
We can shrug off such attacks on Christian Zionism, knowing that many of its critics seem to have little love for the Jewish people, and do not believe that God has or will fulfill His promises to them literally.

Yet there is a serious problem with Christian Zionism that cannot be chalked up to the biases or lack of balance that some critics demonstrate. That problem ought not go without scrutiny and censure, but unfortunately the average Christian is unaware of it. The problem is, many Christian Zionists are involved (some proactively, others unknowingly) in preventing Jews from hearing the gospel.

So maybe the time has come for us to ask, “How Christian is today’s Christian Zionism?” Please note the word “today’s,” because the landscape of Christian Zionism has dramatically shifted in recent years.

Once called “restorationism,” Christian Zionism (which I’ll refer to as biblical Christian Zionism) began as a two-fold belief rooted in a commitment to Scripture. At its core was the conviction that God would one day return the Jewish people to the land He had given to their ancestors and that they would finally come to recognize Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah.

Great nineteenth century preachers such as Simeon and Spurgeon frequently preached about both a physical and spiritual restoration of the Jewish people. Nineteenth century British political leaders such as Lord Byron and Lord Shaftesbury promoted the cause of a Jewish homeland, while also supporting the efforts of Jewish evangelism and missions.

In the United States, biblical Christian Zionism was promoted by a wide range of theologians, though it became more widespread, in part due to the rise of dispensational theology. William Blackstone championed the cause and rallied four hundred American business leaders and politicians—both Christian and Jewish—to sign a bold statement calling for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. That petition is known as the Blackstone Memorial. Blackstone was also committed to Jewish evangelism, and founded a Jewish mission agency known as “Life in Messiah.”

When Israel finally became a modern state in 1948, it was a glorious, faith-strengthening confirmation of biblical Christian Zionism. And when Jerusalem was reclaimed in 1967, many believed the “times of the Gentiles” had been fulfilled and the end-times scenario of rapture and tribulation was about to unfold.

Certainly there did seem to be many Jewish people coming to believe in Jesus in the late ’60s and early ’70s. Jews for Jesus and the wider Messianic movement came into existence during that time. Yet the numbers of Jesus-believing Jews, especially in Israel, remained few. One might think that Christian Zionism would see this as a challenge to be met by greater fervor and commitment to proclaiming the good news to Jewish people. But curiously, the opposite occurred.

A new form of Christian Zionism emerged in the mid 1970s and early 1980s; it was more political and actually divorced itself from Jewish evangelism, contending that a Christian’s biblical duty to the Jews and Israel was best carried out through providing material comfort, political support and helping fund Jewish immigration to Israel.

These new Christian Zionist organizations, best represented by Bridges for Peace and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, made it very clear to Jewish leaders in Israel and abroad they had no intention of evangelizing Jews. Some, not all, of their leaders argued that evangelism of Jews was a waste of time and unnecessarily offensive. Jewish evangelism, in any case, was not a cause that would endear these leaders to the people with whom they were beginning to network. The hope seemed to be that eventually those networks would help open people’s hearts to the gospel in a way that direct evangelism would not. If this has proven to be the case, it is a well-kept secret.

Recently, the two above-mentioned organizations have been dwarfed in scope and influence by the rise of two other organizations: the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ) and Christians United For Israel (CUFI). These financial juggernauts successfully tap into the deep reservoir of Christian Zionist sentiment here in America. (IFCJ raised 75 million dollars last year. CUFI does not disclose its finances but is on record as giving millions of dollars to various Jewish groups in Israel each year). Both organizations are currently run by Jewish people who do not know Jesus: Yechiel Eckstein of IFCJ is an Orthodox rabbi, and David Brog of CUFI an attorney and former chief of staff to Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania.

These newer “Christian” Zionist organizations have set themselves against Jewish evangelism in ways that their predecessors did not. In his book *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism* (as well as in other printed material) Rabbi Eckstein suggests that, “The rejection of Jesus as Messiah is the key to Jewish survival.” Accordingly, a good deal of the money Eckstein raises from Christians goes to organizations whose agendas include anti-missionary activity.

As for David Brog, in an interview with Katherine Jean Lopez on Beliefnet, he boasts on behalf of the Christians he knows that, “I and others who have worked with Christians in support of Israel all report that no one has ever tried to convert us,” and in his book *Standing With Israel* he says that “While there is no evidence that the Christian-Jewish alliance in support of Israel [aka CUFI] facilitates the conversion of Jews, there is evidence that the alliance actually works to impede efforts to convert Jews” (David Brog, *Standing With Israel,*
Lake Mary, Fla.: Frontline Publishers, 2006, 188-189). While this is meant to reassure the Jewish community concerning Christian Zionists, it ought to have the opposite effect on Christians who care about the salvation of Jewish people.

It might seem like the phrases “try to convert” or “efforts to convert” imply a certain overbearing attempt at sharing the gospel, but the fact is, Brog is referring to any attempt to tell Jewish people the gospel. Washington Jewish Week interviewed Brog and published an article explaining, “Brog said the group (CUFI) tells people, ‘If you cannot put aside your desire to share the Gospel with Jews, there’s the door’” (Eric Fingerhut, “Educating on Evangelicals.” Washington Jewish Week, July 4, 2007).

I am absolutely convinced the vast majority of Christians supporting CUFI and IFCJ do not know about these policies and practices. My guess is that many who support these groups genuinely believe in Jewish evangelism and expect that their support will help Jewish people come to Christ. Sadly, their resources are going to projects run by people who are committed to preventing Jewish people from hearing about Jesus.

This is not meant to discourage Christians from providing material help and support in a truly Christian way; but it is fair to question how “Christian” such support can really be in situations where Christ himself is excluded from the conversation, and where funds are raised and channeled by people who do not know Him. Jewish people in Israel are more open to the gospel message than any other Jewish community in the world today! The responses we’ve seen to our Behold Your God Israel campaigns have signaled us that now is the time to make an all out effort to make the Savior known in the Land of Israel.

It is time for all true Christian Zionists to recall the biblical vision that not only supports God’s promises to restore a homeland for the Jewish people, but also addresses the greatest need of all. Just like anyone else, Jewish people need to have a restored relationship with God through Jesus. Now more than ever is the time for true Christian Zionists to open their eyes to the phenomenal opportunity to take part in that original vision.

It is not enough to raise funds for Israel. Christian Zionists ought also to raise the awareness that Jesus, the Messiah, loves Israelis and Palestinians — and that only He can bring the peace that those who live in the Land so urgently need and so earnestly desire.

When those who stand by Israel are willing to bring the good news of Jesus to the Jew first, then Christian Zionism will once again be fully Christian.

In the meantime, please consider this:

When someone makes an appeal for Christians to show their love for Jewish people, please remember that our love is incomplete at best and misleading at worst if it does not point beyond ourselves and to the One who loved us so much that He sent His Son to die, so that WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM will not perish, but have eternal life.

If you are concerned about where a Christian Zionist organization you support (or would like to support) stands when it comes to the gospel, write and ask them for a written response to these questions:

- Are participants on your projects permitted to speak of their faith in Jesus to the Jewish people they meet through your program?
- Are Jews who believe the teachings of the New Testament concerning Jesus allowed to participate in your programs?
- Do any of the organizations to whom you send funds include a component for countering Christian missionary work?

God bless you as you look for biblical ways to bless the people of Israel!