

ZIONISM, A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE
Rev. Edward H. Flannery

Zionism is a sacred word in Judaism; on the lips of some Christians it is a word of opprobrium. For the latter, inter alia, the very word needs rehabilitating. In the task of rehabilitation adequate assistance from the Jewish side cannot be taken for granted. At times one is tempted to believe that there are as many varieties of Zionism as there are Zionists. Thus does the word suffer from lack of precise and commonly accepted definition. This definition deserves a high priority on the ecumenical agenda, for the reality it describes is an important one not only for Jews, but for Christians and the world community as well.

It is my purpose in this talk to present one Christian's view of the subject. Hopefully the effort will encourage other Christians to present their own.

It is difficult to surmise where some Christians find their view of Zionism. Certainly not from its extensive and open history. I recall a conversation with a Christian friend during which I manifested my favor for Israel. I remember his question and the tone of indignation: "Do you mean to say you're a Zionist?" He was typical. His view of Zionism was largely that of a sinister, secret and aggressive conspiracy intent on dispossessing other peoples of their homeland. The overtones from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion here are patent. Others, adhering closer to history


insist nevertheless on defining Zionism by certain features of an extreme form of Zionism that would repatriate all Jews throughout the world in an Israel that extended from the Tigris to the Euphrates. Arab propaganda is a factor here. Others again raise against Zionist Jews, the hackneyed charge of double loyalty forgetful, many of them, that they were targets of the same charge themselves a few years earlier.

When the Christian turns to the Jew for clarification, usually he is disappointed, if not actually bewildered. To his surprise he finds that there is a cultural and a spiritual as well as a political Zionism and, among the political kinds, that there exist a religious and a socialist, even Marxist variety, just to mention some of the major types. One Jew may tell him Israel is no more than a territorial haven for persecuted Jews throughout the world; another, that it is a divine fulfilment. And he may encounter anti-Zionist Zionists -- actually super-Zionists - who will only accept a nation or state in Israel wrought by the Messiah.

On a trip to Israel in 1973 this disparity of views was brought out sharply for me. Having noticed the serenity of the Israelis in their troubles, I had the custom of inquiring of them their reason for this. I asked my Israeli guide, "Why are you Israelis so calm in the face of your peril?" He answered, "I've been in two wars, and I'll be in

another with my son by my side, and we'll win again." I was struck by his confidence in Israeli power, and I knew then what "ain Breira" (No alternative!) -- Israel's secret weapon -- really means. In an Orthodox kibbutz near Bethsheba I put my questions to a young man. His answer was simple and direct" "God brought us here. No one can get us out."

A familiarity with some of the founding fathers of Zionism would be enough to dispel our surprise or confusion at these contrasting views. Few Christians are aware of the writings of the founding fathers of modern Zionism or of the distance separating an Ahad Ha'am from a Theodore Herzl, a Rabbi Kook from a Ber Borochov, A.D. Gordon from Leon Pinsker. These distances are a measure of the breadth and complexity of Zionism and of the richness that have characterized the concept from its resurgence in modern times.



What is appreciated still less is the unity of inspiration that unifies the various, even conflicting views of Zionism. The founders of Zionism did better than they knew. Whether they sensed it or not, they rode a wave from the past that found its beginnings in biblical times, in a covenant, and in a promise and a hope that never abandoned the Jewish people. To my mind, modern political Zionism is but a latter-day political manifestation of the deep

messianic core of Judaism itself. To the Jew and those knowledgeable here, Israel can never be a matter of mere politics.

The millennial yearning for Zion and the final Aliyah initiated by Herzl form an indivisible whole that any adequate definition of Zionism must take into account.

It is of course impossible to speak of Zionism without reference to the State of Israel, its concrete embodiment today. While one cannot equate Zionism and that State, they are in a sense two aspects of the same thing. Often in this talk they will be spoken of interchangeably. A caution is necessary here however. An acceptance of the Zionist idea or reality does not require an acceptance of all policies and actions of the State of Israel. This distinction is important for those who, for one reason or another, believe they must remain critics of the Israeli State. It would be unwise, in any case, from an apologetical point of view, as well as unfair to the Zionist ideal to demand support for all policies and practices of the hard-pressed Israeli State. I say this although I feel no need personally for such a caution.

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The subject proper of this talk is the Christian perspective on Zionism, which will engage us for the rest

of this address.

Is there a Christian perspective on Zionism?

There are several, some of which I shall outline, and one which, to my mind, is the true or ideal Christian perspective. That the latter as I see it is not the common Christian perspective will emerge from much of what follows.

Developing my subject, I shall consider three categories of Christian approach to Zionism: Christian non-Zionism, Christian anti-Zionism, and Christian Zionism.

I. Christian non-Zionism

There are Christians from whom Zionism and/or the State of Israel hold no particular interest or significance. Their view is not a result of ignorance or necessarily of hostility, but of principle. They are often found among theologians. This is perhaps because the source of this opinion is often theological. Bluntly stated: with the universalization of salvation brought by Christianity whatever theological meaning any particular land might have had disappears. Ecumenically deficient, this view fails to limit the scope of its verdict to a purely Christian context and to allow us to recognize significance for the land of Israel for Judaism, a Judaism moreover that Christianity may look upon with favor. It fails further when it does not move forward to an appreciation of the historical, cultural, religious ties which bind the Jewish people to Christianity and which would thereby earn

a special status for the land even in the Christian outlook. Further, Christian non-Zionism fails to take account of Christian involvement in the anti-Semitic record. Christians are tied to Jews by guilt as well as by positive bonds. Zionism and finally the State of Israel became urgent necessities as the plight of the Jew, mostly in Christian countries, became intolerable. In a remote sense Christian anti-Semitism created the State of Israel. A sense of history obviously does not stand out in Christian non-Zionism.

II. Christian Anti-Zionism

1. There is, firstly, an anti-Zionism which Christians share with non-Christians and which is accordingly not Christian in any rigorous sense. It is characterized in general by a belief that Israel has no right to exist or simply by a persistent hostility toward Israel. Often it is marked by an exclusive favoring of the Arab cause (I leave actual Arabs out of this consideration) or an exclusive concentration on the Arab refugee problem in particular. Espousal of these causes is always given an anti-Israeli or anti-Jewish turn. Over and beyond a critical stance regarding actions or policies of Israel there remains in this purview a compulsive tendency to disfavor that State and to judge it severely in all circumstances. Often the animus involved has a "liberal" or "Third World" flavor.

In the first instance, its source is found in a grandiose universalism which finds the particularism of Israel, of Judaism, and of Jews offensive. In the latter, Israel is falsely and unfairly seen as a creature of "Western Imperialism" and a bridgehead of that Communist bogeyman into the Third World itself.

There remains no question in my mind about where to look for the source of these views of Israel and/or Zionism. The age-old antisemitism that has beset the Western World through the centuries lives an unconscious existence today in millions of people throughout the world. Now an unconscious phenomenon, it must reveal itself only in disguised and symptomatic forms. The most popular and active of these is anti-Zionism or anti-Israelism. This antisemitic derivation is of course roundly denied by its victims, just as is the repressed antisemitism from which it springs.

2. More definably Christian is another form of anti-Zionism which we might call institutional. To track this down a short excursus into recent history is necessary.

In the past, for its own reasons Protestantism was frankly pro-Zionist; today it is in Protestantism that anti-Zionism fares best, specifically in the World Council of Churches and in the National Council of Churches in this country. In the past Roman Catholicism was unblushingly anti-Zionist; today it is much less so, in any case less

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by comparison with its Protestant counterparts. I am of course quite conscious of the fact that the Vatican today is anything but a model of pro-Zionism, but here the Vatican is more or less the exception in the Catholic world.

As Zionism began to take concrete shape toward the end of the last century the attitude of Rome toward the prospect of a Jewish state in Palestine was not encouraging. The Vatican's chief concern was centered on safeguarding the Holy Places in Palestine and the rights of Christians in the area. Its policy was to resist any change in the status quo but at the same time to try to accommodate itself to new realities as they emerged. Later, as the conflict developed in Palestine, the Vatican adopted a stand of neutrality, but whenever tempted to verge from this stand it veered toward the Arab side.

As early as 1896 Theodore Herzl sought Catholic support for his idea of a Jewish State in Palestine. He was granted an interview with Msgr. Antonio Agliardi, Papal Nuncio in Vienna, but was given a cool reception. In 1904 in a meeting with Cardinal Merry del Val, Papal Secretary of State under Pope Pius X, the Cardinal assured Herzl that the Church could not countenance the Jews possessing the Holy Land since they had not accepted the divinity of Christ. A few days later in an audience Pius reiterated the same view. He stated in conclusion: "If you come to Palestine and settle your people there, we want to have churches and

priests ready to baptize you." However, shortly thereafter Merry del Val assured an associate of Herzl, Heinrich York Steiner, that if the resettlement was humanitarian he would not oppose efforts to found Jewish colonies in Palestine.

In 1917 Zionist writer Nahum Sokolow was received by Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State to Pope Benedict XV, who assured him that as long as reserved zones for the Holy Places were provided the Holy See wished the Zionists well. In private audience with Pope Benedict a month later the Pontiff stated, "I believe we shall be good neighbors," and asked simply for respect for the Holy Places. Six months later the Pope had to some degree changed his mind. The appearance of the Balfour Declaration caused the Vatican worry for the safety of the Holy Places and the Pope expressed his misgivings about Jewish control of Palestinian affairs. In 1918 the mood in Rome had markedly changed. Gasparri was now clearly unsympathetic to Zionism, and the Pope told a consistory that it would be a "bitter grief if unbelievers in Palestine were put in a superior or more privileged position." It is believed that the Pope was influenced by British Cardinal Bourne, an anti-Zionist. After the San Remo Peace Conference, which awarded the Mandate of Palestine to Britain anti-Zionism grew rapidly in the Vatican. The Vatican favored internationalization as an overall solution to the problem of Palestine.

In Rome the notion that Jews were Communists was widespread, and the fear of Communism strong. Pius XI was influenced by Luigi Barlassina, Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, an anti-Zionist who saw the kibbutzim as Communistic and the Balfour plan as an effort to build an "Empire of Zion." Chaim Weizmann tried to get things straight in Rome, but Gasparri would only concede the possibility of a national home for Jews in Palestine, with no "privileged position" for Jews or a Jewish State there.

In 1922 Gasparri complained to the League of Nations that the national home for Jews of the Balfour plan constituted a "privileged position" for Zionists, and in a consistory Pope Pius urged that Christians and Holy Places in Palestine be protected against non-Catholics and Jews. In a Papal Bull of 1924 he again urged that Catholic interests in Palestine be safeguarded.

Meanwhile a veritable anti-Zionist campaign was waged by Vatican officials and publications. L'Osservatore Romano and Civiltà Cattolica more particularly editorialized against Zionism and called for internationalization of the Holy Places.

During his early Pontificate Pope Pius XII espoused a policy favoring the status quo of that time, which included a national home for Jews under the British mandate. But as the conflict in Palestine worsened he adopted a policy of neutrality. He was impressed by the humanitarian work done

by the Zionists in Palestine. The partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab State was approved by most Catholic countries. The Vatican made no comment on the occasion and was satisfied that the city of Jerusalem would be internationalized. In three Encyclicals Pius XII pleaded for internationalization and the protection of Christian rights and places in Israel. L'Osservatore Romano and Civiltà Cattolica continued to fight Zionism and the State of Israel in their pages.

When Israel sought membership in the United Nations several Catholic countries opposed it on the grounds that the plan for internationalization of Jerusalem proposed by the United Nations had not been honored.

In 1952 Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett of Israel was received in audience by Pius XII. Meanwhile, many eminent Catholics visited Israel and many Catholic religious took up residence and citizenship there. By 1967 Vatican authorities were impressed by Israel's behavior toward the Holy Places, and by 1968 had ceased speaking of internationalization of the city of Jerusalem.

Pope John XXIII, friendly to Jews and Israel but continuing Vatican policy, did not establish official ties with Israel, mostly because of fear of Arab reprisals, it was believed. Churchmen throughout the Middle East were thoroughly hostile to Israel, and brought heavy pressure on

the Vatican in that direction.

Pope Paul VI maintained the policy of neutrality but in several talks asked for a special juridical status for Christians and the Holy Places in Israel. He visited Israel in 1964 as a pilgrim. On this occasion he referred to President Shazar as "Your Excellency," but never used the word "Israel." During his administration he received Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Prime Minister Golda Meir in audience.

Many consider the present relationship between the Vatican and Israel as a de facto recognition of that State. There are grounds to believe that Israeli authorities are satisfied with this arrangement. It is feared, particularly on the Catholic side, that a de jure recognition at this time would do more harm than good. Meanwhile Church authorities have expressed their satisfaction with the manner in which Israel has conducted itself with respect to the Holy Places. And it appears that the Vatican has forsaken its demand for internationalization of Jerusalem, seeking rather some form of international agreement respecting rights of Christians and the protection of the Holy Places.

Christian institutional anti-Zionism is essentially a political entity. Its foremost driving forces have had to do with rights of Christians in Israel, open access to the Holy sites, property interests, and fear of Arab reprisals or disfavor. The last motive is probably the most potent.

Is antisemitism involved in this form of anti-Zionism? As in most cases of anti-Zionism, there exists most~~ly~~ likely some degree of it, but this factor should not be exaggerated. It lurks in the background, unconsciously coloring considerations arising from other areas.

Of greater import is the question: to what extent were theological considerations a factor? The question overflows the bounds of institutional anti-Zionism and constitutes a form all its own, which may be named theological anti-Zionism.

3. What is theological anti-Zionism? Briefly, it is the belief that Jews are an exiled people destined to dispersal throughout the world without temple or homeland until the end of time in expiation for their part in the death of Christ and their rejection of Him as their Messiah and Lord. To a large extent it was a corollary of the deicide charge elaborated in the early Patristic era, which held Jews responsible for the death of Christ. In the second half of the fourth century there was added to this charge the belief that a divine punishment was visited on the Jews which included a prohibition that they should not return to their Temple and homeland. St. John Chrysostom was a prime expositor of this opinion. He, among others, was powerfully impressed by the failure of Julian the Apostate (Emperor) to rebuild the Temple in 363 C.E. Historians of the time record that miraculous happenings confounded attempts at reconstruction

of the Temple. The happenings were interpreted as a divine intervention, and thereafter certain texts of the Old and New Testaments were educed as predictions of the perpetual exile of Israel. Several of the Fathers adopted this position, but they did not represent a universal tradition or majority of patristic opinion.

Despite the lack of scriptural or full patristic backing, the view that Jews could not return to Israel spread and became a prominent part of medieval Christian folklore as well as a firm conviction among many theological writers. The popular myth of the "wandering Jew" is one of its offshoots.

It is against the backdrop of such thinking that the remark of Pope Pius X, cited earlier, is to be evaluated. So also is the hostility ^{or} ~~of~~ disfavor with which so many conservative Christian writers and spokesmen of the last several decades have greeted Zionist efforts.

The confutation which the recent return of Jews to Israel has given to such views has of course greatly weakened them, if not actually dealt them a mortal blow. It is a hardy theologian indeed who today would give credence to the old thesis. Perhaps the revenge the rejected views take is to be found in the coolness of many Christian leaders and observers in matters touching Israel. They live on as a kind of theological hangover wielding a negative influence on considerations of Israel arising from other than theological

spheres.

III. Christian Zionism

It comes as a surprise at this juncture of our discussion to learn not only that there are Christian Zionists but also that they were in a sense the first Zionists. I mean first of course with respect to modern political and social Zionism.

These proto-Zionists are not usually considered a integral part of Zionism proper since their motivation was at base religious and conversionist. Ben Halpern in his fine book The Idea of the Jewish State does not consider them true Zionists, pointing out they they paid little attention to Zionism as a solution to the important facets of "the Jewish problem." Yet there can be little question that they popularized the idea of Jews returning as a body to Palestine long before modern Jews seriously entertained the idea. By the time Herzl initiated political Zionism at the close of the last century they had made the Christian, and even the Turkish, world somewhat receptive to the idea of a Jewish return to Palestine. More, they set the stage for a group of British statesmen in the 20th century who, having acquired their Zionist leanings from this current of Christian Zionism, laid the groundwork for the British policy favoring a homeland for Jews in Palestine. Lord Arthur Balfour was one of this group. Without this group, it is possible to speculate, the state of Israel would not exist as it is, or at all, today.

Christian Zionism began in the 16th century of pietistic and millenarian inspiration. Its first spokesman seems to be Thomas Brightman, who is considered founder of what is commonly known as the "Restoration Movement," meaning the movement which promoted the return of the Jews to Palestine. In this century such names as Hugo Grotius, Oliver Cromwell, and Roger Williams stand out on the list of involved.

The next two centuries saw a widening and deepening of the movement. Several statesmen took an interest, and in the 18th century many churchmen, writers, poets were added to their number. All, directly or indirectly, drew their motivation from the religious current: directly, as in the case of the bishops of London and Bristol, England; less directly perhaps in the case of Lord Byron.

The 19th century was the heyday of Christian Zionism. Books, tracts, association, political proposals, resettlement plans, and literary pieces multiplied in several countries, especially in England. Most of the endeavors were millenarian or fundamentalist in inspiration, and practically all were Protestant. A new development was a shift in some quarters from a purely theological or scriptural interest in the restoration to a nationalistic one, to a greater interest in the return for its own sake. In her Daniel Deronda George Eliot exemplified this new turn. Christian Zionists no longer felt constrained to a biblical motivation in their

Zionist endeavors.

With the Arab revolt against the Turks in Palestine in the 1830's and with the emergence of British and French political designs on the Middle East, the quality of Christian Zionism was further tempered and reinforced by patriotic concerns. Another development came in England toward the end of the century with Edward Cazalet, who proposed to Parliament that Palestine become a spiritual and cultural center for Judaism, anticipating Ahad Haam by many decades. The great names on the roster of Christian Zionism of this period were President John Adams, Alexander Dumas fils, and Benjamin Disraeli.

The 20th century saw the Restoration movement further widen its scope and receive recognition in many countries, principally Protestant. Some of the leading statesmen in England, influenced by restorationist ideals, gave their support. Joseph Chamberlain, Lloyd George, and Lord Balfour were prominent among them. Christian Zionism worked hand in hand with political Zionism, Jewish or Christian. The British Palestine Society, a organization of Christians and Jews bent on the harmonization of Zionist and British interests, provides an example in point.

This positive picture began to change about 1920 with the advent of Arab opposition to Zionism. Protestantism, until now sympathetic to Zionism, began to veer toward a

pro-Arab and even a non or anti-Zionist stance. Institutional interests predominated in the change.

From this point on an interesting cleavage developed in Protestantism. Pro-Zionism retreated into the Evangelical and fundamentalist sects, while liberal Protestantism became increasingly anti-Zionist by reason, in all likelihood, of the fundamentalist character of its fellow-Zionist coreligionists and also of the particularist character of Jewish attachment to eretz Israel. This bifurcation in Protestantism remains to this day.

As the century wore on, a new form of Christian Zionism made its appearance. Individual Christians, mostly from liberal ranks in Catholicism and Protestantism, striking out on their own, put their hand to building a Christian Zionism that was neither purely humanitarian nor Evangelistic but nonetheless properly Christian. There is of course more than one variety of this type of Zionism. In accent they run along a spectrum from the theological to the humanitarian and ethical, but are too numerous to outline here. I restrict myself to my own view, to which the residue of this talk will be addressed.

IV. Toward an Authentic Christian Zionism

An inquiry into the origins of the new brand of Christian Zionism would be of considerable interest. What brought about this new Christian sympathy to Zionism free of the traditional

conversionist approach and yet not necessarily dependent on a merely humanitarian outlook?

Unquestionably these origins are linked to the revision and renewal of the Christian theology of Judaism that has been underway in the churches in the present century. The revision began with the rejection of the deicide accusation. In all theologically respectable circles and on the authoritative level of most churches this age-old charge against the Jewish people was explicitly rejected and condemned. Further, the belief that Judaism as a means of salvation is rejected by God has lost much ground. More positively, the Jewish heritage of Christianity has been rediscovered and explored, and an appreciation of the vitality and riches of post-biblical Judaism has been gained. If we except a few isolated pioneers, the burden of these new gains has been carried by that new instrument of communication, the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Thanks to it mutual understanding and esteem have grown in a large sector of Christian and Jewish leadership and scholarship, and many misconceptions of the past have melted away.

It is against the backdrop of this theological development that the new approach to Zionism must be viewed.

Another consideration of importance is the Holocaust. In the aftermath of this horrendous event Christians came to the realization that they are tied to Jews by bonds of

guilt as well as of brotherhood and understanding. The conclusion could not be escaped that Hitler's genocide would have occurred without the connivance of many Christian individuals and nations or without the "teaching of contempt" and the "system of degradation" applied to Jews in the Christian centuries that preceded it.

Paradoxically, one of the strongest roots of Zionist fulfillment in our time was Christian antisemitism -- a sobering reflection for our contemporary Christian anti-Zionists. Had Jews been able to live in peace in Christian lands, yesterday and today, it is very doubtful that Zionism would have engendered the necessary impetus to found a state like that in Israel today. The Holocaust was but the final shock that convinced reasonable people that the only viable solution to oppression of Jews was a Jewish homeland or state. By 1945 it was apparent that this entity could only be located in Palestine where the first Jewish commonwealths flourished and where the hearts, prayers, and pilgrimages of Jews were centered for the last 1900 years.

A final factor we shall mention respecting the birth of the new Christian Zionism is the decline in Christian antisemitism. That it declined to some degree as the present century took shape can be seen by a mere comparison of this century with any that preceded it. We need not go into the reasons or motives for the decline. Was the secularization of

society itself enough to attract negative Christian energies in other directions than against Jews and Judaism? Or was the leaven of the Christian gospel of love beginning at last to take effect in an area where Christian hostility was at its worst? Questions for the historian. The old Judaeophobia, in any case, gave way to toleration, even to a degree of friendship. An interesting phenomenon was in process. The perennial Jew-hate, spawned in Christian institutions, was gradually vacating these to find new homes in completely laicized ones such as Soviet Communism, Fascist parties, "liberal" ideologies, anti-Zionism, and others again.

The decline in Christian antisemitism has effected a parallel decline in Christian anti-Zionism, and the latter process facilitated the emergence of the new integral Christian Zionism under discussion. This conclusion presupposed, obviously, a close relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. The relationship is, to my mind, both close and causal. For many this assertion would require more evidence, which cannot be provided here. Suffice it to say that the age-old antisemitic animus, despite some decline, lives on vigorously today. Its principal difference at present consists in the fact that, no longer socially or morally acceptable, it is repressed and leads a subliminal, nonetheless active, existence. Rejected at the bar of reason

and morality, it now must find disguised and socially acceptable ways of surfacing. Long analysis and observation of the matter has convinced me that the most common and effective disguise is anti-Zionism.

From the foregoing it is not to be deduced that an integral Christian Zionism necessarily drew from the ranks of former anti-Zionists, but rather merely ~~take~~ the decline in Christian antisemitism exerted an overall effect on all segments of Christian opinion on Zionism, allowing, for one thing, the traditional fundamentalist Zionism to develop into a more authentic and self-consistent kind.

V. The Structure of Christian ~~anti~~ Zionism

The structure of an integral Christian Zionism is many-storied. A human as well as a spiritual phenomenon, it includes elements which belong to other Zionism, but goes on to include specifically Christian ingredients. We proceed from the former to the latter.

1. A core of justice.

That the most persecuted people in Christian history was at long last conceded the right to return to a small portion of its original homeland through the instrumentality of the Zionist movement should in itself be enough to cause Christian rejoicing. Christian guilt already alluded to only reinforces the impulse to rejoice. Driven from its land centuries ago, the Jewish people never fully abandoned

this land in aspiration, prayer, or in fact. It remained the center of their spiritual and intellectual life and return to it was ever cultivated in mind and prayer as well as practiced by the perennial aliyot that took place. To shorten the story: in the present century, after many decades of peaceful settlement and land purchases, a certain portion of what was left of Palestine, following the establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, contained a Jewish majority. It was seen as reasonable and just that the solution to the conflict-ridden problem of Palestine was the formation of a Jewish state in this area in addition to an Arab Palestinian one. So was it decided and voted by the United Nations in 1947. Twice thereafter suit was made to the World Court at the Hague to challenge this action. Both times it was turned down, so fully was the justice of the UN action recognized by the Court. That the dispersed and harrassed Jewish people had a small homeland, a haven, a new source of national identity, and a promise of survival seemed, to say the least, to reasonable people to meet the basic requirements of justice. None should be more sensitive to these requirements than Christians, whose mission in the world had been so intimately -- and tragically -- tied to the fate of the Jews.

Over and above these norms of justice stand those of humanity and compassion. That this consideration is so often

lacking in the outlook of many Christians can only be explained by an all but complete ignorance of what has happened to Jews in Christian history and to a like ignorance of the true history of Zionism, both remote and proximate. A real understanding of Zionism is, of course, impossible ^{without} ~~with~~ a full acquaintance with these histories.

A first essential ingredient of a Christian Zionism, then, is that sense of justice and fair play that he holds in common with all reasonable and fair observers. With them he upholds Israel's juridical and moral right to exist and develop in place. He finds this stand in no way incompatible with his right to sustain the legitimate rights of Arab Palestinians or his right to criticize Israeli policies or actions he believes to be erroneous or wrong.

Something to Celebrate

The Christian Zionist generally finds himself in the ranks of those who admire the Zionist achievement in Israel. An unbiased and undistorted look at that achievement is best expressed in language of eulogy and celebration. A simple comparison of the territory from which Israel was shaped say in 1920, with Israel as it exists today upsets all our paradigms and expectations of state-building and social progress. Given the adverse territorial, economic, and political conditions of the area during the time

involved, the achievement almost defies explanation. To invoke what has been referred to as the Israelis' secret weapon, ain breira (No alternative!) is not enough. Some find it necessary, in final accounting, to speak in terms of quasi-miracle. The plain fact is that where there were no grounds for expecting it there is now a strong, vibrant, democratic, highly educated state and people which man for man and mile for mile compares favorably with any other state or people in the world. It is a state, moreover, in which we have potentially a great boon, to the entire Middle East economically and culturally, if Israel has accomplished this under stress and travail what could it not do in peace? So many reasons to celebrate.

It is possible in today's liberationist perspective terms to view the return of the Jewish people to Israel as a liberation of historic proportions. The situation of Jews in the diaspora throughout the centuries could never be regarded as that of and free equal citizens. Even in places where civil rights were -- and are -- guarded by law, subtle discriminations against Jews existed and psychological pressures weighed upon them. In Israel alone are the rights and dignity due them fully honored. The liberation of the Jewish people embodied in the creation of the State of Israel undoes a millennial oppression second to no other. This kind of understanding enters into the sense of cele-

bration that informs the Christian Zionist perspective.

3. Back to Theology

No Christian Zionism can fully remain outside the scope of Christian theology, including its doctrinal part. There exists a theology, often called positive, which attends to those aspects of belief which to some degree hinge on or flow from the coursing of history.

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POSTSCRIPT

In the final, unfinished part (Back to Theology) I had in mind to cut a path somewhere between a fundamentalist liberalism and a full blown rationalist criticism in employing scriptural and traditional theological concepts.

It centers on the problem of the land or sacred territory in Christian theology.

There are many views, those of Maritain, Davis, Berkhof, Hruby, Eckhart, Oesterreicher, et alii. My accent would have been on that of Maritain, who sees the preservation of Israel and the return of Jews to their homeland in Israel rooted in God's love and fidelity.

Messianic and eschatological considerations would have to be brought in.

An authentic Christian Zionism is open-ended. Its evolution and growth is certainly far from finished. This is a point to be made. Et cetera.

E. J. F.

October 17, 1977

MEMO

TO: Members of Israel Study

FROM: Ed Flannery

It has been brought to my attention that several of our study group have looked favorably on the possibility of working on the topic of "The Construction of an Authentic Christian Zionism" during the present working year.

I had made it known I began a piece on that subject a couple of years ago but left it incomplete. At the urging of some I have taken it out of mothballs and am sending it to Sr. Ann Patrick for distribution to our membership. It could serve as a starting point for discussions. If you have the patience to read it, you may be in a position to decide whether or not we should take up this subject for our agendum.

I have not reread the piece even cursorily for lack of time. Please overlook the numberless defects of thought, syntax, and spelling that no doubt proliferate in this brash attempt.

E. F.