

Understanding American Christian Zionism: Case Studies of Christians United for Israel and Christian Friends of Israeli Communities

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Abstract

Assessment of the Israel lobby in America has been a recurrent topic in academic literature from a broad variety of political viewpoints. However the focus has been upon the Jewish lobby and organisations such as AIPAC. Little attention has been paid to the larger Christian Zionist lobby, which often provides stronger and much more determined support for Israel. This paper seeks to provide an understanding of American Christian Zionism through an analysis of the beliefs and political effect of two key organisations, Christians United for Israel and Christian Friends of Israeli Communities. This paper seeks to demonstrate the highly controversial nature of American Christian Zionists through an analysis of their beliefs, before attempting to establish the number of Christian Zionists who subscribe to different ideologies. An examination of their negative political effect through a study of the level of Christian Zionist support for Israeli expansion will follow. The paper will demonstrate the large number of Christian Zionists subscribing to the controversial dispensationalist ideology and the significant number encouraging and supporting illegal settlements in the West Bank.

Keywords: Christian Zionism, Dispensationalism, Settlements, Israel

Introduction

The United States (U.S.) has significant influence in the Middle East and therefore an understanding of its foreign policy is crucial to an understanding of international relations in the area. One aspect of this is the support given to Israel in response to the lobbying of the U.S. government by both Jewish and Christian Zionists in America. This paper seeks to provide an examination of the Christian Zionist lobby in the U.S. demonstrating its controversial nature and negative political effect.

Christian Zionism has had a significant effect on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and the power of Christian Zionists in the U.S. has been underestimated. Through case studies of Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC), this article aims to answer two key questions:

1. To what extent do Christian Zionists subscribe to dispensationalist theology?
2. To what extent do American Christian Zionists support increased Israeli expansion in the West Bank and what is the nature of this support?

These two questions are important as they allow us to study both the religious beliefs of American Christian Zionist organisations and their political effect. Dispensationalism, which will be explained in full detail in section one, is a highly controversial religious concept, which suggests that Christian Zionists support Israel purely for self-advancing reasons, with a disregard for the long-term safety and prosperity of the Israeli people. Christian Zionist support for settlements is highly controversial as Israeli settlement building in the West Bank is illegal under international law and the extent to which Christian Zionists support these can be seen as a measure of the level of extreme political views within the movement. The existence of organisations like CFOIC would suggest that a significant number support the settlement movement, yet no conclusive evidence has been produced on the issue.

CUFI and CFOIC have been selected for study, as they are both very different, providing key areas for analysis. CUFI is the largest of all the Christian Zionist organisations and is therefore key to providing an indication of Christian Zionist beliefs. Furthermore, its size provides it with a significant number of access points for information and analysis. For example this paper will examine the beliefs of CUFI supporters through a study of comments

posted on their Facebook page. CUFI has the largest social network following of any Christian Zionist organisation in America, with 1,019,765 followers on Facebook (Accurate March 2013). CUFI has been chosen both for its size and for its large social network presence, which provides a useful insight into the views of Christian Zionists as opposed to the limited and often biased information provided by the organisations themselves and academic commentary.

CFOIC has been selected because of its key aim, to facilitate a relationship between Christian Zionists in the U.S. and the settlements. This organisation will be key to the analysis of Christian Zionist support for settlements in section three. CFOIC regularly sends out emails to subscribers calling for donations in order to support settlement infrastructure and Israeli charities based in the West Bank.

Importance of this study.

Much of the discussion on Israel's relationship with the United States focuses upon the Jewish Israel lobby, which includes both criticism and supporting literature. Two of the best-known and most controversial writers on the subject are Mearsheimer and Walt. In their article *The Israel Lobby* (2006) and subsequent book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2007), Mearsheimer and Walt (both realists) argue that the Israel lobby is manipulating American foreign policy in a way that is not in the interest of the United States but is in line with Israeli government policy (Mearshiemer & Walt 2006). They make some valid points regarding the ability for outside groups to influence foreign policy in the American government system; however they focus on Jewish lobby groups such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), failing to fully examine the role of the arguably more powerful Christian lobby. Academics writing on the U.S. relationship with Israel have failed to discuss the impact of Christian Zionist organisations. Stephen Spector points out that observers view the "combination of the powerful pro-Israel lobby in Washington...and disproportionately large Jewish contributions in election campaigns" as the reason for U.S. support for Israel (2009: 245). This is simply not the full story.

Much of the limited literature on Christian Zionists is politically motivated in its criticism, strongly taking the side of the Palestinians in the Israeli-Arab Conflict in its analysis. This is problematic as it immediately puts all Christian Zionist support for Israel in a negative light, generalising on the effect of Christian Zionists. This bias has produced a gap in academic

discussion on the influence of the Christian Zionist lobby. Much of the social science scholarship on religion in the U.S. has “focused on religious-secular conflicts” such as abortion and gay rights (Baumgartner *et al.* 2008: 171). The debate regarding Christian Zionism is important as there is a lack of academic analysis in the literature to date.

The potential power of Christian Zionists’ is significantly greater than that of the Jewish Israel lobby. This is largely due to their size. The majority of Christian Zionists are Evangelical Christians, who make up 26.3 per cent of the total U.S population (Pew Research Center 2008). In comparison, the Jewish population only makes up 1.7 per cent of the total (Pew Research Center 2008). The size of the evangelical population provides Christian Zionists with significant voting power; their population is four times that of nonreligious voters, ‘and twelve times the number of Jewish voters’ (Martin 1999: 68). Hence the potential power and scope of the Christian Zionist lobby makes them a very important group to study in order to further understand the influences on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

In order to examine the two organisations, an understanding of Christian Zionism is essential. Section one will answer the question ‘Who are they?’ The section will begin by discussing the religious beliefs of Christian Zionists, before examining criticisms of these beliefs and their political effect. Much of the criticism they have faced has been closely linked with strong criticisms of the Israeli state, and a significant proportion of this is often polemical in nature. Critics of their religious beliefs have targeted dispensationalist theology. However it is difficult to ascertain the number subscribing to this theology. The leadership of Christian Zionist organisations avoid advertising this topic due to the nature of their beliefs, which could be seen to be on the one hand supporting Israel, but on the other praying for its destruction. This discussion will be followed by an outline of the main Christian Zionist organisations and groups, highlighting their size and scope, before providing case studies of CUFI and CFOIC, in preparation for a study of the two organisations.

Sections two and three will utilise primary sources in order to understand the beliefs and political views of Christian Zionism. This will be achieved through examining primary sources from CUFI’s Facebook page and the author’s own database of emails from CFOIC. A fully detailed methodology will be outlined within section two and highlighted in section

three. Section two will utilise these unique resources in order to establish the extent to which Christian Zionists in America are dispensationalists.

Section three will examine the political beliefs of Christian Zionists in relation to the extent to which Christian Zionists support Israeli expansion in the West Bank. There have been many allegations of illegal funding of the settlement movement in the West Bank from Christian Zionist groups in the U.S. but the controversial nature of this activity makes the funding highly covert. In an in-depth study of the organisations as in section two, section three will ascertain the extent to which Christian Zionists demonstrate support for Israeli expansion and the nature of this funding. Both sections two and three are useful literature as they use primary sources in order to understand the beliefs and political views of the Christian Zionist movement in the U.S.

This paper intends to provide an insight into American Christian Zionism demonstrating its controversial nature and negative political effect.

Section 1: Who are Christian Zionists?

This section will examine the beliefs of Christian Zionists and identify key academic critiques and literature on the movement. This will be followed by an identification of the key groups and leaders, followed by detailed studies of CUFI and CFOIC.

1.1. The Christian Zionist Lobby and its Beliefs.

Christian Zionism originates from a belief that Christians are duty bound by the Bible to support the Jewish return to Israel. The term Christian Zionist was first used to describe Henri Dunant, the Swiss philanthropist who founded the Red Cross. Dunant was “one of only a handful of Gentiles to be invited to the First World Zionist Congress.” (Sizer 2004: 19).

Many Christian Zionists have theological reasons for supporting Israel, but individuals vary in their level of support. There are two camps of Christian Zionists, the biblical Zionists whose support for Israel stems from biblical literature, and the dispensationalists who

subscribe to a theological belief that Israel holds significance in the return of Jesus, the Messiah, to earth. There is also a significant crossover between the two groups. Biblical reasons for supporting Israel are universal amongst Christian Zionists; however, many Christian Zionists also subscribe to dispensationalism. As in other religions also, different people choose to subscribe to different levels of belief. For the purpose of this article, both motives for supporting Israel will be examined bearing in mind there is significant crossover.

1.1.1. Biblical Christian Zionists

Biblical Christian Zionists cite a large number of biblical references in support of their beliefs. I have highlighted the two most common within literature. These are Genesis Chapters 12:3 and 15:18. Genesis 12:3 states:

And I will bless them that bless thee,
And curse him that curseth thee:
And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (The Bible).

Biblical Zionists interpret this as a direct message to bless the Jewish people as God's 'chosen people' through support for Israel. David Brog, Executive Director of CUFI argues that Genesis 12:3 "commands philo-Semitism and Zionism" (2006: 69). This in some cases can produce unconditional support for Israel along biblical lines. Biblical Zionists often cite the successes of nations and groups in history who have 'blessed' the Jews as evidence for the validity of Genesis 12:3, for example in Post-Enlightenment England, the good treatment of the Jews resulted in the 'sun never setting' on the British Empire (Brog 2006: 70).

The geographical relationship of the Jewish people to the land of Israel according to Christian Zionists is cemented in Genesis Chapter 15:18 which states:

In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates (The Bible).

This biblical passage states that God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people stretching from the Nile, to the Euphrates, an area that would encompass much of modern day Egypt, Jordan and Iraq as well as all of Israel and the occupied territories. These two verses enable

biblical literalists to argue that the land of Israel belongs “unequivocally...to the Jewish people and that this gift is permanently valid” (Baumgartner *et al.* 2008: 174). Some Biblical Zionists do subscribe to the belief in a greater Israel, however the extent of this support very much varies among different individuals, with the less literal Biblical Zionists simply supporting an Israeli state within practical borders. It tends to be the Christian Zionists who also subscribe to dispensationalism who take these biblical passages the most literally.

Hubers argues that for many Biblical Zionists, their support for Israel is furthered as its story resonates with that of America echoing “themes of the American frontier myth” (2003: 101). This is an interesting interpretation and might explain why there is such wide support by Christian Zionists for Israel. This viewpoint is contrary to that of Abu-Akel (2005) who rather simplistically views Christian Zionist support for Israel as theological. Biblical Zionism has produced philosemitism (gentile appreciation of Judaism), which has been essential to furthering biblical Christian support for Israel (Lewis 2010: 14). There has been a failure to appreciate the impact of philosemitism on Christian support for the Jewish homeland in much of the literature. It seems however, in the United States and worldwide, biblical Zionists are a minority and “the ‘dispensionals’ are the majority” (Pawson 2008: 23). Biblical reasons for supporting Israel tend not to face as much criticism as dispensationalist reasons.

1.1.2. Dispensationalist Christian Zionists

The dispensational theory originates from nineteenth century England, popularised by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Dispensationalism builds upon biblical writing that states that the Jewish people are God’s chosen people and suggests that “the Jewish people are no longer repudiated by God, rather they continued to be blessed by Him” (Friedman 2009: 48). This is in contradiction to the conventional Christian belief that the Jews lost their ‘chosen people’ status when they failed to accept Jesus as the Messiah, and the Christian people inherited God’s covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-2, The Bible). Christian Zionism brings the Jewish people back into light and rejects what is commonly known as ‘replacement theology.’ Today dispensationalist Zionists believe that by rejecting replacement theology they are “in the ascendance” (Brog 2006: 38).

The main aim of dispensationalist Christians is to ensure their safety following Armageddon. For many dispensationalists Israel “forms the key piece to the end-times jigsaw puzzle”

(Wilson 1989: 265). Tony Campolo (2005) effectively highlights the main beliefs of Darby's followers and is regularly cited in other writings for his comprehensive description of dispensationalist theology. Campolo states that for Armageddon to arrive and ultimately for Jesus to return to earth, the following must occur:

The nation of Israel must be re-established...the Jews must return to the Holy Land and become the sole occupiers of the land...the Jewish Temple that once stood on Mt. Zion must be rebuilt and the temple sacrifices of ancient Israel must be reinstated (Campolo 2005).

The corollary to this interpretation is that dispensationalist Zionists can expedite the arrival of Armageddon. Fahed Abu-Akel argues that these aims are highly impractical and detrimental to any sort of peace process. The biblical land of Israel includes "all the land between the Euphrates and the Nile rivers" and in terms of the temple, it must be rebuilt "where the Muslim Dome of the Rock now stands," one of the holiest sights in Islam (Abu-Akel 2005: 41). However Abu-Akel fails to recognise that the views of Christian Zionists, as in all religions, vary. Not all dispensationalists believe the assertion that the temple must be rebuilt. The core belief for dispensationalists is Israel's importance in the return of Jesus and the end of the world. However, dispensationalists differ in their beliefs about the means for this to happen.

All subscribers of dispensationalism believe that when the conditions are right, "Jesus will *almost* return" [emphasis in original] and 'rapture' will begin (Campolo 2005). Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, a contemporary of Darby who is also credited with the popularisation of dispensationalist theory focused much of his teaching on the rapture. Rapture, it is argued, will emerge prior to Armageddon and the coming of the Messiah. "God will remove all of his true believers from earth...and all of God's true followers will vanish in an instant and their souls will ascend to heaven," where they will join Jesus (Haija 2006: 81). Haija argues that the 'Great Tribulation' – "three and a half years of pseudo-peace" will succeed this, a time of war and famine where the earth will be completely ruled by the anti-Christ (Haija 2006: 83).

Following these years of tribulation, it is believed, "against the anti-Christ will stand 144,000 Jews, who will have by then been converted to Christianity" (Campolo 2005). These Jews will "meet the anti-Christ for the final battle known as Armageddon, and the converted Jews

will single-handedly defeat the anti Christ” (Haija 2006: 84), following which Jesus will return and “imprison Satan and his hosts, and then establish his Messianic Kingdom here on Earth in a period called the Millennium” (Campolo 2005).

Support for Israel is based on the importance of the Jews to the redemption of the world. As many commentators argue, dispensationalists believe that 144,000 Jews will save the world and for these end times to arrive, the Jews must be in Israel (Campolo 2005). Support for Israel is therefore critical to the future of the world in the eyes of many dispensationalist Christians. This provides Israel with much needed support which, however, is predicated on a desire for the destruction of the world.

This view of American Christian Zionists however is criticised by David Brog, Executive Director of CUFI. Brog argues that the large number of critical commentators of dispensationalist theory provides answers that are “superficial at best and slanderous at worst” (2006: 66). The claim that Christian Zionists support Israel only to speed up the arrival of the Second Coming is false according to Brog. Brog states that Christian Zionists do “not presume to speed it up through their actions,” and this interpretation is incorrect arguing, “man cannot alter God’s timetable for the second coming” (2006: 82). In his book, *Standing With Israel* Brog argues that although some Christian Zionists believe in dispensational theology, they support Israel for biblical reasons. Brog goes on to argue that the majority of dispensationalists are ‘premillennial dispensationalists’ and it is the ‘postmillennial dispensationalists’ who claim to be able to speed up rapture. If we accept Brog’s argument that most Christian Zionists are premillennial dispensationalists, the end times would be irrelevant, and their discussion within Christian Zionist circles in relation to Israel would not exist. However the end times are still referred to by Christian Zionists. On visiting the CUFI conference in 2010, Alice Bach reported that the organisation’s leader, John Hagee, “still alludes to the ultimate battle of Armageddon” (Bach 2010: 87). Even if Brog’s distinction is true, there are still many Christian Zionists who have stated their support for Israel with the aim of speeding up rapture.

In an interview former Congressional Majority Leader, Tom DeLay, states that his support for Israel stems from a belief in the second coming, “Honestly, it’s what I live for, I hope it comes tomorrow” (mblumenthal 2007). This statement from Tom DeLay a highly influential

Christian Zionist seems to suggest that Brog's argument that the majority of Christian Zionists are premillennial dispensationalists is fabricated.

David Pawson in his book *Defending Christian Zionism* argues that this expectation to be 'taken up' is hypocrisy, "leaving Israel alone in this world to face the biggest troubles of all" (2008: 34). Christian Zionist beliefs clearly vary dramatically with dispensationalist views being criticised internally by biblical Christian Zionists and externally by opponents to the theology and critics of Israel.

The theological foundations of dispensationalist Zionism have been disseminated through fictional literature. Baumgartner, Francia and Morris discuss the *Left Behind* book series which are adventure novels documenting the end of the world, and state that "almost one in ten adults [in the U.S.]...have read at least one of the books in the series" (2008: 173). With over 60 million copies sold in the US and over 700 million worldwide, the potential influence of these books is vast (Campolo 2005). They tell the story of several born-again Christians as they battle the forces of the Anti-Christ in an end of the world scenario. Many authors in the field such as Haija have acknowledged the books' influence on the spread of dispensationalism. Haija sees a direct correlation between people reading these books and the growth in popularity of dispensationalist theory (Haija 2006: 83).

1.2. Christian Zionist Support for Israel: A Pattern of Criticism

Much of the academic literature written on Christian Zionism has been severely critical of the movement, especially the dispensationalist side. There are two types of critique of Christian Zionism: firstly, those who criticise the theological interpretation of Christianity as support for Israel, and secondly the negative political consequences of Christian Zionism. Much of the literature criticising the theological basis is written by evangelical Christians such as Stephen Sizer (2004), who believes that Christian Zionism is a dangerous faction of evangelical Christianity in America. However like many critics of the movement Sizer fails to distinguish between the two sides of Christian Zionism in America, grouping both biblical and dispensationalist Zionists as one.

Sizer argues that Christian Zionists are detrimental to western policy in the Middle East, criticising them for their unapologetic support for Israel, through which they oppose any criticisms or hostility towards Israel and supporting Israeli expansion along biblical lines (Sizer 2004: 21). This is a viewpoint supported by a large number of other academics writing on the topic. Abu-Akel takes this criticism further, stating “if we support the Christian Zionist plan, then we must understand that we are, in fact, supporting ethnic cleansing and pure racism” (Abu-Akel 2005: 43). It seems that some critics of Christian Zionism have failed to base their claims academically. Moderates do not view Israeli policy as anything close to ethnic cleansing. Abu-Akel argues that the theological reasons Christian Zionists support Israel are irrelevant, what is important is the political effect these views are having (Abu-Akel 2005: 43). This is a view shared by many writing in this area. Friedman takes a more moderate view of Christian Zionism, suggesting it is “even negatively impacting the desires of many left-wing Israelis (Jews) who would like to see peace in the Holy Land” (Friedman 2009: 54).

Sizer also criticises the Zionist lobby and dispensationalist theory from an objective perspective. As an evangelical, Sizer believes that Christian Zionist Organisations have “disavowed or redefined evangelism and identify with right-wing Israeli opinion, lobbying the United States government to continue to finance Israel’s expansionist agenda” (Sizer 2004: 22). Campolo shares this disagreement with many Christian Zionist principles, but takes a more moderate position explicitly criticising dispensationalism. Campolo argues: “Those of us Evangelical Christians who have not been swept into the Darby fold must not be considered anti-Zionist...intensely, we support the right of Israel to exist within secure borders,” however he holds the view that “Christian Zionists have become a major barrier, if not *the* [emphasis in original] major barrier, to peace in the Middle East” (Campolo 2005).

Many of the authors argue that Christian Zionism has contributed to a rise in Islamic fundamentalism (Friedman 2009: 47). Davidson takes this further, arguing, “the Christian fundamentalists have a fear an [sic] loathing of Islam even older than that of the Zionists” (Davidson 2011). This association of Christian fundamentalists and Zionists with anti-Islam viewpoints is detrimental to the academic validity of Davidson’s article as he suggests all Christian Zionists and Zionists hold anti-Islam viewpoints. However, there are a number of Christian Zionists who do subscribe to this anti-Islamic view. Brog argues that evangelicals have “enthusiastically embraced Huntington’s thesis” in their criticism of Islam (Brog 2006:

76). In his book *'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order'* Samuel Huntington identifies the Western and Islamic civilisations as two groups that will clash (1996). Although many subscribers to Huntington's theory are far from anti-Islamic, this book drives a significant anti-Islamic presence among some Christian Zionists in America. Sizer points out that "comparisons between Hitler and the Arabs are now frequent in the writings of contemporary Christian Zionists" (Sizer 2004: 242). Ironically Sizer has been criticised for his links with websites and people who have referred to Israel as Nazi (The Board of Deputies of British Jews 2012).

Sizer's views have not been without criticism. Smith describes Sizer's book as "unnecessarily polemical and pejorative" (Smith 2008: 172). The book often takes a polemical viewpoint of Israel, which is unnecessary to many of the arguments and detrimental to the academic validity of the book. Sizer has more recently been criticised in the UK by the Board of Deputies of British Jews who have made a complaint to the Church of England. This is due to Sizer's action on his website where he has suggested Israelis are child killers and has posted links to websites which support the anti-Semitic Protocols of Zion (The Board of Deputies of British Jews 2012). Pawson furthers this accusation of anti-Semitism arguing that many of Sizer's views are "not unlike that of Hamas," a terrorist organisation (2008: 17). This clearly demonstrates the controversy of much of the literature to be discussed in this paper.

The writings of Christian Zionists themselves shed light on the subject. Both Marvin Wilson and David Pawson criticise the views of dispensationalist Christian Zionists. They represent the views of biblical Christian Zionists, and view much of the dispensationalist theology as myth. Pawson states "there is not a single explicit statement in the New Testament making the Jewish return a 'sign' of Jesus' return" (2008: 33). Many biblical Zionist critics of the dispensationalist movement view the support they endow Israel as too great. To criticise Israel can be viewed by some extreme dispensationalist Christians as "tantamount to opposing God" (Wilson 1989: 273). Pawson is very critical of the writing of many critics of Christian Zionism, especially Sizer, for their failure to differentiate between biblical Zionists and dispensationalists. In his book Sizer regularly amalgamates these two different beliefs into one group. It is very important that this differentiation is made clear in this paper, as a person's beliefs can affect the extent to which they support and lobby for Israeli policy.

The majority of the American public appears to view the emergence of religious conservatives such as the Christian Zionists as a growing threat to the separation of church and state (Martin 1999: 67). Zionism is a key part of the political agenda of the Christian right in America and advocates are likely to associate themselves with right wing Israeli policies such as those which favour increased settlement building.

In the academic literature, the debate seems to focus on the legitimacy of the movement, both from a Christian theological perspective and a political perspective regarding its impact on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. This brings about a variety of critiques, many of which can sometimes appear to be rather simplistic and driven by ideology and opinion rather than evidence and analysis.

1.3. The Christian Zionist Movement.

The Christian Zionist movement is very large, and must not be underestimated. Martin argues, “religious conservatives have become an enduring and important part of the social landscape” (Martin 1999: 68). The socio-religious pool from which these organisations draw their membership, white evangelical Protestants, “comprise nearly 25 percent of all registered voters...four times the number of non-religious voters and twelve times the number of Jewish voters” (Martin 1999: 68). With 10 per cent of US voters declaring themselves as Zionist Christians, this is equal to over 31 million Americans, compared to a Jewish population of 2 per cent, 6 million (Haija 2006: 75); the potential power of the Christian Zionist movement is enormous. This figure is especially large when we consider that not all Jewish people are strong supporters of Israel nor are they Zionists for that matter. AIPAC claims to have only 100,000 members (AIPAC 2012); while the single largest Christian Zionist organisation CUFI, membership is ten times the size of AIPAC’s at one million (CUFI 2012).

Unlike its Jewish equivalent, the Christian Zionist lobby is not strongly autonomous. This brief section will identify some of the key organisations in the Christian Zionist lobby.

The largest organisation CUFI is defined by Friedman as, “a group that aims to lobby the government specifically on Israeli issues” (Friedman 2009: 52). In 2007, “CUFI’s second annual forum attracted over four thousand participants” (Friedman 2009: 52). Modelled on

AIPAC's conferences, the conference included talks by multiple guest speakers including Senator John McCain who received seven standing ovations in six minutes for his strong support for Israel (Friedman 2009: 52).

Other examples include Bridges for Peace (BFP) and International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), which has paid for the transport of 40,000 of the 700,000 immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s (Lewis 2010: 173). More controversially, the ICEJ has allegedly "been linked to the efforts of fanatical Jews and born-again Christians to 'hasten the coming of the Messiah' by attempting to take over the Dome of the Rock and destroy the Moslems' Al-Asqa mosque in Jerusalem" (Diamond 1989: 203). The validity of this claim, however, seems to be limited as there is no conclusive evidence. Furthermore, the ICEJ does not subscribe to the concept of "the Rapture of the church" (Lewis 2010: 177). BFP and the ICEJ are both fairly moderate Christian Zionist organisations. Diamond's accusation demonstrates the level of undue criticism received by many of these organisations.

CFOIC could be viewed as more controversial as it openly funds settlements in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law (Phillips 2011: 31). CFOIC publicises that it funds legal settlements in the Judea and Samaria (West Bank). This example serves to demonstrate the strong views of many Christian Zionists towards Israel, exemplified by a preparedness to disregard the legality of the actions they are funding and to disregard the rights of the Palestinian people to a state of their own. These actions also contravene the policies of the U.S. government who have regularly attempted to curb settlement building.

Many of the writers refer to former President Ronald Reagan as a key dispensationalist. It is alleged that Reagan himself believed he was required as President to produce a military build-up in order to be prepared for Armageddon (Campolo 2005). Reagan's Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt believed that rapture was on its way, and "saw no reason to hold back on drilling for oil in national parks, eliminating environmental policies designed to protect the Earth's atmosphere, rivers, lakes and oceans" (Campolo 2005). As mentioned previously with the example of Tom DeLay, dispensationalism has been an influence on U.S. foreign policy. This demonstrates the extent to which dispensationalism and Christian Zionism has infiltrated the government and had an influence on policy and decision-making.

1.3.1. CUFI Case Study

CUFI aims to be an all-encompassing umbrella organisation for Christian Zionists. Although many Christian Zionists subscribe to dispensationalist theory, it appears that CUFI try to refrain from advertising this point. There is no mention on their website of premillennial dispensationalism (CUFI 2012). In a document produced by their founder, Pastor John Hagee, he highlights seven biblical reasons as to why Christians should support Israel (Hagee 2012) however none of them mention dispensationalist theology. It seems that although it is well understood that many Christian Zionists believe their support for Israel will advance rapture and eventually Armageddon, this is something the leadership do not wish to have portrayed. The journalist Max Blumenthal corroborates this fact when writing on his attendance of the 2007 CUFI conference in Washington D.C. Blumenthal writes that throughout the conference, he and his photographer “were hounded by PR agents seeking to prevent us from interviewing attendees about the End Times” (Blumenthal 2007). He goes on to say that he was “instructed to only interview CUFI leaders capable of sticking to the talking point that their support for Israel has, as Hagee declared, ‘nothing to do with the End Times’” (Blumenthal 2007).

Although it is widely understood that Hagee and many of his followers are dispensationalist Christians, as some of the interviews in Blumenthal’s related film shows (*Rapture Ready: The Christians United for Israel Tour 2007*), it seems CUFI’s leaders do not wish for this to be publicised. This is likely to relate to their desire for a positive public image, as they are aware of the criticism dispensationalists face. On the one hand they wish to support Israel, but on the other hand they adhere to the view that ‘non-believers’ will suffer a terrible fate. As Diamond points out if anything were to bring about public concern over the growing political power of the religious right, “it would be the realization that millions of born-again Americans might be waiting in eager anticipation for their fellow citizens to be blown off the face of the earth” (Diamond 1989: 135). However, interestingly David Brog dismisses these criticisms arguing that there has been a misunderstanding of dispensationalist theory, and CUFI’s support for Israel is based upon biblical literature, not the advancing of Armageddon (2006: 82).

It seems however that the support Israel receives from Christian Zionists is simply “too great” for Israelis and other supporters of Israel to deny on the reasons behind it (Haija 2006: 87). CUFI poses a major threat to the peace process in the Middle East. In CUFI’s most

recent newsletter to its members, Hagee and David Brog sign their opening letter to members with the words “Every minute counts; we must help win the battle for Jerusalem!” (Hagee and Brog 2012). Although like dispensationalism, this viewpoint is not formally expressed on their website, it is widely understood that CUFI support Israel’s policy in Judea and Samaria. Therefore for many Israelis who are against the settlement movement, Christian Zionism impacts negatively on their hope for peace (Friedman 2009: 54).

On the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, John Hagee assured the new president that his followers would support the new administration, however, as Friedman points out, Hagee cannot control this vast number of evangelicals, with some in “the extreme premillennial dispensationalist camp who persist in their radical rhetoric,” where Obama has been referred to “as the antichrist” (Friedman 2009: 59). As evidence in later sections will show, Obama is the target of much racist and illegitimate criticism from Christian Zionists. This is a further issue for CUFI’s public image as it gives critics greater ammunition. It seems CUFI is an organisation which supports Israel while at the same time attempting to play down the extremist viewpoints of the movement’s foundations and its membership.

1.3.2. CFOIC Case Study

CFOIC was started in 1995 as a response to the Oslo peace process. It claims that the transfer of territory to the Palestinian Authority in 1993 and 1995 “ran counter to God’s plan for the Jewish nation” (CFOIC 2005). However their statements on the reasons for supporting settlements in the West Bank are not just based on biblical claims to land. They cite Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and the current situation with Hamas ruling the Gaza strip and regular rocket attacks into Israel as political evidence for the need for Israel to control all of the land.

It seems that CFOIC has been involved in highly controversial practices in pursuing its aims. Elizabeth Phillips cites the example of the settlement of Maskiot in the West Bank. In 2007 the Israeli government suspended building plans, yet CFOIC allegedly raised money to build temporary structures at the site (Phillips 2011: 31).

It is very difficult to determine the extent to which CFOIC are dispensationalists. On their website CFOIC claim to support Israel on biblical grounds, however in the same way as CUFI, it is possible this is not true. CFOIC has had less academic literature written about it

due to its significantly smaller size in comparison to CUFI; therefore it is more difficult to determine the true reasons for their support for Israel. It seems as an organisation, CFOIC is very different to CUFI in that it is simply a means for Christian Zionists to support Israel, rather than a religious organisation.

Both of these organisations are very different and will provide some very interesting conclusions. Christian Zionists support Israel for a broad variety of reasons and demonstrate their support for Israel in very different ways. This section has demonstrated some of the differing reasons for Christian support of Israel in the U.S. and has highlighted the controversial nature of some of the beliefs of members of CFOIC and CUFI.

Section 2. Dispensationalism in the Christian Zionist Movement in the U.S.

Dispensationalism is a highly controversial theory. It is difficult however to determine the numbers who support the theology against those who simply support Israel for biblical reasons, especially because of the large crossover of beliefs which also exists. Establishing a concrete answer is made more difficult as groups do not publicise their beliefs. It is widely accepted that the majority of Christian Zionists subscribe to the biblical reasons for supporting Israel as a basis for their beliefs, and much of the literature has suggested that the large majority of Christian Zionists in the U.S. also subscribe to dispensationalism. The extent to which this is true is very difficult to ascertain. Dispensationalist organisations do not wish their views to be publicised because of the effect this could have on their status in society. This issue was discussed in section one and the analysis of the CUFI conference by Max Blumenthal is evidence for this (Rapture Ready: The Christians United for Israel Tour 2007).

This section will use original research data to ascertain the extent to which American Christian Zionists are dispensationalists through examining CUFI and CFOIC. As leaders fail to publicise the views of their membership via their websites and other media outlets, this section will look directly at the views of these organisations through examining statements made by the membership and email communications in the form of comments of Christian Zionists on the CUFI Facebook page and the email communications of CFOIC in an attempt

to establish the extent to which the membership of these organisations subscribe to a dispensationalist ideology.

2.1. Method

In order to establish the extent to which these two Christian Zionist organisations are made up of dispensationalists, this section will examine both the Facebook postings and the author's own database of emails using quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The quantitative analysis of comments on posts requires the use of framing theory, allowing for an examination of the number of times users demonstrate their support of dispensationalist theology. Although typically, "the majority of framing effects represent differences in opinion," (Iyengar 2010), this study will contrast 'what they want you to think', with the actual political views of the Christian Zionist membership collected through framing. Dennis Chong and James Druckman provide a comprehensive guide to political framing theory, outlining framing methodology as follows:

First, an issue or event is identified...Second...the researcher needs to isolate a specific attitude" towards an issue. "Third, an initial set of frames for an issue is identified inductively to create a coding scheme...The next step is to select sources for content analysis. (Chong and Druckman 2007: 106-7)

I am going to use this method in order to examine statements made by Christian Zionist subscribers. My methodology is as follows:

1. Identification of issue: the extent to which dispensationalist views are present within Christian Zionists.
2. Attitude: support for dispensationalism.
3. Frames:
 - Display of dispensationalist viewpoints.
 - Demonstration of Christian Zionist opposition to dispensationalism.
 - Anti Christian Zionist.
4. Sources: Social network comments of Christian Zionists, outlined in section 2.3.

Before commencing an explanation of the way in which the frames will be identified is required. Framing is being used to analyse the comments, however unlike many other framing studies, the study cannot be conducted just by looking for specific words. There are a variety of ways in which an individual can express a certain viewpoint. For example, in the displaying of dispensationalist viewpoints, an individual is unlikely to use the word dispensationalist. They may refer to 'End Times' or they might state they support Israel in order to advance the return of Jesus or 'Rapture'. The same applies for the other frames. Therefore in analysing the comments on CUFI Facebook posts, each comment must be read and assessed to ascertain its meaning.

Qualitative analysis will be used to analyse key statements and opinions displayed in the emails of CFOIC. This of course has the same issues with discourse as framing analysis.

2.2. Limits of the Study

Framing in political science is a well-established method of studying data, however it does of course have its weaknesses, as does this study. The data being examined from Facebook consists of comments on CUFI posts, which typically quote the Bible, politicians, significant people within the movement and update followers on news and campaigns with regard to Israel. The CUFI Facebook posts therefore do not encourage users to simply declare their religious beliefs. A further limit is the number of people who comment and publicise their views on the site and who are subscribers to the site. With 1,019,765 followers (Facebook, Accurate March 2013), there are a large number of people that CUFI can reach through their Facebook presence, however those choosing to comment are a self-selected group.

One disadvantage of this method is that we cannot assume that all of the comments on Facebook are posted by Christian Zionists. We can only assume that a large majority of those who follow the page are Christian Zionists based in America, simply because that is the basis and target area of the organisation.

The study aims only to demonstrate an existing significant level of support for dispensationalism and therefore cannot be fully conclusive in estimating the number of Christian Zionists who follow a dispensationalist theology. Furthermore the nature of the

posts people comment on means that often they do not declare their specific views. The posts tend to just make a statement and the majority of people simply comment stating their agreement with the post or support for Israel. The focus of this study is on the numbers posting comments which express a viewpoint rather than those which merely express support for the post. As the number of comments on specific frames is likely to be low, there is a danger that a small number of comments will provide only a small body of evidence in support of the argument of the study.

A further constraint is the possibility of human error. Some framing studies have been conducted using computers, however searching for key words using a computer system will not produce a valid study. As the language of the comments is likely to vary, the choice of relevant comments is a subjective one and cannot reliably be carried out using key words.

Another disadvantage of this study is the limited number of emails from CFOIC that were available within the time frame of the study. This is because as an undergraduate dissertation, this subject was only formalised in November 2012, meaning the collection of data could not have commenced prior to this date. However this should not hinder the study significantly as the content and style of the emails appears to change little over time.

2.3. The Datasets

CUFI Dataset

The dataset has been taken from regular CUFI postings on two average days in February 2013. This results in 10 CUFI posts, with an average of 400 comments on each post for analysis. The reason so few posts have been used is because often views that leaders do not wish to be displayed about their organisation are removed, therefore to get the best out of the data, one must analyse the comments as soon as they are published. There follows an example of one of the posts. The remainder of the posts analysed are listed in the appendix.



Figure 2.1: Image of Post 1. (Facebook 2013).

In the majority of the examples used, the post consists of an image together with a statement, as in this example of a statement made by Prime Minister Netanyahu. Supporters of CUFI can choose to comment on the right hand side.

An important consideration to examine before examining and analysing the findings of this study is the potential censoring of posts. From putting together the data through the process of framing, conversations within the comments between Christian Zionists and their critics have been noticed, often with the critics' side of the discussion missing. In analysing real-time comments however, some of these have been preserved. In one particular comment an individual has noticed this:

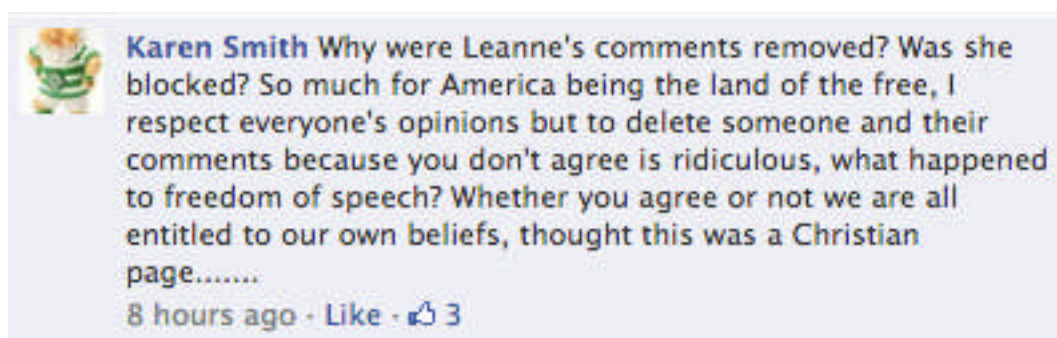


Figure 2.2. Critical Comment (Smith 2013)

This comment was however later removed, most likely because it was seen to be too critical of CUFI and a hindrance to their public image. I am unable to confirm the content of the original comment to which Karen Smith is referring. However the comment demonstrates the existence of censoring on the page. This means that CUFI as the managers of the page may have been censoring not only criticism of Israel, but also the display of dispensationalist viewpoints. This makes it very important to monitor these comments in real time as soon as possible.

CFOIC Dataset

The data is made up of emails sent out to their subscribers from which we can understand the aims of the organisation. The majority of the emails are sent out on a Friday wishing the American followers of CFOIC a 'Shabbat Shalom' (Good Sabbath) informing them of the Torah (Jewish Biblical) portion of the week. The emails aim to inform the readers of the Shabbat and weekly activities of the Jewish people they support. The remaining emails are aimed to encourage subscribers to donate to CFOIC projects.

The author's database of emails sent from the CFOIC leadership to its member's stretches from November 2012 up until the time of writing (March 2013). This provides approximately 44 emails. This limited number of emails to examine does provide a limitation to the scale of the study. However these emails tend to follow a rather similar format, with regular emails sent out with few changes made to their content. These emails will be studied using qualitative methods, examining the content of these emails and establishing whether they allude to or directly demonstrate a belief in dispensationalist theology. Unlike the public information displayed on CFOIC websites, these emails provide a different side to the organisation as the information is not directly in the public domain.

2.4 The Study's findings.

2.4.1. CUFI

In establishing the extent to which CUFI is made up of dispensationalist Christians, the following frames were used when examining the Facebook comments of CUFI supporters allowing the simple recording of the number of times these views were expressed:

1. Demonstration of dispensationalist views.
2. Christian Zionist criticisms of dispensationalism.
3. Anti Christian Zionist views.

Posts on other issues were sometimes recorded for use in further studies and are shown in the appendix, the remaining posts expressing predictable views for followers of a Christian Zionist page such as support for Israel were not recorded as this is to be expected. It was important to view the anti- Christian Zionist comments as these put into perspective the number of dispensationalist comments, as like the dispensationalist viewpoint comments, they have both been subject to removal by the page's administrators. The number of criticisms by Christian Zionists of dispensationalist theory were also important to note as they demonstrate non-dispensationalist support for Israel. The results are as follows:

	Brief Post Description	Date	Number Of Comments	Demonstration of dispensationalist views	Christian Zionist criticism of dispensationalism	Anti Christian Zionist
1	Netanyahu Statement	Feb-18	593	23	0	12
2	CUFI Statement on Hagel	Feb-19	256	7	0	0
3	Gods Covenant with Israel (Jer 31:31-34)	Feb-18	434	4	1	2
4	God has a plan for Israel (Ephesians 3:20)	Feb-18	346	5	0	1
5	Share if you believe America should support Israel	Feb-18	354	6	0	3
6	Gods watch over Israel (Psalm 121:4)	Feb-18	516	5	2	3
7	Share if you (heart) Israel	Feb-18	463	2	0	4
8	George HW Bush Statement	Feb-18	481	7	0	1
9	God will protect and preserve Israel (Jude 24)	Feb-18	274	3	0	0
10	God will honour his promise of peace and protection (Psalm 32:7)	Feb-18	147	3	0	2
Totals			3864	65	3	28
Average number of comments per post			386.4	6.5	0.3	2.8

Table 2.1. Results of CUFI study of dispensationalism within the membership. Images of posts being examined are shown in the appendix.

In order to understand this data we must identify some key areas of the table. The descriptions of the posts, the full text of which are available in the appendix demonstrate there are three different types of CUFI posts across this two day period; those which focus on political issues, those which simply call for followers to show their support for Israel, and

those which quote biblical references to Israel. From looking at the total number of comments for each of these posts it is difficult to see any pattern or any individual topic area that draws significantly more comments than another.

The key area to examine in this table is the average number of comments per post as this gives us a clear overall indication of the number of times an issue arose. Examining the individual posts is useful to determine the issues that spark greater debate on Christian Zionist beliefs. For example it is clear that post one sparked significantly greater conversations over dispensationalist beliefs and anti-Christian Zionist comments than most of the others. This is evidence for Netanyahu's popularity amongst Christian Zionists and most likely drew criticism from non-Christian Zionists who do not share such a view of the Israeli Prime Minister. The data has been displayed in this way in order to gain an overall view of what is being said on the CUFI Facebook page and produce a more conclusive result.

In an average of 386.4 comments, only an average of 6.5 demonstrated a dispensationalist outlook. This is significantly low. Although the numbers are small this is a significant finding. The number displaying a rejection of dispensationalism is 20 times fewer than those in support. This is significant as comments that criticise dispensationalism are unlikely to be removed by the page's managers, unlike those demonstrating support for dispensationalist theology. This therefore suggests a subscription to dispensationalism or at the very least an acceptance of this view exists within the followers of the CUFI Facebook page

The issue here is that the majority of comments are users simply agreeing with the statement in the post, not an expression of their specific beliefs meaning we are only able to use under 100 of the total comments in order to establish the extent to which dispensationalism exists. This is a significant weakness to the study.

It is therefore valid to argue that a number of CUFI followers on Facebook either subscribe to the dispensationalist theology or are accepting of it, something the leadership does not want publicised.

2.4.2. CFOIC

The extent to which CFOIC is an organisation made up of dispensationalists is very difficult to determine. CFOIC is different from CUFI as it is more of a direct action group than a

lobby group. CFOIC's work involves funding the settlement movement in the West Bank; therefore the nature of their communication does not aim to preach, rather to provide Christian Zionists with a route to support Israel. The language used in their communications however, does demonstrate they aim to appeal to the more extreme side of Christian Zionism. For example in one email, Kimberly Troup the Director of the U.S. office of the organisation writes, "we know with certainty that Jerusalem belongs to the Jewish people" (Troup, 2012). This style of rhetoric is more typically associated with the dispensationalist movement. Dispensationalist Christian Zionists tend to offer Israel greater unconditional support than their biblical counterparts. Organisations such as CUFI try to avoid rhetoric stating support for all of Jerusalem to be part of Israel in order to avoid criticism by outside observers. CUFI's official policy is that Jerusalem should be the capital of Israel, however they do not argue against the two state solution. This suggests that CFOIC accepts dispensationalist Christian Zionist supporters or benefactors. It is however, very difficult to determine their true beliefs. I did attempt to get in contact with CFOIC, but they refused an interview.

The email database will become much more useful in the following study regarding Christian Zionist support for the settlement movement. The examination of the extent to which CFOIC is made up of dispensationalists has demonstrated the difficulty in finding a conclusive answer.

2.5. Conclusions

This section has attempted to draw the debate away from the often polemical and over critical viewpoints of Christian Zionism such as those coming from writers like Stephen Sizer whilst demonstrating the controversial nature of Christian Zionism. It is important to distinguish between the different sides of Christian Zionism. Without conducting a survey of Christian Zionists across the U.S. it is very difficult to determine the numbers of each different Christian Zionist faction. This paper cannot make an outright declaration on the number of dispensationalist Christians, however this section aims to provide an insight into the potential for further research. A definitive conclusion requires significantly more information.

Pawson alludes to the fact that dispensationalists outnumber the biblical Zionists in America (2008: 23). The limited evidence presented here has further substantiated this viewpoint, demonstrating that a number of dispensationalist Zionists do exist within American society.

CUFI is the biggest Christian Zionist organisation in the U.S. and it has been clear from the literature that they are an organisation where dispensationalism is accepted and subscribed to. The extent to which this exists however is debatable. The evidence presented here has further substantiated the existence and acceptance of dispensationalist ideology within CUFI. The statements made in CFOIC internal emails allow for the existence of dispensationalism and do not contradict dispensationalist beliefs in any way. It seems CFOIC has the potential to provide an outlet for dispensationalist Christians to contribute and assist Israeli expansion into the West Bank, a cause many dispensationalists support.

The beliefs of many Christian Zionists continue to be highly controversial. This study has not been fully conclusive. While it is clear that an element of dispensationalism does exist within the Christian Zionist community in the U.S., this area requires further analysis and research in order to establish the true size and scope of the movement.

Section 3: Christian Zionism and Settlements.

The beliefs of Christian Zionism are criticised mainly because of their political effect. Religious beliefs are often widely accepted until they produce something negative, for example criticism of Islamic beliefs has recently grown due to a growth in Islamic terrorism. This section will focus on their political effects with regard to foreign policy.

One of the most controversial political viewpoints Christian Zionists often express is with regard to Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). The settlements are illegal under international law and there have been many attempts by U.S. governments to halt the continued building of them as they hinder the possibility of a future Palestinian state and a potential peace agreement. The existence of organisations such as CFOIC is clear evidence that some Christian Zionists support them. Christian Zionist organisations have lobbied government and sent significant amounts of money directly to settlements in order to encourage continued expansion into the West Bank. This section aims to provide an understanding of one of the most controversial political viewpoints of Christian Zionists in America through establishing the extent to which Christian Zionists support the settlement movement and the level of funding the movement receives.

Much of Christian Zionist support for settlements stems from their support for a greater state of Israel. Dispensationalists tend to have much stronger views on settlements than biblical Zionists, as their overarching aim is to ensure support for Israeli expansion in order to bring about the return of Jesus. Support for Israeli expansion has led critics of Christian Zionists to accuse them of becoming “a major barrier, if not *the* major barrier, to peace in the Middle East [emphasis in original]” (Campolo 2005). To argue that Christian Zionists are *the* major barrier to peace exhibits a failure to examine the bigger picture of the conflict. Christian Zionist support for settlements has a *negative* effect on the peace process. To say that Christian Zionists are *the* major barrier to peace takes the argument too far, as it is not the Christian Zionists who are physically living on land intended as part of a future Palestinian state.

The section will begin by outlining alleged links to settlement movements, providing an important case study of the largest settlement in the West Bank, Ariel, examining the support it receives from Christian Zionists in the U.S. This will be followed by a quantitative examination of the level of support for the settlement movement among the Christian Zionist community. This will be carried out using the same methodology as in section two. A greater picture of Christian Zionist support for settlements will be produced by a qualitative study, using original sources from the author’s own database of emails from CFOIC in order to examine the level of funding and legality of American Christian Zionist activity towards settlements.

3.1. Ariel.

Ariel is the biggest Israeli settlement, situated 13 miles within the West Bank, and surrounded by Israel’s security barrier. Ariel has long been associated with Christian Zionism. Ron Nachman, the first mayor of Ariel, initially formed relationships between Christian Zionists in America and Ariel. Nachman (who died in January 2013) used to regularly visit American churches in preference to synagogues as while in synagogues he took a lot of questions, in churches, Nachman received “big checks [sic]” (Phillips 2011: 30). There is clearly an existent unquestionable support for settlements in the Christian Zionist community. With a significant number of restrictions on Israeli government funding of settlements, Ariel has been dependent on Christian Zionist donations in order to develop. To some this would suggest that Christian Zionists are providing a barrier to peace. However,

although, in this example Christian Zionists are helping to develop the infrastructure in Ariel, the settlers are driven by their own religious and economic intentions and would be living in the region with or without Christian Zionist financial assistance.

Faith Bible Chapel, a church in Colorado, sponsors Ariel, providing the funds for “medical equipment, items needed in the schools, college scholarships and contributions to community projects, including a Holocaust museum, the sports and recreation centre and improvements to soldiers; accommodation” (Phillips 2011: 32). Sponsorship of individual settlements by churches and groups in America is common among the Christian Zionist movement.

Financial support for settlements is not just restricted to churches. Alice Bach suggests CUFI has contributed \$6 million to Ariel (2010: 78). The significant support for Ariel from Christian Zionists demonstrates the importance of funding settlements to many Christian Zionists and the negative effect they are having on the peace process.

3.2. Level of Support for Settlements Among the Christian Zionist Membership.

This section will attempt to establish the level of support for settlements amongst the Christian Zionist population. This will be achieved through studying the comments made by Christian Zionist supporters of CUFI on CUFI posts. Using the same methodology and study as used in section 2, following the Chong and Druckman method, this section will examine the statements made by Christian Zionists on CUFI’s Facebook page in relation to Israeli expansion.

The methodology is as follows:

1. Identification of issue: the extent to which Christian Zionists support Israeli settlement expansion.
2. Attitude: support for settlements.
3. Frames:
 - Display of support for settlements.
 - Display of non-support for settlement.
4. Sources: Social network comments of Christian Zionists, outlined in section 2, section 3.

Please refer to the method section in section two for an explanation of the coding and full methodology.

3.2.1. Limits of the study

This study has the same limitations as outlined in section two. The major issue with this particular study is that it cannot be conclusive. The posts available for examination do not necessarily encourage Christian Zionists to comment about their views on settlements and Israeli expansion. Christian Zionists are unlikely to discuss the issue independently. Therefore the frame demonstrating Christian Zionists support for settlements must be compared with another separate frame, which is also unrelated to the statement made in the initial CUFI post. This will then allow us to establish the level of support for settlements and Israeli expansion by examining the number of times the issue is raised in comparison to another political issue.

In the previous study in section two the removal of comments was a key issue. Although it is less likely for comments on these issues to be removed, it is still a key concern, therefore like the previous study, the comments had to be analysed as soon as possible after they were posted, again limiting the number of posts available for analysis. Therefore the same posts as in section two have been studied, using different frames. The full results and original posts being studied are available in the appendix.

3.2.2. Results.

The following frames are to be examined in this study:

- Display of support for settlements.
- Display of non-support for settlement.
- Display of Anti-Obama viewpoints.
- Display of Anti-Muslim viewpoints.

The anti-Obama and anti-Muslim frames have been introduced as these are viewpoints held by some Christian Zionists, like that of support for settlements. By introducing these frames it will enable the examination of the importance of supporting settlements on the Christian Zionist agenda in comparison to criticisms of Obama or the Islamic faith. As none of the CUFI posts talk of issues relating to these frames or encourage comment on these issues

(with the exception of post number 2 – see below), we can expect the number of comments to be considerably low for all of these frames, allowing for a relative comparison. The results are as follows:

	Brief Post Description	Date	Number Of Comments	Support for Settlements	Against Settlements	Anti Obama Viewpoints	Anti Muslim Viewpoints
1	Netanyahu Statement	Feb-18	593	6	0	9	0
2	CUFI Hagel Statement	Feb-19	256	6	0	37	23
3	Gods Covenant with Israel (Jer 31: 31-34)	Feb-18	434	16	2	0	1
4	God has a plan for Israel (Ephesians 3:20)	Feb-18	346	4	0	2	11
5	Share if you believe America should support Israel	Feb-18	354	3	0	13	5
6	Gods watch over Israel (Psalm 121:4)	Feb-18	516	0	1	1	0
7	Share if you (heart) Israel	Feb-18	463	0	0	5	3
8	George HW Bush Statement	Feb-18	481	6	1	13	3
9	God will protect and preserve Israel (Jude 24)	Feb-18	274	1	0	3	0
10	God will honour his promise of peace and protection (Psalm 32:7)	Feb-18	147	1	0	0	0
Totals			3864	43	4	83	48
Average number of comments per post			386.4	4.3	0.4	8.3	4.8

Table 3.1. Results of CUFI study of support for settlements within the membership. Images of posts being examined are shown in the appendix.

This table must be analysed in very much the same way as in section two. Again the key numbers to examine and understand are the average number of comments on an issue per post. On first inspection as predicted these results are not conclusive. As in section two, the low number of comments on the issue in comparison to the number of comments on each post demonstrates that this is not a key issue for discussion on the CUFI Facebook page. These results do show that more support for the settlements exists than criticism, which was to be expected. The interesting numbers are in comparison to other issues.

The results indicate that Christian Zionists demonstrate a greater willingness to criticise Obama than to declare their support for the settlements. However almost half of the total number of comments demonstrating anti-Obama viewpoints come from one post, number two, which is a CUFI statement on the appointment of Senator Chuck Hagel. This is an issue that invoked mass criticism of Obama from the Christian Zionist membership, therefore, this

result should be viewed as an anomaly. Subtracting this result and recalculating the average number of comments per post gives us 4.6.

	Support for Settlements	Against Settlements	Anti Obama Viewpoints	Anti Muslim Viewpoints
Average number of comments per post	4.3	0.4	4.6	4.8

Table 3.2. Recalculated Averages of support for settlement study.

These numbers suggest that anti-Obama views are comparatively common among the Christian Zionist population as support for settlements and anti-Muslim views. However, it is well known that Christian Zionists are in general strongly anti-Obama, with many referring to Obama as the antichrist (Friedman 2009: 59). Therefore if the proportions taken from this study are correct, it would be fair to say that a significant proportion of Christian Zionists support Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the expansion of the state.

This study cannot be regarded as fully conclusive and a more detailed census is required to establish the exact levels of support for a variety of issues amongst the Christian Zionist population. However, it does indicate that a significant number of Christian Zionists support the settlement movement.

3.3. The Level of Funding for Settlements from American Christian Zionists.

The previous section has demonstrated the existence of significant Christian Zionist support for the settlement movement. Exact figures of money being directly donated to settlements are difficult to come by. However we can get an idea of the level of funding by examining emails sent to CFOIC membership, many of which mention numbers and specific causes requiring funds. This will analyse the authors own database of CFOIC emails to its membership qualitatively in order to establish the level of funding directed at the settlements from Christian Zionists.

This study will focus on emails asking subscribers to donate to CFOIC causes. Examining the amounts of money CFOIC require for individual projects will allow us to establish a relative level of funding to the settlements from Christian Zionists.

The most recent email in the dataset asking for money was received on 7th March 2013 and asks for subscribers to help struggling Jewish families at Passover. The email states that many of the 100,000 Jews living in Samaria need help to fund their requirements at Passover “due to unemployment, budget cost, and terrorism” (CFOIC 2013). In this email, CFOIC ask for \$6000 in order to feed 150 families over Passover (CFOIC 2013). Interestingly, an identical email was sent out almost two weeks previously. This suggests that the \$6000 called on was not reached initially, which does produce some unexpected evidence. It seems possible from this example that Christian Zionist funding for Israeli settlements is not as significant as expected. However, this funding could be regarded as much less controversial than funding settlement infrastructure. Helping the poor, even those living in illegal settlements could still be viewed as a valid cause. Before coming to any conclusions an analysis of more evidence and an attempt to establish the level of direct funding of settlement infrastructure is required.

3.3.1. The Funding of Settlement Infrastructure

Within the dataset, ten out of the total 44 emails ask subscribers to donate. This is a fairly low number considering CFOIC is a charitable organisation aiming to assist Israeli settlement communities. The largest amount of money any of these emails call for is \$41,130, which has been requested by the community of Karnei Shomron for the renovation of a “special education resource room” (Troup 2013). This demonstrates a clear link between Christian Zionists in America and the funding of settlement infrastructure. It seems that by asking for \$41,130, CFOIC expect reaching this figure to be achievable. Emails in the dataset have called for on average just under \$20,000 in infrastructure funding. The fact that CFOIC is requesting this high level of funding does suggest that they believe it is achievable. Although this is not conclusive evidence, sources stating the exact amount of money actually going into settlement infrastructure are unobtainable.

The emails analysed are those being sent to CFOIC members over a five-month period. Assuming all of the targets stated by CFOIC in their emails were met, in the short five-month period, CFOIC potentially donated over \$109,830 to settlements, which over a year would equate to over a quarter of a million dollars.

3.3.2. Settlement Controversies

Many of the settlements for which CFOIC attempt to gain Christian Zionist funding are involved in highly controversial land grab activities from Palestinians. CFOIC claim to fund only those settlements deemed legal by the Israeli government, however this has not always been the case. Although all settlements are illegal under international law, as no Palestinian state has yet been formed, Israel claims some settlements are legitimate.

An example is Nokdim in Judea, for which CFOIC have asked \$12,700 “to complete the landscaping around their brand new playground” (Troup 2012). It emerged in 2011 that the new park being built on unused land in the middle of Nokdim (playground included) was being built on private Palestinian land, and it was deemed illegal under both Israeli and international law (Tali Shapiro 2011). From looking at maps of Nokdim, there is only one playground in the very small settlement and it is likely that CFOIC are attempting to fund the completion of an illegal playground on Palestinian land. This demonstrates the high level of controversy behind CFOIC work in the West Bank and the relationship between Christian Zionists in America and the settlement movement.

This is an important discovery as CFOIC claim to only fund settlements legitimate under Israeli law. Therefore their activity in funding this particular playground is illegal under international and Israeli law. This is something that CFOIC would not want publicised. In my research I have only discovered one case of illegal behaviour under Israeli law by CFOIC, however, other examples of American Christian Zionists directly funding settlements which are illegal under Israeli law is clearly a strong possibility. This demonstrates the negative impact of Christian Zionist activity in West Bank. In this example CFOIC are partaking in an illegal land grab.

A further controversy is the settlement of Gevaot also in Judea, whose people have “asked for \$23,000 for renovations and equipment for the recreation and exercise center they are building” for disabled children (Troup 2013). Gevaot however is again highly controversial. Currently a settlement under construction, approved by Defence Minister Ehud Barak, Gevaot was previously just an outpost of caravans where radical settlers were living. Although the initial intention, to assist disabled children is highly commendable, CFOIC are doing this at the expense of the Palestinians and a potential future peace agreement. Christian Zionists are facilitating continued settlement expansion in the West Bank, which is highly

problematic. Again Gevaot is within the West Bank in an area assigned as part of a future Palestinian state. This example demonstrates a disregard of American Christian Zionist funders for the peace process further highlighting the controversy behind Christian Zionist 'charity' to Israel.

3.3. Conclusions

This section has outlined and examined Christian Zionist support for settlements. It seems that within the U.S. there is significant support for Israeli expansion amongst the Christian Zionist population. This has been established from examination of CUFI's Facebook page. An exact level of support is very difficult to establish, however this section has provided some much needed empirical evidence to demonstrate the existence of the support. Furthermore this section has shown that there is no overwhelming evidence of the claim that all Christian Zionists support settlements.

The level of funding being directed at the settlements from one specific organisation has also been demonstrated. A study of CFOIC, the organisation most well known in the US for its support of the settlements has provided evidence to suggest that Christian Zionists fund a significant amount of settlement infrastructure. Furthermore, a considerable amount of this funding is highly controversial and has a negative effect on the peace process. CFOIC view non-violent settlement of the West Bank as legitimate and are providing a means for American Christian Zionists to support Israeli settlements, a policy which is against international law and the foreign policy of the American government.

The example of the Nokdim playground demonstrates a complete disregard for the legality of Christian Zionist practices in the West Bank. It is ironic that Christian Zionists are willing to ignore Israeli law, the country they are aiming to assist. It further suggests that there is an element of Christian Zionism that supports Israel in the hope of advancing its own cause.

The foreign policy of Christian Zionists in America has a negative effect on the Middle East peace process. Support for settlements deviates from the views of moderates and a significant number of the Israeli population. This to an extent makes the existence of Christian Zionists a hindrance to Israel rather than an asset. A significant number of Christian Zionists want to see the restoration of biblical Israel in the Middle East and will do what they can from their

homes in the U.S. to advance this. Christian Zionists political views are having a negative effect on future peace in the Middle East.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to provide a useful critical insight into Christian Zionism in America. The movement has been significantly understudied and its importance in American politics underestimated. With such large membership bases and controversial beliefs these organisations cannot simply be ignored. This article has examined the issues raised by the nature of these groups and their potentially disturbing political effects through the examination of two key Christian Zionist organisations.

Section one provided an outline of the main two types of Christian Zionism, describing biblical and dispensationalist Zionism and their differences and the frequent crossover between the two. It seems that the dispensationalists are more controversial in nature than the biblical Zionists, and the significant criticism they have faced, from biblical Zionists and critics of Christian Zionists as a whole is evidence for this. Dispensationalists appear to have given Christian Zionism a bad name, with writers grouping American Christian Zionists as a single homogenous group, when in fact there are deep divisions in beliefs. This has highlighted the need for significant study on the area.

The controversial political effect and political beliefs of members of the movement are also evidence for a need to study American Christian Zionists further. Many writers on the subject have blamed them for the failure of peace in the Middle East. Although it is fair to say they have not helped, blaming an outside group living in America for the failure of two opposing sides living in the Middle East to agree is rather extreme. Most literature on Christian Zionism has focused on their impact within the U.S. Little attention has been paid to the direct funding of settlements in the West Bank.

The studies of sections two and three have provided some very interesting results. Although neither is fully conclusive, they have provided a basis for further study on Christian Zionism. The study of Christian Zionists has provided evidence for the existence of dispensationalism in the movement, something that the leaders of CUFI continue to deny. The study could not

provide an accurate estimate of CZs who subscribe to both ideologies; therefore a future study involving more complex detailed data collection is required.

The study of the relationship between the Christian Zionists and the settlement movement has been very revealing. It has not only demonstrated the existence of strong support for Israeli expansion, but has suggested that many Christian Zionist organisations including CFOIC have been involved in the funding of settlements which are also illegal under Israeli law, an activity that CFOIC strongly denies.

These two studies have been useful, as they have overturned the claims of the leadership of both CFOIC and CUFI about their beliefs and actions. The findings demonstrate the extreme controversies behind these two organisations and suggest that other significant issues are likely to exist within many other Christian Zionist organisations, providing more areas for future scholarship.

The power of Christian Zionists in America cannot be denied and it is important that much of the controversial behaviour of a number of American Christian Zionists is publicised in a way that is not polemical or unnecessarily critical because of the writer's political position. Other discussions of Christian Zionism have provided some useful critical evidence, however many have simply been used as an opportunity to criticise Israel and pin current American foreign policy on the Christian right and Jewish lobby groups. This paper has provided a novel insight into Christian Zionism through case studies of specific areas of CFOIC and CUFI shedding light on the controversial nature of their beliefs and political viewpoints.

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Appendix 1: Full results from quantitative study of CUFI Facebook Posts.

	Brief Post Description	Date (2013)	Total Number of Comments	Acknowledgment of Discrimination	Christian Zionist Criticism of	Support for Settlements	Against Settlements	Anti Obama	Anti Muslim	Anti Hagel	Anti Christian Zionist
1	Netanyahu Statement	Feb-18	593	23	0	6	0	9	0	0	12
2	CUFI Hagel Statement	Feb-19	256	7	0	6	0	37	23	12	0
3	Gods Covenant with Israel (Jer 31: 31-34)	Feb-18	434	4	1	16	1	0	1	0	2
4	God has a plan for Israel (Ephesians 3:20)	Feb-18	346	5	0	4	0	2	11	0	1
5	Share if you believe America should support Israel	Feb-18	354	6	0	3	0	13	5	0	3
6	Gods watch over Israel (Psalm 121:4)	Feb-18	516	5	2	0	2	1	0	0	3
7	Share if you (heart) Israel	Feb-18	463	2	0	0	0	5	3	0	4
8	George H.W. Bush Statement	Feb-18	481	7	0	6	0	13	3	0	1
9	God will protect and preserve Israel (Jude 24)	Feb-18	274	3	0	1	0	3	0	0	0
10	God will honour his promise of peace and protection (Psalm 32:7)	Feb-18	147	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	Totals		3864	65	3	43	3	83	48	12	28
	Average number of comments per post.		386.4	6.5	0.3	4.3	0.3	8.3	4.8	1.2	2.8

Appendix 2: Images of CUFI Facebook posts.

Post 1: Netanyahu Statement (Facebook, 2013).



<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445610739814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&theater>

Post 2: CUFI Hagel Statement (Facebook, 2013).



<http://www.facebook.com/ChristiansUnitedforIsrael/posts/10151448713229814>

Post 3: Gods Covenant with Israel (Jer 31: 31-34) (Facebook, 2013).



<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445601739814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&theater>

Post 4: God has a plan for Israel (Ephesians 3:20) (Facebook, 2013).



<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445597529814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&theater>

Post 5: Share if you believe America should support Israel (Facebook, 2013).



<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445620044814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&theater>

Post 6: Gods watch over Israel (Psalm 121:4) (Facebook, 2013).



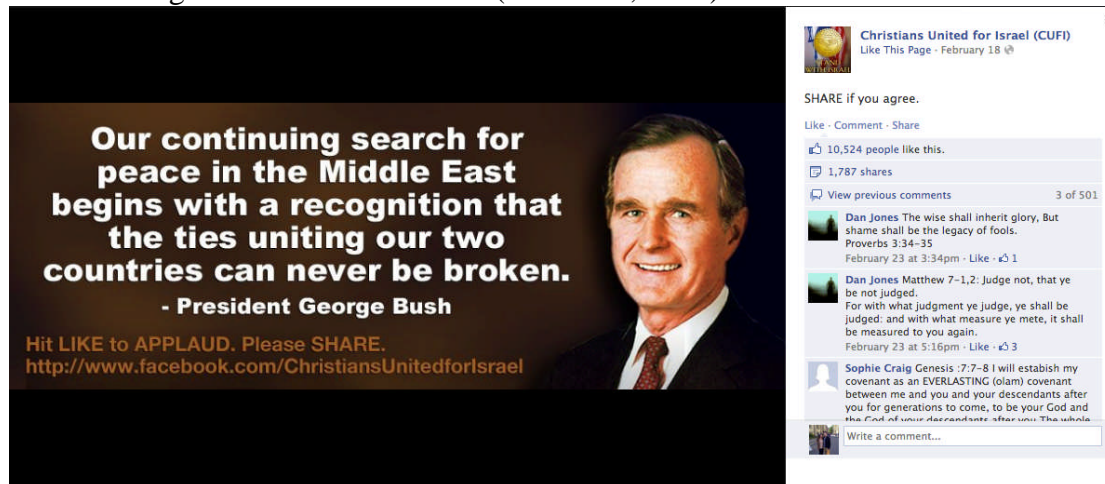
http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445594704814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&relevant_count=1

Post 7: Share if you (heart) Israel (Facebook, 2013).



http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445619524814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&relevant_count=1

Post 8: George H.W. Bush Statement (Facebook, 2013).



http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445612639814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&relevant_count=1

Post 9: God will protect and preserve Israel (Jude 24) (Facebook, 2013).



http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445595044814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&relevant_count=1

Post 10: God will honour his promise of peace and protection (Psalm 32:7) (Facebook, 2013).



The image shows a Facebook post from the page "Christians United for Israel (CUFI)". The post features a background image of a cityscape, likely Jerusalem, with a large, ornate golden dome in the foreground. Overlaid on the image is a circular gold seal with the text "GOD'S PROMISES ARE TRUE" and "United For Israel". The main text of the post reads: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:7). Below this, it says: "Zion can take comfort in knowing that God will honor His promise of peace and protection." At the bottom of the image, it says: "LIKE to say AMEN. SHARE if you agree." The right side of the image shows the Facebook interface, including the page name "Christians United for Israel (CUFI)", the date "Like This Page · February 18", and a list of comments. The comments include: "Billie Pullin Amen", "Kathy Enriqueta Aguirre AMEN", "Catherine Kirchner McGowan Amen..", "Ghulam Ali israel is world no1 terrorist", "Chuck Haines Amen!", and "Ghulam Ali america is big terrorism".

Christians United for Israel (CUFI)
Like This Page · February 18

SHARE if you agree.

Like · Comment · Share

5,846 people like this.

1,249 shares

View previous comments 54 of 163

Billie Pullin Amen
February 22 at 7:43am · Like

Kathy Enriqueta Aguirre AMEN
February 22 at 7:55am · Like

Catherine Kirchner McGowan Amen..
February 22 at 8:31am via mobile · Like

Ghulam Ali israel is world no1 terrorist
February 22 at 10:01am · Like

Chuck Haines Amen!
February 22 at 10:01am · Like

Ghulam Ali america is big terrorism

Write a comment...

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151445598594814&set=a.58091114813.64770.24014374813&type=1&theater>