms at Mar Michael, where their belongings are searched thoroughly. In the end the missionaries spend the first part of the evening in the governor's house, in "a lower room, which serves as barracks for soldiers. There we spent the evening with twenty or thirty soldiers about us, who were smoking and playing at chess, and expected to sleep on the ground among them," Fisk writes. It did not go quite as badly as that.

At about ten the same evening they are called to the governor's room, where they are treated with courtesy and given coffee. When asked why they also distribute Scriptures in Arabic to Muslims, they answer, "If Mussulmans [Muslims] wish to read our books, and learn what we believe, we are always ready to give them an opportunity"⁵³ – an answer which seems to satisfy the governor but which is hardly the whole truth!

Afterwards they are taken to the governor's nephew's room in the same building. After sherbet, pipes, coffee, and a supper, they spend the night there. The physical "afflictions" in connection with the arrest were thus endurable. Worse was the uncertainty as to the ultimate consequence for their work. Fisk gives expression to this: "What we most seriously feared, was, that we should be either ordered to leave Jerusalem, or prohibited from distributing the Holy Scriptures."

Neither of these things happened. The next day, February 11, the missionaries asked if they "could distribute the Scriptures as formerly," to which the answer was, "Certainly." And they are told that the crier on the previous day had only prohibited "Mussulmans" from receiving their books – an explanation which the missionaries do not accept but regard as a downright untruth.⁵⁴

They are taken back to their rooms at Mar Michael. In Fisk's words: "Mr. Bird's room and mine were given up to us. The Bible Society's Room they have not discovered the day before. They now examined this, and sealed it up; and said that this, and Mr. King's room, in which they found me the day before, must remain for the present sealed up."⁵⁵

On their "release" they immediately send word to the British consul in Jaffa, Antonio Damiani, and to Consul Peter Abbott in Beirut. Both intervene, Consul Damiani by sending his son, Joseph, to Jerusalem.⁵⁶ At another meeting between the missionaries, accompanied by Joseph Damiani, and the judge, the latter rules "that infidels, meaning Christians and Jews, might buy and sell their infidel books as they like, only Mussulmans must

52 Bird, 112.

53 *Missionary Herald* (1825): 34.

54 *Ibid.*, 35.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*, 36.

not purchase, nor receive them."⁵⁷ After this interview the Bible Society Room is unsealed on February 18, and the Bible-men can continue their work. The end of it was that "the Turks made no objection to the distribution of Christian books among Christians."⁵⁸

Before then the Muslim authorities had paid a visit to the Jews.

Fisk and the Jews

Lewis had distributed Scriptures to Jews (see above). So had the Americans. It is not possible to determine the quantity on the basis of the sources available, but it is hardly a large number.

Two days after the missionaries' "release" – i.e. February 13, but with the Bible Society Room still sealed and without the ability to distribute Scriptures – the "College of the European Jews, under the pretence that they have some of our books there," is sealed up, writes Fisk. The next day an order comes from the Pasha of Damascus, "commanding that the European Jews should not be molested, nor any money extracted from them." This command, which relates to an *earlier* complaint from the Jews, contributes to the solution of the affair in question and the College was reopened. Fisk comments:

When the Jews told me that the College had been sealed up on account of our books, I felt as if there were no prospect of selling any more books to Jews; but to my surprise, the same Jew, before going away, asked if we had any more Hebrew Bibles, and said a friend of his wished to purchase a quantity. The next day an Armenian called to tell us what grief our confinement occasioned in their convent, and to inquire if we had Armenian Bibles, saying that he wished to purchase seven or eight. The few Bibles which we brought with us, however, were all sold, and we had nothing remaining but Testaments.⁵⁹

So Fisk did sell a few Hebrew Scriptures. About other contacts with Jews, he writes, "With a few Jews I have had several religious discussions, and have frequently read with them portions of the Old and New Testament."⁶⁰

Distribution of Bibles after the Arrest

Two days after the Bible Society Room had been unsealed, i.e. February 20, Joseph, the Dragoman, is again sent out into the streets of Jerusalem

57 Ibid., 36–37.

58 Ibid., 38.

59 Ibid., 36.

60 Ibid., 12.



to sell Scriptures, and “in the course of four days we sold about two hundred copies,” Fisk writes.

Accompanied by Joseph Damiani, Fisk and Bird set out, on February 24, on a visit to Hebron and Bethlehem – even bringing a letter of introduction from Rabbi Mendel to the Jews of Hebron.⁶¹

The sources are silent about the sale of Bibles in Hebron, but in Bethlehem they sold “16 copies of the Scriptures, and gave away 18, and 60 tracts” – doubtless to Christians.

On February 27, they are back in Jerusalem. On one day in the beginning of March, 50 copies of the Scriptures are sold, “and the day following 54 copies.”⁶²

Fisk accounts for the total sale of Scriptures in “the course of five months at Jerusalem” in these words: “I sold 703 copies of the Bible, New Testament, Psalter, or Genesis, for \$ 210, and gave away 86, and 400 tracts.”⁶³ The distribution also includes some “copies of the New Testament and of the Psalms of David” to the few Syrians of Jerusalem.⁶⁴

So the arrest did not influence the sale of Scriptures. By and large, there is no difference between the number of (parts of) Scriptures sold before and after the arrest, the majority to pilgrims, a few to Jews, and a few to Muslims.

Fisk and Bird’s Last Six Weeks in Jerusalem

About March 10, 1824, Fisk falls ill. “About six weeks before I left Jerusalem, I was attacked by a fever, which interrupted my studies and labors for the rest of the time.”⁶⁵ After Easter, in mid-April, the pilgrims – according to Bird – “immediately prepare for their homes; and Jerusalem, without pilgrims, offered at that time few advantages for evangelical labor.” The bill for the rented rooms at Mar Michael is paid, a total of 200 piastres, and Papas Joel, who receives the money, is admonished not to do as he did the year before: pretend to his superiors that the Bible-men only paid 100 piastres!⁶⁶ Even though the missionaries leave Jerusalem, the lease of the four rooms at Mar Michael is still valid.

Fisk and Bird leave Jerusalem on April 22. Fisk writes in connection with this: “I left a large quantity [of Scriptures] in the Bible Society Room at Jerusalem and a considerable quantity at Joppa.”⁶⁷

When Fisk left Jerusalem in the spring of 1823, he – and King – had used up their supply. It was different in the spring of 1824, when he, and Bird, still had a large supply. But the Hebrew Bibles had all been sold.

61 *Ibid.*, 65.

62 *Ibid.*, 37.

63 *Ibid.*, 67.

64 *Ibid.*, 12.

65 *Ibid.*, 67.

66 Bird, 130.

67 *Missionary Herald* (1825): 67.

Concluding Remarks

The turn of the year 1823–1824 meant a reorganization of the Bible work in Jerusalem. There is still no Bible Society, but a Bible Society Room was set up, and the American missionary Pliny Fisk was appointed leader of the work. The architect behind this was William Jowett.

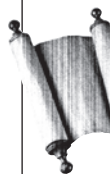
There are plans in Boston as well as in London to make Jerusalem a "station" for American and English Bible-men respectively, but the political situation in Palestine does not make this possible. The Bible Society Room and three other rented rooms at the Greek convent Mar Michael comprise the base for the Bible work. This is the place where Scriptures are sent and kept until the Bible-men return to Jerusalem, not least at the Christian festivals.

While the American missionaries in 1823–1824 distributed Scriptures predominantly, but not exclusively, to the Christians in Jerusalem and to pilgrims, William Bucknor Lewis succeeded in distributing a large number of Scriptures to Jews. As has been demonstrated, the number of distributed Hebrew New Testaments is relatively small. The Jews in Jerusalem are not very receptive to them.

In the first six months of 1824, several bans are issued against the Protestant missionaries and against the distribution of Bibles. We will look into that in the next article in this series, which will deal with the period from the summer of 1824 to the spring of 1827.

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BOOK REVIEWS



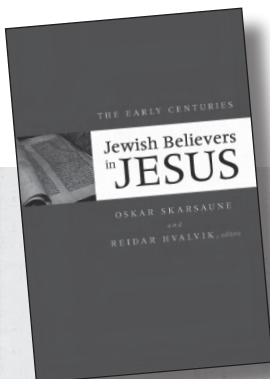
Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries

reviewed by **Markus Bockmuehl**

This large multi-author tome joins an unprecedented recent flurry of books about ancient Jewish Christianity, including Simon Claude Mimouni's *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* and *Les chrétiens d'origine juive dans l'antiquité*; Simon Claude Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones' *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du Colloque de Jérusalem, 6-10 juillet 1998*; Peter J. Tomson Doris and Lambers-Petry's *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*; Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed's *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*; Matt Jackson-McCabe's *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts*;

and the related programmatic works of Daniel Boyarin – *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*; *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*; and *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*. Its distinctive contribution, arguably, is to provide us with the first large-scale account of ancient Jewish Christianity based on Jewish and Christian literary sources from the New Testament to the fifth and sixth centuries (the hope being eventually to follow this volume with a sequel on the later period). This in itself is a tremendous achievement. At the same time, the cliché of being “long awaited” here applies in more than one sense: constituent papers were first presented in 2000-2001, “print-ready” by 2003, and the volume itself repeatedly announced by Hendrickson before finally appearing in mid-2007.

Given the contentious and methodologically fraught history of this question, the



Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries

EDITED BY OSKAR SKARSAUNE AND REIDAR HVALVIK.

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first part of the book is laudably given over to issues of definition, method, sources, and *Forschungsgeschichte*. Like other recent contributors, Skarsaune deliberately departs from a long tradition of *theological* taxonomy in order to define Jewish believers in Jesus *ethnically*, as “Jews by birth or conversion who in one way or another believed Jesus was their savior” (p. 3). In the second introductory chapter, James Carleton Paget surveys with deft erudition the treatment and definition of “Jewish Christianities” in 19th and 20th-century scholarship.

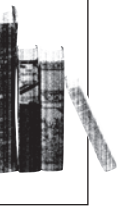
Part Two devotes six chapters to the New Testament and related material. In “James and the Jerusalem Community,” Richard Bauckham accessibly recapitulates a good deal of his extensive body of scholarship on James and on Judaeon Christianity, also including a most useful 10-page A-to-Z (Addai to Timon) “prosopography of the Jerusalem church.” Donald A. Hagner’s portrait of “Paul as a Jewish Believer” strikes a somewhat dissonant note with other chapters in this collection; resolutely opposed to scholarship arising from the so-called “New Perspective” on Paul, Hagner argues for a “most radical” Paul (p. 105 n.43) to whom the coming of Christ means “the law is no longer in effect” (p. 112) and who therefore “has broken with Judaism” (p. 104): the temple is “a redundancy” (p. 115) and faith requires “a separation from his previous Jewish existence” (p. 120). Unsurprisingly, in the first of his three successive chapters, Reidar Hvalvik finds a rather different Lucan Paul, Jewishly observant even in places where Luke’s editorial hand is hardly self-evident (though no negotiation between his and Hagner’s Paul is offered). In the next chapter, Hvalvik examines Jewish believers connected with the Pauline mission, beginning with another alphabetical (Ananias to Timothy) prosopography and identifying 24 definite and 4 probable Jewish individuals. Hvalvik

then surveys the Roman church’s Jewish origins, the ministries of Peter and Paul, and subsequent developments including *1 Clement* and *Herms*. Peter Hirschberg concludes this section with a conventional and (in both style and substance) Germanic reading of the Gospel and Apocalypse of John as evidence for Jewish believers in Asia Minor.

Part Three turns to a survey of the *literature* of Jewish believers, including contributions by Craig A. Evans on Matthew and the apocryphal Jewish gospels; Torleif Elgvin on Jewish Christian “editing” and “interpolations” in the OT Pseudepigrapha (reflection on method, e.g. in the light of work such as James Davila’s *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?*, might have permitted a somewhat sharper critical edge); Graham Stanton on the Pseudo-Clementines (taking for granted their extensive anti-Pauline stance and accepting the early origin of *Rec.* 1.27-71); Skarsaune himself on Jewish Christian writings quoted in Fathers like Papias, Irenaeus, Hegesippus, Julius Africanus, Origen, and Jerome; and Skarsaune again on Jewish Christian sources used in Justin.

Part Four turns from a literary to the more sociological question of Jewish Christian “groups” attested in the Fathers, including Skarsaune on the Ebionites, Wolfram Kinzig on the Nazoraeans, Gunnar af Hällström with Skarsaune on Cerinthus, Elxai (Elchasai) et al.

Part Five presents something of a grab-bag of archaeological and “other” literary evidence not yet covered: extensive chapters by Skarsaune *encore une fois* on Greek and Latin Patristic Literature in its own right, Lawrence Lahey on the genre of Christian-Jewish dialogues excepting Justin, and Philip S. Alexander on rabbinic evidence; rather brief treatments by Sten Hidal on the Syriac Fathers and Anders Ekenberg on the evidence of “Church



Orders" and liturgical texts; and finally James F. Strange on the methodologically thorny question of archaeological evidence.

Skarsaune's conclusion to the volume is a substantial and constructive essay in its own right. Acknowledging the somewhat fragmentary, "jigsaw" impression of the preceding contributions, due in part to the nature of the evidence, he argues convincingly that the new historical paradigm of "ways that never parted" helps restore a sense of the "ambience" without which the ancient Jewish believers cannot be understood: while questioning some of the normative definitions advanced by mainstream Jewish and Christian leaders, "they did not by their existence challenge the essence of either religion" (p. 753). A survey of their likely geographic spread culminates in the surprising, but by no means implausible, suggestion that before the Constantinian revolution Jewish believers numbered around 100,000 in total (pp. 770-71). They represented a pluriform phenomenon around which, contrary to ancient polemic and to the influential modern paradigm of F. C. Baur, the "fuzzy" pluralities of Judaism and Christianity continued in reality to overlap.

Sadly a review of this brevity permits no critical interaction with the substance of any multi-author volume. We have in this case a considerable labor of love on the part of the editors, who between them composed more than half of the text. That fact, along with their eclectic team of contributors (only some of them known for prior expertise in this area) and the long and apparently bumpy path to publication, may tell its own tale about this bulky but somewhat mixed bag of goodies. The book contains some fine examples of engaging fresh scholarship in the primary sources: Alexander, Bauckham, Kinzig, and the editors particularly stood out for this reviewer, and others could be added. In certain parts of the book, however, the framing of schol-

arly questions and positions feels at times competent but dated, "stuck" almost, with chapters of very diverse length and approach insufficiently enlivened by those changing historical goalposts and terms of reference noted above (and whose importance Skarsaune himself explicitly foregrounds in the Preface and Conclusion). In the end, it was perhaps too late for any serious editorial streamlining. Among the unfulfilled desiderata could be a greater sense of shared ownership of approaches and definitions, let alone even the broad-brush outline of a historical synthesis.

It is precisely at the synthetic and hermeneutical level, indeed, that Skarsaune's own contributions are arguably most promising and evocative: were the Jewish believers a tiny historical irrelevance, as they typically appear in rabbinic and patristic accounts (and their modern interpreters)? Or could it be that they were instead a numerically and intellectually more substantial community of belief and praxis, which until the Constantinian turn played a dynamic cross-pollinating role in the surprisingly fertile two-way hermeneutical traffic between Jews and Christians?¹ Readers would no doubt welcome potential future volumes of this valuable history. In the meantime, however, we are perhaps permitted to hope that Prof. Skarsaune may also find an opportunity to deploy his exceptional expertise and passion for this subject to explore his own free-standing synthesis of this volume's key findings and implications.

1 Documented e.g. in Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; cf. also Herbert W. Bassler, *Studies in Exegesis: Christian Critiques of Jewish Law and Rabbinic Responses, 70-300 C.E.* The Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism 2. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2000.

Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election

Joel Kaminsky teaches at Smith College's Department of Religion (Northampton, MA) and directs the college's Jewish Studies program. In the face of complaints from both Jewish and Christian writers that election "has outlived its theological usefulness," Kaminsky offers this entrée into defending the Bible's particularism.

Chapters 1–4 cover election in the context of Cain and Abel; Ishmael and Isaac/Hagar and Sarah; Jacob and Esau; and Joseph and his brothers. Chapters 5–6 deal with election as it interfaces with covenant, law, and holiness. In chapters 7 and 8, we are introduced to the ideas of the "anti-elect" and the "non-elect," which are not to be equated with one another; and the concluding three chapters, 9–11, handle election in relation to prophecy, wisdom literature, the New Testament, and rabbinic literature.

Kaminsky offers enough to stimulate a month of coffee-and-cake discussions. Some samples:

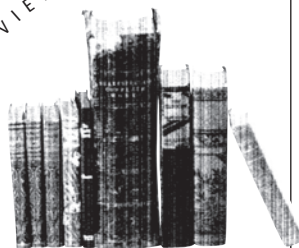
The Hebrew Bible often operates with a double causality in which events occur through a mysterious interweaving of divine providence and human actions. (p. 31)

One should not confuse the status of being non-elect with that of being an enemy of God or what I prefer to call the anti-elect. Most important, some of the non-elect actually receive promises of special divine blessing, as is the case with Ishmael. (p. 35)

Being chosen often implies that such a child will be exposed to danger by God or other relatives, as well as posing a danger to those not chosen. (p. 41)

The fact that God favors Joseph as Jacob does indicates that God loves in a way that

BOOK REVIEWS



by **Rich Robinson**

humans do and points toward a theological explanation of the concept of Israel's election. If God's love is like human love in any way whatsoever, then it is unlikely that God has an identical love for all nations and all individuals. . . . In some sense God's special love for Israel reveals God's ability to connect to humans in a much more profound and intimate way than the assertion that God has a generic and equal love for all humans. (p. 67)

Later on, Kaminsky argues that the boundaries between conditional and unconditional covenants are often more blurred in Scripture than many allow. He also addresses Christian supersessionism and the danger of equating election and service too closely: "It may be time for contemporary Christians to stop claiming that Israel lost its elect status by refusing to actively missionize others as its prophets called it to do. On the other hand, Jewish critics of Christian missionary activity must realize that the notion of Christian mission has a basis in the Hebrew Bible" (p. 175). In the end, Kaminsky is not happy with the traditional distinctions between the saved and the unsaved (hence his emphasis on the non-elect who are different from the anti-elect), and suggests Karl Rahner's anonymous Christian theology as a possible way out.

A book for anyone concerned with the election of the Jewish people – and what Jewish theologians are thinking about it.

Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007, 242 pp., \$29.50, paper.

Inventing Jewish Ritual

Vanessa Ochs is a Jewish feminist and Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Writing from the descriptive view of an anthropologist, she chronicles the nature of innovation in Jewish ritual, asking both how it comes about and also whether such innovations are “really Jewish.” It doesn’t matter whether you agree with her feminist and same-sex perspectives that color the book. See if the following remarks don’t shed light on the nature of rituals adapted or created by Jewish believers in Jesus:

A meaningful ritual might be created by just one person drawing upon Jewish tradition. Even just once. (p. 13)

They never asked for permission – they seized this right. (p. 18, describing women who have begun wearing tallitot)

I no longer asked, “Is this new ritual really Jewish?” but instead asked, “What new rituals are Jews actually practicing?” (p. 30)

In short, Jewish is as Jewish does. Ochs observes that in today’s world, new Jewish rituals tend to be driven by a search for personal meaning, valuing the individual over the community. But that is not always the case, and she ends with three case

studies, two of which are more communally oriented: the use of “Miriam’s tambourine” among Lubavitcher women, examples of “Holocaust Torahs” in synagogues (which cannot be used in worship but only displayed), and a same-sex wedding ceremony, showing the boundary-stretching nature of modern Judaism. But it’s crucial to note that innovation is also part of Orthodox Jewish life, not just for pick-and-choose liberal Jews.

You don’t need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows, and it doesn’t take long to recognize that current trends in the Jewish community undercut accusations of “stealing religious symbols” and the like.

At the end of the day, it seems to me that some will grant Jewish believers a place at the Jewish table. Those who wish to deny that place – which could ultimately be some, most, or a few – will, I predict, not do so on the basis of belief (e.g. God’s tri-unity) nor practice, but on the basis of community and ecclesiology. Those described in this book vary widely in belief and practice, but what they have in common is that their religious circle tends to be among other Jews. Since the community of Jesus-followers includes Jews as well as Gentiles, I believe that will be the place where borders are drawn. (It has in fact already become the issue in the Messianic community, for example, in Mark Kinzer’s idea of a bilateral ecclesiology. See Mishkan 48 [2006] on Kinzer’s book *PostMissionary Messianic Judaism*.) In Ochs’s book, we see that except for the area of peoplehood, borders in today’s Jewish world seem to be pretty much up for grabs.

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