

DEZIONISATION OF CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY IN A QUEST FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF PALESTINIANS

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Abstract

This paper is an auto-ethnographic reflection using the lens of Postcolonial Theory to investigate the evolution of the political myths propounded by Zionists which is used as a justification for the existence of the State of Israel. It examines how biblical verses and expressions such as *'chosen people'*, *'promised land'* or *'A land without a people for a people without a land,'* serve as absolute narratives used by many fundamentalist Christians around the world including the Churches in the Philippines and Jewish Zionists as the *'title deeds'*. This state of mind perpetually vindicates ethnic division, military occupation, and triggers countless violations of basic human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territory [oPT]. This historical injustice is explored via Edward Said's Post-Colonial concept of *'imaginative geography'* in order to consider how the Zionist Jews and Christian eschatological doctrine reinforce and promote *'imaginative geography'* to re-conceptualize and Zionise the West Bank area. By repositioning our standpoint within the frames of the oppressed whose voice has been quashed into silence, this exploration aims to describe the condition of Palestinians whose story needs to be revisited.

Keywords: Arab Jews, Dispensational Theology, Imaginative Geography, Zionism

"No Palestinian State If I am re-elected..."

--- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, 16 March 2015

"In order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we should not dwell in the ancient past—we should forget it."

--- Slavoj Žižek, 2 March 2015

Introduction

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is a challenging hermeneutical problem today due to the thread of unfounded ideas propagated by evangelical Christian communities which continue to confound their sense of history.¹ In the Philippines for example, Christians are taught in Sunday school by Christian pastors that Israel is the nation of God. On a personal level, as a member of such congregation, I accepted this as a personal mantra without having a critical view of its ideological and geopolitical implications. Being situated in such position, notions of Abrahamic promises reverberate in the hearts and minds of most Christians which enhances the religious-ideological claims of the Zionist movement. As a result, taking the side of the Israelis against Palestinians is equivalent to the idea that one is in the side of God as the Scripture says so. This

¹ David D. Grafton, 'The Use of Scripture in the Current Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,' *Word & Word Volume*, 24, Number 1 Winter 200, (Minnesota, Saint Paul, 2004), 1.

belief spellbound a lot of Christian communities worldwide as such religious-ideological rhetoric convince believers to empathize with the Israelis.

Brought about by a cunning UN resolution, the myth of Zionism was installed as a geopolitical reality when Davin Ben-Gurion was inducted to be the first prime-minister of the State of Israel. Ben-Gurion gradually inscribed the Judeo-Christian eschatological belief in the minds of people as he claimed that God mandated him to establish the modern State of Israel.² This process enabled Judaism to be hijacked by the ideology of Zionism. This religious discourse legitimized an apartheid system carved in the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip which developed a thriving sentiment of animosity among its occupants until this day. Moreover, this political ideology gained a momentum of support as it extended in other communities worldwide since its inception notably the emergence of fundamentalist Christianity from the European continent and then later in the United States.³ It is this consolidated literalist interpretation of fundamentalist Christians and the unfounded political ideology of Zionism which muddled the true history behind the birth of the State of Israel in the 20th Century as most religious scholars and historians concur. Within the lines of this debate, pro-Israel Christian churches in the Philippines lamentably joined the same bandwagon. For example, biblical verses such as *"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"*⁴ are unthoughtfully spoken which creates the symbolic violence against the 'Otherness' of Palestinians. This literalist interpretation of the Scripture can be traced during the second wave of American Christian evangelical missions in the Philippines after World War II, and these views have not been clearly discussed thoroughly among Protestant and Evangelical Christians.

An inversion of reality occurs when one publicly expresses a blatant criticism of Israel's atrocious policies and actions toward Palestinians. This gesture is usually perceived as a form of anti-Semitism and overturns reality in which the victim becomes the villain. What happens further is that such reversal of the Palestinian reality becomes a political ruse which empowers the one who victimizes. The American Jewish activist Norman Finkelstein⁵ contends that castigating the critics of Israeli political violence against Palestinians as a form of Anti-Semitism is a misleading and misinformed accusation. Finkelstein argues it was used in order to mislead the international community from the concrete reality felt in the ground. Such classification are mislabels which immunizes the State of Israel against criticism from its racist, militaristic, and apartheid policies toward Palestinians.⁶ Finkelstein added that the Zionist state uses this misnomer to gain profit, political clout, and the blind unwavering support of the international community for the expansionist and illegal settlements of Israelis in Palestinian territory.

To avoid international attention, one of the most intractable acts of the State of Israel is the implementation of silent transfer policy in area C in West Bank area and East Jerusalem.⁷ This silent transfer policy uprooted those indigenous Palestinians from their own land. Critics say it is a covert policy of the State of Israel to advance their project of colonization or Zionisation of the West Bank

² John Rose, *The Myth of Zionism*, (London/Ann. Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2004), 8-9.

³ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism Road-Map To Armageddon?*, (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 26-30.

⁴ New International Version Genesis 12, 1-7.

⁵ He was born in a conservative Jewish and holocaust survival family. According to him, both of his parents were survivors of the Warsaw ghetto and the Nazi concentration camps.

⁶ Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, (New York: Verso Publisher, 2000), 9-38.

⁷ See Israel's Policy of Demolishing Palestinians Homes Must End – Accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.icahd.org/node/458#sthash.F9lUbdpo.dpuf>.

area. Unfortunately, the manipulation of information, hypocrisy, and duplicity in the mainstream media about this covert policy, as Finkelstein describes, undeniably observable.

The question then arises as to why this is happening? Scholars suggest that there are two fundamental reasons: first, the religious presupposition imbedded in my mind that Jesus was a Jew; second, my Pauline reading of the New Testament was highly influenced by Dispensational theology. This dispensational theology became the singular frame and foundation of this theological thinking. According to Dispensational theologians, the modern-day Israel is the direct remnant of Israelites or the twelve tribes of Jacob.⁸ Consequently, this religious-ideological statement is undisputed and universalized among conservative Christian movements in the Philippines.⁹

Shortly after my three months of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) everything has been changed. As a result of my understanding of Palestinian struggle, witnessing, and experiencing life under Israeli occupation I have realised that I need to rethink my Christian theological stance. Undoubtedly, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel program was an eye-opener for me. By cause of growing dissatisfaction with some of my previous social organizations, cultural practices, and theological convictions leads me to explore the social ministry of the World Council of Churches. We realized that these mythological claims of the modern State of Israel and the Western mainstream media are ideologically motivated to fabricate and distort the imagery of Palestinians. They misrepresent, distort, and mislead rather enlighten the international community about the actual reality on the West Bank area.

When we visited the massive Gaza border, we got stunned how secured those Israelis community living near the border. Undeniably, the wall is highly equipped and mobile that can stream images from various angles. I begin to wonder how the Palestinians in the Gaza can retaliate. In fact, Palestinians in the Gaza area does not have any military capabilities to do so. I witness how impossible it is for the people in Gaza to fight back against all these iron domes and huge borders that have been built by the modern State of Israel. As Noam Chomsky describes that Gaza is an open air prison.¹⁰ All of fabricated images and information about Palestinians was suddenly eroded in my mind. From time to time, I began to distill some conceptual understanding of my experiences. Eventually, I became fully convinced that something was wrong with my biblical-theological propositions about the modern State of Israel. No matter how I tried, I knew that I fell short in my understanding about the actual reality in the occupied Palestinian Territory as how the Western media depicted it. Whatever judgment one might take—for or against modern State of Israel—honestly, I find myself enthralled by their distorted claims of being a nation of God.

As British Trotskyist politician Jose Rose points out, this is an intellectual sleight-of-hand to manipulate the Bible stories to make them fit Zionism's political claims on Palestinian land.¹¹ If we

⁸ Both terms were hotly debated among the Jewish community and Hebrew scholars. 'Israeli' is the designated term for the modern citizen even if he or she has an Arab ethnicity. 'Israelite' is the biblical term used in the Hebrew Bible and Christian Bible. See Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, "Biology and Ideology", *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, (London/Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004), 18-28.

⁹ I am referring to the Pentecostals, Christian Evangelicals, Baptists, and some other Protestant churches in the Philippines. They embrace the literal readings of the Bible. Based on my research and discussion among the mainline Protestant and Orthodox Churches in the West Bank I can say that they testify that these churches have politically financially and theologically supported the foreign policy on Palestine and the rest of the Middle East Region.

¹⁰ Noam Chomsky, 'My Visit to Gaza, the World's Largest Open-Air Prison', *Op-Ed*, 09 November 2012, Accessed October 22, 2015, <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/12635-noam-chomsky-my-visit-to-gaza-the-worlds-largest-open-air-prison>.

¹¹ John Rose, *The Myth of Zionism*, (London/Ann. Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2004) 1-7.

take this seriously, the result of this religious ideological doctrine would lead to increasing violation of the Palestinians' basic right to exist in the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas.¹² Honestly, I spent two years to process and reorienting my misinformed understanding of the modern conflict in Israel and Palestine. To my mind, explaining this apparent paradox requires, first of all, a fundamental discussion that should be made of the historical development of Zionism and the contribution of Christian eschatology to the present conflict. Second, through postcolonial reflection on the anti-essentialist response borrowed from Palestinian intellectual scholar Edward Said, I must be willing to challenge the dominant view in different theological institutions or seminaries in the Philippines. Third, I need to address the culture of silence among Christian communities, and lastly, I need to offer a way of doing philosophy in response to a quest for the emancipation of Palestinians.

Glimpses of the Historical Development of Zionism and the Role of the Christian Literalist Movement

Geopolitically speaking, the complexity and long-fostering so called religious tension created by the birth of modern day State of Israel we know today, I would say, originally from competing demands and interests of Western colonizers and of the entire region, Middle East and North Africa region. Certainly, it has been prized for its location especially, who control large part of the Middle East by powerful Western countries. As Chomsky describes, the Israel's presence in the MENA region serves as a watchdog or military hardware of the United States has been thought to be necessary to counteract those world superpower competitors in black gold/oil industry.^{13,14} Aside from these oil market competitions, we know that US-Israel (Zionist) strategic movement in Middle East appears to be also seeking for political domination in the entire region.¹⁵ Inspired by the Zionist ideology with a religious face, the establishment of the modern State of Israel entails triumphalist-expansionist ideology in the Palestinian territory.¹⁶

Moreover, many questions arise including, how and when this ideological movement started? How did Israel become a powerful state actor in the Middle East region? How is it that World Christianity becomes silent about the violence/crime committed by the Zionist movement against the Palestinian people? I will not pretend to know everything. I am stating that in this section I will provide an overview of the subject matter shortly. Several attempts have already been made to explain the origins of Zionist ideology. Some scholars attempt to trace the political-metaphysical myths that framing and justifying the existence of the modern day State of Israel. In this section, the task is to provide a short introduction to the historical development of the Zionist movement, and how Christian theology was co-opted or hijacked by this religious ideology by exploiting biblical idioms, biblical narratives, and casting imaginative geography to justifying the illegal occupation the West Bank area.

I suggest that "imaginative geography" became a political instrument to frame and reframe our understanding of the Israel/Palestine conflict and to the entire Middle East region. These political-metaphysical myths (biblical idioms) are the source to sustain repression and culture of

¹² Rose, *The Myth of Zionism*, 1-2.

¹³ Lance Selfa, *Israel: The U. S. Watchdog*, *International Socialist Review Issue* 4, Spring 1998.

¹⁴ Noam Chomsky, *The Middle East Illusion*, (US: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 3-4.

¹⁵ "Edward Said: Imperial Continuity - Palestine, Iraq, and U.S. Policy" University of Washington, *The Walker-Ames Lecture Series* --8 May 2003, Accessed October 22, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgteOJ1LihU>.

¹⁶ Stewart Reiser, "The Arab-Israeli Wars, A Conflict of Strategic Attrition", *Prolonged Wars: The Post-Nuclear Challenge*, eds. Karl P. Magyar, Constantine P. Danopoulos, (July 2001), 68.

silent among Christian community when it comes to violation of human rights in the West Bank area. Interestingly, how this imaginative geography institutionally purported by Orientalist/colonialist/ and western academic discourse. Obviously, as Said describes, this fact continues to be evident in the Palestinian struggles by displacing them and erasing their history and identity.¹⁷

Link to my exposures during the EAPPI program I began to question my theological understanding and propositions based on dispensational theology. To my dismay, I discovered there were various theories and historical claims about when and where this ideological movement gradually and systematically formed. It is rather difficult to determine whether Western Christianity was at the stage of development or none at all. I learned that the Zionist movement is very influential political, economically, and sociologically. Admittedly, we are confronted with a religious ideology that claims to be all-powerful, without any alternative, and it seemingly without any possibility to challenge or to change it.

Arguably, the creation of Zionism often revolves around the Christian eschatological doctrine, specifically the 'Dispensational theology.' Stephen Sizer argues that Dispensationalist theology is a widespread eschatological doctrine created by the Western literalist interpretation of the Scripture.¹⁸ According to Sizer, it divides the history of the world into 'dispensations', divinely established periods. This theological doctrine holds that God provided Israel with specific promises which will be fulfilled at a later time. Dispensationalist theologians read the Christian Scripture by using current events. Obviously, as was to be expected, dispensationalist Christians are selective in their choice of verses of the Christian Scripture. By literal interpretation and quoting Biblical verses, they will be justifying their bigotry through the Christian Scripture.

I would consider that dispensational theologians as a community of self-proclaimed endtime prophets. Western Fundamentalist Christians as expressed themselves as end-time survivalist community paved the way for the creation of the modern day State of Israel. Using biblical idioms Zionist Jews and Christian eschatological doctrine reinforce and promote "imaginative geography." It can be describes that this concept forged, re-conceptualized and zionised the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestine. Ironically, the origins of the Zionist thinkers are secular, and yet, Zionists argue that the Hebrew Bible is their mandate. As Nur Masalha describes, that Zionists seized, radicalized, and nationalized the Hebrew Scripture, and it became central sources to modern fundamental myths of the secular Zionism.¹⁹ This pushes Zionist cast imaginative gazes upon territory they coveted or illegally occupied, and the landscapes captured in such gazes became sites not of reflection and contestation, but projection and the fulfillment of biblical prophesies. Consequently, the Hebrew Scripture and the Christian Scripture now became an ideological apparatus to project and justify the occupation (zionisation) of the East Jerusalem and the West Bank area.

Historically-theologically speaking, Dispensational theology is often discussed and is extremely complicated therefore; I treated here only partially in a brief sketch. Dispensational theology was promoted after the First World War by Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921), the author of the Scofield Reference Bible.²⁰ These materials has been circulating extensively among Christian communities and seminaries on the worldwide. According to critics, these materials has

¹⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 3-61; *On Palestine Question*, (New York: Vintage Book, 1992), 16-17.

¹⁸ Stephen Sizer, *Dispensationalism: Its History, Theology and Politics*, (Online Edition, 2005), 72-87.

¹⁹ Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archeology and Post-Colonialism in Israel-Palestine*, (USA: ZED Books, 2007), 25.

²⁰ Sizer, *Dispensationalist: Its History, Theology and Politics*, 88-91.

elicited a storm of controversy among biblical scholars and Christian communities. One of the proponent and influential figures of this theological doctrine is John Nelson Derby. Derby's biblical knowledge is questionable. Most of the Christian dispensational theologians consider John Nelson Darby (1800-82) is the father of dispensationalism and his protégé, namely, Cyrus I. Scofield and D.L. Moody.²¹ In his own time, Darby efforts turned into apologetic about Christian theological understanding of end-times attracted most of American churches. It has been suggested that Zionism was originally formulated by Christian theologians in the United Kingdom and later, in Europe region in the late nineteenth century.²² Eventually, it was imported into the United States of America.

Stephen Sizer argues that Darby's protégé, Scofield and Moody, brought Darby's sectarian theology into mainstream evangelical circles.²³ Sizer contends that this theological system has been accepted by the majority of current American T.V. and popular evangelicals, specifically in the US Bible belt.²⁴ According to the survey, 82% of white evangelical Christians think God gave the Jewish people Israel.²⁵ The dramatic development of this theological system can be traced from individual conviction or interpretation to its institutionalization. It might be said that the three largest seminaries in the US namely, Moody Bible Institute, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Southwestern Baptist Seminary are the leading school in the world which espouse Dispensational Theology and are Christian Zionist.²⁶ Aside from these, there are now proliferation of these Christian-Zionist ideologies and movements both on ground and at the level of institutions, particularly in the mass media. Obviously, the strategy is supported by American pro-Israeli lobbyists, diplomats, and Christian churches around the world. This strategy is counter the growing Anti-Christian Zionist movement around the world which sees it as a new form of anti-Semitism, and those people who has been anxious about the growing threat to the legitimacy of Zionist political-metaphysical claims of the modern state of Israel.

One of the powerful international Christian Zionist organizations is the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem or ICEJ.²⁷ The ICEJ is also closely linked to one of the largest US Zionist Christian organization namely; Christians United for Israel lead by American popular evangelist John Hagee.²⁸ Despite of much controversy about being a Christian and a Zionist at the

²¹ Steven Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Dispensationalism and The Roots of Sectarian Theology: A History of Dispensational Approaches*, Information Clearing House, 2000, Accessed October 28, 2015, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article4531.htm>.

²² Michael Prior & William Taylor, *Christians in the Holy Lands*, (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 2004), 19-107.

²³ Steven Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Dispensationalism and The Roots of Sectarian Theology: A History of Dispensational Approaches*, Information Clearing House.

²⁴ Steven Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Dispensationalism and The Roots of Sectarian Theology: A History of Dispensational Approaches*, Information Clearing House.

²⁵ See 'More Christian Americans Believe God Gave Israel to the Jewish People than Jewish Americans Themselves,' *Pew Research Center*, October 2013, Accessed October 28, 2015, <http://bennorton.com/more-christian-americans-believe-god-gave-israel-to-the-jewish-people-than-jewish-americans-themselves/>.

²⁶ Steven Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Dispensationalism and The Roots of Sectarian Theology: A History of Dispensational Approaches*, *Information Clearing House*.

²⁷ See *Christian Zionism 101*, Accessed October 28, 2015, <http://int.icej.org/media/christian-zionism-101>.

²⁸ See Christian United for Israel or CUFI, Accessed October 28, 2015, http://www.cufi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_pastor_john_hagee.

same time, these people are committed to support the Zionist and its dispensationalist agenda. None of these [forerunners] are intimidated by the critics. These Christian Zionists and dispensationalist theologians are to be held sacrosanct, vigilant, and have characterized strong emotional value to defend the modern day State of Israel.

Since dispensationalist theology is diverse, it is difficult to limit all of dispensational theology into few core values. Nevertheless, the most important beliefs were identified, and there was general agreement on them among dispensational theologians. The major agreements or themes of dispensationalist theologies are: *first*, the modern State of Israel is present nation of God (direct descendant of the Ancient Israelites); *second*, the promised land belongs only to modern day Israel (absolute ownership not conditional); *third*, the precondition of the coming of Christ is the rebuilding of the so-called '*Third Temple*'²⁹ exactly where the Dome of the Rock is located; *lastly*, those unbelieving nations would unite and plot against modern day Israel. According to this theology, Christ will immediately appear to defend Israel. At the end, the modern day State of Israel would be convinced that Christ is their rejected Savior.

One of the major arguments for Zionist Jews and Christian dispensationalists, that the modern day State of Israel is the direct descendant of the Ancient Israelite. In results, this historical claim has spelt a huge amount of trouble and multifarious miseries toward Palestinians. During 1948, the establishment of modern day State of Israel, this theological interpretation mixed with ideological element, and utilizes as justification for Zionist Israelis to eradicate Palestinian's towns, and villages. In terms of fatalities, the death toll on both sides has been increasing. Statistically speaking, in 2000 alone, by September 29, at least 1,198 Israelis and 9,151 Palestinians have been recorded killed.³⁰ In addition, past records and the ongoing slaughters in Gaza strip and West Bank area not included in these figures. In August 2014 the Israeli military operation in Gaza was undeniably a crime against humanity.³¹ The status of modern day State of Israel, as a direct descendant of the Ancient Biblical Israelites, immune to criticism from global Christians, Jewish activists, Human Rights movements, and international laws.

Secondly, rebuilding of the *third Temple* concept is predominant among Zionist Jews and Fundamentalist Christians who hold that the modern day State of Israel is the direct fulfilment of promises from the Hebrew Bible. For the Jewish claimant, it is an eschatological fulfillment of the Davidic promise. As we discussed earlier, this concept is frame and overarching theme within the Dispensationalist theology and Zionist ideology. Perhaps, I would say, the centrepiece of the Zionist ideology. One might say the climax of the end-time prophecy is the coming of Christ. The coming of Christ is to defend the modern day State of Israel against all nations who plotted against them. If one looks into the countless publications on the theme of rebuilding the *third temple* concept is numerous, I find it quite disturbing and dangerous contribution of the Dispensationalist theology especially in the context of Palestine and Israel conflict. However, it is not all embracing and acceptable among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. For dispensationalist Christians and Zionist Jews, rebuilding the *third temple* would be a national divine symbol to the modern day State of Israel. Needless to say, this would be a triumph of the western colonisation of the Palestine, and a disastrous to the entire Middle East region.

²⁹ See *Temple Mount Institute Jerusalem*, Accessed October 24, 2015, https://www.templeinstitute.org/temple_mount.htm.

³⁰ See UN OCHA *Special Report on occupied Palestinian territory*, 2000, Accessed October 24, 2015, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/BE07C80CDA4579468525734800500272>.

³¹ *Human Rights Watch Report on Israel/Palestine*, Accessed October 24, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/israel/palestine>.

To fulfill this apocalyptic theme, dispensational theologians argue that global Christian community should give their unconditional support to the modern day State of Israel. Aside from Christian supporters, global Zionist movement is gaining a tremendous political support from powerful Western countries such as US, Britain, and Germany. We witness over a decade ago the most powerful nation who untiring supporter of modern day Israel is the United States of America. Both right-wing parties and Christian conservative communities are united to adopt and pursue Zionist agenda in the United State politics and Middle East region. The results of this special relationship translated into unconditional military and financial aids to modern day State of Israel are overwhelming. As Chomsky describes, for decades the US has had this special relationship with Israel and it is expressed on the two levels of military and economic aid.³² This unholy alliance is controversial and unchallenged. Instrumentalizing biblical idioms and narratives, Christian dispensationalist theologians believe that by supporting the Zionist agenda in the Middle East and North African region is equivalent to preparation of the immanent return of Christ. Alongside, as John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt argues, that the main role of Washington is to provide unconditional diplomatic support and votes in National Security Council resolutions.³³ The points is, the strong Jewish influence of lobbyists in the US Congress have brought Israel billions of dollars in financial support from the US and other Western countries. Needless to say, Zionist Jewish lobbyists in the US provide material and financial support for Israel. So, critics describes, Zionist Jewish lobbyists and the Christian right wing are warmongers, and racists. Pro-Israel Christians provides a religious ideological justification for the war-crime against Palestinians. As Palestinian Christian and Lutheran minister Mitri Raheb simply put it, the international community supplies Israel a hardware while Christian right wing or fundamentalist Christian churches provide Israel with a software.³⁴

The Christian-Zionist ideological narrative and projection is destructive agenda, leading worldwide Christian communities to withhold their criticism against the crimes committed by the modern State of Israel. Under the influence of the Zionist ideological spell Christian dispensationalist theologians legitimate those atrocities of the Zionist regime (modern day State of Israel). Since 1948, this has become the 'title deeds' for justifying ethnic division, military occupation, building apartheid wall, and violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territory [oPT]. We can see straight away the links between ideology and religious involvement through understanding dispensational theology and the ideology of Zionism.

Edward Said, *Orientalism/Culture and Imperialism/Postcolonial Response Imaginative Geographies*³⁵

This section is devoted to the concept of Edward Said's work on imaginative geography. If one want to understand Said's contribution to the current debates, all required basic knowledge such as colonialism, politics of identity, and power, required to have a basic knowledge of the French

³² Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*, (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 48.

³³ John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, 'The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, Fall (2006), 30.

³⁴ An Interview with Reverend Mitre Raheb, *Did God Give Israel the Land?*, Produced by the United Church of Canada, February 2, 2015, Accessed October 24, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8REdBQ30d8>.

³⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Book, 1979), 50-73.

critical thinker Michael Foucault on the link between power and knowledge.³⁶ Like Foucault, Said begins with the most fundamental question of how academic/knowledge discourse is linked to power.³⁷ Foucault's work presents this familiar critical vocabulary in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison and The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, and one can identify certain elements of his thought that are important for Said. Foucault argued that power is basically produced and reproduced knowledge. Foucault argues power manufactures our knowledge or idea of the world. Foucault describes power structures and structuring our constitutive immediate world. Obviously, there are many similarities in this precise interrelationship between Said and Foucault's idea of the relationship between power and knowledge. In fact, Said criticizes our present academic institutions due to its relation with economic imperialism and its accompaniment, media imperialism.³⁸ As Said argues, a systematic process of orientalizing the oriental by Western academicians are ambiguous and stereotyping.³⁹ In short, the oriental categories were originally a result of Western political and ideological imperialism. In the case of the Israel and Palestine conflict, Israel is always projected as victims and Palestinians as terrorists. The Christian dispensationalist and Zionist ideological discourses successfully spread this ideologically constructed victimhood against the Palestinian narrative. In results, it distorts the imagery of Palestine; it silences their voice, and marginalized Palestinian activists and Jewish activist who fought to survive against the atrocities and occupations of the modern day State of Israel. The ironic is that while Israelis is fighting for occupation Palestinians is fighting for survival.

Again, using the biblical idioms, the modern day State of Israel projecting and casting "*imaginative geography*" onto the Palestinian territory. Besides, Jewish white supremacy becomes a notorious ideology that caters for colonizing Palestine. As Keith W. Whitelam argues that Jewish white supremacy attempts to deny the space and time of Palestinians' history or existence.⁴⁰ But how this *imaginative geography* take place? Along with a certain methodology and style, Said draws on Foucault's important theorization of power and knowledge. This discussion provides a consolidation of the idea how Christian dispensationalist and Zionist Jews construct and reconstruct their narrative of the land of Palestine. The modern day State of Israel exploits the literal interpretation of the Hebrew and Christian Scripture. By projecting these ancient biblical maps on to the Palestinian territory, they dismiss their crime of occupation. Invoking and purging the ancient names and cities of the Scriptures terminates basic rights and history of the indigenous Palestinian community. The Judaisation or zionisation process takes place by using invented tradition and archeology to annihilate any trace of the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory. For example, the Zionist state erases the names of Palestinian cities and villages by replacing them with biblical names and utilizing three forms of demolition: punitive, administrative and military/clearing land.⁴¹ Indeed, it is

³⁶ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power", *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 131.

³⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Book, 1979), 32-49.

³⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 330.

³⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 49-72.

⁴⁰ Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History 1st Edition*, (Abingdon, Oxon, Oxford, Routledge, 1996), 71-121; Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism*, (London, ZED Books, 2007), 15-134; A Campaign Focusing Attention on Israel's Policy of Judaisation, ICAHD, May 16, 2015, Accessed September 18, 2015, <http://icahd.org/blog/2015/05/16/a-campaign-focusing-attention-on-israels-policy-of-judaization/>.

⁴¹ Ronen Shnayderman, *Through No Fault of Their Own Punitive House Demolitions during the al-Aqsa Intifada*, November 2004, Accessed September 18, 2015, www.btselem.org.

a troubling thought that Zionist victory using correlationism with the Hebrew Scripture or Christian Scripture to conquest of the Palestinians' land. Thus, *imaginative geography* operates as a discourse and continuum action that extends forward, reaching towards an infinite point of progress of Israeli occupation of the land of Palestine. Obviously, this is how the modern day State of Israel uses and manipulates biblical language or idiom to create and reinforce their power to colonialize or zionise the land of Palestine. Such terms as '*chosen people*', '*promised land*' or '*a land without a people for a people without a land*,' operates as a discourse in continuum action towards the colonization or zionisation of the land of Palestine.

At the height of the tension between Iran and the US and its allies, the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, provided the US President Barak Obama with a genocidal Bible story - the story of Esther that ends with the mass-murder of Persians.⁴² In this gesture, the prime minister of Israel underscores that violence is at the heart of the sacred text, particularly to those who are not in favor of the existence of the modern day State of Israel's illusionary and imperialistic agenda in the MENA region. Conservative politicians, Zionist Jews and Christians often exploits the religious text in their public statements and appearances in order to be more appealing and convincing to their Christian audience. Such strategies are effective to those uninformed listeners. This theo-political tendency is not simply the result of successful marketing skilled Zionist politicians, lobbyists, and diplomats; rather it draws from the religious text of the Scripture. It endeavors to frame and reframe the issue and speaks to a hunger for waging war against the enemy of the chosen people of God. These problems cannot be disassociated from the framework of dispensationalist theology in which they appeared and developed their urgency to colonialize or zionise the land of Palestine.

In the Zionist rhetoric and self-perception, it seems that sacred text is in the lynching, pogrom and technological weaponry of today how to deal with Palestinians. For Said, to project these biblical idioms is a form of the Western style of dominating the Orient.⁴³ In the case of zionisation of the land of Palestine, this clearly demonstrates how history is written by the victors. Biblical idioms such as '*chosen people*', '*promised land*' or '*a land without a people for a people without a land*,' made up of the interruption of the pluralities and suspension of diversities. The proliferation of meanings all points to singularities of absolute claims of the Zionist Jews to the land of Palestine. For them, to uphold the supernatural rights of state of Israel over the land of Palestine is to uphold the promises of God. This definition has a political action that suggests that modern day Israelis are ready to defend their self-serving ideology of exceptionalism. Moreover, Said notes that these biblical idioms exercise one-sided hegemonic power of the West over the oriental.⁴⁴ This impulse encourages and attempts to construct and reconstruct the identity, local history, and the future of the oriental; frequently it persecutes what it sees as a threat to the established power of the West.

The process is intended to marginalize and exclude a certain group, belief and practices and authorize another group, belief and practices. It is an immense repertoire of Zionist colonialisation or zionisation of the land of Palestine. The result of the instrumentalizing of these biblical idioms is disastrous for Palestinians. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2014 report, IDMC, estimates that there were at least 263,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in occupied Palestine as

⁴² Philip Weiss, *Netanyahu gives genocidal bible story to Obama US Politics*, March 7, 2012, Accessed October 27, 2015, <http://mondoweiss.net/2012/03/netanyahu-gives-genocidal-bible-story-to-obama#sthash.JHoHOvRZ.dpuf>. See also *Netanyahu quotes Jesus and Bible 5 times in U.N. speech - PIJN 0157* - Dr. Chaps Klingenschmitt, Oct 15, 2013, Accessed October 27, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zt33_KafqKA.

⁴³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Book, 1979), 3.

⁴⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 5.

of September 2014 alone.⁴⁵ Aside from this, since 1948 up to 1967 Palestinians lost almost 78% of their land to the state of Israel.⁴⁶ This zionisation or colonialisation is a continuum until this very moment.⁴⁷ Palestinian refugees are another important issue.

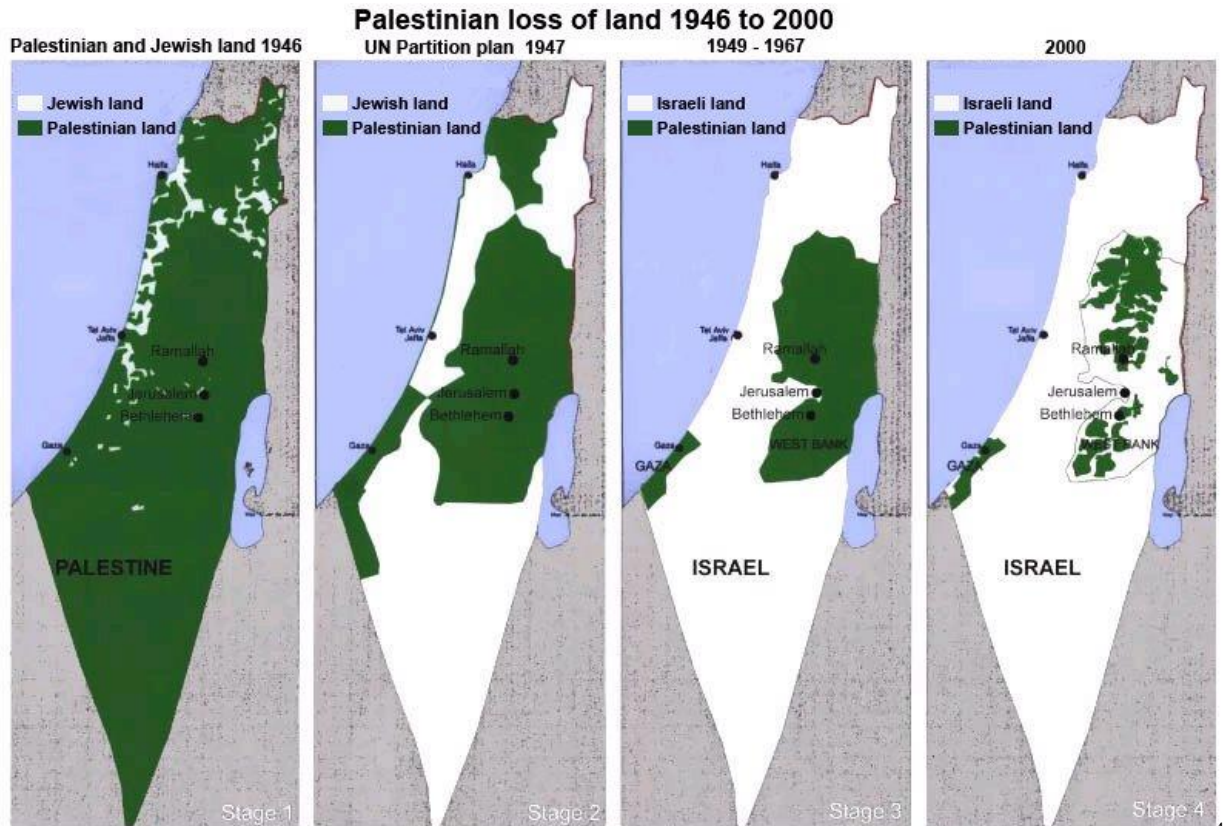


Photo credit: JRIJ, 2015⁴⁸

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has documented that since 1950 UNRWA is catering the basic needs of 750,000 Palestine refugees.⁴⁹ In

⁴⁵ Occupied Palestine: A policy of displacement and dispossession amid renewed conflict, *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre Report Overview*, 27 October 2014, Accessed October 25, 2015, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/palestine/2014/occupied-palestine-a-policy-of-displacement-and-dispossession-amid-renewed-conflict>.

⁴⁶ Palestinian Loss of Land: 1946 – 2012, *Written by AUPHR*, Wednesday, 26 September 2012, Accessed October 25, 2015, <http://auphr.org/index.php/news/5100-palestinian-loss-of-land-1946-2012>.

⁴⁷ Survey of Palestine Maps, *The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ)*, Accessed October 25, 2015, <http://www.arij.org/survey-of-palestine-maps.html>.

⁴⁸ Palestine Map, *The Applied Jerusalem Institute-Jerusalem/Society*, Accessed October 31, 2015, <http://www.arij.org/>

⁴⁹ Palestinian Refugees, *The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees*, Accessed October 25, 2015, <http://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States. UNRWA also receives some funding

addition, UNRWA also stated that approximately 5 million Palestine refugees are eligible for UNRWA services.⁵⁰ The view taken here is that much of what happens in the land of Palestine and to the Palestinians is a form of ethnic cleansing. Actually this is how a modern Israeli historian Ilan Pappé describes it in his book entitled *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*,⁵¹ whilst Anita Shapira confirms that the Zionist leadership legitimized the use of terror over Palestinians civilians even earlier.⁵² It justified forced silent transfer and eradication of the Palestinians' villages. The map below is a representation of the systematic colonialisation/Zionisation/Judaisation of the Palestinian territory (Figure 1).

Anti-Essentialist Response [Jews-Arab]

Some years ago, there was a craving for academic pursuit of the identity discourse of Israelis and the Palestinians. The international news about the question of DNA sequencing studies or the eugenics movement regarding Western Zionist Jews, this is very disturbing. People were preoccupied by the genetic composition that was based on the historical theo-political claims of the modern day Jews.⁵³ Ironically, modern science has become a political tool to manipulate a specific truth-claim. A former Palestinian professor of genetics and director of clinical cytogenetic services at Yale School of Medicine, Dr. Mazim B. Qumsiyeh, argues that it is an intentional exploitation of science in favor of one political ideology.⁵⁴ Actually, this practice of racial purity is not new to us. The connection between biology, ideology and religion is a heritage common to all modern states. The scrub of much identity politics is supported by an impressive construction and reconstruction of facts. During 1907-1960, the US government used fumigated to prevent those people who were deemed genetically inferior from reproducing without their consent, pursuant to state laws and without criminalizing those people who execute it.⁵⁵ In short, the victims were the mentally ill and disabled individuals. This was later radicalized and exploited under the leadership of Hitler regarding the European Jews.⁵⁶ This shows how the state can be powerful to award, remove and to reduce your rights, including your identity. The racist state has the power to marginalize or to exclude and include a certain group vis-a-vis a favored group. The state also has the capability to construct and reconstruct local and national identity.⁵⁷ The tragic elimination of the local identity of one ethnic

from the Regular Budget of the United Nations, which is used mostly for international staffing costs.

⁵⁰ Palestinian Refugees, *The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees*, [date is not indicated].

⁵¹ *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (London: One world Publications, 2006).

⁵² Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Power*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 350.

⁵³ Kate Yandell, 'Jewish Heritage Written in DNA,' *The Scientist*, September 9, 2014, Accessed October 30, 2015, <http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/40956/title/Jewish-Heritage-Written-in-DNA/>.

⁵⁴ Mazim B. Qumsiyeh, *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, (London/Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004), 19.

⁵⁵ M. B. Qumsiyeh, *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, 20.

⁵⁶ Judy Scales-Trent, 'Racial Purity Laws in the United States and Nazi Germany: The Targeting Process,' *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23.2 (2001) 260-307. See also *The Quest for Racial Purity: Germans with Mental and Physical Disabilities, African Germans, and Roma*, (author and date are not indicated), Accessed October 31, 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20090831-nazi-ideology-book-part2.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Alex Murray, *Giorgio Agamben*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 68.

group in favor of White supremacy is a form of Western colonialisation. Again, it is an exercise of one-sided hegemonic power of the West over the oriental. Aside from this, this purist Jewish identity is reflected in the Constitution of Israel.⁵⁸ This social construction of the Jewish identity has become the determining factor of the excluding and including discourse.⁵⁹

It is a form of totalizing one's own identity and ethnicity in the guise of religious language, knowing the all identity and ethnicity are based on the social construction of reality. But the Zionist Jews insist on it. Qumsiyeh argues that the apologetic of modern Zionist Jews claims that being Jewish is not merely religious or an imagined community but a national ethnic community and race emerged and direct descendant from the Ancient biblical Israelites, particularly from the twelve tribes of Israel.⁶⁰ Again, this bases the privilege and supernatural rights of the state of Israel over the land of Palestine upon the promises of God. This statement is meant to confront the problem of identity and right to land that was explored by Edward Said. This is precisely an essentialist understanding of Jewish identity. Unfortunately, it is prevalent among Zionist Christian churches. In fact, those Jews who are married to Arabs are discriminated against in modern Israeli society based on the constructed status of '*Jewish nationality*'.⁶¹ It became the criterion of local and national identity. Hence, it is a form of classification that operates as the dominant discourse in the continuum action of colonization or zionisation of the land of Palestine. Utilization of the biblical idioms as national ethnic identity and race emerged in their historical, religious and political narrative. This '*single Jewish origins*' mentality today smacks of religious extremism and exceptionalism. This strategy is well articulated in the introductory statement of The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel that the land of Israel is the land for the Jewish people. Thus, the concept '*single Jewish origins*' imbeds a form of totalizing one's own identity and ethnicity in the guise of religious language, expressing full identity and ethnicity.⁶² This should be challenged, interrogated and questioned properly.

Conclusion

My own analysis suggests that some important qualifications are needed to the overall quite uncontested concepts espoused by Christian dispensationalists and Zionist Jews. Even Zionist Christians, however, would admit how difficult, even it seems impossible, it is to distinguish between them and spot immediately the dissimilarity between Dispensationalist theology and Zionist ideology, since all have sought to conform to the paradigm of the distorted usage of biblical idioms. Yet to sensitized observers, Christian conformity to a theo-political system of dispensationalist theology and Zionist ideology remains a potentially disruptive, efficacious enactment of religious-political conviction. This philosophy became educative and instrumental for

⁵⁸ Constitution for Israel. A Joint Project of the Knesset and the Jewish Agency for Israel Operated in North America by the Israel-American Jewish Forum, *Constitution for Israel, Israeli American Jewish Forum*, (2005), Accessed October 31, 2015, www.cfisrael.org.

⁵⁹ Constitution for Israel, *Israeli American Jewish Forum*, (2004), 1. Accessed October 31, 2015, www.cfisrael.org.

⁶⁰ Qumsiyeh, *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, 20.

⁶¹ Suraya Dadoo, Love and marriage in Israel, *Intifada*, (7 November 2003), Accessed October 31, 2015, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/love-and-marriage-israel/4868>.

⁶² See *The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*, May 14, 1948, Accessed October 31, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx>.

liberation and emancipation of the Palestinians. The main task of philosophy here is to destabilize the logic of Zionism. This paper is meant to explore or even provoke a very sensitive issue that borders on equally sensitive issues, such as Zionism being different from Judaism, ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian communities, and injustices in the West Bank and East Jerusalem areas. I maintain that Zionism is not a representation of the Jewish call for a community of believers. It is an ideology rooted in an archaic-supremacist-racist metaphysic tradition which promotes the rebirth of religious alterity [What does this mean?] and uses modern day political apparatuses of biopolitics. The suppression and aggression towards Palestinian people should be resisted. Their distorted images of the Palestinian should be challenged and reconstructed or corrected. Hence, the aim/task of philosophy is to challenge the essentialist dichotomy/dualism between being an Arab and a Jew, to free both peoples from extremist positions, and to bring justice, reconciliation, reinterpretation and dezionisation of their considered sacred texts. This entails dealing with untouchable issues that Zionists are trying to cover up. Key issues to solve are the problems of Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and the future of the settlers. Zionist regimes cover up by using the distorted biblical idioms '*chosen people*', '*promised land*' or "*A land without a people for a people without a land.*" These have been used by many Christian Churches in the Philippines and Jewish Zionists as the '*title deeds*' for justifying ethnic division, military occupation, an apartheid wall and violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territory. These biblical idioms are taken as God's promises to modern day Israel. Israel's dangerous dream of imaginative geography is unrealistic and inherently a form of Western colonial projection.

I elaborate in this paper that dispensationalist theology is a dramatic process representing an impoverishment of biblical interpretation among the Christian community, in social, cultural, political and religious terms. Though it is widely accepted by the Christian majority for certain and uncertain reasons, rereading and reinterpreting the Christian eschatology is badly needed. Over the last decades Christian churches have long been silent about the crimes of the Zionist state of Israel or have even supported them. Christians worldwide are therefore responsible for the catastrophe or the Nakba of the Palestinians---both Christians and Muslims in Palestine. To combat this distorted interpretation, it is important that Christians should engage themselves in dezionising their Christian Eschatology. This process is one of the works to destabilize the Zionist hegemonic forms of political and social control in the present. This dezionisation process involves working to deactivate the darkness of the present conflict between Israelis and Palestinians through tracing its shadows in racism, white supremacy, western form of colonialism, white supremacy and ethnocentrism. These key issues can give Christians a sense of how the Zionists read, manipulate and utilize the biblical idioms or language. Zionists use these biblical idioms, genealogy and narrative as political instruments, whilst the Western mass media manipulates the realities on the ground. Most of their representations and [the] grand narratives portray Israel as the victim. Plying the language of victimhood it fuels the popular narrative that Israel should defend themselves against Palestinian terrorism and Christians should take the side of modern day Israel. Whatever the public issue in question, the Christian tendency is to focus on the biblical idioms, biblical promises, and prophetic fulfillments---and the issue has never been a question of injustices and violations of the basic human rights committed by the state of Israel over Palestinians. This challenge is not to be taken lightly. It is a radical call and confrontation for the Christian community against Zionist ideological elements that cut and frame the Christian eschatological doctrine. Dezionisation is a prophetic critique of oppressive power in language and life. This checking process is not only a concern for justice but involves one's own ideas and biases. It is a self-critique. This process has the potential to transform the way we approach a difficult and divisive issue at hand. In doing so, dezionising Christian eschatology will bring transformation to the dominant belief and attitude toward the Israel/Palestine conflict. In solidarity with Palestinians, as Christians, we have to be in the vanguard of the practice

of advocating neighborly love to overcome racism, ethnocentrism, and human suffering. We have to proclaim and demonstrate the dezionise “Good News” to the whole world.

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