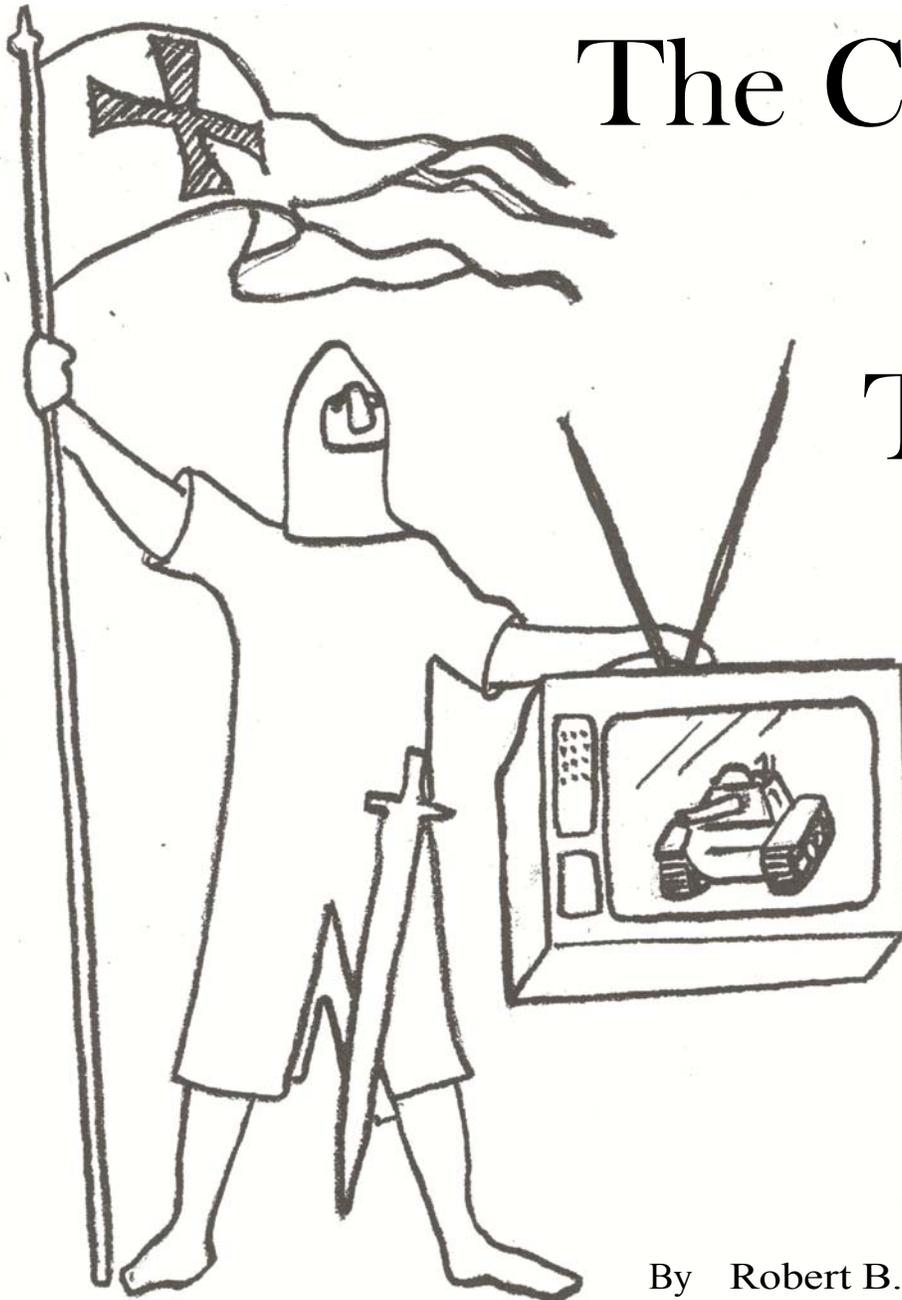


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The Crusades:

Then

and

Now

By Robert B. Ashmore

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About This Issue

In December of last year, a Secret Service agent was asked to leave an American Airlines flight to Texas, where he was en route to join his security detail at President George Bush's ranch.

When the agent was escorted off the flight because he was carrying a gun for which he had the necessary documentation, some of the passengers began to rifle through his belongings that he had left on his seat. There they found a book entitled "The Crusades Through Arab Eyes."

The thought occurred to us, if the subject was engaging enough for a member of President Bush's security detail to explore, perhaps there was something there important enough to merit a feature article.

We invited Dr. Robert Ashmore of Marquette University to research and write the article. His previous Link contribution was in 1988 on "Israel and South Africa," an issue for which we still receive requests.

On page 13, we have a notice announcing our new web site: www.ameu.org. You can find this article posted on our site, as are all our Link issues going back to 1979, including Dr Ashmore's previous one. By the end of August, we expect to have all our issues dating back to 1968 posted and "downloadable."

Part of the difficulty of posting the pre-1995 articles is that we do not

have them in a digital format. We would appreciate it if any readers would like to volunteer their clerical services in helping us to digitize text from older issues.

The web site offers other new services: The lexicon of words and phrases that appeared in our last issue "A Style Sheet on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict" has been updated and can be accessed alphabetically. (We actually distributed over 25,000 copies of this issue, making it one of the most requested issues we ever published.)

We also invite readers to sign up for emails alerting them

to changes in our web resources. This includes updates in our book and video listings, which now can be ordered on-line with a credit card.

For those who prefer to order our books and videos the old-fashioned way, they are listed here on pages 14-16 — including the book that the Secret Service agent was reading.

[Editor's Note: Because the entire AMEU book and video catalogue is available on this web site, the two book pages that are part of the mailed issue of The Link are omitted from this internet edition.]



Dr. Robert B. Ashmore

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer, on September 18, 2001, was required to express President George Bush's regrets for using the word "crusade" to describe his campaign against selective terrorism. (Why it is selective will be explained below.) President Bush was quickly informed that "crusade" is a loaded term that evokes ugly memories of what the West did to Muslims during the Middle Ages.

Shortly thereafter, the Defense Department had to retract a similar gaffe. Having dubbed the military operation "Infinite Justice," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was informed that only God's actions are properly characterized as "infinite." Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics, among others, pointed out in *The New York Times* of Sept. 21, 2001 that attributing the term "infinite" to finite human beings "is the sin of pride."

Missteps such as these have confirmed in the minds of many that United States policy is hampered by ignorance and arrogance. This view, prevalent in Europe and the Middle East, was emphasized by religious scholar, Karen Armstrong, who teaches at a rabbinical college in London and is visiting scholar at Harvard University. She stated, in the *Chicago Tribune* of Oct. 24, 2001, that "Americans tend to have a reputation of not being very aware of what's going on in the rest of the world. You've always felt sort of cut off by your great oceans and isolated. President Bush, I'm afraid, was rather the epitome of that."

Whether this is a fair assessment is much debated. In what follows we will place current U.S. foreign policy in historical context, in the hope of clarifying why it is, as Lisa Beyer queried recently in *Time Magazine*, Sept. 1, 2001, that demonstrators in other countries wave signs that read, "Americans, think! Why does the whole world hate you?"

Crusading

Crusading" is a concept that applies to successive campaigns against the East and even against foes in the West during medieval times, as well as to the actions of imperial powers in the 19th and early 20th centuries that produced, in the words of David Fromkin, a "peace to end all peace." As well, a clear understanding of crusading reveals that it characterizes much that is occurring today, from U.S.-headed economic sanctions on Iraq to Israel's expansionist settlement policy in Arab territory to Russia's devastating campaign in Chechnya.

Proceeding chronologically, it is traditional to indicate that the Crusades began with Pope Urban II's call at the Council of Clermont in 1095 A.D. for a holy war against Muslims who controlled Jerusalem and threatened Byzantium, the eastern Roman empire. In appealing to knights, priests and the poor to become "soldiers of St. Peter" and launch the first Crusade, Urban II was advancing the dream of his predecessor, Pope Gregory VII who, as early as 1074, planned to raise an army in response to the Byzantine emperor's call for help. Later the Eastern Christians would learn that they should have been wary of what they asked for, since they got it in a way not at all intended. That is because Pope Gregory and later Crusaders saw this appeal as an opportunity to assert papal supremacy over the Eastern Church, as well as to focus the martial energies of Europe against foes other than one another. For too long, the brutish and illiterate warriors of Europe had waged war among themselves, and now the "crucesignati" (those signed by the cross) could serve God by attacking Muslims who were, in the rhetoric of the times, "an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God, a generation, forsooth, which has neither directed its heart nor entrusted its spirit to God."¹

Seeing it as a Christian duty to "exterminate this vile race from our lands,"² a loosely organized mob of soldiers, clergy, and the poor marched off in pilgrimage to liberate the lands of Christ. Some were led by Peter the Hermit, others by a French lord, Walter Sansavoir. Lacking the means to buy food along the way, "foraging, thefts, riots, and violence were the result" as these religious enthusiasts swept through Europe toward Constantinople.³ Anxious for glory, the "People's Crusade" was transported across the Bosphorus on August 6, 1096, Emperor Alexius I having had enough of this mob pillaging the suburbs of Constantinople while it waited to attack Muslims.

Other crusader forces did not make it that far, plundering instead the Jews who lived in thriving cities in Germany. Jews became targets of these crusaders for various reasons. After all, Jews had crucified Christ. Also, they had grown wealthy in Europe through the sinful activity of usury. Albert of Aix recorded the deeds of Christendom's holy warriors:

They killed the women, also, and with their swords pierced tender children of whatever age and sex. The Jews, seeing that their Christian enemies were attacking them and their children, and that they were sparing no age, likewise fell upon one another, brother, children, wives, and sisters, and thus they perished at each other's hands...preferring them to perish thus by their own hands rather than to be killed by the weapons of the uncircumcised.⁴

Eastern Emperor Alexius demanded oaths of those Crusaders who did invade Muslim-held lands, requiring them to return to him the lands that they captured. Such oaths were not kept and, in the course of time, various Crusader states were formed in the region. Taking Nicaea, Antioch, and Edessa, the Frankish warriors (or "Franj" as

they were called in the East) distinguished themselves in the way they vanquished the Syrian city of Ma'arra in November, 1098. The chronicler Radulph of Caen wrote, "In Ma'arra our troops boiled pagan adults in cooking-pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled." Trying to explain themselves in a letter to the Pope, the commanders said this, "A terrible famine racked the army in Ma'arra, and placed it in the cruel necessity of feeding itself upon the bodies of the Saracens." The ordeal of the city was completed when hundreds of torch-bearing Franj set fire to every house.⁵

Reaching Jerusalem in June, 1099, the Crusaders lay siege to the city. Successfully defeating its defenders, the Crusaders flooded into Jerusalem on July 15. "Men, women, and children were put to the sword until the streets were littered with corpses. Even Jewish inhabitants were killed."⁵ Arabs would long thereafter recall the difference between how the Franj took Jerusalem and the earlier taking of Jerusalem by Calif Umar in 638 A.D. Upon entering Jerusalem Umar had assured the Greek patriarch that lives and property of the inhabitants would be respected. Escorted to the site of the Holy Sepulchre, Umar insisted on not praying inside the site, lest Muslims appropriate it. Instead, he unrolled his prayer mat outside. By contrast, the Arab historian Ibn al-Athir reported concerning the Crusader victory of 1099, "The population of the holy city was put to the sword, and the Franj spent a week massacring Muslims." Ibn al-Qalanisi adds, "The Jews had gathered in their synagogue and the Franj burned them alive." Maalouf writes, "Not even their co-religionists were spared. One of the first measures taken by the Franj was to expel from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre all the priests of Oriental rites...They arrested the priests who had been entrusted with custody of the Cross and tortured them to make them reveal the secret [of its whereabouts]."⁷

After a siege of 2,000 days, the strategic port of Tripoli fell to Crusaders on July 12, 1109. The city was sacked; 100,000 volumes in its famous "House of Culture" were burned; most of the inhabitants were sold into slavery. Thus was created the last Crusader state. The next target was Beirut, which fell to the Crusaders in May, 1110. The population of Beirut was massacred. In December of that year Saida (Sidon) also was taken. "In the space of eighteen months three of the most renowned cities of the Arab world—Tripoli, Beirut, and Saida—had been taken and sacked, their inhabitants massacred or deported, their emirs, qadis, and experts on religious law killed or forced into exile, their mosques profaned."⁸ For Arabs it was a time to be long remembered.

By 1145 the Crusader gains were in jeopardy, and so Pope Eugenius III called the 2nd Crusade. St. Bernard of Clairvaux and his Cisterian brother monks preached the crusade as a means of redemption. "I call blessed the generation that can seize an opportunity of such rich indulgence as this...The blessing is spread throughout the whole world, and all the world is flocking to receive this badge of immortality."⁹ Those who today deplore Palestin-

ian martyrs who anticipate heavenly reward for their sacrifice might do well to recall the similar Christian appeal.

Some of these new Crusaders asked permission to fulfill their vow and merit eternal reward by attacking pagan Wends who lived east of the Elbe River. Bernard persuaded the pope to grant this means of redemption, since warfare in service to the true faith could be in any direction. St. Bernard warned, however, that there should be no truce with the pagans. It was to be either conversion or extermination. Although Bernard himself did not approve, Jews of the Rhineland again fell victim to massacres in this second crusade as they had fifty years earlier. While aspiring to spiritual reward, assembling crusaders were not loath to enrich themselves along the way. King Alfonso I sought their help in concluding his siege of Muslim-held Lisbon. Crusaders obliged and Lisbon fell to the plunderers on October 24, 1147.

The 2nd Crusade ended in a disaster. The Byzantine emperor allied with the Muslims, since the Crusaders were not returning conquered lands to him. Besides, unruly Crusaders repeatedly attacked Byzantine citizens in the vicinity of Constantinople. The Muslim Turks inflicted defeat after defeat on the Crusaders — at Dorylaeum, at Laodicea, at Damascus. Nur al-Din took Aleppo and massacred all its Christian inhabitants, slaughter not being the exclusive practice of only one party to these conflicts. On the Christian side, Reynald of Chatillon decided to take the Byzantine island of Cyprus in 1156, claiming that the emperor had not paid him a promised sum.

Cyprus never fully recovered from what was done to it in that spring of 1156. All the island's cultivated fields were systematically ravaged, from north to south; all the livestock was slaughtered; the palace, churches, and convents were pillaged, and everything that was not carried off was demolished or burned. Women were raped, old men and children slaughtered; rich men were taken as hostages, poor ones beheaded. Before setting off loaded with booty, Reynald ordered all the Greek priests and monks assembled; he then had their noses cut off before sending them, thus mutilated, to Constantinople.¹⁰

Such Christian-on-Christian barbarism was not to be the last that the Crusades would inspire. In fact, as we shall see, later Crusades in Europe would be called for the express purpose of exterminating Christians who were deemed heretics. Meanwhile, the effort of Muslims to recover lands taken by the Crusaders was advanced by Saladin, a Kurdish officer who succeeded to the rule of Egypt and confronted the Franj warriors near the Sea of Galilee on July 3, 1187. Celebrated as the "Horns of Hattin" victory, so named for a hill with two peaks nearby, Saladin smashed the Crusaders. Saladin then took the citadel at Tiberias, and followed with reconquests of Acre, Nablus, Haifa, Nazareth, Saida, Beirut, Ascalon, Gaza, and Bethlehem.

On September 20, Saladin encircled Jerusalem,

where he was viewed with favor by Orthodox and other Eastern Christians, because they had been so badly treated by Latin prelates. Crusader defenders capitulated, and Saladin entered Jerusalem on October 2, ordering that there be neither massacre nor plunder. Saladin even strengthened the guard at Christian places of worship and promised free passage for pilgrims. His purpose had been accomplished, he reasoned, in simply liberating this holy city from Western invaders.

Pope Gregory VIII's response to Saladin's victories was to impose a seven-year truce on Christians warring among themselves in Europe, so that their energies could be focused on his call for a 3rd Crusade which covered the years from 1188-92. Crusading barons had been released from Muslim captivity after swearing an oath that they would never take up arms again against Saladin, but they promptly broke their vow. Philip II of France and Richard the Lionhearted of England disembarked their troops in the spring of 1191. Richard took Acre and put to the sword his prisoners, including soldiers and women and children. However, by late 1192 the conflict had worn down to an agreement on a five-year truce, with Crusaders retaining land along the coast and Saladin still in control of Jerusalem.

Pope Innocent III proclaimed a fourth Crusade and, even though he forbade an attack on Constantinople, in April, 1204 that is exactly what the army of Christ did. The Latin conquerors smashed icons, stripped altars of everything valuable, seized relics, looted homes, defiled women and sacked the Eastern Christian capital. Innocent III was later to write to his legate, "For those who are supposed to serve Christ rather than themselves, who should have used their swords against the infidel, have bathed those swords in the blood of Christians. They have not spared religion, nor age, nor sex..."¹¹ Forevermore, animosity of Eastern Christians towards Rome would be fueled by memory of this defilement.

Before declaring a fifth Crusade against the East, Innocent III directed his fervor to calls for crusades in Europe against various foes in the Baltic, in Sicily, in Spain and in southern France. Against Albigensian heretics in France the Pope offered crusaders all the usual indulgences and privileges associated with crusades against the East. The destruction of heretic locations, for example Beziers, was so horrible that other cities quickly surrendered. Although the French crown acquired the conquered lands, the Al-

bigensian heresy was not to be finally destroyed until the Inquisition completed the extermination decades later.

A misnomer "Children's Crusade" was headed by Nicholas of Cologne in 1212. He was joined by a throng of elderly, poor, women and children seeking to rescue Jerusalem. But, they made it only as far as Genoa and Marseilles, and the popular movement dissipated without reaching the Holy Land. Pope Innocent's call for a fifth Crusade in 1213 was worked out in detail at the Fourth Lateran Council. This time the strategy was to conquer Egypt and thence proceed northward. Laying siege to Damietta in Egypt, the city of some 60,000 fell to Crusaders in 1219, with only 10,000 of its inhabitants surviving. Feuding crusader factions fought over the loot. But, they were unable to hold the city for long and, by 1221, the Fifth Crusade ended with the surrender of Damietta and the evacuation of Egypt.

It was now the turn of King Louis IX of France. Although later canonized, "Saint" Louis "was an anti-Semite and a cruel persecutor of heretics, and he was so consumed with loathing of Muslims that he led not one crusade but two."¹² When he was only 15 years old Louis created the first Inquisition to eliminate Catharite heretics in the south of France. Between 1229 and 1247 the Inquisition tortured and

handed over for execution the heretics, and King Louis massacred the last of the Cathari at Montsegur in 1247. Pope Gregory IX found the Inquisition to be such an effective tool in the crusade against heretics that he created a general Inquisition in 1233 in pursuit of other wayward souls.

Louis IX launched the first of his crusades against Muslims in 1248. In Egypt he was taken prisoner, released only after paying a huge ransom, and returned to France in 1254. In threatening his enemy, "Saint" Louis had reminded them of earlier successes of Christians against Muslims in Spain. "We chased your people before us like herds of oxen. We killed the men, made widows of the women, and captured girls and boys. Was that not a lesson to you?"¹³ Against Jews the king had been equally unsparing. His friend and biographer, John of Joinville, recorded Louis' words. "No one who is not a very learned clerk should argue with Jews. A layman, as soon as he hears the Christian faith maligned should defend it by the sword, with a good thrust in the belly as far as the sword will go."¹⁴

Against the advice of his court, King Louis IX decided



Presumed representation of Saladin, around 1180 .

in 1267 to lead a second Crusade. Sailing in 1270 to Tunis, the king and many of his crusaders died there from disease. Not only failing to reach Jerusalem, the French achieved nothing from this crusade. By 1291 the Crusader states in the East were wiped out. This was not to be the end of crusading, however. The Kingdom of Cyprus became heir to the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Peter I mounted a crusade that gathered at Rhodes in 1365 and took Alexandria, massacred its citizens and took a great deal of booty.

In 1360, Muslim Turks began European conquests, overrunning Bulgaria and Greece. Crusading now became a desperate effort to save Europe. It was Timur (Tamerline), a Muslim who was half Mongol and half Turk, who in effect saved Europe, because his own victories led to his destroying the Turkish army at Ankara in 1402.

In 1443 Pope Eugenius IV called a crusade to save Byzantium from the Ottomans, but the 2,200 year old Eastern Roman state ended in May, 1453, with Sultan Mahmed II taking Constantinople. Despite subsequent calls from the popes for crusades to regain Constantinople, none occurred. The final effort to mount a major crusade against the Muslim east was made by Pope Leo X, who reigned from 1513 to 1521. Various factors combined to neutralize such an initiative, including the Protestant Reformation, which meant that a unified church no longer existed to pose the threat that it had been. Also, Martin Luther opposed crusades as defying God's punishment of the Catholic Church. In Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella pursued their own crusade against the last Muslim possession in Spain, seizing Granada in 1492. After seven centuries of war the reconquista was completed. Now Spain could turn its attention to conquest of the New World, the treatment of its indigenous peoples being a sad history with which we are all at least somewhat familiar.

The Crusaders' Legacy

Karen Armstrong argues that one legacy from the Crusades is a still abiding Western habit of regarding Muslims and Jews in an "abnormal way."¹⁵ Both had become objects of fear and were viewed as a threat to Europe. Sincerely convinced that their crusades were an act of love for God, peoples of western Europe fashioned a concept of self that viewed Jews and Muslims as "other" and as a threat to their values and their way of life. One manifestation of this was ongoing pogroms against Jews, who were even blamed for the Black Death, a plague that hit Europe in 1348.

As for Islam, the threat to Europe derived from Ottoman Turkish advances beyond Byzantium until the Christian victory at Lepanto in 1571 stopped further Turkish conquests. Even so, the dread of this mighty Islamic empire in the east continued to cast a dark shadow over Europe. The Crusades of the Medieval period would

continue to influence a view of Muslims and Jews as aliens, even when fundamentalist Christian thinking would later champion reconstitution of the state of Israel, but only as a means for the eventual triumph of Christianity.

As Carole Hillenbrand has pointed out, "...the Crusading phenomenon did not stop abruptly with the fall of Acre in 1291. Offensives on both sides, European and Muslim, were repeatedly launched in subsequent centuries...labeled as Crusade or *Jihad* and were conducted in the same spirit as similar undertakings which had taken place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."¹⁶ Reverberations from the centuries of Crusading against the Muslim east would long affect the attitudes of all peoples in the East, and actions of both Britain and France early in the 20th century would come to be viewed as a renewed attempt by Western imperialists to crusade against the unbelieving enemy. Akbar Ahmed is quoted in Hillenbrand to this effect:

The memory of the Crusades lingers in the Middle East and colors Muslim perceptions of Europe. It is the memory of an aggressive, backward and religiously fanatic Europe. This historical memory would be reinforced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as imperial Europeans once again arrived to subjugate and colonize territories in the Middle East. Unfortunately this legacy of bitterness is overlooked by most Europeans when thinking of the Crusades.¹⁷

Amin Maalouf concluded his work on the Crusades through Arab eyes with a similar observation that one wishes were better understood not only by Europe, but also — and much more importantly — by the United States, since it is the United States that today stands alone against the world in its support for Israel, whose illegal hilltop settlements in Arab territories stand like Crusader fortresses. Maalouf warned that "the Arab East still sees the West as a natural enemy. Against that enemy, any hostile action—be it political, military, or based on oil—is considered no more than legitimate vengeance. And there can be no doubt that the schism between these two worlds dates from the Crusades, deeply felt by the Arabs, even today, as an act of rape."¹⁸

Before turning to these more recent incursions into the Middle East, it might be well to reflect on Christian ideology that inspired not only 19th and 20th century imperial action in the East, but also motivated phenomena such as Puritan settlement in colonial America. Armstrong points out that English Puritans of the 17th century thought of themselves as living in the last times, when Christ's Second Coming would be accompanied by conversion of Jews. The Puritans identified with persecuted Jews of old, gave Jewish names to their children, called their colony in America the "English Canaan," and assigned biblical names to their settlements of Hebron, Salem, Zion, Bethlehem, Judea, etc. In fact, Puritans utilized the same rationale in overcoming American Indians as later Zionists would invent in supplanting Palestinians. Puritans chose

to think of the New World as “an ‘empty’ country, a barren wilderness, which the natives were too primitive to develop properly,” and Armstrong quotes Robert Cushman, business agent for the colony, who wrote in 1622 with Old Testament fervor about the Indians:

[They] do but run over the grass, as do also the foxes and wild beasts. They are not industrious, neither have art, science, skill or faculty to use either the land or the commodities of it, but all spoils, rots and is marred for want of manuring, gathering, ordering, etc. As the ancient patriarchs therefore removed from straiter places into more roomy, where the land lay idle and waste, and none used it, though there dwelt inhabitants by them (as Genesis 13:6, 11, 12 and 34:21 and 41:20) so it is lawful now to take a land which none useth to make use of it.¹⁹

This remarkably racist denial of the ability and even of the existence of native peoples would parallel Zionist colonial action in Palestine. The latter would find support in the eschatological thinking of British and American politicians. And it would be replicated in other Christian rationalizations for crusading colonialism, such as that of the Afrikaners in South Africa. (On the family resemblances between Afrikaner and Zionist ideologies, see my essay published as *The Link* for Oct.-Nov. 1988.)

English Protestants would long champion the return of Jews to Palestine, brought up as they were on Old Testament stories which, without benefit of modern biblical scholarship, they accepted as historical fact. As a consequence, either denying or dismissing as irrelevant the Arab inhabitation of Palestine for 1,200 continuous years, British leaders such as Lloyd George and Lord Balfour would implement their Christian beliefs with support for what eventually became the State of Israel.

Decades before Lloyd George and Balfour exercised power to that end, Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, in 1838, acted on the suggestion of Lord Shaftesbury to strengthen Jewish presence in the Holy Land. Shaftesbury's interest was not in the welfare of Jews as such, but rather in hastening the Second Coming of Christ. In fact, he was something of an anti-Semite, as are many Christian advocates of Israel today, and he opposed Jewish emancipation in 1861. His interest, therefore, in the conversion of Jews to Christianity and the millennium to follow is what inspired his influence on Palmerston. On August 17, 1840, Shaftesbury got *The Times* to print a lead article explaining a plan “to plant the Jewish people in the land of their fathers.”²⁰

In working to this end, Shaftesbury's background anti-Semitism combined with other British leaders' more overt anti-Semitism toward the Arabs. (Arabs are Semites.) For example, Lord Cromer (Evelyn Baring) was effectively ruler of Egypt at the time when Britain was occupying the country. Contending that Arabs were inherently incapable of managing their own affairs, Cromer went so far as to publish the view that “somehow or other the Oriental gen-

erally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly the opposite to the European.”²¹ Contempt for Arabs and disregard for their interests were perhaps no more clearly expressed than in Balfour's memorandum “Respecting Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.”

For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country...The Four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.²²

Regina Sharif has written an illuminating book, “Non-Jewish Zionism”, in which she explains the Christian belief system that grounded support of British and American leaders for Jewish political ambitions in Palestine. When Lloyd George became Prime Minister in 1916, he made Arthur Balfour his Minister of Foreign Affairs. Balfour was reared by a deeply religious mother in a Scottish Protestantism that strongly believed in the restoration of the Jews as prelude to the Second Coming of Christ, and Balfour considered history to be “an instrument for carrying out a Divine purpose.”²³

Like the Crusaders of the Middle Ages, Balfour was inspired to implement a design for the Holy Land that negated the rights of its inhabitants. The prime minister whom he served, Lloyd George, was of the same conviction and expressed it in words such as these, “I was brought up in a school where I was taught far more about the history of the Jews than about the history of my own land...We absorbed it and made it part of the best in the Gentile character.” The Palestine campaign was for him the most compelling part of the British effort in World War I, because he was moved by his “memories of the sacred writings, familiar to him from childhood, which foretold the restoration of the Jewish People to the Holy Land.”²⁴

Betraying commitments made to the Arabs that, if they rose up in rebellion against the Ottoman Turks, they would be granted independence at the conclusion of the war, Britain conspired in a succession of secret agreements to achieve the opposite. Ignoring pledges made in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence of 1915, Britain and France divided between themselves the control of the Arab Middle East, with France assuming the mandate for Syria and Lebanon, while Britain took Palestine and Iraq.

In November, 1917, Balfour issued the famous declaration that bears his name, addressing it to the Jewish leader, Baron Rothschild. “His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object.” Totally contradicted by Britain's subsequent actions was the proviso “that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (who at that time constituted

over 90% of the population!).

Balfour was not one to be overly troubled by broken promises and contradictory commitments. As he himself acknowledged, "So far as Palestine is concerned, the powers have made no statement of fact that is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate."

Aware that Balfour had deeply anti-Semitic leanings manifested in such moves as his introduction of an Aliens Bill in Parliament to limit Jewish immigration into Britain, the Jewish leader, Lord Montagu, objected during deliberations leading up to the declaration that "the policy of His Majesty's Government is anti-Semitic in result and will prove a rallying ground for anti-Semites in every country of the world." And Charles Montefiore, also Jewish, wrote to the War Cabinet in 1917, "It is very significant that anti-Semites are always so sympathetic to Zionism."²⁵ One member of that War Cabinet, Lord Curzon, expressed a seemingly rare concern about the Arab population of Palestine, writing that the Arabs would "not be content either to be expropriated for Jewish immigrants or to act as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the latter."²⁶

(Yet, even that has come to pass, as those familiar with the manual labor force in Israel and in the Occupied Territories well know to be the case.)

United States foreign policy at that time and since reflects the same Christian Zionist influence. President Woodrow Wilson in 1918 wrote to Rabbi Stephen Wise, leader of American Zionism, endorsing the Balfour Declaration. Wilson offered similar assurances to other of his Jewish friends, including Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter. An offspring of Presbyterian ministers on both sides of his family, Wilson had imbibed the same beliefs that fueled support for Zionism in Britain. Wilson relished the thought that he, "the son of the manse, should be able to help restore the Holy Land to its people."²⁷

Then U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing out that Wilson's Zionism was in contradiction to Wilson's historic 14 Points, "in which he rejected the right of territorial acquisition by force, condemned secret agreements and proclaimed the principle of self-determination of peoples. Point 12 even stated specifically that the 'non-Turkish nationalities' of the Ottoman Empire should be assured an unmolested opportunity of autonomous development."²⁸ In spite of all this, Wilson's crusader-like determination to prevail against Arab resistance carried the day.

Congressional support for the Balfour Declaration came in 1922 via a resolution championed in the Senate by Massachusetts senator Henry Cabot Lodge. This chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee stated publicly that "I never could accept in patience the thought that Jerusalem and Palestine should be under the control of the Mohammedans..." The House of Representatives soon followed with its own resolution endorsing the re-establishment of "the House of Israel" in "the ancient Jewish land."²⁹

Theological motivations, as compelling for U.S. presidents as they were for medieval Crusaders, tilted American foreign policy from decade to decade. In 1948 President Harry Truman was anxious to recognize the State of Israel instantly upon its proclamation by the Provisional Government. Clark Clifford, advisor to Truman, said of his Southern Baptist president, "As a student of the Bible he believed in the historic justification for a Jewish homeland and it was a conviction with him that the Balfour Declaration of 1917 constituted a solemn promise that fulfilled the age-old hopes and dreams of the Jewish people."³⁰

In 1953 Harry Truman was introduced to the audience at a Jewish theological school as "the man who helped create the State of Israel." Truman objected, instead comparing himself to the Persian emperor, Cyrus the Great, who facilitated the return of the Jews to Israel from their Babylonian captivity. Truman declared, "What do you mean 'helped create'? I am Cyrus, I am Cyrus."³¹

Fellow Baptist Jimmy Carter manifested as president the same Christian Zionist prejudice toward Israel. In a speech on May 1, 1978, Carter made clear how fundamentalist theology affected his own foreign policy toward the Middle East. The State of Israel was "a return at last, to the Biblical land from which the Jews were driven so many hundreds of years ago...The establishment of the nation of Israel is the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and the very essence of its fulfillment." To Israel Carter confessed "an absolute and total commitment as a human being, as an American, as a religious person."³² This from a sitting president at the same time as he was orchestrating the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt.

Closer to the present, we are reminded that Bill Clinton as president was fond of telling audiences that his pastor back in Arkansas had always admonished him, warning that if he ever failed to support Israel, God would never forgive him. And the current president, George W. Bush, is universally viewed in the Arab world as indeed conducting a crusade of "good versus evil." His administration is filled with advisors and cabinet officials who espouse anti-Arab and anti-Muslim views. Hawkish pro-Israeli writer, Cal Thomas, himself also a fundamentalist Christian, approvingly wrote in an article in Crosswalks.com News Channel, that Bush's Attorney General is clear on what divides two sides in the current conflict. John Ashcroft is quoted as saying, "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends his son to die for you." Arab-American organizations wrote to President Bush, asking that he distance himself from views that are "inflammatory, fanatical and inexcusable, particularly coming from the Attorney General of the United States."³³

Propagating stereotypically hateful views concerning Islam is commonplace among Christian leaders who are fundamentalist supporters of Israel. Franklin Graham, fundamentalist preacher son of Billy Graham, pronounced on NBC Nightly News November 16, 2001: "The God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It is a different God,

and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion.” Another Christian fundamentalist preacher, Pat Robertson, broadcast on his “700 Club” television program February 21, 2002 similarly distorted beliefs. Islam, he said, “is not a peaceful religion that wants to coexist. They want to coexist until they can control, dominate and then, if need be, destroy.”

It was on the same “700 Club” television program (a vehicle for pro-Israeli propaganda), that Pat Robertson and fellow Christian fundamentalist preacher, Jerry Falwell on September 13, 2001 had an exchange that brought condemnation from many quarters, coming so soon after the Twin Towers attack in New York. With Robertson repeatedly offering his “amen,” Falwell concluded that “the pagans, and the abortionists, and the gays and lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say, ‘You helped this happen.’”

A few days later, after a deluge of criticism, Falwell appeared on Geraldo Rivera’s cable TV show to “ask God’s forgiveness and yours” for his remarks. But, then, two weeks after Falwell apologized to God and Geraldo, the Jerry Falwell Ministries mailed out a fund-raiser letter written by his preacher son. It alleged that “Satan has launched a hail of fiery darts at dad” and that “liberals, and especially gay activists, have launched a vicious smear campaign to discredit him.” Meanwhile, the press continued to report Falwell’s unrepentant ideological statements. From Lakeland, Florida came a news item in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel of Nov. 21, 2001, that the Rev. Falwell had told a conference of Baptist pastors that “Osama bin Laden’s soul could be saved if he converted to Christianity — but he would still deserve to be killed.”

President Bush has long enjoyed the political support of Falwell and Robertson. Bush’s own rhetoric reflects the fundamentalist penchant for dichotomizing. The president’s crusade is, in his own mind, a clear war of good against evil. In his State of the Union address on January 30, 2002, Bush labeled as an “axis of evil” the countries of Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Iran’s Ayatollah Ali Khamenei responded by deploring the speech of a man “thirsty for human blood.” Pointing out that Bush was inexperienced and unaware of realities in other countries, Khamenei was reported in *The New York Times* of Feb. 1, 2002 as saying:

The United States president is threatening and accusing other countries of evil involvement while America has opposed popular movements, supported undemocratic regimes, sold lethal weapons and looted the wealth of other nations more than any other country. These are evil acts and so America is the most evil country.

President Bush’s simple explanation for the hostility of foreign peoples against the United States was expressed when he addressed a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001. “They hate what they see right here in

this chamber. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms, our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.” It is odd that Bush failed to realize that Palestinians have desperately turned to suicide attacks precisely because they have despaired of Israel’s U.S.-backed refusal to permit them those freedoms. Instead, with American financing Israel continues its illegal settlement build-up, its control of water resources and its confiscation of land, its assassinations and imprisonments without trial, its torture and deportation policies—all while it claims to be a democracy with values identical to the United States.

As Elaine Sciolino stated in commenting on Bush’s September 20 address in *The New York Times* of Sept. 23: “The perception that America bolsters authoritarian governments even while it heralds democracy as an ideal fuels the sense of betrayal throughout the Muslim world.” One need only be reminded that, in his “war on evil,” Bush has enlisted the support of Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and Israel—all of them repeatedly condemned by international human rights organizations for their systematic violation of human rights.

In the same *New York Times* essay, Sciolino quoted Jon Alterman, analyst at the U.S. Institute of Peace, who had also commented on Bush’s simplistic rationalization. “They don’t hate us because we have a Congress,” Alterman objected. “They hate us because we seem so indifferent to their problems and their suffering.”

Writing an essay titled “Who’s More Arrogant?” in *Time* magazine on December 10, 2001, Lance Morrow stated, “If this is to be a clash of civilizations, Islam vs. the West, there might still be time for a period of serious, difficult introspection—a cultural examination of conscience on both sides.” He then continued:

The Americans find themselves in the unaccustomed position of being the injured party. But eventually, when they have got a grip on the terrorist threat and return to calmer moments, they are going to have to give intelligent thought to turning their money and freedom to more decent, more responsible purposes. When they have put their flags away, Americans will have to ask if they want to go back to what they were on Sept. 10. They can do a lot better.

While rational voices are to be found in the media, the preponderance of columnists and commentators and publications in the United States maintain a hawkish, anti-Islam, pro-Israeli posture. On December 3, 2001, Jim Rutenberg wrote an article in *The New York Times* headlined “Fox Portrays a War of Good and Evil, and Many Applaud.” The network, owned by sensation-mongering Rupert Murdoch, is seen by Rutenberg as “encouraging correspondents and writers to tap into their anger and let it play out in a way that reminds rivals and press critics of the war drumbeat of the old Hearst papers and the ideologically driven British tabloids.”

Fox network admits that it avoids showing reports on the genesis of Muslim hostility toward the United States, at the same time that it uses labels like “terror goons,” “dirtbag,” “diabolical,” and “monster” to describe the Taliban. Rutenberg points out that the Fox network “has thrown away many of the conventions that have guided television journalism for half a century,” but quotes Roger Ailes, Fox News chairman, as saying, “If that makes me the bad guy, tough luck. I’m still getting the ratings.” Interestingly, executives at two other networks, Rutenberg reported, “were reluctant to argue against Fox’s position” that condemned “misguided evenhandedness” because, they said, “that could invite accusations of insufficient patriotism.”

The list is long of those who, like the Fox network, crusade in various media forums. Eric Alterman, columnist for *The Nation* and a regular contributor to MSNBC.com, wrote for the latter on March 28, 2002: “In most of the world, it is the Palestinian narrative of a dispossessed people that dominates. In the United States, however, the narrative that dominates is Israel’s...” Alterman explains that the pro-Israeli lobby in America is one of the strongest anywhere, and that Jews give millions of dollars to reward politicians who are pro-Israeli or to punish those who are deemed pro-Palestinian. But, he adds, “Another reason is the near-complete domination by pro-Israel partisans of the punditocracy discourse.”

Alterman then lists 61 “columnists and commentators who can be counted upon to support Israel reflexively and without qualification.” Jews among them include William Safire, Charles Krauthammer, Martin Peretz, Lawrence Kaplan, Mortimer Zukerman, John Podhoretz, A.M. Rosenthal, William Kristol, Yossi Halevi, Alan Dershowitz, Zev Chafets, Robert Kagan and more. Alterman next identifies eight “publications that, for reasons of ownership or editorship can be counted upon to support Israel reflexively and without qualification.” These include *The New Republic*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The New York Daily News*, *The New York Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*. Against massive support for Israel in the media Alterman is able to name only five columnists “likely to be reflexively anti-Israel” (Robert Novak, Pat Buchanan, Alexander Cockburn, Christopher Hitchens, and Edward Said.) Alterman’s conclusion is that “the punditocracy debate of the Middle East in America is dominated by people who cannot imagine criticizing Israel.”

Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times* views himself as balanced in his writing. One might point, however, to the extreme characterizations that Friedman made in a Sept. 14, 2001 column: “The terrorists who hit the U.S. this week are people who pray to the God of hate. Their terrorism is not aimed at reversing any specific U.S. policy. Indeed, they make no demands. Their terrorism is driven by pure hatred and nihilism...” Contrast this with Amos Oz warning that same day in *The New York Times*: “...it may easily seduce us into forgetting that with or without Islamic fundamentalism, with or without Arab terrorism, there is no

justification whatsoever for the lasting occupation and suppression of the Palestinian people by Israel.”

Friedman might also reflect on the words of Arundhati Roy, Indian writer whose “*The God of Small Things*” has sold more than 6 million copies in 40 languages since 1997. Speaking of Osama bin Laden, she says, in the Nov. 3, 2001 *New York Times*: “He has been sculpted from the spare rib of a world laid waste by America’s foreign policy.”

Arabs and Muslims throughout the world understandably link massive U.S. media support for Israel back to popular support for the medieval crusades of West against East, with Israel today seen as a colonial settler outpost for renewed attempts at Western domination. This view is reinforced by the realization that so much of that U.S. support is fueled by Christian fundamentalists. In a *Jerusalem Post* column of Nov. 23, 2001 titled “Israel’s True Secret Weapons,” Jonathan Rosenblum wrote that “the bedrock American support for Israel is devout Christians. Not only do they vastly outnumber American Jews, they are far less likely to be embarrassed by criticism of Israel in certain liberal circles.”

Successive Israeli governments have cultivated and encouraged Christian Zionists in this country, although each side knows that the other is being used for an end result and from motives that each disapproves in the other. For example, evangelist Billy Graham’s anti-Semitism was long masked by public support for Israel. When H.R. Haldeman’s White House diaries came out in 1994, Billy Graham denounced claims that, in conversation with President Richard Nixon, he had attributed the nation’s problems to “satanic Jews.” However, earlier this year the National Archives made public Graham’s 1972 Oval Office conversation with Nixon. As reported by *The New York Times* on March 17, 2002, Billy Graham is heard “denigrating Jews in terms far stronger than the [Haldeman] diary accounts.” Graham insisted that the Jewish “stranglehold has got to be broken or the country’s going down the drain...a lot of the Jews are great friends of mine, they swarm around me and are friendly to me because they know that I’m friendly with Israel. But they don’t know how I really feel about what they are doing to this country.”

On the other side of this cynical relationship, Israel’s relentlessly repressive treatment of the Holy Land’s native Christians (who are, after all, Palestinians) has decimated the Christian population. For example, the Christian population was over 18 percent in 1948 when Jews proclaimed their state, but in 1999, Christians were less than 2 percent. There are today more Christians from Jerusalem living in Sydney, Australia than in Jerusalem itself. Not long ago Bethlehem was 80 percent Christian, but now is only one-third Christian.

While these facts are known to both Israeli politicians and Christian Zionists in the United States, the love-hate alliance endures, each side crusading for its own purposes—with Arabs and Muslims as the losers. Mark

O’Keefe wrote in *The Washington Post* on January 26, 2002: “In an effort to solidify its relationship with American evangelicals, the government of Israel has launched initiatives that include expense-paid trips to the Holy Land and strategy sessions with the Christian Coalition...” Indicating that the target audience is Christian Zionism, O’Keefe explains the rationale. “It’s ‘anything for Israel’ theology has the potential to affect U.S. foreign policy in the same way that the Christian right has influenced domestic issues through political pressure.” He then quotes Janet Parshall, who hosts a weekday show on evangelical stations across the country. “If I felt the administration or anyone in Congress was moving away from support of Israel, believe me, I’d encourage people to pick up the phone and tell their legislators, ‘Don’t you dare.’”

Gary Bauer, another Christian conservative, threatens politicians in the same fashion. Quoted in *The New York Times* on April 16, 2002, Bauer said, “I do email every day to 100,000 people, and I’m just inundated with very emotional responses saying ‘Keep standing up, we’ve got to stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel.’” In that same article Bauer criticized the remarks of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, whom President Bush had sent to a pro-Israel rally on April 15. The fanaticism of such supporters for Israel is apparent in the *Times* report:

Mr. Wolfowitz, who is Jewish, was drowned out by chants of “no more Arafat” and booed as he told the crowd gathered on the Capitol grounds that “innocent Palestinians” as well as Israelis were suffering from the bloodshed. He also spoke of the “future of Palestine’s children.”

No identification of potent propaganda forces for Israel in this country would be complete without mentioning Hollywood. Several years ago a documentary on TV titled “Jews, Movies and the American Dream” (a Halpern/Jacobovici production) candidly stated that the founders of Hollywood in the 1920s were six Jewish immigrants, all born within a 500 mile radius of one another in eastern Europe. It is well known that Jewish producers and directors and scriptwriters insure that no movie sympathetic to Palestinians ever emerges from Hollywood. Blockbuster movies like “The Siege,” “True Lies,” and “Rules of Engagement” are invariably anti-Arab and anti-Muslim. Jack Shaheen, author of “Reel Bad Arabs,” has documented that Jewish producers Menachem Golan and Yoram Globus have alone produced 26 hate-Arab movies. In contrast, the unending flood of movie and TV productions on the Holocaust has compelled one Jewish scholar to deplore this “exploitation of Jewish suffering.” In fact, Norman Finkelstein titled his recent book “The Holocaust Industry.”

Conclusion

This essay concludes with one last but extremely important aspect of the fundamentalist

Christian/Zionist Jewish crusade. It is the mutual reliance on biblical texts from the first books of the Old Testament. Again, in *The New York Times* of April 21, 2002, Gary Bauer, who was identified as having made common cause with William Kristol of the Jewish right wing, is quoted as saying: “As an evangelical, I do believe that the land is what is called covenant land, that God made a covenant with the Jews that that would be their land.”

One might wonder why Christian fundamentalists ignore New Testament teaching that there is no distinction now between Jew and Gentile, between circumcised and uncircumcised, as St. Paul frequently preached. This Christian message derives, of course, from the realization that Christ came to save all peoples, since He loves all equally. Ignoring the Gospel that all are now “chosen people” because of Christ’s universally redemptive sacrifice, Christian fundamentalists selectively focus on the Torah books at the beginning of the Old Testament, rather than acknowledge that the “new dispensation” accomplished through Jesus’ life and death and resurrection has superceded the old.

A more radical criticism of Orthodox Jewish/Christian Zionist exclusive reliance on the first books of the Old Testament is this. There is no scientific evidence that supports the historicity of those books of the Bible. This is the growing consensus of biblical archeologists, Old and New Testament scholars, and Christian as well as Reform and Conservative Jewish researchers. In a lengthy essay by Michael Massing that reviewed “Etz Hayim,” a new Torah and commentary issued by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Massing writes in *The New York Times* of March 9, 2002:

Abraham, the Jewish patriarch, probably never existed. Nor did Moses. The entire Exodus story as recounted in the Bible probably never occurred. The same is true of the tumbling of the walls of Jericho. And David, far from being the fearless king who built Jerusalem into a mighty capital, was more likely a provincial leader whose reputation was later magnified to provide a rallying point for a fledgling nation.

Compiled by David Lieber of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, this volume provides a “new Torah for modern minds,” as well as 41 essays by well-known rabbis and scholars. The virtually total absence of empirical evidence for traditional Jewish claims about their early history is agreed. Robert Wexler, president of the University of Judaism, is said by Massing to hold that “on the basis of modern scholarship, it seems unlikely that the story of Genesis originated in Palestine...The story of Noah was probably borrowed from the Mesopotamian epic Gilgamesh.”

One contributor quoted in the essay, Rabbi David Wolpe, states that archaeologists digging in the Sinai have “found no trace of the tribes of Israel—not one shard of pottery.” Wolpe flatly states that it “is more or less settled and understood among most conservative rabbis” that the

Bible is not literally true. Lee I. Levine, professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is also quoted. "There is no reference in Egyptian sources to Israel's sojourn in that country." Massing then continues to explain Levine's findings:

Similarly ambiguous, Mr. Levine writes, is the evidence of the conquest and settlement of Canaan, the ancient name for the area including Israel. Excavations showing that Jericho was unwallled and uninhabited, he says, "clearly seem to contradict the violent and complete conquest portrayed in the Book of Joshua." What's more, he says, there is an "almost total absence of archeological evidence" backing up the Bible's grand descriptions of the Jerusalem of David and Solomon.

Thomas L. Thompson, at one time my colleague at Marquette University, now holds a chair in the University of Copenhagen. He recently published "The Mythic Past: Biblical Archeology and the Myth of Israel." In the preface he states, "We can say now with considerable confidence that the Bible is not a history of anyone's past." Thompson explains what his research and that of others in the field has concluded. "Today we no longer have a history of Israel. Not only have Adam and Eve and the flood story passed over to mythology, but we can no longer talk about a time of the patriarchs. There never was a 'United Monarchy' in history and it is meaningless to speak of pre-exilic prophets and their writings."

Earlier in 1992, Thompson published a complete study, titled "The Early History of the Israelite People." In it he established that "there could not have been a 'United Kingdom' with a Saul, David or Solomon in Jerusalem during the tenth century BCE."

Such findings today create no scandal, since biblical scholarship no longer is "infected" by the uncritical presumption that the Old Testament is history, says Thompson. The "circular logic" of taking for granted its own assumptions has been replaced by a self-critical science.

"False Testament: Archeology refutes the Bible's claim to history" is the title of a recent essay by Daniel Lazare that addresses the same issues. Confirming that there is no evidence that Abraham ever lived, or that there was a migration from Mesopotamia, or a long stay of Jews in Egypt, or an exodus into the Sinai, or a Davidic empire, Lazare asks concerning the Hebrews, "So why invent for themselves an identity as exiles and invaders?" He answers, "The only way that the Israelites could establish a moral right to the land they inhabited was by claiming to have conquered it sometime in the distant past." Lazare tellingly points out that the same rationale was applied "in the twentieth century by Zionist pioneers eager for evidence that the Jewish claim to the Holy Land was every bit as ancient as the Old Testament said it was."³⁴

Now that Jews have a Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C., Japanese Americans have one in Los Angeles, Blacks have one in Milwaukee, and Armenians are plan-

ning one for Washington, D.C., it is not unthinkable that the holocaust suffered by Palestinians — what they call their Nakba — be memorialized in the United States, which has contributed so much to that catastrophe, and which for that reason contains so many "holocaust deniers." One can only speculate how many more decades it might be before the U.S. government contributes land on the Mall and pays the annual expenses of a Palestinian Holocaust Museum, as the government does for Jews. Such a museum would likely not begin its chronicle of the Palestinian holocaust with 1948, when Jews proclaimed a state of Israel, nor even with 1897 when Zionists led by Theodor Herzl at their first congress in Basle adopted a program to colonize what Jewish settlers delusively referred to as "a land without people" (Palestine). Rather, the history might well begin with the Crusades of the 11th century A.D.

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- ▶ Masri, M., **Children of Shatila** (1999, 58 minutes). The children 17 years after the massacre. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$39.50.**
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- ▶ Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (1990, 38 minutes). A rare collection of Palestinian dresses with accessories modeled against the background of Palestinian music, with commentary tracing the designs back to Canaanite times. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$25.00.**
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