

Christian Zionism as a Representation of American Manifest Destiny

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Theoretical Background: The Bipolar World View

We swim in a sea of culture. Our culture and its traditions set parameters for perception that still, despite the ‘globalizing’ nature of our world, create in-groups and out-groups, and tell us what is comfortable and uncomfortable, right and wrong. Matthew Arnold once put it this way: culture creates a picture of societal ‘perfection’ and then sends us out to ‘make it prevail.’¹ That is what the West has been doing for at least the past 200 years (led for the last 60 years by the United States). Mesmerized by the power drawn from its industrial and scientific revolutions, the West has glorified its own culture as one of modernity and progress. To this claim it has added the championship of Judeo-Christian values and, more recently, the democratic political system. And then, with a sense of divinely granted manifest destiny, the West has gone out into the rest of the world and sought to universalize that culture. In truth this expansion, this process of self-glorification, has been pursued mainly through imperialist conquest and economic penetration. However, the parameters set by their cultural paradigm do not allow most Westerners to see it that way. Instead, they have traditionally seen their own actions through the rationalizing lens of a bipolar world view.

The bipolar world view marries the positive and romantic self-conception of the West as a modern, progressive, moral, and democratic place, with a corresponding negative perception of the East as a backward, fanatical, immoral, and tyrannical zone in need of guidance and control. As the work of Edward Said work has shown, this perception of the non-West is essential to the West’s own idea of itself: ‘The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.’² Thus, one really cannot separate the two. It also allows the West to perceive the universalization of

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¹ ‘The great aim of culture [is] the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail.’

The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 19.

² Edward Said (1978) *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books), pp. 1–2.

its culture—its manifest destiny—as a pursuit, in Arthur Balfour’s words, of ‘the general welfare of mankind.’³ *Ipso facto*, imperialism becomes altruistic.

One particularly important aspect of the bipolar world view—important because of its continuing impact on perception and policy in the United States—is its religious content. This speaks specifically to the Western claim to possess in Protestant Christianity a superior, or ‘true,’ religion. Here the West’s altruistic mission to bring the East the virtues of good government and the hardware of progress is melded to the proselytizing zeal of Protestant evangelical fundamentalism.

This religious aspect of the bipolar world view has taken on a special meaning when applied by Americans to the Holy Land, or what is now Israel and Palestine. Most Americans have understood the Holy Land principally in terms of its biblical representation.⁴ Having learned a romantic version of Western and American history in public school, they have also learned romanticized variants on the biblical history of the Holy Land in Sunday and Hebrew schools. One consequence of this is that the mythical Palestine of the Bible is much more meaningful to many than the Palestine actually inhabited by millions of contemporary Palestinian Arabs. Another consequence is that for as many as 40 million Americans who characterize themselves as Christian fundamentalists,⁵ Palestine has primary meaning in terms of its place in prophetic interpretation.

There is a parallel, pseudo-historical storyline to all this that fits neatly with the bipolar world view: That in the dim past the ‘real’ (biblical) Palestine that is the Holy Land was stolen from Christendom (the West) by heathen Muslims (the East) who, over the centuries, have transformed the ‘land of milk and honey’ into a ‘land of dust.’⁶ Rectification of this situation has been a longstanding objective of conservative Protestants. Beginning in the nineteenth century, rectification started to appear possible. The Ottoman Empire, in whose territory the Holy Land rested, was on the wane, and the imperialist, expanding West was correspondingly waxing. This growing Western strength would express itself, in part, through the dispersal of Western evangelical missionaries throughout the world, including the Middle East.

America as the Spearhead of Western Manifest Destiny

Among the most avid of these missionaries were American Protestants trained specifically for such overseas efforts at colleges and seminaries in New England beginning in the 1830s. Their efforts were coordinated and financed by a long-lived organization named the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). What is particularly interesting about their efforts is that they merged their mission to redeem the Holy Land (and the rest of the world as well) with the firm belief that the American political, economic, and social culture was the God-ordained ideal version of the already glorified Western culture. This means that Western manifest destiny should be spearheaded by the advancement of American culture, which was as important to spread about as Protestant Christianity. In fact, in the minds of

³ Lawrence Davidson (2001) *America’s Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida), p. 22. These are the words Balfour used to characterize the post-World War I mandate regime. Rudyard Kipling would call it the taking up of the ‘white man’s burden.’

⁴ See Davidson, *America’s Palestine*, chap. 1.

⁵ See *Newsweek*, 1 November 2000.

⁶ See Fuad Sha’ban (1991) *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought* (Durham, NC: Acorn Press), p. 91.

American missionaries, the two were almost synonymous. For example, the Reverend John Codman addressed supporters of American missionaries in 1836 in the following way:

How can we better testify our appreciation of [America's] free institutions, than by laboring to plant them in other lands? For where the Gospel goes in its purity and power, there will follow in its train the blessings of civilization, and good government. . . . Coming himself from a land of freedom, he [the missionary] will naturally spread around him an atmosphere of liberty.⁷

Codman was expressing a connection between God, Western civilization and the United States that was more or less taken for granted, not only by American clergymen but also by American politicians and other spokesmen. That is how America has seen its own manifest destiny. It comes from God. The sincere belief in this proposition can be seen as early as 1630 when John Winthrop proclaimed New England as the home of his divinely blessed 'City upon a Hill' in which God would 'delight to dwell among us as his own people.'⁸ The settlements of the Pilgrims and Puritans were generally thought of as a 'new Israel' linking the sacred history of biblical 'covenant lands' to the destiny of America. This outlook still prevailed in the mid-nineteenth century when the editor and essayist John L. O'Sullivan declared that America's divinely sanctioned project was to overrun the continent and then to establish 'on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man.'⁹ He coined the term 'manifest destiny.' This idea, that America has a God-given destiny, has been reaffirmed in the inaugural speeches of US presidents. One finds that God is identified with a 'divinely blessed' America and its mission in the world in every single one of them except the one for Thomas Jefferson's second inauguration (which was only several paragraphs long).¹⁰ As Albert Weinberg has demonstrated in his comprehensive study of the phenomenon of American manifest destiny, westward expansion across the continent (and the near genocidal displacement of 'heathen' native Americans) was rationalized repeatedly by references to providence, 'natural right,' the 'creator,' and 'God's will.'¹¹ When William McKinley decided to retain the Philippines as an American colony following the Spanish-American War, he did so only after staying up praying all night. In the morning God had given him the needed justification: America would keep the Philippines to 'uplift, and civilize and Christianize' the (Catholic and Muslim) natives. One result was a colonial war that (officially) lasted from 1899 to 1902 and took the lives of 4,234 Americans and at least 220,000 Filipinos.¹²

With time this integration of God into what Benedict Anderson might call America's 'imagined community'¹³ has taken on even greater proportions. What was originally only

⁷ Clifton Phillips (1969) *Protestant America and the Pagan World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 243.

⁸ <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/winthrop.htm>.

⁹ John L. O'Sullivan (1839) 'The great nation of futurity,' *The United States Democratic Review*, 6(23), pp. 426–430.

¹⁰ See the addresses posted by the Avalon Project of Yale University Law School at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/inaug.htm>.

¹¹ Albert Weinberg (1963) *Manifest Destiny* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books).

¹² Cited in Howard Zinn (1980) *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper & Row), pp. 305–306.

¹³ See Benedict Anderson (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).

an alliance between God and America's continental destiny, has now become God's alleged assertion that American manifest destiny is synonymous with the world's destiny. The fact that President George W. Bush's crusade for democratic freedom—'our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of humanity . . . a trust we bear and pass along'¹⁴ will be 'passed along,' with the help of American troops, is the modern metamorphosis of the bipolar world view.

American Manifest Destiny and the Zionist Connection

This identification of the United States and its manifest destiny with a God that has plans for mankind constitutes an implicit identification of America with the biblical Israelites and their own God-given manifest destiny in the Holy Land. This orientation creates a seemingly natural American sympathy for the Zionist movement. In the nineteenth century, those who recognized and acted on this identification were American Protestant evangelicals who sought not only to promote the return of the Jews to Palestine so as to rescue the Holy Land from heathen Muslim rule but also to promote what they believed to be prophetic steps leading to the second coming of Christ. The most energetic of these believers in 'pre-millennial dispensationalism'¹⁵ was William Eugene Blackstone, for whom the Bible was oracular. He was a prolific writer and tireless campaigner for a modern reincarnation of ancient Israel. In 1891 Blackstone drew up a petition addressed to President Benjamin Harrison and Secretary of State James G. Blaine asking for the 'use of their good offices and influence with the governments of the European world to secure the holding, at an early date, of an international conference to consider the condition of the Israelites and their claims to Palestine as their ancient home.'¹⁶ Significantly, it was signed by 413 well-known Americans, including the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, J. P. Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller.

This petition is early evidence of the power of this subject to attract a wide range of influential Americans. Against this backdrop of prophetic expectation, those with pre-millenarian inclinations would automatically connect Zionism with a Palestine qua Holy Land in need of redemption. Thus, during World War I and the subsequent British capture of Jerusalem, American Protestants in general assumed that the Jews, led by an active Zionist movement, had the right—the manifest destiny—to 'return home.'

In terms of the bipolar world view and altruistic imperialism, the Zionists (who were Westerners, and 'modern, progressive people'), allied to the British, soon became perceived as the major vehicle for the physical and spiritual revitalization of Palestine, as

¹⁴ George W. Bush, Inaugural Address, 20 January 2001.

¹⁵ 'Dispensationalism' is the regulation or ordering of events by God. History is divided into periods that witness certain divinely set events. A 'pre-millennial' reading of biblical prophecy dictates that certain events must occur prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Paul S. Boyer defines it as 'a series of last-day signs' signaling the end of the world. One of these signs is the return of the Jews to the 'promised land' and the recreation of an exclusively Jewish state of Israel (see Boyer's piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 14 February 2003, p. B10). The pre-millennial period ends with the battle of Armageddon and the defeat of the Anti-Christ. This signifies the 'end of times' and the end of history. We then get the return of Christ, and the Rapture in which the faithful are transported to heaven; those few surviving Jews not slaughtered at the battle of Armageddon are then converted to Christianity. See also 'Christian Zionism summarized' posted on the Globalist.org. Website at (http://globalist.org/world_regions/asia/palestine-israel/020423_christian_zionism.html).

¹⁶ Paul C. Merkley (1998) *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1898–1948* (London: Frank Cass), p. 68.

well as the realization of prophecy. Simultaneously the natives, the indigenous Arabs (both the Muslim majority and what American Protestants considered the 'pseudo' Christian Arabs of the Greek Orthodox and Catholic 'degenerate churches') became less noticed except in as much as they stood in 'barbaric' opposition to prophecy and modernity alike. This took the form of a process of 'perceptual depopulation' that erased the demographic and cultural/religious realities of contemporary Palestine. Thus Palestine became a 'land without a people for a people without a land.'¹⁷ It was a form of ethnic cleansing at the conceptual level.

America's discovery of Zionism was the apparent discovery of biblical Israelites who had come alive once more. Building on deep national memories going back to the Puritans, Americans were soon identifying with the Zionists through more recent parallels that made it seem as if they shared two versions of the same divine destiny. For example, the Reverend John Hubers, the Reformed Church in America's Mission Coordinator for the Middle East and South Asia, critically described the basis for this shared 'manifest destiny' as:

[T]he belief that the settlement and taming of . . . largely uninhabited land . . . was a divinely destined event. Here's how the story goes: a brave pioneering people, escaping from religious and political oppression in [Europe or Egypt] meet great obstacles in realizing their dreams of a free land for free people in an untamed wilderness. Among these obstacles are 'savage' natives [native Americans or Canaanites or contemporary Palestinians] who use terrorist tactics to attempt to thwart their designs. With God's help the brave settlers defeat the 'savages' and force them off the land, at least the best land, thus making way for those who are better able to exploit the God given resources that it yields.¹⁸

American Zionists, starting soon after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration (1917), began to promote this identification extensively. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, representatives of the Zionist Organization of America strategically placed articles in American newspapers describing the Zionist 'pioneers' as modern-day versions of American settlers. For example, study the following quotes from a typical article that appeared in the *New York Times* on 11 June 1922: 'These immigrants to Palestine are indeed the Jewish Puritans'; their settlements are 'the Jamestown and Plymouth of the new House of Israel'; they are 'building the new Judea even as the Puritans built New England'; the settlers are like the 'followers of Daniel Boone who opened the West for American settlers' while 'facing the dangers of Indian warfare'; and in the process 'the Jews are bringing prosperity and happiness in Palestine.'¹⁹

¹⁷ The phrase was coined originally by the British Christian Zionist Lord Shaftesbury in 1853. It was used consistently by Zionist propagandists in the United States and elsewhere to argue that Palestine was essentially unpopulated. Today, the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) disingenuously claims that 'the phrase . . . was used occasionally by early Zionists to refer to the fact that the Arab residents of Turkish-ruled Palestine did not consider themselves a "people" separate from the Arabs of surrounding countries . . .' See (<http://www.zoa.org/pressrel2001/20011220a.htm>).

¹⁸ See 'Christian Zionism and the myth of America' at (http://www.mecchurches.org/newsreport/wol14_2/christianzionism.asp).

¹⁹ See Davidson, *America's Palestine*, pp. 46–47.

Correspondingly, many of the rationalizations for settlement, expansion and appropriation that Americans used in their continental conquest were those later used by Zionists to explain and justify to the American people and government their colonization of Palestine. One can compare the categories of argument researched by Albert Weinberg in his book *Manifest Destiny* with positions taken by David Ben-Gurion between 1918 and 1948 and reiterated by many American Zionists. The similarity of arguments for American manifest destiny and Zionism included propinquity or the notion of natural boundaries. Americans used this argument to justify expansion from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River, then to the Rocky Mountains, and then to the Pacific coast. Ben-Gurion used the same argument for a northern Israeli boundary at the Litani River in Lebanon and the 'furthest edge of the Transjordan.'²⁰ Another similar argument was based on a 'destined use of the soil' or the notion that God wanted the land to go to those who could develop it. As Weinberg pointed out, Americans often used this rationale,²¹ and Ben-Gurion used the same tack when he claimed that the Arabs had left Palestine 'undeveloped' and therefore they had no 'right . . . to rule the country.' The Jews, however, were the 'builders' Palestine 'awaits.'²² Other parallel arguments were 'extension of freedom,' 'paramount interest,' and 'true title.'²³

By using the same arguments to the same purpose of expansion and colonization, Zionists both in the United States and Palestine helped Americans to feel that the whole Zionist effort was somehow running parallel to American history. Thus, as early as January 1923, while attending an American Zionist celebration in his honor, Representative Hamilton Fish could make the following statement:

I see a vision that if such a [Jewish] state is created [in Palestine] . . . there will be a great republic, built on democratic principles . . . They will fashion their government after the ideals of ours and believe in our flag . . . because it represents freedom, liberty and justice and that is what we want to see eventually in Palestine.'²⁴

Christian Zionism's Impact on Twentieth-century Presidents

Representative Fish's 'vision' had no relation to real Zionist policies in Palestine, all of which at that time reflected a socialist model that was utter anathema in an America beset by Red Scares. But reality mattered little, because Americans had become convinced that Zionism reflected an American style, destiny and way of life. The Americans who most enthusiastically bought into this fanciful story of parallel manifest destinies turned out to be the spiritual heirs of William Blackstone. And, as the signers of Blackstone's original petition presaged, they were men of influence.

²⁰ See Nur Masalha (1992) *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies), p. 87.

²¹ Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, pp. 73, 79.

²² Shabtai Teveth (1985) *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 38.

²³ See Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, pp. 143–154. See also David Ben-Gurion quotes based on declassified documents and personal diaries at (<http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story638.html>).

²⁴ Cited in Davidson, *America's Palestine*, pp. 51–52.

For instance, there was Woodrow Wilson, US president from 1913 to 1921. He believed that America had a God-ordained political destiny to reform the world. 'It is surely the manifest destiny of the United States,' he proclaimed, to demonstrate democracy's 'power to prevail.'²⁵ Wilson had grown up in a strong Presbyterian environment (his father was a clergyman and his mother was the daughter of one), read the Bible daily, and was fascinated with the Zionist movement. His friend and ally Louis Brandeis had described Zionism to him as a variant on American Progressivism, and so he saw it as a sort of Americanized biblical endeavor. Thus, after lending his support to the Balfour Declaration, he marveled that 'I, a son of the manse, should be able to help restore the Holy Land to its people.' In March of 1919 he informed the Zionist leader Rabbi Stephen Wise: 'don't worry Dr. Wise, Palestine is yours.'²⁶

Every president since Wilson has drawn connections between the United States and God. Most have referenced the Bible as a source of inspiration and alleged a similarity between the destiny of America and the experiences of the ancient Hebrews. This attitude constitutes a powerful illusion that continued strongly. For example, Harry Truman (president, 1945–53) believed that 'the fundamental basis of this nation's law was given by Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teaching of Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul.'²⁷ The divinely ordained destiny of the United States was to create a 'free world' and to protect it against 'godless communism.' Truman believed part of that mission entailed the establishment of the State of Israel. He thought that his knowledge of the Old Testament made him an expert on contemporary Palestine, and it was his 'expert' opinion that the Holy Land was the proper patrimony of the Jews. He took personal offense at those (particularly in the State Department) who disagreed with this judgment.²⁸ Having helped in the establishment of the State of Israel, he said of himself: 'I am Cyrus. I am Cyrus.'²⁹

Lyndon B. Johnson (president, 1963–69) said that every time he thought of the Israelis, he either equated them with the biblical heroes of his youth or with his native Texan ancestors who, as another 'frontier people,' fought off the Mexicans.³⁰ In a speech to the B'nai B'rith, he explained that his 'very deep ties with the land and people of Israel' were a function of 'my Christian faith' and 'the Bible stories woven into my childhood memories.'³¹ Consequently, as president, Johnson acted as if the United States had a spiritual connection to both the ancient and modern Israelites. 'Our society is illuminated by the spiritual insights of the Hebrew prophets.' Therefore, he asserted, 'America and Israel have a common love of human freedom, and they have a common faith in a democratic way of life.'³²

Ronald Reagan (president, 1981–89) had similar views. He thought that the United States was the product of a 'divine plan,' just as was Israel. He identified the United States with Israel as two 'stable and democratic' countries sharing the same Judeo-Christian

²⁵ Woodrow Wilson, 8th State of the Union Message, 7 December 1920.

²⁶ Davidson, *America's Palestine*, pp. 16, 21.

²⁷ See (http://www.errantskeptics.org/quotes_by_presidents.htm).

²⁸ Davidson, *America's Palestine*, p. 174.

²⁹ Merkley, *Politics of Christian Zionism*, p. 191.

³⁰ Davidson, *America's Palestine*, p. 220.

³¹ (<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/presquote.html>).

³² (<http://www.eyeranian.net/2003/11/19,518.shtml>).

heritage. A believer in the literal truth of the Bible, Reagan also believed in its prophetic predictions. On at least seven public occasions he alluded to Bible prophecies about the coming of Armageddon (and thus the destruction of most of the Jewish people as a prelude to the second coming of Christ), and in 1983 he explicitly told Thomas Dine of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee that these prophecies were true.³³

Contemporary American Christian Zionists

Christian Zionists continue to express these same religious passions and obsessions. Furthermore, they are well positioned and equipped to spread their ideas. Utilizing televangelist techniques, religious radio, evangelical newspapers and even novels, once more they have taken up pre-millennial prophecy as a key motivator for American support of Israel. Simultaneously, according to Robert Pyne, a theologian who works at the Dallas Theological Seminary, these same evangelicals 'identify the American cause ... as the cause of Christ.'³⁴ Thus, for these evangelicals the fate of American and Israel are tied together by divine prophecy.

One should not think of today's Christian Zionists as a fringe group. Those who think of themselves as Christian conservatives accept the Bible as the literal or inspired word of God, believe in prophecy, and expect the end of the world in the relatively near future, make up close to 20 percent of the American electorate.³⁵ This constituency has become the voting core of the Republican Party, or as Karl Rove, Bush's political adviser, describes it, the Republican Party's 'base.'³⁶ And it is an effective and highly motivated base acting against the backdrop of a general population known for its political apathy and record of non-voting.

The Christian Zionists are represented by several groups: The Christian Coalition of America, for example, was founded by Pat Robertson who, on a November 2002 program of the Christian Broadcasting Network that reaches 180 countries, called Muslims 'worse than Nazis.' He also characterized the efforts to bring peace to the Middle East as an illusion: 'The idea that you're going to make peace with the Muslim world by giving them territory is an absolute illusion.'³⁷ The Moral Majority founded by Jerry Falwell is another Christian Zionist group. In October 2002, Falwell called the Muslim prophet Muhammad 'a terrorist,' and in June of 2003 he remarked that 'it is my belief that the Bible belt in

³³ Andrew Lang, 'Convergence: the politics of Armageddon,' at (<http://www.prop1.org/inaugur/85reagan/85rrarm.htm>).

³⁴ Cited in Lee McAuliffe Rambo, 'Bush believes he is leading a Holy War,' *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 13 April 2003.

³⁵ This comes to approximately 40 million Americans; see the following polls: *New York Times* poll published on 7 December 1997; *Newsweek* polls (conducted by Princeton Research Associates) on 24 October 1999 and 1 May 2000; and the *CNN/USA Today* poll of 22 November 2002. See also the BBC report, 'President Bush and religion,' 7 May 2002; Jane Lampman's article in the *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 March 2003; and *Newsweek*, 'Year 2000 and the history of prophecy,' 1 November 2000.

³⁶ Cited in *Guardian Weekly*, 21–27 November 2002, p. 23. Rove has argued that in the 2000 presidential election some four million American evangelicals, 'all natural Bush supporters,' did not vote. His goal for the 2004 election was to get a significant portion of these potential voters to the polls; see Rupert Cornwell, 'In God he trusts—how George Bush infused the White House with a religious spirit,' *The Independent*, 21 February 2003.

³⁷ Cited in the *Jordan Times*, 14 November 2002.

America is Israel's only safety belt right now.'³⁸ The National Unity Coalition for Israel (NUCI), an important lobbying arm of the American Christian Zionist movement that maintains close contacts with neo-conservative Washington think tanks and Bush administration personnel, is presently claiming to represent 40 million Americans and is the originator of a 'Save Israel [from any compromises to the Palestinians] Campaign.'³⁹ The Religious Roundtable is run by Ed McAteer, the self-styled 'godfather' of the modern Religious Right. In his opinion, 'the best friends that Israel has are not those people who believe the Bible contains the word of God, but that the Bible is the word of God.'⁴⁰ In addition to the above there are other well-known tele-evangelist personalities such as Billy Graham and his son Franklin Graham (who gave the benediction at George W. Bush's first presidential inaugural).⁴¹

All of these individuals and groups had been galvanized by the 1967 'Six Day War' and Israeli expansion into the Occupied Territories. Just as in the case of General Allenby's capture of Jerusalem in December of 1917, they saw the hand of God in Israeli expansion into the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and interpreted these events as a big step toward the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Their faith seemingly re-confirmed by events, Christian Zionists since 1967 have been energized to move prophecy forward. Thus, they take hard-line positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, attempting to block any American government support for a Palestinian state or the trading of land for peace.⁴² In essence they support the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.⁴³

Thus a revitalized and politically potent Christian Zionism has built on the legacy of identification with biblical and contemporary Israel and allied itself to the American Zionist movement and neo-conservative political philosophy. In doing so, it has been able, especially since the advent of the George W. Bush administration in 2001, to exercise a major influence on the formulation of US policy as it relates to Israel. In this effort they

³⁸ <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/10/03/60minutes/main524268.shtml>.

³⁹ <http://www.israelunitycoalition.com/>.

⁴⁰ Cited in Ken Silverstein & Michael Scherer, 'Born again Zionists,' *Mother Jones*, September/October 2002. McAteer also hopes to be the 'first evangelical ambassador to Israel.'

⁴¹ A minority of conservative Christians disapprove of the one-sidedness of the Bush administration's foreign policy. About 'forty evangelical leaders' wrote to the president in the summer of 2002 asking for an 'evenhanded US policy toward Israel and the Palestinians.' They also pointedly rejected 'the way some have distorted biblical passages for their rationale for uncritical support for Israel'; see further Lampman, *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 March 2003. Some of these disapproving evangelicals assert that Bush has distorted Christian theology into an 'American civil religion'; see further Jim Wallis, 'Dangerous religion,' *Sojourners Magazine*, September/October 2003. See also Corinne Whitlatch, 'Christian commitment to peacemaking is distorted by Christian Zionists,' at <http://www.pcusa.org/washington/issuesnet/me-030610.htm>.

⁴² For instance, they adamantly oppose something as mild as Bush's 'Roadmap to Peace'; see Giles Fraser, 'Evangelicals in the US believe there is a biblical basis for opposing the Middle East Road Map,' *Guardian*, 9 June 2003. Attacking the road map, Ed McAteer said: 'It's not a road map. It's a roadblock. Every grain of sand in that piece of real estate backed up by the Jordan River, the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean belongs to the Jewish people because God gave it to them'; cited in Carol Eisenberg, 'Road Map testing their faith,' *Newsday*, 10 June 2003. McAteer's position mimics closely those of fanatical Jewish settlers who in a June 2003 rally in Jerusalem held up signs that read 'To Divide Our Land is to Defy God'; see *Haaretz*, 4 June 2003. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which makes the Israeli settlement movement illegal under international law is disregarded or held in disdain by both McAteer and the Israeli colonists.

⁴³ For instance, on 1 May 2002 Congressman Richard Armey, a Christian Zionist and then leader of the Republican Party in the House of Representatives, told MSNBC talk show host Chris Mathews that he supported the expulsion of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories (West Bank and Gaza).

once more have close allies in the government. For instance, the 2002 convention of the Christian Coalition, held in Washington, DC, opened with a videotaped benediction that came straight from the Oval Office. The most powerful Republicans in Congress addressed the Convention (as did the Zionist mayor of Jerusalem). Tom Delay, who was then the majority whip of the House of Representatives, told the crowd: We are 'standing up for Jews and Jesus.'⁴⁴ Later, as the majority leader in the House of Representatives, Delay went to Israel with the same message and addressed the Knesset directly. Under these circumstances, according to Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the conservative Cato Institute and himself an evangelical, the Christian Zionist message 'colors the environment in which [government foreign policy] decisions are made.'⁴⁵ Even the weakest and essentially meaningless demand on Israel by the White House results in tens of thousands of angry protest letters from the Christian Zionist camp. It is no surprise, then, that this administration often turns a blind eye to Israeli behavior no matter how brutal. The oppression of the Palestinians and the confiscation of their land is simply 'God's way' of keeping his promise to 'bless' the Israelites along with those who aid them (most of all America), and 'curse' those who oppose Israel. In other words, since the Jews are God's chosen people and Israel plays a central role in prophecy, the Israelis can do no wrong.

This unquestioning support for Israel fits neatly into the neo-conservative, pro-Zionism of Bush's secular advisers such as Vice President Richard Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, former National Security Adviser and current Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and influential actors such as Douglas Feith, Richard Pearle, and Paul Wolfowitz. Thus, there is an intertwining alliance of neo-conservative government leaders and the Christian Zionist movement. It should be noted that all these people and groups also believe that the United States has a duty, and a divine manifest destiny, to reshape the world in terms of its own interests (which, of course, allegedly represent the interests of the whole Judeo-Christian world). The same neo-conservative advisers who support Israel with the assistance and blessing of the Christian Coalition, planned the invasion of Iraq, and assert America's right to remake the Middle East in the name of, as the Reverend John Codman put it some 167 years ago, 'spreading the atmosphere of liberty.' As American troops bombed Baghdad, Franklin Graham prepared his army of missionaries as a second wave of invaders.⁴⁶

In the pursuit of their goals, be they in terms of American or Israeli manifest destiny, Christian Zionists do not recognize the applicability of UN resolutions, international treaties, or for that matter, US law and policy. When, in 1997, John Hagee, a prominent American Christian Fundamentalist who had raised a million dollars to help settle Soviet Jews on the West Bank, was asked whether he had any concern that such efforts went against US policy (at that time) on expansion of the settlements, he adamantly said no. 'I am a Bible scholar and a theologian,' he said, 'and from my perspective the law of God

⁴⁴ See the American Jewish newspaper *Forward*, 18 October 2002. Appearing at the 2002 Christian Coalition convention in Washington, along with House Majority leader Tom Delay, was Benny Elon, the leader of Israel's Moledet Party. Elon drew cheers from thousands of attendees waving Israeli flags when he called for the 'relocation' of West Bank Palestinians to Jordan.

⁴⁵ (http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2002/37/ma_109_01.html).

⁴⁶ See the *Guardian*, 4 April 2003, (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,929399,00.html>).

transcends the laws of the United States government and the US State Department.⁴⁷ To the extent that the Executive Branch and Congress are populated by men and women with a Christian Zionist ideology, adherence to US law becomes either secondary or an obstacle to be worked around. It is perhaps within this context that the Patriot Act, the establishment of the 'detention camp' at Guantanamo Bay, and the Bush administration's policy of exaggeration, evasion, and lying, in part, can be understood.

Enter George W. Bush

President George W. Bush is an evangelical Christian conservative who embraces a belief in the parallel, divinely sanctioned, manifest destinies of the United States and Israel. Christian Zionism and neo-conservatism are the two guiding philosophies of his administration's Middle East foreign policy. He and his policies can be judged to represent the logical outcome of the triumph of nationalist mythology and religious fantasy over fact-based national interest and analysis. For example, Bush has said that he makes decisions by 'gut instinct.'⁴⁸ There seems little doubt that his instinct is basically that of an evangelical Christian with an unquestioning commitment to a divinely inspired American manifest destiny. In effect, the president believes that God is using the United States as an instrument toward some preordained end, as can be seen in his 2002 and 2003 State of the Union addresses: 'the loving God behind all of life and all of history' once more has called on the United States to spread 'the liberty we prize' which, according to the president, is 'the right of every person and the future of every nation.'⁴⁹

American-style democracy also turns out to be identical with 'God's gift to humanity.' A *Newsweek* article that examined Bush and religion concluded that the Bush administration is 'the most resolutely "faith-based" in modern times, an enterprise founded, supported and guided by trust in the temporal and spiritual power of God.'⁵⁰ The same article provided a series of quotes from the president that meld Christian fundamentalist thought and American manifest destiny: 'Our Nation is chosen by God and commissioned by history to be a model to the world of justice';⁵¹ the United States has been called upon to bring God's gift of liberty to 'every human being in the world';⁵² 'freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them . . . we are in a conflict between good and evil, and we will call evil by its name';⁵³ in Saddam Hussein 'we are encountering evil' that must be destroyed, even if it means war—an action about which Mr. Bush says: 'if anyone can be at peace, I am at peace about this.'⁵⁴ Other national print media have also published stories on this subject, and all have concluded that, as one reporter put it, 'The sense of divine calling is hard to miss in the White House.'⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Donald Wagner, 'The interregnum: Christian Zionism in the Clinton years,' *The Daily Star*, 13 October 2003.

⁴⁸ In an interview with Bob Woodward in 2002 Bush said: 'I am not a textbook player. I'm a gut player'; cited in Richard Brookhiser, 'The mind of George Bush,' *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 2003, p. 62. See also Jane Lampman, *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 March 2003.

⁴⁹ http://www.jimpix.co.uk/words/bush_speech.asp.

⁵⁰ Howard Fineman, 'Bush and God,' *Newsweek*, 10 March 2003, p. 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 33.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 24.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 21.

⁵⁵ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 February 2003, p. A11.

The above quotes strongly suggest that Bush has interpreted his evangelical faith in the reductive fashion of Presidents McKinley and Wilson. However, perhaps even more than his fundamentalist predecessors, Christian evangelicalism melded to American nationalism marks the boundaries of Bush's world view, and he seems incapable of the self-examination and reflection required to see beyond it. The implications can be frightening for those who happen not to share the president's world view. For instance, decisions made from 'the gut' and guided by 'providence' do not have to be thought through. This approach helps to explain Bush's well-known lack of intellectual curiosity. In the Bush White House there is no one to play the cynic, the devil's advocate, the 'what if' critic. Indeed, this attitude means, according to a member of Bush's staff, that 'no one is allowed to second guess, even when you should.'⁵⁶ David Frum, a former speech writer for Bush, has said that the president's attitude is 'You do your best and accept that everything is in God's hands . . . things will work out.'⁵⁷ There is a powerful feeling of certainty that comes with knowing, absolutely, that one is on God's side. According to former Commerce Secretary Don Evans, the president's faith gives him 'a very clear sense of what is good and what is evil.'⁵⁸ Consequently, he knows who are the 'terrorists' and the 'evildoers.' Iran and North Korea are 'evil.' Saddam Hussein is 'evil.' Correspondingly, the president's gut and faith tell him who is 'good.' In the Middle East, the good guys are the Israelis.

Even before he was president, Bush had told the American Jewish Committee: 'I am a Christian. But I believe with the Psalmist that the Lord God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. We will stand up for our friends in the world. And one of the most important friends is the state of Israel.'⁵⁹ Thus, the way George W. Bush interprets his Christian fundamentalist faith and, for instance, how he interprets scripture follow in the line of Wilson, Truman, Johnson, and Reagan and lead to the same result—an a priori sympathy for, and identification with, Israel. There is every evidence that this religiously inspired identification, along with the influence of neo-conservative advisors who see Israeli behavior as a model for American action in the Middle East, is now the basis for American policy formulation in that region.

Conclusion

An historical conflation of the United States and the biblical Hebrews is as old as the country itself. Many Americans feel a sense of purpose that they say comes from God and constitutes a parallel manifest destiny with both the ancient and modern Israelites. As the above has demonstrated, this belief can be found in the speeches of American political leaders at all levels. It is a deeply held belief that manifests itself in the rationalizations and policies of Congress and American presidents. Today, this orientation is backed up by organized religious groups that have effectively taken over the Republican Party.

An intricate and ideologically driven alliance now exists between the political elites of the United States (and their mythology of manifest destiny), Israel (and its mythology of Greater Israel necessitating the expansion into 'covenant lands'), and millions of Christian Zionists (with their mythology to a sacred prophetic plan for the world). It is this last

⁵⁶ White House Staff quote.

⁵⁷ Frum quote.

⁵⁸ Evans quote.

⁵⁹ See Bush speech in Atlanta, Georgia, 8 November 2001.

group, the Christian Zionists, who subsume the first two mythologies under the third, creating a vision of divine destiny in which the two sacred nations of the United States and Israel play a shared central role. This has produced an ultimately non-rational basis for policy formulation in that it forgoes real-world analysis and in its place puts ideological and religious fantasy. The consequences have been radical and violent. Manifest destiny has always been a bloody and disastrous notion. In its American manifestation it has led to the killing of millions of native Americans, Mexicans, and Filipinos. Now, American political leaders resort to this ideology once more. Now, as in the past, they invoke God and religion to justify policies they proclaim as good but which in practice bring death and destruction to millions who remain invisible victims to those who are convinced of the righteousness of their cause. In effect, Bush along with his neo-conservative allies and Christian Zionist boosters have resurrected imperialism and colonialism as legitimate pursuits in the name of religion and security. In this new international order the United States and Israel go forward hand in hand, each actualizing these at once very old and newly devastating policies: Israel in the territories of occupied Palestine, and the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both try to hide the horror that results—the deaths of tens of thousands and the destruction of whole cultures—through the propaganda and ‘spin’ of a mutual admiration society that touts the notions of progress, democracy, and God’s will. Such is the allied legacy of manifest destiny: American, Zionist, and Christian Zionist.

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