**More Desired than Our Owne Salvation**

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### Rev. Dr. Robert O. Smith

Academic Director of the Jerusalem Global Gateway Program, Notre Dame University, Smith is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He once served as the church’s Area Program Director for the Middle East & North Africa. He also served as Special Adviser to the President of the Lutheran World Federation, Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan. He is the author of *More Desired than Our Owne Salvation: The Roots of Christian Zionism* (Oxford, 2013). Rsmith45@nd.edu.

1. Introduction. What is Christian Zionism? Smith is from Oklahoma and was raised in the evangelical Pentecostal tradition. He will be speaking from an American Protestant perspective, and his aim is to understand Zionism.
2. Opening Anecdote about Senator Inhof of Oklahoma. After September 11, 2001, people asked, “Why do Muslims hate us?” Senator Inhof spoke at the U.S. Senate. He said that the attacks were a Satanic act in the demonic minds of terrorists.
3. The USA and the State of Israel are fighting the same fight against the same enemy. We were not attacked because we have a “special relationship” with Israel, but because we have honored the people of Israel (Gen. 12:3). Why do Arabs hate Israel? Because it is a Western government based on biblical laws.
4. Inhof said there are seven grounds for Israel’s right to the land. The last is this: the West Bank belongs to Israel “because God said so,” since Abram pitched his tent at Hebron. Zionism is a contest over whether the word of God is true.
5. Inhof’s political orientation is determined by his scriptural hermeneutics.
6. What Is Scriptural Zionism? Smith says that “It is a problem, an illness, a disease, that is afflicting American Christianity.”
7. Aspects.
8. Is it support for political Zionism? That depends on what “Zionism” means. It can mean something secular, or it can be something wedded to Judaism.
9. Is it that Jews deserve a safe home? Smith affirms that.
10. Is it that Americans are rectifying their relations with the Jewish people?
11. Smith’s Definition. “Political Zionism is political action informed by specifically Christian commitments to support Jewish control over the geographic area now comprising Israel and Palestine.”
12. Smith will soon submit an article to the *Lutheran Quarterly*. But there are so many forms of Christian Zionism. It’s not in your set of beliefs, it’s in the political actions you take. If you support Jewish control for this territory, you are a Christian Zionist.
13. Many people in Oklahoma believe that every word of the Bible is true, and that Jesus will rapture people up before the tribulation. Smith’s grandma Rosie believes, however, that the land should be shared – thus she is not a political Zionist.
14. Dawkins: Christian Zionist is a “meme”, a unit of cultural transmission, a unit of imitation. It is an idea, behavior or style that spreads from person to person with a culture.
15. Christian Zionism and Its View of Arabs.
16. Zionism continues to inform how Anglo-American Christians view Arabs.
17. The Kairos Palestine Document (2009) condemns any theology “that legitimizes the occupation” because “it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, subordinating God to temporary human interests, and distorting the divine image in the human beings living under both political and theological injustice” (2.5).
18. The Kairos Palestine Document also “calls for repentance” and asks “our sister Churches not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed on us.”
19. The Kairos South African Document (1985 and 2015) criticized “state theology” and condemned theologies that justify Apartheid, saying that Zionism has become an element within the dominant structures of empire. “Christians cannot support the Zionism informing Israeli oppression.”
20. Zionism and Popular Culture.
21. The “Left Behind” series of ten novels reinforces Christian Zionism. Those who are “left behind” have to battle the anti-Christ.
22. Cultural Christian Zionism, like cultural fundamentalism, permeates some Christian cultures.
23. It informs the dominant/default American culture.
24. The “Left Behind” series dramatizes those left behind by Jesus after the rapture.
25. Christians United for Israel (CUFI) claims 50 million supporters in the world. It is linked to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). CUFI is led by Rev. John Hagee. Support for Israel is support for America.
26. Father Gabriel Naddaf is a Greek Orthodox priest who wants Palestinian Christians to join the JDF. He says, “We are not Arab or Palestinian; we are Aramaean.” He wants Palestinians to assimilate into the Jewish State.
27. The International Christian Embassy in Israel is older than CUFI. It annually brings Christian Zionists into the Jerusalem Parade, to show Christian support for Israel.
28. Tension with Evangelical Christianity. The chief rabbis of Israel are wary of Christian evangelicals because they want to evangelize.
29. The Political Dimension.
30. History.
31. John Nelson Darby (1800-82) was the founder of pre-millennial dispensationalism. He was anti-political. “We are not of this earth; we do not vote.” Thus John Hagee cannot claim Darby as his ancestor.
32. John Bale, in *The Image of Both Churches* (1545), wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation. He wanted all Jews to convert to Christianity, as part of God’s cosmic plan throughout history. This is the real source of Christian Zionism. He followed English Protestant Judaeocentric prophecy interpretation.
33. Thomas Morton of Berwick (1596) wrote: The conversion of the Jews “may be more desired than our owne salvation.” This is the landscape of proto-Puritan England.
34. The Earliest Example of Political Christian Zionism was in England. See “The Petition of the Jewes for the repealing of the Act of Parliament for their banishment out of England” (1648). The Jews had been banished from England since Richard II. The Petition was for the state to take an action for the benefit of the Jews, allowing them to stay in England.
35. They hoped for the Jews to form an army and fight, as Puritans, against the Ottoman Empire.
36. This would “prove” the Puritan view of Scripture, and thus destroy the Catholic Church.
37. There would be a “Jewish” part of the Church of Christ (those who fight against Muslims) and a “Gentile” part of the Church of Christ (fighting against Roman Catholicism).
38. The Distillation of the Tradition.
39. Joseph Mede (d. 1638) said, “These new Christians from the East” may undertake “an expedition against the beast.”
	1. The conversion of Israel will coincide with the “destruction of the Turkish empire.”
	2. Mede influenced the Puritans of the New World: Increase Mather, Cotton Mather, and Samuel Sewell.
40. William Blackstone (1830-1897), an American, published *Jesus Is Coming* (1878). He believed that Palestine is the Jews’ proper home. He is a Zionist, because he wanted action. He published “Palestine for the Jews.” Herzl’s pamphlet, *Der Judenstaat*, was published in 1896. Blackstone predated Herzl. Political Zionism is an American contribution, not a Jewish one.
41. American Zionism.
42. Themes.
43. It practices politics and wants to change the world.
44. It lacks doctrinal content, and is about politics.
45. Christian Zionism is an “imperial theology.”
46. The Imperial Theology.
47. Power belongs to empire. It is essential for the realization of God’s purposes.
48. For John Hagee, American military superiority has to support Israel.
49. The Gospel of Exceptionalism.
50. Manifest Destiny in the USA is about the expansion of American frontiers, and also about the Protestant renewal of the world.
51. In the 21st century, it is not about adherence to doctrines; it is a combination of religious traditionalism, of belief in American exceptionalism, and of whiteness.
52. White Traditionalist Evangelicals and Black Evangelical Christians have the same doctrinal beliefs, but in 2004, they differed on the question, “Do you believe that the USA should favor Israel over Palestinians?” Latter-Day Saints said yes. Black Protestants said no, whites said yes.
53. 62% of Americans believe in American exceptionalism. Latter-Day Saints agree 82%. 74% of white evangelicals. But Black Protestants were 41%. Black Protestants reject exceptionalism.
54. The racial foundations of cultural theology are noteworthy.
55. Thesis: Christian Zionism is a tradition harmful to Jewish-Christian Relations.
56. The Evangelical Protestant tradition sees Jews as “whites” who will fight on the “right side” against the enemies of Protestantism.
57. This has led to a “fetishized Jew.” Many Evangelical Christians don’t know any real Jews, and they ignore Arab Christians.
58. Arab Christians are *not* defenders of Christendom.
59. Palestinian Christians who do not see themselves as suffering under Islam “must be comprehended as having sided with Islam.”
60. Mitri Raheb said that Arab Christianity is inextricably linked with Islam.
61. Edward Said: “Being an Arab . . . means being a member of . . . an Islamicate world or culture.”
62. American Zionism is a political coverup for Israeli occupation.”
63. Discussion.
64. AIPAC and CUFI. How are they linked? Hagee said that CUFI is not about proselytism. AIPAC gave Hagee its blessing. Hagee claims to have convinced Jerry Falwell, “Jews do not have to be converted to be saved.” But Falwell rejected Hagee. Hagee says, “When we [Jews and Christians] see the messiah coming down the road, one of us will have a lot of explaining to do.”
65. The goal of Christian Zionists, they say, is merely to bless Israel. They have deliberately over-simplified matters, based on Genesis 12:3.
66. Theodore Herzl was preceded by American Zionism. Herzl is responding to anti-Semitism in the context of the Dreyfus Affair. Assimilation will never be enough. We have to go somewhere else: Argentina, Israel, Congo. Herzl was sought out by an Austrian, Heschler, who felt that Herzl was the prophet. Heschler frightened Herzl.