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APOCALYPTIC THEOPOLITICS:
DISPENSATIONALISM, ISRAEL/PALESTINE,
AND ECCLESIAL ENACTMENTS OF ESCHATOLOGY

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APOCALYPTIC THEOPOLITICS: DISPENSATIONALISM, ISRAEL/PALESTINE,
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By Elizabeth Phillips

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical analysis of the theology and ethics of dispensationalist Christian Zionism in America. Chapter One introduces the thesis and its method, which draws constructively from history, sociology, and anthropology while remaining substantively theological. Chapter Two describes dispensationalism's origins in nineteenth-century Britain and its dissemination and development in America. Chapter Three moves from broad, historical description to the contemporary and particular through an introduction to Faith Bible Chapel (FBC), an American Christian Zionist congregation. This description arises from an academic term spent at FBC observing congregational life and conducting extensive interviews, as well as fieldwork undertaken in FBC's "adopted settlement" in the West Bank, including interviews with Israeli settlers about partnerships with American Christians.

The remaining chapters move to more explicitly doctrinal analysis. Chapters Four through Six are shaped by William Cavanaugh's concept of 'theopolitics' (*Theopolitical Imagination*, 2002): a disciplined, community-gathering common imagination of time and space. Through the exploration of a key historical text (*The Scofield Reference Bible*, 1917) and its continuing legacies in the life and thought of FBC, these chapters examine the theopolitics of dispensationalist Christian Zionism, demonstrating that it is a complex system of convictions and practices in which the disciplines of biblicism and biblical literalism form an eschatology which subordinates ecclesiology and Christology, nurturing an imagination of the roles of Christ and the church in time and space which sever social ethics from necessary Christological and ecclesiological sources. John Howard Yoder's work is used to bring this system into relief, and to establish that eschatology per se is not inimical to Christian social ethics. Chapter Seven concludes the thesis with a summary of its findings, as well as a discussion of the positive functions of apocalyptic in Christian social ethics, pointing toward the possibility of alternative ecclesial enactments of apocalyptic theopolitics.

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction¹

It is time for Sunday School, and children and adults alike are making their way to their weekly lessons. Members of the Prophecy Workshop are filing into their usual classroom. They help themselves to doughnuts, and coffee in Styrofoam cups as they warmly greet and chat with one another and take their seats. The class of about thirty members is pleased to hear that they will be viewing another installment of a video by televangelist Perry Stone, who identifies himself as “one of America’s foremost experts on Bible Prophecy.”² One of the class’s two female facilitators inserts the Perry Stone DVD into the player,³ the chatting is hushed, and the revelations begin.

Stone is on location in Israel, standing outdoors in a sporty track suit, interpreting the book of Ezekiel. He reads several verses of chapter 35, which is a prophecy against Mount Seir, and he explains this is a reference to modern-day Palestinians. Verse five says, “Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity . . .”⁴ Stone goes on to read verse ten, “Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it.” He explains that this is the “two state solution,” which is the rhetoric of “fanatical Palestinians” today. And chapter 36, verse three (“ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people”) describes the way Arabs and others blame all the world’s

¹ Format, grammar, and punctuation throughout the thesis conform to the guidelines in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). American spellings are used throughout.

² Perry Stone Ministries, Voice of Evangelism, “About International Evangelist Perry Stone,” <http://www.voe.org/about/about_perry.aspx> (4 June 2008).

³ Perry Stone, *Israel and the Battle of Gog and Magog*, Voice of Evangelism Ministry, Inc., 120 min., DVD.

⁴ King James Version (hereafter KJV).

problems on Israel. Members of the Prophecy Workshop exchange knowing glances.

Stone explains that the conflict between Arabs and Israel, particularly in the “so-called West Bank,” will erupt into the Battle of Gog and Magog described in chapters 38 and 39. Six nations are involved in the Battle of Gog and Magog, according to Ezekiel 38.5-6, which Stone identifies as follows: Persia is Iran, Ethiopia is Ethiopia and Sudan, Libya is Libya, Gomer is Germany, Togarmah is Turkey, and Meshech and Tubal are southern Russia and eastern Turkey. “What do all these nations have in common?” Stone asks. Fifty years ago they were all pro-Western and Jews and Christians could live there peacefully; now they’re all Muslim – many Prophecy Workshop members gasp – and they hate the West because “they think the West helped create Israel.” So, the battle of Gog and Magog will be “an Islamic invasion, Muslim nations with fanatical leaders coming together thinking they can destroy Israel,” which is the “evil thought” of 38.10.

Verse 38.4 (“And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army . . .”) reveals what will precipitate the invasion of Israel by her Arab neighbors, because “hooks into thy jaws” refers to a major famine. The famine, Stone explains, may be the result of natural causes or of the detonation of weapons of mass destruction. Either way, Israel’s underground water sources will sustain agriculture and Arabs will attack Israel for her food. “Not convinced?” Stone teases his audience, “The Valley of Jezreel, the site of Armageddon, is currently farm land.” The viewers in the Prophecy Workshop are stunned. When the Arabs invade, continues Stone, the United Nations will force Israel to sign a peace treaty, as prophesied in Daniel, and as Israel disarms, the Antichrist will secretly begin to arm himself, setting the stage for the great tribulation.

One of the facilitators stops the DVD, as time has run out for this week’s session of the Prophecy Workshop. The members of the class share their astonishment, and make recommendations to one another of how to pray and what to read in preparation for these end times events. Then they cheerfully disperse, some to the late morning worship service, stopping along the way in the church café to buy a Starbucks, and others who worshipped at a earlier service adjourn to the Starbucks across the street.

Though this scene may be unfamiliar and bizarre to the reader, to untold

millions of contemporary American Christian Zionists,⁵ it is entirely routine. The Prophecy Workshop is a Sunday morning adult Bible class which meets weekly at Faith Bible Chapel in Arvada, Colorado (FBC). The method of biblical interpretation used in the video by Perry Stone has its roots in the theological system of dispensational premillennialism. This thesis is an exploration of the theology and ethics of American Christian Zionism through encounter with the particular Christian Zionist community at FBC, which is discussed within the historical and theological context of dispensationalism.

Most Christian eschatologies can be described as either millenarian or amillennial; they are or are not focused upon the millennium or thousand years of peace on earth described in Revelation 20. Millenarians can be either postmillennial – believing that humans will be instrumental in ushering in the millennium, at the end of which Christ will return – or premillennial – believing that Christ will return first and rule on earth for the millennium.⁶ Dispensationalism is a particular type of premillennialism which originated in nineteenth-century Britain, was popularized in America around the turn of the century, and became the ascendant eschatology of American evangelicalism in the post-war era. Today virtually all conservative Protestants in America are influenced – to widely varying degrees – by dispensational premillennialism and the type of Christian Zionism which it has inspired.⁷ Defined

⁵ Estimates of the numbers of American Christian Zionists vary widely, seemingly underestimated by those who consider their significance minimal and overestimated both by Christian Zionist leaders and by critics who consider their influence pernicious. Whether the definition of Christian Zionism involves only beliefs or includes activism is also a key variable. Stephen Sizer cites estimates from 25 to 100 million. Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 2004).

⁶ For a brief introduction to types of millennialisms, see Timothy P. Weber, “Millennialism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷ “In a word, dispensationalism, broadly defined, is the way most Bible-believing Christians in America read current history and daily news.” Susan Harding, “Imagining the Last Days: The Politics of Apocalyptic Language,” in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), 58.

most basically, Christian Zionism involves the convictions that biblical prophecy foretells a Jewish nation in the Holy Land preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ, that the modern nation-state of Israel is the beginning of the fulfillment of these prophecies, and that Christians have a duty to actively support Jews and the state of Israel in tangible ways.

American Christian Zionism has recently become the subject of several published volumes and widespread discussion, much of which assumes or argues that millenarian convictions are motivating Christian Zionists to attempt to hasten the apocalypse. Such approaches are neither entirely fair nor particularly beneficial for the purposes of challenging this influential movement, as they trade more in the easy dismissal of caricatures than in serious critical engagement. This thesis seeks to exemplify such serious engagement, from the perspective of theological ethics. Most works on Christian Zionism⁸ are written for popular audiences, and tend to fall into two categories: (1) exposé pieces written journalistically for audiences unfamiliar with Christian Zionism, and (2) awareness-raising pieces written by evangelical leaders and scholars to dissuade evangelical audiences from adherence to Christian Zionism. Of the few recent works on Christian Zionism written for scholarly readers, none is written by a theologian.

The goal of this thesis is scholarly analysis of a particular Christian Zionist community through methods which draw constructively from the disciplines of history, sociology, and anthropology while remaining substantively theological. It proceeds from the conviction that theological method, particularly of the theological ethicist, must intentionally and carefully attend to the complex realities of the actual people involved in the compelling theological and social issues of our day. This thesis seeks to take seriously the problematic nature of Christian Zionism yet move beyond stereotypes and caricatures into deep critical engagement with a particular Christian Zionist community.

I spent an academic term⁹ at FBC observing congregational life and

⁸ Examples of each of these types will be discussed in Chapter Two, below.

⁹ Easter Term 2007. I received permission from the congregation's leadership to conduct this research, and all those who were interviewed (and as far as possible, those who were being observed) were aware that I was conducting doctoral research.

conducting interviews with all the leaders and core members of the congregation's pro-Israel ministry. I sought to immerse myself in the pro-Israel culture of the congregation through attending worship services, Sunday School classes, prayer meetings, planning meetings, and large-scale events. I read the books that were being read and recommended by members, familiarized myself with several of the prophecy teachers on whom the congregation relies, and explored the Zionist organizations with which they are partners. This research was conducted when FBC's pro-Israel activism was at an annual peak. The congregation prepared for and staged an extravagant evening program for Israel Awareness Day. The pastor, George Morrison – whom everyone at FBC consistently calls Pastor George – preached a five-week sermon series on Israel and the end times, under the title “Hope for the Future.” Pastor George's wife, Cheryl,¹⁰ who is a full-time staff member and director of FBC's Israel Outreach ministry, led a group of young singers and dancers toward the conclusion of a year of intense training and their departure for a summer tour of performances at Israeli military bases. A large group of delegates also prepared to join thousands of Christian Zionists from around the country to lobby the United States government through the Washington, D. C. summit of Christians United for Israel.

Further research was conducted in Ariel, FBC's “adopted settlement” in the West Bank. I was given a tour of the settlement to see the many aspects of life there to which FBC and other Christian Zionists have contributed. Interviews were also conducted with Israeli settlers, including the mayor of the settlement, about their

All interviews and sermons were recorded and transcribed so that quotations are exact. The events of Israel Awareness Day (20 May 2007) were video recorded, also providing exact quotations. Other quotations from observed events are from handwritten notes taken during observation.

¹⁰ George and Cheryl Morrison are the only members of the congregation who will be named. The Morrises are public figures; they are presenters on a regional television program and are highly visible in the national leadership of Christian Zionist organizations. They also gave specific permission for their full names to be used. All other members who were interviewed gave this permission as well, but I have chosen to protect their privacy by omitting names. Citations for quotations from interviews of unnamed persons will include the date of the interview. Other individuals who are not members of the congregation and are named below are likewise public figures, and those among them who were interviewed gave permission for their names to be used.

partnership with American Christians. FBC's connection with Ariel was originally facilitated by Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC), and visits were made for interviews with the directors of both their United States office in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and their Israel office in the West Bank settlement of Karnei Shomeron.

FBC was selected as the focus of this study because it is somewhat unique among and yet thoroughly representative of American Christian Zionists. FBC's partnership with Ariel is unusual in its longevity and depth of commitment. FBC has also chosen a form of supporting Israel which is relatively unique by sending singers and dancers to perform for Israeli soldiers. Activist Christian Zionism is central to the history, convictions, and work of FBC to a degree which is also somewhat unusual. However, while no quantitative work has been done which could demonstrate that members of FBC are a representative sample of Christian Zionists in America, it is nonetheless true that there are many reasons for confidence that the congregation is an accurate representation of American Christian Zionism overall. FBC is in partnership with and often among the leaders of several of the most prominent Christian Zionist organizations. Members of the congregation are reading the same Zionist literature and listening to the same Zionist prophecy teachers as millions of other conservative American Christians. And while there are some distinct features which arise from FBC's particular history and context, for the most part their congregation shares the character and ethos of the hundreds of other multi-thousand-member evangelical congregations which are located in the suburbs of the major urban centers across the United States.¹¹ While, on the one hand, one should not underestimate the significant variations between Christian Zionist congregations which are in large part due to their predominantly non-denominational polity, on the other hand, one can also not underestimate the cohering power of Christian Zionist media and organizations.

¹¹ For recent research on American megachurches, see the findings of an extensive empirical project at the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, "Megachurches," <<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megachurches.html>> (24 June 2008). The Hartford researchers have also published their findings in a popularly accessible book, Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn From America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

I was first introduced to the possibility of studying Christian Zionism ethnographically (broadly defined as description growing out of time spent with a group of people) through the work of anthropologist Susan Harding, who had engaged in an ethnographic study of Jerry Falwell's church in the 1980s.¹² Based on this study and her research into other studies of dispensationalism by journalists and historians, Harding criticized writers on dispensationalism for assuming analytical distinctions between categories such as religion and politics, belief and behavior, which caused their studies to be framed in terms of causal connections between the two types of categories: What beliefs cause dispensationalists to act politically? Or what are the political consequences of dispensational beliefs? In contrast, Harding suggested that dispensationalism should be studied as "a narrative mode of knowing history," instead of as a set of religious beliefs – as "discourse that constitutes reality, not language that (erroneously) represents reality." The beliefs and politics of dispensationalists should not be understood as separable categories between which the scholar can make connections, rather it should be understood that "dispensationalism is a kind of narrative politics." Scholars should avoid journalistic fixation on how dispensationalists succumb to apocalyptic readings of current events or what the political consequences are of their apocalyptic beliefs. Instead, "[t]he relevant question is: What is the politics of those apocalyptic readings?"¹³

Harding's reorientation, which could be characterized as a move away from causal explanations arising from modern analytical categories, and toward thick descriptions arising from poststructuralist anthropological approaches, is indeed helpful. However, perhaps Harding unintentionally preserved some of the categories she intended to challenge by suggesting that dispensationalism should be approached as a discourse or historical narrative *instead of* as a set of religious beliefs. While certainly she was correct that dispensationalism should not be reduced to a set of religious beliefs, it is surely also the case that inattention to the specific set of doctrinal beliefs held by dispensationalist communities would adversely effect any

¹² Susan Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹³ Susan Harding, "Imagining the Last Days."

attempt to understand dispensationalism.

By employing William T. Cavanaugh's concept of theopolitics, I hope to make the ethnographic turn called for by Harding while demonstrating that proper attention can be given to dispensationalism as a system of beliefs and practices, convictions and politics, all interrelated within the discourse both spoken and enacted by dispensationalist communities. In other words, this thesis seeks to learn from Harding's anthropological sensibilities yet approach dispensationalism from a perspective which is properly and substantively theological. Cavanaugh uses the term theopolitics – or theopolitical imagination – to describe a disciplined, community-gathering common imagination of time and space. He argues that many modern Christians have been disciplined to imagine time and space in terms of the nation-state and civil society, and that Christians should marshal the resources of their tradition, especially the discipline of the liturgy, “for more radical imaginings of space and time . . . around which to enact communities of solidarity and resistance.”¹⁴

Dispensationalist Christian Zionism is not an instantiation of the sorts of theopolitical imagination either argued against or advocated by Cavanaugh, and in this sense the term is used very differently here than in Cavanaugh, as it is used entirely apart from his specific argument concerning the modern nation-state and the church's relationship to it. Approaching dispensationalism as a particular instance of theopolitical imagination, used generically as a disciplined, community-gathering imagination of time and space, overcomes the dualisms of belief and behavior, religion and politics, against which Harding was reacting. It transcends questions of causation and consequence to address Harding's question about the politics of dispensationalism without divorcing dispensational politics from dispensational theology. Dispensationalist Christian Zionism is thus approached here as a complex historical-cultural-social-theological-political system. As the beliefs and practices of dispensationalists in general and FBC in particular are discussed below, the intention is not to prove which beliefs cause which behaviors, but to enter into and explore the complex discourse in which beliefs and practices are interrelated. Cavanaugh's work

¹⁴ William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in and Age of Global Consumerism* (New York: T&T Clark, 2002).

has offered guidance in this regard not only through the concept of theopolitics, but also through his book, *Torture and Eucharist*, which offers a methodological exemplar of thick socio-historical description in a work which is substantively theological.¹⁵

In addition to the fieldwork research carried out at FBC, there is an additional component of textual research reflected below. Various texts which are central to the life and thought of FBC are explored where relevant, but the central textual interlocutor is *The Scofield Reference Bible*.¹⁶ As will be discussed below, Scofield's system of study notes and chain references was one of the primary means of the dissemination of dispensationalist theology in America in the early twentieth century. While the members of FBC today do not frequently use Scofield, and many of them are even unaware of *The Scofield Reference Bible*'s existence, the unmistakable echoes, reiterations, and reappropriations of the form of dispensationalism which Scofield codified permeate their congregational life and thought.

The work of John Howard Yoder will be used to bring into relief certain theological features of the complex system of Christian Zionism. Yoder is particularly suited to this task because of his work on the relationship between eschatology and social ethics. Those familiar with the importance of the historical Jesus and the church in Yoder's work may not be aware of the centrality of eschatology in his thought. However, centrality is not an overstatement.¹⁷ Especially in *The Politics of Jesus*,¹⁸ and

¹⁵ William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). Cavanaugh describes the rise of Pinochet's military dictatorship in Chile, how the church was at first powerless to resist the regime, and how the Chilean church eventually found its voice and the strength to stand against torture.

¹⁶ C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909 and 1917).

¹⁷ In one of the first single-author volumes written on Yoder, Craig Carter structures his argument around three themes: Christology as the source of Yoder's social ethics, eschatology as the context of Yoder's social ethics, and ecclesiology as the shape of Yoder's social ethics. Craig Carter, *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001). An entire volume has also been written on Yoder's eschatology: Philip LeMasters, *The Import of Eschatology in John Howard Yoder's Critique of Constantinianism* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992). Another

The Christian Witness to the State,¹⁹ eschatology is at the core of Yoder's arguments. Yoder also wrote several essays which, at least in part, address the relationship between eschatology and ethics.²⁰ He insisted that the apocalyptic texts of the Bible, too easily abandoned by moderns, are in fact relevant to shaping Christian eschatology; though they were written within the conventions of the apocalyptic genre, they are actually more concerned with eschatology than apocalypics.²¹

author, arguing that Yoder can be characterized as a Pauline theologian, built his argument on two themes in Yoder: eschatology and justification. Douglas Harink, "The Anabaptist and the Apostle: John Howard Yoder as a Pauline Theologian," in *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*, eds. Ben C. Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2004), 274-287.

¹⁸ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

¹⁹ Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002).

²⁰ "Armaments and Eschatology," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 1:1 (1988): 43-61. "Ethics and Eschatology," *Ex Auditu* 6 (1990): 119-128. "Discerning the Kingdom of God in the Struggles of the World," *International Review of Missions* 68 (October 1979): 366-372. The following essays in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984): "The Kingdom as Social Ethic," 80-101; "The Constantinian Sources of Western Christian Ethics," 135-147. The following essays in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael J. Cartwright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): "The Otherness of the Church," 54-64; "To Serve Our God and to Rule the World," 128-140; "Peace Without Eschatology?," 144-167; "Christ, the Hope of the World," 194-218. "On Not Being in Charge," in *War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions*, ed. J. Patout Burns (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 74-90. "The Original Revolution," in *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 13-33. Yoder also lectured at length on eschatology when he taught Mennonite seminary students. Some of these lectures are included in the collection, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002).

²¹ Yoder defined eschatology as being concerned with "the meaning of the *eschaton* for present history," as differentiated from apocalypics, which he defined as being concerned with specific information about the time and nature of the *eschaton*. Yoder, "Peace Without Eschatology?," 145. While I am – and certainly Yoder was – aware of complex debates in other disciplines about the meanings of apocalyptic, apocalypics, apocalypticism, etc., these cannot meaningfully be engaged here. I will simply allow Yoder's definitions to stand.

The use of Yoder's work is not intended to imply that his corpus is entirely unproblematic or that it can serve simplistically as a theological foil or antidote to dispensationalist theology. The goal is not necessarily to persuade the reader to agree with Yoder so much as to alert the reader to the central issues at stake in dispensationalism, and to their complexity, through the parallel exploration of a theological ethicist who takes seriously eschatology and apocalyptic yet draws starkly contrasting conclusions to those of dispensationalism. The use of Yoder's work to bring into relief problematic features of the relationship between eschatology and social ethics in American Christian Zionism is one narrow project of which there could be many; the work of numerous other theologians could be employed, and the focus of the study could be shifted to other issues such as biblical hermeneutics.

The structure of the thesis will proceed as follows. Chapter Two will provide the historical and theological background necessary for understanding contemporary Christian Zionists like those at FBC. The roots and tenets of dispensational premillennialism will be traced from its origins in nineteenth-century Britain, its dissemination in America, its ascendancy in fundamentalism, and its activist transformation in the post-war era. A further analysis of the relationship of dispensationalists to Jews, Judaism, and Israel will cover the same territory, detailing dispensationalist restorationism, Zionism, and contemporary Zionist activism. The chapter will close with a discussion of the debate over whether dispensationalist Christian Zionism is inherently anti-Semitic or philo-Semitic.

Chapter Three will introduce the history and contemporary character of the congregation at FBC. Special attention will be given to FBC's views on and interactions with Jews, Judaism, and Israel. Arising from the methodological commitments discussed above is a considerable amount of detail in the description of the convictions, life, and work of the congregation. It is hoped that the reader will be provided with as close an experience as possible to making personal visits to FBC – visits which necessitate encounter with a community in all its complexity instead of hastily attempting to analyze the congregation's theology and ethics apart from their lives and their humanity.

Having thus provided the reader with FBC's historical and theological context, as well as a detailed window into the life of their congregation, the thesis will proceed to more explicitly doctrinal analysis. Chapter Four will explore the place of

Christology in eschatology, especially as related to the communal imagination of time. The Christological shape of Yoder's eschatology, in which the cross inaugurates the eschatological era and redefines kingship, politics, and power, will serve to highlight a very different Christological stamp on dispensationalist eschatology. Scofield's doctrines of the dispensations and the covenants, as well as his stark contrast between the two advents of Jesus Christ, will be shown to shape an eschatology in which the cross postpones the eschatological era, which will arrive in the future to affirm precisely the notions of kingship, politics, and power which Yoder has argued Jesus rejects. For the contemporary Christian Zionists at FBC, these doctrines linger in a divided soteriology in which Jesus' efficacy differs dramatically in his two advents, sustaining both evangelistic and Zionistic zeal.

Ecclesiology will be the focus of Chapter Five. The convergence of the doctrines of the church and eschatology will be explored, with attention to the communal imagination of space. Yoder's ecclesiology is deeply dependent upon eschatology for its orientation, and the centrally significant human space is found in the eschatological vision of the priestly kingdom gathered by the lamb that was slain. In Scofield, ecclesiology is deeply adumbrated by eschatology, which reveals the modern nation-state of Israel to be the centrally significant space in the divine plan. Whereas for Yoder, the visible sign of God's reign and sovereignty in the current age is the church, for dispensationalist Christian Zionists it is the existence of the state of Israel. An examination of differing critiques of the Constantinian shift will lead to the chapter's conclusion with a discussion of the troubling anti-Catholicism and profound ambivalence toward Jews exhibited among Christian Zionists.

A final theological issue of the relationship between eschatology and social ethics will be examined in Chapter Six. It will be shown that Christology and ecclesiology meet in Yoder's eschatology to both motivate and restrain social action, but in dispensationalism eschatology functions to subordinate both Christology and ecclesiology, rendering them ineffectual in the processes of social ethical deliberation and action. The absence of these crucial sources will be shown in the views of FBC members on social ethical issues such as politics, poverty, and peace, as well as their convictions about Islam, Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians.

Chapter Seven will close the thesis with a summary of the previous chapters and a distillation of the findings of this exploration of the eschatology and ethics of

American Christian Zionism as instantiated at Faith Bible Chapel, and will point toward the potential of the positive function of apocalyptic in the formation of Christian eschatology and social ethics, which may lead to a very different sort of apocalyptic theopolitics and ecclesial enactment thereof.

CHAPTER TWO

A Brief History of Dispensationalist Christian Zionism

The complex system of convictions and activism which ties the people of Faith Bible Chapel to the state of Israel and its people cannot be understood apart from setting the congregation in its historical and theological context. To that end, the next task of this study is a brief historical introduction to dispensational premillennialism, which will also serve as an introduction to previous works written on the subject,¹

¹ The first scholarly history of American dispensationalism was: C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1958). Kraus noted that proponents of dispensationalism had not written histories of their own movement because they made facile historical and theological connections between their beliefs and the historic premillennialism of the early church. For examples see Arnold D. Ehlert, “A Bibliography of Dispensationalism,” first published in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1944) and later as a book (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965); and Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (New York: Loizeaux Bros., 1953). While Kraus primarily aimed to tell the history of dispensationalism as a distinct movement with nineteenth-century origins, his work was also a critique of dispensationalist theology, particularly John Nelson Darby’s ecclesiology. Differentiation of dispensationalism from historic premillennialism was the central task of Clarence Bass’s 1960 history: Clarence B. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960). Bass was a dispensationalist who set out to study Darby and in the process became convinced that dispensationalism was irreconcilable with the historic Christian tradition. The next major historical work on dispensationalism appeared in 1970 in Sandeen’s landmark volume on the origins of fundamentalism, which is discussed below: Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970). Timothy Weber has written two volumes on dispensationalist history, the first focusing more broadly on premillennialism in America before World War II – Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) – and a more recent work which covers some of the same historical ground but focuses specifically on how dispensationalism has shaped American evangelicals’ attitudes and activism in regard to the modern state of Israel: Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel’s Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004). Paul Boyer has also made a significant contribution to the field with his extensive study of popular-level books, periodicals, and conference papers on the subject of biblical prophecy written from the 1870s to the 1970s. Though not all his sources were dispensationalist, dispensational convictions certainly form the core of the body of work he surveyed. Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). These are the main sources for the

followed by an introduction to the complicated relationship between dispensationalism and Jews, Judaism, and Israel.

A Brief History of Dispensationalism

*The Millennium in Modern Britain*²

An optimistic postmillennialism dominated eighteenth-century British Christianity until the French Revolution. This began to change with the extraordinary social upheaval and the precipitous decline of the Catholic Church in France, which struck many Britons as apocalyptic – exactly the sorts of things described in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. The end seemed close at hand and a revival of premillennialism began to take shape within British Christianity.³ Leading thinkers on the subject began meeting at invitation-only gatherings at Albury Park in the late 1820s. Conversation at these conferences focused on three central concerns: the second coming of Christ, prophetic chronology, and the restoration of Jews to Palestine.⁴ By the 1830s there

following historical overview.

² On premillennialism before the modern era, see Stephen Hunt, ed., *Christian Millenarianism: From the Early Church to Waco* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001); Boyer, 46-68; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). As Sandeen noted, “Although millenarianism in Western thought has a long history, it is a discontinuous one.” Sandeen, xviii.

³ Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 153-158.

⁴ Carter, 158 ff.; Sandeen, 18ff. The conclusions reached in these gatherings were summarized into six points by Henry Drummond, the group’s host: “1. This ‘dispensation’ or age will not end ‘insensibly’ but cataclysmically in judgment and destruction of the church in the same manner in which the Jewish dispensation ended. 2. The Jews will be restored to Palestine during the time of judgment. 3. The judgment to come will fall principally upon Christendom. 4. When the judgment is past, the millennium will begin. 5. The 1260 years of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 ought to be measured from the reign of Justinian to the French Revolution. The vials of wrath (Revelation 16) are now being poured out and the second advent is imminent.” Henry Drummond, *Dialogues on Prophecy*, 1:ii-iii. Quoted by Sandeen, 21-22. On Drummond, see Carter, 158-172.

was a strong premillennial movement in Britain, complete with prophetic conferences, periodicals, and societies.⁵ In its beginnings, the movement was dominated by Anglican clerics; there were few Methodists or dissenters involved. By the second half of the century, however, there were increasing numbers of premillennialists among Baptists and groups which had left the established churches, such as the Irvingites and Plymouth Brethren.⁶

British premillennialists had a pessimistic view of the world, a deep conviction that everything – including the church – was getting worse. For them, God’s dealings with humanity over the course of history could be described as a series of dispensations. In each dispensation God had used new means by which to reach humanity, but every time humans failed the test and were judged by God. The British premillennialists also believed that the Bible should be read with strict literalism, not allegory or spiritualization. Their literalist interpretations of prophecy led to constructions of elaborate end-time chronologies, and to the conviction that a Jewish state would be restored in Palestine before the millennium.

John Nelson Darby and the Genesis of Dispensationalism

It was in the context of this revival of premillennialism that John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) became a notable figure in British Christianity.⁷ Born in London and raised in Dublin, Darby was a lawyer who became an Anglican priest. However, he quickly became disillusioned with the established church. When an accident left him incapacitated, he spent his convalescence considering the state of the church. He chose to leave the priesthood just a few years after his ordination. A major factor in his decision was the rising Erastianism among Church of Ireland leaders, including the 1826 decree of the Archbishop of Dublin which required all Catholic converts to the Church of Ireland to take an oath of allegiance and supremacy to the King. Darby

⁵ Periodicals included *Morning Watch*, *Christian Herald*, *Expositor of Prophecy* and *Investigator*. Societies included the Society for the Investigation of Prophecy and the Prophecy Investigation Society. Sandeen, 22-24; Carter, 154.

⁶ Sandeen, 20, 40. On Edward Irving, see Sandeen, 14-22, 25-29; Carter, 154.

⁷ On the relationship and differences between the English and Irish millennialist movements, see Carter.

protested the decree to no avail.⁸

Darby then encountered a group of people with similar misgivings about the established church. They were meeting for Bible study, prayer and the “breaking of bread” in homes in Dublin. Similar, independent groups were meeting in Plymouth and Bristol. At the same time, Darby was attending prophecy conferences at Lady Powerscourt’s country estate in County Wicklow. The Powerscourt gathering eventually joined with a group of those who had been meeting in homes, becoming perhaps the first body of what would come to be known as the Plymouth Brethren.⁹ Soon the Brethren had united under the leadership of Darby and of B.W. Newton (1807-1899). Their membership was drawn from the elite: intellectuals, clergy, barristers, solicitors, military officers, doctors, and aristocrats. From 1832-1875 the Plymouth Brethren movement expanded as its leaders traveled across North America and Europe and their ideas were disseminated through lectures, books, pamphlets, journals, and tracts. Their teachings included the rejection of apostolic succession, the creeds, infant baptism, and ordination. They advocated egalitarian ministry and separation from the non-elect and apostate.¹⁰ However, the movement was also plagued by disagreements and divisions, largely resulting from disputes between Darby and Newton regarding clericalism and Darby’s eschatology.¹¹

Darby shared all the central premillennialist tenets described above. Like other premillennialists of the era, Darby developed a system of dispensations which both described how God has interacted and will interact with humanity through the course of history, and how to understand various texts of the Bible based on the different dispensations to which they were addressed.¹² However, Darby also diverged from the

⁸ Bass, 48-51; Carter, 213.

⁹ Carter, 195-210.

¹⁰ Ibid., 242.

¹¹ See Kraus, 45ff.; Bass 64-99; Sandeen, 30, 61-70; and Peter Prosser, *Dispensationalist Eschatology and Its Influence on American and British Religious Movements* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 185-195.

¹² Even before the nineteenth-century movement, several dispensational outlines had existed, ranging from five to ten different dispensations. Darby’s outline contained seven: the dispensations of Paradise, Noah, Abraham, Israel (which could

wider movement in several ways. Virtually all British premillennialists outside of the Plymouth Brethren were historicists, but Darby was a futurist. Historicist premillennialism interprets biblical prophecies as in process; some have already been fulfilled in the present age and some are being fulfilled in contemporary world events. Futurist premillennialism interprets biblical prophecies as having only to do with the era previous to Jesus' first advent and the events immediately surrounding and following his second advent. Historicism had led to the development of a wide diversity of prophetic chronologies as well as setting dates for Christ's return. Darby's futurism eliminated both these potentially embarrassing features from premillennialism.¹³ Also, Darby's pessimism about the church extended to a conviction that the established church was apostate and must be abandoned. These two divergences from British premillennialism Darby shared with most of his fellow Plymouth Brethren.

In two additional distinctions, however, Darby was apparently original and – for a time – alone. Darby posited a “secret rapture” of the church when true believers would suddenly be caught up into the air to meet Christ at an entirely unpredictable moment.¹⁴ While others had suggested ideas similar to Darby's rapture, based on 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17, they had associated it with the second coming of Christ. Darby posited the rapture as a separate event which could happen at any moment and would precede the second coming by seven years, the period of tribulation. “There were, in

be further divided into Israel under the law, the priesthood, and the kings), the Gentiles, the Spirit, and the Millennium. See Kraus, 25, 29-30; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 20-21. For examples of other dispensational outlines, see Kraus, 30-44. On Darby's life, see Kraus, 26-30; Bass, 48-63; Sandeen, 59-80; Boyer, 86-90; Carter, 210-248.

¹³ Futurism did not originate with Darby or the Plymouth Brethren, but with sixteenth-century Jesuit priest Francisco Ribera, and was revived in an 1827 work by Spanish Jesuit Manuel Lacunza. See Yakov Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel: American Fundamentalist Attitudes Toward Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, 1865-1945* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1991), 14; Sandeen, 37. By the mid-1860s, futurism had come to predominate in British premillennialism. Sandeen, 81-87.

¹⁴ Whether or not the doctrine of the rapture originated with Darby has been the subject of much intra-premillennial debate. See Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 15; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 24; Bass, 146-147.

effect, two ‘second comings’ in Darby’s eschatology. The church is first taken from earth secretly and then, at a later time, Christ returns in a public second advent as described in Matthew 24.’¹⁵

Darby also held the innovative belief that the Bible contained two distinct messages, one for Israel and one for the church. These two messages are applicable in separate dispensations because Israel and the church play two separate roles in God’s plan for human history. The church is in no way the new Israel and none of God’s promises to Israel have been transferred to the church. According to Darby, a strictly literal reading of the Bible is consistent and comprehensible only if these two messages are properly distinguished from one another.

Too traditional to admit that biblical authors might have contradicted each other, and too rationalist to admit that the prophetic maze defied penetration, Darby attempted a resolution of his exegetical dilemma by distinguishing between Scripture intended for the church and Scripture intended for Israel.¹⁶

Thus, although Darby’s form of premillennialism came to be known as dispensationalism, it was not his use of dispensations which was original or central to his system. Rather, it was his doctrine of the church which most profoundly shaped his own life decisions and formed the core of his theological system. The two original (or at least distinctive) features of Darby’s theology, the Israel/church distinction and the rapture, grew out of his ecclesiology wedded with his rationalist approach to scripture.¹⁷ Yet, though his entire system became influential for a short time in British premillennialist circles, it was his eschatology in particular that would take hold across the Atlantic and which would eventually become the predominant form of premillennialism in America.¹⁸

¹⁵ Sandeen, 63.

¹⁶ Sandeen, 66. Sandeen has also noted that the same problems which arose from modern, rationalist readings of scripture were resolved in this way by Darby but by other contemporaries through higher criticism. Sandeen, 68.

¹⁷ See Kraus, 27; Sandeen, 66-67; Bass, 39, 129; Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 17.

¹⁸ Ariel suggests that at least one reason for the limited influence of the Plymouth Brethren in Britain was their social elitism. Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 13.

The Millennium in America through the Nineteenth Century

Though most American Puritans had been premillennialists, postmillennialism eventually came to dominate American eschatology. The shift was especially due to the influence of Jonathan Edwards in the 1730s and 40s, after which American Protestants were primarily postmillennial for several decades. However, as in Britain, the French Revolution was a major factor in some Christians' return to premillennialism. Around the turn of the century (1790s-1800s) there was an invigoration of many types of millenarianism. Jonathan Edwards's postmillennialism, as well as that of Alexander Campbell in the Disciples of Christ, flourished as did radical forms of Adventism among Millerites, Mormons, Shakers, and the Oneida Community.¹⁹ "America in the early nineteenth century was drunk on the millennium. Whether in support of optimism or pessimism, radicalism or conservatism, Americans seemed unable to avoid – seemed bound to utilize – the vocabulary of Christian eschatology."²⁰

After 1840, British-style premillennialism began to receive attention in America as well. By the end of the American Civil War, there were significant trans-Atlantic relationships between premillennialists. Darby visited North America several times in the 1860s and 70s teaching his dispensationalist system,²¹ though Darby himself did not rise to prominence in America. One reason for this was likely his personality. By all accounts he was an extraordinarily ruthless man when faced with any measure of opposition; he was entirely intolerant of dissent.²² His written work had little more appeal to the masses than his personality, as it is notoriously unclear

¹⁹ See Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 1-10; Boyer, 68-86; Sandeen, 42-55; Prosser, 169-181. On various millennialisms in late eighteenth-century America, see Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²⁰ Sandeen, 42.

²¹ Sandeen has noted that with all of Darby's visits to North America combined, he was there for a total of seven years between 1862-1877. Sandeen, 71.

²² See Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 13; Sandeen, 31; Bass, 55ff.

and confusing.²³ In addition, Darby's reading of scripture convinced him that there would be no strong numeric increase of the truly faithful, so he did not aim for or expect mass conversions to his teachings.²⁴ Perhaps most significantly, however, Americans – at least in this first generation of dispensationalism – resisted Darby's insistence that they must abandon their apostate denominations. Perhaps Darby did not realize the extent to which this aspect of his message was tailored to an audience disillusioned by an established church. American premillennialists could agree that the world was getting worse, but they did not agree that the church was doomed to the same fate. In the first generation of the movement, premillennialist leaders remained faithful to and hopeful about the future of their denominations.²⁵

Whatever the reasons for the unpopularity of Darby himself and his ecclesiology, the response was rather more positive when it came to his eschatology. The package of premillennialism sculpted by Darby, including the rapture and the unique place of Israel in God's ultimate plan, gained a wide following in America. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, his eschatology gained prominence among American evangelicals largely through Bible conferences. The Believers' Meeting for Bible Study – later named the Niagara Bible Conference when Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario became the regular meeting place – met for two weeks every summer for about 30 years in the late 1800s. These meetings were modeled after Bible studies Darby convened with pastors on his visits to America and Canada, and Darby may have had direct influence on shaping the conference movement.²⁶ At the 1878 Niagara conference, the group developed a creedal statement covering fourteen doctrinal points, one of which was an affirmation of premillennialism.²⁷

However, not all Niagara participants were premillennialists. Some

²³ Bass, 60.

²⁴ Sandeen, 70.

²⁵ See Kraus, 55-56; Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 25; Sandeen, 79; Prosser, 201-210.

²⁶ Kraus, 79.

²⁷ Sandeen includes the entire creed as Appendix A, 273-277.

premillennialists within the conference movement, feeling more tolerated than embraced at Niagara, began a series of conferences focused exclusively on prophecy with a meeting in New York City in 1878. Six more prophetic conferences were held in various northeastern cities over the next forty years. As the meetings progressed, dispensationalism became increasingly prominent in the discussions and among the participants.²⁸ During this same period, Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) organized the Northfield Conference which met almost every summer from 1880 until Moody died. Deeply influenced by Darby, though the two men's relationship with one another was antagonistic, Moody introduced large audiences of evangelicals to British premillennialism through these conferences.²⁹ Just as dispensationalism had first taken hold among Anglican elites in Britain, it first became popular in America among the educated Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Baptist clergy and intellectuals of the major urban centers of the Northeastern and Midwestern states.³⁰

Soon the premillennialists involved in the conference movement were also founding Bible Institutes. From the 1880s and well into the twentieth century, scores of these training schools were founded by premillennialists who, due to the urgency of Christ's imminent return, rejected liberal arts education in favor of more brief, evangelistically-focused courses of study. The most prominent among these were Northfield Bible School (later Moody Bible Institute) and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (later BIOLA). Virtually all the institutes were teaching strict dispensationalism.³¹ From the institutes there began to flow a steady stream of dispensationalist ministers into American churches and dispensationalist missionaries

²⁸ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 33; Sandeen, 132-161; Kraus, 71-97.

²⁹ Sandeen, 172-176; Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 35-36.

³⁰ Sandeen, 163.

³¹ See Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 35; Sandeen, 181-183; Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 50-54; Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 72-80. See an interesting discussion of the shift from evangelicals founding liberal arts colleges in the nineteenth-century to Bible Institutes in the twentieth- in Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

around the world.³² Weber has pointed out that during this period of dispensationalist growth and expansion, the scores of pastors “who gave their congregations steady doses of the new premillennialism,” were just as, if not more important than the conferences and institutions.³³

At the end of the nineteenth century, as theological liberalism grew in strength and popularity among some American Protestants, evangelicals began to rally and cooperate in spite of their differences to defend their agreed-upon central orthodoxies, chief among which was the primary authority of the inerrant scriptures literally interpreted. Although dispensationalist eschatology remained suspect to many evangelicals, dispensationalist dedication to this particular view of the Bible was unquestionable. “Probably the most important reason for dispensationalism’s growing acceptance among evangelicals was dispensationalists’ unwavering loyalty to and defense of the Bible.”³⁴ In addition to biblicism, dispensationalists’ affirmation of historical primitivism and supernaturalism also strengthened their alliances with non-dispensationalist evangelicals.³⁵

Dispensationalism in Early Twentieth-Century America

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the premillennial movement was soaring in popularity but deeply troubled internally. Between 1895 and 1914, most of the movement’s key leaders died, and a heated internal controversy arose over the doctrine of the rapture. However, the controversy was eventually settled in favor of dispensationalism and the any-moment rapture, and a new generation of leaders emerged.³⁶

The continuing spread of dispensationalism in America after the turn of the

³² For a discussion of dispensationalism’s impact on foreign missions, see Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 59-66; *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 65-81; Sandeen, 185-186.

³³ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 36. See also Bass, 210.

³⁵ Weber, *In the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 36-41.

³⁶ Kraus, 99-104; Sandeen, 208-221.

century can be attributed to one source more than any other: *The Scofield Reference Bible*. C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) was a Confederate soldier and a United States Attorney for Kansas whose life was plagued with scandal and family strife before he was converted to evangelicalism by a YMCA worker in 1879 after being arrested on charges of forgery. He lived in St. Louis, Missouri at the time and began studying the Bible there with James Brookes (1830-1897). Brookes was an influential premillennialist, an organizer of the Niagara conferences, and editor of *Truth*, one of the most prominent periodicals of the premillennial movement.³⁷

Brookes introduced Scofield to dispensationalism and their Bible studies together were Scofield's only theological training before he became pastor of the First Congregational Church in Dallas, Texas. He became a popular speaker among dispensationalists and was actively involved in the Niagara conferences, leaving Dallas temporarily to teach at Northfield Bible School. Scofield and Arno Gaebelein (1861-1945), editor of the popular dispensationalist journal *Our Hope*, were the key leaders of the dispensationalist, pro-rapture side of the intra-premillennialist controversies of this period.³⁸ Scofield was also influential in the founding of Dallas Theological Seminary, which remains the most influential center of dispensationalist teaching today.

In 1902, Gaebelein raised enough money for Scofield to reduce his church work to part-time in order to develop a Bible with dispensationalist study notes. Several Plymouth Brethren were involved in the Bible's development, which was first published by Oxford University Press in 1909, with a revised edition following in 1917. *The Scofield Reference Bible* became known as "the classic expression of the mainstream of the movement in America."³⁹ By 1990, somewhere between 8 and 13 million copies had been sold.⁴⁰

World events in the early twentieth century also contributed to the spread and

³⁷ Boyer, 91; Kraus, 11-112; Sandeen, 134, 223; Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 26-30.

³⁸ Sandeen, 214ff.

³⁹ Kraus, 19.

⁴⁰ Boyer, 97-99.

continued popularity of dispensationalism. Based on their interpretation of Daniel 7-9, dispensationalists expected a new Roman Empire to rise to power before the rapture; it would be a confederacy of ten countries within the boundaries of the original Roman Empire and its leader would be the Antichrist. They also believed, based on their interpretation of Ezekiel's reference to Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38.2), that Russia would control a northern confederacy which would rise up against Israel once it was re-established as a state in Palestine.⁴¹ When the northern confederacy attacked Israel, they would be joined by a southern Arab/African confederacy, and their combined attack would force the Antichrist to join the fray. This prophetic outline was largely a matter of consensus among dispensationalists well before World War I. When hostilities erupted in 1914, dispensationalists made the following, strikingly accurate predictions. Weber's summary of their predictions and the related outcomes of the war bears quotation at length:

Since Germany had not been a member of the original [Roman] empire and did not seem to figure prominently in the prophetic future, except as part of the northern confederacy that would oppose the new Rome, it would probably lose the war, suffer national humiliation, and give up some of its western territory that had originally belonged to the old Rome. The Austro-Hungarian Empire would have to be broken up so that some of its Slavic provinces north of the Danube would be free to fall under the influence of Russia and its northern confederation. Russia, though now closely allied with powers formerly within the Roman Empire, would end that association with the West and eventually develop as an independent power with influence over other nations in northern and eastern Europe. The Ottoman Empire, whether as a result of the war or later series of events, would eventually relinquish control over Palestine or at least allow the regathering of the Jews there. Ireland would gain its independence from Great Britain. As one can easily see, premillennialists' predictions were amazingly accurate. Germany lost the war, was forced to accept full blame for the conflict, was loaded down with reparations, and turned over some of its western territory, Alsace-Lorraine, to France. Austria-Hungary was partitioned into Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and gave up additional territory to Romania, Italy, and Poland. Russia suffered two revolutions in 1917, made a separate peace with Germany, and terminated its alliance with the Western powers. The Ottoman Empire simply dissolved after the war, with Palestine passing to British control, and Ireland won its independence from England three years after the

⁴¹ For the complicated stories of these interpretations see Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 68-72; Boyer, 152-180.

war.⁴²

The fact that dispensationalism lasted well beyond its first and second generations of leaders is much more easily explained in light of what must have seemed overwhelming confirmation of their beliefs.⁴³ Weber has gone so far as to say that “No event in the fifty years after 1875 did more for the morale of American premillennialists than World War I . . . Though times were tragic, things were never better for American premillennialism.”⁴⁴

Perhaps post-World-War-I euphoria of dispensationalists contributed to the sharp rise in targeted attacks on dispensationalism from liberal theologians and biblical scholars. The most well known argument of this type was University of Chicago professor Shirley Jackson Case’s *The Millennial Hope*.⁴⁵ Liberals not only attacked dispensationalist theology, but sought to demonstrate that dispensationalism was politically dangerous and subversive to the American cause, as it could not consistently support or fight for democracy.⁴⁶

After World War I, dispensationalism began to lose favor among Presbyterians and other mainline denominations and to grow among Baptists and non-denominational groups. The leadership of the movement shifted from intellectuals and clergy to less educated pastors and lay people. The centers of dispensationalist influence and power shifted away from denominational structures toward the Bible institutes.⁴⁷ Many dispensationalist leaders, such as Gaebelien, began calling for true

⁴² Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 73. Weber does note that, of course, some of these outcomes were predictable on other grounds, but maintains that dispensationalists made their predictions almost solely based on already established consensus interpretations of prophecy. He also notes that the fall of the Russian czar was a difficult-to-interpret, surprise outcome of the war.

⁴³ See Boyer, 100-102; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 68-74.

⁴⁴ Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 105.

⁴⁵ Shirley Jackson Case, *The Millennial Hope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918).

⁴⁶ Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 117-124; Sandeen, 235-237.

⁴⁷ Sandeen, 240-242. On the rise of dispensationalism within Pentecostalism,

Christians to leave their apostate denominations, and many heeded the call.⁴⁸ Of course, many of these shifts were not only the results of ecclesiological convictions. They were manifestations of the radical re-ordering taking place within American Protestantism as a result of growing polarity between conservatives and liberals – in short, we have come to the rise of fundamentalism.

Excursus: Historiography of Dispensationalism and Fundamentalism

In 1970, American church historian Ernest Sandeen made the radical claim that fundamentalism was not just a party from the 1920s controversies but a movement which existed before and after the 20s – in fact, it was none other than the premillennial movement of the nineteenth century which had broadened itself through alliance with conservative Princeton theology, with which it shared biblical literalism in common.⁴⁹ Sandeen was, in part, reacting to the exclusively sociological approaches of previous studies of fundamentalism which largely dismissed the movement as the last, dying gasps of those who were unable or unwilling to adapt to social change.⁵⁰ Sandeen's thesis suggested – in contrast to social explanations which portrayed fundamentalism as born in and sure to die soon after a period of social upheaval – that fundamentalism's roots were actually theological, and specifically premillennialist. Eleven years later, when Timothy Weber published perhaps the definitive history of American premillennialism to date, he largely assumed and built

see Prosser.

⁴⁸ Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 171-175.

⁴⁹ Sandeen stated his thesis thus: "Fundamentalism ought to be understood partly if not largely as one aspect of the history of millennialism." Sandeen, xix.

⁵⁰ One of the best known of such treatments of fundamentalism was Stewart G. Cole, *The History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931). Other examples include Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) and Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), which focus on fundamentalism as reaction against evolution and intellectual progress. Marsden has described this approach in more detail: George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 199-205.

on Sandeen's thesis.⁵¹

However, Sandeen's thesis (though not his historical work as a whole) was largely discredited by George M. Marsden in the book which has set the standard for all subsequent studies of American fundamentalism, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. Marsden claimed that Sandeen had reduced fundamentalism by tracing it to purely theological roots.⁵² Instead, Marsden insisted, historians must understand fundamentalism's wider roots which were cultural, social, and intellectual in addition to theological, and that the theological roots of pietism, revivalism, holiness movements, and others were important in addition to premillennialism.⁵³

Though dispensational premillennialism can no longer be regarded as *the* central impetus or feature of American Christian fundamentalism, it is nonetheless agreed that dispensationalism was *a* central tenet of the fundamentalist movement

⁵¹ Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*. Ferenc Morton Szasz, while questioning the broad impact of Princeton theology, also built on Sandeen's work, calling the nineteenth-century revival of millennialism one of the most important factors in the rise of fundamentalism, and noting the vital importance of the Bible and prophecy conferences in the movement's formation.

⁵² Sandeen did make the following qualification to the conclusions of his study: "The danger in the present book, of course, is that the pendulum will swing in the other direction and that all the events of the 1920s will be interpreted through the history of the millenarian-Fundamentalist movement. Such a reductionistic solution would produce an equally distorted history," Sandeen, 248; ". . . even without the millenarians, the Presbyterian church would have faced a crisis in the twenties." Sandeen, 256.

⁵³ He described his book as focusing on "how individuals who were committed to typically American versions of evangelical Christianity responded to and were influenced by the social, intellectual, and religious crises of their time." Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 3. The only substantial argument against Marsden to have surfaced in the quarter-century since *Fundamentalism and American Culture* was published is that he focused too exclusively on the Presbyterian face of fundamentalism and neglected the other, quite numerically strong, constituencies, especially Wesleyan Pentecostals. See Donald W. Dayton, "Donald Dayton Replies [to George Marsden]," *Christian Scholars Review* 7: 2,3 (1977): 207-210; and Donald W. Dayton, George Marsden, et. al., "Symposium: What is Evangelicalism?" *Christian Scholars Review* 23:1 (1993): 10-89. See also Randall J. Stephens, "More Recovered: A Review of Recent Historical Literature on Evangelicalism in the Late Victorian Era," *Quodlibet* 3:1 (Winter 2001) <<http://www.quodlibet.net/stephens-victorian.shtml>> (18 June 2008)..

which came to prominence in the years between the two World Wars.

*Dispensationalism in America, World War II - 2008*⁵⁴

The totalitarian regimes which rose after World War I and the outbreak of World War II did not fit as neatly into dispensationalist expectations as did the initial outcome of the first war. Controversies arose over Mussolini's prophetic significance. Puzzlement abounded as Germany and Russia, prophesied partners of the northern confederacy, became bitterly divided enemies. Dispensationalists watched their relationship anxiously. When Hitler and Stalin agreed to the nonaggression pact of 1939, the world suddenly made sense again – but not for long. When Hitler turned on Russia, dispensationalists were stunned and virtually silent. Perhaps the confirmations of World War I were still giving them enough assurance to believe, in spite of all the geo-political evidence to the contrary, that the prophecies would somehow be fulfilled. They did not have to be sustained by this faith alone for very long. Just three years after World War II ended, the Jewish state of Israel was established in Palestine.

The development of new weapons during the war years raised the specter of apocalyptic scenarios involving atomic bombs. A dispensationalist professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Wilbur Smith, wrote one of the most popular pieces on this theme, the 1945 pamphlet "This Atomic Age and the Word of God." Smith cautioned against liberal remedies to the atomic threat, especially the formation of global governmental bodies, which would only pave the way for Antichrist. Likeminded dispensationalists met the formation of the United Nations in the 1950s with cool skepticism.⁵⁵ In the early 1960s, the atomic theme continued among dispensationalists

⁵⁴ In recent years there have been several studies of twentieth- and twenty-first-century American Christian Zionism by authors in fields other than history of Christianity or Zionism. These include a journalist: Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); a specialist in literature and theology: Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); a professor of rhetorical theory: Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and a psychologist: Charles B. Strozier, *Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

⁵⁵ Boyer, 119-120.

such as Dallas Theological Seminary professor Dwight Pentecost, who warned that Ezekiel's war was imminent. Prophecy conferences also focused on themes of nuclear fulfillment of biblical prophecy.⁵⁶

During the 1950s, and continuing into the 1960s, important shifts occurred among conservative American Protestants. Some began to differentiate themselves from fundamentalism, especially on issues related to cultural separation. This new generation of conservative leaders sought to maintain fundamentalism's emphases on biblical authority, evangelism, personal conversion, and atonement while rejecting fundamentalism's separatism from mainline Protestantism and wider society. This was the rise of twentieth-century evangelicalism.⁵⁷

Weber has characterized the 1970s and 80s as an era in which dispensationalists made new and surprisingly bold and successful forays into mass media and politics.⁵⁸ The most noteworthy mass media success was Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, first published in 1970.⁵⁹ Lindsey studied at Dallas Theological Seminary, the intellectual heart of American dispensationalism. Under leading dispensationalist scholars John F. Walvoord, Charles C. Ryrie, and Dwight Pentecost, Lindsey learned the copious details of dispensationalist doctrine. Soon thereafter he became a popular speaker on the end times among college students in Southern California. Notes from these evangelistically successful lectures would eventually be transformed into Lindsey's breakthrough book, which interpreted recent and current world events in light of biblical prophecy in snappy, populist prose. *The Late Great Planet Earth* became the best-selling nonfiction book of the entire decade. Over the thirty years following its publication, it would be translated into over fifty

⁵⁶ Ibid., 122-126.

⁵⁷ The standard works on the topic are by George Marsden: *Fundamentalism and American Culture; Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991); *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987).

⁵⁸ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 187-207.

⁵⁹ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

languages and sell over thirty-five million copies.⁶⁰ Following Lindsey's success, many dispensationalists joined the Christian mass media revolution, entering publishing, radio, and television in unprecedented numbers and reaching audiences of millions.

Mass media were not the only new territories entered by dispensationalists in the 1970s and 80s; they also entered into politics in new ways and in surprising numbers. Their activism was focused primarily on "pro-family" issues such as opposition to abortion, gay marriage, and the Equal Rights Amendment, as well as other issues related to the subsequently-termed "culture wars," such as creationism and prayer in schools. Some groups also prioritized fiscal conservatism and national defense and security. Most of the prominent leaders of the New Christian Right were dispensationalists, including Jerry Falwell and other leaders of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition. Perhaps no figure combined these two frontiers of dispensationalism, mass media and conservative politics, more prominently than Pat Robertson. Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) was ahead of the trend, going on air in the early 1960s. With the well-established base of CBN viewers (especially of the *700 Club* program) and the university he founded (now Regent University, Virginia Beach), he was able to educate and mobilize hundreds of thousands of Americans in his politically conservative and prophetically-charged campaigns against disarmament, immorality, and the New World Order.⁶¹

By the 1990s, the relevance and appeal of *The Late Great Planet Earth* was waning. Tim LaHaye stepped into the void with a stunningly popular series of dispensationalist novels. LaHaye was a graduate of Bob Jones University and a founding board member of the Moral Majority. He and his wife Beverly were prominent leaders of the New Christian Right. In the mid-1990s he provided the sketch of prophetic chronology which Jerry Jenkins, a prolific Christian author, turned into a series of novels chronicling the events of the rapture and seven years of

⁶⁰ See Clark, 154-158; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 188-192.

⁶¹ See Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 204-207; and Clyde Wilcox and Carin Larson, *Onward Christian Soldiers?: The Religious Right in American Politics*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006).

tribulation.⁶² The *Left Behind* novels – an original series of twelve books (seven of which made the *New York Times* best-seller list) to which there has now been added a series of three prequel novels and a projected series of sequel novels – have sold over 63 million copies. They have also spawned an industry of *Left Behind* movies, graphic novels, videos, juvenile novels, military novels, political novels, merchandise, and most recently a controversial video game.⁶³

With the end of the cold war era, the Soviet Union and the atomic bomb were slowly replaced in dispensationalist attentions by Arabs, Islam and terrorism. The transition was not an immediate or easy one. Dispensationalists had long believed that Israel would have to contend against the forces of Russia and the northern confederacy in the end times; Arab states only figured in the chronologies marginally. However, when the Persian Gulf War erupted in 1990, the shift was solidified. Sales in prophetic books soared and John F. Walvoord, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and author of the newly-updated and reissued *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis*,⁶⁴ became a sought-after pundit on radio and television reports on the significance of the conflict in Iraq and Kuwait. Dispensationalists became fascinated with Saddam Hussein's plans to rebuild the city of Babylon and some strayed from traditional interpretations of Babylon in Revelation as the revived Roman Empire and the apostate church, favoring instead the literal city reborn under Hussein's rule. This shift was popularized in the evolving plot of the *Left Behind* novels, in which the United Nations is controlled by the Antichrist, renamed the Global Community, and headquartered in the New Babylon in Iraq.⁶⁵

⁶² Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 192-196. For a fascinating study of readers of *Left Behind*, see Frykholm.

⁶³ For all the book titles and other merchandise, see Left Behind, <www.leftbehind.com> (19 June 2008). Sales figures are from Suzanne Ely, "No Growing Pains for 'Left Behind'," *USA Weekend Magazine* (4 June 2006). <http://www.usaweekend.com/06_issues/060604/060604celeb_kirk_cameron.html> (18 June 2008).

⁶⁴ John F. Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis: What the Bible Says about the Future of the Middle East and the End of Western Civilization* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974 and 1990).

⁶⁵ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 207-212.

As we will see below,⁶⁶ the events of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent “War on Terror” have confirmed focus on Arabs, Islam, and the Middle East as the central figures in fulfillment of end-times prophecies. Dispensationalist leaders and authors such as John Hagee and Joel Rosenberg continue to raise alarms about Iran and other Middle Eastern states, as well as the religion of Islam. Dispensationalist antagonism toward non-Jewish Middle Easterners arises not only from current American conflicts with terrorist entities and Middle Eastern states, but also from the perception that non-Jewish Middle Easterners are Israel’s enemies paired with the conviction that Christians must support Israel and Jewish people.

The Relationship of Dispensationalists to Jews, Judaism and Israel

Before exploring this incredibly complex relationship, it is important to note that support for the state of Israel among Christians has, by no means, been confined to dispensationalism. There are many volumes written on Christian contributions to Zionism which make no reference to dispensationalism, or which treat it very briefly as one factor among many which led Christians to Zionism.⁶⁷ While virtually every source on Christian Zionism includes a discussion of William E. Blackstone,⁶⁸ several do so without reference to his dispensationalism.⁶⁹ Some sources make no reference at

⁶⁶ See pages 183-189, below.

⁶⁷ Examples include the following: Hertzal Fishman, *American Protestantism and a Jewish State* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973); and Michael J. Pragai, *Faith and Fulfillment: Christians and the Return to the Promised Land* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell and Co., 1985).

⁶⁸ See page 35, below.

⁶⁹ Examples include the following: Edward Bernard Glick, *The Triangular Connection: America, Israel, and American Jews* (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1982); Peter Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983); Regina S. Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism: Its Roots in Western History* (London: Zed Press, 1983); William L. Burton, “Protestant America and the Rebirth of Israel,” *Jewish Social Studies* 26 (1964): 203-214.

all to dispensationalists or dispensationalism.⁷⁰ There have been many millenarianisms, hermeneutical strategies, and political ideologies which have motivated Christians of various kinds to support a Jewish state in Palestine. There were restorationists (the term used to describe advocates for a Jewish state in Palestine before the Zionist movement was founded) in Britain long before Darby and in America long before dispensationalism became the most prominent eschatology among fundamentalists and evangelicals. Further, though it is commonly assumed that all Christian Zionists are politically and theologically conservative, this was not the case before statehood. One of the most prominent Christian groups to support the creation of a Jewish state in the 1940s was the Christian Council on Palestine, the founding members of which included Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich.⁷¹ Some Christian Zionist organizations exist to this day which are not dependent upon evangelicalism or dispensationalism.⁷²

Dispensational Restorationism and the Rise of Jewish Zionism

Nevertheless, one of the central convictions arising from the biblical literalism of nineteenth-century premillennialists was that a Jewish state would be established in Palestine before the millennium. Almost from the very beginnings of the premillennial movement, restorationism was “firmly established as a plank in the millenarian creed.”⁷³ Restorationism became even more important as dispensationalism became the favored form of premillennialism. According to the dispensationalist interpretation of God’s covenants with Israel, no matter what turns history might take in the current

⁷⁰ For example, Robert T. Handy, “Zion in American Christian Movements,” in *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956): 284-297.

⁷¹ Glick, 68; Lawrence J. Epstein, *Zion’s Call: Christian Contributions to the origins of Development of Israel* (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 122-129. On various Protestant views toward Israel, see Fishman.

⁷² For example, The National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel (NCLCI) was founded by scholar Franklin Littell just after the 1967 war, with the goal of maintaining and organizing support for Israel among mainstream churches in North America.

⁷³ Sandeen, 11.

dispensation, there will inevitably come a time when Israel is a great nation, in the promised land, ruled by the Davidic Messiah. In early nineteenth-century Britain and America, many Christians identified their own nations with the Promised Land of the Bible. Much has been written on the “British-Israel” and “America as Israel” sentiments of the era.⁷⁴ In contrast, dispensationalism suggested that no modern country, nor the church, had taken the place of Israel in God’s plan. God had a specific plan for the people of Israel gathered as a nation-state, and that plan would yet be fulfilled.

According to Sandeen, “there can be no question that the millenarian movement played a significant role in preparing the British for political Zionism.”⁷⁵ “Preparing” is not too strong a word here, as there were many vocal Christian restorationists well before the organization of the Zionist movement. While a few individual Jewish leaders had supported restoration in the early nineteenth century, they were usually met with insistence that it was better to assimilate and participate fully in European society than to withdraw to a Jewish state.⁷⁶

However, assimilationism was dealt several serious blows in the 1880s as anti-Jewish sentiment erupted anew across Europe, and even more so in Russia. Then, when French Jewish officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was convicted of spying in 1895, anti-Jewish riots occurred across France, driving more and more Jews to agree with rising restorationist sentiments.⁷⁷ In 1897 the first Zionist Congress met in Basel, Switzerland, marking the official beginning of the movement. Because Ottoman imperial control of Palestine so complicated the scenario, some leaders of the movement suggested other geographical locations for the Jewish state, particularly Uganda as it was controlled by the British who were increasingly sympathetic to Zionism. But such suggestions were unpopular, and the movement quickly refocused

⁷⁴ Boyer, 86.

⁷⁵ Sandeen, 11-12.

⁷⁶ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 97.

⁷⁷ This was the occasion of the writing of “*J’accuse*,” the famous open letter to the French president by author Emile Sola. *L’Aurore* (23 February, 1898).

on Palestine.⁷⁸ In 1917, as British forces challenged the loosening grip of the Ottoman Empire on Palestine, the British foreign secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour, declared the sympathy of the British government for Zionism in a letter to James Rothschild, a leader of the movement. The Balfour Declaration, and the fall of Jerusalem to the British a few weeks later, sustained the Zionist movement over the next, tragic decades until the Jewish state became a reality in 1948.

However, several years before the Zionist movement took shape, some Christians influenced by dispensationalism began to advocate restoration actively. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, moved both by dispensationalist theology and the political interests of the British Empire, “advocated the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land as early as 1839.”⁷⁹ Even more important was dispensationalist William E. Blackstone (1841-1935), who became an outspoken proponent of a Jewish state in Palestine. In fact, Blackstone was “one of the first Americans to advocate the return of the Jews to Palestine.”⁸⁰ Blackstone was a Methodist and a successful businessman. Living near Chicago after the Civil War, he became associated with many members of the extensive dispensationalist network there. Eventually, he helped popularize dispensationalism, publishing the book *Jesus is Coming* in 1878. “Probably no dispensational Bible teacher of his time had a larger popular audience.”⁸¹

Yet Blackstone was not content only to write about restorationism. Unlike most dispensationalists of his generation, he became an activist in the cause. Most notably, in 1891 – six years before the founding of the Zionist movement – he sponsored his famous “memorial,” a lobbying piece delivered to the president and the secretary of state advocating a Jewish state in Palestine and signed by 413 prominent Americans, including the chief justice of the Supreme Court, several congressmen, mayors, journalists, and business leaders, one of which was John D. Rockefeller. He

⁷⁸ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 97-99.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 158. See also Pragai, 43ff.; Sharif, 41-43.

⁸⁰ Szasz, 81.

⁸¹ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 103.

developed similar petitions again in 1903 and 1916, the latter being presented to President Wilson by a delegation of prominent Christian leaders. Wilson supported the Balfour Declaration the following year. When the Zionist movement became active in the early 1900s, Blackstone worked side by side with its leaders. At the Zionist conference of 1918, he was proclaimed a “Father of Zionism.” And on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Blackstone Memorial in 1956, the state of Israel named a national forest for him.⁸²

Blackstone did not limit his activism to the political arena; he was also a pioneer in Jewish missions. He founded one of the first American missionary groups to focus on converting Jews in 1887: the Chicago Committee for Hebrew Christian Work, later the Chicago Hebrew Mission. Another early leader in dispensationalist missions was Arno Gaebelein, a Methodist and the leader of New York City’s Hope of Israel Mission. These missions offered varied social services and training programs for newly-immigrated Jews, published literature, held lectures, and organized conferences. Gaebelein’s mission work eventually expanded to Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and even Jerusalem. “Eventually, nearly every major American city with a substantial Jewish population had some kind of evangelistic witness to the Jews, most of which were either founded or heavily supported by premillennialists.”⁸³ Dispensationalist missions continued to expand over the next few decades. In 1923, Moody Bible Institute began a training program focused on evangelizing Jews.⁸⁴

⁸² On Blackstone, see: Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 102-106; Ruth W. Mouly, *The Religious Right and Israel: The Politics of Armageddon* (Chicago: Midwest Research, 1985), 19-20; Pragai, 56-57; Sharif, 91-93; Moshe Davis, *With Eyes Toward Zion, Volume IV: America and the Holy Land* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 64-66.

⁸³ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 115.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 112-128. On American dispensationalist missions to Jews, see Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). On British millennialist evangelism of Jews, see Sarah Kochav, “‘Beginning at Jerusalem’: The Mission to the Jews and English Evangelical Eschatology,” in Moshe Davis, ed., *With Eyes Toward Zion, Volume V: Jerusalem in the Mind of the Western World, 1800-1948* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

The American Colony in Jerusalem

Another group of dispensationalists, under the leadership of Horatio and Anna Spafford, had an entirely different approach to restorationism and mission. Many American evangelicals are familiar with the harrowing tale of the Spaffords who, in 1873 decided to take a family vacation in Europe. Anna and their four daughters went ahead and Horatio planned to join them soon after, but their steamer was involved in a collision in which 230 passengers perished, including all four girls. Anna's telegraph to Horatio said only "survived. alone." In response, Horatio wrote the beloved hymn "It is Well with my Soul," a proclamation of God's sovereignty amidst human suffering.⁸⁵

However, few evangelicals today know how the rest of the Spafford story unfolded. They went on to have two more daughters and one son, but the son died of scarlet fever. Having suffered the deaths of five children, the Spaffords became increasingly dissatisfied with the Calvinistic explanations of God's sovereignty given them by their Presbyterian church. Horatio began to question the church's doctrines publicly and was eventually forced out of the congregation. But the Spaffords were supported by many dispensationalists, including Blackstone and Moody. A small group of their dispensationalist supporters began to call themselves the Overcomers (others have called them Spaffordites), and in 1881 they moved together to Jerusalem and established a commune in the Old City.

The Overcomers believed the second coming was very close at hand, and this led to strict rules against private property, the education of children, and sexual intercourse. They also provided humanitarian aid to Jewish immigrants living in severe poverty. Many dispensationalists who toured the Holy Land visited the community, which was known as the American Colony in Jerusalem. When Horatio died, Anna became the matriarch of the colony and her leadership became increasingly authoritarian and charismatic (in the sense of claiming to be informed by

⁸⁵ For the story of the Spaffords, as told by their daughter, see Bertha Spafford Vester, *Our Jerusalem: An American Family in the Holy City, 1881-1949* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1951). On the sinking of the *Ville du Haure* and the writing of "It is Well with my Soul," see pages 38-61.

direct revelation). In 1896 they were joined by over 100 Swedish dispensationalists who were eager for front-row seats to prophetic fulfillment. However, the colony soon began to settle in to the reality that Christ had not yet returned. They started several agricultural and retail establishments to support the community, including a guest house which is still a functioning hotel today. Anna also received a revelation that they should begin educating their children and allowing them to marry and have sex, as they were coming of age. The community continued for over fifty years, eventually losing its eschatological focus. In fact, after Anna died and the second generation matured, they became supporters of Arab Palestinians against the rising Zionist movement.⁸⁶

Dispensationalists on The Protocols and Hitler

A particularly dark episode in the relationship between dispensationalists and Jews surrounded the emergence of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. A literary forgery and anti-Jewish hoax, *The Protocols* first surfaced in Russia shortly after 1900, and was alleged to be a secret document internal to the Jewish plot to control the world. *The Protocols* was later seized upon by anti-Jewish groups in Europe and America. It was printed in installments in American newspapers beginning in 1919, and later published as a book, *The International Jew*,⁸⁷ funded by Henry Ford. Some dispensationalists saw it for the forgery it was from the beginning. But many exploited it as a sign of the end times. Gaebelien in particular became fascinated with *The Protocols*. He wrote about the “apostate Jews” and their conspiracy in his journal, *Our Hope*. In the 1930s, dispensationalist interest in *The Protocols* was renewed when the fundamentalist *Defender* published “evidence” supporting claims of the document’s authenticity. Gaebelien published *The Conflict of the Ages*,⁸⁸ a history of human

⁸⁶ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 106-109; Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 36-38. See also Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 152-159.

⁸⁷ *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem* (Dearborn, MI: Dearborn Publishing, 1920).

⁸⁸ Arno Clemens Gaebelien, *The Conflict of the Ages: The Mystery of*

lawlessness, in which he again supported *The Protocols*. In his view, *The Protocols* revealed how the stage was being set for a final battle between good and evil. By the late 1930s, many more dispensationalists had condemned *The Protocols* as a vicious forgery, and few wanted to be associated with it. James Brookes asked dispensationalist leaders to sign his “Manifesto to the Jews,” condemning anti-Semitism and renouncing *The Protocols*. Most agreed. A few refused. Gaebelein seems to have secretly had his name added to the list later, but never printed a retraction in *Our Hope*, and continued to promote *The Conflict of the Ages* the rest of his life.⁸⁹

William Bell Riley (1861-1947), a dispensationalist fundamentalist leader, was one of the few who refused to withdraw support for *The Protocols*. He was also one of the few dispensationalist leaders who continued to voice support for Hitler after 1935, when his anti-Jewish campaign was well known.⁹⁰ When the world became aware of Hitler’s genocidal intentions, most dispensationalists condemned his treatment of Jews, but also saw it as part of the long history of Jews being left to the mercy of their enemies as divine punishment. “Just as God had used Nebuchadnezzar’s evil and ruthless Babylonians to punish the chosen people in the Old Testament, God was using Hitler’s Nazis to carry out later dimensions of the divine plan. But God would judge the persecutors too, when their awful work was done.”⁹¹

Israeli Statehood

As World War II ended, tensions were escalating in Palestine. War between Jews and Arabs seemed inevitable, and the British prepared to exit the region. War did break out in November of 1947, and David Ben-Gurion declared Israel a state in May of 1948. Over 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were displaced. The British left Palestine,

Lawlessness: Its Origin, Historic Development and Coming Defeat (New York: Publication office “Our Hope”, 1933).

⁸⁹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 210; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 130-142.

⁹⁰ Clark, 138-139; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 130-142, 146.

⁹¹ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 147. See also Clark, 139.

the United States recognized Israel's statehood, and Israel joined the United Nations, all in short order.

Reaction to Israel's statehood was mixed within dispensationalism. Israel of 1948 did not extend to the borders they expected, leading some to deny statehood as a fulfillment of prophecy. Others heralded it as the first, important phase of fulfillment. Central to these differences was not only the issue of geography, but the issue of the religious status of Jews returning to Palestine. Most nineteenth-century dispensationalists had believed that the Jewish state would not be restored in Palestine until after the tribulation, when Jesus returned and was enthroned as Messiah. Thus, Jews would only return to Palestine "in belief." However, as restorationist sentiments and possibilities grew within the British Empire and especially after the founding of the Zionist movement, many dispensationalists argued that Jews would return to Palestine "in unbelief," that is not having accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Statehood brought this debate to its climax, with most dispensationalists eventually deciding that the return of Jews to Palestine "in unbelief" was in fact the beginning of prophetic fulfillment.⁹²

Less prominent in dispensationalist debates about statehood were questions of its international legality and its impact on Arab Palestinians. Although there were a very few dispensationalist voices raising questions about justice for Palestinians and international order, the overwhelming vocal majority had decidedly anti-Arab views, portrayed the Palestinians as obstacles to God's plan for the Holy Land, and concluded that the unfolding of prophecy transcended international law and order concerns. "The Arabs had to adjust to God's plan for them, which did not include possessing Palestine in the end times."⁹³ Unconditional support for Israel became the norm among dispensationalists. Most vocally supported Israel's attack on Egypt in 1956, and they resoundingly heralded the Six-Day War of 1967 – particularly the Israeli capture of Jerusalem – as miraculous prophetic fulfillment.⁹⁴

Weber has argued that when Israel became a state, and especially after its

⁹² Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 166-169; Boyer, 187-193.

⁹³ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 171. See also Boyer, 200-203.

⁹⁴ Boyer, 204; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 175-186.

expansion in 1967, a major shift occurred within dispensationalism. He likened the majority of pre-statehood dispensationalists to spectators in the stands, passively watching a game on the field below. However, when the game took the dramatic turn of statehood, they were no longer content to observe and many left the stands to join the game and help ensure it continued to play out as they believed it should.⁹⁵ Shortly after the Six-Day War, more and more dispensationalist Christians began actively forging ties with Israelis. Approximately 1400 people attended the 1971 Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy which was addressed by Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

A shift which began with the eerily accurate fulfillment of dispensationalist predictions in World War I, was furthered by the advent of Israeli statehood: the turn of many American dispensationalists away from the strictly futurist interpretation of biblical prophecy taught by Darby and Scofield, toward a more historicist interpretation of the beginnings of prophetic fulfillment in the contemporary age. Events which were originally expected to occur after the rapture now seemed to be unfolding before dispensationalist eyes, and prophetic interpretations as well as attitudes toward Zionist activism were duly reoriented.

Holy Land Tours

Evangelicals and fundamentalists began touring the newly-expanded Israel in large numbers, especially after the Israeli Ministry of Tourism gave prominent American conservative leaders all-expense-paid tours so that they could encourage their constituencies to come to Israel, or learn how to direct tours themselves. Soon there were dozens of conservative Christian travel agencies and tour groups organizing trips to the Holy Land.⁹⁶

One of the most prominent leaders of Holy Land tours was Jerry Falwell (1933-2007). Founder of the Moral Majority and Liberty University, televangelist, and pastor of the 22,000-member Thomas Road Baptist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia, Falwell was one of the most public faces of American fundamentalism from the 1970s

⁹⁵ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 213-218.

until his death. He also had a particularly close relationship with Israel. He took one of the Israeli government's free tours in 1978, was awarded the Vladimir Jabotinsky Medal by Prime Minister Begin in 1980, was provided a personal jet by the Israeli government to ease his frequent travel between America and Israel, and was one of the first people Begin called for support after Israel bombed a nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981.⁹⁷ In 1984 Falwell made this prediction: "It is my feeling that the best friends Israel has in the world today are among Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians. I think five years from now that consensus will be virtually unanimous."⁹⁸

Grace Halsell, an investigative journalist and former Johnson administration speech writer, went on two of Jerry Falwell's Holy Land tours in the 1980s as research for her book, *Prophecy and Politics*.⁹⁹ She noted that although the tours were billed as Christian and all the participants were conservative Christians, they were largely focused on Israeli history, government, and military, and relating this information to biblical prophecy. She was struck by the paucity of tour stops and lectures related to the life and ministry of Jesus, and the complete lack of attention to the indigenous Christian church. In fact, when she tabulated how the tour groups had spent their time, the ratio of hours spent learning about Israel, Zionism, the Israeli military, and

⁹⁷ Ibid., 218-219. See also Harding's fascinating ethnography of Falwell's congregation, which is written as a portrait of the group's shift from separatist fundamentalism to activist evangelicalism. Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell*.

⁹⁸ This quotation from Falwell is in a fascinating book which is edited transcripts of an extensive interview with Falwell by a sympathetic Jew seeking to make Falwell palatable to and trusted by American and Israeli Jews: Merrill Simon, *Jerry Falwell and the Jews* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1984), 88. Simon was ahead of his time, writing articles in the mid-1970s urging Jewish Zionists to tap the "theoretical love of the state of Israel" among Christian fundamentalists and transform it into political action. Ibid., xii.

⁹⁹ Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists and the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1986). Halsell's book is a treasure-trove of both anecdotes and researched data and is cited by virtually everyone who has written on the subject of dispensationalism and Zionism since its publication. However, her tone and conclusions lean toward conspiracy theory, which was common of journalistic pieces of the mid-1980s on fundamentalists and evangelicals, especially in relation to the cold war and nuclear weapons. She also insists that dispensationalists' motives must be purely political, not theological.

prophecy to hours spent at Christian sites and/or learning about Jesus was 30:1.¹⁰⁰

Writing on Dispensationalist Christian Zionism

Jerry Falwell and other dispensationalist leaders of the New Christian Right brought their brand of Christian Zionism under the investigative lights of authors outside of disciplines related to the history and theology of Christianity. It is striking that nearly all the literature on Christian Zionism in which dispensationalism does not figure prominently was written before the mid-1980s.¹⁰¹ With the rise of the New Christian Right in America there came a new level of pro-Israel activism and an increased visibility of dispensationalist Christianity which seems to have finally allowed dispensationalism to register on the radar screens of historians, sociologists, and journalists.¹⁰²

The renewed fundamentalist and evangelical political activism of the late 1970s and 1980s not only brought dispensationalism to the attention of outsiders writing about Christian Zionism, it also gave rise to an ongoing genre of books written by evangelicals for evangelical audiences explaining and strongly critiquing dispensationalism and the history of Christian Zionism. The first well-known book of this sort was Dwight Wilson's *Armageddon Now!*, published in 1977. The next came from a British evangelical, Colin Chapman. He published *Whose Promised Land?* in 1983, and has since released four further editions. More recent examples include Donald E. Wagner's *Anxious for Armageddon*, Gary M. Burge's *Whose Land? Whose Promise?*, and British Anglican Stephen Sizer's *Christian Zionism and Zion's*

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 121.

¹⁰¹ See the interesting example of Yona Malachy's 1978 volume, *American Fundamentalism and Israel: The Relation of Fundamentalist Churches to Zionism and the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1978). The volume includes chapters on Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostalism, and Dispensationalism. Malachy attributes the Christian Zionism of American fundamentalism to Adventism, and concludes that Zionism amongst dispensationalists since World War I has been only doctrinal, not activist.

¹⁰² For example, in contrast to the many sources cited above (see notes 69-71, above) from Jewish authors who seemed unaware of dispensationalism, Epstein's 1984 volume discusses dispensationalism and includes sections on Darby, Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, Hal Lindsey, and Dwight Moody.

*Christian Soldiers?*¹⁰³ These books each include original, scholarly work in addition to accessibly presented overviews of materials from previous works. They aimed to raise awareness among conservative Christians concerning the history and the inadequacies of Christian Zionism, the history of the conflict in Israel/Palestine, and the plight of Palestinians, especially Palestinian Christians.

Christian Zionist Organizations

The early 1980s also brought the founding of the International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem (ICEJ). The majority of the international community protested Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem by moving their embassies to Tel Aviv, and in 1980 a group of Christian Zionists, dispensationalists and non-dispensationalist Charismatics, purchased the former Chilean embassy building and founded the ICEJ. The embassy is best known for hosting an annual Feast of Tabernacles conference which attracts several thousands of Christian Zionists from around the world who march through Jerusalem and are addressed by the Prime Minister. The ICEJ also provides social services to Jews in Jerusalem, brings evangelical and fundamentalist tourists to Israel, organizes Christian Zionist Congresses, lobbies the United States government on behalf of Israel, and assists Jews in immigrating to Israel.¹⁰⁴ By 1998 they had assisted approximately 40,000 immigrants from Russia alone.¹⁰⁵ The ICEJ currently claims to represent "millions of believers from over 125 countries," and has

¹⁰³ Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now! The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel since 1917* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977); Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis over Israel and Palestine* (Ann Arbor, MI: Lion Pub., 1983); Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Churches* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995); Gary M. Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise?: What Christians are Not Being Told about Israel and the Palestinians* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003); Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-Map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2004) and *Zion's Christian Soldiers? The Bible, Israel and the Church* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁴ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 215-218; Paul Charles Merkley, *Christian Attitudes towards the State of Israel* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 170-176.

¹⁰⁵ Merkley, *Christian Attitudes towards the State of Israel*, 173.

“active representation in nearly 80 nations.”¹⁰⁶

In addition to the ICEJ, there are several prominent Christian Zionist organizations active today with historic roots in and/or contemporary connections with dispensationalism. Bridges for Peace and Christians United for Israel are perhaps the most widely known, and they will be discussed below.¹⁰⁷ Other groups include Christians for Israel,¹⁰⁸ the Unity Coalition for Israel,¹⁰⁹ Christian Friends of Israel,¹¹⁰ and the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.¹¹¹

While many Christian Zionists, including those who are the subject of this study, claim to oppose proselytism of Jews, others have continued the missionary efforts of earlier dispensationalists. The most widely known group of this sort, Jews for Jesus, was founded in San Francisco in 1970. Their approach to evangelizing Jews was built on the conviction that Jews who become Christians should retain their Jewish identity.¹¹² The group was one manifestation of the wider movement of Messianic Judaism. While Jewish converts to Christianity before the 1970s generally joined existing evangelical congregations, with the rise of Messianic Judaism congregations founded by Jewish converts began to emerge. Eventually, Christian missions groups began founding such congregations as well. These congregations generally met on Saturdays and observed Jewish festivals throughout the year.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, “Your Embassy in Jerusalem,” <www.icej.org/articles/about_us> (11 June 2008).

¹⁰⁷ See pages 65-66, below.

¹⁰⁸ Christians for Israel International, <www.c4israel.org> (19 June 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Unity Coalition for Israel, <www.israelunitycoalition.org> (19 June 2008).

¹¹⁰ Christian Friends of Israel, <www.cfi-usa.org> (19 June 2008).

¹¹¹ International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, <www.ifcj.org> (19 June 2008).

¹¹² Jews for Jesus, <www.jewsforjesus.org> (19 June 2008). See also Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 234-238; Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, 200-219.

¹¹³ Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, 220-251; Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 238-242.

However, it eventually became clear that the congregations were attracting more Gentile Christians than converted Jews. A survey published in 2000 estimated that of 50,000-60,000 Jewish Christians in North America, only about ten percent attended Messianic congregations. Among the Jewish members of Messianic congregations, very few had been converted by fellow Jews; ninety-eight percent had been evangelized by Gentile Christians.¹¹⁴ Messianic congregations also emerged in Israel. By 2000, there were over six thousand Messianic Jews meeting in over 100 congregations or house groups around Israel.¹¹⁵

In addition to political activism, humanitarian work, and missions, a few dispensationalists have also become involved with radical fringe groups in Israel which seek the destruction of the Muslim buildings on the Temple Mount so that the new Jewish temple can be erected. Weber has demonstrated ties between some Christian Zionists and the Temple Mount Faithful, a group whose stated goals include “Liberating the Temple Mount from Arab (Islamic) occupation,”¹¹⁶ and the Temple Institute, which will be discussed below.¹¹⁷ Such activities cause many to question whether Christian Zionists truly seek Israel’s best interests, or only the fulfillment of their own vision of Israel’s future.

Do Dispensationalists Love Jews?

An ongoing debate within the literature on dispensationalism and Israel concerns whether dispensationalism is inherently philo-Semitic, anti-Semitic, or is

¹¹⁴ Jeffrey S. Wasserman, *Messianic Jewish Congregations: Who Sold This Business to the Gentiles?* (New York: University Press of America, 2000). Quoted by Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 242.

¹¹⁵ Statistics from Ariel and Wasserman quoted by Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 245.

¹¹⁶ Temple Mount and Eretz Yisrael Faithful Movement, Jerusalem, “Objectives,” <www.templemountfaithful.org/obj.htm> (11 June 2008). See also Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 257-260.

¹¹⁷ See pages 70-71, below. See also Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 260-262.

deeply ambivalent toward Jews.¹¹⁸ David Rausch has argued in several places that Christian fundamentalism is essentially philo-Semitic. Following Sandeen's thesis on the growth of fundamentalism from the premillennial movement, Rausch describes nineteenth-century premillennialists, whom he calls "proto-fundamentalists," as consistent supporters of restorationism and as "pro-Jewish." In fact, he insists that "the more Fundamentalist in theology that one is, the more pro-Jewish one becomes; *and* the more Liberal in theology one is, the more there is a chance for anti-Semitism to occur."¹¹⁹ Rausch has presented Gaebelien as typifying dispensationalists' love of and dedication to the Jewish people – the *Protocols* episode was unfortunate, but temporary and uncharacteristic, especially since many other dispensationalist leaders immediately rejected their authenticity.¹²⁰

Rausch has been challenged by several scholars. Weber has insisted that dispensationalists have had an ironic ambivalence toward Jews and Judaism, often acting and speaking in philo-Semitic ways, but also engaging in many other behaviors which certainly seem anti-Semitic.¹²¹ Rausch has also been refuted in Yakov Ariel's 1991 volume, *On Behalf of Israel*, which focuses on the relationship of dispensationalism to Jews, Judaism, and Zionism. Ariel uses Blackstone and Gaebelien as representatives of the movement. Blackstone is characterized as a man who "sincerely considered himself a friend of the Jews," yet was clearly motivated most by his dispensationalism, not by friendship. Ariel found no evidence that Blackstone saw any intrinsic value in Judaism as a cultural heritage or religious belief system, nor driving concern to do for Jews what Jews wanted or needed. Instead,

¹¹⁸ I am using the terms 'anti-Semitism', 'philo-Semitism,' and related terms as they are used in the body of literature to which I am referring. They are used only in reference to Jews and Judaism, not in the more literal or technical sense of 'Semitic' which refers more widely to all Semitic peoples/cultures.

¹¹⁹ David A. Rausch, *Zionism Within Early American Fundamentalism, 1878-1918: A Convergence of Two Traditions* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1979), 341-342.

¹²⁰ Rausch, "Fundamentalism and the Jew: An Interpretive Essay," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24 (1980): 105-112.

¹²¹ Weber, "A Reply to David Rausch's 'Fundamentalism and the Jew,'" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24 (1981): 67-71.

Blackstone's Zionism was "an instrument for setting Jews in Palestine and preparing the ground for the great events that would take place after the rapture of the church."¹²² Ariel's exploration of Gaebelien reveals a similar, if perhaps more troubling, ambivalence. He has argued that Gaebelien's promotion of *The Protocols* was far from exceptional and that, while Gaebelien's views on Jews and Judaism were "complex and varied," and while he explicitly rejected anti-Semitism, he consistently wrote about Jews with suspicion and with a sense of their moral inferiority.¹²³ Ariel concluded, "Gaebelien's writings reveal with sharpness and clarity the complexity and ambivalence of the premillennialist attitudes toward the Jewish people, Judaism, and Zionism."¹²⁴

Ariel's analysis is corroborated by Paul Merkley, an historian of Christian Zionism who is sympathetic to the movement. He has noted that dispensationalists such as Blackstone were motivated by "dogmatic convictions," not concerns for justice for Jews.¹²⁵ A striking example of this dynamic is that Reform Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch spoke at Blackstone's 1890 conference, insisting, "We modern Jews do not wish to be restored to Palestine," rather that Jews preferred full acceptance in the countries where they already resided. Nonetheless, Blackstone went forward with his memorial the following year.¹²⁶

Paul Boyer also argued against Rausch's conclusions, showing that while dispensationalists say they are against anti-Semitism, they are unduly inclined to

¹²² Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 95.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 112-114.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹²⁵ Paul Charles Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998), 62. The same conclusion has been reached elsewhere as well. "Jewry, Israel, and Jerusalem are not taken as Jews, Israel, and Jerusalem, but merely as pieces of a puzzle, or figures in a scheme, or elements of an eschatological timetable." Erich Geldbach, "Jerusalem in the Mind-Set of John Nelson Darby and his Fundamentalist Followers," in *With Eyes Toward Zion, Volume V: Jerusalem in the Mind of the Western World, 1800-1948*, eds. Yehosha Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997): 109-121.

¹²⁶ Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, 69-70.

expect and tolerate the existence of anti-Semitism. Further, he argued that the system developed by Darby and Scofield gave “the Jew” such “cosmic *otherness*” that dispensationalists are bound to view Jews as wholly separate and different from themselves and others, which is a kind of latent anti-Semitism.¹²⁷ Stephen Haynes has made a similar argument. He has described the history of Christian attitudes toward Jews as marked by the “witness-people myth,” a way of viewing the Jewish people mythologically and as moral symbols. Haynes argues that Christians “have a great difficulty viewing Jews as human beings like themselves.” Instead, in the Christian imagination, Jews are “cast in an angelic or demonic role.” Interestingly, Haynes shows how dispensationalism contains an inverse conviction to medieval Christian mythologies of Jews, which portrayed them as demonic and in league with Satan to murder Christ. The inverse conviction in dispensationalism is that Satan is constantly plotting to harm God’s chosen people and is in league with anti-Semites to destroy them. Ironically, however, because they believe such plots are foretold in prophecy and therefore inevitable, dispensationalists have consistently failed to oppose anti-Semitism actively.¹²⁸ Haynes also uses an anecdote from Grace Halsell’s investigative work to typify the way in which dispensationalists claim to be friends of Jews, but ignore their expressed desires and self-understandings. At the first Christian Zionist Congress, there was a resolution proposed in support of Israel annexing the West Bank. Some delegates pointed out that many Israelis favored trading land for peace. An angry delegate shouted, “We don’t care what the Israelis vote! We care what God says! And God gave the land to the Jews!”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Boyer, 217-224.

¹²⁸ Stephen R. Haynes, *Reluctant Witnesses: Jews and the Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 5-6, 150-166.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 164. According to Halsell, the angry delegate was John MacArthur.

Conclusion

Dispensationalism has taken a long and complicated journey in its brief history: from the mind of a disillusioned Anglican priest to the broadcasts of fiery televangelists; from an elite minority in nineteenth-century Britain to powerful, populist mega-churches across twenty-first century America; from studied observation to militant activism. But throughout the journey there has remained a unique view of the relationship between Christianity and Israel. Our study turns now from secondary treatments of this complex history to primary encounters with one contemporary instantiation of the Christian Zionism which has come to prominence in America and has its roots – though often unwittingly – in the history and theology of dispensational premillennialism.

CHAPTER THREE

An Introduction to Faith Bible Chapel

It is Sunday morning and thousands of worshippers have gathered at Faith Bible Chapel. Many of those present today are visiting for the first time. FBC wants to persuade as many of these visitors as possible to return on future Sundays. Pastor George is on the stage welcoming the crowd, and he asks first-time visitors to raise their hands. Several men fan out across the vast sanctuary, delivering small packets to each person with a hand raised. The packets include a brochure -- bright yellow and glossy, large and square -- which simply reads “faithbiblechapel” on the front. Inside there is information on children’s ministry, the Alpha course, the Atrium Café, prayer requests, the identity and beliefs of FBC, and how to become a member. The first-timers are also given a flier about the Bread Ministry and a form to fill out. Pastor George explains that FBC delivers a freshly baked loaf of bread to the home of every first-time visitor who fills out the form, and he cues the technical staff to screen some promotional videos so that the visitors will have time to fill out the forms before the offering is collected. Soon, small velvety bags with wooden handles are circulating, into which some are dropping cash and checks while the first-timers drop in their requests for free bread. Those visitors who take a moment to read the glossy brochure also find the following narrative of the congregation’s history:

Faith Bible Chapel started in the mid 60's as several families gathered for a Bible study. With a strong desire to learn God’s Word and His ways, the group soon outgrew the home and moved to a small church building in Arvada. In 1969 the church moved to a larger facility at 9th & Acoma in Denver. It was here that the church began to grow in miraculous ways. By 1977 the church had outgrown that space and moved back to Arvada, purchasing 9 acres at 62nd and Ward Road. In 1996, purchasing another campus and building, we became one church meeting in two locations. In June of 2001, construction began for a new Family Worship Center to seat 2600 people. This would enable the church to grow and make a place where the five services on two campuses could come back together. Altogether Faith Bible Chapel is currently ministering to over 5000 people locally and has a mission outreach supporting over 40 different ministries here in the United States and around the world.¹

¹ Faith Bible Chapel, “faithbiblechapel” (Arvada, CO), unpublished brochure. A longer version of this history as well as considerable amounts of information about the congregation can be found on their website, Faith Bible Chapel, <www.fbc.org>.

A Slightly Less Brief History of Faith Bible Chapel²

Of course the history of FBC is slightly more complicated than this brief narrative, and it involves more than numeric growth and movement between buildings. The families who met in a home in the 1960s were not simply a group of friends who decided to study the Bible together. They were mostly families from the area of San Jose, California who had moved to Denver along with the family of Bob Hooley, the church's founding pastor, for the purpose of planting a new church. They had been members of the same non-denominational church in California, and when Hooley felt called by God to return to his former home of Denver in 1964, several families joined the effort. Pastor George describes the origins of the group as miraculous: Hooley was healed of a physical ailment, opening the eyes of those around him to see that "God was still moving in people's lives. That became real to them, so, that's a big part of our history, because that's a big part of who we are today. Our message is: God is real. . . So, that's our history, is changed lives."³

Israel was a central concern of the congregation from its inception. A prophetic word was received⁴ that God wanted the new church to "bless his people." As Cheryl Morrison told the story, Hooley did not understand the prophetic word and began studying his Bible in order to decipher the message. "And in reading his Bible he came across Genesis 12:3,⁵ and he said, 'This is it.' He didn't know what it meant, he didn't know how to do it. He was clueless, but said, 'This is it. So it's like one of

² Although FBC is only a little over forty years old, learning their history is neither simple nor straightforward. As many American evangelicals, the members of FBC are much more focused on the present and the future than the past. There is neither a strong sense among the members of the congregation's history, nor has an historical archive been kept. Apart from documents cited, the following history is taken from conversations and interviews.

³ George Morrison, Interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

⁴ Accounts varied as to whom. One account had a matriarchal figure in the church in California delivering the word she had received to Hooley. Another account had Hooley receiving the word directly.

⁵ "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." King James Version.

the founding pillars – not pillars, one of the caissons, that go deep. It was a founding thing of our church.”⁶ The small group meeting in homes in the 1960s became very focused on learning the biblical histories and prophecies concerning Israel. They began reading whatever books they could find about Israel, eventually including *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey. Cheryl Morrison remembers first attending FBC in 1967, hearing Hooley teach about Israel and being moved so deeply that she repented of her anti-Semitism and was not only forgiven but unexpectedly “given a heart for Israel.”

By 1973 members of the church began touring Israel together. On the first FBC tour in March of that year, the group was in the Golan Heights and their tour guide was describing the 1967 war. He told them that when the question arose whether or not to take the Golan, “the decisive factor was, we have to do it for the children.”⁷ The group was standing on top of a former Syrian bunker, looking down over an Israeli kibbutz. The tour guide explained that before the Golan was taken, the children in this kibbutz did not know the difference between the sound of thunder and the sound of mortar fire. The Israelis took the land to change the lives of these children. The group was deeply moved by this account, and one of the men said, “I just feel we need to do what Genesis 12:3 says, that we need to stand here and bless Israel from this place that it’s been cursed from for so many years,” and they began to pray and to bless Israel.⁸

There was a young woman in the group with her newly-wedded husband. They had been worshiping with FBC since they were teenagers and the church met in his parents’ home. She is now a full-time member of the FBC staff and often tells the story often of what happened next that day in the Golan – and she cries every time. “As we turned to go back, it was just like heaven opened, and I just heard this simple song, ‘I will bless those who bless my people. I will curse those who curse them too. For this I have promised to my servant Abraham. I will keep my word.’”⁹ She sang the

⁶ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

song for the group and they were overcome. This narrative has become central to FBC's pro-Israel ministry, and the song is still sung at nearly every Israel-related event at FBC. People from all over the world seek permission from FBC to use "I Will Bless" in their own worship, events, and recordings.

When the group returned from the tour, the congregation's commitment to Israel began to take shape. Cheryl Morrison, who went on the tour the following year, remembers reading everything she could get her hands on about the history of modern Israel, and "it became clear to me that the events of June 1967 had been totally orchestrated by the hand of God to reunite Jerusalem and to put it under the control of the Jews."¹⁰ A performance group called Singers Shalom was soon formed, largely for the purpose of performing the song, "I Will Bless." This group would eventually evolve into The Internationals, who would do their first performance tour in Israel in 1977. The congregation also began to discuss hosting a large event to educate Christians about Jews, the Holocaust, and the modern state of Israel. They held their first Israel Awareness Day in 1978.

Hooley self-published several booklets on Israel, which FBC continues to use. Hooley had been the pastor of the church as it moved from homes into a small building in a suburb, then into a larger building downtown, and he continued as pastor through the move back to the suburb when a still larger building was needed in 1977. He resigned in 1984.¹¹ A leader from within the congregation took his place. George Morrison had come to FBC having had a born-again experience as an adult, soon after which he read *The Late Great Planet Earth*. He met his wife, Cheryl at FBC. Together they enrolled in and graduated from FBC's Bible College. Morrison was a partner in the construction firm that built the congregation's third building when they moved back to Arvada. When George became the pastor, Cheryl, who had been in charge of every Israel Awareness Day since its inception, became the official director of the Israel Outreach ministry. The Morrises' vision for FBC was inspired by 1

¹⁰ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

¹¹ Some members referred to what happened in this period as a church split. Others just reported that this was the year Hooley left. No one was interested in sharing details. It is clear that something very negative happened and they choose not to talk about it, at least not to outsiders.

Corinthians 10.32, which says, “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.”¹² Their deeply dispensationalist interpretation of this verse led them to conclude that these are the three people groups God is dealing with in the world, and each must be dealt with seriously and separately. Through their Israel Outreach they seek to inform Christians about Jews and to bless the Jewish community. Through their Missions ministry they seek to spread the gospel to the Gentiles. And through their internal ministries like Women’s Ministry, children’s and youth ministries, Celebrate Recovery, and Drama Ministry, they seek to grow and strengthen their church.

Faith Bible Chapel Today

FBC now has a weekly attendance of approximately 4500 people. Up to 75 small groups meet in various places around the city during the week. The Sunday School program is so large that it requires 700 volunteers to teach and assist. Their facilities include the 1977 building which is now connected by a skywalk stretching over a major thoroughfare to the recently-built Family Worship Center. At a corner facing a busy intersection, letters five feet tall spell out the church’s name and water cascades over the letters into a fountain. Large electronic signs face both directions flashing service times and upcoming events.

At FBC on a Sunday morning there are at least four police officers directing traffic around the church building. After being directed to a parking space, members walk to the Family Worship Center along paths lined with speakers amplifying praise music. Just outside the main entrance is a large, golden sculpture of a globe which appears to be lifted up by the water of the fountain below it. At every door FBC members greet those arriving. Inside the main entrance is a cavernous lobby. Flags of many countries of the world are suspended from the white metal support beams spanning the ceiling high above. White stones comprise a large section of one wall, and “Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem” is written across them in large, black metal

¹² King James Version.

letters. To one side is a plaque reading, “This wall is made of Jerusalem stone and stands as a reminder of God’s covenant promises to Israel.” Near the wall, glass cases display gifts given to FBC by Jewish friends, including a prayer shawl, a shofar and a menorah. Elsewhere in the lobby is a large depiction of a Jewish man blowing a shofar between two mountains and two tablets with Hebrew writing. The image is surrounded by the inscription: “Let the sound of the shofar bind the majestic mountains of Colorado with the holy mountains of Judea and bring unity of Christian and Jew.”

The lobby leads to the sanctuary on one side, and on the other is the Atrium Café, a large cluster of tables and chairs near expansive, floor-to-ceiling windows. Starbucks coffee and breakfast foods are served here on Sunday mornings. On Wednesday evenings the atrium is the venue for a cafeteria-style dinner before the mid-week service. Televisions are mounted in several places around the atrium. Before and between services these display advertisements for upcoming events, and services are broadcast on them so that parents with particularly “active” children can remain in the atrium, watching the service from there. An additional television is mounted in the ladies’ room so that women queuing for the toilets can see the advertisements and those breastfeeding on the overstuffed couch can watch the service. A portion of the atrium wing of the lobby is filled with information booths on Sunday mornings. Those interested can speak with volunteers or staff members, or pick up literature about the Kingdom Business Alliance, Faith Bible Institute, Beacon Institute, Women’s Ministry, Israel Outreach and other ministries of FBC. There is also a wall covered with large, backlit photographs of all the missionaries supported by the congregation. Under each photograph is a wooden slot filled with copies of the missionary’s current newsletter.

Behind the Jerusalem wall is the sanctuary. 2600 seats face the large stage flanked by American, Israeli, Colorado, and Christian flags. Above and to each side of the stage are large screens where song lyrics, scriptural texts, and advertisements for events are shown during services. On Sunday mornings the stage is peopled with choir members, a worship team, and a full band.

Connected to the Family Worship Center is part of FBC’s school facility. Faith Christian Academy has an enrollment of over 1000 students, first grade through high school. While the high school has its own building several blocks away from the

church, the elementary school and middle school students meet in classrooms in the two church buildings which are also used for Sunday School.

There are also extensive day care facilities and recreational facilities for the children of FBC. The Kids' Clubhouse is equipped with a climbing wall, a zip line and an XBOX. Children can attend a variety of events here, including worship dance classes. Older children also have their own space, the Fuel Headquarters, a large room resembling a night club, with black walls, a stage with full band equipment, and sound boards in the back surrounded by a chain-link cage. Passages of scripture are painted on the walls like graffiti, and above the exit is written, "You are now entering the mission field."

Adjacent to the Family Worship Center is the free-standing Prayer Chapel. Inside, about forty seats face a small stage, again flanked by American and Israeli flags. On the stage is a podium and a very small table, on which sit a flower arrangement and faux, shellacked bread and wine. The walls of the small chapel are lined with prayer stations, large bulletin boards with requests and guidance for prayer. The stations have the headings, "Our Church," "Missions," "Nations," "Urgent Needs," "Personal Requests," and "Israel."

There are five worship services at FBC each weekend. On Saturday evening there is one contemporary worship service called "FaithLive." On Sunday morning there are two more "FaithLive" services held in the main sanctuary. Concurrent with these services are a traditional worship service ("Traditions") and a "progressive," youth-focused service ("Fuel"). Pastor George's sermons are broadcast to these services in the older sanctuary by closed circuit television.

There is also a Spanish-speaking congregation called Impacto de Fe, whose average weekly attendance is approximately 1000. Apart from the members of Impacto de Fe, those attending FBC are predominantly of European descent. While there is a very small number of attendees of African or Asian descent, all of FBC's ministry staff (of which there are about twenty) are white or Latino.¹³

FBC is conservative on issues related to gender. Though there are females in

¹³ Demographic figures on the ethnicities, ages, and socio-economic indicators of the congregation were repeatedly requested but not provided. It is unknown whether no such figures are kept by the church or if they chose not to divulge them.

full time ministry positions, they are never referred to as pastors, while all the men in comparable positions are. Apart from Cheryl Morrison, women are rarely found teaching or leading adults, except along with male counterparts. Guidance given to the families of FBC includes traditional gender hierarchy.¹⁴

Worship at FBC is non-liturgical and very low. The Wednesday evening service includes communion, which is also practiced once a quarter on Sunday morning. At regular baby dedication services, babies born since the last service are brought forward by their families, introduced to the congregation, and prayed for by Pastor George. Full immersion adult baptisms take place once every six weeks or so. In the weeks between baptismal services, those considering being baptized are asked to indicate their interest on a card filled out during a service and dropped in the collection. Those who fill out cards or otherwise indicate their interest are asked to attend a single class on the day of their baptism – at 8:00 to be baptized at the 10:00 service, and at 9:00 to be baptized at the 11:00 service. On the day of the service, a movable baptistry is brought into the sanctuary and filled. Those planning to be baptized are reminded in the previous week’s announcements, “wear dark clothing, bring a towel, and a change of clothes.” Most of these services include fifteen to thirty baptisms, though after the membership drive which takes place every fall, it is not unusual for there to be 150 baptisms.

New Christians and those exploring Christianity are encouraged to participate in the Alpha Course, a ten-week series of Sunday morning brunch gatherings culminating in a weekend retreat, intended to serve as a “practical introduction to the

¹⁴ In the Spring of 2007 there was a six-week series on Wednesday evenings about marriage. After a brief corporate worship service, unmarried members were asked to leave the sanctuary to attend an alternative class in another room. The marriage class was co-taught by a male pastor and his wife. She told the class that before they married she did not want to do all the cooking or cleaning or stay at home, and that she would not even say the traditional wedding vows that include ‘obey’. “I don’t even know why he married me knowing all of that!” she said. She explained that she had been ignorant of God’s plan for wives to submit to their husbands. Submission has nothing to do with inequality, she clarified, and women and men are equal. But for there to be order in the home, there has to be submission. After years of marriage to her godly husband, she learned to trust and love him in such a way that she began to desire to do his cooking and cleaning and to stay home to keep his house. “I Promise,” Wednesday evening class, 23 May 2007.

Christian faith.” New members of FBC, those considering membership, and those who want to strengthen their commitment as members are encouraged to attend a series of five Discovery Courses. These courses meet on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings for three hours and are meant to introduce participants to the “five steps in our spiritual journey”: discovering your church family, spiritual maturity, your ministry, your life mission, worship and the Holy Spirit. In the Discovery 101 class, as well as in much of the church’s literature, the following statement of belief is given:

We believe . . .

The Bible to be God-inspired and the guide for our lives.

In the Trinity – that there is one God, who has revealed Himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus is God and became a man. We believe He lived a sinless human life and then died for our sins. We believe He was resurrected, lives in heaven, and will return again in power and glory.

Each person can receive the gift of eternal life and live forever in heaven with God.

The Holy Spirit shows us when we sin, and helps us to turn from sin to godly living.

God has not rejected Israel and we offer friendship and support to the Jewish people throughout the world.

FBC members who want to continue their Christian education can enroll in the Faith Bible Institute of Biblical Studies. Established as an unaccredited Bible College in 1969, renamed School of the Bible, and recently renamed again, the institute has approximately 100 people enrolled at any given time. Over its 38 years, it has produced nearly 1500 graduates, many of whom are leaders and teachers in the congregation. Others are sent out by FBC as missionaries. Graduates have completed two years of attending class one evening a week between August and May, completing the eight courses offered: Spiritual Dynamics, Biblical Theology, Israel/End-Time Events, Tabernacle in the Wilderness, Old Testament Bible Characters, Knowing God, Growing in Grace, and Applying Spiritual Gifts in Ministry. Each week lectures are given by leaders of FBC who develop their own curriculum. Memory verses, readings, and brief papers are assigned. FBC also hosts the Beacon Institute, which offers series of weekend seminars taught by guest lecturers, covering widely varying topics such as “The Trinity,” and “You Can Be Emotionally Healed.”

FBC currently supports forty-nine missionaries, missionary families, and mission groups in Colorado, elsewhere in the United States, and in many locations

around the world. Three of these missionary families are based in Israel, and one is based in Cyprus and works throughout the Middle East. According to one FBC staff member, the congregation supports additional missions work among Muslims in the Middle East, but they cannot make public whom or where because of laws against Christian missions.

Faith Bible Chapel, Israel, Judaism and Jews

Support for the state of Israel, exploration of Judaism, and friendship with Jewish people are enacted in many different ways in the life of FBC. These practices have been developing since the church's inception. Long-time members of FBC sometimes lament the ways in which the congregation's expansive numerical growth has necessarily meant that a smaller percentage of the members are deeply involved in Christian Zionism. While the entire congregation participates in some Zionist practices today, others require commitments of time and finances which limit the numbers of members who can be involved.

There are three full-time staff members whose duties are shared by the Israel Outreach Ministry and the Women's Ministry, as both ministries are overseen by Cheryl Morrison. The pro-Israel events which are most intended to involve and mobilize the entire congregation occur only once or twice a year. It is possible that visitors to FBC, if they were not curious about the many Israel-related items throughout the buildings or did not pay close attention to literature given to them, could attend for weeks or even months before becoming aware that Christian Zionism is a central conviction of the church for many of its members. However, involvement in the congregation beyond the most superficial of levels will certainly make congregants aware of the substantial network of pro-Israel education, prayer, events, and activism.

Pro-Israel Education

FBC provides opportunities for members of all ages to learn about Israel and Judaism. A volunteer has developed a Sunday School curriculum for teaching the children about Israel. The first memory verse is Genesis 12.3. There is a strong

emphasis on the land belonging to the Jews and that this is the answer to the current conflict. There is also an emphasis on the significance of the Jewish feasts.

Some FBC members learn about and pray for Israel at Chai Night, a Bridges for Peace event which FBC participates in and promotes. ‘Chai’ is transliterated from the Hebrew word for life. Because the combined numeric value of the letters in the word is eighteen, the event is held on or near the eighteenth of the month. Participants gather in a home in the evening and sing *Hatikvah* and some additional songs, usually in Hebrew. They discuss some topic related to current events, Jewish-Christian relations, Israeli history or biblical archaeology. They pray together for Israel and the United States, and close by singing “I Will Bless.”

Every Sunday morning there is an Israel Outreach counter in the lobby with information on Israel and the Israel Outreach ministry. Brochures from Christian Zionist groups, information on FBC’s adopted settlement, Ariel, and pamphlets describing why Christians should support Israel are free for the taking. Other items such as self-published booklets by the former and current pastors, CDs of messages about Israel, and Ahava (Dead Sea) skin products are for sale.

Adults can take a Faith Bible Institute course on Israel/End Times, or attend a variety of Sunday morning classes on related subjects. There is an adult Sunday School class on Hebrew Roots of Christianity, which focuses on Hebrew words, Jewish observances and customs, to promote appreciation of Judaism and knowledge of the significance of all things Jewish for Christians today. Another adult class, the Prophecy Workshop, focuses more specifically on the modern state of Israel. Participants relate current events to prophetic and apocalyptic texts through watching and discussing videos featuring prominent prophecy teachers, primarily Perry Stone, David Regan, and John Hagee.

One Sunday morning in the Prophecy Workshop,¹⁵ the two women facilitating the gathering asked if anyone had anything to share about current events. Someone brought up what a good thing it was that a local professor who had made offensive comments about September 11 had left the university. Many people in the class voiced agreement. They were talking about Ward Churchill, a leftist professor of

¹⁵ 27 May 2007.

Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder. The day after September 11, 2001, he had written an article in which he likened the complicity of Germans in the Third Reich to the complicity of Twin Towers elites in the unjust consequences of “America’s global financial empire.”¹⁶ When there was a public reaction against his article, he did not apologize or back down from his argument. “I am not a ‘defender’ of the September 11 attacks,” he replied, “but simply pointing out that if U.S. foreign policy results in massive death and destruction abroad, we cannot feign innocence when some of that destruction is returned.”¹⁷ Members of the Prophecy Workshop found it deeply offensive that Churchill would suggest that the victims of the September 11 attacks somehow deserved their deaths.

After discussing this matter, the Prophecy Workshop class watched the video, “God, Judgment, and the Weather,” by David Regan. Regan gave a lesson on how God raises up prophets to call nations to repentance, and if the people do not respond, God uses natural disasters as “remedial judgments.” If the nation still does not repent, God destroys it. Regan then gave detailed descriptions of six natural disasters which have occurred in the United States since 1991 as remedial judgments against the nation for pressuring Israel to act against their interest, culminating in Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans just days after Israel had removed Jewish settlers from Gaza and Condoleezza Rice responded that we could not stop at Gaza alone.

Regan also pointed out that not all remedial judgments are natural disasters. In fact, God raised up prophets to call America to repentance for the cultural revolution

¹⁶ The sentence people found most offensive was, “If there was a better, more effective, or in fact any other way of visiting some penalty befitting their participation upon the little Eichmanns inhabiting the sterile sanctuary of the twin towers, I’d really be interested in hearing about it.” Ward Churchill, “‘Some People Push Back’: On the Justice of Roosting Chickens,” *Pockets of Resistance* 11 (12 September 2001). The essay was later expanded into a book: Ward Churchill, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Ward Churchill, public statement, 31 January 2005. The full statement as well as several other texts related to the controversy can be found at: “Ward Churchill’s Essay and Statement,” *Political Gateway* (16 May 2006) <<http://www.politicalgateway.com/news/read.html?id=2739>> (13 June 2008).

of the 1960s, when Americans started calling evil good and good evil. America did not repent, and the resulting remedial judgments were failure in Vietnam and the AIDs epidemic, as well as natural disasters. These judgments culminated in September 11, which was “God’s wake up call” to America to repent for being “the moral polluter of the world.” Americans take the most pride in their money and their power, and that is why the greatest symbols of American wealth (the Twin Towers) and American power (the Pentagon) were attacked on 9/11. The video closed with the image of a billboard in Louisiana which had been badly damaged in Hurricane Katrina. The advertisement on the billboard had been stripped off, revealing the message which had previously been posted there, “We need to talk. -God.” The Prophecy Workshop participants gasped and applauded. “Well, it doesn’t get any clearer than that, does it?,” one man remarked, to the class’s vigorous agreement.

Praying for Israel

Members of FBC are encouraged to pray regularly for Israel, and many corporate gatherings include such prayers. The Israel station in the prayer chapel encourages prayers for Bridges for Peace, the safety and blessing of Israelis of all ages, increased immigration of Jews into Israel, a stronger Israeli economy, the rounding up and punishment of anti-Israel world leaders and terrorists,¹⁸ the establishment of biblical and secure borders, the Israel Defense Force, the peace of Jerusalem, wisdom for Israel’s leaders, and the settlement of Ariel. A box of tissues sits beneath the scriptures, photographs, and documents posted on the prayer station available to guide prayer on each of these topics.

A focused time of small group prayer for Israel takes place on the first Wednesday night of every month. About twenty members of FBC gather in the Prayer Chapel to pray for their adopted settlement of Ariel, for matters relating to current events, for Israel’s security and prosperity, for events and projects of the Israel

¹⁸ Photographs of Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Bashar al-Assad, and Muammar al-Gaddafi, among others under the title “World’s Most Wanted,” have the caption, “Let hatred be abated. May God save all that can be saved and move His mighty hand against those who continue to thwart His plan for His people in His land.”

Outreach ministry and for any Israel-related matters for which they feel moved by the Holy Spirit to pray. At the May 2007 meeting, much of the evening's prayer focused on a story in the *Jerusalem Post* that Syria was massing its military at the Israeli border. The story had special meaning for some in the prayer group who heard that there had been a prophetic word received "among the believers" in Israel that there would soon be a war with Syria. The group fervently prayed that the war with Syria would come in God's time, that the Israeli military would be strengthened and prepared, and that they would not fail like they had the previous summer in Lebanon. "We hope there does not have to be a war. But we know that your Word says that wars are coming," one man prayed. Others prayed that the world powers would not restrain Israel from doing whatever was necessary, and that the United States would give Israel whatever armaments they need. Another man prayed that Israel would be empowered to wipe out their enemies, "because they are your enemies, God." A prayer was said for George Bush, that his heart would be turned against the peace process. "We don't want a road map to peace, Lord."

Pro-Israel Advocacy and Activism

FBC seeks to give tangible support to Jewish people and to Israel both directly and through established organizations. As a congregation they contribute financially to Bridges for Peace, Christians United for Israel, and the Allied Jewish Federation. Most of this money is used to help Jews immigrate to Israel or to give humanitarian assistance to Jews in need. Many individual members of FBC contribute to additional organizations such as the Jewish National Fund.

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, FBC was particularly focused on lobbying for and assisting with the immigration of Jews out of the Soviet Union. Their pro-Israel activism in Soviet immigration led them to an amazing relationship with a group of Christian Zionists from across the globe. A large group of Russian Pentecostal Christians were seeking to immigrate to the United States and the state of Israel had agreed to assist them with needed visas, but the group would need American sponsors to come to the United States. "So they called us and they were funny," remembers Cheryl Morrison. "They said, 'Pastor, we don't know what to do

with Pentecostals, but somebody told us maybe you did.”¹⁹ The Morrisons agreed to sponsor one family, which turned out to be an extended family of thirty people. The entire congregation rallied to support the family. They took their school bus to the airport to pick them up, rented houses for them, admitted their children into their school, and formed teams of volunteers to help them learn the various systems of American society, from grocery shopping to legal advocacy. “It turned out to be the most amazing, rejuvenating, revival spirit in our church. . . and they had an amazing love for Israel from the Word and from what Israel did for them. Actually, an Israeli general came to speak here and they all stood in line and kissed his hand!”²⁰

The Russian Pentecostals formed their own congregation and met in FBC’s building, but as they attracted other Russian immigrants, their congregation grew and they began to search for a building of their own. Cheryl Morrison remembers the day they found it. “So one day they came over and they found Pastor George and they said they wanted him to bless, to look at what they’d found and tell them if it was ok.” Cheryl gets very emotional at this point and can barely finish the story, “It was our old church building on West 59th Place. . . When he saw it . . . he said, he just wept. He said he could hardly get out of the car.”²¹

The church’s partnership with Bridges for Peace²² is especially strong. Several of the core members of the Israel Outreach ministry are current or former full-time volunteers for Bridges for Peace, and their annual national conference is held at FBC every two years or so. The motto of Bridges for Peace is, “Don’t just read about Bible prophecy – Be a part of it!” From their headquarters in Jerusalem they operate a food bank which distributes between fifty and sixty tons of food every month, and they offer various types of humanitarian aid to Israelis in need, particularly new immigrants. They pay expenses for thousands of Jews who could not otherwise afford to immigrate. They also organize tours of Israel for visiting Christians. Bridges for

¹⁹ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See Bridges for Peace, <www.bridgesforpeace.com> (20 June 2008).

Peace has international offices in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. These offices work to raise awareness among Christians about Israel through events like Pastors Forums, and to “build bridges” between Christians and Jews through events like Chai Night.²³ They produce monthly and bimonthly publications, send weekly emails to supporters, and produce television and radio broadcasts.

FBC also has a strong partnership with Christians United for Israel (CUFI), the advocacy and lobbying group recently organized by the most influential leader of American Christian Zionism today, Pastor John Hagee. In the early 1980s, George and Cheryl Morrison traveled to visit Hagee at his church in San Antonio, Texas when they learned that he shared their views on Israel. Soon after this meeting, Hagee began inviting evangelical leaders, including George Morrison, to meet together and explore ways of uniting in support of Israel. Hagee came to refer to George Morrison as his “\$20,000 friend,” because he had spent such a large sum of money sponsoring these gatherings and nothing seemed to come of them except a growing friendship between Hagee and Morrison. Hagee’s efforts finally bore fruit in February of 2006, when he invited 400 evangelical leaders to San Antonio and they agreed to form CUFI, setting aside various differences between them and uniting on the single issue of unequivocal support for the state of Israel and the Jewish people. Just months later, CUFI gathered 3600 Christians from across America in Washington, D.C. for their first national summit. At this annual event, attendees are given a “Middle East briefing” and a list of talking points before spreading out across Capitol Hill to lobby their congressional representatives for strengthened American support for Israel. There is also a gala evening event with performances, worship, distinguished speakers, and the presentation of a check from CUFI to support pro-Israel causes. In 2006, the check was for \$7 million.

CUFI also encourages churches to host a Night to Honor Israel, and provides a how-to packet which includes tips on approaching local Jewish leaders, getting media coverage, and security. Hagee’s church hosted their first Night to Honor Israel in 1981, after Israel bombed a nuclear reactor in Iraq and there was criticism of their

²³ See page 61, above.

action in the media. In response, Hagee wanted to host an event to “salute the Jewish people for what they’d done.”²⁴ In the first year of CUFI’s existence, over fifty churches across America hosted Nights to Honor Israel. According to CUFI,

‘A Night to Honor Israel’ is a non-conversionary tribute to the nation of Israel and the Jewish people of the world. Its purpose is to promote esteem and understanding between Christians and Jews and to emphasize that the beliefs we hold in common are greater than the differences we have allowed to separate us. . . . Israel is the only nation on the face of the earth created by God. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob decreed the boundaries of Israel and gave it to His chosen people, the Jews, for all time. The choice is very clear; Christians can either choose to be a friend to Israel and please the Lord or choose not to support Israel and offend God.²⁵

In March 2008, CUFI held its first Jerusalem Summit, including a Night to Honor Israel in the Jerusalem Convention Center, a “Unity Rally Walk” through Jerusalem and a celebration of Israel’s “60th Birthday.” In conjunction, the Morrisons of FBC led a tour of Israel culminating with the Jerusalem Summit, which CUFI promoted.

The July 2007 CUFI Summit in Washington, D.C. attracted over 4500 participants. One Sunday morning in May 2007, Pastor George was encouraging FBC members to join him and Cheryl at the upcoming summit. “We do all of this not just because we’re looking for things to do, or we’re just planning a tour of Washington, D.C.,” he said. “Listen, we feel as though we’re right in the middle of what God is doing prophetically. And we believe as a church, we want to be on the cutting edge. We want to be there doing what God has called us to do. That’s what prophecy’s about.”²⁶ FBC sent several dozen delegates to the summit. Speakers included Senator Joseph Lieberman, Senator John McCain, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, former Israeli Ambassador Dore Gold, and former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. When the FBC delegates met for a pre-summit informational

²⁴ John Hagee, Keynote address at Faith Bible Chapel, Israel Awareness Day 2006 (Arvada, CO: Faith Bible Chapel Media Ministry), DVD.

²⁵ Christian United for Israel, “Christians United for Israel Presents Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot Celebration) and A National Night to Honor Israel,” (2006), brochure.

²⁶ George Morrison, “The Benefits of Knowing the Future,” sermon in the series *Hope for the Future* (6 May 2007), audio recording, Faith Bible Chapel Media Ministry (Arvada, CO).

meeting, Pastor George remarked that the timing of last year's summit was amazing because Israel's war with Lebanon broke out the same week. But he said the timing is even more important now because the rally of bipartisan support for Israel in response to the war was waning, and Congress needed to be reminded to support Israel at all times, not only in times of war. Cheryl Morrison remarked that AIPAC had just been in Washington D.C. for their annual lobbying summit in March and being followed so closely by CUFI would only increase their impact.

A recent book has argued that the degree to which Israel receives material and diplomatic support from the United States cannot be explained fully by either moral or strategic arguments, but is due in large measure to the considerable power of the Israel lobby, which the book's authors define as "a loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively works to move U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction."²⁷ The authors dismiss "religious beliefs of a bygone era" as explanations for U.S. policies in the Middle East,²⁸ but also include CUFI among the central organizations in the Israel lobby. In the view of the authors, the various Jewish groups in the lobby have more longstanding influence and operate with a vastly higher degree of sophistication than do Christian Zionist groups, thus their influence is not determinative, yet "Christian Zionists can be thought of as an important 'junior partner' to the various pro-Israel groups in the American Jewish community."²⁹

The Executive Director of CUFI is a young and charismatic Jewish man named David Brog. Since graduating from Princeton University and Harvard Law School, Brog has practiced corporate law and served as chief of staff for Senator Arlen Specter. His book, *Standing With Israel: Why Christians Support the Jewish State*,³⁰ is an apology on behalf of Christian Zionists – he is writing as a Jew to other Jews, saying, "We can trust these people." While he was doing research for the book,

²⁷ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

³⁰ David Brog, *Standing With Israel: Why Christians Support the Jewish State*. (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2006).

Brog visited FBC. People there speak of him with extraordinary fondness. The elderly couple who invited him to FBC described his response. “We took him to Israel Awareness Day and, you know, showed him all the – he couldn’t believe it. He’d never seen anything like this. And what a wonderful young man. He really is. Pastor Hagee couldn’t have picked anybody better.”³¹ Brog included a paragraph in his book on that visit to FBC, praising the quality of the event and FBC’s work to spread the message of Christian Zionism.³²

Brog describes dispensationalism as a “tectonic shift” in American Christian theology which largely defeated supersessionism and motivated the rise of American Christian Zionism. Brog is, of course, aware that non-dispensationalist – particularly liberal – Christians have also rejected supersessionism, but he notes these groups very quickly and dismisses them equally quickly because their rejection of supersessionism was motivated primarily by Holocaust guilt, as opposed to the biblical and theological motivations of dispensationalists, and has born no fruit of support for Israel.

Brog insists that the mainstream media and the Jewish community misunderstand Christian Zionists if they believe that proselytizing or hastening of Armageddon is their ultimate goal.

While unable to speed the Second Coming, however, evangelical Christians definitely do wish for it. Given what will happen to the Jews upon Jesus’ return, such aspirations strike some as profoundly disturbing. Yet prayers for Christ’s return have nothing to do with killing and converting Jews. Christians pray for the Second Coming for the same reasons that Orthodox Jews pray for the first coming of their Messiah – they long for the promised reign of God on earth that will follow.³³

Brog’s argument is that American Christian Zionists are, in fact, Righteous Gentiles. Though their loyalty has not been tested and they have not had to risk their own lives for Jews as the Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust did, they are nonetheless their heirs. Specifically, they are not heirs of rescuers during the Holocaust who had humanitarian and pacifist motives – the heirs of these rescuers’ legacies do not

³¹ Interview by author, 31 May 2007, Arvada.

³² Brog, 175.

³³ Ibid., 184.

support the Israeli state – but of the theologically motivated rescuers like Corrie ten Boom’s family, who rejected supersessionism. Brog closes his book by raising the specters of September 11 and radical Islam.

Since September 11, the new threats facing Americans and Israelis should likewise work to bring into sharp relief the fundamental values that evangelical Christians and Jews share while making their disagreements appear small by comparison. None of the differences between Jewish and Christian Zionists impact upon the larger questions at the core of what it means to be a moral actor in the world today. Christians and Jews share bedrock beliefs in basic morality and the value of human life that make them natural allies in the face of attacks from enemies who share neither.³⁴

Holy Land Tours

Each year, multiple groups from FBC take tours of Israel. These tours have at least two central functions: contribution to Israel’s economy through spending tourism dollars there, and strengthening of the congregation’s Christian Zionist views through the structure and content of the tours. The Morrisons lead regular sight-seeing tours for interested members, and “second-timers” tours for people returning to Israel and wanting to see additional sights. There are also Israel tours for teenagers of the congregation. The size of the groups varies widely, the largest being nearly 150. The tours include Christian sites such as the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum, the Garden Tomb and the Garden of Gethsemane; tour members also visit sites related to Jewish history, including Qumran, Masada, the Western Wall, the City of David, and the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum. Other sites visited relate directly to their Christian Zionist views of the state of Israel and biblical prophecy, including the settlements of Ariel and Shiloh, the Golan Heights, the Valley of Megiddo, and the Temple Institute. “The Temple Institute’s ultimate goal is to see Israel rebuild the Holy Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, in accord with the biblical commandments.”³⁵ They are reconstructing all the necessary sacred vessels and implements required for the temple, strictly according to biblical specifications. Visitors can see the already completed musical instruments, crown of the high priest,

³⁴ Ibid., 255.

³⁵ The Temple Institute, <www.templeinstitute.org> (11 June 2008).

menorah, incense altar and table of showbread.

Many members take FBC's Israel tours repeatedly. They speak of their first tour as the time when God "gave them a heart for Israel," and as a turning point in their commitment to support Israel. One couple who attended another church learned about the tour from a neighbor. Their experiences on the tour led them to leave their church and join FBC, and later led him to become a representative for Bridges for Peace. This former FBI agent unabashedly weeps when he describes that first tour.

It is such a, has such a deep impact on your spirit, whenever you finally make the connection between the head knowledge you have from years and years of sermons and Sunday school and Bible studies, a lot of which talks about Israel's history and the Jewish people and all of that. And then you finally are in the, in the physical, geographical location where it happened, and is happening, and is going to happen – it, it's kind of an overpowering realization.³⁶

While some who have gone on the tours were deeply moved by places related to the life and ministry of Jesus, many others speak with disdain for these "Christian sites" and much prefer the "Biblical sites," meaning places of significance in Israelite history and/or prophecy. Many stress the importance of having a Jewish tour guide, so that these places are not missed. Going with a Christian tour guide "may or may not translate into a pro-Arab, anti-Jewish bent, but it often does. And that is perfectly ok with replacement theology³⁷ Christians."³⁸ One man spoke laughingly of how he could not take seriously the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem or the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in Tabgha, and was scolded by priests for behaving disrespectfully in their holy places. In contrast, he spoke of visiting the Western Wall as "phenomenal . . . It was homecoming."³⁹ One woman reflected on the place that impacted her most, "I was totally taken by the Valley of Armageddon . . .

³⁶ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

³⁷ 'Replacement theology' is the term used by Christian Zionists for supersessionism, the doctrine that the church has replaced Israel in the divine plan. See pages 151-153, below.

³⁸ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

³⁹ Interview by author, 14 May 2007, Arvada.

. knowing that that is where the end battle is going to be.”⁴⁰

Jewish Friends

FBC seeks to maintain friendly relationships with the local Jewish community. Most of their closer relationships are with Conservative and Modern Orthodox Jews. The local Orthodox Jews tend to be more suspicious of proselytism. Local Reformed Jews are less willing to cooperate with them because of political differences, especially on social issues. FBC always invites local Jews to attend Israel Awareness Day, and there have always been Holocaust survivors in attendance. In 2007, over five thousand invitations were mailed to Jews in the area.

The Morrisons are often invited to speak to Jewish groups in the region. When Cheryl recently spoke to a small group at a local synagogue, she described Christian Zionism as motivated by highly valuing the authority of scripture, the truth of which has been confirmed by the miraculous establishment of the modern state of Israel. Then she told them that 9/11 had changed everything, that as a result Christians and Jews were realizing they had a common enemy and should therefore unite as friends and allies.

The rabbi of this particular synagogue is a friend and admirer of FBC and the Morrisons. He moved to the Denver area in 2006 and attended that year’s Israel Awareness Day. He was so impressed by it that he invited the Morrisons to his synagogue for Yom Kippur. They invited him to speak at Israel Awareness Day the following year. “Let me say to you all,” he exclaimed to applause and cheers, “you are all *Tzadikhei Umot HaOlam*, Righteous Gentiles!” He said that the nations of the world should follow their example and realize “that there has to be a commitment to the concept of ‘I will bless those that bless thee and curse those that curse thee.’”⁴¹

The rabbi has in common with the members of FBC the belief that what is happening in Israel is the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. He believes that Messiah is coming soon and it is increasingly important to support Israel. Neither he nor the Morrisons are bothered by the fact that he believes Messiah is coming for the first

⁴⁰ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁴¹ Address given at Faith Bible Chapel, Israel Awareness Day, 20 May 2008.

time and they believe he is returning. They are open and friendly about this difference of opinion. Other differences, both theological and political, are entirely avoided in their conversations. While the rabbi personally favors a “two state solution” and was concerned by what he considered radical views espoused by John Hagee at the 2006 Israel Awareness Day, he does not discuss these views with the Morrisons, and did not express them when he spoke at the 2007 Israel Awareness Day.⁴² Instead, he shared happy reminiscences of Israel taking the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967. He was at a Yeshiva just outside Jerusalem when it happened, and he told of their joy when word came over the radio, “‘*Ha’er Jerushalaim be’adenu!*’ The city of Jerusalem is once again in our hands!” He then shared that two hundred of his own family members had perished in the Holocaust, and his teenaged niece had died in a suicide bombing in Israel. “When will the nations of the world stand up and be counted and say, ‘enough is enough’?”⁴³

The International Singers and Dancers

For thirty years FBC has been sending a group to Israel for a summer performance tour with the goal of blessing Israel and telling Israelis that there are Christians who love and support them. “It’s just a constant declaring that there are Christians who care for you, and the God of your fathers loves you. It’s very simple.”⁴⁴ The original group was singers with musicians who played live accompaniment. They were first called The Internationals because of the varying ethnicities of the original members. Since then the group has been predominantly, if not exclusively, white, but the name stayed with them. In 1986, dancers were added to the group. In 2007, they were a group of five singers and twelve dancers performing to recorded tracks instead of live accompaniment. The singers were in their thirties and

⁴² When I interviewed the rabbi about his relationship with FBC and Christian Zionism in general, he began asking me questions about what they believe from the moment I first sat down. He said that he had not had conversations with people at FBC or Christian Zionists he had worked with in other locations about any of their theological or political differences.

⁴³ Address given at Faith Bible Chapel, Israel Awareness Day, 20 May 2008.

⁴⁴ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

forties. The dancers' ages ranged from sixteen to twenty-two. Most dancers enter the group at sixteen, although there have been dancers as young as fourteen. At the 2007 IAD, one of the singers explained to the crowd why the Internationals go to Israel.

We go to let them know that we as Christians believe that God has a plan for the Jewish people, that God made a covenant that He keeps with the Jewish people, and that He has a covenant with the land of Israel. We want them to know that we believe that they belong in that land and that we are there to love them and support them in any way that we can.⁴⁵

Often FBC members become interested in being Internationals because their parents or friends have been members. Some begin dancing with the Little Internationals⁴⁶ and grow up wanting to become Internationals. Others join the group to make friends, for the opportunity to perform, or because they have been recruited, and only after joining do they come to understand the group's mission. Internationals are not only trained in singing and dancing, they are also given lectures and reading assignments on Israel. They are all expected to read "Why Christians Should Support Israel," by John Hagee,⁴⁷ and *Blow the Trumpet in Zion*, by Richard Booker.⁴⁸

Being an International is a serious commitment. Every member pays for half of the total cost of airfare, lodging, and food on the tour. Members who are old enough to have full-time employment use their annual vacation to go on tour. Those who are still in school spend about half of their summer vacation preparing for and going on the tour. One former member recalls, "That's what I spent all my summers doing and all my babysitting money and everything for that."⁴⁹ Planning for the June tour begins in October each year, and regular rehearsals begin in January. Three Israelis come to

⁴⁵ Faith Bible Chapel, Israel Awareness Day, 20 May 2007.

⁴⁶ See page 80, below.

⁴⁷ This brief essay has been published many places and is now available on the Christians United for Israel website: John Hagee, "The Apple of HIS Eye: Why Christians Should Support Israel," <http://www.cufi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=learn_teachings#Apple> (11 June 2008).

⁴⁸ Richard Booker, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion: The Dramatic Story of God's Covenant Plan for Israel Including Their Past Glory and Suffering, Present Crisis, and Future Hope* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1985).

⁴⁹ Interview by author, 30 May 2007, Arvada.

FBC during the year to coach the Internationals in their song choices, Hebrew pronunciation, and choreography.

One of the 2007 singers had recently moved to Arizona and flew to Colorado every month for rehearsals. Another singer moved from California to Colorado for the express purpose of joining the Internationals. Some members join the group when they are very young and continue to tour every summer for thirteen years or more. One of the 2007 singers toured with the group several times in her teens and early twenties, then stopped touring while her five children were young. She then returned to the tour, along with her seventeen-year-old daughter who was a dancer.

On their approximately eighteen-day tour, the Internationals do about thirteen performances. Each performance includes about a dozen numbers, and there is a costume change between every one. These range from black satin *Haredi* Jewish costumes which the male dancers wear for a folk dance number, to Orthodox Jewish wedding clothes for a dance to “*L’Haim*,” to florescent tee shirts and Capri pants for a modern Israeli pop number, and Israeli military uniforms for a tribute number. All of the performances are at military bases except for one in FBC’s adopted settlement of Ariel, and one for the send-off party for teens entering the military from Pardesia. One dancer reflected on the significance of performing for the military. She said the military was “the core of Israel’s being.” Another remarked how moved she was by the differing life situations of teens in American and Israel. “We’re about to go off to college, and they’re about to go fight for their country.”⁵⁰ Usually the group sees sights during the day and does one performance each evening. “One time we did [performances] three times a day,” remembers Cheryl Morrison. “I was, you know, putting their bodies on the bus!”⁵¹ She warns the group that their schedule will be grueling. “And I’ll be yelling at you, telling you to do this and that, and if that offends you, you need to get over it. If you need to be treated like a little kid, get plenty of that from your momma before we leave!”⁵²

⁵⁰ International Singers and Dancers, interview by author, 28 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵¹ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵² Cheryl Morrison, International Singers and Dancers rehearsal, 28 May 2007,

The leaders, parents and members of the Internationals are not worried about the tour's safety, but this is not because they believe that Palestinians are not dangerous. They believe that God always has protected them and will continue to do so. Each year members of FBC commit to pray daily for the group and for one specific member. In 2007, the tour group had two hundred committed "prayer partners." They also believe that as the leaders of the church pray, God will tell them not to send the group if it is not going to be safe. Major terrorist attacks have occurred in places just before or just after the Internationals were there, but never while they were there. One mother of a former dancer described a year when there was significant terrorist activity. "Cheryl reminded us and has always reminded us that, you know, God is good. God has protected. And they're over there blessing the Jewish people."⁵³

The Internationals also feel safe because their bus driver has connections in the Israeli military. He calls ahead to ask about each location, if it is expected to be safe that day and which route is best for getting there safely. On one tour this connection even made it possible for Cheryl Morrison to take the group into Gaza.

I've always told them, you know, most of the difficulty's in Gaza. We don't go to Gaza. And I said [to the parents] we wouldn't go to Gaza. But three years ago, just before Israel pulled out, my guide said to me, 'You want to go to Gaza?' I said, 'Is it safe?' And he had a cousin who was in charge of the intel in the area and he called him and he said, 'This would be a great time. There's no reason they can't go in.' And I was laughing. We switched buses, got on a bullet-proof bus, but I was laughing the whole way in. I said, 'Here we go! I always tell people we're not going to Gaza, and here we are.' It was a great experience for the kids, biblically. I mean, they were blown away.⁵⁴

The leaders of the group proudly discuss taking the Internationals to other places they consider dangerous, like Bethlehem, Hebron and Shiloh. "Do we go to dangerous places? . . . Yeah, we do. Do we think God will show us if there's danger? I believe God would show us. We're askin' Him. . . We have taken them to dangerous places. What an, an extreme privilege."⁵⁵

Arvada.

⁵³ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁴ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁵ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

However, there is also an awareness among all those involved that safety is not guaranteed, and there is a strong sense among them that what the Internationals do is worth any risk. The mother of a dancer told of her daughter's response to friends and relatives who thought it was too dangerous to go. "Her comment always is, 'If it's my time to go, what better place to go than in Israel?' Obviously I don't want her to go yet, but even so, there's some validity to that. You're over there doing what you should be doing."⁵⁶ The youngest of the dancers, a sixteen-year-old who was going on tour for the first time, said he thought they would be safe because they were doing this for God. "But if we're not, I'm ready to go." Another dancer agreed that the tour was worth risking his life. "I wouldn't care if I died in Israel." One of the singers remarked that after two years of touring with the group, even if something happened to her in Israel, "I would still say, 'I've been blessed.'"⁵⁷ A full-time staff member in the Israel Outreach who tours with the group and is also the mother of former and current Internationals shared that her daughter and son-in-law had recently prepared a will, naming the legal guardians of their two-year-old twins, because they were about to go on the Internationals tour. This grandmother concluded, unflinchingly, "Bad things happen to good people all the time, and if we don't come home, we don't come home, and it will have been worth it."⁵⁸

Internationals and their parents often describe the group as life-changing. One couple told how their awkward and insecure teenage son gained extraordinary confidence from training and touring. Former members spoke of life-long friendships that began on tour. One mother who went on the tour as a chaperone could barely speak of the experience without crying. "The thing that really was amazing to me was watching these average kids, you know, these kids that I know . . . and they go there and these soldiers who are defending this land, and they bless them . . . just these average, middle class, Christian kids blessing the apple of God's eye, you know?"

⁵⁶ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁷ International Singers and Dancers, interview by author, 28 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁸ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

Defending the land that God gave them.”⁵⁹ A former International and current FBC staff member looked back over her decades at FBC and located the greatest importance and significance of that time in her years touring with the Internationals. Those with long tenures in the group are heartbroken when the year finally comes that their age or family or work commitments prevent them from touring any longer. A mother said of her daughter, “the first year she didn’t go, because they’re married, they don’t have the money to do that now – she’s a nurse and had to step down – she cried and cried. It puts a hook in your heart. It’s a huge hook in your heart.”⁶⁰

Israel Awareness Day

For most members of FBC, the major Israel-related event of each year is Israel Awareness Day (IAD). Preparations for IAD are made virtually year-round. In the weeks leading up to and following IAD each year, Pastor George preaches a sermon series on Israel and the end times. Worship on the morning of IAD is focused on themes related to Israel and the entire congregation is encouraged to attend the evening program. The event is treated as being of the utmost importance by those involved in its planning and organization. At the opening of an IAD dress rehearsal in 2007, Cheryl Morrison told the performers, “On Sunday night you will be doing something in the spirit realm. It is that significant.” During the dress rehearsal, people who have participated in planning IAD for decades were still moved nearly to tears by the images of Jerusalem projected onto the backdrop and the stirring Hebrew songs. Throughout the day, every person in the building stopped what he or she was doing, stood respectfully, and sang along whenever *Hatikvah*, the Israeli national anthem, was rehearsed.

Many who have attended FBC for twenty or more years speak nostalgically of the early days of IAD, when every year they had a weekend-long event and every member of the (significantly smaller) congregation helped in its preparation and execution. The classrooms and meeting areas of the church were filled with educational displays, presentations, videos, and dramas. There was always a

⁵⁹ Interview by author, 14 May 2007, Arvada.

⁶⁰ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

Holocaust remembrance element, and often local Holocaust survivors would speak. One year there was a display about Operation Entebbe, the 1976 Israeli mission to rescue hostages being held on an Air France flight by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. FBC members salvaged an old Mercedes and an airplane wing which they painted to look like the Israeli C130, and created a set with a painted backdrop from which the car and the wing appeared to emerge. For several years there was a member who created surprisingly accurate faces for mannequins which were placed in dioramas depicting important moments and people in Jewish and Israeli history. One year the focus was Golda Meir, and people posed with her striking likeness like tourists at a wax museum.

In the early years of IAD, education was the focus. Most aspects of the event were intended to raise awareness among Christians about the history and significance of Israel and the Jewish people. Today, IAD has evolved into a way of reaching out to the local Jewish community, all of whom are invited each year and given special transportation to the event if needed. “This is another reason why we have an Israel Awareness Day,” wrote Pastor George, “It is to bring back an understanding that we have sinned against the Holy God; and, in doing this, we repent of our anti-Semitism and pledge our support to Israel, Jerusalem and the Jewish people in what they are doing.”⁶¹ On a Sunday morning before IAD 2007, he reminded the congregation of this aspect of the event. “So our Jewish friends come, and we want to show them our unconditional love. And we just want to let them know what Christians are all about, and that we believe that God has a very special plan for them and God is doing something in their nation, and He’s doing something among their people.”⁶² For those Jews who do come, IAD can be overwhelming. After the 2007 IAD, an elderly man approached one of the organizers of the event. Weeping, he said to her, “You single-handedly washed my heart tonight. You washed away all the yuck that I’ve carried in my heart about how Christians have treated Jews.” “That’s gold,” Cheryl Morrison

⁶¹ George Morrison, *Israel in the Balance* (Arvada, CO: George Morrison, 1999).

⁶² George Morrison, “Israel: God’s Sign of the Times,” sermon in the series *Hope for the Future* (20 May 2007), audio recording, Faith Bible Chapel Media Ministry (Arvada, CO).

remarked as she told the story of this man's response, "That's gold."

IAD has also become more celebratory. The 2007 IAD celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the "reunification" of Jerusalem in 1967, and the 2008 IAD marks the sixtieth anniversary of Israeli statehood. 2008 is a "big year," which is how people at FBC refer to weekend-long events, as opposed to the years when IAD is limited to a single evening. On "big years," there are displays, dramas and seminars. There are six teams of "Little Internationals," children of various age groups performing Israeli dances. The training of these teams provides both entertainment for the event as well as preparation of future Internationals.

On the Sunday morning of IAD 2007, every entrance to every parking lot at FBC was flanked with American and Israeli flags. American and Israeli flags also lined the walkways into the building. Inside, the congregation was larger than usual and the atmosphere was absolutely electric. The Internationals led the congregation in rousing Hebrew songs. "*Messiach! Messiach! Messiach!*" was sung gleefully as the congregation raised their hands and waved their arms back and forth. The Internationals, the choir, the band, and all the leaders on stage were dressed in Israeli blue and white. A photograph of the Western Wall was projected to fill the entire backdrop of the stage.

Not everyone at FBC that morning was enthusiastic about IAD. Outside the main entrance there was a small group of protestors. They held yellow signs with large black letters reading, "NO MORE WARS FOR ISRAEL," "WHO WOULD JESUS BOMB?," "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS," "IRAQ? WWJD?," "CHOOSE LIFE NOT WAR," and "APOSTATE CHURCH: CHRIST FOLLOWERS SHALL NOT KILL." There was also a large yellow cross, smeared with red, which said, "PALESTINE." The demonstrators did not speak unless spoken to. They handed literature to anyone who would take it. No one from FBC spoke to them except one apparently homeless man who argued with them at length.⁶³

⁶³ The protestors were members of Project Strait Gate, a Phoenix-based group established for the purpose of holding "vigils" outside of churches and Christian events across America, wherever the Iraq war is not opposed and Israel is supported unconditionally. "Project Strait Gate's purpose is to influence fellow Christ-followers to oppose continued slaughter in the Middle East based not on secular conclusions, but on Jesus' words," stated a letter warning FBC in advance that there would be a

Pastor George encouraged the congregation to come back that evening, and described the significance of the event.

This year is very special. Our theme is ‘Jerusalem: Jewel of the Ages,’ because this is the fortieth anniversary of the reunification, if you will, of the city of Jerusalem that has come back under the control of Israel, where it belongs – the city of David. And it’s a very significant event in God’s time clock concerning his return to this earth. Because if Israel were not in its place, if Jerusalem were not under the control [of Israel], then we’d be looking for a different time when Jesus would return. But all of it comes together and all of this points to the fact of the second return of Christ. I’m certainly looking forward to that. I don’t know about you, but I am looking forward to Jesus returning.⁶⁴

He then preached a sermon on Ezekiel 37, interpreting the transformation of the dry bones into living bodies as the gathering of Diaspora Jews and the rise of the state of Israel. In the Ezekiel narrative, God breaths life into the bodies which makes them live and move and, Pastor George said, this is the portion of the prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled. “What’s the next thing? The breath of God. What we’re waiting for is the breath of God. . . They come alive to accept their Messiah. . . there’s a day coming when Israel will receive that breath.” This interpretation of the Ezekiel passage was then related to IAD. “God called Ezekiel into partnership to prophesy to the bones. God wants us to cooperate with His purposes. That’s what we are doing with IAD. We’re cooperating with God and we’re speaking life into the situation. . . We’re speaking life into the Jewish people. We’re asking God to open their eyes, and we know God is going to do it because of His faithfulness!”⁶⁵ The congregation applauded.

vigil outside on IAD. Charles E. Carlson, Scottsdale, AZ, to Pastor George Morrison, Arvada, CO, 16 May 2007, copy provided by Charles Colson, Director of We Hold These Truths, a Strait Gate Ministry. The approach of this group is two-fold: the assertion that it is inconsistent and un-Christian to claim to be pro-life while supporting wars in the Middle East, and the affirmation of supersessionist theology.

⁶⁴ George Morrison, “Israel: God’s Sign of the Times.”

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Just outside the sanctuary there was plenty of IAD merchandise for sale. Action Israel's Milk and Honey Press was there selling children's books on Israel.⁶⁶ There were tables draped in blue fabric with glittery white stars of David, and covered with a variety of items including books, music, Passover dishes, menorahs and candles, prayer shawls, yarmulkes, framed drawings of the Western Wall and Ahava skin products. Representatives from Golden Treasure Worship and Witness Wear were also on hand with tables full of jewelry.

In the Prophecy Workshop they watched a Perry Stone video on the battle of Gog and Magog. Stone described how Iraq's weapons of mass destruction were moved into Syria in cargo holds of commercial flights before the war. Prophecies in Isaiah 17.1-3 will be fulfilled when these weapons fall into the hands of radicals planning to use them against Israel. Israel will learn of their plan and launch a preemptive nuclear strike, destroying Damascus. Similarly, radicals in Gaza will acquire weapons of mass destruction and Israel will destroy the entire Gaza strip, in fulfillment of Joel 3.4, Zephaniah 2.4 and Zechariah 9.5. "This isn't something we want to happen," Stone clarified. "As Christians we love all the people of these regions. But the Bible says this is what will happen."⁶⁷ These small battles will precede the ultimate battle of Armageddon, where the returning Christ will win a decisive victory along with the raptured and resurrected saints. Stone asked his audience to imagine the wonder of becoming soldiers in the army of the conquering Jesus. "Whenever I visit Jerusalem," he joked, "I like to try and spot the land I want to conquer!"⁶⁸

For the organizers of IAD, the afternoon was a busy one. There were songs and dances to rehearse one last time, costumes to perfect. There was sound and lighting equipment to test. There were booths to be filled with displays and information. The gymnasium of the school was being transformed into a reception hall. A huge banner painted with a panorama of Jerusalem created a backdrop for a

⁶⁶ See Milk and Honey Press, <www.milkandhoneypress.com> (20 June 2008).

⁶⁷ Stone, *Israel and the Battle of Gog and Magog*.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

small stage. On each of the two dozen round tables, center pieces were being created from items usually displayed in the Israel Outreach office, each center piece incorporating five or six items which had been given as gifts to the Internationals by military groups for whom they performed. There were plaques, menorahs, trophies, framed photographs and various engraved items, all placed neatly on velvety blue fabric.

As the hour for the IAD evening program approached, hundreds of people arrived early and queued for the best seats. Others perused booths in the atrium staffed by representatives of various pro-Israel groups, including Bridges for Peace, Action Israel,⁶⁹ Americans Against Terrorism,⁷⁰ Colorado-Israel Chamber of Commerce,⁷¹ and Stand With Us.⁷² Each of these groups was distributing literature to the people visiting their displays.⁷³ Action Israel offered a postcard-sized map of the Middle East, highlighting that, “Arabs occupy 5,366,649 square miles while Israel only has 10,000,” and that “Jordan occupies 77% of Mandatory Palestine given to Jews.” Americans Against Terrorism distributed fliers advertising their views on current events. One flier described how terrorists are amassing in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Iran. “When war breaks out,” it concluded, “the IDF must not be restrained in its efforts to protect Jewish lives and defeat Israel’s Arab enemies. Calls for peace and restraint, even if made by sincere, well-meaning Jews, can ultimately only mean more Israeli victims.” One of the pamphlets at the Stand With Us booth

⁶⁹ A Denver-based organization for pro-Israel advocacy formed just after September 11, 2001. See Action Israel, <www.actionisrael.org> (20 June 2008).

⁷⁰ Described by a member as being founded by members of Action Israel who wanted the group to be more explicitly political.

⁷¹ Promoting economic development which benefits both Colorado and Israel. See Colorado-Israel Chamber of Commerce, <www.coloradoisrael.org> (20 June 2008).

⁷² Advocacy group focused mainly on spreading the pro-Israel message through publications and conferences. See Stand With Us, <www.standwithus.com> (20 June 2008).

⁷³ The following descriptions of literature are based on items which were distributed at FBC’s Israel Awareness Day, 20 May 2007.

described how “The U.N. is preoccupied with Israel and the disputed territories.” It included a map of other disputed territories in the world – including Scotland, Greenland, and Norfolk Island, in addition to places like Chechnya and Kashmir– and asked, “Why does the U.N. ignore other disputed territories?”

Doors to the sanctuary were flanked with volunteers handing out programs and free copies of *The JerUSAlem Connection*,⁷⁴ a publication by and for American Christian Zionists. The magazine included articles such as, “Who Really Supports Israel?,” a guide to presidential candidates’ views and voting records on Israel, and “Pastor John Hagee’s speech to the 2007 AIPAC Annual Policy Conference.”

Pastor George greeted the crowd of about two thousand and introduced the evening’s program. “We’re here to say tonight that Jerusalem needs to remain – it must remain – the undivided capital under the control of Israel and the Jewish people.” The crowd cheered. “It’s not a political stance,” he added. “We’re not political Zionists, we’re Bible Zionists. We’re Biblical Zionists. We believe God has said that Israel has a right to exist.”

The house lights went down and the performers took the stage for the multi-media presentation, “Jerusalem: Jewel of the Ages.”⁷⁵ The program opened with songs performed by the International singers, some in Hebrew and others in English, interspersed with performances by the International dancers. These led into an audio/video/performance piece on the history of Jerusalem. Narrators on stage joined with images on screen and music played by the live band to tell the story of God’s covenant with Abraham, the conquest of Canaan, the establishment of a capital at Jerusalem by King David, the building of Solomon’s temple and its destruction by the Babylonians, the building of the second temple and its destruction by the Romans, and

⁷⁴ Subtitled, “A Voice for Christian Zionism.” The following articles were in the May-June 2007 issue (Iyar-Sivan-Tammuz 5767) distributed at FBC’s IAD, 20 May 2007. James M. Hutchens, “Who Really Supports Israel?”: 4. John Hagee, “Pastor John Hagee’s Speech to the 2007 AIPAC Annual Policy Conference”: 6-7. See also *The JerUSAlem Connection*, <www.tjci.org> (20 June 2008).

⁷⁵ Kevin M. Norberg, “Jerusalem: Jewel of the Ages,” multimedia presentation, updated for 2007 by Steve Hannan. Musical concept by Kevin M. Norberg, updated for 2007 by Stan Sinclair. Performed at Faith Bible Chapel (Arvada, CO: 20 May 2007).

the centuries of Jews longing to return to Jerusalem. Narrations and images were interspersed with songs such as “*Yevarechecha*” (Psalm 128), and “Next Year in Jerusalem.”

The music and the lights became darker as the narrators described the Holocaust, quickly rising again to greet the news of the establishment of the Jewish state and a rousing rendition of *Hatikvah*. Then the drums and electric guitars beat out a fearful rhythm as the wars of 1948 and 1967 were described. “Just as the spilling of Jewish blood had signaled the end of the nation’s existence, so the spilling of still more blood signaled its rebirth. . . . If ever peace would come, it would come with a high price tag. That price? War!” Two middle-aged men, members of the original Internationals, took the stage in Israeli military uniforms to tell the story and sing the song of “Ammunition Hill,” vivid images of tanks and gunfire flashing behind them. The conclusion of the Six-Day War, Israel’s seizure of the Old City, was then narrated with great joy as a Jewish man entered center stage to blow the shofar. “Israel’s brilliant victory had won back her precious land – the most precious of all, the Old City. Jerusalem was reunited! . . . They were finally home. The people, their land and their God were again together.”

After a joyful song and dance, there was a description of Israel today, “still the only democracy in the Middle East.” The audience was told of the freedom for all faiths in the Jerusalem of Israel, in contrast to its restrictions under Arab rule, as scenes of prayer at the Western Wall were shown. Finally, all the performers gathered for a reprise of “Jewel of the Ages,” climaxing in the line, “It’s the city of your name,” and the stage full of people pointing to heaven.

Cheryl Morrison encouraged the audience to give generously in the offering. Videos were shown describing each of the groups to which the offering would contribute: the Allied Federation’s Operation Promise, assisting Ethiopian Jewish immigrants to Israel (“You too can play a part in biblical prophecy,” said the voice-over); Bridges for Peace food bank’s distribution of groceries to needy Jewish families; and Ariel, FBC’s adopted settlement in the West Bank. The audience was told that ten percent of the offering would go to CUFI – “because we believe in biblical principles” – and the rest would be divided evenly between the other three groups.

The keynote speech was given by former Israeli Ambassador Dore Gold. As he

came to the podium, a very large, muscular man could be seen in the shadows behind him and two armed policeman appeared at each side of the stage. “I only wish this event tonight was televised on Israeli television!” he remarked, to loud applause. He then made a case for Israel’s right to control Jerusalem. He said that the Jewish majority was re-established in Jerusalem in 1863. “The claim of Israel was far stronger than International Law.” He said that U.N. Resolution 242 never intended Israeli withdrawal from Jerusalem. He described the events of 1967 as miraculous, and criticized Camp David.⁷⁶ “What I don’t understand is how anyone who has witnessed the miracles of 1967 can put on the table a proposal that seeks to roll back a miracle!” The crowd applauded. “Of course, Camp David was a failure, luckily for us.”

In between comments on Arafat’s denial that the temple was ever in Jerusalem and Ahmadinejad’s Holocaust denial, Gold criticized Jimmy Carter for calling Israel an apartheid state. “Well, just look at those pictures you saw on those TV screens of the state of Israel bringing Jews from Ethiopia! Is that an apartheid country?!” He affirmed the need for religious freedom and pluralism in Jerusalem, “And the only nation that will protect Jerusalem for all its faiths is the democratic state of Israel.” Withdrawal from Jerusalem would create “a terrorist tsunami,” he warned. Keep Jerusalem in Israeli hands, he concluded, “keep Jerusalem free!” The program closed with Pastor George echoing this sentiment. “Let’s not forget, the city of Jerusalem needs to remain the undivided capital of the nation of Israel! Continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem! Thank you for coming.”

Ariel, FBC’s Adopted West Bank Settlement

In 1995, a Christian couple from Colorado visited Israel and shared with a lawyer friend how disturbed they were by the Oslo Accords, particularly the call for Israel to withdraw from Gaza and the West Bank.⁷⁷ The couple was Ted and Audrey

⁷⁶ Peace accords were signed between Israel and Egypt under the Carter administration at the Camp David presidential retreat in 1978.

⁷⁷ CFOIC literature states, “Christian Friends of Israeli Communities was established in 1995, in response to the Oslo Process, the devastating series of agreements that ceded land to the Arabs in the heart of Biblical Israel.” From an

Beckett, wealthy real estate developers based in Colorado Springs. Their lawyer friend suggested that they contact the mayor of Ariel, a settlement in the West Bank, who had organized a fund to raise money for development in the settlements. The fund was a response to the Oslo Accords, in that because of the accords there was no more government aid money coming into the settlements. In those days, the Ariel Development Fund focused on raising money from Jews, primarily in America. The Becketts decided to establish a similar organization to raise support for the Gaza and West Bank settlements from Christians, and they called it Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC).⁷⁸ The original vision of CFOIC was threefold: to partner Christian churches with Israeli settlements through an “adopt-a-settlement” program, to facilitate a network of pen pals to encourage relationships between Christians and Israeli settlers, and to educate American Christians about Israel and the settlement movement. FBC was the first church approached by CFOIC about adopting a settlement, and they agreed to adopt Ariel.

Eventually CFOIC expanded beyond the Becketts’ vision, abandoning the pen pal project after problems with Christian letters offending Jewish pen pals, and focusing on raising funds for specific needs in the settlements instead of settlement adoption. While there have been a few other successful adoptions facilitated by CFOIC – including Melbourne (Florida) First Assembly of God’s adoption of Ma’ale Ephraim and the Fellowship Church (Orlando, Florida) adoption of Quedumim – they have found it more productive in general to raise funds from individuals as well as churches and channel these funds to meet the needs of settlements. The three objectives of CFOIC today are to educate Christians about Israel, especially Judea and Samaria, to bring tourism to “biblical Israel,” and to support “Jewish communities” through funding projects developed within the communities themselves. The objective of education is fulfilled through publications and speaking engagements. The tourism objective is fulfilled by cooperating with existing tour groups to bring

information sheet titled, “What is CFOIC?”

⁷⁸ See one journalist’s experiences interviewing Ted Beckett in Clark, chapter nine: “Watchmen for Israel.”

them into West Bank settlements they might not otherwise visit. The objective of support for the settlements is fulfilled through a wide variety of projects. Many of CFOIC's projects focus on the needs of children, ranging from playgrounds to scholarships, from after-school programs to counseling services. Other projects focus on security, mainly providing equipment for volunteer security and emergency response teams. Most of the remaining projects focus on settlers who formerly resided in Gaza. Funds raised through CFOIC which were used to support Gaza settlements are now contributed to relocation, construction, and agricultural assistance for the "Gush Katif refugees."

CFOIC now has headquarters in Colorado Springs and in the West Bank settlement of Karnei Shomeron. There are also offices in Germany and Holland, and representatives in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Bulgaria. Sondra Oster Baras, the director of the Israel office is an Orthodox Jewish woman who grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and went on to earn a law degree from Columbia University. She and her husband made *aliyah*⁷⁹ in 1984 and she soon became an advocate and activist on behalf of the settlement movement. She believes the settlers are "modern day pioneers" and "the repositories of Zionism." Baras became director of CFOIC in 1998. She is a dynamic speaker, appearing often in American media, and voices her hard-line views without circumspection. Appearing on Pat Robertson's 700 Club in February of 2002, she called Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif with armed guards in 2000 – which many identify as at least one of the instigating events leading to the second intifada – as "the wisest thing that Sharon ever did."⁸⁰

In promotional DVDs for CFOIC Baras voices rejection of the peace process, saying that it is not a process for peace but "a process to weaken Israel, to deprive of it's most important assets, and to bring Israel to a point of defeat."⁸¹ When asked in

⁷⁹ 'Aliyah' is a Hebrew word meaning 'ascent', and is used by Zionists to describe Jewish immigration to Israel.

⁸⁰ Sandra Oster Baras, *700 Club Interview with Pat Robertson* (February 12, 2002), Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (Colorado Springs, CO), DVD.

⁸¹ Sandra Oster Baras, *Cry! For the Beloved Country*, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (Colorado Springs, CO), DVD.

person what sort of process would bring peace, she responded, “Oh, an absolute reversal of everything we’ve seen today. . . Israel needs to be a lot more aggressive.” Israeli aggression is the solution, not a contributor to the problems. “You know, as far as I’m concerned,” she said matter-of-factly, “the Arabs brought this misfortune on themselves. And it’s about time that they stood up, took responsibility, and moved forward.” She makes no attempt to disguise her disdain.

At this point, I don’t want any Arab coming into my house because I don’t know if he’s literally going to stab me in the back tomorrow. They have to change. And this is a problem all over the world, in Muslim societies where the violence is everywhere. I mean, the fact that just a few months ago, five employees of the British National Health System turned into terrorists, and these are people that just a few days earlier were treating British patients! You know? So you trust them to save you and the next day they’re blowing you up? Who wants them? You can’t trust them!⁸²

She is also very frank about her differences with the evangelical Christians from whom she raises funds, but she does not believe that their differences are a problem. She knows that they believe Jews should, and at least some eventually will, accept Jesus as the Messiah. “I mean, I’m convinced that they’re wrong. They’re convinced that I’m wrong. Ok. We can leave it in God’s hands.” Beliefs about the conversion of Jews are irrelevant as long as Christians commit not to act on those beliefs and evangelize Jews.

The only thing we demand is an unconditional support for Israel. How you work that into your Christianity, as long as it doesn’t have an anti-Semitic element to it, or if it doesn’t have an element that is, that comes with an agenda of wanting to evangelize the Jews, it doesn’t matter what your theology is. We don’t get involved.⁸³

But when it comes to prophecies about returning to the land, she and her evangelical Christian partners speak the same language. “You know, read Ezekiel 36. These are the mountains of Israel that are coming to bloom again . . . so we just think we need to do more things to make it happen. God is opening the opportunities, but man’s gotta

⁸² Sandra Oster Baras, interview by author, 17 September 2007, Karnei Shomeron.

⁸³ Ibid.

do something.”⁸⁴

Although Baras is still a close friend of FBC and often speaks there, FBC no longer has much direct contact with CFOIC. When they adopted Ariel, CFOIC was young and unsophisticated. FBC could accomplish more by partnering directly with the Ariel Development Fund instead of working through CFOIC, so the adoption has taken on a life of its own, independent of the adoption agency.

Ariel was settled in 1978 with the permission of the Israeli government by a group of young Israelis led by Ron Nachman. They arrived on the West Bank hilltop by helicopter and slept in tents. Thirty years later, Ariel has 19,000 residents and Ron Nachman, who became their first elected mayor in 1985, has been re-elected four times. The youth of Ariel can receive their entire education inside the settlement. There are preschools, four elementary schools, three junior high schools, and one comprehensive high school, as well as a college with 9000 students. Ariel is large and well-funded enough to have many other facilities which are rare in the settlements. There is a shopping center with dozens of stores and restaurants, three medical clinics, a large public swimming pool, an extensive central park with a recently constructed “river,” a community center, a cultural and performing arts center, and a sports and recreation complex. Over 100 small plants and factories occupy Ariel’s industrial park.

Ariel and the bloc of settlements nearby are “consensus communities,” clusters of West Bank settlements which both Israeli and United States leaders have proposed remain Israeli in any final settlement with a Palestinian state. In this regard Ariel is both strategically important and particularly controversial. Ariel is on strategic high ground, perched above surrounding valleys and an underground water aquifer, an extremely important asset in this arid region. Ariel is also strategically important because it is situated just east of the strip of Israel that would be extremely thin – just nine miles wide at some points – if the Green Line became the Israel-Palestine border. Inclusion of the Ariel bloc would more than double the width of this strip of land, as Ariel is located twelve miles to the east of the Green Line. Both Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert have committed publicly to eventually annex the Ariel bloc into Israel

⁸⁴ Ibid.

proper. The likelihood of annexation seems confirmed by the snaking path of the Israeli “security fence,” which dips deep inside the West Bank to surround Ariel.

Over half of Ariel’s population today are recent Russian immigrants. Many Israelis choose to live in Ariel, not because of their ideological dedication to the settlement movement, but because it is only forty minutes from Tel Aviv, with housing costs one third as expensive. Some residents of the Golan Heights and northern Galilee regions moved to Ariel to escape the effects of the second Lebanon war. When Ariel gave temporary shelter to residents of a dismantled Gaza settlement, one third of these settlers chose to stay. Recently there has also been an influx of members of the Jewish Renewal Movement, which is adding a slightly more religious tone to Ariel. Historically, fewer than ten percent of Ariel’s residents have been religious. Nevertheless, there are thirteen synagogues in Ariel.

For most of its history, Ariel has had close connections with and benefited from the financial assistance of evangelical Christians. Ron Nachman first understood the potential for such partnerships in the 1980s, when he met Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founder and president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. After visiting with Eckstein, Nachman came to a conclusion: with only twelve million Jewish people in the world, Israelis cannot survive the threats of Arab hostility and anti-Israel European policies without seeking support from non-Jews. Eckstein had pointed him to the most eager non-Jewish supporters of Israel in the world, Christian Zionists. Nachman and the staff of the Ariel Development Fund have since cultivated friendships with Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Billye Brim, Maranatha Chapel of San Diego, the Johnston family of the JH Ranch Christian Camp, Victoria Hearst’s Ridgway Christian Center, Mac and Lynne Hammond of Living Word Christian Center, and John Hagee, in addition to their partnership with FBC. Ariel receives an average of fifteen visits per year from various Christian Zionist supporters. Ron Nachman and Dina Shalit, the director of the Ariel Development Fund, have been guests at several Nights to Honor Israel, including at John Hagee’s Cornerstone Church. Nachman reminisces about his speech at one Night to Honor Israel, where he told the audience to repeat with him that there is no West Bank in the Bible. “You should of heard it,” he said proudly. “Four thousand Christians shouting with me, ‘No

West Bank!”⁸⁵ Nachman strongly prefers these occasions to visiting synagogues in America. He says that when he visits synagogues he gets a lot of questions, but when he visits churches he gets big checks. Christian Zionist support for Ariel is “of mammoth importance,” reported one municipal official, “There are many practical services we would not have without their contributions. We would have a drastically reduced quality of life.”⁸⁶

The connection between Ariel and FBC is both financial and relational. Financially, the contributions of FBC are extensive. “They have had a hand in almost every facet of community life,”⁸⁷ said one resident. The church’s first gift was an ark for Torah scrolls. Since then they have given the community an ultrasound machine for the medical clinic, an annual gift of whatever item is needed at the local schools, a television, DVD player, and stereo for the local soldiers, an ongoing scholarship for students from Ariel to pursue their education after military service, and contributions to many of the community projects including a Holocaust museum, the sports and recreation center, and improvements to soldiers’ accommodation. Perhaps best known among the residents are two long term gifts of FBC to Ariel. The Brenda Wygant memorial vineyard and arbor are perched on one of the highest spots of Ariel. Brenda Wygant was a member of FBC’s Internationals and visited Ariel several times before she died of cancer. Now grapes grow there in her memory and most of the Christian groups who visit Ariel plant vines there “in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:5,”⁸⁸ which says, “Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit.”⁸⁹

The other long term gift is the ongoing endowment of Ariel’s Child Development Center. Originally built with a grant from the Milken Family Foundation of Los Angeles, the center now covers approximately eighty percent of its operating

⁸⁵ Ron Nachman, phone interview by author, 25 September 2007, Jerusalem.

⁸⁶ Dina Shalit, interview by author, 6 September 2007, Ariel.

⁸⁷ Interview by author, 23 September 2007, Ariel.

⁸⁸ “Honorable Mentschen,” *Shalom Ariel* (Autumn 2006): 24.

⁸⁹ New Revised Standard Version.

costs with payments received from the families served. FBC, along with their Spanish-speaking congregation, Impacto de Fe, covers the remaining twenty percent as well as funding additional equipment and staff training as needed. Funds from FBC also allow the center to subsidize eighty percent of the fees of low-income families. “When we adopted Ariel,” remembers Cheryl Morrison, “We asked the Lord, ‘What do you want us to do there?’ And the scripture came to me when Jesus said, ‘When you’ve done it to the least of these, my brethren, you’ve done it to me.’ So we said, ‘Who would be the least in Ariel?’ And it would be the children who have emotional, physical and learning disabilities.”⁹⁰

The center provides one-on-one speech therapy, occupational therapy (including art, music, and gardening therapies, among others), physical therapy, tutoring for children with learning disabilities, and psychological services. They serve children with congenital problems as well as those suffering from traumas, including terrorism. About one hundred families are served each year, and there is always a waiting list. The center works in conjunction with the schools, with the goal of diagnosing and treating problems as early as possible and keeping children with disabilities in mainstream education. Without the center, families of children with disabilities either could not live in Ariel, would have to drive long distances missing work and school to get to other treatment centers, or would not have access to treatment at all.

In the words of one couple who lives in Ariel, the people of FBC “don’t just leave their money. They get involved.”⁹¹ Whenever a group from FBC visits Israel, it includes a visit to Ariel. Though some settlers would gladly open their homes to them, Cheryl Morrison insists that FBC groups stay in Ariel’s Eshel Hashomron Hotel, so that they can contribute to the local economy. But they also meet and eat with residents instead of maintaining tourist-like distance. Members of FBC also keep in touch with Ariel’s political agenda. For example, many people in Ariel, FBC, and CFOIC opposed the construction of the “security fence,” seeing it as a denial that all

⁹⁰ Cheryl Morrison, Israel Awareness Day, 20 May 2007, Faith Bible Chapel (Arvada, CO), DVD.

⁹¹ Interview by author, 23 September 2007, Ariel.

of Judea and Samaria are the rightful property of the state of Israel. However, when it became clear that the barrier would be built, Ariel wanted to be on the Israeli side of it. Members of FBC contacted the municipal offices in Ariel to let them know they were lobbying for the barrier to go around Ariel, as it now does. When Mayor Nachman spoke at John Hagee's church in March 2006, he quipped, "I don't call it a wall or a fence around Ariel. I call it a gated community."⁹²

The young people of FBC and Ariel are particularly connected. When the Internationals visit Ariel each year, they not only perform for the community, they meet with the teens of the settlement and have structured discussions on topics like how their lives are similar, or the differences between a country with a volunteer military and one where military service is compulsory at a young age. They also visit local schools. Recently one Ariel junior high assembled an album of the students' photographs and life stories, and presented it to the Internationals as a gift. When youth groups from FBC take Israel tours, they do volunteer work in Ariel ranging from manual labor like painting and landscaping to spending time with the handicapped adults of Ariel. When the second intifada started, the teens of Ariel were extremely isolated. Their parents forbade the usual recreational drives into nearby Tel Aviv because of incidents on the small road shared by Israelis and Palestinians which was their only route. Cheryl Morrison visited the offices of the Development Fund and told them that the teens of Ariel had been on the hearts of those at FBC and they wanted to do something to help them through this difficult time. They paid for food, entertainment, and decorations for a Hanukkah party for all of Ariel's teens. The party revived and encouraged the youth, and has become an annual tradition.

Some of the youth of Ariel also have the opportunity to visit FBC and other Christian friends in America. Taking a cue from their friends at FBC, the Ariel Development Fund sponsors a group of teenagers which performs traditional Israeli and Russian dances as well as songs in English in tours of the United States. The group, For Zion's Sake, has about twenty members. Each year about half of the members have to leave the group to join the military, which is mandatory for all Israeli citizens at the age of eighteen. For Zion's Sake does some performances for

⁹² Ron Nachman, phone interview by author, 25 September 2007, Jerusalem.

Jewish groups, but they are hosted by and spend most of their time with evangelical Christians. The following excerpt from the Development Fund's quarterly magazine describes their recent visit to FBC.

[T]he church's own singers and dancers, waving Israeli flags and laden with gifts, welcomed Ariel's young entertainers. Because their arrival coincided with Israel's Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers, the kids and their host families gathered in the church's small prayer chapel for a special ceremony. The names of the soldiers killed in the Second Lebanon War last summer were read and a candle lit in memory of each one. It was a moving moment and created an immediate tie between the Israelis and the Americans.⁹³

The 2007 tour program opened with "From Israel with Love," a tribute song to Americans, thanking them for helping Israel. They performed some of the same songs as the Internationals, including "Mashiach," during which the boys danced in *Haredi* costumes. Other songs were more specific to their life as settlers, including "Exodus," which included this solo by a boy whose face was filled both with youthful acne and very adult anger:

This land is mine.
 God gave this land to me,
 This brave and ancient land to me.
 And when the morning sun
 Reveals her hills and plains,
 I can see a land where children can run free.
 To make this land our home,
 If I must fight, I'll fight.
 To make this land our home,
 If I must die, this land is mine.⁹⁴

Director of the Ariel Development Fund and resident of Ariel from its early years, Dina Shalit, introduced each song the teens performed. By way of introduction to their "Western Dance" number, complete with cowboy and cowgirl costumes, she said that both Israelis and Americans have a pioneering spirit and "in the U. S. it was settlers who built the country, spreading the borders past the original thirteen colonies. Your history, however, only reflects admiration for the settlers who moved west, and with

⁹³ "A Hard Act To Follow," *Shalom Ariel* (Autumn 2007): 9.

⁹⁴ Andy Williams, "The Exodus Song (This Land is Mine)," performed by For Zion's Sake (Ariel: Ariel Development Fund, 2006), DVD.

visions of a manifest destiny created a free and democratic USA from sea to shining sea.”⁹⁵ She later introduced the closing song, “Bring Them Home,” by announcing that the fund’s next project was to encourage North American Jews to immigrate to Israel and live in Ariel, a project for which the help of the audiences was needed.⁹⁶

It’s a promise that God made.
 It’s a prophecy He gave.
 From the northern lands he said
 They’d come home
 To the ancient promised land.
 God has given his command.
 Now their fate is in our hands.
 Bring them home.
 Do not deny.
 There’s a blessing on high
 If you bless Israel.
 Bring them home.⁹⁷

Ariel also sends a delegation of teenagers to America each year to visit Christian Zionist friends. They visit Maranatha Chapel in San Diego where they are hosted by Christian families and taken to southern California tourist attractions, and JH Ranch in northern California where they participate in a two week adventure challenge/leadership training program along with American Christian teens.

Settlers who work with the teens of Ariel describe their interactions with American Christians as life-changing. Before their encounters with Christian Zionists, some of Ariel’s teens felt isolated and abandoned, and that the whole world hates them because they are settlers. They have tended to be non-observant and uninterested in Judaism, as well as alienated from the causes of Zionism and settlement. Some have become depressed by their isolated lives and their treatment by other Israelis as second class citizens. Then they encounter these hundreds and thousands of people

⁹⁵ Dina Shalit, For Zion’s Sake, Ariel Development Fund, 2006, DVD.

⁹⁶ This project, funded by the Israeli Ministry of Absorption, the Jewish Agency, and Nefesh B’Nefesh, is called “Ariel A.I.M.S.,” which stands for Aliyah Integration Movement for Success. The project includes recruitment of immigrants, housing development, and job placement.

⁹⁷ Author unknown, “Bring Them Home,” performed by For Zion’s Sake, (Ariel: Ariel Development Fund, 2006), DVD.

who repeatedly greet them with messages like, “You are chosen by God. God has not forsaken your people. God chose you to settle the land He promised to Abraham. We love you unconditionally and support your right to the land.” They come away feeling loved and confident, with a new interest in Judaism and a zealous commitment to Israel, military service, and the settlement movement. Many stay in touch with the Christians they meet. Some have reported that they planned to leave Israel, but now they are proud to stay and defend the land, and they are proud to be God’s chosen people. Some leaders of Ariel locate the lasting significance of Christian Zionism on their community in these exchanges, as much if not more than the financial contributions. The relationships being fostered between young Christians and young settlers are cultivating the future American supporters of Israel’s claims to land in the West Bank, and the future Israeli defenders and expanders of the settlements.

Again, the participants in these exchanges insist that their theological differences are irrelevant. As long as the Christians do not proselytize, the leaders of Ariel are unconcerned with their beliefs other than their support for the state of Israel. “They don’t do it because of us,” stated Mayor Nachman, candidly. “They do it for their own benefit.” But for Nachman, like other Jews who chose to cooperate with Christian Zionists, this realization is unproblematic. “If we agree with their ideology, I don’t see why not to strengthen it.”⁹⁸

According to Mearshimer and Walt’s recent work on the influence of Christian Zionists on U.S. foreign policy, the efforts of Christian groups to support the settlements, of which they cite FBC’s adoption of Ariel as a “celebrated example,” have made a significant difference. “Absent their support, settlers would be less numerous in Israel, and the U.S. and Israeli government would be less constrained by their presence in the Occupied Territories as well as their political activities.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ron Nachman, phone interview by author, 25 September 2007, Jerusalem.

⁹⁹ Mearsheimer and Walt, 134 and 138.

Conclusion

The people of FBC do not speak of John Nelson Darby, British premillennialism or the Bible conference movement. One has difficulty finding a *Scofield Reference Bible* at FBC, or even members who are familiar with Scofield. Yet their history places them firmly within the historical development of dispensationalist Christian Zionism in America. The birth of their church was just a few years before Israel's dramatic annexations in the 1967 war, a key motivating factor for Christian Zionist activism. FBC's first visit to Israel was just a few years after the publication of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a watershed event in the popularization of dispensationalist views on Israel and the end times. Their first Israel Awareness Day was in the late 1970s, coinciding with the Israel's free tours for American pastors, and with the beginnings of the New Christian Right. The congregation is now closely allied with John Hagee, the foremost figure in contemporary Christian Zionism.

However, and rather interestingly, one aspect of the internal narrative of the congregation's Christian Zionism is that they were isolated, unappreciated, and relatively unique in their support of Israel in their early years. They do not conceive of themselves as having grown out of an existing tradition of Christian Zionism or as being part of a trend of rising activism in the 1960s-1980s. As far as they are concerned, they were simply Christians reading their Bibles who finally realized what God really says about Israel and decided to do something about it; it took decades for millions of other Christians to catch on. One woman who has been a part of FBC since it met in homes said of the church's support of Israel in its early decades, "It was a great challenge to find inroads to do that, at that time. It's much easier now, but back then it was not . . . Back then it was difficult to find those trails. I mean, we were blazing trails!"¹⁰⁰ Those reflecting on the shift from isolation to involvement in vast Christian Zionist organizations and networks usually speak in terms of the miraculous movement of God to reveal the truth about Israel to more Christians and to bring them

¹⁰⁰ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

into cooperation with one another.¹⁰¹

God's miraculous power is also credited for the congregation's numeric growth and financial prosperity, and this too is related to their Christian Zionism. People involved with FBC's Israel Outreach believe that there is a perception among the media and non-Zionist Christians that Christian Zionists support Israel in order to receive blessings themselves, in fulfillment of Genesis 12.3. While they strongly deny this is a motive, they do affirm that it seems to be an evident consequence of their Zionism. "One of the reasons why Faith, as opposed to all the other non-denominational churches that started in the 60s, has been so successful and blessed is because it always stands for Israel," one member explained.¹⁰²

FBC's ahistorical self-understanding fuels the certitude of their beliefs and the urgency of their activism. They do not understand themselves as part of a theological tradition with a particular way of reading the Bible which has led to certain conclusions about Israel. They understand themselves as simply taking biblical texts on Israel at face value, and as being in direct contact with God's miraculous workings in the world today. Their unacknowledged immersion in the disciplines of dispensationalist biblical interpretation feeds their deeply dispensationalist imagination of time and space, which in turn sustains their Christian Zionist activism. In the following chapters, this theopolitical imagination will be explored. A dispensationalist imagination of time shapes FBC's Christology, while a dispensationalist imagination of space shapes their ecclesiology, and both are misshapen due to their subordination to dispensationalist eschatology. FBC's activism on behalf of Israel therefore arises out of a theological system cut off from the Christological and ecclesiological resources necessary for properly Christian social ethics.

¹⁰¹ My untested hypothesis is that the shift had mostly to do with the rise of Christian media and of the New Christian Right. There were strong pockets of Christian Zionist belief around the country during the 1960s and 1970s, but they were not aware of each other, did not have access to as many Zionist resources, and were not mobilized by activist leaders until Christian television, publishing, and right-wing politics were transformed in the 1980s and 1990s.

¹⁰² Interview by author, 14 May 2007, Arvada.

CHAPTER FOUR

Christology and Eschatology

It is another Sunday morning at FBC. Photographs of green leaves are projected on the large screens across the front of the sanctuary and the members of the praise team are dressed in various shades of green. They lead the congregation, who are filing into the sanctuary at leisurely intervals dressed in bright summer colors, short sleeves, and tank tops, in songs about Jesus. “*Santo, santo, santo!*” They sing one verse of the familiar hymn in Spanish. On the stage just behind the singers is a set of props. There is a life-size wooden cross, complete with dark red smudges where crucified hands, feet, and back would have bled. There is also something arched, made of wood, like a bridge. Across the bridge from the cross is a wooden stool on which a large, golden crown has been placed.

When the praise team has been seated and Pastor George has taken the stage after the offering, he strays from the Plexiglas pulpit even more often than usual, using the props to illustrate his sermon. “When we talk about grace, we talk about the cross,” he says, pointing to the large, bloodied object. “Because it was two thousand years ago where Jesus hung, he died for our sins.” He steps on to the bridge and begins to walk across it, slowly. “And then, the other end of this bridge that we have built is a crown. And the crown represents the second return of Christ and the future we have in eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ, with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.” He turns from the crown back toward the center of the bridge. “Now, in the mean time we have this kind of bridge that we’re crossing over, life that we’re living.”¹

Pastor George asks the congregation to read along with him from Hebrews 9.26-28. Many in the congregation unzip their leather or quilted Bible covers and turn to the book of Hebrews, though the passage is printed on a handout they have all received and is projected on the large screens.

‘He then would have to suffer often since the foundation of the world, but

¹ George Morrison, “From Grace To Glory,” sermon in the series *Hope for the Future* (3 June 2007), audio recording, Faith Bible Chapel Media Ministry (Arvada, CO).

now, once at the end of the ages,’ circle that word, or underline, ‘end of the ages.’ ‘He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once,’ that’s another word I want you to circle, ‘once.’ ‘but once, to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time,’ underline the word, or the words ‘second time,’ ‘apart from sin, for salvation.’²

Having read the passage and instructed the congregation in appropriate underlining, Pastor George explains the text. “‘Once,’ it says . . . stating that Jesus Christ came the first time to die, but it’s the only time he’s gonna do that. . . The sacrifice doesn’t have to be offered over and over again every year. Once he died, happened two thousand years ago.” He’s been gesturing toward the cross, now he moves toward the crown. “And now we eagerly wait for him who will appear the second time apart from sin for the salvation of our bodies, and this earth and everything else. So we have this span of period,” he indicates the bridge, “from the time that he died to the second appearing.”³

The sermon continues for thirty minutes or so, until Pastor George closes the service with a prayer that God will look deeply into the heart of each individual and move them to either accept Jesus as personal savior or recommit their lives to him. Then a member of the band starts playing the keyboard in low, repentant tones, and Pastor George leads the congregation in praying the appropriate prayer. “With every head bowed, with our eyes closed, today, with these thoughts that we’ve shared fresh in your mind, you’re saying, ‘I want this day to be a great day. I wanna commit my heart to Christ for the first time, or in a greater way. . .’”

The cross and the crown – representing, respectively, the substitutionary and satisfying death of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of individuals’ sins, and the victorious and conquering second coming of Jesus Christ to defeat his enemies and rule the world – overshadow virtually every other possible aspect of Christology in the theology of Faith Bible Chapel. One important factor contributing to this reality is the dispensationalist imagination of time. Through the following examination of Scofield’s interpretation of time as related to Jesus Christ and his two advents, several

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

problematic features of dispensationalist Christology will be identified and brought into focus through contrast with Yoder's work. We will then see how the specifics of these problematic features, though revised or no longer emphasized by the contemporary heirs of dispensationalism at Faith Bible Chapel, continue to have lasting implications in the theology which sustains their Zionist activism.

Jesus Christ and Human Time

One important aspect of Christology is exploration of the consequences of God as human entering into human time. Among the many questions raised by this doctrine is what effect, if any, the life and death of Jesus Christ had on human time. The following section will demonstrate that Yoder's answer to this question has to do with the transformation of human time through the inauguration at the cross of a new aeon, which is experienced now as the foretaste of the coming kingdom. Because the kingdom is characterized by social renewal and those realities are available in part now because of Christ, Christians are invited into both the hopeful possibility and the hard work of concrete social renewal in this present age. In a subsequent section, Yoder's Christological transformation of human time will alert the reader to the stark social fatalism arising from the dispensationalist imagination of time. Scofield's concepts of the dispensations, the 'times of the Gentiles,' and the 'seventy weeks' converge in a vision of humanity locked in cycles of failure and judgment, and of successions of totalizing imperial rule. Not only was this grim vision of human time not transformed by Jesus Christ, in fact his death opened a temporal gap and postponed the only era in which social renewal will be possible, the millennial kingdom. Finally, we will see how the members of FBC are schooled in this dispensationalist imagination of time, but how a crucial event which has occurred since Scofield's writing – the founding of the modern state of Israel – has resulted in a revised employment of dispensationalism.

Jesus Christ and Human Time in Yoder

According to Yoder, the present age – the time between Pentecost and

parousia – is “a period of the overlapping of two aeons.”⁴ It is not entirely different from what has gone before or what will come after, but is a period of time when aspects of the former and coming realities are blended in human experience. The two aeons are perhaps more precisely referred to as “present” and “coming,” rather than “old” and “new,”⁵ not only because of their temporal coexistence, but also because their distinction from one another is as much “directional” as it is temporal. “[O]ne points backward to human history outside of (before) Christ; the other points forward to the fullness of the kingdom of God, of which it is a foretaste.”⁶

Jesus revealed the character of the coming aeon in his life and his teachings, but it was not the age of nationalistic revival – the renewed Davidic kingdom – which was expected, and thus Jesus was rejected.⁷ Jesus “proclaimed the institution of a new kind of life, not of a new government.”⁸ However, the rejection of Jesus and his kingdom in no way thwarted or postponed the coming aeon. Instead, it provided the opportunity for the inauguration of the coming kingdom of which the new aeon is foretaste. “The cross is not a detour or a hurdle on the way to the kingdom, nor is it even the way to the kingdom; it is the kingdom come.”⁹ In submission to death on a cross, Jesus did not abdicate his Messianic title, rather “the suffering of the Messiah *is* the inauguration of the kingdom.”¹⁰

The kingdom inaugurated at the cross will be consummated at the end of the present age when creation “becomes identical with the new aeon.”¹¹ In the gospel of Luke, Jesus describes the coming kingdom through the image of Jubilee, affirming the

⁴ Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 146.

⁵ See Yoder, *Christian Witness to the State*, 9.

⁶ Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 146.

⁷ See *Ibid.*, 147.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 51.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 150.

themes of social renewal which characterized his mother's and Zechariah's proclamations of Jesus' mission: reversal of rich and poor, feeding of the hungry, deliverance from oppression.¹² Although the consummation of the kingdom will usher in the age of full social renewal, God's historical presence with humanity – in God's relationship with Israel, in the person of Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit – makes concrete social renewal possible, though partial and anticipatory. Thus, in Yoder's work, the cross opens a new aeon, the foretaste of the coming kingdom which, though not fully realized, includes revived possibilities for social renewal through the presence of the Holy Spirit empowering the church in her life and her work in the world.

*Jesus Christ and Human Time in Scofield*¹³

Scofield's imagination of human time was shaped by the concept of dispensations. He defined a dispensation as "a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."¹⁴ In each dispensation God requires humanity or some specific group of humans to order their lives in regard to a specific reality. Inevitably, humans fail and suffer God's judgment. Five such dispensations have already occurred. The present age is the sixth dispensation, and there is one yet to come.

First was the Dispensation of Innocency, God tested Adam and Eve simply by forbidding the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. They failed the test and God judged them by expelling them from the garden.¹⁵ Second, the Dispensation of Conscience began when human conscience awakened through the knowledge of good and evil. God tested humanity's ability to do all that which they knew to be good and

¹² See Yoder on Luke in chapter two of *The Politics of Jesus*.

¹³ In the remainder of the thesis, all quotations from *The Scofield Reference Bible* are from the 1917 edition. Citations will refer to placement in relation to biblical texts instead of page numbers, as pagination may differ in various printings. For example, the citation: "Scofield, Genesis 1.28, note," refers to Scofield's footnote on that verse. All scriptural quotations used with reference to Scofield are from the King James Version, as this was the version to which Scofield originally attached his notes.

¹⁴ Scofield, Genesis 1.28, note.

¹⁵ On the Dispensation of Innocency, see Scofield, Genesis 1.28, note.

abstain from all that which they knew to be evil. Humanity failed and was judged in the flood.¹⁶ Third, God introduced the Dispensation of Human Government. The test was for humanity to govern successfully the world on God's behalf.¹⁷ Originally, this governmental responsibility "rested upon the whole race, Jew and Gentile, until the failure of Israel under the Palestinian Covenant brought the judgments of the Captivities, when 'the times of the Gentiles' began, and the government of the world passed exclusively into Gentile hands."¹⁸ Thus, the test of human government has ended and will end differently for different people groups. For the human race, the test ended in the judgment of linguistic confusion at Babel. For Jews, the test ended in the judgment of captivity. The test will end for Gentiles when Jesus returns to judge and abolish all Gentile nations and restore the nation of Israel.¹⁹ Fourth, the Dispensation of Promise applied only to the descendants of Abraham, whom God promised to bless. The test was simply to abide in God's graciousness and receive God's blessing. Their failure, according to Scofield, was that "they rashly accepted the law" and "exchanged grace for law."²⁰ Fifth, and beginning at the revelation of the law at Sinai, The Dispensation of Law applied only to the nation of Israel. Unfortunately, Scofield wrote, "The history of Israel in the wilderness and in the land is one long record of the violation of the law."²¹ The testing of the nation ended in the judgment of the captivities, but the dispensation did not end until the crucifixion.

Sixth, the Dispensation of Grace began with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The test is whether Jesus will be accepted or rejected, with good works

¹⁶ On the Dispensation of Conscience, see Scofield, Genesis 3.23, note.

¹⁷ Based on Genesis 9.6 ("Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."), Scofield wrote, "The highest function of government is the judicial taking of life. All other governmental powers are implied in that." Genesis 8.21, note.

¹⁸ Scofield, Genesis 8.21, note.

¹⁹ On the Dispensation of Human Government, see Scofield, Genesis 8.21, note.

²⁰ On the Dispensation of Promise, see Scofield, Genesis 12.1, note.

²¹ On the Dispensation of the Law, see Scofield, Exodus 19.8, note.

following acceptance as fruits of salvation (instead of obedience being the test and the condition of salvation, as under the law). Israel rejected Jesus, and both Jews and Gentiles crucified him. While many more Jews and Gentiles have since claimed to accept Jesus, most of these will eventually be revealed as false. The predicted end of the dispensation is that the visible church will descend ever further into apostasy until Jesus returns and judges them in the apocalypse.²²

The seventh and final dispensation, the one which breaks the cycle of test-failure-judgment, is the Kingdom, or the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. This dispensation will begin when Christ returns at the end of the great tribulation, and will consist of a millennium of righteous rule by Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem over a restored and converted Israel and all the world. There is no test. The dispensation will end when Christ “shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.”²³

In addition to the dispensations, another key to understanding the dispensationalist imagination of time is the interpretation of three passages in the book of Daniel. In Daniel 2, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of an image with a golden head, silver arms, brass abdomen and thighs, iron legs, and feet of mixed iron and clay. A stone strikes the iron and clay feet, smashing them to pieces, then grows to become a mountain filling the entire earth. Daniel interprets the dream, telling Nebuchadnezzar that each part of the image represents a kingdom. The brass head is Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, and the other parts represent coming kingdoms of the future, succeeding one another until the stone, a kingdom set up by God which will have no end, consumes all other kingdoms.²⁴

Scofield conflates this dream with Daniel’s vision of four beasts in chapter 7, where Daniel sees four creatures coming up out of the sea: a lion with eagle’s wings, a

²² On the Dispensation of Grace, see John 1.17. In a note on James’s speech to the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, Scofield says, “Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the N.T. It gives the divine purpose for this age, and for the beginning of the next” – the calling out of the church followed by the return of the Lord to reign over Israel. Scofield, Acts 15.13, note.

²³ On the Dispensation of the Kingdom see Scofield, Ephesians 1.10, note.

²⁴ See Daniel 2.31-45.

bear, a leopard, and a dreadful beast with iron teeth and ten horns. An additional horn appears, with eyes and a speaking mouth. The Ancient of days destroys this beast and takes away the dominion of the other beasts, giving all dominion and power to one like a son of man. Daniel interprets his vision as representing four kingdoms, with the fourth having ten kings followed by a final, terrible king who will speak against God and then be judged. All dominion will then be given to the saints of God in an everlasting kingdom.²⁵ Scofield places headings within the text to offer his interpretation that the two visions speak of the same succession of kingdoms, which are the “world empires” of Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, which will be replaced by the kingdom of heaven. This succession of world empires is the “times of the Gentiles” to which Jesus refers in Luke 21.24.²⁶ When the Dispensation of Human Government ended for Israel in the judgment of captivities, all human government was given to Gentiles, who will rule the earth through successive empires until Christ returns – the smiting stone in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the Son of Man in Daniel’s vision – to establish the millennial kingdom.²⁷

Another vision in Daniel chapter 9 provides the chronology which ties together the dispensations, the times of the Gentiles, and the two advents of Jesus Christ in the dispensationalist imagination of time:

²⁴Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city; to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make the reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. ²⁵Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, ever in troublous times. ²⁶And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. ²⁷And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he

²⁵ See Daniel 7.1-28.

²⁶ “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” KJV.

²⁷ See Scofield’s notes on Daniel 2.31 and Revelation 16.19.

shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.²⁸

Scofield interprets the “seventy weeks” of verse 24 as “sevens of years; seventy weeks of seven years each,” a total of 490 years. Sixty-nine of the seventy weeks (483 years) have already been fulfilled. In seven weeks (49 years), the temple was rebuilt, as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. After sixty-two weeks (434 years), Messiah arrived in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, and after that he was “cut off” by his rejection and crucifixion. The one week (seven years) of verse 27 remains to be fulfilled, but between the fulfilled 483 years and the unfulfilled 7 years stands the indeterminate “unto the end” of verse 26.

What was not revealed to Daniel or any Hebrew prophet was that the rejection of Jesus as king would open a rift in prophetic time, stopping the 490-year clock, and that this in-between time would be the Dispensation of Grace, or the age of the church. When the age of the church has run its course, the true church will be raptured and the prophetic clock will begin ticking again. In the final week (seven years), all the remaining prophecies preceding the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time, or the kingdom age, will be fulfilled. The events described in verse 27 above as occurring “in the midst of the week,” are aspects of the great tribulation, which will be the final three-and-a-half years of the seventieth week.²⁹

Despite the dispensationalist penchant for elaborate charts of the dispensations which look like time lines, the dispensations do not allow for a philosophy of time which is purely linear. Repetition of the progression from test to failure to judgment gives dispensational time a partially cyclical character. While the death and resurrection of Jesus did usher in a new dispensation, it was because the cross signaled yet another failure of humanity, not the victory of the way of Jesus, as in Yoder. For Yoder the cross was the culmination of Jesus’ life and teachings and the inauguration of the kingdom. For Scofield the cross was the final phase of Israel’s rejection of, and thus the postponement of Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom. Yoder

²⁸ Daniel 9.24-27.

²⁹ Scofield, Daniel 9.24, note.

sees concrete social renewal made possible in new ways through, because of, and after the cross. Scofield sees the only hope of true social renewal (the kingdom age) rejected and postponed at the cross. According to Yoder, a new era dawned at the cross, and although it has not yet fully arrived and ended the former era, nonetheless its inauguration has transformed the realities of the human situation within time. In dispensationalism, the first advent of Jesus Christ did not transform human time; the cycle of test-failure-judgment continues, and humanity is once again on the downward slope of the inevitable decline of the current dispensation. Human time is marked by successions of human moral failure ruled over by successive totalizing but ultimately doomed empires, until Jesus Christ's second advent and the establishment of the kingdom on earth. Instead of a positive transformation of human time through the inauguration of a new aeon, as in Yoder, dispensationalism's interpretation of the cross and human time is that the rejection of Jesus opened a temporal gap, a pause between the times in which God was doing and will do what is of ultimate importance.

Jesus Christ and Human Time at Faith Bible Chapel

No mention is made of the dispensations in FBC's statement of "essential beliefs." The dispensations do not appear prominently in the vast majority of classes, conversations and sermons. It is entirely conceivable that one could attend FBC regularly for years without ever being introduced to the concept. However, dispensationalism was prominent in the teaching of their founding pastor, who led the congregation for its first twenty years. Leaders of the church today describe learning about the dispensations, the times of the Gentiles, and the seventy weeks from Pastor Hooley and the Bible teachers of the church's early years, or from their instructors in the church's Bible College. Students in the current manifestation of the Bible College, the Faith Bible Institute for Biblical Studies, are still schooled in these staples of dispensationalist theology. These features of dispensationalism also figure prominently in the literature central to the core members of the Israel Outreach ministry.

Perhaps the most central piece of literature among the most actively Christian Zionist members of FBC is *Blow the Trumpet in Zion: The Dramatic Story of God's Covenant Plan for Israel, Including Their Past Glory and Suffering, Present Crisis,*

and Future Hope, by Richard Booker. Booker is a former oil executive turned pastor and televangelist. He is the founder and director of the Texas-based Institute for Hebraic-Christian Studies.³⁰ Booker's work is used in Faith Bible Institute courses, assigned to members of the Internationals, and is widely recommended, given, sold, and discussed at FBC.³¹ While Booker never refers to dispensations or dispensationalism, and never cites Scofield or any other dispensationalist interpreter, much of his book reads like an updated and paraphrased compilation of Scofield's notes. He employs the dispensationalist interpretation of the times of the Gentiles as follows:

The Times of the Gentiles represents that period in world history when the Gentile nations of the world would rule over Jerusalem and dominate the Jewish people. God would allow this to take place as a part of His sovereignty over the flow of history in working out His divine plans and purposes. When one of these nations or empires had served its purpose, God would destroy it because of its evil and raise up another in its place. This cycle would continue throughout the course of world history until God determined to bring it to a close with the second coming of Messiah Jesus. . . . Because Israel is now in control of Jerusalem, we know that the times of the Gentiles are at an end. . . . I believe in the very near future there will be a worldwide economic, political, social, moral and military collapse of all the Gentile powers.³²

Likewise, though Pastor George rarely refers to the dispensations from the pulpit, he readily identifies the congregation's theology with dispensationalism.

If you're using the term dispensations, in other words there were periods of time that you could track and pretty well identify that this was an age – for instance, we believe this is the age of grace You go back and you have the age of the law, you know. And if you break it down that way, if you call that dispensationalism, yes. . . . You know, we don't believe the millennial kingdom is here yet and won't be established until the Messiah Christ comes back and sets it up, the literal return of Christ to this earth. There is a millennial reign, a thousand year reign of Christ, brought out in Revelation.

³⁰ See Institute for Hebraic-Christian Studies, <www.rbooker.com> (20 June 2008).

³¹ When I asked members for reading recommendations, Booker was almost invariably mentioned. I was given multiple copies of the book, saw it for sale at all the Israel-related events, and was shown boxes full of copies stored with the church's educational materials.

³² Booker, 72-73.

So, yes, we do believe those things.³³

Thus, the dispensationalist imagination of time has significant influence on the congregation's theology even though the specifics of the dispensations are only discussed in certain circles. The social determinism and fatalism often associated with dispensationalism by its critics is also prominent in the congregation's understanding of the unfolding of human history. However, because the eschatological dimensions of dispensationalism have remained much closer to the forefront as the historical dimensions have receded into the background, the social decline of the current age made inevitable by the cycle of the dispensations is now described more often in eschatological terms, especially through the use of an image from Matthew 24. Jesus tells the disciples that they will know the end of the age is coming when there are wars and rumors of wars, strife between nations, all sorts of natural disasters, human suffering, and immorality. He refers to all these as *arche odion*, which is usually translated "the beginning of sorrows." Interestingly, though this is the translation in every version which seems to be in use at FBC, they almost universally revert to a more archaic translation when discussing this passage: "birth-pangs," as used in the Revised Standard Version and by Scofield in his notes. All the troubles in the world, all the terrible things we see on the news, they explain, are the birth-pangs of the coming Messiah. And like pain in childbirth, we know it will keep getting worse until he arrives. Pastor George employed the image, confirming the congregation's social fatalism, in a Mother's Day sermon:

Every mom in here knows what a pregnancy is like. Men, don't even begin to think that you understand. But they know that the first month there's a little discomfort possibly, the second month it increases, the third and fourth, and by the time you get to the eighth month, mom, there's a little discomfort involved in it. And when you go into that labor, it intensifies and moves down from ten minute intervals down to, what, five and four and three and two, and then . . . delivery. So the point that Jesus is making here is very clear. He said, the things that you see happening are going to increase, increase, increase in intensity, get stronger and stronger and stronger until the day that Jesus Christ comes back. Now, what we see happening now, let's not be troubled by it, but let us be alert to the fact that it's increasing.³⁴

³³ George Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

³⁴ George Morrison, "The 'Do Nots' of the Last Days," sermon in the series *Hope for the Future* (13 May 2007), audio recording, Faith Bible Chapel Media

On another occasion, a woman on staff reflected that as a mother she understood labor pain, and that helped her not be discouraged by the world's troubles. "What's goin' on in the world today, I think that if I didn't know that it was part of God's time clock – I mean, like the labor pains increase, and they increase in intensity as well as the time lapses – after having children, I know – and then, the time pattern becomes, the sequence becomes increasingly quicker, and I see that happening."³⁵

With the dispensations and their cyclical philosophy of time receding to the background of FBC's theology, and dispensationalist chronology and theology of the end times replacing it in prominence, the social fatalism which was associated with the inevitability of human failure in traditional dispensationalism is now echoed in the social fatalism tied with the nearness of the end of the age. One of the factors contributing to this shift has almost certainly been the establishment of Israel as a modern nation-state. Whereas for Scofield and those who were persuaded by him in the early twentieth century there was not yet any indication in current global events that the seventieth week and the end of the times of the Gentiles were approaching, since a Jewish nation-state has been established in Palestine, there is now every reason for people like those at FBC to believe that the end is near and that ever-increasing social ills are only to be expected.

The Two Advents of Jesus Christ

The subject of Jesus Christ within human time raises several further issues related to the correlation of the first and second advents. The following analysis of Yoder's work on the subject reveals Christological commitments to continuity

Ministry (Arvada, CO).

³⁵ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada. When another man in the congregation used this same image to describe how the world is getting worse and worse, he gave this example to prove his point: "I read an article just the other day, a hotel, motel, whatever it was, in the Napa Valley, they removed the Gideon Bible from the night stand and replaced it with Al Gore's *Convenient Truth* [sic!]." Interview by author, 7 May 2007, Arvada.

between the two advents; to the unity and normativity of Jesus' person, teachings, life, and death; and to a Messiah who did not refuse kingship or politics, but redefined them through suffering service. Yoder's Christological holism in turn will accentuate the troubling dualities of dispensationalist Christology in an exploration of Scofield's notes. Arising from traditional dispensationalist doctrines of the two advents, of Jesus' dispensational locus, and of the covenants, we will find a Jesus whose roles, identities, and functions are starkly divided between his two comings. A final section will describe how some of these dispensationalist doctrines are still taught at FBC, while others have been rejected, and how the consequent legacy is a thin Christology and a divided soteriology which views Jesus as saving individual souls through the first advent and redeeming sociality only when he returns.

The Continuity of the Two Advents in Yoder

Some popular readings of the book of Revelation see a second advent of Jesus Christ which will be entirely different from his first; vengeance will be his, and this time he will do the killing instead of the dying. Yoder resists the idea of radical discontinuity between the two advents, and interestingly, he does this by appealing to rather than rejecting the visions of Revelation. In his writings on eschatology and social ethics, Yoder returned again and again to Revelation 4-5, John's vision of four creatures, twenty-four elders, and myriad angels worshiping the Lamb who was slain, the only one in heaven or on earth worthy to open the scroll with seven seals. Yoder describes the scroll as containing the meaning of history, and it is *because* the Lamb was slain that he is worthy to open the scroll, worthy of honor, and worshiped by the multitudes. "[T]he cross and not the sword, suffering and not brute power determines the meaning of history."³⁶ In fact, Yoder argues that central to the message of Revelation is not a repudiation of the way of the cross, but another revelation that the cross is in fact God's way in this world. Revelation is "about how the crucified Jesus is a more adequate key to understanding what God is about in the real world of empires and armies and markets than is the ruler in Rome, with all his supporting

³⁶ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 232. See also "Christ the Hope of the World," 218; *Preface to Theology*, 247-248.

military, commercial, and sacerdotal networks.”³⁷ When Jesus returns and the kingdom is consummated, bringing the entire creation into harmony with the new aeon, we will not see a Christ who has abandoned his cross. Rather, the “consummation is first of all the vindication of the way of the cross.”³⁸

Some may object that Christ will come again for a very different purpose, which is judgment. There is no denial or evasion of judgment in Yoder’s unity of the two advents. Yoder affirms the creedal confession that Jesus will come again to judge.³⁹ For Yoder, however, final judgment and even the reality of hell are not incongruous with the witness of the first advent; they are the culmination of divine patience and non-coercion. “With judgment and hell the old aeon comes to its end (by being left to itself) and the fate of the disobedient is exclusion from the new heaven and the new earth, the consummation of the new society begun in Christ.”⁴⁰ A further objection may be raised that Christ is depicted in Revelation as meting out violent judgment. Yoder would counter that in Revelation 19, the rider on the white horse who judges and makes war is The Word of God; his sword is his tongue, not a weapon in his hand. “God’s agent is his own miraculous Word, the sword coming from the mouth of the King of kings and Lord of lords who is astride the white horse (Rev. 19). Just as has been the case ever since the patriarchs and most notably at Christ’s cross, the task of obedience is to obey, and the responsibility for bringing about victory is God’s alone, God’s means beyond human calculation.”⁴¹

Thus, while Jesus will come again to judge, for Yoder there is no substantive discontinuity between the two advents, and interpretations which emphasize discontinuity do violence both to the biblical texts involved as well as to the center of Christology: that in the cross, God’s ways in the world have most clearly been revealed.

³⁷ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 246.

³⁸ Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 151.

³⁹ See for example, Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 251-254.

⁴⁰ Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 152.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The Contrast of the Two Advents in Scofield

In addition to making notes on individual passages of scripture, Scofield also linked these notes together in topical chains of reference. Which topics he chose for such chains, the passages he chose to include in them, and how he summarized the importance of each chain are all telling indicators of his theology. The prophetic passages in the chain of references related to the first advent of Christ have to do with the birth/arrival of a redeemer figure or with rejection and suffering. The prophetic passages in the chain on Christ's second advent have to do with reigning, judging, being glorified, regathering the people into the land, and an age of peace and prosperity. They overlap in many cases with the chain of references to the kingdom. Most striking are the several passages which speak of both the former and the latter themes. In these cases, Scofield notes that the Old Testament prophets "saw in one blended vision the rejection and crucifixion of the King, and also His glory as David's Son." It was not revealed to them that there would be a span of time between these two realities, or that the church would come into existence during that interval. This was not revealed until Jesus' teachings on "the mysteries of the kingdom."⁴² According to Scofield, the prophets were perplexed by their combined visions of rejection and glory, suffering and power, and it was to their limited vision in this regard that 1 Peter 1.10-11 referred:

¹⁰Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come to you; ¹¹Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

The problem of what seemed like contradictory visions to the prophets was "solved by partial fulfillment."⁴³ That is, only the rejection and suffering aspects were fulfilled in Christ's first advent; the aspects of glory and power will not be fulfilled until he returns.

⁴² Scofield, Matthew 13.17, note. See also Malachi 3.1, note. "Mysteries of the kingdom" is Scofield's phrase for Jesus' parables on the kingdom in Matthew 13. See Matthew 13.3, note.

⁴³ Scofield, Acts 1.11, note.

The solution of that mystery lies, as the New Testament makes clear, in the two advents – the first advent to redemption through suffering; the second advent to the kingdom in glory, when the national promises to Israel will be fulfilled . . . to [the prophets] it was not revealed that between the advent to suffering, and the advent to glory, would be accomplished certain ‘mysteries of the kingdom’ (Mt. 13:11-16), nor that, consequent upon Messiah’s rejection, the New Testament Church would be called out. These were, to them, ‘mysteries hid in God’ (Eph. 3:1-10).⁴⁴

For example, one of the texts most widely used by Christians as herald of Christ’s first advent, Isaiah 9.6-7, is interpreted by Scofield as a “blended vision” of the two advents.

⁶For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the Increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

While the birth of the child in verse six is a vision of the first advent, the details of government, peace, the Davidic throne, and kingdom are all visions of the second advent.⁴⁵

Scofield’s doctrine of the two advents is in utter contrast to Yoder’s theology in which the cross is the way of Jesus in both advents. When considered in relation to Yoder’s two aeons versus Scofield’s dispensations, we find that whereas Yoder’s soteriology is holistic, Scofield’s soteriology is divided in kind between the two advents. The first advent was efficacious for individual soteriology understood as the forgiveness of sins, but social, embodied soteriology must await the second advent. Jesus Christ who died on the cross can save the individual from sin; only Jesus Christ the millennial ruler can redeem human bodies and human sociality.

⁴⁴ Scofield, “The Prophetical Books,” introduction (immediately preceding Isaiah).

⁴⁵ As indicated by the marginal subject references to which Scofield links each part of these verses.

Jesus the Teacher in Yoder

At the very heart of Yoder's entire corpus, and particularly his most well-known work, *The Politics of Jesus*, is the claim that what Jesus taught and the way Jesus lived and died are normative for the formation of Christian ethics today. *The Politics of Jesus* opens with Yoder identifying and arguing against several specific ways in which the thought of theologians, textual scholars, and common Christians has resulted in the non-normativity of Jesus. One of the central questions raised by Yoder in this regard is: "What becomes the meaning of the incarnation if Jesus is not normative man?"⁴⁶ The remainder of the book is an argument "that the ministry and the claims of Jesus are best understood as presenting to hearers and readers not the avoidance of political options, but one particular social-political-ethical option."⁴⁷

The challenge Yoder put to his audience was not only to read the teachings of Jesus as normative, but to widen ethical normativity beyond Jesus-the-teacher by relating Jesus' teachings to his person, the way he lived, and the way he died. "Jesus must, therefore, be seen not just as a teacher nor just as an actor on the social scene but in the unity of his teaching and person. His life is a life according to the Sermon on the Mount; the cross is the meaning of his moral teaching."⁴⁸ This unity of person and teaching is crucial to Yoder's ethical method, as it rejects not only tendencies to make Jesus' teachings irrelevant on the one hand, but also any overly simplistic reduction of Jesus' life to a set of teachings which must be obeyed, on the other hand. The latter tendency, Yoder noted, has been an unfortunate feature of some forms of Christian pacifism.⁴⁹ In Yoder's view, however, nonviolence is "not a matter of legalism but of discipleship, not 'thou shalt not' but 'as he is, so are we in this world' (1 John 4:17)."⁵⁰

⁴⁶Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁸ Yoder, "Christ the Light of the World," in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael J. Cartwright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 184.

⁴⁹ See Ibid., 185.

⁵⁰ Yoder, "Peace Without Eschatology?," 148.

Jesus the Teacher in Scofield

According to Scofield, the earthly ministry of Jesus occurred during the Dispensation of the Law. The teachings Jesus gave were either of that dispensation, or they were teachings intended for the kingdom, which Israel rejected and was thus postponed. Early in Jesus' ministry, his primary message was that the kingdom was "at hand." This early period included the Sermon on the Mount, which Scofield described as "the principles of the kingdom." Here (Matthew 5-7), Jesus is explaining how the coming kingdom will operate. The literal application of these teachings, therefore, is only for the kingdom age. In fact, the Sermon on the Mount is the "constitution" and "law" for the millennium.

Whenever the kingdom of heaven is established on earth it will be according to that constitution, which may be regarded as an explanation of the word 'righteousness' as used by the prophets in describing the kingdom (e.g. Isa. 11:4, 5; 32:1; Dan. 9:24). In this sense the Sermon on the Mount is pure law . . . the Sermon on the Mount in its primary application gives neither the privilege nor the duty of the Church. These are found in the Epistles.⁵¹

The offer of the kingdom and teachings about its governance were given by Jesus to the nation of Israel, and were rejected. The only application of the Sermon on the Mount to the church is through moral principles which "fundamentally reappear in the teaching of the Epistles."⁵²

Thus, Scofield does not entirely rule out all application of Jesus' teachings to the Christian life: "Distinguish, in the Gospels, *interpretation* from *moral application*. Much in the Gospels which belongs in strictness of interpretation to the Jew or the kingdom, is yet such a revelation of the mind of God, and so based on eternal principles, as to have a moral application to the people of God whatever their position

⁵¹ Scofield, Matthew 5.2, note.

⁵² Ibid. See also the following in Scofield, "The Four Gospels," introduction (immediately preceding Matthew): "The mission of Jesus was, *primarily*, to the Jews . . . Expect, therefore, a strong legal and Jewish coloring up to the cross . . . The Sermon on the Mount is law, not grace, for it demands as the condition of blessing (Mt. 5:3-9) that perfect character which grace, through divine power, creates (Gal.5:22, 23)."

dispensationally.”⁵³ However, the very few examples Scofield gives of the “moral application” of Jesus’ teachings to the Christian life are inward, individual, and ethically non-specific. For example, “It always remains true that the poor in spirit, rather than the proud, are blessed, and those who mourn because of their sins, and who are meek in consciousness of them, will hunger and thirst after righteousness, and hungering will be filled.”⁵⁴

The most extraordinary example of Scofield’s doctrine that Jesus’ teachings are not for the church in their literal sense is seen in his introduction to 2 Corinthians, where he suggests that the problem in Corinth which Paul had to combat was that some were attempting to live by Jesus’ teachings. “It is evident that the really dangerous sect in Corinth was that which said, ‘and I of Christ’ (1 Cor. 1:12). They rejected the new revelation through Paul of the doctrines of grace; grounding themselves, probably, on the kingdom teachings of our Lord as ‘a minister of the circumcision’ (Rom. 15:8); seemingly oblivious that a new dispensation had been introduced by Christ’s death.”⁵⁵

Thus we find several layers of duality in Scofield’s Christology. There is a strict division between the two advents. Particularly in contrast to Yoder’s view of the unity of the life, teachings and death of Jesus, we find a division between Jesus’ life, including his teachings, which are said to be of and for Judaism and Israel, and his death which is for atonement. Jesus’ death satisfies and substitutes; it has nothing to do with embodiment of his teachings. Finally, in contrast to Yoder’s argument that Jesus was teaching about and inaugurating a particular socio-political reality, we find the further duality in Scofield of Jesus’ social teachings being for the millennial kingdom and the only present application for Christians being inward and individual.

⁵³ Scofield, “The Four Gospels,” introduction.

⁵⁴ Scofield, Matthew 5.2, note.

⁵⁵ Scofield, “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,” introduction. Scofield is perhaps a bit contradictory on the relationship between Jesus’ teachings and Paul’s. Whereas here he refers to Paul as having a new revelation, elsewhere he insists that “Paul originates nothing but unfolds everything” which was “latent in the teachings of Jesus Christ.” See “The Epistles of Paul,” introduction.

Christ the King in Yoder

In his first advent, Jesus neither rejected kingship nor accepted the prevailing, Davidic interpretation of the coming king. Instead, he identified himself with Isaiah's suffering servant, thus redefining kingship.⁵⁶ Jesus' rejection of Davidic kingship was not a rejection of political leadership, but a redefinition of its godly execution. "The alternative to how the kings of the earth rule is not 'spirituality' but servanthood."⁵⁷

Jesus was repeatedly offered and tempted by opportunities to become the Davidic king many expected. According to Yoder, this is at the heart of the narrative of Satan's temptations: he was offering Jesus ways of seizing the throne to which he was entitled and which his followers would expect him to claim. This is particularly evident in Matthew's account where Jesus is offered world supremacy.⁵⁸ The temptation recurs in the feeding of the multitude and in the triumphal entry and cleansing of the temple, and culminates in Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane. ". . . Jesus was drawn, at this very last moment of temptation, to think *once again* of the messianic violence with which he had been tempted since the beginning."⁵⁹ Matthew's account in particular sets forth the real option that a confrontation with Judas and the police coming to arrest Jesus could actually be the moment "God would unleash the apocalyptic holy war."⁶⁰ But once again, Jesus refuses to be that sort of king. "As Satan had come thrice in the desert, so the real option of Zealot-like kingship comes the third time in the public ministry. . . Once more, now clearly for the last time, the option of the crusade beckons. Once more Jesus sees this option as a real temptation. Once more he rejects it."⁶¹

Jesus' rejection of violent, dominating kingship results in the people's

⁵⁶ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 243ff. See also "To Serve Our God and to Rule the World," 133f.

⁵⁷ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 38-39.

⁵⁸ See *Ibid.*, 25-27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

rejection of Jesus,⁶² and leads Jesus to the cross. “It is evident in Jesus that when God comes to be King, Jesus rejects the sword and the throne, taking up instead the whip of cords and the cross.”⁶³ However, rejection and suffering do not lead to abdication of kingship or failure of Christ’s kingdom. Instead, the cross most boldly and perfectly enacts kingship and kingdom, and by the cross Jesus ascends to a different throne. “[T]he cross is not defeat. Christ’s obedience unto death was crowned by the miracle of the resurrection and the exaltation at the right hand of God.”⁶⁴ This reality is confirmed most clearly and poetically in another passage central to Yoder’s work on eschatology and social ethics, the Christ Hymn of Philippians.⁶⁵ The hymn sings of Jesus emptying himself of his divine status and humbling himself “even to death on a cross. *Therefore* God also highly exalted him . . .” Just as the Lamb of Revelation is worthy because he was slain, Jesus of the Christ Hymn is exalted because he was crucified.

Christ the King in Scofield

Many of Scofield’s notes on prophecies related to Christ’s first advent and on the gospels have to do with Jesus being rejected as king. Scofield’s combination of chain references, notes on specific passages, and headings added within the biblical text together tell of a process during Jesus’ first advent whereby he offered the kingdom to the Jews, was morally rejected by his audiences, ceased offering or teaching about the kingdom, made one last official offer of himself as king, was officially rejected and thus crucified.

In Matthew’s gospel, Scofield identifies the turning point of Jesus’ moral rejection when Jesus pronounces woes upon three cities “wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.”⁶⁶ Scofield takes this passage to mean

⁶² See Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 146-147.

⁶³ Yoder, “Christ the Light of the World,” 185.

⁶⁴ Yoder, “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 147.

⁶⁵ Philippians 2.5-11. See Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 145; “Peace Without Eschatology?,” 147-148.

⁶⁶ Matthew 11.20-24.

that these cities were chosen for the testing of the people and because they did not believe, Jesus acknowledges that he has been rejected and changes his ministry in several ways. He begins speaking of judgment for those who reject him.⁶⁷ He begins to predict his official rejection, suffering, resurrection, and second coming.⁶⁸ He no longer offers the kingdom to the nation of Israel; instead he begins offering “rest and service” to individuals. He no longer teaches concerning the nature of the coming kingdom; instead he begins to teach concerning “personal discipleship.”⁶⁹ He also begins to minister to Gentiles, the first of whom is the Syrophonecian woman of Matthew 15, whose daughter he heals.⁷⁰

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, it was to fulfill Zechariah 9.9, “. . . behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Scofield describes this as Jesus’ final official offer of himself as the Davidic king.⁷¹ The people seemed to receive him as such, crying out “Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name

⁶⁷ Scofield, Matthew 11.20, note.

⁶⁸ The disciples’ message must change in these regards as well. In Matthew, just after Jesus says to Peter, “upon this rock I will build my church,” he “charged his disciples that they should tell not man that he was Jesus the Christ” (Matthew 16.20). Scofield notes, “The disciples had been proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, i.e. the covenanted King of a kingdom promised to the Jews, and ‘at hand.’ The church, on the contrary, must be built upon testimony to Him as crucified, risen from the dead, ascended, and made ‘Head over all things to the church’ (Eph. 1:20-23). The former testimony was ended, the new testimony was not yet ready, because the blood of the new covenant had not yet been shed, but our Lord begins to speak of His death and resurrection (v. 21). It is a turning point of immense significance.” Scofield, Matthew 16.20, note.

⁶⁹ See Scofield’s headings in the text of Matthew 11, and Matthew 11.28, note.

⁷⁰ “For the first time the rejected Son of David ministers to a Gentile.” Scofield, Matthew 15.21, note. However, this is not a complete turning away from Israel and toward Gentiles, which is predicted in Matthew 12.18-21. “In *fulfillment* this awaited the *official* rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ, and the final rejection of the risen Christ.” Matthew 12.18, note. His ministry to the Syrophonecian woman was a “precursive fulfillment.” Matthew 15.21, note.

⁷¹ See Scofield’s heading at Matthew 21.

of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”⁷² However, their acceptance of Jesus as king was not genuine. “So little was Jesus deceived by his apparent reception as King, that he wept over Jerusalem and announced its impending destruction . . . The same multitude soon cried, ‘Crucify Him.’”⁷³ Not only did the crowds not genuinely accept Jesus as King, more importantly, there was “no welcome from the official representatives of the nation.”⁷⁴ This was the beginning of the official rejection which culminated in Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross. Because of this official rejection, Jesus turned away from Israel entirely, though not permanently. Scofield interprets Matthew 21.43 (“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”) as Jesus’ declaration that the kingdom of God has been “taken from Israel nationally and given to the Gentiles.” However, the kingdom of heaven still awaits establishment, and although Jesus announces that he has “set aside” Israel, it will not be so forever. When Jesus returns in his second advent, he will set aside the church and give the promised kingdom to Israel.⁷⁵

In between his two advents, Christ has ascended into heaven, where he is enthroned. However, it is of crucial importance to traditional dispensationalism that Christ is seated now on the Father’s throne, and not on his own throne, which is the throne of David.⁷⁶ The entire system of dispensations and covenants would be disturbed if Christ was already enthroned as the Davidic King. Christ can only be the king in relation to the Israelite kingdom which is yet to be established.

Distinguishing the various identities of Christ in relation to various groups of people is therefore also important to Scofield. For example, in his notes on the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophonecian woman, Scofield points out that when she addressed Jesus as “son of David,” he ignored her “for a Gentile has no claim upon

⁷² Scofield, Matthew 21.9.

⁷³ Scofield, Zechariah 9.9, note.

⁷⁴ Scofield, Matthew 21.4, note.

⁷⁵ Scofield, Matthew 21.43, note; Romans 11.1, note.

⁷⁶ Scofield, Zechariah 6.11, note; Revelation 3.21, note.

Him in that character,” but when she called him “Lord,” he answered her immediately.⁷⁷ Similarly, when a group of Greeks comes looking for Jesus after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he replies, in part, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”⁷⁸ Scofield explains that Jesus could not receive these Greeks. “Christ in the flesh, King of the Jews, could be no proper object of faith to the Gentiles, though the Jews should have believed on Him as such. For Gentiles the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; Christ must be lifted up on the cross and believed in as a sacrifice for sin, as Seed of Abraham, not David.”⁷⁹ Accordingly to the church, Christ is not king except in regard to his “divine title.” He is “King of the Jews,” but never “King of the Church.”⁸⁰

For Scofield, Jesus came as king offering the Davidic kingdom. When he was rejected, he turned away from being king and establishing the kingdom toward being savior and addressing the individual. He will not be king and his kingdom will not be known until the second advent. When that day comes, the character of his kingship and kingdom are sure to be Davidic. For Yoder, Jesus came rejecting the Davidic interpretation of kingship and for this very reason he was rejected. He did not therefore turn away from his role as king, rather he inaugurated and revealed the character of his kingdom in the cross. Whereas in Yoder’s work we see the kingdom come in the cross and Jesus exalted because of his submission to suffering, in Scofield we see the kingdom postponed because of the cross and Jesus’ future enthronement set in contradistinction to his suffering.

The Politics of Jesus Christ in Yoder

For Yoder, Jesus’ kingdom is not nonpolitical or apolitical, rather Jesus redefined politics. He rejected several concrete political options readily available to

⁷⁷ Scofield, Matthew 15.21, note.

⁷⁸ John 12.24.

⁷⁹ Scofield, John 12.23, note.

⁸⁰ Scofield, Matthew 2.2, note. See also “The Four Gospels,” introduction.

him: the revolution against the Roman Empire sought by the Zealots, the “realistic” compromises and collaborations of the Sadducees, the withdrawal from wider society made by the Essenes, and the society within society created by the Pharisees’ “ghetto.”⁸¹ Yet Jesus was gathering a political community with a political agenda. In Luke’s gospel, the political nature of Jesus’ proclamation and ministry was evident from the beginning, in the Magnificat, Zechariah’s prophecy, the preaching of John the Baptist, the temptation in the wilderness, and in the synagogue of Nazareth. Jesus proclaimed the arrival and described the character of the coming aeon when he read from Isaiah in Nazareth (Luke 4).⁸² After the reading, which describes one sent by God to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed, Jesus proclaimed that the words had been fulfilled in the hearing of those gathered in the synagogue. “We may have great difficulty in knowing in what sense this event came to pass or could have come to pass; but what the event was supposed to be is clear: it is a visible socio-political, economic restructuring of relations among the people of God, achieved by [God’s] intervention in the person of Jesus as the one Anointed and endued with the Spirit.”⁸³ Thus, although the empire was mistaken in crucifying him as a revolutionary, they were not mistaken in identifying his message as political and subversive. Jesus was “the bearer of a new possibility of human, social, and therefore political relationships.”⁸⁴

The new political possibilities introduced by Jesus were not new ways of ruling the empire, nor new ways of defeating the empire. Nor were they new ways for the individual to interact with the empire. The new political possibilities arose through Jesus’ gathering of the Christian community. Returning again to the vision of the slain lamb in Revelation, Yoder notes that the Lamb gathers a priestly kingdom of members of every tribe, nation, and kingdom. The church is thus a community with its own

⁸¹ Yoder, “The Original Revolution.” See also “Are You the One Who is to Come?,” in *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 210.

⁸² Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 31.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 52. See also *The Christian Witness to the State*, 17.

internal political possibilities, as well as a body functioning in the world as Christ's, ruling with and as Christ through service to the world.

The Politics of Jesus Christ in Scofield

In addition to the dispensations, many of the peculiarities of dispensationalist theology arise from a particular view of covenant. According to Scofield, God has entered into eight covenants with humans. These covenants are the realities which “condition life and salvation,” and around which “all scripture crystallizes.”⁸⁵ The Edenic Covenant was made with Adam and Eve and “conditioned the life of man in innocency.”⁸⁶ The Adamic Covenant “conditions the life of fallen man.” God cursed the serpent as an illustration of the consequences of sin, promised a redeemer, changed the woman in relation to childbearing and in subjection to male headship, made humans dependent on hard labor, and introduced physical death. These aspects of the Adamic Covenant will not end until the kingdom comes.⁸⁷ The Noahic Covenant was made with Noah after the flood, and through it God established human government.⁸⁸

The Abrahamic Covenant was the first made specifically with Abraham's descendants. Previously, God had dealt with the one human race; now the descendants of Abraham are dealt with as a peculiarly set apart race.⁸⁹ God promised to make Abraham a great name and nation, to bless him and make him a blessing, to bless those that bless him and curse those that curse him. Through this covenant, God founded the nation of Israel, and confirmed and expanded the Adamic promise of redemption. This covenant has not failed or been rescinded, but was “modified by prophecies of three dispossessions and restorations,” two of which have been fulfilled. At the time of Scofield's writing, he believed that Israel was in the third dispossession

⁸⁵ See Scofield's summary of the covenants in Hebrews 8.8, note.

⁸⁶ On the Edenic Covenant see Scofield, Genesis 1.28, note.

⁸⁷ On the Adamic Covenant see Scofield, Genesis 3.14, note.

⁸⁸ On the Noahic Covenant see Scofield, Genesis 8.21, note.

⁸⁹ See Scofield, Genesis 11.10, note.

and awaited final restoration. The Mosaic Covenant was the law given to Israel through Moses, and included the commandments, social judgments and religious ordinances. Scofield described it as a conditional covenant of works, and noted that Christians are in no way under this covenant.⁹⁰ The Palestinian Covenant was a conditional covenant of entrance into the promised land. It foretold the disobedience of Israel, consequent dispersion, future repentance, the return of the Lord, national restoration and conversion of Israel, and God's judgment on Israel's oppressors. It was under this covenant that Israel first entered the land and was subsequently punished for unfaithfulness by dispersion.⁹¹

The Davidic Covenant is that "upon which the glorious kingdom of Christ . . . is to be founded." It is the promise of a perpetual posterity, throne, and kingdom to David's family. The condition is that disobedience will be chastised, which was fulfilled in the division of Israel into two kingdoms and the subsequent captivities. However, chastisement did not annul the covenant, which is immutable and has been only partially fulfilled. "Since that time [the chastisement by captivities] but one King of the Davidic family has been crowned at Jerusalem and He was crowned with thorns . . . the Lord God will yet give to the thorn-crowned One 'the throne of his father David.'" ⁹² The New Covenant was made through the sacrifice of Christ, securing the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant for all humanity, as well as "the perpetuity, future conversion, and blessing of Israel." It is absolutely unconditional, and therefore final.⁹³

According to this understanding of covenants, all humanity currently lives

⁹⁰ On the Mosaic Covenant see Scofield, Exodus 19.25, note. On the contrast between the law of Moses and the law of Christ, see 2 John 5, note.

⁹¹ On the Palestinian Covenant see Scofield, Deuteronomy 30.3, note. In dispensationalism, the distinction between the unconditional Abrahamic covenant and the conditional Palestinian covenant explains why the promise of the land to Israel is yet to be fulfilled. "It is important to see that the nation has never as yet taken the land under the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant, nor has it ever possessed the whole land." Scofield, Deuteronomy 30.3, note.

⁹² On the Davidic Covenant see 2 Samuel 7.8.

⁹³ On the New Covenant see Hebrews 8.8.

under the Adamic and Noahic Covenants; “unbelieving” Jews (the term used in dispensationalism for Jews who do not recognize Jesus as Messiah) are under the Mosaic Covenant and some are still experiencing the dispersion foretold in the Palestinian Covenant; Christians are under the New Covenant; and both Christians and Jews await the final fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants when Jesus returns. In his second advent, Jesus will accomplish the ultimate fulfillment of these covenants as he defeats the reigning political powers and installs himself as the global religio-political ruler.

When the world has descended into the chaos of the great tribulation, climaxing in the unspeakable bloodshed of the battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ will return and begin the Day of Jehovah.⁹⁴ Accompanied by an army of saints and angels, he will destroy the Gentile world-powers, fulfilling Nebuchadnezzar’s prophetic dream of the stone smiting the image’s feet,⁹⁵ ending the times of the Gentiles. Christ will cast the Beast and Antichrist into the lake of fire.⁹⁶ He will bind Satan and cast him into a bottomless pit for the duration of the millennium.⁹⁷ Seeing the Lord returning in glory, Israel will recognize him as their king and as the one they rejected. Repenting, they will receive him as their savior and ruler, and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit will come over Israel, fulfilling Joel 2.28.⁹⁸ Christ will gather Israel

⁹⁴ The day of Jehovah (day of the Lord) is “that lengthened period of time beginning with the return of the Lord in glory, and ending with the purgation of the heavens and earth by fire preparatory to the new heavens and the new earth.” Scofield, Revelation 19.19, note.

⁹⁵ Daniel 2.34 and Scofield, Daniel 2.31, note.

⁹⁶ Revelation 19.20.

⁹⁷ Revelation 20.1-3 and Scofield, Revelation 20.10, note.

⁹⁸ “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions . . .” Joel 2.28. Scofield points out that “afterward” means “last days,” and that this phrase has differing meanings in relation to the church and Israel. For the church, the last days began with Christ’s first advent and end at the rapture. (Thus the prophecy was fulfilled for the church at Pentecost in Acts 2.) For Israel the last days are the kingdom age. Scofield, Joel 2.28, note. See also notes on Joel 1.4; Malachi 2.15; Acts 2.17. This is also the “latter rain” of Zechariah 10.1.

out from among all the nations of the earth and converted Israel will enter the promised land. Then there will be a world-wide conversion of Gentiles⁹⁹ and the establishment of the kingdom on earth. Israel will be the center of the new social order and Jerusalem will be the political capitol.¹⁰⁰ Temple worship will be renewed in the rebuilt temple,¹⁰¹ making Jerusalem the religious as well as political center of the world.¹⁰² Jesus' Christ's theocratic rule will extend over the whole earth, administered by the apostles as theocracy was once administered by the judges.¹⁰³

Thus, the returning Christ will exercise extreme violence, brutal judgment, and irresistible world-wide religious and political domination. In fulfillment of the outstanding covenantal promises, he will make Israel the greatest of all great nations, restore all Jews to their promised Palestine, and take his throne as the ultimate Davidic ruler. Precisely the vision of politics which Jesus most clearly rejected according to Yoder is the one he will embrace in his second advent according to Scofield. Instead of a redefinition of politics, we have only a postponement of Jesus becoming a violent, dominating political ruler. Instead of a redefinition of power through suffering, we find that Jesus came once in weakness but will come again in power, defined in terms of violence and domination.

This contrast is particularly clear in Yoder's and Scofield's differing uses of

⁹⁹ See Acts 1.10-11, note. Scofield interprets the dry bones vision of Ezekiel 37 as the restoration of Israel, the judgment of the nations, and the setting up of the kingdom. "The 'bones' are the whole house of Israel who shall then be living. The 'graves' are the nations where they dwell. . . . verse 28 implies that then Jehovah will become known to the Gentiles in a marked way. This is also the order of Acts 15:16,17, and the two passages strongly indicate the time of full Gentile conversion. See also Isa.11:10." Ezekiel 37.1, note.

¹⁰⁰ See Scofield, Isaiah 40.1, note.

¹⁰¹ The kingdom-age temple is described in Ezekiel 40-47. Scofield, Haggai 2.9, note. The sacrifices offered in the kingdom-age temple will be "memorial, looking back to the cross, as the offerings under the old covenant were anticipatory, looking forward to the cross." Ezekiel 43.19, note. There will also be renewed Sabbath observance. Matthew 12.1, note.

¹⁰² Scofield, Zechariah 7.2, note.

¹⁰³ Scofield, Matthew 19.28, note.

the Luke 4 narrative of Jesus reading from Isaiah in the synagogue, as well as Jesus' identification with Isaiah's suffering servant. While for Yoder the narrative functions as Jesus setting forth his social platform and announcing an era of social renewal, for Scofield it functions as an affirmation of his dichotomous view of the two advents.

Isaiah 61.1-3 is the passage which Jesus reads in Luke's narrative:

¹The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; ³To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

Scofield notes that Jesus stopped reading after "the acceptable year of the Lord," because the first part of the passage was fulfilled in the first advent: Jesus came and proclaimed "the acceptable year," which Scofield defines as grace, but the day of vengeance is yet to come in Christ's second advent, after which Israel will be regathered, which is the meaning of verse 3. Similarly, Scofield notes that the servant of Isaiah 42 is described as both "weak, despised, rejected, slain," and as "a mighty conqueror, taking vengeance on the nations and restoring Israel." He explains that the former relate to the first advent while the latter refer to the second advent and are yet unfulfilled.¹⁰⁴

The Two Advents at Faith Bible Chapel: Jesus Christ as Savior and King

The members of FBC are not especially concerned with the specifics of Scofield's doctrine of the two advents. A visitor to a Sunday service or Bible class is not likely to be led through prophetic texts and told which passages refer to which advent. However, those involved in Israel Outreach receive this interpretation of the two advents through sources such as Booker. Booker describes how the rabbis of Jesus' day had "Messianic tunnel vision," which focused on prophecies of a coming

¹⁰⁴ Scofield, Isaiah 42.1, note. For other interesting examples of passages which Scofield insists were not fulfilled in the first advent, see Isaiah 11.1, note and Zephaniah 3.15, note.

political-military deliverer, preventing them from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah.

What the rabbis were not able to understand was that the portraits of the Messiah would be fulfilled in one person, but not at the same time. There would be a time gap between the two roles the Messiah would play. This would require Him to appear on planet earth at two different times. The first time He would come as the religious Messiah to bring atonement for sin and establish the spiritual realm of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. Then after a period of time, He would come again as the political-military Messiah to establish the physical kingdom of God over all the earth and the physical kingdom of David to administer it along with the resurrected believers of all ages.¹⁰⁵

In his recent book, *In Defense of Israel*, John Hagee offers a revised version of the dispensationalist doctrine of the two advents. Because of his deep investment in opposing “replacement theology,” Hagee refutes the idea that first century Jews rejected Jesus as Messiah. According to Hagee, Jesus came in his first advent only to die for sins; he did not come to be Messiah, which is defined as the Davidic, political ruler of national Israel. Jews could not reject that which was not offered. Interestingly, Hagee uses several of the same biblical texts Yoder uses: Yoder uses them to demonstrate that Jesus was refusing to be a violent, nationalistic, Davidic ruler, instead redefining politics; Hagee uses them to demonstrate that Jesus was rejecting this role for his first advent because he would return to be such a ruler in his second advent. According to Hagee, Jesus came once for atonement and he will come again to be Messiah.¹⁰⁶

The divided soteriology of dispensationalism, which sees the individual soul saved through the first advent but embodiment and sociality unredeemable until the second advent, is still a central and guiding force in FBC’s theology. When asked about the purpose of the first advent, members of the congregation universally responded in terms of atonement, usually understood as substitution and satisfaction. “I mean, we were in need of a savior,” a Faith Bible Institute instructor explained. “Hebrews chapter ten and verse nine says there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood. That means the only way to pay for our sins is if we die. And so he

¹⁰⁵ Booker, 171.

¹⁰⁶ John Hagee, *In Defense of Israel: The Bible’s Mandate for Supporting the Jewish State* (Lake Mary, Florida: Front Line, 2007), 121-170.

came and took our place.”¹⁰⁷ In the theology of FBC, Christian salvation is radically individual and inward. Each individual can locate his or her “salvation” in the point in time he or she accepted Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.

Soteriology of sociality and embodiment is relegated to the second advent.¹⁰⁸ Booker describes Jesus’ second advent as a “golden age” when “God will rule planet earth through Messiah Jesus.” The thousand-year reign of Christ on earth will be “the utopia for which man has so desperately strived, but never achieved.” All previous, failed attempts at international unity will be overshadowed by the totalizing unity of submission to the millennial theocracy. “There will be no need for a United Nations. Jesus will rule with absolute authority and power. All nations will submit to Him, and no open rebellion will be tolerated.” Absolute submission to Jesus’ rule will bring about the longed-for social utopia. “All social problems will be solved. No one will be oppressed . . . There will be no social workers, discrimination, inequities or inequalities of any kind.” And there will be comprehensive, global peace. “The military academies will be closed and the war machines dismantled.” This will free “vast sums of money” which will bring economic equality. “Everyone will have an equal opportunity to work and provide for their family with dignity and honor. There will be a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work. The rich will not be allowed to exploit the poor. . . Management and labor will work together for the common good.” Without the presence of sin and Satan, human bodies will also experience utopian health and wellness. “There will be no use for hospitals as there will be little or no sickness and death.” The human lifespan will lengthen exponentially. “Even animals will live together in peace.” The earth will become more productive, with the result that no one will suffer for lack of food.¹⁰⁹ Booker’s characteristically dispensationalist description of the millennium is notable for its utterly utopian expectations of the coming age, and for the conviction that no measure of this redeemed sociality is

¹⁰⁷ Interview by author, 7 May 2007, Arvada.

¹⁰⁸ As with all Christian communities, FBC’s theology and practice are not always internally coherent. Though their theology relegates embodied salvation to the millennium, they have a strong commitment to the practice of prayer for physical healing.

¹⁰⁹ Booker, 136-146.

available in the current age. Only after Jesus returns in his second advent and comes to power through military conquest will conditions such as peace, redistribution, equality, and fair labor be possible.

In contrast to Scofield's doctrine of the two advents, Scofield's idea that the teachings of Jesus Christ are not for Christians is entirely foreign to the members of FBC. According to Pastor George, "That's not our belief at all. We believe very strongly that the teachings of Jesus are for our lives today."¹¹⁰ This claim is somewhat confirmed by his preaching. In one sermon, for example, he reflected on the meaning of 'Christian.' "Where that word first appears in the New Testament, in the book of Acts . . . why? Because they were followers of Christ. They were Christ-like. They were close to his teachings. They followed his teachings. They lived the kind of lives that Jesus expressed while he was alive. They were Christians. A Christian oughta be a Christian, oughta be Christ-like, oughta be a follower of Jesus."¹¹¹

There is unequivocal agreement in the congregation that Jesus' teachings are central to living the Christian life. However, the actual content of Jesus' teachings and its ethical application in today's Christian lives are somewhat more difficult issues. When asked about the central message of Jesus' teachings or the most important single teaching Jesus gave on earth, many FBC members spoke in general terms of love – that Jesus taught humans about God's love, or that Jesus taught us to love God and love our neighbor, or that Christians should love one another. Others said that Jesus taught us to worship God, how to be redeemed, and how to avoid going to hell.

Observation of what is taught and discussed at FBC indicates that the teachings of Jesus which are truly central to this congregation's theology are found in Matthew 24 and 25. The Olivet Discourse, as these two chapters are called, begins with the disciples asking Jesus what the signs will be of the end of the age (or world, depending upon the translation). What follows are apocalyptic descriptions of the end and parables of the kingdom, which are taken to include literal descriptions of the

¹¹⁰ George Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

¹¹¹ George Morrison, "From Grace to Glory," sermon in the series *Hope for the Future* (3 June 2007), audio recording, Faith Bible Chapel Media Ministry (Arvada, CO).

great tribulation and the second coming of Jesus Christ. These passages were referenced independently in about half of the interviews conducted. They figured prominently in Pastor George's sermon series on Israel and the end times, as they do in his self-published pamphlet, *Israel in the Balance*. In fact, this discourse looms so large in the imagination of FBC that some, including the pastor, have come to think of the two chapters as a much more lengthy portion of Jesus' teachings than it actually is. In a sermon on chapter 24, Pastor George described the context: "So Jesus now takes time at the very end, and chapters 24, 25, 26, even 27, all the way up to the end, he begins to talk about the way things are going to be in the end. And he gives us parables, he gives us words of instruction."¹¹² A woman on the ministry staff echoed this confused sense of the discourse's prominence when explaining why it is important for Christians to know what will happen in the end times. "I mean, look at the discourse in Matthew. I mean, what is there? Like five or six chapters all about what Jesus is relating to the end times."¹¹³

Conclusion

Several aspects of FBC's Christian Zionism are sustained by the inheritance of the dispensationalist imagination of time as cycles of test and failure and judgment, coupled with dispensationalist doctrines of Jesus' roles in his two advents and the nature of human history between the two advents. FBC's certainty in the inevitability that the social conditions of the world can only worsen dramatically as the current dispensation draws to its close, as well as the inevitability of Israel's ascendancy and ultimacy, focuses their attentions and activism on the cause of Zionism. The confluence of their beliefs that Jesus came once to save individual souls from sin, that he will come again to conquer militarily and rule imperially, and that the time in

¹¹² George Morrison, "The 'Do Nots' of the Last Days." Chapters 26 and 27 of Matthew are actually narrations of Jesus' betrayal, last supper, prayers in Gethsemane, trial, crucifixion, and burial.

¹¹³ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

between is the age of Gentile rule and Gentile missions, gives them an evangelistic zeal which applies primarily to Gentiles and a political zeal which applies primarily to the state of Israel.

The Christological dichotomy which troubles their theology is not the classic debate between Christ's two natures; their problem is not that they have focused too much on the human Jesus or the divine Christ to the exclusion of the unity of his natures. Instead their Christology is troubled by a dichotomous view of the two advents: one for a suffering servant, meek and rejected, who saves the individual's soul through substitutionary atonement; another for the conquering victor, violent and dominating, who transforms the entire world through theocratic empire. For the theopolitics of American Christian Zionism, the Jesus of the first advent is irrelevant, and the coming Christ of the *eschaton* is the guiding light. Christology is subordinated to and malformed by dispensationalist eschatology. In the following chapter we will find a similar dynamic at work in relation to ecclesiology.

CHAPTER FIVE

Ecclesiology and Eschatology

Cheryl Morrison has a speaking engagement tonight at a local synagogue. In the car on the way, she explains that she does not need to evangelize Jews because these are the times of the Gentiles. The day of Israel's national conversion to Christ is coming – and soon – but not today, and it is not for her to do the converting. She describes the synagogue's new rabbi. "George calls him our evangelical rabbi friend," she says playfully, because of the rabbi's extensive efforts to draw new members to the synagogue. Becoming more serious now, she explains that 9/11 changed everything between evangelical Christians and Jews. "That's what I'm going to tell them tonight, that now we have a common enemy."

She arrives to find a surprisingly small audience, and she commiserates with them about how church attendance wanes this time of year. She begins her presentation by telling the gathering of elderly Jews that she was "raised anti-Semitic." She shares a vivid memory of hearing the word 'Jew' one day as a child, and coming home to ask about it. "Boy, did I get an ear full!" She took her family's anti-Semitism for granted until she was convicted by God's Holy Spirit as an adult. Then she began to reach out to the Jewish students in the public school where she taught.

Cheryl explains that throughout Christian history there have always been Christian Zionists. Today, most Christian Zionists are evangelicals. An audience member asks her to define the term. Evangelicals, she clarifies, are Christians who believe in the Bible. She explains that Genesis 12.3 is the foundation of Christian Zionism, and she describes how these blessings and curses of God have functioned throughout Jewish and Gentile history. Support for Israel is the reason why America is so blessed as a nation. Israel and the United States are the only nations on earth founded on the truth of God's word. But she clarifies that FBC does not support Israel simply so that they themselves will be blessed. "I mean, I've received death threats over this thing."

She tells them that Christians who are not Zionists believe in "replacement theology," which is a very dangerous way of misinterpreting scripture. She says she can't understand why Christians would want to say that everything in the Bible about

Israel now applies to the church. Thumbing through her leather-bound, blue Bible she says, “I mean, I say to them, have you read some of this stuff God says he’ll do to the Jews if they don’t obey him, you morons?”

Eventually Cheryl comes to the topic of the state of Israel, how evil forces have always been against it but how it will ultimately triumph. However, Israel is not yet all it is meant to become. She says that the glory of the name of God has not yet been re-established there, then she defers uncomfortably to the rabbi in case he disagrees. He agrees entirely. He speaks of the birth pangs which must precede the coming of Messiah. He and Cheryl and the elderly audience chirp together in prophetic agreement.

The relationship between FBC and their Jewish friends is difficult for an outsider to penetrate and understand. Jews and Judaism hold an esteemed place in the hearts and minds of FBC’s members. Yet, like many dispensationalists before them, people at FBC often say and do things which one cannot imagine being anything but deeply offensive to Jews. This chapter addresses the complex relationship between FBC and Jews, Judaism, and Israel as part of the legacy of the dispensationalist doctrines concerning the church and the kingdom. In terms of theopolitical imagination, the issue at hand is the dispensationalist imagination of space, specifically the space in which Christ’s reign is realized within human history.

The Kingdom, The Church, and Human Space

While the theme of time raises issues surrounding how to relate Christ’s two advents, the theme of space raises issues surrounding how to relate the kingdom and the church. Differing answers to this question of the locus of Christ’s reign in Yoder and Scofield point to two different understandings of the central space in which God’s intentions are manifest on earth. Again, Scofield’s answer differs for different dispensations. This aspect of dispensationalism lingers in FBC’s vision of Christ reigning spiritually today in the hearts of individual believers, but politically in the future in Israel.

The Kingdom, the Church, and Human Space in Yoder

If, as Yoder argued, Jesus did not refuse kingship but redefined it, where is his kingdom? If in this time when the two aeons exist in tension the kingdom is among us but not yet consummated, where is the space within human experience and time wherein it is manifest? It is no surprise to readers with even the most cursory knowledge of Yoder that his answer would be: the church. What has been less explored and discussed is the eschatological nature of Yoder's ecclesiological focus. Yoder turned repeatedly to John's vision in Revelation 4 and 5 to describe the eschatological nature of the church's significance.¹ We have seen how this vision functions for Yoder as an eschatological revelation of the meaning of history, which is found in the way of the cross. But the revelation is not only about the Lamb; it is also about the meaning of worshiping the Lamb. "To sing 'The Lamb is Worthy to Receive Power', as did the early communities whose hymnody is reflected in the first vision of John, is not mere poetry. It is performative proclamation. It redefines the cosmos . . ."²

Part of this doxological redefinition of the cosmos³ is that the Lamb gathers a priestly kingdom. Persons from every tribe, nation, and kingdom are gathered under the Lordship of Christ to rule and reign with him.⁴ This is a vision "of the gathering of the church," and it is in the church "where it is already clear that [Jesus] rules."⁵ The church is the space in which humans find the meaning of their history and where that meaning is enacted. "[T]he meaning of history lies not in the acquisition and defense of the culture and the freedoms of the West, not in the aggrandizement of material

¹ See Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 231ff.; "To Serve Our God and to Rule the World," 128 ff.; "Peace Without Eschatology?," 151; "The Spirit of God and the Politics of Men," in *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 235.

² Yoder, "Armaments and Eschatology," 53.

³ In one place Yoder structures an entire presentation/essay around this theme. "To Serve Our God and to Rule the World" describes nine implications of seeing history doxologically.

⁴ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 248. See also "Peace without Eschatology?," 151.

⁵ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 247-248.

comforts and political sovereignty, but in the calling together ‘for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation,’ a ‘people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.’”⁶

However, the sovereignty of Christ is not manifest exclusively in the church. While the church is the present embodiment and anticipation of the ultimate triumph of God’s redemption, and thus serves as the “scaffolding” of history, the world, even in its rebellion, is ruled over by Christ.⁷ By “world” Yoder means the realm of human existence in which Christ’s lordship is not recognized, as distinguished from the realm where there is willing submission to Christ.⁸ The world is not aware that Christ is sovereign, and the visible reign of Christ through the church does not look like sovereignty to the world because it is characterized by nonviolence and servanthood. In this way Christ’s reign is hidden.⁹ The church reigns with Christ not for her own aggrandizement but as beacon and foretaste of the kingdom way available to and meant for all creation. “The people of God are not a substitute or an escape from the whole world’s being brought to the effective knowledge of divine righteousness; the believing community is the beginning, the pilot run, the bridgehead of the new world on the way.”¹⁰

As we have seen above, in Yoder, the church’s reign is not apolitical, rather she lives and reigns with and as Christ, who redefined politics. The politics of the church are not separate from but do transcend normal human politics. “Jesus made it clear that the nationalized hope of Israel had been a misunderstanding, and that God’s true purpose was the creation of a new society, unidentifiable with any of the local, national, or ethnic solidarities of any time.”¹¹ For Yoder, then, the central human

⁶ Yoder, “The Otherness of the Church,” 61. See also *The Christian Witness to the State*, 13. “Peace without Eschatology?,” 151, 163.

⁷ Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State*, 10-11.

⁸ See Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State*.

⁹ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 248.

¹⁰ Yoder, “Are You the One Who Is to Come?,” 216.

¹¹ Yoder, *Christian Witness to the State*, 10.

space in which Christ rules as king – both in part now and in full ultimately – is an ecclesio-political kingdom.

The Kingdom, the Church, and Human Space in Scofield

Scofield distinguishes between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Heaven. The kingdom of God is God’s universal reign. It can only be entered by the new birth. It is inward and spiritual. The kingdom of Heaven is the “earthly sphere of kingdom of God.” It is Messianic, Davidic, and will be established on the earth. At the end of the millennium, Christ will deliver his kingdom, the kingdom of Heaven, to God the Father, and the two kingdoms will merge into one kingdom of the Father.¹²

Through Abraham, God set aside a people and promised eternal dedication to them. This people, Israel, is the focus of God’s relationship to and dealings with humanity. “Israel is always the center of the divine counsels earthward.”¹³ As we have seen, the kingdom of Heaven was promised to Israel through Abraham and offered to Israel in Jesus’ first advent. However, Israel rejected Jesus as king and therefore the kingdom will not be established on earth until he returns. Thus, the church exists in a gap between God’s primary dealings with humanity. The church is neither the new Israel nor the kingdom come.¹⁴

Jesus came proclaiming that the kingdom of Heaven was “at hand.” However, Scofield is careful to note that “at hand” does not necessarily mean immediately. “When Christ appeared to the Jewish people, the next thing, in the order of revelation as it then stood, should have been the setting up of the Davidic kingdom. In the knowledge of God, not yet disclosed, lay the rejection of the kingdom (and King), the long period of the mystery of the kingdom, the world-wide preaching of the cross, and the out-calling of the Church. But this was as yet locked up in the secret counsels of

¹² Based on 1 Corinthians 15.24-28. On the distinction between the kingdoms, see Scofield’s notes on Matthew 6.33; 3.2; 13.43.

¹³ Scofield, Isaiah 10.12, note.

¹⁴ See Scofield, “The Four Gospels,” introduction (immediately preceding Matthew).

God.”¹⁵ The reader of Scofield gets the sense that if Israel had officially recognized Jesus as Messiah during his first advent, he would have set up the kingdom then and there; the kingdom was only postponed because Jesus was rejected. However, in one note Scofield states that the establishment of the kingdom was not a real possibility during Jesus’ first advent because prophecies concerning the socio-political scene at the establishment of the kingdom had not been fulfilled.¹⁶

We have seen that, according to Scofield, the prophets were confused by their blended visions of the first and second advents of Christ because the mystery of the time between the advents was not yet revealed. Jesus began to explain this mystery in the teachings recorded in Matthew 13. Scofield calls these parables “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” because when the disciples ask Jesus why he is teaching in parables, he replies, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”¹⁷ According to Scofield’s interpretation of the parables, the kingdom, not yet established on the earth, is now in a “mystery form.” “It is the sphere of Christian profession during this age. It is a mingled body of true and false, wheat and tares, good and bad . . . within it Christ sees the true children of the true kingdom who, at the end, are to ‘shine forth as the sun.’ . . . Also, in this form of the kingdom, so unlike that which is to be, He sees the Church, His body and bride . . .”¹⁸

Scofield’s notes on the parable of the pearl of great price (Matthew 13.45-46) illustrate the distinction between the church and the kingdom. A previous note explained that the treasure hidden in a field, in the previous verse, symbolized Israel dispersed in the world. “As Israel is the hid treasure, so the Church is the pearl of great cost. Covering the same period of time as the mysteries of the kingdom, is the

¹⁵ Scofield, Matthew 4.17, note.

¹⁶ “It will be ‘in the days of these kings,’ i.e. the days of the ten kings (cf. Dan. 7:24-27) symbolized by the toes of the image. That condition did not exist at the advent of Messiah, nor was it even possible until the dissolution of the Roman empire, and the rise of the present national world-system.” Scofield, Daniel 2.44, note.

¹⁷ Matthew 13.11.

¹⁸ Scofield, Matthew 13.47, note.

mystery of the Church. . . The kingdom is not the Church, but the true children of the kingdom during the fulfillment of these mysteries, baptized by one Spirit into one body, compose the true Church, the pearl.”¹⁹ In other words, according to Scofield’s reading of the Hebrew prophets, God had not revealed to anyone before Christ’s first advent that there would be an interval between first and second advents during which the kingdom would not be established on earth, or that during that interval a new thing, the church, would come into existence. According to Scofield, this is explained in Ephesians 3, to which he gave the heading “The church a mystery hidden from past ages.”

Thus, for Yoder, the primary space in which Christ’s reign is manifest in the current age is ecclesio-political, the church which Jesus gathered having redefined kingship and politics. By contrast, in Scofield, the primary manifestation of the kingdom will be future and geo-political. The church, far from being the primary social structure through which Christ reigns, is a mysterious in-between reality which fills the gap in prophetic time between the rejection of the king and establishment of the kingdom. While in Yoder, Christ reigns over all the world through his hidden sovereignty and through the church in her visible witness and service in the present age, in Scofield’s present age Christ reigns with God through salvation and the inner person: he reigns only in the Christian heart.

The Kingdom, the Church, and Human Space at FBC

There is a lot of talk about the kingdom of God at FBC, yet a lack of clarity about what the kingdom is. Members, including ministers on staff and volunteer leaders who teach doctrinal classes, described the kingdom in terms ranging widely from God’s reign over everything, and thus all creation, to the message of salvation, to the personal relationship an individual has with God. It is clear that they are not steeped in Scofield’s theology of the kingdoms. One man who teaches about the kingdom in Faith Bible Institute said that the kingdom of heaven is actually heaven itself.

Pastor George specified that while the kingdom will not be established on

¹⁹ Scofield, Matthew 13.45, note.

earth until Jesus returns, Christians can seek to establish kingdom principles in their lives through the way they live as individuals. This distinction is similar to how Booker addresses the kingdom in *Blow the Trumpet in Zion*, where he gives a slight variation on Scofield's theology of the kingdoms. Instead of distinguishing between the kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of God, Booker refers to these two realities as the two realms of the kingdom of God. The physical realm is the kingdom which Jesus offered to Israel, which they rejected, and which will be established on earth when Jesus returns. "By rejecting Jesus as their Messiah, the Jews were showing that they still rejected God's rule over them. Jesus then offered the spiritual aspects of the kingdom of God to the Gentiles."²⁰ The spiritual realm is Jesus' rule "as king in the hearts of all who have received Him as their personal Messiah and Lord. That rule is manifested as one lives under the control of God's Holy Spirit."²¹ The spiritual realm and the church are not identical, but it is the spiritual and not the physical realm to which the church relates. "Today, every individual Jew and Gentile who accepts His offer becomes part of a new company of people – called the church. The church presently lives in the spiritual realm of the kingdom of God."²²

While the members of FBC are clearly influenced by this slightly revised dispensationalist view of the kingdom, they do not use dispensationalist language to describe the church, and they are much less pessimistic than Scofield or Darby about what the church, as institution, is capable of in this age. Most American evangelicals and fundamentalists rejected the specifics of Darby's ecclesiology while exuberantly embracing his eschatology.²³ The first American dispensationalists, for the most part, were unwilling to leave their congregations and denominations in response to Darby's ecclesiological pessimism. Yet it could be argued that his pessimism planted seeds within the movement which bore fruit in the later generations who became so at home in non-denominational congregations. When presented with the traditional

²⁰ Booker, 137.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ See page 20, above.

dispensationalist view of the institutional church and asked if it is the view of FBC, Pastor George said, “Yes and no to that.”

Among non-denominational evangelicals today, the appalling faithlessness and ultimate doom of the visible church described by Darby and Scofield is largely applied to the main-line denominations, and especially the Roman Catholic Church. (We will return to Christian Zionist views on Catholicism below.) While Scofield’s predictions of the fate of the visible church have been transferred to the denominations, his descriptions of the invisible church have come to be applied to true Christians. That is, the distinction is no longer between visible and invisible churches, but apostate and true churches with the latter characterized largely by an understanding of Christianity as most centrally a personal, spiritual relationship between the individual and Jesus Christ. The inward, spiritual bond between individuals which comprises the true church in Scofield is now translated into radically individualistic and spiritualized understandings of the church’s nature and purpose.

When asked about the purposes and priorities of the church, people at FBC spoke mainly in terms of individual salvation and fellowship which encourages the individual. Some members simply said that church is essential because the Bible commands believers to meet together.²⁴ Other members spoke of the inability of the individual Christian to be faithful without the encouragement of other Christians. A common metaphor was that a log or lump of coal burning bright in a fire cannot continue to burn once it is separated from the rest of the fuel. Of course conversion must proceed such fellowship, thus evangelism was the other ecclesiological function most discussed. However, as Pastor George noted from the pulpit one Sunday, the church does not only exist to convert and encourage individuals – it also exists to support the state of Israel. “We’re not here just to be patted on the back all the time, although we all needs words of encouragement, to be patted on the back and encouraged in our faith. But we’re encouraged in our faith so that we can give the

²⁴ This usually included a quotation from or allusion to Hebrews 10.24-25, and again, although the KJV is no longer used publicly at FBC, KJV was the language in which adults had memorized key texts: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

good news to our neighbor, give the good news to the nations of the world . . . to be involved with what God is doing in the Middle East in supporting God's plan for Israel and the Jewish people." In an interview, Pastor George said the top priorities of the church should be salvation, believing Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and supporting Israel. He seemed at a loss to name anything else: "Then, I mean, along with those, well, I don't think anything else, you know, you'd have to give me an example of what would even be higher than that."

While the church in this age functions to preach salvation and offer encouragement to the individual, God's socio-political purposes will be fulfilled in the coming age through Israel. Thus, the central social function of the church today is to support the Israeli state, as it will be the site of the culmination of God's intentions for human history. According to Booker, "As we look into the world through the pages of the Bible, we see that God is absolutely in control of world events and is moving them around the Jew to bring [His] promises to pass."²⁵ These events will culminate in the millennial kingdom, headquartered in Israel. "When Messiah Jesus returns, He will rule planet earth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4). Israel will be the head nation of the world (Deuteronomy 28:13; Zechariah 8:32)."²⁶

The Constantinian Shift and the Visibility of the Church

Another prominent feature of traditional dispensationalist ecclesiology is the distinction between the visible, apostate church and the true, invisible church. Yoder is well known for his recurring critique of the Constantinian shift, one feature of which was the development of the doctrine of the invisible church. However, an examination of Scofield's use of the doctrine will reveal that the invisible church has a very different meaning in dispensationalism. We will also find that the members of FBC are worried about a different Constantinian shift: the rise of supersessionism. While their opposition to supersessionism and anti-Judaism is sympathetic and

²⁵ Booker, 36.

²⁶ Booker, 136.

commendable in many regards, an exploration of its complexities will reveal the disturbing realities of anti-Catholicism and ambivalence toward Jews and Judaism in contemporary American Christian Zionism.

The Invisible Constantinian Church in Yoder

Central to all aspects of Yoder's work is an argument about how the church was corrupted by the Constantinian shift. Constantine is only a symbol for Yoder; there is no simplistic suggestion that at the moment of Constantine's conversion, everything went wrong with the church.²⁷ However, the legalization and later establishment of Christianity were decisive shifts in the church's history. Yoder argues that one of the key changes that took place during this transitional period was the rise of the idea that the true church is invisible. The idea had both ecclesiological and eschatological causes and implications. Ecclesiological, Yoder argues, the idea of an invisible true church was necessitated by establishment. When the church was a minority in the society, their life and witness were clear and visible. When "the church was everybody," there had to be something beyond the visible church which was 'true'.²⁸

Eschatologically, the invisibility of the true church arose in contrast to the visibility of the empire. That is, when the church was a powerless minority, Christians had to trust against visible evidence that God was governing history; they would have to wait for the *eschaton* for Christ's lordship over all creation to become fully visible. What could be seen was that there was a community of people worshiping and following Jesus. When the church became a broker and beneficiary of societal power, God's governance of history became a visible reality and the true church became invisible. Eschatology was realized and the millennial kingdom was identified with the empire.²⁹ "Previously Christians had known as a fact of experience that the church

²⁷ See, for examples, Yoder, "The Otherness of the Church," 57; "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," 135.

²⁸ Yoder, "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," 135-136.

²⁹ See Yoder, "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," 136-138; "Peace Without Eschatology?," 154-155. For a description of how Constantinian alliances have continued into the present, see "Christ, the Hope of the World."

existed but had to believe against appearances that Christ ruled over the world. After Constantine one knew as a fact of experience that Christ was ruling over the world but had to believe against the evidence that there existed ‘a believing church.’”³⁰

In fact, when the true church became invisible, Christianity’s ability to discern the difference between the church and the world also dissipated. According to Yoder, the pre-Constantinian church affirmed Christ’s lordship over both the church and the world, but viewed church and world as visibly distinct due to the church’s recognition of Christ’s lordship and the world’s denial of it. After Constantine, “the two visible realities, church and world, were fused” and that which had been recognized as “worldly” was now baptized.³¹

Yoder unfortunately attributes these negative shifts to Augustine in several places.³² A much more appropriate target for his critique would perhaps have been Eusebius. A more careful and sympathetic reading of *City of God* reveals that Augustine’s concepts of the City of God and the City of Earth are largely compatible with Yoder’s understanding of two realms – one in which Christ’s sovereignty over all the earth is recognized though not yet fully realized, and another in which it is denied – as in *The Christian Witness to the State*.³³

The Invisible True Church in Scofield

The distinction between the visible and invisible church took on new dimensions in dispensationalism. The visible church is not only an ambivalent blend of wheat and tares, it is largely a faithless institution which is descending in an inevitable spiral of apostasy for which it will be judged and destroyed by God.

³⁰ Yoder, “The Otherness of the Church,” 57.

³¹ See Yoder, “The Otherness of the Church.”

³² See Yoder, “The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics,” 136; “Peace without Eschatology?,” 154; “The Otherness of the Church,” 157.

³³ This comparison cannot be explored further within the scope of the current project, but would make a fascinating study. For an example of an attempt to place Yoder and Augustine into constructive dialog with one another, see Gerald W. Schlabach, “The Christian Witness in the Earthly City: John H. Yoder as Augustinian Interlocutor,” in *A Mind Patient and Untamed*, 221-244.

Historically, this negative view of the church is largely due to Darby's own disillusionment with established Christianity in Britain.³⁴ Doctrinally, it is a further consequence of this particular view of dispensations. The church is just one in a series of means through which God has tested and sought to communicate with humanity, but in which humanity is destined for unavoidable failure.

A further dispensationalist development in the doctrine of the invisibility of the true church was Darby's doctrine of the rapture. The true church is not only invisible in the sense of not being coterminous with the visible church, but will also become literally invisible in the moment in which all the true believers are taken into heaven – the rapture.

According to Scofield, wherever scripture speaks of the body or bride of Christ, of unity with or in Christ, or the headship of Christ, it speaks of the true church, which is described as “the whole number of regenerate persons from Pentecost to the first resurrection, united together and to Christ by the baptism with the Holy Spirit . . .”³⁵ Whereas the true church is the spiritual body of Christ, mysteriously united by and in Christ, the visible church is the “body of professed believers called, collectively, ‘the Church,’ of which history takes account as such . . .”³⁶ In contrast to the everlasting unity and faithfulness of the true church, which is in Christ, the condition of the visible church is revealed in scripture to be ever-worsening apostasy.

Scofield suggests that the character of the visible church across history is foretold in the seven letters to seven churches in Revelation. While each letter dealt with issues in the local church to which it was addressed, each also prophesied the future deterioration of the visible church, in chronological order. The Ephesian church (Revelation 2.1-7) is praised for its patience but accused of having “left thy first love.”

³⁴ See pages 15-18, above.

³⁵ Scofield, Hebrews 12.23, note.

³⁶ Scofield, 1 Timothy 3.15, note. The true church is especially described in Ephesians. “It contains the highest church truth, but has nothing about church order. The church here is the true church, ‘His body,’ not the local church, as in Philippians, Corinthians, etc.” Scofield, “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians,” introduction.

This describes the visible church at the date of the writing of Revelation. The church in Smyrna (2.8-11) is exhorted not to fear and to remain faithful in suffering, which prophesies the state of the visible church during the Roman persecutions. The letter to the church in Pergamos (2.12-17) chastises the congregation for holding “the doctrine of Balaam,” and “the doctrine of the Nicolaitans,” which Scofield defines as worldliness and “priestly assumption,” respectively.³⁷ Pergamos symbolizes the visible church after Constantine’s conversion. Scofield’s heading in the text reads, “The church under imperial favor, settled in the world, A.D. 316 to the end.” The church in Thyratira (2.18-29) is said to have been seduced by Jezebel, to whom the letter promises gruesome retribution. Scofield notes, “As Jezebel brought idolatry into Israel, so Romanism weds Christian doctrine to Pagan ceremonies.” Thyratira, then, is the visible church under the papacy (500-1500), which Scofield describes as being established by the victory of Balaamism and Nicolaitanism. The church in Sardis (3.1-6) is said to have “a few names . . . which have not defiled their garments.” This is the Protestant Reformation, in which Scofield saw “a believing remnant,” but “whose works were not fulfilled.” The church in Philadelphia (3.7-13) alone is praised for keeping Christ’s word and not denying his name, and is assured that Christ will protect them. For Scofield, this must refer to the true church within the visible church. Finally, the Laodicean church (3.14-22) is infamously spewed out of Christ’s mouth for being lukewarm, which foretells of the final apostasy in the church’s last days, the “time of self-satisfied profession.”³⁸

Those who have never heard the gospel (the lost), those who believe in errors concerning the gospel (the ignorant or heretical), even those who abandon the faith entirely (the lapsed),³⁹ may all yet come to the truth and be saved. In the case of apostasy, however – the case of deliberately rejecting the truth of the gospel while still

³⁷ Elsewhere Scofield describes Balaamism in teaching as never rising above natural reason, and Balaamism in practice as “easy world-conformity.” Numbers 22.5, note.

³⁸ All quotations from Scofield on the seven letters are taken from the headings in the text of Revelation 2-3 or from Revelation 1.20, note.

³⁹ Scofield does not use this term. I use it here for clarification, and not in its technical, historical sense.

professing to be Christian – there is no turning back. Apostasy “in the church, as in Israel, is irremediable, and awaits judgment.”⁴⁰ This reality is illustrated in Nahum. Nineveh, having repented and turned to the Lord after Jonah’s preaching, has turned apostate. Whereas Nineveh had been lost in Jonah’s day, and therefore God relented from judgment and saved them, in Nahum’s day they were apostate, and therefore God did not even offer the possibility of repentance. God sent Nahum only to announce judgment. “It is the way of God; *apostasy* is punished by catastrophic destruction. Of this the flood and the destruction of Nineveh are witnesses. The coming destruction of apostate Christendom is foreshadowed by these.”⁴¹

Members of the true, invisible church will escape God’s judgment on and destruction of the apostate, visible church by means of the rapture. The rapture, which Scofield usually calls “the first resurrection,”⁴² is the moment at which the true saints of both Israel (from before the first advent) and the church age will rise up and meet Christ in the air. This is a taking up of the living and a bodily resurrection of the dead. According to Scofield, the rapture will occur at the very moment when the church age ends and the seven weeks of Daniel⁴³ will begin.⁴⁴ It is at the rapture that the prophetic clock begins to tick once again.

The doctrine of the invisible church which Yoder criticized functioned to affirm establishment Christianity, to conflate the coming kingdom with the current regime, and to blur the distinction between church and world. Interestingly,

⁴⁰ Scofield, 2 Timothy 3.1, note.

⁴¹ Scofield, Nahum 1.1, note. Interestingly, in several places Scofield notes that the apostasy of the visible church had already begun before the close of the canon. See Scofield’s introductions to the books of 2 Timothy, 3 John, and Jude.

⁴² Based on Revelation 20.4-5.

⁴³ See pages 107-108, above.

⁴⁴ According to Scofield, the rapture is described in 1 Thessalonians 4.14-17; Revelation 20.4-5; Isaiah 26.19; and 1 Corinthians 15.22-23. Scofield uses the term “rapture” only once in his reference notes (Revelation 19.17, note). He explains the rapture in the following notes: 1 Thessalonians 4.17; Revelation 19.17, 20.4; 1 Corinthians 15.52; John 14.3. The timing of the rapture was later debated within dispensationalism with some favoring a mid-tribulation rapture and others arguing that the rapture will occur at the end of the tribulation.

dispensationalism's version of the invisible church does not serve these purposes. Establishment Christianity is identified as the apostate visible church, the coming kingdom has absolutely nothing to do with the current realities of church or state, and the distinction between church and world is still emphasized. However, whereas Yoder was troubled by the conflation of church, state, and kingdom in Constantinianism, surely equally troubling is the dispensationalist vision of the hopelessness of the visible church and its utter contradistinction to the kingdom.

FBC and the Other Constantinian Shift

Another sort of Constantinian shift is of grave concern to the members of FBC. Booker also writes about how the church changed dramatically after Constantine's conversion. However, while Yoder's critique of the Constantinian shift has a particularly Anabaptist slant, Booker's is peculiarly evangelical and anti-supersessionist – as well as substantively naive and ahistorical. “The church became flooded with nonbelievers who embraced the Christian faith but never received Jesus personally as their Lord and Savior,” he suggests. “These nonbelievers brought their hate against the Jews with them into this new Christian faith.”⁴⁵ While Augustine comes under fire from Yoder for the doctrine of the invisible church, he fares even more poorly among people at FBC who blame him for the doctrine of supersessionism. Cheryl Morrison's Bible study guide on Israel says:

Many Christians believe the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, because they rejected Jesus as Messiah. Some believe the church has replaced Israel and Israel no longer has a place in the plan of God. This heresy is called Replacement Theology, a teaching that provides fertile soil in the hearts of Christians for anti-Semitic beliefs. Replacement Theology became the position of the Church during the time of Augustine (354-430 AD), who popularized it in his book *The City of God*.⁴⁶

A pamphlet which is available at the Israel Outreach information center every Sunday chronicles *The Guilt of Christianity Towards the Jewish People*, and cites second-hand anti-Jewish quotations from Chrysostom and Augustine, such as, “Let them live

⁴⁵ Booker, 85-86.

⁴⁶ Cheryl Morrison, *God's Heart for His People*, 17.

among us, but let them suffer and be continually humiliated (Augustine).”⁴⁷ With the conversion of Constantine, the pamphlet continues, this anti-Jewish “theology was translated into government policy.”⁴⁸

What FBC’s critics of the Constantinian shift are recognizing is very much like – though not expressed with the theological acumen of – Yoder’s critique of eschatology realized in the empire. They agree that the Constantinian church wrongly ascribed realities of the coming *eschaton* to their own age. However, Yoder locates the problem in Caesar’s usurping of Christ’s lordship and the distinctive witness of the church, whereas the Christian Zionist locates the problem in the empire and the church usurping the centrality of Israel in the divine plan.

FBC’s strong stand against anti-Jewish Christianity along with their deep appreciation for Jews as a people are certainly the most sympathetic aspects of their beliefs and activism. They unequivocally reject supersessionism. They have considerable knowledge of and deeply felt anguish over the past sins of Christians against Jews. They believe strongly that Christianity owes a debt to Jews because the prophets, the Old Testament, the Messiah, and guiding principles of civilization came to Christians through Judaism.

A retired member of FBC who was among the pioneers of the Israel Outreach ministry and who worked for Bridges for Peace for many years told of a time when he spoke to a senior citizen’s group at a synagogue.

I said, ‘Now, remember whatever I say today and whatever I do, everything I am and everything we ever will be, we owe to you, the Jew. Without you we’d have no Old Testament, no New Testament, no patriarchs, no prophets, no Messiah! So what we want to say today, we want you to know we love you.’ . . . And I said – the rabbi was sitting right here [next to me] – ‘Some day, we’re going to go up to Jerusalem, and I’m gonna take hold of his garment! And he, being the Jew, he’s gonna lead the way, and we’re gonna go to Jerusalem to hear the word of the Lord.’ And the rabbi looked at me, and he had tears in his

⁴⁷ Sister Pista, *The Guilt of Christianity Towards the Jewish People* (Phoenix: Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, 1997), 4. Sources cited by Sister Pista are *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) and a transcript of a lecture given by Olga Marshall, Lydia Research Adviser (Swanick, England: 1997).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

eyes.⁴⁹

The people of FBC also insist that if and when anti-Jewish sentiments become actions against Jews and Israel, they will not stand by silently as most Christians did during the Holocaust. “We’re not gonna keep silent,” George Morrison preached on Israel Awareness Day 2007. “When all the world will speak out in opposition to Israel and its existence, and the Jewish people, when the popular thing will be to turn your back on Israel, we’re not going to keep silent. Why? Because God’s given us instructions. We’re the watchmen on the wall. We’re not to hold our peace.”⁵⁰

For FBC it is essential that their support of Jews is not only expressed in sentiments and words, but in many concrete forms from educating their children about the Holocaust to contributing to Jewish charities to fostering positive relationships with their Jewish neighbors. They believe that Romans 15.27 commands Christians to repay their spiritual debt to Jews in tangible ways: “. . . for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things.”⁵¹

However, FBC’s opposition to supersessionism and their relationship to Jewish people, while exhibiting the most sympathetic aspects of their Zionism, also raise two of its darkest aspects. One is their deep anti-Catholicism. The narrative of the corruption of the church in the time of Constantine and Augustine is extended among Christian Zionists into a tale of an apostate church which canonized and institutionalized anti-Judaism among many other evils. Included in Booker’s description of the Roman church corrupted by anti-Judaism is the following comment: “We have this same problem today. The Pope recently gave an audience to Yasser

⁴⁹ Interview by author, 31 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁰ George Morrison, “Israel: God’s Sign of the Times.” He was alluding to Isaiah 62.1,6: “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. . . I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence . . .” KJV.

⁵¹ New Revised Standard Version.

Arafat. Yasser Arafat has one goal in life – to kill every Jew he can.”⁵² Members of FBC often speak pejoratively of Catholicism and its captivity to replacement theology. However, the most provocative statements of anti-Catholicism come from FBC’s close friend, John Hagee. When Hagee spoke at FBC’s Israel Awareness Day in 2006, he gave a litany of the sins of Christians against Jews throughout history. When he came to the twentieth-century, he made this stark accusation: “And then came Hitler’s Holocaust, which was really the blueprint drawn by the Roman Catholic Church hundreds of years before.”⁵³ Hagee puts flesh on this bare claim in his most recent book, *In Defense of Israel*. There is a table covering three pages which sets “Roman Church Policy” next to “Nazi Policy” in order to prove that Hitler was motivated and consoled by Roman Catholicism and could justifiably claim that his program of extermination of the Jews was “the work of the church.”⁵⁴

The deep ambivalence of dispensationalism towards Jews discussed above⁵⁵ is an even more prominent and dark feature of FBC’s Zionism. While one side of their thought, speech, and deeds demonstrates love for and dedication to the well-being of Jews, there is another side which exhibits racism and which seriously calls into question their claims about not evangelizing Jews. If, for the present, the definition of racism can be restricted to the belief that humanity can be divided into different categories by race, each race having distinct and definite qualities, with the result that one or some race/s is/are found superior, then FBC’s view of Jews is essentially racist. In the thought of most FBC members, Jews are a monolithic group; Jews are “the Jews” throughout history, today, and into the future.⁵⁶ Often, their views of Jews as a race favor Jews and identify Jews as a, if not the superior race. This is especially true

⁵² Booker, 86.

⁵³ John Hagee, Keynote address at Faith Bible Chapel, Israel Awareness Day 2006.

⁵⁴ Hagee, *In Defense of Israel*, 30-32.

⁵⁵ See pages 47-49, above.

⁵⁶ In only one interview did a member note that he could not say anything of Jews as a group because little can be said which accurately describes the entire group of people.

in relation to intellect. Jews as a group are seen as intellectually superior and their success in certain professions as well as technological advances developed in Israel are seen as evidence of their status as God's chosen people. Speaking to a group at a local synagogue, Cheryl Morrison stated that although Jews comprise less than ten percent of the world's population, 35 percent of Nobel Prize winners are Jews. "This is because God has given the Jews an intellect, talent, and ability that is superior in order to make them a blessing to the nations." This is why there are so many Jewish doctors and lawyers, she suggested.⁵⁷

However, sometimes the stereotyping is also negative. In a candid moment one man admitted that he basically did not like Jews. "I'm just being honest with you, ok? I love Israel and I love the Jewish people . . ." he paused, "at a distance, because God told me to do so. . . But I mean, a lot of Jewish people I don't like. I've got to be honest with you. . . I love them because God tells me to."⁵⁸ Another couple, long-time leaders of the Israel Outreach, reflected on how much Jews need to be loved because they have received so much hate. They need to be loved even though "they sometimes are even hard to like. I'm not just talking about Jews," the husband clarified, "I'm talking about people. But, the Jew in particular."⁵⁹

A central metaphor in descriptions of Jews at FBC is blindness, which is drawn from the second half of Romans 11, verse 25: "blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."⁶⁰ Cheryl Morrison's Bible study guide on Israel directs readers to study Romans 11, then asks questions such as, "What are the two reasons Jews have been blinded to the Gospel?" and "According to

⁵⁷ I later asked the rabbi of the synagogue whether this was at all offensive to him. He said, on the contrary, that he agreed, and went on to describe a journal article which argued thus: In the Middle Ages, Christians sent their best and brightest men into priesthood and monasticism, removing their contributions from the Christian gene pool, while Jews married the best and brightest men to the best and brightest women, strengthening their gene pool, thus the superiority of Jews.

⁵⁸ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁹ Interview by author, 31 May 2007, Arvada.

⁶⁰ KJV.

Romans 11:25, how long will Jews be blinded?”⁶¹ Another woman in the congregation described Jews as “our blinded brothers and sisters.”⁶²

The blindness of Jews, according to FBC, is their lack of recognition of Jesus as Messiah – which brings us to the issue of proselytism. FBC absolutely insists that they in no way seek or attempt to convert Jews to Christianity. Their partnerships with Jewish groups hinge on the truth of this claim. In most of their interactions with Jewish groups, they have maintained non-conversionary postures and gained considerable trust. The Jewish leaders with whom they interact most seem genuinely to trust that they have no intention to proselytize and will never cross that line. However, the claim must be contested for several reasons.

FBC gives financial support to people who proselytize. They contribute to Frank Eiklor’s pro-Israel evangelism network, Shalom International, which seeks to bring the gospel “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.”⁶³ A missionary family featured on the missions board in the FBC atrium lives in Israel and ministers to Russian Jews. In their newsletter to FBC in May 2007, they told of their experience that “usually God, in His mighty ways, arranges opportunities to share our faith quite soon after the initial meeting” with Jews. The family is also connected with Trumpet of Salvation to Israel, an organization which explicitly describes itself as evangelistic.

We are called to preach the Gospel of Yeshua haMashiach (Jesus Christ) to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles. The Trumpet ministry is dedicated to bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people in a Jewish way, in order for God's covenant people to recognize their own Messiah, promised to their forefathers and long awaited through many generations, but made strange to them through a long and tragic church history.⁶⁴

FBC also supports a couple who is on staff at King of Kings Community in Jerusalem,

⁶¹ Cheryl Morrison, *God’s Heart for His People*, 18-19. Morrison goes on to ask, in reference to verses 28-29, “Why are the Jews the enemies of the Gospel?”

⁶² Interview by author, 31 May 2007, Arvada.

⁶³ Shalom International, “The Vision,” <www.shalomworldwide.org/pages.asp?pageid=51364> (24 January 2008).

⁶⁴ Trumpet of Salvation to Israel, “Welcome to Trumpet of Salvation to Israel!” <www.trumpetofsalvation.com> (24 January 2008).

a Messianic congregation which openly describes itself as evangelizing Jews.⁶⁵

In most conversations on the subject it becomes clear that while FBC stands firm in their commitment not to openly proselytize, it is not because they believe Jews do not need to become Christians or that there are no appropriate ways to evangelize. There is an unequivocal belief that Jews will eventually come to Jesus. For most people at FBC, this means that if an opportunity arises in which Jews ask questions or raise topics of conversation which naturally lead into sharing the gospel of Jesus, Christians can and should seize such opportunities. “We don’t, we don’t, um,” one woman explained, dropping her voice to a whisper, “we don’t share Jesus. We answer any question they ask. ‘Now, now tell me what you believe. Now why do you believe that?’ Sure, we can answer that. But then let it go,” she whispers again, “and let God do it.”⁶⁶ Another man described how going to Israel without explicit plans to proselytize opens more doors for proselytizing because Jews trust and welcome them.⁶⁷

Churches like FBC come under harsh criticism from some other types of evangelicals for their public stand against proselytizing. One woman responded, laughing, “We are evangelizing ‘em! Just doing it in a different way.” The difference is waiting to be asked an appropriate question. “And if you’ve taken the time and the patience that you should take with a person, I guarantee you they will eventually ask. It’s a guarantee. It happens every time.”⁶⁸ Another woman described how she is trying to be patient in this process with her Jewish friend, Deb. The process began years ago when she invited Deb to Israel Awareness Day.

The first thing she said to me, right out of the shoot was, ‘I am not going to be converted to Jesus.’ And I said, ‘Deb, that is not my goal, to convert you to Jesus.’ Although I have prayed for her salvation. But she would not have come, she would not have ever stepped foot in these doors if she thought that was what was going on, because she’s had enough of that. So, she came, and

⁶⁵ See King of Kings Community, Jerusalem, “About Us,” <www.kkcj.org/about> (12 June 2008).

⁶⁶ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁶⁷ Interview by author, 7 May 2007, Arvada.

⁶⁸ Interview by author, 31 May 2007, Arvada.

she was blown away. She has come every year. . . I think the trust she has, the knowledge that we genuinely love and care about the Jewish people, could be an impetus that could bring her to Jesus. She has to see that. You know, they have to see it to understand it. And that's not something that you can really jam down their throat. The Lord Jesus – I remember Cheryl [Morrison] saying one time – is like a bone in the throat of a Jew. They cannot hear that or handle that. So, I prefer to witness to her in that way, in love and relationship building, praying that there will come a day – but it may not be something I'll see – when she'll have a choice to make and she'll remember this and that will be her choice, because of that.⁶⁹

One of the most vocal and active members of the Israel Outreach ministry was proudly describing the church's stand against proselytism and the criticisms they come under for it. When asked why Christians should not convert Jews, he struggled. "Oh! I was hoping you wouldn't ask that." He laughed nervously.

That's the question. . . I have struggled with that. . . I haven't resolved it in my own mind. John 14.6: 'I am' – this is Jesus' words – 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.' I have sat through classes where people so much wanted to believe that Jews are going to spend eternity with God because they're Jews – because they believe in God? But reject Jesus? That, I just have to shake my head and say, what do you do with John 14.6? I – you can't get around it! . . . So, I do have a problem. There's no simple answer with, how do you have an Israel ministry and hope beyond hope that the Jewish people, you know, and all Jewish people will spend eternity with God, and then not evangelize them? How do you reconcile that?⁷⁰

Other members feel more settled in their answers, which are based in dispensationalism. Cheryl Morrison says that Christians do not need to convert Jews because there will be a national conversion of all Israel at the end of the times of the Gentiles. Another leader in the Israel Outreach ministry said "I believe Jews do not need Jesus, at this point, to be in relationship with God, because God made a covenant with them and their families for all times." However, Jews will come to accept Jesus as Messiah in the end. "The blinders are gonna come off their eyes. That's gonna happen too. They're gonna see him as Messiah for the first time."⁷¹ When describing how Christians should pray for Israel, one woman reflected on her own practice:

⁶⁹ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷⁰ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷¹ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

My heart's cry is, as I read the scriptures, not only for their safety, but for the day that they will see him. And that's in his time. And that they will know him for who he is. But until then, that God would just prepare their hearts and ready them for that time. You know, when you're there [in Israel] – there are times that we've been there and I think, 'You know, we probably just sang for some of the hundred and forty-four thousand who will come through the time of the tribulation.' It's really quite something.⁷²

The 144,000 are the righteous remnant of Jews during the tribulation, and the doctrine of the tribulation, of course, is dispensationalism's darkest point in relation to Jews. While the members of FBC do not discuss it often, the extreme suffering of Jews during the tribulation still figures prominently in the literature central to those most active in Israel Outreach. Booker gives a standard dispensationalist portrait of the tribulation. "As horrible as this tribulation period will be, God will use it to turn the heart of the Jew back to Him."⁷³ As many dispensationalists before him, Booker uses allusions to the Holocaust in descriptions of the tribulation. "Through satanic power to perform miracles, the Antichrist will persuade the nations to move their military armament into the Middle East to finish off the Jews and defeat their coming Messiah. This will be the final 'final solution' to the Jewish problem and will take place at the very end of the tribulation period."⁷⁴

In fact, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion* is a stunning portrait of dispensationalist ambivalence toward Jews. The book was written "to inform Christians so as to encourage them to support the Jewish people," "to promote greater understanding, care and love between Christians and Jews everywhere," and as "a love gift from a Christian to the Jewish people."⁷⁵ It includes an entire chapter on "Why Christians should love Jews." Yet it is full of extraordinarily offensive passages about Jews.

After presenting evidence that Jews are God's chosen people, Booker concludes, "You may not like God's selection, but you are stuck with it. You might as well get used to the idea and agree with God that He knows what He's doing and can

⁷² Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷³ Booker, 121.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 123.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3.

choose anybody He desires for whatever His purposes.”⁷⁶ Booker’s narration of the history of the Jewish people is tinged throughout with bigotry, condescension, and cruelty. He states that when the Israelites worshiped idols, it proved that “[A]s a nation, their hearts never really turned toward God.”⁷⁷ In turn, God punished them by driving them out of the land. “Because of their disobedience, God raised up Gentile nations and used them as His means of chastening the Jews. This has always been one of God’s ways of dealing with the Jews, as it still is today.”⁷⁸ When they were given the opportunity to return to the land out of exile, many stayed behind. “They had become comfortable in Babylon. Returning home to rebuild the nation was just too much of a challenge for most of the Jews. This is much like the attitude many Jewish people have today. Some have returned to the land, but most have chosen to remain among the Gentiles.”⁷⁹ Not only were they too lazy to return, they simply did not love God enough. “The reason they stayed behind is because they loved Babylon more than they loved God. If they had loved God, they would have returned to the land.”⁸⁰ God’s judgment has continued to rest upon Jews throughout the centuries, one of the consequences being their small numbers. “Why so many more Arabs than Jews? It can only be because of God’s judgment upon the Jews for dishonoring the covenant.”⁸¹ Jews were also punished by being scattered by the Romans, who also corrupted Jews with Greek philosophy, “so that today, even though there has always been a godly remnant of Jews, many are either agnostic or atheist. Perhaps this is why there are twice as many Jews today in the United States as there are in Israel. . . Perhaps they don’t have a heart for the land because they may not have a heart for God.”⁸²

Booker’s description of the anti-Jewish sins of the world includes the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 64.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 78.

⁸¹ Ibid., 71-72.

⁸² Ibid., 79.

crusades, the Inquisition, and this shocking portrayal of the Holocaust: “The horror of the holocaust finally awakened the Jew to the fact that the world did not want him. There was no place safe for him to live except in his own homeland. As horrible as this demonic-inspired torture was, God used it to put the desire in the Jewish heart to return to his ancient land in fulfillment of Bible prophecy and God’s plan for Israel.”⁸³

Booker moves from these horrors of the past to those of the future, predicting that just as God used World War I “to prepare the land, freeing it from Turkish rule,” and World War II “to prepare the people to return to the land,” likewise “He is going to use World War III to prepare the Jewish heart to receive their Messiah.”⁸⁴ Incredibly, Booker expects to have held a Jewish audience throughout this “history,” and he addresses a word of comfort to his Jewish readers after describing how two-thirds of the Jews in Israel will die during the tribulation. “For my Jewish friends who must endure these hardships, take courage and lift your heads to heaven for your redemption draws near.”⁸⁵

Conclusion

The doctrine of the kingdom existing now only in mystery form but established on earth in the coming millennium was popularized in America by Scofield long before a Jewish state in Palestine became a political reality. Since that dramatic turn of events, the dispensationalist doctrine of the kingdom has taken on

⁸³ Ibid., 90. This dispensationalist view of God’s intentions for the Holocaust became national news in the 2008 American presidential campaign. John McCain, who had sought and eagerly embraced John Hagee’s endorsement of his candidacy, and refused to renounce Hagee when his anti-Catholicism came to light, finally rejected Hagee’s support when excerpts from one of Hagee’s sermons was released in the news media. In the excerpt, Hagee said that God used the Holocaust to make the Jews return to Israel. See Michael Luo, “McCain Rejects Hagee Backing as Nazi Remarks Surface,” *The New York Times* (22 May 2008) <<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/mccain-rejects-hagee-backing-as-nazi-remarks-surface/index.html?hp>> (15 June 2008).

⁸⁴ Booker, 107.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 118.

new geo-political significance and urgency. For the theological descendants of dispensationalism, though Jesus is certainly active today in the hearts and spiritual lives of individual Christians, divine action is most clearly recognizable in the creation, expansion, and survival of the Jewish state. God's power and providence seem feverishly focused on a small slice of land in the Middle East, where the stage is being set for Christ to return and fulfill God's ultimate intentions through geo-political reign. Though not central to God's plan, the church is important. She functions now to convert and prepare individuals for Christ's return, and to join God in preparing the site of that return. For members of FBC, this is not a matter of hastening the second advent, but of recognizing and cooperating with God's purposes for humanity.

At the center of God's purposes, as Christian Zionists understand them, are the Jewish people and the Jewish state. Persecution of that people and resistance to the will and workings of that state are the worst kinds of heresy. This zeal for righting the anti-Jewish wrongs of history is admirable, and the commitment of FBC to enact this zeal concretely is truly impressive. However, in their impassioned "support" for the state which they believe will host the returning Christ, and for the people whom they believe will finally recognize him as Messiah, both the church and the Jewish individual have been lost. Just as dispensationalist eschatology subordinates Christology, making it a doctrine which fits neatly in a system of Zionist fervor and activism, so dispensationalist eschatology subordinates ecclesiology, making the church the converter and comforter of individual souls today and the activist supporter and comforter of the state to which Jesus will return in the future. And the ultimacy of Israel and its people gives them mythic status in the Christian Zionist imagination, which allows the people of FBC to speak and act with what is truly a profound ambivalence to actual Jewish people and the complex realities of the state of Israel.

In the following chapter, the convergence of Christology and ecclesiology within the relationship between eschatology and social ethics in Yoder will focus attention on the converse in dispensationalist Christian Zionism, where eschatology overshadows and distorts Christology and ecclesiology, severing Christian Zionists from the sources necessary for the formation of properly Christian social ethics.

CHAPTER SIX

Eschatology and Social Ethics

It is the first Wednesday of the month, time for FBC's monthly Israel prayer meeting. Just after the Wednesday night church service, about twenty people gather in the prayer chapel to intercede for Israel. Cheryl Morrison arrives and begins to move the chairs into a large circle. "Yes, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus," she says under her breath as she arranges the room. The chairs in the circle are soon filled and Cheryl begins to lead the group in prayer. She tells them that she has seen an article on the *Jerusalem Post* website reporting a military build-up on the Syrian-Israeli border. She explains that this is significant because there was a prophecy "among the believers" in Israel that there would be a war with Syria soon, and she had personally received a word from God while in the Golan in 2000 regarding preparation for war with Syria.

The group received this news as their marching orders for the prayer meeting. No one prayed for an easing of tensions between Israel and Syria; no one prayed that the military build-up end; no one prayed that there would not be war. Curiously, one man prayed, "We hope there does not have to be a war. But we know that your word says that wars are coming . . ." They prayed that the war would happen in God's good time; that the Israeli military would be prepared and not fail as they had in Lebanon in 2006; that Jewish casualties would be minimal. They prayed that the U.S. government would support Israel and not stand in the way of whatever they needed to do; that God would turn George Bush's heart against the "Road Map"; that no one, "whether it be the Europeans or the Arabs," would seek to restrain Israel's military; that America would supply whatever weapons Israel needed. One man prayed, "We don't want a road map to peace." They prayed for Israel to be empowered to wipe out their enemies, "because they are your enemies, God." Cheryl prayed with ferocity for fatality among Israel's enemies: "Let Syria make a fatal mistake, Lord. Let Hezbollah make a fatal mistake. Let Hamas make a fatal mistake. Let Iran make a fatal mistake."

At the end of the hour everyone in the circle stood, joined hands, and sang together, "Lord we bless, Lord we love Thy people. Lord we bless, Lord we love Thy land. We weep for, we pray for, intercede for Israel. Lord, now move Thy hand."

Any of the FBC members participating in this prayer meeting would have happily described the activities of the evening as prayer for the peace of Jerusalem.

Yet an observer might well wonder how an evangelical prayer meeting came to resemble a war rally, and how reasonable people can understand themselves to be participating in the ways of the kingdom through militaristic prayers and activism. This chapter will explore the ways in which dispensationalist Christian Zionism subordinates Christology and ecclesiology to eschatology, severing Christian Zionist theology from the ecclesiological and Christological sources necessary for the formation of Christian social ethics. Without these crucial sources, the events predicted in dispensationalist eschatology become normative guides for contemporary socio-political action. These problematic realities of Christian Zionist social ethics are brought into relief by the coalescence of Christology and ecclesiology in Yoder's eschatology, which results both in motivation of and healthy restraint of social action. Finally, this chapter will examine the troubling views of FBC members on social ethical issues such as poverty and peace; most troubling by far are their views on Islam, Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians. Their mythic view of Jews and Israel coupled with an equally mythic but starkly negative view of non-Jewish Middle Easterners fit within the matrix of dispensationalist eschatology to nourish radical political views and activism.

Eschatology and Social Ethics in Yoder

In Yoder, eschatology both motivates social action – a particularly important message for his own Mennonite tradition – and restrains social action – a particularly important response to the liberal social optimism of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century theology. Eschatology as understood by Yoder does not propel Christians into the kind of optimistic “Christianizing” of society associated with the Social Gospel.¹ Nor does it make Christians helpless spectators of the world's demise, as does thoroughgoing dispensationalism. Christian eschatology as interpreted by Yoder performs the twin functions of motivating social action and restraining it, of

¹ For a comparison and contrast of Yoder's and Rauschenbusch's eschatologies, see Reinhard L. Hütter, “The Church: Midwife of History or Witness of the Eschaton?” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 18 (Spring 1990): 27-54.

giving hope and of insuring modesty.

One might be tempted to describe this dual function of eschatology through the well-worn categories of the “already” and the “not yet”: Because Christ has *already* won the victory, gathered the church, and sent the Holy Spirit, Christians are motivated and empowered to participate in God’s redemptive purposes for all creation. Yet because Christ has *not yet* returned, finally subduing every power, and every knee does not yet bend to Christ’s lordship, Christians are restrained from too much optimism and from acting as though circumstances can be made to turn out right. However, this description would miss what is central to Yoder’s particular interpretation of New Testament eschatology. What is remarkable about Yoder’s eschatology is that it is precisely the nature of the *already* of Christ’s reign that *both* motivates and restrains social action. *Because* Christ reigns, the church is reigning with him and thus her efforts to love her neighbors and embody the earthly ministry of Christ are empowered and meaningful. And yet, Christ reigns *because* he chose suffering over violence and patience over coercion, so the church must also refuse attempts to seize power, control history, or eliminate evil. Thus God’s eschatological word to the church, “Christ Reigns,” is both a word drawing her into social action and a word reminding her that she is not in control of human history; it is both a word instilling unshakable hope and a word restraining naive optimism; it is both a word soliciting her participation and delimiting her means.

“Christ Reigns” as Invitation and Hope: Eschatology Motivates Social Action

Within Yoder’s social ethics, eschatology functions as motivation for social action, both by inviting the church into service to the world and by giving hope. In the light of eschatology, social action becomes meaningful and the church is empowered to speak discerning, prophetic words and to serve in pioneering, creative ways. Such action is made possible, sustained, and transcended by hope.

For Yoder, faithful behavior is derived from the good news that Christ reigns, and obedience is made possible by the realities of the coming aeon in which the church already participates.² Although eschatology relativizes human effort and

² See Yoder, “To Serve Our God and to Rule the World,” 136; *Preface to Theology*, 246; *The Christian Witness to the State*, 9.

reveals that human efforts are not of ultimate importance, human effort is not thereby rendered meaningless. On the contrary, the coming kingdom makes human effort meaningful “because what God is going to do will be the fulfillment of human efforts, of human history.”³ In fact, it is ultimately in light of the *eschaton* that human effort, indeed history, are imparted meaningfulness.⁴

In the light of the *eschaton* the church can also accurately discern what is right and wrong in world events and thereby offer valid critiques. For Yoder, the biblical apocalypses are about “how the crucified Jesus is a more adequate key to understanding what God is about in the real world of empires and armies and markets than is the ruler in Rome, with all his supporting military, commercial, and sacerdotal networks.”⁵ With this key, the church is able to offer both a valid critique of what is wrong,⁶ as well as to “own the Lamb’s victory in our own time,”⁷ celebrating those realities in the church and in the world that are consonant with the coming kingdom.

Not only discernment, not only a prophetic word of critique or celebration, is made possible in light of the *eschaton*. When the church views human events through the lens of Jesus Christ, who is enthroned because of his cross and who is coming again, the church then has “a clue to which kinds of causation, which kinds of community-building, which kinds of conflict management, go with the grain of the cosmos . . .”⁸ – she learns how to rule with Christ through serving the world. She will develop creative, non-violent, “non-imperial strategies and tactics” for social action. Non-violent, non-imperial action is only irrelevant, irresponsible, and/or ineffective if it is true that violence works, and that the meaning of history is in the hands of the

³ Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 255.

⁴ Yoder, “Peace without Eschatology?,” 145.

⁵ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 246. See also “To Serve Our God and to Rule the World,” 132.

⁶ See Yoder, “Peace without Eschatology?,” 157.

⁷ Yoder, “To Serve Our God and to Rule the World,” 137. In this passage Yoder speaks of the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. as a specific example of the Lamb’s victory in recent times.

⁸ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 246.

rulers of empires. New Testament eschatology reveals, to the contrary, that nonviolence is the true power and that (as Yoder paraphrased Tolstoy) “progress in history is borne by the underdogs.”⁹ Therefore, although the faithful church renounces relevance, responsibility, and effectiveness as defined by the world, she finds that the non-violent, servant way of Jesus is actually more relevant, responsible, and effective in the long run. “The church will be most effective where it abandons effectiveness and intelligence for the foolish weakness of the cross in which are the wisdom and the power of God.”¹⁰ Such eschatologically-shaped social action includes both negative efforts in the form of “militant non-cooperation,”¹¹ like the non-violent resistance of the American Civil Rights movement, as well as positive efforts to “pioneer” servant solutions to social ills. Yoder describes Anglo-Saxon democracy and the development of universities and hospitals as positive, pioneering efforts of the church which were then generalized for the use of entire societies.¹²

Christ-centered eschatology not only invites the church into social action, it provides a transcendent hope which sustains that action. Apocalyptic, Yoder suggests, calls into question standard accounts of moral reasoning which depend upon a closed cosmos of predictable causes and effects, and thereby opens the door to a non-consequentialist mode of moral reasoning: hope.¹³ Christian hope and Christian ethics exist in a “spiral of complementarity, whereby the ethic supports the promise and vice versa, both of them contradicting both the fallen world’s defeatism and the fallen

⁹ Yoder, “To Serve Our God and to Rule the World,” 137.

¹⁰ Yoder, “The Otherness of the Church,” 64. See also “Christ, the Hope of the World,” 215. For Yoder, this is not only a theory of what might be, but a verifiable description of what has been. “It can be argued that this is the lesson of history. The Christian church has been more successful in contributing to the development of society and to human well-being precisely when it has avoided alliances with the dominant political or cultural powers.” “Christ, the Hope of the World,” 202.

¹¹ Yoder, “Armaments and Eschatology,” 56.

¹² See Yoder, “Christ, the Hope of the World,” 205; “To Serve Our God and to Rule the World,” 135.

¹³ Yoder, “Ethics and Eschatology,” 123.

Powers' oppression . . .”¹⁴ The “hope that our efforts seek to proclaim” is that Jesus is the Lord of history and God’s Holy Spirit will make human efforts meaningful. Within this hope is the dimension of “wonder,” that element of the unexpected which has characterized all the most important historical social movements.¹⁵ The ethic sustained by eschatological hope is characterized by freedom, not only a *freedom from* needing to control, but precisely through the realization that the church cannot and need not control history comes the *freedom for* actively serving society.¹⁶

“Christ Reigns” as Limitation and Modesty: Eschatology Restrains Social Action

Let us first be very clear about what is meant here by restraint of social action. Contrary to many of Yoder’s critics, Yoderian, eschatologically-oriented ecclesiology does not trap Christians in a sectarian church which has little or nothing to say to or do in the world. In Yoder, eschatology restrains conceptions of, optimism in, and means of social action; it does not restrain the church from participating in social action in alliances with and for the benefit of the wider society.

Jesus is the sovereign, ruling Christ *because* he refused to take control of society and its history. “The universal testimony of Scripture is that Christians are those who follow Christ at just this point.”¹⁷ Thus the church cannot conceive of social action as effectiveness in leading society towards its proper goal or pushing society towards peace and justice. Christian social action must be conceived of as faithfulness to Christ through service and witness. “Since we are not the lord of history there will be times when the only thing we can do is to speak and the only word we can speak is the word clothed in a deed, a word that can command attention from no one and that can coerce no one.”¹⁸

Eschatology also limits optimism in the outcomes of social action. Because the

¹⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵ Yoder, “Christ, the Hope of the World,” 204-205.

¹⁶ See Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 187, 239-241.

¹⁷ Ibid., 234.

¹⁸ Yoder, “Christ the Hope of the World,” 204.

two aeons exist in tension with one another, there will be no point in human history when the church can feel satisfied that her social efforts are complete. Additionally, the efforts that are made by the church will often have the short-term outcome of Jesus' own earthly efforts, namely rejection and suffering instead of obvious "success." The eschatological hope of the church is very often a hope held against the evidence.

Finally, the means by which Christians may carry out social action are limited by eschatology. Just as the reign of Christ is characterized by service and non-violence, so is the presence of the church in the world. The *eschaton* is not an end which justifies all means; it is a revelation of the reality that it is the slaughtered Lamb who reigns and who calls the church to be in the world as he is in the world. Judgment and elimination of evil are the end-times prerogatives of God, not the responsibility of the church. "The Christian's responsibility for defeating evil is to resist the temptation to meet it on its own terms. To crush the evil adversary is to be vanquished by him because it means accepting his standards."¹⁹ Rejecting violent and otherwise evil means is not a matter of purity or of deontology, it is a matter of living in the reality that the cross and the church shaped by it are at the center of God's purposes in history.

Social Ethics in Scofield and American Dispensationalism

Social Ethics in Scofield

The standard issues and themes in biblical social ethics are scarcely addressed by Scofield in his notes and chains of references. One striking example is his treatment of Isaiah chapters 56-59, which contain what many consider rich social ethical materials, including the often quoted, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou

¹⁹ Yoder, "Peace Without Eschatology?," 152.

cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”²⁰ Scofield virtually ignores these chapters; there is not a single note. Whereas most chapters have multiple explanatory and introductory headings which give clear indications of Scofield’s interpretations of each section, all four of these chapters share the same single heading, “Ethical instructions.”

Interestingly, Scofield describes the Hebrew prophets as “primarily revivalists and patriots, speaking on behalf of God to the heart and conscience of the nation.”²¹ While Scofield does not reduce the prophets to the single role of foretelling future events,²² it is nonetheless clear that he is keen to discuss only this role, to the absolute exclusion of any discussion of prophetic messages about God’s concern for justice and God’s judgment against greedy, oppressive, unjust ways. In his introduction to the prophetic books, Scofield describes – in two brief sentences – the message of the prophets to their contemporaries as the “sin and failure” of Israel and their chastisement. The following eight paragraphs discuss the prophets as predictors of the coming Messiah, the end times, and the kingdom age. Of the 182 notes in all the prophetic books (Isaiah - Malachi), 102 concern the end times.

Scofield has no chains of references on the poor, poverty, greed, money, or wealth. There is a single note on Christian giving, but its only comment on the relationship between rich and poor is that both are given the privilege of giving proportionate to their income.²³ When Scofield does comment on passages referring to the poor, they are usually taken as references to the remnant of Israel.²⁴ Most strikingly, Jesus’ teaching on the Son of Man returning to judge between those who did and did not help him when they saw him hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, or

²⁰ Isaiah 58.6, KJV.

²¹ Scofield, “The Prophetical Books,” introduction (immediately preceding Isaiah).

²² “The prophetic messages have a twofold character: first, that which was local and for the prophet’s time; secondly, that which was predictive of the divine purpose in the future.” Ibid.

²³ Scofield, 2 Corinthians 8.1, note.

²⁴ See Scofield, Zechariah 11.11, note.

in prison, is interpreted as Jesus' final judgment of the Gentile nations according to their treatment of the Jewish remnant.²⁵

There is no chain of reference on peace. In the single note on peace, Scofield explains that "peace" usually refers to peace with God (the work of Christ) or inward peace (in the soul of the believer); the idea of socio-political peace on earth is only used in passages about the kingdom age.²⁶ Likewise, there is no chain of references to reconciliation. When the King James Version uses the word to translate Hebrew terms, Scofield notes that this is inaccurate; "atonement is invariably the meaning. Reconciliation is a N.T. doctrine."²⁷ In the New Testament, reconciliation is equated with propitiation; there is no discussion of a social dimension of Christian reconciliation.²⁸

Scofield did not create a chain of references to justice. The Hebrew word groups *yashar*, *tsadiq*, and *tsidkiah* are interpreted as referring only to the relationship between the individual and God: a just person is one who has offered appropriate sacrifice for sin and is thereby right with God.²⁹ The Greek *dik-* word groups are taken as justification through the propitiating sacrifice of Christ: a just person is one who has been justified by Christ's sacrifice.³⁰

These explorations of Scofield's treatment of the prophetic books and of some standard themes in biblical ethics reveal that Scofield is much more focused on the end times and atonement than on ethics. In fact, Scofield's chains of reference cover 73 topics, and a full one-third of these have to do with the end times and/or kingdom age, while another third have to do with topics surrounding the issue of atonement (salvation, forgiveness, grace, election, etc.). Of the remaining third, only three topics

²⁵ Scofield, Matthew 25.32, note.

²⁶ Scofield, Matthew 10.34, note.

²⁷ Scofield, Daniel 9.24, note. This note also lists all other instances.

²⁸ See Colossians 1.21.

²⁹ Scofield, Luke 2.25, note.

³⁰ Scofield, Romans 3.28, note.

– giving, separation, and law – have specifically to do with the moral life.³¹

We have seen that for Scofield, the teachings of Jesus cannot, strictly speaking, be used as ethical guidance for the Christian because they are Jewish in character and do not pertain to the current dispensation. Yet Scofield does not entirely rule out their application to the Christian life: “Distinguish, in the Gospels, *interpretation* from *moral application*. Much in the Gospels which belongs in strictness of interpretation to the Jew or the kingdom, is yet such a revelation of the mind of God, and so based on eternal principles, as to have a moral application to the people of God whatever their position dispensationally.”³² However, the very few examples Scofield gives of the “moral application” of Jesus’ teachings to the Christian life are inward, individual, and ethically non-specific. For example, “It always remains true that the poor in spirit, rather than the proud, are blessed, and those who mourn because of their sins, and who are meek in consciousness of them, will hunger and thirst after righteousness, and hungering will be filled.”³³

Social Ethics and American Dispensationalism

American church historian Timothy L. Smith coined the phrase “the great reversal” to describe one of the central issues of fundamentalist/evangelical historiography: the shift from reform-minded, socially active nineteenth-century evangelicalism to the less politically-engaged, more privately-focused fundamentalism of the twentieth century. When Smith first wrote on the subject in the late 1950s, he posited that in the mid-nineteenth century, revivalism and perfectionism flourished in all the major Protestant denominations and formed an ethos of egalitarianism, optimism, and social activism – particularly in opposition to slavery, poverty, and greed – which laid the groundwork for the turn-of-the-century Social Gospel movement. However, it was only while revivalism and perfectionism were combined

³¹ For Scofield, separation is an important moral principle which guides Christians, not to avoid contact with evil but to be separate from evil and sinners in one’s desires and actions. See 2 Corinthians 6.17, note.

³² Scofield, “The Four Gospels,” introduction.

³³ Scofield, Matthew 5.2, note.

with postmillennialism that they were “socially volatile.”³⁴ The thesis that postmillennial evangelicalism’s social activism was reversed by the shift to premillennialist eschatology was also supported by Martin Marty’s 1970 history of Protestantism in America. Marty concluded that the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries had seen a division of American Protestantism into two parties: the postmillennialist “transformers” of society who challenged the status quo, and the premillennialist “rescuers” of society whose social pessimism and radical individualism resulted in affirming the status quo.³⁵

Smith’s “great reversal” became the subject of much discussion among evangelicals in the 1970s. David O. Moberg used Smith’s phrase as the title for his 1972 book, which made a popular-level appeal for Christians to heal the rift between evangelism and social concern. Among the long list of various social, historical and theological causes of the “great reversal,” Moberg included the social pessimism of dispensationalism.³⁶ The theme was picked up again by Donald Dayton in a series of articles published in the *Post-American* (now *Sojourners*) in 1975, and again as a book one year later. Most of Dayton’s work focused on describing the social activism of nineteenth-century evangelicals, including abolitionism and feminism, but he also weighed in on causes for the “great reversal.” Dayton insisted that sociological, theological, biblical, and psychological factors must all be taken into account, but also pointed to the shift from postmillennialism to premillennialism after the Civil War as the most important theological cause.³⁷ By the 1980s, the attribution of the “great

³⁴ Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

³⁵ Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970).

³⁶ David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism Versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972). Other causes discussed include reaction to the Social Gospel movement, the growing problems of urbanization and industrialization, social withdrawal from inner cities and the poor, fixation on nineteenth-century theological issues, and diversion of energies into the anti-evolution battle. Moberg, 34-37.

³⁷ Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*. Also reprinted with new preface in 1988. Other causes discussed include the difficulty of maintaining social movements over time, the growing diversity and secularization of American society, the rise of Princeton theology, a shift in focus from ethics to doctrine, and the

reversal” to the rise of premillennialism had become a common-place in studies of American Protestantism.³⁸ While Weber was careful to note the ongoing tension in premillennialism between fatalism and activism, in regard to systemic social reform he too conceded that “premillennialism generally broke the spirit of social concern which had played such a prominent role in earlier evangelicalism.”³⁹

George Marsden called for more nuance in discussions of the “great reversal” in his 1980 landmark work on fundamentalism.⁴⁰ He proposed that there had in fact been two stages in the shift: (1) In the last third of the nineteenth century, revivalist evangelicals’ interest in political action diminished, but they remained “socially active” through private charity. (2) In the first third of the twentieth century, evangelicals became suspicious of all “progressive social concern,” whether political or charitable. Marsden described the shift to premillennialism as one factor contributing to the first, or “preparatory” stage, but focused more on a shift in theological emphases from Calvinistic to pietistic, and on the rise of the Holiness movement. He also demonstrated that as late as the turn of the century, premillennialist leaders still encouraged progressive social action. For example, a clear challenge to the idea that dispensationalism and/or holiness theology cause social passivity is the work of Reuben Torrey, dispensationalist and holiness revivalist who also founded the International Christian Workers Association in 1886, which one scholar has called “‘the most important’ of the era’s Protestant social service

fundamentalist/modernist controversy. See 122-134. Dayton also points out that there were some exceptions to the idea that premillennialism contributed to the “great reversal” – people whose premillennialism gave them a sense of urgency in missions or inner city ministries and whose experiences in those contexts drove them into relief and welfare work, and a few into social reform. Dayton, 127.

³⁸ For example, “This shift, which has been labeled ‘the great reversal,’ was largely a result of the decline in the influence of postmillennial traditions and the rise of the premillennial influences in the denominations as a whole.” James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 30. Interestingly, Szasz has suggested that the void left by the rejection of social reform was filled by the activities surrounding Bible and prophecy conferences. Szasz, 74.

³⁹ Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 183.

⁴⁰ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.

organizations.”⁴¹

Marsden concluded that “[n]either premillennialism nor holiness teachings . . . were sufficient causes” for the “great reversal,” and that “the basic causes of the ‘Great Reversal’ must be broader than simply the rise of new dispensationalist or holiness views.” Instead, the central (though not exclusive) cause of the turn away from social concern and reform was the backlash of fundamentalism against the Social Gospel movement. According to Marsden, two aspects of the Social Gospel were most disconcerting to evangelicals. First, proponents of the Social Gospel focused on action as the mark of true Christianity, instead of focusing on atonement. This meant that truth was demonstrated pragmatically, whereas evangelicals were committed to the necessity of truth being demonstrated directly and propositionally. It also meant an emphasis on social reform which seemed to exclude evangelism and revivalism. Second, the eschatology of the Social Gospel envisioned the kingdom of God being realized in this age through social progress – the absolute antithesis of premillennialism.⁴²

Weber has also pointed to the facts that there is a tension within dispensationalism for and against social reform, and that different dispensationalists have chosen to live within or favor one side of this tension in varying ways. The tension is caused by the inevitability of social decay on the one hand, and the desire on the other hand to ensure one’s standing and be about the work of the Lord when the rapture occurs. For example, when prohibition was the key item on the evangelical social agenda, some dispensationalists condemned the cause while others joined in. The former group reasoned that increased drunkenness was a sign of the end times and therefore one neither could nor should stop it. The latter reasoned that, although all social reform could only function as stopgap measures and not long-term solutions, it was nonetheless a way of demonstrating Christian love.⁴³

⁴¹ The scholar is Aaron Abell in a study of late nineteenth-century Protestant social work, and the example is cited by Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 81.

⁴² Ibid., 85-93.

⁴³ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 54-59.

Perhaps an interesting addition to be made to discussions of the “great reversal” is the sometimes surprisingly radical character of dispensationalist convictions and rhetoric regarding the social order. Marsden noted that early American postmillennialism responded to secularization in American society by “bless[ing] its manifestations – such as materialism, capitalism, and nationalism – with Christian symbolism,” while premillennialists had no faith in these manifestations and no optimism in their progress. For premillennialists, true progress is achieved only by God and only in the future.⁴⁴ This orientation prevented them from investing the apparent progress of American society with eschatological significance. Therefore, while premillennialists’ resistance to social reform and scientific progress has allowed many to assume that their ideology was stereotypically conservative, it is important to note that capitalist democracy, the social ills of urbanization, and American nationalism were also resisted by thorough-going dispensationalists.⁴⁵ Paul Boyer has documented the fascinating tensions within dispensationalism between the social utopianism of their millennial expectations, their profound pessimism in human progress and social reform, and their stinging critiques of modernity which often echoed radical ideologies. For example, “premillennialists matched the most vehement radicals in describing capitalism’s human toll and conditions in the industrial city.”⁴⁶ Sandeen also noted of dispensationalists that, “In the face of American nationalism, they offered a sober and pessimistic view of the future of all human society, including the United States.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 48-51.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 126. On dispensationalism and democracy see Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 83-87.

⁴⁶ Boyer, 94ff.

⁴⁷ Sandeen, xvi.

Social Ethics at Faith Bible Chapel

Do the members of FBC show more concern for the social ethical issues which Scofield ignored in his notes, or is the “great reversal” still evinced at FBC? The following section will explore the attitudes and activism of FBC in relation to the issues of politics in general, and poverty and peace in particular, and the section will close with an exploration of perhaps the most disturbing elements of FBC’s social ethics, those related to Islam, Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians.

Politics, Poverty, and Peace

The members of FBC are not satisfied with watching the world’s inevitable social decline. They believe their duty as Christians is to work to make the world a better place as long as they are in it. Ironically, Pastor George’s favorite metaphor for Christian social action is occupation; Christians are the forward force, occupying the world until Jesus returns to conquer.⁴⁸ According to FBC members, occupying – or being salt and light, their second favorite metaphor for social action – includes evangelism, Bible translation, caring for the poor and the environment, educating the uneducated, and involvement in politics.

The most important political issues for most of FBC’s members – in addition to Israel – are abortion and homosexuality. “I think the wickedest thing that happens in this world,” one man proclaimed emotionally, “above rape and murder and everything else, is abortion. . . There is nothing wickeder that goes on in the world. There is nothing!”⁴⁹ Another man agreed that opposition to abortion is non-negotiable, as is opposition to gay marriage. “Defending marriage is a no-brainer. Defending the right to life is a no-brainer. . . Politically, those are probably the two biggest [issues] . . . Probably nothing comes up to the level of importance of those two.”⁵⁰ Members of FBC were among the leaders of a drive to amend their state’s constitution to define

⁴⁸ He used the metaphor in all five sermons I heard him deliver as well as in an interview.

⁴⁹ Interview by author, 7 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁰ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

marriage as between a man and a woman. They had a training day for pastors in order to mobilize other congregations. For a month they had a petition available every Sunday, on which they gathered several thousand signatures in favor of the amendment. “And it passed. It paid off. The Colorado constitution now has been amended to say that. That’s an example of what I think we should be doing,” said one of the amendment drive’s leaders.⁵¹

People at FBC believe poverty is a dire social issue and that Christians should be more active in combating poverty. Americans are excessively wealthy, one man reflected, and should be ashamed. However, reflections on poverty at FBC are almost always joined with disconcerting provisos. One man spoke of helping the poor in terms of their needs being addressed before they can hear the gospel. “It’s tough for a guy that’s starving to focus on anything but where to get his next meal,” he noted, then added, “You know, you can’t go to a group of starving people in deepest, darkest Africa and preach to them and expect them to automatically glob onto that when they’re not sure they’re gonna be alive the next day.”

Cheryl Morrison echoed the concern of many at FBC that caring for the poor not take priority over or be done apart from evangelism. She insisted that social problems cannot actually be solved, so the focus must be on preaching the gospel of individual salvation.

Jesus, when he left, said, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples.’ It hadn’t changed. Yeah, we ought to care about the poor. I do. We have to care about the poor. But if you only focus on the poor and the cause of AIDS without the clarity of preaching the gospel, you’re not going to accomplish anything. Millions of dollars have been thrown at AIDS. It hadn’t gotten better. It stopped a little bit in America because you can educate – because Americans are educated at a different level. But you can’t – I mean, just throwing money at things doesn’t fix them. . . . You know, care for the poor, care for the widows, care for the fatherless, but first and foremost preach the gospel.⁵²

“Throwing money at problems” is what the government does. And it is the conviction of many at FBC that alleviation of poverty is not the government’s

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

responsibility and cannot be solved by governmental methods. “James says that this is undefiled religion, that you feed the poor, take care of the widows, and the orphans. And we need to do that as a church,” one Bible teacher insisted. “I think that we in this country have made a mistake and turned so many things over to the government. We’re spending millions of dollars where, that’s actually where the church has fallen down. That’s the church’s responsibility, not the government’s.”⁵³ FBC also shares Scofield’s interpretation of Matthew 25.31-46, reading the poor and the least as Jews. One staff member described the heart of the Israel Outreach in terms of repaying Christianity’s many debts to Jews. “You know, the Lord does say, you’ve benefited in so many of these ways . . . When you’ve done it to the least of these brethren you’ve done it unto me.”⁵⁴

Very few phrases are heard more often at FBC than “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” The large Jerusalem stone wall that bears this message in tall, black letters is one of the first things seen upon entering the church building. Members are constantly admonished, and faithfully continue, to pray for peace. These admonitions and prayers are difficult for an outsider to reconcile with the fervent prayers for and talk of the necessity of more violence and war. People at FBC do not shrink from the extremely violent implications of their beliefs or from explicitly violent speech. At the 2006 Israel Awareness Day, the director of the local Allied Jewish Federation was met with thousands of applauding hands following this statement of Israel’s use of force: “We will not be intimidated. They can attack us again and again. We will retaliate. We will cause pain to anybody who causes pain to us. . . Eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth – and ten times over if they will try it again! No question about it.”⁵⁵

The keynote speaker at FBC’s 2006 Israel Awareness Day was John Hagee. He closed his speech with a call for the United States to go to war against Iran. “I call upon the United States of America, our president and our military leaders that at some point in the future, Iran must be held responsible. Let’s join Israel in that hour of

⁵³ Interview by author, 10 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁴ Interview by author, 30 May 2007, Arvada.

⁵⁵ Shaul Amir, public address at Israel Awareness Day 2006 (Arvada, CO: Faith Bible Chapel Media Ministry), DVD.

reckoning!” The crowd cheers. “There’s a new Hitler in the Middle East. He’s the president of Iran. We must act now to stop Iran before the maniacal dream of the extermination of the Jews becomes a nuclear holocaust.” There is more applause as he builds momentum. “I hope that America has the courage to join Israel in a military preemptive strike against Iran that will destroy forever their nuclear capabilities of attacking Israel and Western democracy.” The packed sanctuary erupts in cheers and applause.

One of the most widely read and recommended recent books at FBC is *Epicenter: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future*, by Joel Rosenberg. The premise of *Epicenter* is that Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 can be treated “as an intercept from the mind of an all-knowing God, just as a CIA analyst might treat an intercept from the cell phone of a world leader . . .”⁵⁶ Ten chapters of the book are based on ten “future headlines” Rosenberg predicts will soon be in the news based on his reading of Ezekiel.⁵⁷ The basic plot follows standard dispensationalism with a few post-9/11 twists. The book closes by telling readers the coming events will be truly horrific, including widespread panic, unprecedented price shocks, terrorist attacks, a great earthquake, pandemic diseases, a firestorm, disrupted shipping, and inability to provide relief. But it will also have the benefit of turning the masses toward God. How should Rosenberg’s readers respond to his predictions? He gives four prescriptions: get saved by following the Four Spiritual Laws (which close with a standard, evangelical invite-Jesus-into-your-heart prayer); warn everyone you

⁵⁶ Joel C. Rosenberg, *Epicenter: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 40.

⁵⁷ 1. “Israel Discovers Massive Reserves of Oil, Gas” (Ezek. 38.8, 11-13); 2. “Treaties and Truces Leave Israelis More Secure than Ever Before” (Ezek. 38.8); 3. “A Czar Rises in Russia, Raising Fears of a New Cold War” (Ezek. 38.2-4; 39.1); 4. “Kremlin Joins ‘Axis of Evil,’ Forms Military Alliance with Iran” (Ezek. 38.5); 5. “Moscow Extends Military Alliance to Include Arab, Islamic World” (Ezek. 38.2-6); 6. “Global Tensions Soar as Russia Targets Israel” (Ezek. 38.8, 10, 12, 14, 18; 39.2); 7. “New War Erupts in Middle East as Earthquakes, Pandemics Hit Europe, Africa, Asia” (Ezek. 38.18-22; 39.6, 12, 17-19); 8. “Iraq Emerges from Chaos as Region’s Wealthiest Country” (Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Revelation 18); 9. “Jews Build Third Temple in Jerusalem” (Ezekiel 40-48); 10. “Muslims Turn to Christ in Record Numbers.”

know (which is done particularly well by buying them copies of his book, he notes); bless Israel as well as her enemies (bless Israel through investment and aid, and bless her enemies through prayer and evangelism); and call for preemptive war against Iran.⁵⁸

The violence advocated and tolerated by members of FBC is not only theoretical or future. According to a journalist who conducted in-depth research into extremism among Israeli settlers, during the first intifada the settlers of Ariel formed a covert, armed militia under the leadership of the mayor, Ron Nachman, and with weapons provided by the Israeli military. Robert Friedman chronicled attacks carried out by Ariel's militia, called *Kullanu* ("all of us"), including invasions of Palestinian homes, beatings, fatal shootings of both militants and innocent children, and burning of agricultural fields and olive groves.⁵⁹

What, then, is meant by all the prayers for peace? One of the most active and vocal members of the Israel Outreach was bewildered by this question. "That's a really good question. Let me think about this. So, so you're kind of asking, whenever we say 'peace,' what are we referring to?" It still took him a significant amount of time to arrive at an answer. "When we say 'peace,' we – evangelical Christians, Faith Bible Chapel, Bridges for Peace – probably first and foremost are referring to an inner peace that comes from salvation." He then explained that "peace process" is a misnomer, because it has only led to increasing violence in the Middle East.

Cheryl Morrison was much more quick to explain the meaning of prayers for peace. "What you're really praying for is the coming of Messiah."⁶⁰ George Morrison consistently teaches that there can be no peace in the Middle East until Jesus returns. His self-published book on Israel closes with a prayer which includes this explanation: "When I pray for the peace of Jerusalem, remind me that I am praying for Jesus Christ

⁵⁸ Rosenberg, 225-246.

⁵⁹ Robert I. Friedman, "The Settlers," *The New York Review of Books* 36:10 (15 June 1989); and "West Bank Story," *The New York Review of Books* 36:18 (23 November 1989), in which Dina Shalit of Ariel's mayor's office refutes Friedman's claims and Friedman responds.

⁶⁰ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

to return since He is the only one that can bring true peace to the Middle East.”⁶¹ However, according to Pastor George, the church’s prayers for Jerusalem’s peace are not only prayers for Jesus to return quickly; they also function to reduce violence in the mean time. The power of the Holy Spirit in each individual believer makes the church a “restraining force against evil.” This is one of the reasons there will be so much evil and violence after the rapture. “When the church is removed, there’s going to be a restraining force removed and then evil will increase and intensify . . . So, because we’re a restraining force, when we pray for peace, there’s a restraining of evil against Israel. There’s a restraining against terrorism and the mustering of the troops against Israel. . . Only when the Prince of Peace comes back will there be total peace.”⁶²

Until then, those who try to bring peace in the Middle East through means other than prayer are usurping the role of Messiah. An article in a magazine distributed at Israel Awareness Day 2007 suggested that both Clinton and Bush have “aggressively displayed” a “Messianic Impulse,” meaning that “they want desperately to be credited as the architects of peace between Israel and Palestinians – something that only Messiah will bring.” What they do not understand is that between now and the second coming, “there *will be no* political or diplomatic solutions until there is a military solution.”⁶³ In the same magazine, another article explains why biblical teachings on peace are not applicable to the Middle East. The prophets’ teachings on peace refer to the millennial kingdom and Jesus’ teachings on peace refer to individual relationships. Those who fail to correctly interpret these teachings are Marcionites. “They believe a loving God would not condone war and therefore they reject the God of War in the Old Testament in favor of the Prince of Peace in the New Testament . . .” and thus “While Christians against Israel create a new theology of peace to promote their anti-war and pro-Palestinian positions, they strip down God’s character. In their teaching, God becomes a deity that stands for love and compassion, but nothing more.” Christian Zionists know better. They know that war is a moral necessity for

⁶¹ George Morrison, *Israel in the Balance*.

⁶² George Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

⁶³ Hutchens, 4.

Israel. “Until the lion lies down with the lamb, Israel does not have the luxury of hammering its swords into plowshares.”⁶⁴

Islam, Muslims, Arabs and Palestinians

The darkest corners of the beliefs and ethics of FBC have to do with Palestinians, Arabs, and the religion of Islam. Islam is not a legitimate, Abrahamic religion in their view. Cheryl Morrison was asked by a woman in her audience at a local synagogue, “What is your attitude on the Muslims?” She said that Allah is not God but a moon god, an idol, which had been worshipped long before Mohammed; Islam is not a true religion. God’s purpose for Israel, she said, was to reveal his name to the world. When Israel triumphs, the Muslims will recognize the true God. “From your mouth to God’s ears,” the woman replied. In *Epicenter*, Joel Rosenberg describes how the war of Gog and Magog, with its unprecedented cataclysm, will cause many to turn to God. “Soon afterward, churches will be overflowing around the world as masses turn to Jesus Christ . . . Synagogues will also be overflowing . . . Mosques, on the other hand, will be increasingly deserted – if they survive this day of judgment at all.”⁶⁵

These comments are mild in comparison to most of what is said and read about Islam at FBC. Many references involve Satan, the demonic, and evil. One member reflecting on a trip to Israel recalled how disturbed he was by the Muslim calls to prayer projected from the minarets. “When we were in Jerusalem especially and that thing would go off, and it was like – it’s like a wailing from hell, and that’s the only way I can describe it. And that got all over us. I thought, how can there be any encouragement when the mount is being defiled?”⁶⁶ In an issue of *Dispatch from Jerusalem* available at the Bridges for Peace display on Israel Awareness Day 2007, an article hailed the “War on Terror” as a “religious mission.” It described terrorists as motivated by Islam, then associated Islam with Satan. “Read the Bible, and analyze

⁶⁴ Shelley Neese, “A Time for War and a Time for Peace,” *The JerUSAlem Connection* (May-June 2007/Iyar-Sivan-Tammuz 5767): 18-19.

⁶⁵ Rosenberg, 229.

⁶⁶ Interview by author, 10 May 2007, Arvada.

some of the strategies and tactics that Satan has always employed when seeking to be ‘*like the Most High*’ (Isaiah 14.14). The battle remains a struggle for the throne – a fierce, arrogant quest for power and authority. Satan has hated the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from the beginning with a passion that is no less intense today. It is important that Christians get into the action.”⁶⁷

The most explicit equation of Allah with Satan and Islam with evil are found in an audio recording available for sale every Sunday at the Israel Outreach counter. Eric Morey, founder and manager of the Galilee Experience, a Christian tourist attraction near the Sea of Galilee, visited FBC and gave a seminar on Islam. The recording is widely recommended and distributed. “Who is Allah?” Morey asks, “In truth, I believe that he is Satan.” Morey makes his case by describing Islam as a religion with lying and murder as central practices. “Now, have you seen any modern-day Muslims using a tactic like that? Yeah? Does that sound familiar?” Most damning of all is that by building a mosque on the Temple Mount, Islam has tried to dethrone God, because “The Temple Mount is God’s throne on earth.” Morey graciously clarified that the “so-called Palestinians” (so-called, though there has never been a Palestinian state) are not the enemy, “it’s the spirit of Islam that’s the enemy here.” But the battle against this spirit, a “religious war,” is “a global conflict with no human solution.” Antichrist will arise from within Islam and everything will unravel from there. A person attending the seminar asked if it was true that there are peace-loving Muslims. Yes, Morey answered, but they are only nominal Muslims. They are not “good Muslims,” because those truly faithful to Islam cannot love peace. “That makes Osama bin Laden one of the best Muslims around!”⁶⁸

Islam is clearly the enemy in the view of FBC. But they are usually quick to note that Muslim people, Arab people, and the Palestinians themselves are not the enemy. Some members stressed that God did not choose to bless Israel and curse the Arabs. God promised to bless and prosper Ishmael and his descendants, and God has.

⁶⁷ Ron Ross, “The War on Terror: A Religious Mission,” *Dispatch from Jerusalem* (February 2007): 6-7, 15.

⁶⁸ Eric Morey, “Israel, Islam and the Antichrist,” (Tiberias, Israel: The Galilee Experience), audio recording.

The difference is that Ishmael was not chosen; the promises to Abraham were not to be fulfilled through Ishmael but through Isaac. Both Jews and Arabs are blessed by God, but only the Jews are chosen by God. Reflecting on the protestors at Israel Awareness Day, one of the FBC performers insisted that they misunderstood FBC and support for Israel. “They don’t understand how much Faith loves Palestinians and wants them to have peace and prosperity,” she lamented.⁶⁹ Sayings such as, “Being pro-Israel does not mean being anti-Arab,” or “Loving Israel does not mean hating Palestinians,” are commonplace at FBC.

However, these messages are often contradicted. A man who teaches courses in Faith Bible Institute described how he traces the biblical accounts of the origins of the Arabs. The animosity between Jews and Arabs has existed since Isaac and Ishmael, he said, but continues today because of Arab animosity and hatred. “If you look at Israel, they respect life. They’re very much like Americans, you know. They have a high value of life. They hate seeing death. They want to live a peace with their neighbors.” When this Bible teacher was asked what is taught at FBC about Palestinians, he made no pretence. Do the people involved in supporting Israel know a lot about the Palestinians? “I’d have to be honest with you and say no. We view them as the enemy. We view them as trying to uproot Israel out of their land which God brought them back to . . . And they’re the enemy of that.” And then it seemed to dawn on him as he spoke, “There’s a lot of Christian Palestinians. There’s a lot of other Palestinians who maybe stay more neutral, that, maybe we have a negative effect on because we’re so pro-Israel. Um . . . I guess that’s just not our focus. I’m not saying it’s alright. I’m just saying it’s not the focus.”⁷⁰

One of the core members of the Israel Outreach was also candid about FBC’s shortcomings in terms of awareness concerning Palestinians. “I don’t think, if you’re looking for a balanced approach here, it’s not. I think we probably should do more in this respect.” He also seemed to have similar realizations in the course of an interview. He said that supporters of Israel can too easily “write off” Palestinians and Arabs. “It’s easy to do that. When you see a poll in Gaza that sixty, seventy percent

⁶⁹ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷⁰ Interview by author, 7 May 2007, Arvada.

support Hamas and their agenda, ya think, to heck with them! Let ‘em – you know, they deserve whatever they get, whether it’s starving or whatever.” Then he seemed to hear himself anew and added, “Well, that’s not really the Christian approach. That’s really not what-would-Jesus-do approach. That’s not what Jesus would do. . . . It’s easy to disregard the plight of the non-Jewish people in the Middle East because of their attitude But we shouldn’t. We should not.”⁷¹

Many other members insisted they were very informed about Palestinians. They reported that FBC listens to the perspectives of Palestinians. However, the examples they cited as their sources called the claim into serious question. They cited speakers like Walid Shoebat and Nonie Darwish, and the film *Obsession*. Shoebat describes himself as a former PLO member who is now an American citizen, critic of Islam, and supporter of Israel. He has spoken to gatherings of Christians United for Israel.⁷² Darwish is also an American, born in Egypt, and operates an organization called Arabs for Israel.⁷³ The film, *Obsession*, was a joint effort of CNN and Fox News which was released on DVD in 2007. The subtitle is *Radical Islam’s War Against the West*. FBC has hosted two screenings of the film. A member praised the film as “a real eye-opener as to what’s going on with the people and how they’re indoctrinated to hatred against the Jewish people and Americans.”⁷⁴

Other members were more clearly aware of the serious social issues faced by Palestinians, and that many live in truly miserable circumstances which are beyond their control. But these members were quick to note that the tragic circumstances are also beyond the control of Israel and those who support Israel; they are entirely the fault of Palestinian leadership. “They are suffering hugely,” Cheryl Morrison said of the Palestinian people, “And it’s their own people that are doing it to them! It’s

⁷¹ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷² See Walid Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad: The Root of Terrorism and the Return of Radical Islam* (Top Executive Media, 2005); and his website: Walid Shoebat, <www.shoebat.com> (20 June 2008).

⁷³ See Nonie Darwish, *Now They Call Me Infidel: Why I Rejected the Jihad for America, Israel, and the War on Terror* (New York: Sentinel, 2006); and her website: Arabs for Israel, <www.arabsforisrael.com> (20 June 2008).

⁷⁴ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

not even fixable. You can't throw money at it, because we've already thrown too much money at it, in my opinion. And they take it and use it for evil purposes."⁷⁵

Another staff member echoed this assessment: "The Palestinian people have suffered. But not because of us! They've suffered because – not because of the Jews! Jews feed 'em and provide schools. They've suffered because of what their leadership has done to them, kept them in refugee camps. Jews haven't kept 'em in refugee camps. Their own leadership has."⁷⁶

This indictment of Palestinian leadership leads back into talk of evil, as in these comments by Cheryl Morrison: "Am I against the Palestinian entity? Absolutely, because it's evil. I mean it's evil. Arabs? God loves them. God desperately loves them. Unfortunately, they're on the wrong side of this deal, and that's sad. But does God love them? Yes." She added that American Christians need to resist the temptation to believe that anything good can come of such evil entities. "Who we are as Americans, we sort of want to look at the redemptive quality in everybody. There is no redemptive quality in Hamas. There is no redemptive quality in Hizbollah, or Ahmadinejad. That kind of thing. Is there in the Arab people? Absolutely."⁷⁷

The members of FBC do not discuss the impact of their "adopted settlement" on the lives of Palestinians in surrounding West Bank villages. Their close friends in Ariel's administration have equally disturbing views on Arabs and Palestinians. In addition to the reports of armed violence carried out against Palestinians discussed above, there is the symptomatic sentiment of Ariel's mayor, Ron Nachman: in 1989, as a member of the Knesset, he proposed that Arabs working in settlements should be required to wear yellow "alien worker" tags.⁷⁸

What, then, is the responsibility of Christian Zionists toward Palestinians? Some members believe they have a responsibility to care for Palestinian Christians in need and that FBC is not doing enough in that regard. Others were perplexed when

⁷⁵ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷⁶ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷⁷ Cheryl Morrison, interview by author, 24 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷⁸ Friedman, "West Bank Story."

asked about interactions with Palestinian Christians. Do any of the groups that FBC sends to Israel spend any time with Palestinian Christians? “I don’t know. I’m not sure,” said one woman who has been on several trips herself and sent her teenage children on several summer trips. “Where would that be? Give me a . . .” she paused in confusion, “Define that for me. . . What would we do? Give me a clue. What would we do with them?” Her husband intervened and pointed out that FBC supports several missionaries to Arabs.⁷⁹

In fact, evangelistic missions and prayer seem to be the only actions most members of FBC can imagine engaging in related to Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. While Christian responsibility to Jews and the state of Israel must be expressed in tangible financial and political action, Christian responsibility to Arabs and Muslims is purely spiritual; missionaries should be sent and prayers should be prayed. “You’re so engrossed in the terrorists and that’s a terrible thing and we need to do something,” reflected one woman, “But you forget these are people. These are people that still have issues, that are scared, that are being taught something that is a deception. They don’t know that. They’re in deception. So it really behooves us to pray for them.”⁸⁰ Cheryl Morrison’s Bible study guide offers suggestions at the end of each lesson for actions to be taken, which include lobbying for the US embassy to be moved to Jerusalem, writing letters to newspaper editors about unfair reporting on Israel, and giving financial support to Jewish charities. In contrast, the section with the title “What about the Arabs?” ends with this action plan: “Pray for the salvation of the descendants of Ishmael and reconciliation of Abraham’s sons.”⁸¹ To be clear, this is not reconciliation which involves concessions on both sides. The sign that a Palestinian is a true Christian is unconditional support for the state of Israel.

Just as Jews have positive mythic significance at FBC, the non-Jewish people of the Middle East (who are largely assumed to be Arab and Muslim), have negative mythic status. They are not actual people living normal human lives, or actual nations with complex socio-political realities. In fact, in Pastor George’s favorite metaphor,

⁷⁹ Interview by author, 14 May 2007, Arvada.

⁸⁰ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁸¹ Cheryl Morrison, *God’s Heart for His People*, 15.

they are simply playing pieces on God's chess board and God moves and defeats them at will. "God's setting up kings, he's taking down kings, he's raising up nations, he's making nations disappear, he's getting people ready."⁸² In a sermon on Matthew 24, Pastor George used the metaphor in describing the end-times reign of Antichrist. "The Antichrist will be a leader that is able to muster enough strength and following that he will invade the Middle East, and all of what's happening now, them being in the news, the nations that are involved that have taken public stance to eliminate Israel, listen, God knew about all this, and just like pawns and other pieces in a chess game, God is putting it all together."⁸³ The next week, on Israel Awareness Day, the metaphor was employed yet again. "You may be worried about terrorism and all America is battling right now, but that is just the moving of pieces on the chess board. God is getting everything into place."⁸⁴

Conclusion

In Yoder's theology we have discovered an eschatology within which ecclesiology and Christology meet to both motivate and restrain social action. The affirmation of Christ's present, though not fully consummated, reign gives human action meaning, sheds light which allows the church to discern needs and means for social action, and gives transcendent hope which sustains social action. The reality of Christ's reign also restrains the church from conceiving of social action incorrectly, from seeking to achieve positive social ends through unfaithful means, and from having too much optimism in the power and outcomes of her work. Chapters Four and Five demonstrated that dispensationalist eschatology subordinates Christology and ecclesiology. A contemporary instantiation of the dispensationalist imagination of time in relation to Jesus' two advents was described in FBC's divided soteriology which makes Jesus' first advent relevant only for atonement while his second advent will bring the redemption of embodiment and sociality. The legacy of the

⁸² George Morrison, "The Benefits of Knowing the Future."

⁸³ George Morrison, "The 'Do Nots' of the Last Days."

⁸⁴ George Morrison, "Israel: God's Sign of the Times."

dispensationalist imagination of space and the strict distinction between Israel and the church, was shown in FBC's extremely thin ecclesiology and robust but misguided theology of Israel which has created a mythic and deeply ambivalent view of Jews and Judaism.

In this chapter we have seen how the subordination of Christology and ecclesiology was evinced in Scofield's seeming inability to connect prophetic texts, the teachings of Jesus, or classic themes of biblical ethics to any social-ethical theology. Once again, the texts and topics which seem most clearly to elicit social-ethical deliberation instead are interpreted in terms of either atonement or the end times. While church historians have worked past the tendency to reduce explanations of the 'great reversal' by ascribing the shift to dispensational premillennialism alone, it is nonetheless true that a shift in American Protestant eschatology toward the type articulated by Scofield was accompanied by significant changes in evangelical/fundamentalist social action.

Like many evangelicals of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, those at FBC have focused their political attentions (other than Zionism) mainly on the issues of abortion and gay marriage. They display an inability to draw connections between biblical and theological issues such as poverty and peace, and concrete contemporary politics. One of the most pressing social issues of the day, tension between Islam and the West, is interpreted and acted upon through a mythic discourse in which Israel represents the cosmic forces of good and Islam and non-Jewish Middle Easterners represent the cosmic forces of evil. The life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, emptied of social relevance by dispensationalist theology, have no bearing on their interpretation or activism in this struggle. Likewise, the church has no role except to be on Israel's side. Social ethics have been severed from the Christological and ecclesiological sources which Yoder has demonstrated are so vital.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

Sunday morning has turned to afternoon at FBC. All four of the morning worship services have ended, Bible classes for adults and children have adjourned, and the Atrium Café has stopped serving coffee and breakfast. Volunteers from the Israel Outreach ministry store away their pro-Israel pamphlets, videos, and merchandise until next week. As members leave the sprawling FBC buildings, they are serenaded by the praise music played through the speakers surrounding the pathways and parking lots. They get into their large sedans and SUVs and drive back to their suburban homes.

Before this study of FBC comes to a close as well, the following chapter will consider what has been discovered in the explorations of their convictions and practices offered above. A summary of the previous chapters will be followed by methodological and theological conclusions drawn from these encounters with dispensationalist Christian Zionism, and the thesis will close with a consideration of constructive theological implications.

Summary and Conclusions

A particular form of premillennialism was born in nineteenth-century Britain amidst a profusion of millenarian movements and restorationist convictions. Key to its formation were rationalist and literalist approaches to scripture along with a deep disillusionment with the established Anglican Church, especially as experienced by John Nelson Darby. Darby and other British premillennialists found wider and more persistent audiences across the Atlantic, and dispensationalism became widespread among American evangelicals. As the century turned, dispensationalist Bible Institutes were training thousands of new pastors, leaders, and missionaries, and C. I. Scofield was writing study notes to the biblical text which would revolutionize the dissemination and longevity of dispensationalist theology.

Another revolution came with the clash of conservatives and liberals, during which dispensational premillennialism became the eschatological plank in the

fundamentalist platform. Central to the dispensationalist plank were the imminent premillennial return of Christ, the any-moment rapture of the true church, and the integrity of the biblical message for and about Israel which was yet to be fulfilled through the restoration of a Jewish nation in Palestine. Two world wars served to strengthen the cultural currency of dispensationalism through the radical realignment of Europe foretold by dispensationalists and resulting from World War I, and the establishment of the state of Israel made possible by the events of World War II. After Israel expanded dramatically in 1967, evangelical dispensationalists shed the apoliticism of their fundamentalist past, and the widespread activism of American Christian Zionism was born. Hal Lindsey, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson brought dispensationalist Christian Zionism to the masses through books, televangelism, and Holy Land tours – and the masses took the message to their polling stations and Capitol Hill through the rise of the New Christian Right.

During these fertile years of the late 1960s through early 1980s, a new church was born in the suburbs of Denver, Colorado. Between 1965 and 2007, FBC grew from a few families meeting in homes to 5000 members meeting in the multiple venues of a sprawling campus. Throughout the congregation's history, teachings on the significance of Israel in biblical prophecy have been central. As the congregation's numbers and resources increased, so did their pro-Israel activism. Today FBC seeks to educate all their members about Israel, prays regularly for Israel, partners with other Christian Zionists and organizations to financially support and lobby for the interests of Israel, regularly sends groups to tour Israel, including the International Singers and Dancers in their performances on Israeli military bases, hosts an annual Israel Awareness Day, seeks to build relational bridges between Christians and Jews both in Israel and at home, and gives significant financial and relational support to their adopted West Bank settlement, Ariel.

FBC's Zionist activism is part of complex system of convictions and practices which is partially sustained by theological inheritances from dispensationalism, as found in *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Though most members of the congregation are no longer directly dependent upon – or in many cases even familiar with – Scofield, legacies of his brand of dispensationalism linger in their thought and in the teachings they receive from Christian Zionist leaders and literature. The dispensationalist imagination of time, with its inevitable cycles of test-failure-judgment, lingers in the

social fatalism tied with FBC's certitude that the end of the current dispensation is at hand. The dramatic contrast between the character and purposes of the two advents of Jesus Christ in dispensationalism lingers in FBC's divided soteriology, in which Jesus saves individual souls through the atoning sacrifice of the first advent but leaves embodiment and sociality unredeemed until his second advent. The dispensationalist relegation of the significance of the teachings of Jesus to dispensations other than our own lingers in the perception at FBC that Jesus' teachings focused on the end times. Dispensationalist teachings concerning the nature of the coming kingdom, a geopolitical reign over the world by Jesus Christ as Israel's Davidic king, survive intact, as do interpretations of prophecies concerning the birth of this kingdom out of seven years of horrific violence and unprecedented human suffering. Thus the legacy of dispensationalist doctrines concerning human time and Jesus Christ's historical and future entries into human time and space is certitude concerning the ultimate failure of all social transformation in the present age and the ultimate ascendancy of Israel, so that social ethical guidance comes not from Jesus' ethical teachings or example but from the character and geographical location of his future reign.

Dispensationalist doctrines concerning the focus of God's activity within human space have similarly left discernable traces in the life and thought of FBC, though forgotten or rejected in their traditional form. In dispensationalism, the center of God's intentions for and action amongst humanity is Israel, which will be restored as a political entity in a particular geographic space. In the mean time, the church has mysteriously come into existence and through it the kingdom exists in mystery form – but the church spoken of here is the invisible true church. The visible, institutional church is doomed to failure and ever-increasing apostasy. The current dispensation will end with the rapture of the true church followed by the violent destruction of the apostate, institutional church and the Gentile nations. At FBC these dispensationalist doctrines have developed into the convictions that the kingdom currently exists spiritually, as Christ reigns within the individual believer's heart, and will exist again physically when Christ returns to reign from his capitol in Jerusalem. Until then, the church's primary spiritual function is to convert and encourage individual believers, and her primary social function is to support and encourage Israel. FBC also has an interpretation of the history of Christianity in which the church was tragically corrupted in the Constantinian era by the rise of supersessionism. The conviction that

the church is in no way the new Israel and that God's ultimate intentions are for Jewish people and the land of Israel lead to bleak anti-Catholicism and a deeply ambivalent view of Jews and Judaism.

Thus disillusionment with the established church in nineteenth-century Britain, wedded with one man's peculiar approach to preserving the rationality of biblical literalism, gave birth to a theological system which, though modified in the passing of time and unacknowledged due to ahistorical self-understanding, nonetheless continues to function as a crucial component of the complex social-historical-cultural-political-theological system which is the contemporary American Christian Zionism instantiated at FBC. In particular, the fact that FBC's American predecessors were especially taken with Darby's eschatology allowed dispensational premillennialist views of the end times to become common currency among American evangelicals. For some, like those at FBC, this has led to a theological predilection for apocalyptic eschatology of a certain form which subordinates Christology and ecclesiology. Members of FBC are left with a system of convictions in which predictions about the future guide their social ethics; Christology, ecclesiology, and the prophetic and apocalyptic biblical critiques of the very forms of sociality which Christian Zionists eagerly endorse – namely, nationalism, militarism, and violent domination – are made unavailable to them as components in the formation of Christian social ethics. Instead, their apocalyptic theopolitics involves them in a spiritual and geo-political battle between good and evil; good being Israel and her supporters and bad being the unabashedly demonized Arab Muslims of the Middle East and any who seek their well-being instead of Israel's.

Although the people of FBC consider themselves evangelicals and would not warm to the title 'fundamentalist,' it is difficult to distinguish their view and use of the Bible from the sort of fundamentalism which emerged in the early twentieth-century controversies and was wedded with dispensationalist eschatology. The Bible is treated as a collection of unmediated, unaltered, and uninterpreted words directly from God. The Bible itself almost takes on divine status. In Cheryl Morrison's Bible study guide, she capitalizes nouns and pronouns referring to the Bible the way some capitalize personal pronouns referring to God: "It's not only important to study God's Word and to know what It says, but it is equally important for each of us to respond in

practical ways to the truths of the Bible.”¹ When George Morrison preached against the evils of moral relativism, he said, “That’s a deception of the last days. Listen, there’s only one truth, and it’s found in this book,” holding his Bible high.² Not only is all truth in the Bible, whatever is not in the Bible is not truth. According to one staff member, “The Word of God is truth. If you can find it in the Word, it’s truth. You can’t find it, it’s not true.”³ In fact, the reader of the Bible can transcend human epistemological limitation. “We are so limited in our own understanding and there is limited knowledge available to us in the world in which we live,” lamented Pastor George. “However, knowledge is unlimited when we tap into the Word of God.”⁴ The phrase “Word of God” is used very literally. In sermons, Pastor George often describes a biblical text with phrases such as, “God says in this verse,” or “God wrote in this chapter . . .” These are not mere slips of impromptu speech; the sentiment is echoed in a popular book amongst FBC members, in which the author writes, “The Bible is not shy about describing itself as a supernatural book, written by an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-powerful God who chooses to give his people advance warning of future events he deems of utmost importance.”⁵

The members of FBC do not recognize that they have a specific way of interpreting the Bible, that their interpretive framework arises from a specific theological tradition, or that it could not be self-evident to anyone who truly believes in the authority of the Bible. Many members describe their journey toward Christian Zionism as a simple matter of having finally truly read and taken seriously what the Bible self-evidently says. When asked about central influences and guiding texts, they are perplexed, and will/can not name teachers or texts which had convinced them of the Christian Zionist position other than the Bible. A question asked at the end of every interview, “What is the one message you would most like to communicate to all

¹ Cheryl Morrison, *God’s Heart for His People*, 6.

² George Morrison, “The ‘Do Nots’ of the Last Days.”

³ Interview by author, 23 May 2007, Arvada.

⁴ George Morrison, *Israel in the Balance*.

⁵ Rosenberg, 47.

Christians about Israel?,” was overwhelmingly met with answers such as, “Read your Bible,” “It’s all right there in the Bible,” “Christian Zionism is biblically right,” “Believe the Bible. God said it. Believe it.” One member said it was simple to explain Christian Zionism to anyone who takes the Bible seriously. “It’s easy. I’d say, you know, how can you read Genesis 12.3, or the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, or Jeremiah 31.35, how can you look at that, if you’re a student of the Bible, and not realize how important the nation of Israel and the Jewish people was, is, and will be to the creator of the universe? I mean, how can you overlook that? If you really want to know what God’s heart is,” he said, pounding his fist on the Bible he held through much of the interview, “it’s all laid out right there for you in his word.”⁶

As discussed above,⁷ dispensationalist theology regarding Israel arose largely from Darby’s efforts to preserve both inerrancy and rationalism. In the context of his theological conservatism and the philosophical trends of the nineteenth century, he felt obligated to affirm both that the Bible is the word of God without error (which meant that there could be no contradiction or lack of harmony between authors or passages), and that the meaning of the Bible is straightforwardly discernable by the rational human (which meant that there was no space for mystery or passages which were not readily intelligible). His solution was that every passage is literally true and applicable to the human condition, and any sense of contradiction, inscrutability, or inapplicability arises only from the reader’s failure to read the passage within the correct dispensation and/or for the correct audience. Once one knows the dispensations and the clear biblical delineations between Jews, Gentiles, and the church, no part of the biblical witness will be unintelligible.

Approaches to biblical interpretation which arose out of nineteenth-century rationalism uniquely unfit their adherents for self-criticism; the belief that the Bible’s meaning is singular and straightforwardly discernable bears fruit in subsequent generations of biblical interpreters who have no awareness of the interpretive process. This dynamic, coupled with the deeply ahistorical self-understanding of the members of FBC, both in relation to their personal, individual faith and their existence and

⁶ Interview by author, 16 May 2007, Arvada.

⁷ See page 18, above.

formation as a congregation, results in a certitude about reading the Bible and knowing the will of God which is virtually impervious to criticism. There is no possible reason why one should reexamine one's own readings, and any challengers can simply be dismissed as not truly believing and revering the Bible as they should. Thus it could be said that biblicism and biblical literalism are among the central practices which discipline the Christian Zionist theopolitical imagination.

The formation of properly Christian social ethics involves the interdependent interrelation of several foci: theological, biblical, philosophical, historical, and sociological. Among the central doctrines of the theological foci are Christology and ecclesiology. In order to answer questions about who we are as humans and Christians, how we ought to live and relate to one another within and without the circle of Christian confession, and what constitutes human flourishing, the Christian ethicist must also seek answers to questions of the person, life, and mission of Jesus Christ, as well as answers to questions of the intended character, purpose, and mission of the church. Among the central texts of the biblical foci are the gospel accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus and the New Testament authors' theological employment of these narratives, as well as the complex prophetic literature with its grappling to measure political realities and the believing community against God's intentions, and the mysterious apocalyptic texts which disorient and reorient the believing community in the face of social and political turmoil.

FBC's theological and hermeneutical inheritances from traditional dispensationalism have uniquely unfitted their members for the constructive employment of these particular theological doctrines and biblical texts. The significance of Jesus Christ for the current age is reduced and limited to atonement, and his social significance is relegated to a future age and is characterized by violent destruction, domination, and irresistible global control; the only social guidance available is his certain future affirmation and employment of nationalistic militarism. The church is understood as primarily relating to the first-advent, atoning Jesus, and thus her mission is chiefly focused on the conversion of individuals and the communal maintenance of that conversion. God's ultimate intentions for human society will be fulfilled in the future through Israel, so the social energies of the church today should be focused on cooperating with God in preparation for the inevitable end-times events which will emanate from the Middle East. The prophetic and apocalyptic texts of the

Bible are taken as predictors of these events, thus their only social guidance is in the reckoning of and preparation for the end times which are so evidently imminent. In light of these dispensationalist legacies, practices such as sending teenagers to provide entertainment for and concurrently pronounce God's pleasure with and blessing over a military which conscripts every teenager from its own nation and is often consumed with the task of defending lands which most of the world believes are held illegally – practices which are virtually unimaginable within other theological and ecclesial contexts – are not only perfectly reasonable, they are reasonably held to be immanently faithful, admirable, and worthy of great cost and risk.

Most outsiders to this complex system, and many of its casual and even not-so-casual observers, easily assume that the reason such extraordinary practices are conscionable among Christian Zionists is that they believe they are hastening Jesus' return. Caricatures arise of blood-thirsty fundamentalists who eagerly await the horrific events they believe will accompany the end of this age, and who support the state of Israel so that these events will come to pass sooner than they would without Christian Zionist assistance. If such Christian Zionists do exist, they were not to be found at FBC. The driving force behind FBC's Zionism is not a fanatical thirst for apocalyptic bloodshed, but an utter certitude that they are cooperating with God in the fruition of God's intentions for humanity and human history. As Pastor George stated in his sermon on Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, "God called Ezekiel into partnership to prophesy to the bones. God wants us to cooperate with his purposes. That's what we're doing with Israel Awareness Day. We're cooperating with God and we're speaking life into this situation."

The concept of cooperating with God's purposes and participating in the central means of God's action in the world pervades not only their work on Israel Awareness Day, but all their Zionist activism. In the case of the International Singers and Dancers, FBC believes that the Israeli military is acting in accordance with God's will – even more than that, they are the foretaste and herald of the ultimate military victory of all time, when Jesus returns to vanquish Israel's enemies and bring Israel into her rightful place at the center of human history, politics, religion, and culture. They do not believe their support of Israel will persuade Jesus to return any sooner, or make him any more successful when he arrives. They simply believe they are cooperating with and participating in the victory which they believe is sure. Similarly,

in the case of FBC's support of the West Bank settlement of Ariel, they are acting on their conviction that Israeli settlers are pioneers on the frontiers of prophetic fulfillment. Contributions to the settlement through prayer, financial support, relationship building and political lobbying are enactments of FBC's belief that no matter what the world says, no matter what Europe or the United Nations does, no matter what America wants – and most radically, no matter what the Israeli government or populous wants – God will fulfill the promise to Abraham of a nation of his descendants inhabiting a particular parcel of land. Objections to the settlements and the occupation may be raised by Arabs, Europeans, Americans, or even Israelis, but the objections are irrelevant to the members of FBC who believe they are cooperating with God by acting on behalf of those who are living proleptically in the light of the future which God is sure to bring about.

What is revealed in this conception of cooperation with God is that although FBC's eschatology and social ethics are thoroughly misguided, their understanding of the relationship between eschatology and social ethics, and their sheer will to enact the implications of that relationship, is nevertheless persuasive, perhaps even convicting. The problem with the relationship between eschatology and social ethics in Christian Zionism, or at least this particular instantiation of Christian Zionism, is not that there is such a relationship, nor even that the nature of the relationship is conceived of incorrectly. That is, the problem is not that their social action is informed by their eschatology, nor is it that they have misunderstood what the relationship should be between social ethics and eschatology. The members of FBC have rightly discerned that eschatology is not only a chronology of end times events, but is also a doctrine of God's intentions for humanity and all creation, and of the status of those intentions in the time between the two advents of Jesus Christ. They have unwittingly displayed that among the several tasks of Christian ethics are these: the discernment of God's ultimate intentions for creation, of God's ways of enacting these intentions in the world, and of how the church cooperates with God through participation in those purposes and those ways.

However, this process of discernment has been drastically misdirected among Christian Zionists through their particular use of apocalyptic. Though their goal is not to bring about the cataclysm of the tribulation and Armageddon, it is nonetheless true that in some ways the cataclysmic nature of their interpretation of apocalyptic has

come to provide a certain sort of ethical normativity. In the following section I will explore the possibility of the alternative employment of apocalyptic which can more constructively guide the process of discerning the eschatological purposes of God, the ways in which God enacts those purposes, and how the church may participate in God's ways through cooperation with God's purposes.

Toward Non-Dispensationalist Ecclesial Enactments of Apocalyptic Theopolitics

When a religious community which is considered radical, extremist and/or heterodox by many is engaged and considered with the depth and care of attention which this thesis has sought to demonstrate, there are several important outcomes. First, attention to an actual community in all its complexity challenges easy assumptions about people with whom there is disagreement. Descriptions of FBC have been offered here, especially in Chapter Three, without extensive commentary, and especially without either the journalistic drama or evangelistic critical fervor with which most non-proponents of Christian Zionism write about such communities and activities. The attempted evenness of tone in such description is obviously not an indication that either the author or the reader has, should, or even can approach such a community objectively, without making critical judgments. Instead, the tone functions to draw the reader into the experience of the depth of engagement with the congregation. In actual interactions with the community, there are long spans of time during which one seems to be encountering entirely average, middle class Americans in an entirely mainstream evangelical mega-church. There are moments of sympathy and appreciation; moments of friendship and warmth. And there are moments of utter revulsion, shock, and dismay at certain beliefs, comments, and practices. This is the ambivalent reality of the human condition. The theological ethicist must take this reality seriously and neither overstate the negative aspects of communities which are deemed misguided in theology and ethics, nor understate the negative aspects of communities which are deemed exemplary.

Second, attention to the complex admixture of faithful and flawed convictions and practices in other individuals and communities can draw attention to one's own unexamined assumptions, beliefs, and practices. This dynamic takes on a unique and

important function when such research is done by a theologian for theological purposes, namely that God is a recognized actor in the analytical process. The theologian encounters the community not as subjects pinned under a microscope, but as persons held before God. When persons are held before God that we might understand them better, their peculiarities for good or ill become prisms through which God's light allows us to see ourselves and our own peculiarities anew.

Following from these two outcomes is the further benefit of being better equipped to propose constructive responses. Having sought to take the community seriously in all its intricacies, the critic is more likely to respond to the actual problems involved instead of arguing against one's own assumptions. And having had one's own assumptions and convictions interrogated in the process, the theologian is prepared to respond through constructing positive alternatives which apply to the theologian's own community, instead of simply and presumptuously offering remedies for the community in question. Thus the constructive proposal offered below is not a remedy to cure what ails FBC, as perceived by a critic of Christian Zionism. Instead, I will offer some constructive reflections arising from one of the theological issues raised in the previous pages.

Critics of Christian Zionism who offer remedy-like responses have addressed several issues arising from their own analyses. Many discuss biblical hermeneutics or biblical content, and seek to convince readers that Christian Zionists read the Bible incorrectly or that even taken literally the Bible does not support Christian Zionism. Some are more concerned with educating readers about the history and contemporary realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the conviction that if Christians know exactly what has happened and is happening in the Middle East, they will not be persuaded by Christian Zionism. Other approaches focus on peace and justice issues and/or liberation, seeking to convince readers that the God of the Bible is deeply concerned with these and that Christian Zionism perpetuates violence, injustice, and oppression. Still others seek to undo the Christian Zionist system by critiquing its theological interpretation of Israel; these sources unfortunately often simply advocate supersessionism and argue that the church is today's Israel.

All these approaches address vital issues. If a constructive theological response of the sort attempted here sought to be comprehensive, it would likewise involve work on biblical hermeneutics and on the ethics of the conflict in Israel/Palestine, including

peace and justice issues. It would need to explore well-developed theological alternatives to both Christian Zionism and supersessionism in regard to the meaning of Israel, both as a people and as a modern nation-state.⁸ Closely related is the issue of land, and a comprehensive constructive response would explore theologies of land in general and the Holy Land in particular. However, all these incredibly dense issues cannot adequately be addressed within the scope of the current project. I have chosen instead to focus on a further issue, one not often addressed by Christian critics of Christian Zionism: the functions and uses of apocalyptic.

Perhaps one useful place to begin a discussion about apocalyptic and ethics is to return briefly to the work of John Howard Yoder. In one particular essay, Yoder offered something like criteria for appropriate employment of apocalyptic. When Yoder was assigned the topic “Armaments and Eschatology” for the 1987 gathering of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics, he made a presentation on the use of apocalyptic discourse in the arms race of the 1980s. He demonstrated the apocalyptic dimension of the arms race debate, “the claim that we have entered a brand new age, where the old continuities and criteria no longer count,”⁹ and the dynamic of the nuclear threat being considered so dire as to legitimate ethical discourse “off the scale of the more careful forms” otherwise practiced.¹⁰

⁸ Unfortunately, Yoder’s work will be of little assistance in this regard. In several essays which were posthumously collected under the title *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, Yoder made a commendable attempt to address the historic division between Judaism and Christianity, arguing that the schism was not inevitable, that Jesus did not abandon Judaism, and that Judaism did not reject Jesus. Unfortunately, however, I must agree with the critique of these essays offered in the after word by Michael Cartwright, which argues that Yoder unintentionally affirmed a soft supersessionism. While Yoder aimed to foster Jewish-Christian dialogue, he mistakenly constructed a “faithful” form of Judaism which bears striking resemblance to his view of faithful Christianity: it is voluntary, non-sacerdotal, trans-national, pacifist, and evangelistic. Though these essays certainly display a sincere attempt to engage the Jewish tradition and encourage dialogue, they also display a seeming inability in Yoder to step outside of his critique of Constantinianism in order to engage in the conversation in more constructive terms. See Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁹ Yoder, “Armaments and Eschatology,” 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

Yoder accurately diagnosed that apocalyptic rhetoric often functions to legitimate ethical moves in light of the coming apocalypse which would otherwise be recognized as illegitimate in light of careful ethical discourse. It is certainly difficult to imagine a non-apocalyptic, coherent Christian ethics which could legitimate the sort of unqualified and unrestrained nationalism and militarism which is inherent in contemporary Christian Zionism. In the cold war arms race which Yoder was addressing, as well as the more recent uses of apocalyptic rhetoric in relation to the environmental crisis, some may call for extraordinary ethical measures because of the extraordinary nature of the looming danger. However, this is a very different dynamic from the function of apocalyptic in Christian Zionism. It is not merely that the coming tribulation and apocalypse looms as a disaster in light of which we must take extraordinary measures; because it is God who will cause the tribulation to occur and Jesus Christ who will enter into the violent melee of the apocalypse, the very character of the apocalypse itself becomes ethically normative. Unrestrained violence, unqualified nationalism, and ungoverned militarism become worthy of veneration and are recognized as legitimate means to desired ends. One need not be Yoderian or otherwise pacifist to recognize the highly problematic nature of this function of apocalyptic in Christian Zionism.

While Yoder was critical of the function of apocalyptic rhetoric in the arms race, his contention was that its illegitimacy was not due to the illegitimacy of apocalyptic discourse per se. In fact, Yoder criticized then recent biblical scholarship and its use by theologians which suggested that seemingly foreign and difficult apocalyptic materials (defined here as texts treating the end of history) should be disregarded in favor of more easily generalized and applied eschatology (defined here as the treatment of God's action in human history). Yoder contended that the setting aside of apocalyptic in favor of an "immanentized hope in Christendom has robbed us of the capacity to discern bad news or to bring good," and that a recovery of valid forms and uses of apocalyptic was needed.¹¹ Such a retrieval, Yoder suggested, may necessitate criteria for the purpose of distinguishing between valid and less valid forms of apocalyptic: "What might it then be about the visions of history which made

¹¹ Ibid., 49.

sense for the early witnesses, which we might with proper care appropriate?”¹²

Yoder went on to describe how apocalyptic “deconstructs” four facets of the way things seem to be: Caesar seems to be the one moving history, Christian moral rules seem to need adjustment to suit the profession of Caesar, cause-and-effect/lesser-of-two-evils judgments seem reliable, and Christian ethics seems readily and unproblematically translatable into morality for everyone. Yoder seemed to imply that these were his criteria for valid apocalyptic; valid apocalyptic deconstructs these four assumptions. However, the list of four assumptions clearly functions more to continue Yoder’s argument against Constantinianism than as constructive work on apocalyptic. However, from the few brief paragraphs in which Yoder described what he meant by deconstruction, a different set of criteria may be retrieved. In this description of deconstruction we find a three-fold movement of apocalyptic in the believing community. Perhaps it is in these three movements, rather than in the list of four assumptions Yoder offered, that more constructive criteria for assessing forms of apocalyptic are found:

The first movement is ‘deconstruction’. Yoder cited ethicist Larry Rasmussen who has suggested that apocalyptic is a vehicle for the believing community to “‘deconstruct’ the self-evident picture of how things are which those in power use to explain that they cannot but stay that way.”¹³ Valid use of apocalyptic does not affirm the status quo, rather it questions standard accounts and opens the possibility of seeing reality differently. The reader or audience of authentic apocalyptic discourse becomes aware that social and political realities are not as they seem.

The second movement is proclamation. Yoder built on Rasmussen’s point about apocalyptic with his own: the sorts of suffering, minority communities from which biblical apocalyptic arose need “first of all to know not what they would do if they were rulers, nor how to seize power, but that the present power constellation which oppresses them is not the last word.”¹⁴ Apocalyptic is a vehicle through which the people of God make and receive the proclamation of the reality that God is in

¹² Ibid., 51.

¹³ Ibid., 53.

¹⁴ Ibid.

control, not those who seek to control others through oppression and violence.

The final movement is empowerment of the believing community to speak truth to power. Yoder's presentation visited, as had so many of his writings on eschatology, the first vision of John in Revelation, calling the hymnody reflected there "performative proclamation" which "redefines the cosmos in a way prerequisite to the moral independence which it takes to speak truth to power."¹⁵ Valid apocalyptic proclaims a different reality, not only for the sake of encouraging beleaguered believers by assuring them that oppressive power is not the final word, but in order that the revealed reality might be extended through empowerment of the people of God to speak truth to oppressive power.

These three movements of apocalyptic in the believing community which have been extracted from Yoder's essay are a potential starting point for constructive work on apocalyptic social ethics. The first movement, deconstruction of apparent social and political realities, is of course closely related to meanings of the Greek word, *apokalypsis*, which have been lost in contemporary English uses of 'apocalypse,' specifically, the senses of unveiling, revelation, and disclosure. The reader of an apocalypse is understood to have been exposed to a vision of realities behind and beyond the prevailing explanations of oppressive contemporary social and political situations. Explanations provided by those who are in power, explanations which serve to legitimate their positions of power and their right to exercise that power through oppression and violence, are revealed as flimsy attempts to usurp the authority which belongs to God alone. Their claims to ultimacy collapse before visions of God's power, grandeur, worthiness, and utter difference from humanity.

Perhaps, then, one of the central variables which tilts uses of apocalyptic in contemporary social ethics toward or away from faithfulness and validity is whether the determinative apocalypse is one of unveiling or one of cataclysm. Further, the act of unveiling must involve not only Yoder's deconstructive move, but a corresponding theologically constructive move. Apocalypses are not only revelations of the unreality of the contemporary status quo, but of the reality of God drawing up humanity and all creation into God's life, and the reality of the ultimate healing and glorification of

¹⁵ Ibid.

creation. While Ezekiel's visions¹⁶ are filled with swords, armies, blood, and judgment, they are also rich with images of blessing and renewal, and of God as good shepherd, gathering and caring for the flock. While Revelation is rife with beasts, plagues, wrath, and doom, it is also marked by festal celebration, beauty, and the glorious renewal of heaven and earth. Because dispensationalism disallows any relevance for these positive visions in the current age, ethical normativity cannot be located in peace, reconciliation, and renewal. Apocalyptic has become detrimental in Zionist social ethics because apocalypse is limited to cataclysm, and aspects of the cataclysm itself have become ethically normative.

However, apocalyptic can positively shape Christian social ethics when apocalypse is reclaimed as an unveiling of ultimate reality which involves both the deconstruction of contemporary power struggles as well as the construction of a vision of a positive future of the healing of society and all creation. The second and third movements of valid apocalyptic, proclamation and empowerment, must also take on this two-fold character of both deconstruction and reconstruction. Through valid apocalyptic, the believing community makes and receives proclamations not only that oppressive power structures are not the final word, but also that the God who is in control of human history ultimately seeks reconciliation among people, healing of societies, and flourishing of all creation. And the truth which valid apocalypse commissions the believing community to speak to those in power involves not only a reminder that the powerful are mortal and their power is temporary, but also that while they are in power they are expected to work with and not against, as Yoder would say, "the grain of the universe."

We may learn from the Christian Zionists at FBC not only how not to make apocalypse-as-cataclysm an ethical guide; they have positive lessons to teach us as well. Though they may not articulate it thus, their apocalyptic eschatology is related to their social ethics through an entirely persuasive series of convictions: that apocalyptic

¹⁶ The book of Ezekiel is not technically considered an apocalypse, but is recognized as a precursor to the apocalyptic genre and shares many of its features. In Christian Zionism, material from Ezekiel is necessary in conjunction with other prophetic and apocalyptic texts in the construction of predictions of the cataclysm of the great tribulation.

points us toward God's ultimate intentions for human society, that a central task of eschatology is to discern God's ways of enacting these intentions within history, and that the church is meant to cooperate with God through participation in those intentions and those ways. At FBC, fundamentalist biblical literalism, dispensationalist temporality, and Zionist focus on the geo-political space of Israel, have converged in a theopolitical imagination in which apocalypse-as-cataclysm radically distorts their vision of God's eschatological intentions, the status of those intentions between the two advents of Jesus Christ, and therefore the ways in which the church is called to cooperate with God.

If apocalyptic is reclaimed as unveiling instead of cataclysm, and if it informs social ethics in keeping with the criteria developed above, an entirely different sort of apocalyptic theopolitics arises. Eschatological visions of the peace, health, and social stability God desires for all creation become the intentions with which the church seeks to cooperate. God's ways of enacting those purposes have thus far in history been revealed most clearly through the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it is in the ways of Jesus that the church most faithfully cooperates with God. The status of those intentions between Jesus' two advents have been entrusted most explicitly to the church, and it is through the church, her internal life and external mission, that Christians are called to cooperate with God in the ultimate intentions for creation which are being worked out through the way of Jesus Christ. In these ways, apocalyptic eschatology comes to constructively shape Christian social ethics, opening possibilities for an entirely different sort of apocalyptic theopolitics.

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