CHRISTIAN ZIONISM

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Definition .1

Christian Zionism is the belief among some Christians that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land, and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, is in accordance with Biblical prophecy, and is a necessary prerequisite for the return of Jesus to reign on Earth. This belief is commonly, though not exclusively, associated with evangelical Protestants around the world.[1]

This belief is distinct from the general political belief that the Jews have a right to a national homeland in Israel. Christian Zionism, as a specifically theological belief, does not necessarily entail sympathy for the Jews as an ethnicity or for Judaism as a religion. Since the biblical text is filled with references to Israel, it is common for Christian Zionists to emphasize the Jewish roots of Christianity, and even to promote Jewish practices and Hebrew terminology as part of their own practice; however, Christian Zionists commonly believe that to fulfill prophecy, a significant number of Jews will accept Jesus as their Messiah, and that in the last days, such Messianic Jews will practice a thoroughly Hebraic form of Christianity.[2]

Many Christian Zionists believe that the people of Israel remain part of the chosen people of God, along with ingrafted gentile Christians. This has the added effect of reducing hostility between Jews and Christian Zionists.[3]

2. Biblical Principles

The Christian Zionist view of the land of Israel can be expressed by having a number of biblical teachings to which such a Christian adheres.

a) Belief in Revelation. According to the Bible, contact between God and man is established by God. He takes the initiative. He is the One Who wants the contact most of all. He has created us in His image. That image in us creates in us a longing for the fulfillment of contact with Him, yet He is the One Who reveals to us how we can make that contact.

b) Revelation via Particularities. The God of the Bible is presented as making specific, particular, concrete, historical choices through which He reveals His plans for the lifestyle He requires. For example ethical teachings collected in the 'Sermon on the Mount'.

c) Record of the Revealed Choices. According to tham Scriptures present a written record of God's earlier revelations. By choosing Abraham and by promising to him the land of Canaan,

God Himself created a new identity. This identity involved a specific land as the basis of the national aspect of the identity; it is also involved being bound in a relationship to God, the Giver, as the basis of the religious aspect of the identity.

d) Required response to revelation. The importance of utter trust in God is reflected in the very name of the land today. The name, Israel, originated in the Jabbok River incident in which God changed Jacob's name to Israel.

It is surely significant that Israel is the only nation in the United Nations which mentions God in its very name.

e) God’s Faithfulness to His Choices. God's choice of the People of Israel and the land of Israel was confirmed and established stronger than ever before when He sent His Son Jesus to be a Jew in the land of Israel. God had promised that the house of Jacob would never be utterly destroyed, that there would always remain a remnant. Accordingly He came down Himself as Immanuel to enter into that identity of "Israel", those who strive to express their utter dependence on God. Thereby He insured the indestructibility of the Jewish identity; even torture and death were revealed as impotent by the resurrection of His Son, the ultimate Jew, Jesus, the epitome of the remnant of the Chosen People.

f) Christian Response to God’s Faithfulness to Israel. A certain deep biblical truth, unknown for centuries throughout most of Christendom, is now regaining recognition; it is the ongoing validity of God's claim on the Jewish people to maintain a specific peculiar combination identity, an identity that is at once both national and religious. Christian Zionists welcome and support the renewal among Christians of this biblical concept of Jewish identity as a sign of God's faithfulness to His historical choices. This means that they support the national existence of the Jewish people including their political autonomy in the State of Israel, and they also support their religious existence as a people called to maintain an identity of a specific dependence on God unlike that of any other people. We respect this dual heritage as being our own heritage.[4]

3. Organizations, Leaders and their Agenda

a) The most well known and influential Christian Zionist organizations include the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ); the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People, also known as The Israel Trust of the Anglican Church within Israel (CMJ or ITAC); Christian Friends of Israel (CFI); Intercessors For Britain (IFB); Prayer Friends of Israel (PFI); Bridges for Peace (BFP); The American Messianic Fellowship (AMF); The Messianic Jewish Alliance America (MJAA); Jews for Jesus (JFJ); the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary; and the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ). [5]

These organizations, in varying degrees, and for a variety of reasons, some contradictory, are part of a broad coalition, which is shaping the content of the Christian Zionist agenda today.

b) Their leaders Contemporary British Christian leaders such as Derek Prince, David Pawson, Lance Lambert, Walter Riggans, along with Americans like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Hal Lindsey, Mike Evans, Charles Dyer, John Walvoord, Dave Hunt, and the German[6] Basilea Schlink, have had considerable influence in popularising an apocalyptic premillennial dispensational eschatology and Zionist vision among Western Christians.

c) Their teachings warrant the description 'Armageddon Theology' is evident from the provocative titles of many of their most recent publications. The beliefs and practices of the most influential of these organizations and individuals will be examined in depth in later chapters. This introduction attempts to map out the main historical and theological facts that have given shape and definition to the term.

At the Third International Christian Zionist Congress held in Jerusalem 25-29 February, 1996 under the auspices of ICEJ, some 1,500 delegates from over 40 countries unanimously affirmed a proclamation and affirmation of Christian Zionism including the following beliefs,

2. God the Father, Almighty, chose the ancient nation and people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to reveal His plan of redemption for the world. They remain elect of God, and without the Jewish nation His redemptive purposes for the world will not be completed.

6. The modern Ingathering of the Jewish People to Eretz Israel and the rebirth of the nation of Israel are in fulfilment of biblical prophecies, as written in both Old and New Testaments.

7. Christian believers are instructed by Scripture to acknowledge the Hebraic roots of their faith and to actively assist and participate in the plan of God for the ingathering of the Jewish People and the restoration of the nation of Israel in our day.

8. The Lord in His zealous love for Israel and the Jewish People blesses and curses peoples and judges nations based upon their treatment of the Chosen People of Israel.

10. According to God's distribution of nations, the Land of Israel has been given to the Jewish People by God as an everlasting possession by an eternal covenant. The Jewish People have the absolute right to possess and dwell in the Land, including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan. [7]

4. Political implications

Political Zionism is '...the ideological instrument for mobilizing international support for an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine.' In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 3379 (XXX) defining Zionism as, 'a form of racism and racial discrimination. It was

no longer politically correct to view Zionism as merely another national liberation movement, in this case for Jews. Uri Davis has written probably the most critical book on the realization of the Zionist goal, entitled, Israel, an Apartheid State. Contemporary Christian Zionism is in part a reaction to this world-wide criticism.

So, for example, in 1967, following the passing of U.N. Resolution 242 in protest at Israel's occupation of the West Bank, and Palestinian Jerusalem, when the entire international community closed their embassy's in Jerusalem, the International Christian Embassy moved to Jerusalem expressly to show solidarity with Israel.

They and other Christian Zionists believe that the modern State of Israel, and Zionism in general, are divinely mandated, the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. 'I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' (Genesis 12:3). So, Hal Lindsey could assert, 'The center of the entire prophetic forecast is the State of Israel."[8]

Christian Zionists see themselves as defenders of and apologists for, the Jewish people, and in particular, the State of Israel. This support involves opposing those deemed to be critical of, or hostile toward Israel. It is rare therefore to find Christian Zionists who feel a similar solidarity with the Palestinians.[9]

5. Critics and Analysis (Islamic Perspective)

Although Christian Zionism is a new political movement that primarily supports the Zionist claims, it is very much based on the same principles that Zionism was. It is the Christian view in support to the returning of the Jews in the Holy Land, and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Therefore Islam stands against as it stands against Zionism itself. Regarded as a new form of racism and apartheid by United Nations, Zionism is racist movements which committed genocide, horrible and inhuman crimes against the Muslim population of Palestine. Islam denies and rejects Zionism because of its crimes towards Palestinians; Islam rejects its political behavior which is totally Machiavellian in its nature. Therefore Islam denies every attempt and endeavor from whatever movements or organizations that support Zionism. The latest conflicts of Israel and their killings upon the innocent Muslim population of Lebanon, is another example of the genocides and crimes of Zionism. Hence everyone who supports its policies and strategies in one or another way is involved in the crimes of Zionism. Islam asks its followers to stand against the injustices done by Israel. The problem of Israel confronting the Muslim World today has neither precedent nor parallel in Islamic history. The Muslim World has tended to regard it as another instance of Modern colonialism, or at best, as a repetition of the Crusades. The difference is not that Israel is neither one of these; but that it is both and

more, much more.[10]In conclusion to all this, I personally think that Muslims should start giving academic responses towards Christian Zionists, as we have the model in Profesor Al-Faruqi dealing with the case of Zionist and his brilliant analysis and critics as well as solution to this problem.

6. References

· *Anderson H. Irwine, Biblical interpretation and Middle East policy : the promised land, America, and Israel, 1917-2002 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005);*

· *Ronning Haylor, Board Member of the ICEJ, THE LAND OF ISRAEL - A Christian Zionist View;*

· *Sizer, Stephen. Christian Zionism: Road map to Armageddon? (InterVarsity Press: 2004);*

· *Wikipedia, encyclopedia- http://en.wikipedia.org*

7. Appendix

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Gorenberg, Gershom. The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

Boyer, Paul. "John Darby Meets Saddam Hussein: Foreign Policy and Bible Prophecy," Chronicle of Higher Education, supplement, February 14, 2003, pp. B 10-B11.

External links

Against Christian Zionism

The JerUSAlem Connection

Zion's Christian Soldiers, CBS News 60 Minutes, June 8, 2003.

"$350 for One Jew, $700 for a Couple"

Christian Zionism (A large collection of Christian Zionist writings)

Hal Lindsey: The Father of Apocalyptic Christian Zionism (a hostile account of this major populariser of Christian Zionist ideas; DEAD LINK)

Christian Zionism (Critical article by a Palestinian Christian)

"Culture, Religion, Apocalypse, and Middle East Foreign Policy," a critical overview by

progressive analysts

"Christian Zionism" by TheocracyWatch.org

Current accounts of Christian attitudes on Zionism

http://www.icej.org/ International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (Dispensational)

http://www.aipac.org/ America-Israel Public Affairs Committee

http://www.exobus.org/ Organisation supporting Aliyah of Jews in Eastern Europe and the CIS

http://www.c4israel.org/ Christians for Israel

http://www.kkcj.org/ King of Kings Community, Jerusalem

"Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Zionism

Notes

[1] Wikipedia

[2] Wikipedia

[3] Wikipedia

[4] Irvine H. Anderson. Biblical interpretation and Middle East policy : the promised land, America, and Israel, 1917-2002 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005)

[5] THE LAND OF ISRAEL - A Christian Zionist View; By Halvor Ronning, Board Member of the ICEJ

[6] THE LAND OF ISRAEL - A Christian Zionist View; By Halvor Ronning, Board Member of the ICEJ

[7] THE LAND OF ISRAEL - A Christian Zionist View; By Halvor Ronning, Board Member of the ICEJ

[8] Stephen Sizer. Christian Zionism: Road map to Armageddon? (InterVarsity Press: 2004)

[9] THE LAND OF ISRAEL - A Christian Zionist View; By Halvor Ronning, Board Member of the ICEJ

[10] Islam and the Problem of Israel, Ismail raji al Faruqi