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The History of a Metaphor: Christian Zionism and the Politics of Apocalypse

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## THE HISTORY OF A METAPHOR : CHRISTIAN ZIONISM AND THE POLITICS OF APOCALYPSE (\*)

*Le sionisme chrétien, c'est-à-dire la pensée selon laquelle la restauration des Juifs doit s'accomplir afin que soient réalisées les prophéties chrétiennes, constitue un des éléments de l'apocalyptique chrétienne. Jérusalem ou Sion, ou la Nouvelle Sion, est aussi une métaphore de l'avènement du Royaume de Paix au retour du Christ.*

*L'article reprend cette histoire du sionisme chrétien en y distinguant trois actes: puritains et Israélites; évangéliques du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle et Juifs; évangéliques américains et Israël. Il montre comment la métaphore sioniste s'articule aux modèles hégémoniques dominants dans chacun des contextes et comment une utopie progressiste se transforme en une pensée conservatrice. Ce développement est repris en final aux fins d'élaboration d'un cadre d'analyse contextuelle du discours sioniste chrétien.*

I give you the end of a golden string:  
Only wind it into a ball. –  
It will lead you in a Heaven's gate,  
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

William Blake, "Jerusalem", 1804

To stand against Israel is to stand against God.

Rev Jerry Falwell, *Listen America*, 1980

In the 1970s and 80s, after prolonged slumber, the themes of Christian Zionism turned up on the frontpages. The fundamentalist preacher Jerry Falwell pointed out that "God deals with nations in relation to how nations deal with Israel". One of the foundations of this belief was a passage in Genesis (12:13), "I will bless those that bless you and curse those that curse you". The Pentecostalist preacher Jimmy Swaggart concurred:

I feel that America is tied with the spiritual umbilical cord to Israel. The ties go back to long before the founding of the United States of America. The Judeo-Christian concept goes all the way back to Abraham and God's promise to Abraham which I believe also included America (1).

When it came to Israel Pentecostals and fundamentalists were in complete agreement. These statements were made in the context of a powerful strategic relationship between the United States and Israel, a relationship which carried global ramifications. Moreover, the auspicious backdrop of these utterances was Israel's 1982 invasion in Lebanon and the bloodletting and devastation involved in that war. More than any time in recent history this period saw a frightening conjunction of apocalyptic beliefs and power politics. The president of the United States, the world's leading nuclear power, confiding his belief in the "Armageddon" scenario was part of this conjunction.

Since August 1990 the theme of Armageddon has come back into popular attention, at least in the United States, in the trail of the Gulf crisis. "At bookstores across the United States, sales of Bibles, prophecy books and books warning of Armageddon have soared since August 2, when Iraq invaded Kuwait" (2). The theses of Christian Zionism are reiterated along with the notion of the "final battle" to take place at the valley of Meggido in northern Israel. Several new books are being published on the theme of Armageddon, also in anticipation of the turn of the millenium (3).

This essay takes some steps back from these episodes to take a broader view of Christian Zionism. Christian Zionism is an aspect of the wider phenomenon of apocalyptic Christianity; in apocalyptic Christianity the restoration and conversion of the Jews have often been regarded as signs of the endtime and of the return of Christ being imminent. The endtime or apocalypse, ushers in the millenium, the thousand-year reign of Christ returned to establish a kingdom of peace, the fulfilment of Christian aspirations, and so apocalyptic Christianity is synonymous with millennial Christianity. The central metaphor for the millenium and the attainment of Christian aspirations is Jerusalem, Zion, or the New Zion.

Christian Zionism proper, of course, develops only after the development of modern political Jewish Zionism in the late-XIXth century. Yet, the notion of the "restoration" of the Jews to Palestine as a political project was first advanced by Christians. This notion has a long and involved history. Its development may be viewed as a drama in three acts, involving (1) the relations between Puritans and "Israelites" in the XVIIth century, (2) between the XIXth-century Evangelicals and Jews, and (3) between American evangelicals and Israel in the XXth century.

Each of these episodes saw different negotiations of the apocalypse and different readings of the metaphor of Zion. The line of inquiry which occupies us here is, how does the Christian apocalyptic relate to the politics of hegemony? What correlations exist between religious attitudes and patterns of hegemony?

In his study of Seventh-Day Adventists, Jonathan Butler distinguished between three different responses among evangelical millennialists (4). One attitude is the *apolitical apocalyptic*, when people are "dead to the world" and choose to ignore all political questions and involvements. A more common response, among American millennialists, is the *political apocalyptic*, characterized as follows by Timothy Weber:

Many premillennialists adopt the rhetoric of political discontent to substantiate their conviction that the world is getting worse, that political institutions are falling apart, and that everything is sliding toward destruction. ... Instead of fleeing from the world like the practitioners of the old apolitical apocalyptic, they keep one

foot within it so that they can prove to themselves and the sceptics around them that everything really is as bad as they say it is. Their actual political involvement, however, is rather peripheral and insignificant (5).

A third type of response Butler terms *political prophetic*. This is when millennialists actually do become politically involved and active; Christian Zionism, by its character, belongs to the latter categories.

Two questions will occupy us in the present context: Under what conditions does the apocalyptic turn political? And, under what circumstances does Christian millennialism become an expression of social and political criticism, as among XVIIth-century Puritans, and when does it become a rhetoric of domination, as among contemporary evangelicals? Phrased otherwise, how is it that the prophecy of a kingdom of peace can turn into a rhetoric of conquest and domination, a device of expansionist war mongering? When is Christian utopianism emancipatory and when does it become a discourse of domination?

How does a utopia become conservative? Karl Mannheim examined this kind of problem in his work on *Ideology and Utopia*, in which he discussed different forms of the “utopian mentality” – the chiliasm of the Anabaptists, the liberal humanitarian, the conservative and the socialist-communist (6).

The objective of this essay is to formulate a conceptual framework for the analysis of religious metaphor, specifically Christian millennialism and the Christian discourse of Zion. Much of the history of Christian Zionism is told in readily available sources (7), so I can restrict myself to a brief account, expanding on the elements which are important to the present problematic, going into specifics to highlight the dynamics of this religious discourse.

### *Prologue: Politics of Apocalypse*

Christian Zionism is a specific expression of the Christian apocalyptic and should be dealt with as part of that tradition. It belongs to an extended chain reaction, of which the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Jewish emancipation, XIXth-century evangelicalism and imperialism, and XXth-century evangelicalism and United States hegemony rank among the significant moments.

As Ernst Käsemann put it in an often-quoted phrase, “Apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology (9). The belief in the resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ is fundamental to Christianity. But from the start it has been subject to a variety of interpretations and thus it has given rise to different forms of apocalypticism.

Christianity, like all messianic religions, also Judaism, inspires a forward-looking, linear view of history. A view of history as a salvific process, a process of transition from bondage to freedom. *How* this transition is to take place – gradually or suddenly, by divine intervention, the intercession of the church or human development – is itself a central question to the Christian negotiation of time and history. To the extent that subsequent views on progress and evolution are secular versions of this underlying sense of history, this basic scenario, (9) this question is echoed in the context of different discourses, for instance, in the argument for evolution or revolution. The latter represents, so to speak, a secular apocalyptic.

An early expression of Christian millennialism was the movement known as Montanism in the second century AD, described as follows in Norman Cohn's classic study of Christian millennialism, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*.

In A.D. 156 it happened in Phrygia that a certain Montanus declared himself to be the incarnation of the Holy Ghost, that "Spirit of Truth" who according to the Fourth Gospel was to reveal things to come. There soon gathered round him a number of ecstasies, much given to visionary experiences which they confidently believed to be of divine origin... The theme of their illuminations was the imminent coming of the Kingdom: the New Jerusalem was about to descend from the heavens on the Phrygian soil, where it would become the habitation of the Saints. The Montanists accordingly summoned all Christians to Phrygia, there to await the Second Coming, in fasting and prayer and bitter repentance (10).

Millennialism was well entrenched in early Christianity – in accordance with the Book of Revelation where the day of judgment and the return of Christ were expected to happen "shortly". Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in the second century and a leading theologian, included millennial views as part of Christian orthodoxy in his treatise *Against Heresies*. He was in good company, of Tertullian and many others. A radical change of views began to take shape in the third century when Origen, probably the most influential among the early theologians, attempted to discredit millennialism. Origen, as Cohn observes,

began to present the Kingdom as an event which would take place not in space or time but only in the souls of believers. For a collective, millenarian eschatology Origen substituted an eschatology of the individual soul.

When in the fourth century Christianity attained a position of supremacy in the Mediterranean world and became the official religion of the Empire, ecclesiastical disapproval of millenarianism became emphatic (11).

This was taken further in Augustine's work the *City of God*, or what the Church made of it. Writing in the Vth century Augustine identifies the City of God with the "People of God" from Adam to the birth of Christ and, in at least one place, with the Church: "The City of God, that is, God's Church" (12). This thesis that the Church already embodied the millennium, remained Church orthodoxy until the XVIth century.

Irenaeus' treatise was henceforth censored by the Church to delete the sections which approved of millennialism; so effectively that they were not recovered until 1575. But, as Cohn notes, this only meant that millennialism, while expurgated from Church doctrine, lived on in the underworld of popular religion.

Thus, some of the dynamics of the politics of apocalypse are apparent already at this early stage: the apocalyptic may be part of orthodoxy until orthodoxy has "gained the world"; the apocalyptic is subversive of authority unless authority is subversive of prevailing hegemony; the apocalyptic is subversive yet may also be harnessed by authority. When religion was politics theology was a political science.

The Church performed a balancing act between, on the one hand, millennial sects which were a voice of social protest and gave a worldly meaning to the promise of redemption, and on the other, mystical views which so interiorized the quest for redemption that the role of the Church was minimized as well.

Yet, on certain occasions also the Church partook of, or harnessed the millennial fervour. The “holy war” of the Crusades is such an instance. A great many pilgrimages were made in the year 1033, the millenium of Christ’s passion. This and the “apocalyptic atmosphere” of the XIth century formed part of the backdrop of the First Crusade. Besides, the Crusades carried a different meaning for the Church hierarchy and the knights than for the common people, the *pauperes* who took part, driven by the bad harvests before 1096 and by the *prophetae* who preached the Crusades. To them the Crusade meant a militant mass pilgrimage, a collective *imitatio Christi*, and some believed that the words of Psalm 147 referred to them: “The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel” (13).

The importance of Jerusalem as the Holy City had declined after AD 590 when the papal throne became the seat of Christian authority. Rome took precedence and the Bishop of Jerusalem, although recognized as the ecclesiastical successor of St James, the brother of Jesus, only ranked fifth in the rearrangement of the Catholic hierarchy. Still Palestine as the Holy Land continued to hold an important place in the spiritual geography of medieval Christians as a site of pilgrimage.

When Christian pilgrimages were blocked after the Turkish Muslim conquest of Palestine, Jerusalem again became the centre of Christian concerns. What was at stake was not merely the earthly Jerusalem but the heavenly city of Jerusalem as described in Revelation (21:10f) and Tobias (13:21f). It was the centre of the world, placed, in the words of Ezekiel (5:5), “in the midst of the nations and countries”. As such we find it on numerous late-medieval world maps (14).

The Jerusalem of the Crusaders was not regarded as “Jehovah’s house”. Quite the contrary, it was from the Crusaders that the first cries of Jewish pogroms were heard. The cry was “hep, hep!” (*Hierosolayme est perdita*), the signal for pogroms from the Crusades to Hitler. Christianity at this stage was a much anti-Jewish as it was anti-Muslim.

It is significant for understanding the historical affinities between Christendom and western imperialism that Jerusalem was the aim of the first European movement of expansion outside of Europe and the first European colony overseas: the Kingdom of Jerusalem. This is overlooked in all the histories of European imperialism which erroneously begin the era of European expansion in the XVth and XVIth centuries (15). It is telling also that it was named the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and not the Kingdom of Israel, or Palestine.

Likewise it is significant that America, the “New World” “discovered” in the era of European Reconnaissance, has been viewed and described in analogy to the Holy land. It became the site of New Spain, New England, New Amsterdam, New France, but, above all, it has been regarded as the New Zion, the New Jerusalem – the fulfillment of millennial hopes and dreams. Joachim of Fiore in the XIIth century had prophesied a Third Age of the world in which all men would live in voluntary poverty, in joy, love and freedom, without pope or emperor. Columbus on his way to Cathay and the Indies also thought of himself as a Joachite messiah, ushering in the Third Age “of the spirit” (16).



Through the late-middle ages popular movements had kept the millennial creed. It revived among the Flaggelants, Waldenses and Albigenses, Lollards and Taborites. Frederick Engels recognized them as precursors of socialism; he also remarked on the similarities between early Christianity and the workers' movement. But his concern was to establish not the continuity but the difference between utopian and scientific socialism, between millennial and post-Enlightenment efforts to change society. The risings of oppressed peasants and the urban poor, "like all mass movements of the Middle Ages, were bound to wear the mask of religion" (17).

The Anabaptists in Germany and the Low Countries engaged in revolutionary action in pursuit of the New Jerusalem, in the Peasant War in Thuringia (1525), in Strassbourg (1533) and in Munster (1534). This was the New Jerusalem of Thomas Müntzer and Jan van Leiden where peasant risings and urban anti-clerical class warfare took on a chiliastic form. Ernst Bloch, as part of his project to revive the tradition of the utopian left, devoted a study to Thomas Müntzer. In many accounts the Anabaptists figure as a classic case of chiliastic radical politics (18). Modern socialism, as Karl Mannheim notes, often dates its origin from the time of the Anabaptists (19). Here the New Jerusalem serves as a radical metaphor of the classless society, utopia on earth.

### *Act One: Puritans and Israelites*

The earliest English theologian to advocate Jewish restoration in Palestine was Reverend Thomas Brightman in 1585. While his work attracted little public attention, one of his students, Sir Henry Finch, a legal officer of the king, developed a large following. He authored a treatise called *The World's Great Restauration or Calling of the Jews and with them of all Nations and Kingdoms of the Earth to the Faith of Christ* (1621).

This thinking formed part of a much larger train of discourse. It goes back, first, to the English claim of a special place in the Catholic Church on account of the idea that Christianity was brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea. "The mainspring of the development of the Joseph legend", notes Barbara Tuchman, "lay in the ever-present British jealousy of Rome... In the person of Joseph England's desire to by-pass Rome and to trace the sources of its faith directly to the primary source in the Holy Land could be satisfied" (20). This goes some way towards explaining why it was in England that the restoration movement took shape first.

More important however is the momentum of the Reformation. In distancing themselves from Rome the Reformers moved closer to the scriptures, in particular the Old Testament, and to the people of the Old Testament, the Israelites. This proximity became a mark of purity, in contrast to the corrupted and idolatrous Church of Rome. The closer the Protestants resembled the Israelites, the closer they would approach the original faith. The fashion for Old Testament nomenclature, for infants and for places (notably in the New World), is but one sign of this outbreak of Hebraism.

Guy, Miles, Peter, and John gave way to Enoch, Amos, Obadiah, Job, Seth, and Eli. Mary and Maud and Margaret and Anne lost out to Sarah, Rebecca, Deborah, and Esther. A Chauncy family of Hertfordshire is recorded whose six chil-

dren were named Isaac, Ichabod, Sarah, Barnabas, Nathaniel, and Israel; The Bible was ransacked from beginning to end; there seems to have been a particular liking for the more obscure or outlandish examples, like Zerrubabel or Habbakuk and even Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (21).

The Hebraic model was, of course, only one of several “cultures” in circulation – Roman Catholic culture with its saints, cathedrals and icons (the City of God), which overlapped with the culture of feudalism with its knights and military ethos; the classical culture of the renaissance humanists; and Protestant culture with its scriptural emphasis and Judaizing strain. Roman Catholicism prevailed in the western Mediterranean world, Protestantism north of the Alps, while classicism with its vogue for Latin and Latinized names was an elite culture that was shared north and south.

From XVIth-century England the Restoration movement spread to other European countries and America. It flooded the Protestant world with tracts and publications, although it was not to have political effect until the XIXth century.

The profound importance of the Reformation for the development of modern politics, for nationalism and state formation, is well established. Koenigsberger referred to the religious groupings in XVIth-century Europe as the first modern parties (22). Michael Walzer discussed the state as a Christian discipline and radical politics as “the saints creation”, referring to the Puritans (23). Christopher Hill discussed the role of the Puritans in the political upheavals in XVIIth-century England, also known as the Puritan Revolution (24). Accordingly this epic is intimately interwoven with the vicissitudes of European politics. The Hebraic model also prevailed among Cromwell and the New Model Army. Cromwell and his officers

literally consulted Scripture for guidance and precedent. A council of war included prayers and Bible reading. Cromwell speaks of himself as “a man who is called to work great things in Israel”, of the Stuarts as “having troubled Israel for fifty years”, ... of England as “our British Israel” and “our English Zion” (25).

They even referred to extremists on their own side as “dissenting Rabbis”.

Thus for the Puritans Israel and Zion were radical metaphors, part of a political prophecy which they militantly implemented; Christian millennialism had come into the *mainstream* of political change. It would only be a matter of the other signs of the endtime to manifest for the millenium to take shape. One such sign was the conversion of the Jews. Accordingly this was “one of the most serious theological concerns of the XVIIth century”.

For quite a few Protestant leaders the Reformation itself indicated that the culmination of Christian history was at hand. For some Counter-Reformers the purification of the Church indicated that the final act of world history would shortly occur. Other developments such as the Thirty Years War, the Turkish invasion of central Europe, the Puritan Revolution, the preaching of the gospel in America, Asia and Africa all reinforced this expectation. And, because of this heightened feeling that the scenario set forth in *Daniel* and *Revelation* was going on before one’s very eyes, many theologians predicted that the conversion of the Jews was imminent (26).

The intensified contacts between Protestants and Jews engendered by this expectation developed in particular in XVIIth-century Holland. From 1604 Puritans had come to settle in the Dutch Republic where they encountered Sephardic Jews, refugees from Portugal and Spain. After a sojourn in Antwerp,



where the Spanish arm eventually also reached, many of them settled in Amsterdam. A new millennial project began to take shape in contacts between two religious refugee groups meeting in a nation which itself owed its existence to a religious revolt. Elements of this project, according to R.H. Popkin, were

(a) to make Christianity less offensive to Jews, (b) to make Christians understand and appreciate actual Judaism as practiced in the seventeenth century, and (c) to enable Jews to understand Judaism so that they could see that Christianity is not in conflict with Judaism, but is, rather the fulfillment of it. If these three goals could be achieved presumably the Jews would join hands with the Christians, and would march together into the Millenarian world in which the Jews (converted or properly informed) would be recalled to their place in Providential history, to their physical place in the Holy Land, which would be rebuilt and would be the center of the Messianic Kingdom (27).

Again the conversion and restoration of the Jews went together. In this respect the Reformation differed from previous attempts to convert the Jews, as in Spain and Portugal, which did *not* include a restoration programme. The Reformation and the return to the Old Testament meant that the Jewish experience again figures on the millennial map. This itself was a commitment born out of oppression and insurgence.

The Puritans' mania for the Old Testament developed directly out of their experience of persecution by the Established Church. The Church hounded and harried them, even to the gibbet, because of their refusal to acknowledge any authority other than the Bible and their own congregation (28).

Indeed the psalms and biblical places most significant in Protestant worship tend to be those of persecution and protest. In the experiences of the Jews in bondage in Egypt, exiled in Babylon, oppressed by Rome, they saw their own fate mirrored. The precedent of the *Exodus* as the metaphor for liberation, as in contemporary liberation theology, was established in the struggles of the Reformation against the Church, the Inquisition and the Spanish-Habsburg empire. As in biblical times, again Rome and the empires of the epoch were the forces of oppression. The profound identification of the Protestants with the Jews of the scriptures was an emancipatory, at times even insurgent, identification. Every reference to the Old Testament, every name, every symbol, thus stood for a consciousness of defiance – defying pope and emperor.

This was a perspective shared by the Puritans and the Dutch alike. As Simon Schama documents with a wealth of examples, comparisons with the Israelites and with the *Exodus* as the metaphor of liberation from the Spanish yoke abound in the literature of the Dutch Golden Age (29). As Jacobus Lydius wrote in 1668:

Above all else I thank him  
Who made Holland Jerusalem.

The encounters of Puritans and Jews in the Dutch Republic gave rise not only to theological interchanges but also to a concrete political programme. English Puritans in Amsterdam drew up a "Petition of the Jews for Repealing the Act of Parliament for their Banishment out of England", which was presented to the British Council of War in 1649. (The banishment referred to is the Order of expulsion of the Jews of 1292). A year later the chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Manasseh ben Israel, published his book *Spes Israel*, translated

and printed in England as *The Hope of Israel*. He advocated the extension of the Jewish diaspora to England in order to complete the world-wide dispersion that was held to be necessary before the ingathering of the exiles could begin. Was it not written in the Book of Daniel, "And when the dispersion of the Holy People shall be completed in all places, then shall all these things be finished".

Thus the Sephardic reading of the signs of the times was compatible with the millennial expectations of the Puritans. Added to this millennial convergence was a convergence of interests.

The business and commercial class, almost exclusively Puritan, was particularly jealous of the Dutch who had seized the opportunity to push into first place in the Levant and Far Eastern trades and in the carrying trade with the European colonies in the Americas as well. Dutch success was aided by Jewish merchants, shipowners and brokers of Amsterdam, who brought in business through their Hispanic and Levantine connections. Their value was not lost on Cromwell, particularly as there were several Marrano families in England who had already been of use to him (30).

Contact between the British Council of State and the Amsterdam Sephardic community was established in 1650 and in 1655 Manasseh in person led a delegation to London to present his *Humble Address to the Lord Protector*, arguing that the Jews were scattered throughout the world "except only in this considerable and mighty Island" and "that before the messiah shall come and restore our Nation, that first we must have our seat here likewise". Next he took up "profit which is a most powerful motive" and pointed out how useful the Jews could be as channels of international influence and trade.

After lengthy deliberations the legal barrier against the re-entry of the Jews into England was lifted, and thus the Jews became a factor in the Anglo-Dutch rivalry which erupted just at this junction, after the adoption of the Navigation Acts.

The Sephardim had played an important part not only in the economic expansion of the Republic but also in its political history. In the XVIth century while still in Antwerp they had served as intermediaries between the Dutch insurgents against the Spanish-Habsburg empire and the Ottoman Porte. Turkish financial and political aid had helped the insurgents led by William of Orange (31).

Now Cromwell sought their capital as well as their connections and services as "intelligencers", who would bring him information on trade policies of rival countries and on royalist conspiracies abroad (32). For the Dutch the Sephardim had performed similar functions, notably in developing trade relations with the East and West Indies (33). No doubt this had been a factor in the Dutch ability to take over the trading empire of the Portuguese. It may now be argued that a factor in the ability of the English to outpace the Republic in the course of the XVIIth century and several Anglo-Dutch wars was the allegiance of the Jews who came to settle in London after 1655.

It is at this juncture that the gradual metamorphosis takes shape of the millennial metaphore from an emancipatory utopia to a hegemonic utopia. This parallels the shift in the societal position of the bearers of the utopian message – in England, the Puritans from outsiders had become insiders, under Cromwell. An in a global context, England changed position from a nation on the periphery of the European balance of power to a place at the hub of the

newly emerging Atlantic network, an ascending nation on its way to becoming a contender for world hegemony (34).

The metaphor of Israel and the New Jerusalem does not necessarily change but the social and political location of the forces using it does, shifting from the periphery to the centre, from persecution to power. Or, it may be argued that for the radical Protestants the metaphor does undergo alterations in meaning and emphasis, from a myth of liberation to a myth of achievement. The metaphor of the reformed Christians as a spiritual "Israel" may be interpreted as a Protestant version of the Augustinian thesis of the *City of God*, in a Hebraic guise. A new career of the metaphor set in. Henceforth the Protestant nations became the leading powers in the development of empire and capital, while the Mediterranean, Catholic powers were eclipsed. This is the career taken up in Max Weber's work on the Protestant ethic and modern capitalism.

Let us linger for a moment with the fate of the metaphor in the XVIIIth century. It does not play a part in the French Revolution, which shies away from things Jewish as it does from Christian symbolism; its leading metaphors are of masonic inspiration or refer to the Roman Republic. Yet, it is General Napoleon Bonaparte who is the first statesman to advocate the restoration of the Jews. The occasion is the siege of St Joan of Acre, following his retreat from Egypt. At Ramle, 25 miles from Jerusalem, on April 4, 1799 he issued a proclamation addressed to the Jews, "the Rightful Heirs of Palestine":

Israelites, arise! ye exiled, arise! Hasten! Now is the moment, which may not return for thousands of years, to claim the restoration of civic rights among the population of the universe which have shamefully been withheld from you for thousands of years, to claim your political existence as a nation among nations, and the unlimited natural right to worship Jehovah in accordance with your faith, publicly and most probably forever (35).

Bonaparte called on the Jews to join his banner and offered them the "warranty and support" of the French nation to regain their patrimony and "to remain master of it and maintain it against all comers". He did not have the opportunity to keep his promises because he was defeated at Acre by the English and by the Ottoman Pasha of Acre. Nonetheless, as Bichara Khader notes, it was a "strategic" promise by means of which Bonaparte sought to obtain the support of the Jews in the ongoing battle – not least from Haïm Farhi, the Jewish Vizir of the Ottoman Pasha of Acre (36).

Again the metaphor forms part of an imperial stratagem. The millennial hopes of which the restoration of the Jews is part have now begun to serve as an imperial beacon, beckoning to panoramas of power. A moral, spiritual geography now interacts with an actual, imperial geography. Napoleon built on an older French aspiration to acquire dominion over the Levant, which goes back to Louis XIV. He followed in the footsteps of Choiseul who a generation earlier had hoped to gain control of Egypt and Arabia, to win spheres of influence in Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia, and thus to wipe out the British in India. Bonaparte also saw Egypt as the vantage point from which England could be destroyed (37).

The proclamation to the Jews was forgotten and buried under the rubble of failure, but Jerusalem was not. Chateaubriand travelled there in 1806 and his *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem* became a best-seller. Jerusalem continued to figure among the central metaphors in European XVIIIth- and XIXth-century discourse, as in the work of Alexander Pope and John Milton (*Paradise*

*Regained*) (38). For William Blake Jerusalem represents the centre of the spiritual world.

England awake! Awake! Awake!  
 Jerusalem thy sister calls  
 Why wild those sleep the sleep of death  
 And close her from thy ancient walls (39).

The metaphor recurs, often in conjunction with the question of Jewish emancipation, in the work of Lessing (*Nathan der Weise*), Lord Byron, Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning. Among the Romantic poets the Jews and Palestine became a topos, just as slavery and abolition, Blacks and Africa.

### *Act Two: Evangelicals and Jews*

In 1792 James Bicheno, an Anglican cleric, published *The Signs of the Times* in which he drew parallels between the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and the events of his day. The French Revolution and the disenfranchisement of the French Catholic Church seemed to him a clear fulfillment of the “Fourth Beast” foretold in Daniel and more tribulations would surely come.

Thus we come to the next episode in the genesis of Christian Zionism, the role of the millennial metaphor among the evangelicals in XIXth-century England. The Evangelical Revival is usually dated from 1790. The importance of evangelicalism to the formation of the Victorian frame of mind is a familiar theme; evangelical principles were peculiarly suited to the exigencies of an increasingly complex industrial society (40).

Evangelicalism, often termed neo-Puritanism, brought with it a revival of Puritan themes, including the millennial metaphor and the preoccupation with Jewry. One of the early spokesmen of the metaphor was Reverend Louis Way, an Anglican clergyman who founded the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews (1809). Again the restoration of the Jews in Palestine was a requirement in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and again contemporary events were carefully charted to indicate the imminence of Jesus’ return. Several MPs and writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge were among Way’s followers. Henry Drummond MP gave a structure to reemerging British millennialism by organizing annual conferences at his estate, the Albury Conferences. The conference of 1829 issued a summary of their doctrine which constituted an elementary outline of premillennialism:

1. This “dispensation” or age will not end insensibly but cataclysmically in judgement and destruction of the church in the same manner in which the Jewish dispensation ended;
2. The Jews will be restored in Palestine during the time of the judgement;
3. The judgement to come will fall principally upon Christendom;
4. When the judgement is passed the millenium will begin;
5. The second advent of Christ will occur before the millenium;
6. The 1260 years of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 ought to be measured from the reign of Justinian to the French Revolution;
7. The vials of wrath (Revelation 16) are now being poured out and the second advent is imminent (41).

The French Revolution formed part of the apocalyptic ambience of the turn of the century, which had prompted the reopening of the books of Daniel and Revelation. In this light, neo-Puritanism in England forms part of a counter-revolutionary ramparts. The millennial metaphor, once a revolutionary metaphor for the early Puritans, had been transmuted to a counter-revolutionary bulwark with the bible serving as a solid defence against the infidel French *philosophes*.

Another current which took shape in this period was the British Israelite movement whose origins can be traced to a book by John Wilson, a Scotsman, who published *Our Israelitish Origins* in 1840. For the Puritans the identification of Albion with Zion carried a spiritual meaning, just as the identification of the Dutch Republic with Israel did for the XVIIth-century Dutch. Now however the argument was that the British peoples are the "Ten Lost Tribes" of Israel, not in a spiritual sense, as with the Puritans, but racially. This matched the trend of the times in which racism took on the status of science and "race" came to be widely regarded as the key to the understanding of history. Edward Hine's book, *Identification of the British Nation with Lost Israel* (1871), carried the argument further.

Presently the Netherlands Israel League argues that the true Israelites and therefore the true "chosen people", are the white West Europeans, Americans and South Africans (42). The Worldwide Church of God in California propagates the views of the British Israelite movement in the United States (43).

Influential as a populariser and missionary of the premillennial doctrine was John Nelson Darby (1800-82), a Scotsman who left the Church of Ireland to establish the Plymouth Brethren. He developed the doctrine of the "Rapture" (based on 1 Thessalonians 4:5-11) and his teachings carried a significant Christian Zionist component. His numerous visits to the United States and Canada accelerated the popularity of the doctrine among American evangelicals.

The step from political apocalyptic to political prophecy was a small one. It was made by Lord Ashley, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, the lay leader of the evangelical movement ("I am an Evangelical of the Evangelicals"). Lord Ashley played a key part in the social issues of the day; as a Tory social reformer he had been instrumental in bringing about the adoption of the Ten Hour Bill and he played a part in the English abolition movement, which had evangelical beginnings. But the cause he cherished most throughout his life was that of the conversion and restoration of the Jews. It was in no small way due to his incessant propagandizing and lobbying that the British consulate in Jerusalem came about in 1838 – the first consulate of a European power in Palestine – and the joint Anglo-Prussian bishopric of Jerusalem in 1841. Palmerston next instructed the consulate to extend British protection to the Jews of Palestine.

These were not merely acts of religious dedication but also of political strategy; they dovetailed closely with British ambitions in the area. For the setting of the metaphor at this stage, as it had been for the French a century earlier, was that of empire. The millennial metaphor now coincided with the imperial horizon and this called for a land bridge to Asia and India.

It was Shaftesbury who first coined the ominous phrase, "A nation without a country for a country without a nation". The Zionists were to transpose his



words to “A land of no people for a people with no land”. In 1839 Shaftesbury made a plea for Jewish settlement in Palestine under the protection of the major powers. *The Times*, a year later, deemed “the proposal to plant the Jewish people in the land of their fathers”, with international support, a subject for “political consideration” (44).

Thus, step by step the plot thickened. The message of the metaphor and the frontiers of empire moved closer and closer. Continuously through the century new plans for Jewish restoration were drawn up and now expedited, then delayed by the zigzag exigencies of British policy in the area, vis à vis the Ottoman Porte, Egypt, and rival European powers. This vacillating process is well on record and need not be detailed here (45).

Jewish emancipation (which in England only passed in 1858) was not long in being followed by the tide of political anti-semitism. This in turn was the key in the development of modern political Jewish Zionism (as against religious Zionism with its much longer history). Henceforth Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism were to move in tandem. This was a *mélange* of utopias at different developmental stages, a rendez-vous of what, for Christians, had become an imperial utopia, while for Jews it was an emancipatory utopia. Indeed the bearers of the utopia occupied different societal niches: Christians settled well within the domain of empire and Jews on its margins.

An example of this cooperation is Reverend William H. Hechler (1845-1931), chaplain to the British Embassy in Vienna and an ardent supporter of the early father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl. For nearly thirty years Hechler provided political support and contacts to Herzl and lobbied for the Zionist cause. It was not until the Balfour Declaration in 1917 that the British commitment to Jewish restoration in Palestine became an overt and eventually irrevocable statement of policy. Lord Balfour himself was a premillennialist and Christian Zionist. He was also known for his anti-semitic attitudes and favoured the settlement of Jews in Palestine rather than in England (46).

This brings us to the question of the relationship between Christian Zionism and anti-semitism generally. The Christian restoration movement always had been an instrument in the context of Christian prophecy: the Jews were to be restored to Palestine in order to bring Christ’s return nearer. The restoration movement, as Barbara Tuchman put it, “was not for the sake of the Jews but for the sake of the promise made to them”. A related question is to what extent XIXth-century Christian Zionism and anti-semitism can both be regarded as reactions to Jewish emancipation.

There is a certain parallel with the movement for the abolition of slavery, some of whose adherents (for instance, Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) made the emancipation of Blacks conditional upon their return to Africa. Liberia and Sierra Leone, established as colonies for freed slaves, owe their existence to this project. Also among Blacks a back-to-Africa movement developed, largely in reaction to white racism, just as Jewish Zionism grew in reaction to anti-semitism.

In rightwing circles, such as the British Israelite movement and the Netherlands Israel League, anti-semitism tends to be vociferous: theirs is an interpretation of the Bible which *excludes* Jews so as to claim and monopolize the “promise” made to them for certain gentile peoples. The overlap or affinity between certain forms of Christian Zionism and anti-semitism has given the



cooperation of Christian and Jewish Zionists a cynical aspect on the part of Jews.

When Zionism eventually found support in Britain it was not for want of trying elsewhere. Why not, for instance, in Germany? Indeed the project was not convenient to German imperial interests at the time ("The Ottoman Empire receives its rifles from Mauser, its cannon from Krupp", commented *the London Times*). But beyond this there were cultural differences. German Christians did not support the Zionist project (47), even though the notion was not entirely without German advocates. The strongest reaction against Jewish emancipation took place in Germany and the longest record of anti-semitism is the German (48), while the millennial metaphor never played as significant a part in Germany as it did in the Anglo-Saxon world.

The Balfour Declaration was adopted after a hundred years of evangelical lobbying, after over three hundred years (from the first restoration proposal in 1585) of the millennial metaphor entering the stream of British history. From a metaphor of defiance it had become a statement of imperial policy.

### *Act Three: American Evangelicals and Israel*

Let's praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.

Nathan Perlmutter, 1982 (49)

The millennial metaphor was part of the founding myths of America. In the light of European classical culture the New World was viewed as the "new Golden Land" (50). In the monumental volumes of Theodore de Bry on the *Grands voyages* (1590-1634), the Leitmotiv was that of America as Eden (51). But to the Pilgrim Fathers and Puritans, America was Israel and the New Zion, the promised land. John Winthrop expressed their sentiments in a sermon he preached aboard the ship *Arbella*, as it made its way to Massachusetts Bay in 1630: "We shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us" (52).

The millennial metaphor prospered on American shores. Was this not an Exodus, daring the dangers of the ocean, planting a settlement in the wilderness, "planting a new heaven and a new earth"? Two scriptural metaphors of liberation merged, the Exodus and the New Jerusalem heralding the New Age. At the same time, the paradox or the flipside of Exodus manifested itself in the New World, by virtue of the failure of success. For the Exodus is also but the passage between Egypt and Canaan. And the Canaanites, who happen to inhabit the promised land, are "excluded from the world of moral concern" (53). Deuteronomy (20:17-8) is quite explicit: they are to be killed, men, women and children, and their idols destroyed.

But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hitives, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: that they teach you not to do after all their abominations.

Phrased rather politely in the words of a Jewish American historian:

The American frontier psychology was much like the frontier psychology of the Israelites during the Age of Judges in the Old Testament. The problems of the Israelites in settling Canaan were akin to the problems the frontiersmen faced in subjugating the American wilderness (54).

So wherever the millennial metaphor could be geographically implemented because of an "open frontier" the logic of emancipation would give way to the logic of conquest. This was the case with the Puritans who confronted the native Americans, with the Boers in South Africa who encountered the Bantu peoples, with the Jews who settled in Palestine. The flipside of the Exodus is the tale of settler colonialism. "The door of hope" for one people is the gate of damnation for another.

Nonetheless, or rather, because of this, the metaphor flourished in the New World and formed part of the credo of Manifest Destiny which beckoned Americans towards the western frontier and eventually overseas (55).

During the XVIIIth century the dominant views among American evangelicals were postmillennialism and the Second Coming, personal conversion, and America as the New Israel. In the first half of the XIXth century the holiness doctrine and Millerism swept the East coast, followed by a broader Great Awakening and emphasis on revivalist preaching and biblical prophecy. This paved the way for Darby and premillennialist teachings from England to take hold in the wake of the turmoil of the Civil War (1860-65). From 1867 to 1920 the Bible and Prophecy Conference Movement provided a forum for Darby and other premillennialists, and by the 1880s premillennial dispensationalism and Christian Zionism had become part of the American millennial package, widely adopted by evangelicals as well as mainstream Protestant leaders.

If we examine the social context of American revivalism, it was again social upheaval, the Civil War, which formed the backdrop to the revival of apocalyptic politics and the millennial metaphor, particularly among those who found themselves on the losing end of social change. The era which saw the rebirth of apocalyptic politics in the United States, the Reconstruction period and its aftermath, also saw the birth of the Ku Klux Klan and the lynchings of Blacks and Indians in the South and the West (56). In England the rebirth of the millennial metaphor, early in the century, had been part of a reaction to the turmoil of the French Revolution, a defensive cultural ramparts. In both cases the metaphor took on a conservative, defensive character, by comparison to its earlier articulations, in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries. Also then social upheaval formed the setting of apocalyptic politics, the Peasant War in Germany, the Reformation, the Thirty Years War, but then the metaphor, among Anabaptists and independent Puritans, presented itself in avowedly offensive, "progressive" modes, as a metaphor of social revolution as against counterrevolution.

In the United States, the major popularizer of Christian Zionism as a political prophecy was William E. Blackstone, author of the best-seller *Jesus is Coming* (1881). Blackstone organized the first American lobby for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine and initiated an intensive campaign which had the support of US Senators, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and business figures such as John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan and Charles B. Scribner. The campaign called on president Benjamin Harrison and next on president Wilson to work for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. When Herzl began discussions with the British government on the possibility of establish-

ing a Jewish colony in Uganda or Argentina, Blackstone sent him a Bible with all passages referring to Israel and Palestine underlined, with clear instruction to the effect that only Palestine must be the site of the Jewish state.

The publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909, an edition with notes and commentary based on premillennial dispensationalism, was a milestone in institutionalizing premillennialism and thereby Christian Zionism. A series of pamphlets published between 1910-1915 titled "The Fundamentals" further institutionalized the premillennial doctrine, spreading it beyond the circle of evangelicals among the mainstream Protestant denominations.

At the same time, for Black Americans, the metaphor had been, at least since the XVIIIth century, the central glyph for emancipation – Exodus stood for redemption from slavery, Jesus was a code for freedom, and the churches founded by Black communities named after scriptural places all stood for sites of sanctuary in the land of oppression. The "Zion" churches of Black congregations reflected the momentum of emancipation and resistance against white domination (57).

"Zion" churches were established in America also by alienated groups other than Blacks. Dissident groups such as the Mormons undertook their own Exodus; this brought the Mormons ultimately to Utah. Here the Zion metaphor has been solidly institutionalized; institutions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City include the Zion First National Bank, Zion Savings Bank & Trust, Zion Cooperative Mercantile institution, and Zion Securities Corporation (58).

Another wellknown instance is Zion City founded in Chicago in 1896 by John Alexander Dowie, an evangelical missionary of Scottish descent. The Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, as its full name runs, "drew the bulk of its following from the impoverished urban communities of the industrial Midwest: a population itself alienated from such experiences of self-determination and rational achievement as were celebrated in XIXth-century American Protestant ideology" (59). In the early 1900s a link developed between Zion City in Illinois and a "Zionist" initiative among Black South Africans, mainly migrant workers in Johannesburg and Natal, which was the start of a proliferation of Zionist churches in South Africa (60).

Earlier in Britain, while Albion was identified as Zion and millennial Jerusalem was sited in "England's green and pleasant land", for dissident groups Zion served as a portable metaphor in the continuing pursuit of more immediate utopias and they established other Zions in Britain (61). "Zions within Zion" so to speak. In America, itself a Zion settlement, this process of the reproduction of Zions repeated itself.

Among Black Americans the discourse of Christian liberation had developed in conjunction with the radical Puritan current of the Quakers who, by the mid-XVIII century, initiated the anti-slavery movement, later joined by methodists and other popular currents of Christianity, which subsequently grew into the abolition movement (62). This has been an emancipatory Christianity and continues to be so today (after an interlude of passivity of the Black church from 1914-1945), commensurate with the fact that Black emancipation continues to be on the agenda.

This current fed into the Pentecostal movement which had its beginnings not in the South, as did fundamentalism, but in the West (particularly in Los

Angeles), among lower class urban people who adopted the charismatic forms of worship of Blacks. Thus Pentecostalism stemmed from a tradition in which the emancipatory momentum of the metaphor prevailed and which, accordingly, represented the other side of the coin of the fundamentalist tendency, which was precisely a Southern ramparts *against* emancipation – the emancipation of Blacks in the South and the influence of Northerners and Yankee liberalism.

For many evangelicals and fundamentalists the birth of the state of Israel in 1948 was confirmation of the premillennial doctrine and the imminence of Jesus' return. In the wake of Israel's lightning victory in 1967 and its capture of Jerusalem, L. Nelson Bell, Billy Graham's father-in-law, wrote in the evangelical journal *Christianity Today*:

That for the first time in more than 2000 years Jerusalem is now completely in the hands of the Jews gives a student of the Bible a thrill and a renewed faith in the accuracy and validity of the Bible (63).

Thus the next phase of the metaphor set in: the restoration of the Jews being accomplished and Jerusalem regained, now the penultimate stage of the millennial scenario was thought to be at hand.

For Israel 1967 was a turning point as well, in domestic as well as foreign policies. (64) David came out of the Six Day War transformed into Goliath. When international pressures began to mount for Israel to retreat from the territories occupied since the war, Israel faced the choice either to retreat or to expand, and chose to follow the latter course. Israel shifted its alliances accordingly. Its relationship with the United States, one of covert cooperation since the 1950s, became overt and over the years increasingly strategic in character (65). The United States took over the role of France of being Israel's chief arms supplier.

Israel's relations with social forces *within* the United States shifted as well, from the "liberal coalition" including Democrats and Blacks, towards a more rightwing ensemble of forces. When the National Council of Churches USA followed the resolution adopted by the United Nations that Israel should retreat from the occupied territories, it was the signal for the American Jewish Committee to begin discreet talks with evangelical church leaders. Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum of the American Jewish Committee later described the episode:

The evangelical community is the largest and fastest growing block of pro-Israeli, pro-Jewish sentiment in this country. Since the 1967 War, the Jewish community has felt abandoned by Protestants, by groups clustered around the National Council of Churches, which, because of sympathy with third world causes, gave an impression of support for the PLO. There was a vacuum of public support to Israel that began to be filled by the fundamentalist and evangelical Christians (66).

When in the 1970s a stream of publications and television evangelists proclaimed premillennialism and Christian Zionism, the theme of apocalypse was increasingly prominent. Books such as Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* became best-sellers, popularizing the premillennial and Christian Zionist perspective in an apocalyptic setting.

At this juncture several forces within the United States began to come together. The New Right, itself a merger of Goldwater radicals and neoconservatives, engaged in an alliance with the evangelicals. This political mo-

mentum also healed the historical doctrinal splits among the evangelicals, between fundamentalists and Pentecostals, charismatics and Baptists.

The New Right came out of a political culture in which the millennial metaphor had long served American hegemony and expansion in the name of Manifest Destiny. Richard Hofstadter referred to the American Right as “a secular and demonic version of adventism”, always “manning the barricades of civilization” (67) Richard Viguerie, one of the coordinators of the rightwing coalition, matched the profile: “I work twelve hours a day to save the western world” (68).

The thesis of “Gramscism of the Right” appears to be valid with respect to Israel’s shift of allegiance from the American Protestant churches to the evangelicals. It is a cultural strategy clearly motivated by political expedience. But with respect to the coalition between the New Right and the evangelicals, the thesis does not hold because of the pre-existing affinities in terms of political culture between the American Right and the evangelicals. They already shared secular and religious versions of the same metaphor, which sanctified America and American imperialism. This cannot be regarded as a matter of “using” culture for political ends, because the political agenda itself reflects a common political culture.

At a gathering in Washington, DC in 1975 of evangelical leaders and Menachem Begin, the leader of the Likud Bloc, the evangelicals pledged their support to Israel. Jerry Falwell stated,

We proclaim that the Land of Israel encompasses Judea and Samaria as integral parts of the Jewish patrimony, with Jerusalem as its one and indivisible capital... Israel stands as a bulwark of strength and determination against those, who by terror and blackmail, threaten our democratic way of life (69).

In 1976 Rev Jerry Falwell was awarded Israel’s Yabotinski award by Menachem Begin. This was but one token of the bond between the American evangelical right and Israel.

1976 is on record as the year of the ascendancy of Christian Zionism. A combination of events unfolded which placed Christian Zionism in the mainstream of the political process. In the United States, Jimmy Carter, a “born again” Southern Baptist, was elected president, drawing on the evangelical vote. In Israel, Menachem Begin and the Likud Bloc came to power in 1977 on a revisionist Zionist platform utilizing biblical imagery. The triangular relationship between the New Right, the evangelicals and the Israel lobby now emerged on the forefront. This coalition agreed on many policy issues, in particular the priority of Israel.

When president Carter called for the creation of a Palestinian homeland, alienating the evangelical and New Right voting blocs, this coalition sprang into action, initiating a national campaign against Carter’s support for Palestinian rights. A costly series of full page advertisements in major American newspapers titled “Evangelicals Concern for Israel” was signed by leading evangelicals. This entered into the momentum which led to the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency of the United States in 1980.

It had been precisely to avert the issue of Palestinian rights that the American Jewish Committee and other Zionist circles in the United States had opted for a coalition with the evangelicals and the New Right, because no support for Israel’s expansionist policy had been forthcoming from the mainline Prot-



estant denominations united in the National Council of Churches. This alliance brought the Israel lobby also close to the anti-semitic undercurrents among American evangelicals.

Nathan Perlmutter, the director of the Anti-Defamation league of B'nai Brith in the United States, stated "I'm deeply grateful for this alliance", and at the same time he redefined anti-semitism not as prejudice against Jews but as criticism of the "Jewish state" of Israel (70). Thus the Jewish Zion underwent a similar career as the Christian Zions previously: it has become an imperial project, with *Eretz Israel* being equivalent to Greater Israel.

The years of the Reagan administration are now often referred to as the "decade of indulgence" (71). While this refers to economic policy it can be extended to political rhetoric and to theology as well. When the "Moral Majority" and other agencies of the evangelical right were catapulted centerstage they broadcast their message of apocalypse. The focal area of the apocalyptic scenario was the Middle East or, to be exact, Armageddon in Israel's valley of Meggido. The time had come for the "dark side of the force", the flipside of the metaphor to emerge. Amidst the upbeat slogans of the Reagan presidency – Good Morning America, the magic of the market place, supply side economics – an eerie note was struck. Armageddon is at the door. This was both unreal and threatening. It was threatening *because* it was unreal. An unreal message in the hands of the occupant of a real position, the presidency of the United States, seemed to make unreality reality's norm (72).

At this juncture apocalypse emerged as a topos in American popular culture, ranging from visions of urban catastrophe to privatized forms of apocalypse or cultivated disaster, whether through drugs or SM (73). Immanuel Wallerstein in 1980 spoke of "the socialist revolution in which we are living" as "the only alternative to Armageddon" (74).

XXth-century Armageddon theology is an amalgam of different prophecies merging the destinies of America and Israel, just as earlier the destinies of Britain and Israel had been fused in the XIXth-century British Restoration movement. At this stage different phases of the metaphor came together. In the publications of the Worldwide Church of God in California, such as *The Plain Truth* published by Herbert Armstrong and his book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, several themes which through the history of the metaphor had represented different strands of belief are fused in one large apocalyptic panorama, which is at the same time an imperial fantasy. Following in the tradition of the British Israelite movement, this work proclaims that all the promises made in the Bible to Israel in fact have been fulfilled to Britain and the United States. They have been fulfilled to the Saxon peoples who are the true Israelites (the Jews are merely the descendants of the tribe of Judah), so that these nations are "lifted above all nations". In this rereading of the scripture, modern imperial history is presented, detailed and documented, as the inexorable fulfillment of ancient prophecy. Imperial grandeur thus grounded spiritually, also imperial paranoia sets in, for the "Great Tribulation" will fall on Britain and America first.

God will use a Nazi-Fascist Europe to punish Britain-America. Then He will use the Communist hordes to wipe out the Roman Europe.

We are entering a time of world trouble – utter WORLD chaos! (75).

Notable in this sample is the division between Europe on the one hand and Britain-America on the other, the labelling of Europe as "Roman" and the



term “hordes” in conjunction with “Communist”, invoking the imagery of the Huns and Mongols.

These and other instances of metaphoric exuberance merge several themes: The theme of the state of Israel as a step toward the fulfillment of the endtime scenario. The United States and Great Britain as New Zions, spiritually wedded to Israel. The notion of the Anglo-Saxons as the actual “Israelites”, that is the theme of the British Israelite movement. And the privileged status of the evangelicals as true believers who thus form a spiritual “Israel”, destined to be taken away through “rapture” at the planetary endgame.

Evangelical support for Greater Israel has not been merely a matter of propaganda. Evangelicals became important financiers of both the Likud Bloc and the West Bank settlement movement (76). In the West Bank American church groups, primarily Southern Baptists, through an institution called the Temple Mount Foundation, supported Israeli extreme right groups who planned to “blow up the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa mosque and then just lay claim to the site”. This led to incidents and a near-crisis in 1985, 1986 (77) and 1990.

The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) opened its doors in 1980 to serve as a focal center for worldwide evangelical support for Israel. “The timing of the opening”, according to a report by the Middle East Council of Churches, “was designed to offset the effect of several embassies withdrawing from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv in protest against Israel declaring Jerusalem as its eternal capital”. The report summarizes the activities of the Embassy as follows:

The Embassy engages in a number of projects which appear to have close collaboration with Israeli political leadership. Among these are: lobbying (particularly in the United States), promotion of Israeli products, sale of Israeli bonds, annual rallies such as the Feast of Tabernacles, lobbying for Soviet Jews to settle in Israel, blood donations for the Israeli defense forces, promoting Christian Zionism in the West (78).

The Embassy which also broadcasts a radio programme “A Word from Jerusalem”, has “embassies” in more than twenty countries.

The Embassy is one among many evangelical organizations active in Israel and the occupied territories. Much of their work is concerned with Christian tourists and Arab Christians. At times the evangelical presence has given occasion to friction and conflict with Israelis who object to Christian missionary and proselytizing activities among Jewish people (79). Jewish nationalists resent being excluded from any quarter of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has since long become a battleground of conflicting claims sacred and secular (80).

The objections of religious Israelis to Christian missionary activities among Jews are not without significance. Ultimately the Christian Zionist scenario calls not simply for the restoration of the Jews but also for their conversion, as a precondition for the endtime. As a consequence, the alliance of Jewish and Christian Zionists can only be a tactical bond for ultimately their objectives clash with one another.

It is noteworthy that we find similar combinations of American evangelical organizations and Israeli forces, active on the side of American interests, on several frontiers of hegemony in the third world. The Iran-Contra affair brought the American-Israeli covert cooperation on the frontpages (81). The

involvement of “muscular Christianity” on several of these frontiers adds another dimension to the pattern – for instance in Honduras and Nicaragua, during the conflict between the *contras* and the *Sandinistas*, and in parts of Southern Africa and Latin America (82). The ICEJ’s “embassy” in Honduras has been active in the support of the *contras*, in collaboration with Gospel Crusade Inc. (83). This suggests that to a certain extent this is not simply an incidental alignment of forces, neither culturally nor politically, but part of a larger pattern of cooperation and, in effect, a global network.

When Israel’s expansionism turned northward, into southern Lebanon, the American evangelicals followed, as if another missionary frontier had opened. George Otis of High Adventure Ministries, operating out of Van Nuys, California, established “Voice of Hope” and “King of Hope” radio stations and a “Star of Hope” television station in southern Lebanon, with the encouragement of the Israeli government and funding from American televangelist audiences. Major Saad Haddad, Israel’s strongman in the area, has been allowed free access to the stations’ facilities. Otis’ aspiration has been to make Lebanon a “true Christian state”, while its broadcasts to Israel serve to prepare “the Jewish souls to recognize Jesus as their Messiah – before the coming battle of Armageddon” (84).

In April 1982 the Star of Hope television station “in southern Free Lebanon” was taken over by Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). Pat Robertson explained that when Israel gained possession of Jerusalem in the Six Day War, this was “the most significant prophetic event of our lifetime... The time of the Gentiles was nearly over. Soon God would be moving towards Israel. And CBN was going to be vital part of that move. I knew it...” (85). In his “700 Club” television programme Pat Robertson repeatedly discussed the situation in Lebanon, often repeating a prediction he made in January 1982:

I guarantee you by the fall of 1982, that there is going to be a judgment on the world, and the ultimate judgment is going to come on the Soviet Union. They are going to be the ones to make military adventures, and they are going to be hit... (86).

On numerous occasions Pat Robertson urged his “700 Club” audience, while superimposing the telephone number of the White House on the screen, to write or call president Reagan, and encourage him to continue his support for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Recently Robertson’s station operates under the name Middle East TV, still from Israel’s *cordon sanitaire*, broadcasting children’s programmes like *Super Book* and *Crusader Robot*. “Hello-I-Am-Cru-sa-der-ro-bot. I-Am-Your-Friend” (87).

### *Denouement*

When reviewing the history of the metaphor of Zion in the terms of our central question, the correlation between religious attitudes and patterns of hegemony, one key distinction to make is between counterhegemonic and hegemonic patterns. When attitudes are counterhegemonic, the metaphor applies to the apocalypse of the old powers, the *dies irae* is directed against the status quo. When they are hegemonic, the metaphor is held to apply to

the power of one's own group, whose destiny is viewed as a fulfillment of millennial promises. There are, of course, different nuances within each pattern but there is no need to go into these in the span of this brief essay.

At the early stages, the overall meaning of the millennial metaphor tends to be counterhegemonic. Thus according to the theodicy of Irenaeus millennial hopes are legitimate, part of orthodoxy, and because they might arise anywhere, it may be termed a "polycentric" vision, which therefore is also subversive of central authority.

With the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church, the metaphor is transformed into a hegemonic discourse with the Church as the City of God and the embodiment of the millennial promise. This renders the metaphor subject to ecclesiastical politics. The metaphor is centralized as much as the Church is, in which the Bishop of Rome over time is transformed into the Vicar of Christ and the papacy becomes a formula for merging spiritual and temporal power. The millennial metaphor thus becomes an imperial vision for an imperial Church, an orthodoxy which holds fast until the XVIth century.

Among the millennial movements of the middle ages the counter-hegemonic meaning of the metaphor is retained – counterhegemonic both vis à vis the Church and hierarchy and vis à vis temporal powers. The metaphor serves as a utopia and a metaphor of defiance. By and large at this stage the defiance tends to be diffuse. Thus during the middle ages, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic versions of the metaphor coexist, in the Church on the one hand and among popular movements on the other. A middle ground, subject to recurrent negotiation, is occupied by, for instance, the Franciscans' and Savonarola's uses of the metaphor. The Albigensian Crusade and the Holy Inquisition represent hegemonic operations of the Church in order to stamp out counterhegemonic or "heretic" tendencies and discourses.

With the onset of the Reformation, the metaphor is radicalized and turns counterhegemonic in a more focused manner, particularly among the Anabaptists. For a brief period in Munster the Anabaptists manage to establish a "liberated zone" and at that junction the metaphor becomes *locally* hegemonic, a New Jerusalem, a Kingdom of God ruled by Anabaptist leadership, which, on the other hand, remains counter-hegemonic in relation to the wider political and social structures.

For the Puritans the metaphor carried different meanings, reflecting their diverse experiences. For English Puritans it served as a counterhegemonic metaphor of defiance which later, in Cromwell's order, turned into a metaphor of reconstruction. The metaphor of defiance was retained among the Puritan "left" currents, the Seekers, Ranters, Levellers, Diggers, Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, and among utopian dissidents.

For the American Puritans, the metaphor guided them from Egypt to Canaan, through the Exodus as the journey of transition, and accordingly, from a discourse of defiance of Old World constellations it became a formula of hegemony for the New World, turning from counterhegemonic to hegemonic. From an exemplary utopia (the city upon a hill) the New Zion became a mode of domination of settler colonialism and subsequently an alibi of empire. Again, as in England, the counterhegemonic current survived as well, for instance among the Quakers of Pennsylvania and the Amish of Iowa, and

the scenario was repeatedly replayed among dissident groups *within* the United States, such as the Mormons, who established their New Zion in Utah.

For the XIXth-century evangelicals, from the start the metaphor was a hegemonic metaphor, a counterrevolutionary ramparts against the French Revolution and Enlightenment culture, a disciplinary formula for the “society of normalization” that took shape in the form of Victorian England. This history ranges from 1792 (Bicheno’s *Signs of the Times*) to its imperial consummation in the Balfour Declaration in 1917. In the latter format the metaphor was not merely conservative but offensive, it operated in an imperial setting and acquired the character of a hegemonic project, the concrete project of the settlement of the Jews in Palestine.

For American evangelicals in the South, with whom the metaphor came to play a central part notably in the period 1867-1920, premillennialism served as a hegemonic discourse in the wake of the Reconstruction era, as a barrier against further Black emancipation and the incursions of Northerners. That is, it was counterhegemonic in relation to the domination of the North and hegemonic within the South itself. Thus it paralleled and coincided with the aversion against Blacks, Catholics and Jews. This defensive, hegemonic stream led to the “fundamentalists” in the period of 1910-20. As in England, the metaphor also took on the character of an imperial (or semi-imperial) project, marked by the Congressional endorsement in 1922 of Jewish settlement in Palestine.

The independent Black churches in America and Pentacostalism represent a counterhegemonic movement in which the metaphor stands for emancipation. For the Pentacostalists this changed gradually as they conformed to the rising tide of Cold War Christianity and adjusted their discourse accordingly. A case in point is the shifting rhetoric of the Jehova’s Witnesses; over the years their discourse shifted from being anti-establishment in the thirties, to a pro-Free World position in the fifties, and adoption of the Armageddon scenario in the eighties (88).

In the postwar period of American boom and Cold War, the hegemonic version of the metaphor spread among Southern Baptists and beyond, culminating in the evangelical alliance of fundamentalists and Pentacostals with the New Right in the Seventies. In this period, marked, in terms of Christian Zionism, by 1948 as the year of the establishment of Israel, 1967 as the year of Greater Israel, and 1977 as the year of the Likud policy of *Eretz Israel*, the metaphor underwent a metamorphosis from a hegemonic to an expansionist discourse, and ultimately, in prophecies such as Hal Lindsey’s, an apocalyptic script of “imperial madness”.

Throughout the recent history of the metaphor, its counterhegemonic version also has been alive and well in the circles of liberation theology, in the Peace Council of the National Council of Churches and the evangelical left.

These meanderings of the metaphor raise several questions. How is it that a single metaphor can engender such a bewildering variety of political projects and attitudes? Is the heterogeneity of political articulations to be sought merely in the diverse and shifting societal loci of the users of the metaphor, or does the metaphor itself change meaning or emphasis in the course of its sojourns? Can any particular reading of the metaphor be regarded as “true”?

The diverse history of the millennial metaphor tells us something, first, about the intrinsic ambiguity of prophecy and the unstable relationship between prophecy and power. A change in the fortunes of the metaphor's users is likely to result in its reinterpretation. Besides, this particular metaphor itself charts an emancipatory scenario which, once a stage of attainment is arrived at, implies a shift of emphasis to a different moment of the metaphor. The moments of the metaphor include the following:

(1) Departure – The *apocalypse* of the status quo as harbinger of a *future* millenium, represented as the *New Jerusalem*.

(2) Journey – The *Exodus* as the passage through the wilderness between the old hegemony (Egypt) and the new (Canaan the promised land, or the New Jerusalem).

(3) Arrival – The point of arrival represents utopia *realized*, the millenium attained, the *City of God* or the *New Jerusalem*. The metaphor in the present tense. Again the *apocalypse* may recur, either as the paranoia of power, or as the prerequisite for the attainment of a further stage or confirmation of the millenium.

The sociopolitical significance of the metaphor at the first and second stages tends to be counterhegemonic and at the third stage hegemonic.

The dynamic of the metaphor interacts with the dynamic of the social forces who use it and rally behind it. This relates to processes of social change over time as well as to the shifting relations of the metaphor's users with other forces in social space. The latter introduces another form of ambiguity. The metaphor can carry multiple meanings, counterhegemonic and hegemonic, *at the same time*, depending on which social relationship is being considered. We can differentiate between *local*, *regional*, *national* and *global* configurations, all which of course coexist simultaneously. A constellation that is locally hegemonic may be counterhegemonic in relation to the regional constellation of forces, and so forth. These dynamics of time and space contextualize the metaphor.

This ambiguity of discourse and an emancipatory momentum changing into a constellation of domination is not an unfamiliar theme (89). It forms the keynote of the difference between Martin Buber's *Pfaden in Utopia*, a work that emphasized the moment of departure, and Ralf Dahrendorf's *Pfade aus Utopia*, which emphasized the moment of arrival, of utopian achievement (90). Time and again decolonization processes have witnessed the metamorphosis of a counterhegemonic ideal (departure) into a hegemonic political formation (arrival) – from white sahib to brown sahib. Likewise the history of socialism, from the First International to the Third, from the labour movement (departure) to the achievement of "real existing socialism" (arrival), exemplifies this drama. The history of modern Zionism, from departure to arrival, again echoes the tale of aspiration *versus* achievement (91).

With respect to Christian Zionism, one of the key problems at a deeper level appears to be the tension between the *particularist* foundations and *universal* aspirations of Christianity. The momentum charted in the Bible is that of the development of a tribal religion with a "jealous God", to a creed of universal aspiration, a "gospel for the gentiles". By turning to the Old Testament (also known as the "Jewish Bible") the Reformers reinvoked the tribal roots of Christianity. This retribalization of Christianity found expression in the routine references in Protestant discourse to the "tribes of Israel" (the lost tribes, thirteenth tribe, and so on). With it came a new look upon Jews



not as a religious community but as the Jewish nation, a shift which paralleled the development of nationalism among gentiles. The dual usage of the “Israel” metaphor, as the purified community of Christians *and* as the “Jewish nation”, reproduced the friction between particularist and universal dimensions of the creed at every juncture.

When the metaphor became a beacon and a target on the imperial horizon the element of particularism became acute. “The very idea of the Restoration of the Jews to Palestine as a nation”, Regina Sharif observes, “has been a popular theme throughout four centuries of modern European history” (92). Christian Zionism has been a potent force in establishing the notion of a “Jewish nation” in western culture and in connecting it to Palestine. It continues to be an important element in the pro-Israeli attitudes in the west. Meanwhile, on the dark side of the metaphor is the erasure of the Palestinians from history since for them there is no place in the script of the promised land. Likewise, on the other side of the millennial preoccupations with Jerusalem are anti-Arab and anti-Islam prejudices for the universalism of the gospel is not without its boundaries.

Even so, while some form of Christian Zionism has been widespread in the Protestant world, it does not mean that there has been a unified Christian attitude towards Palestine and Israel. The evangelical perspective is but one among several. There are different attitudes towards Israel also in Judaism, where religious attitudes range from total support of the state of Israel and the Zionist project to total rejection. Presently Reform and Conservative Judaism are virtually barred from establishing a presence in Israel (93); only Orthodox Judaism is represented in Israel, certain tendencies of which are Zionist while others, such as the Hassidic, reject the state of Israel.

The problem of universalism is not specific to Christianity. Is it possible to develop a universal metaphor from a single centre, a single standpoint? The universalism of the Roman Catholic Church, of the Renaissance and the credo of humanism, of the Enlightenment and the claims of reason, entails similar dilemmas and paradoxes.

At the end of the road we arrive at the limits of the metaphor itself. Is it meaningful to discuss and negotiate the degree of validity or error of any particular application of the metaphor, if at the last terminus the metaphor itself breaks down? Does this, in the last resort, call for a different epistemology, a discourse of discourses, a metadiscourse and a commensurate politics? An awareness of the uses and abuses of metaphor, lest the invocation of a metaphor of liberation also activates the principle of the fairy tale-in-reverse, that is princes turning into frogs.

If this history illustrates the contingency of religious discourse in relation to political forces, also the reverse is indicated – the role of cultural capital in shaping patterns of hegemony.

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NOTES

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