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The War on Gaza: Perpetual Falsehoods and Betrayals in the Service of Endless Deception. Amir Nour

Part IX: How Jewish Zionism Was Created by Christian Evangelicals

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"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,

Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat."

—(Rudyard Kipling)[1]

A Brief History of a Long Struggle

In 2008, Professor of Political Science and History at the University of California, Los Angeles, **Anthony Pagden** published one of the best books[2] concerning the history of the long and Manichean struggle between East and West, from classical times to the conflicts of the twenty-first century, including the protracted and seemingly insoluble Israeli-Arab and Israel-Palestine conflicts.

In this illuminating masterpiece of stunning scope and relevance, Pagden argues that the differences that divide West from East go deeper than politics, deeper than religion; and to understand this volatile relationship and how it has played out over the centuries, it is necessary to go back before the Crusades, before the birth of Islam, and even before the birth of Christianity. For him, the starting point should be set in the fifth century BCE. Europe, he goes on to say, was born out of Asia and for centuries the two shared a single history. But when the Persian emperor Xerxes, commonly known as Xerxes the Great, son of Darius the Great, tried to conquer Greece in 480 BCE – with initial victories securing control of mainland Greece but ending in defeat in Platatea the following year – a struggle began which has never ceased.



Later on, the conflict resumed when **Alexander the Great** and then the Romans tried to unite Europe and Asia into a single civilization – as symbolized by the historically famous "Susa weddings"[3]. Even more bitter battles continued unabated after the conversion of the West to Christianity

and much of the East to Islam, two universal religions, each claiming world dominance. These battles culminated with the destructive episode of the Crusades during the Middle Ages, and were followed by Western colonization of almost all of the Islamic territories starting in the nineteenth century. They continue to our times under the pretext of the so-called American-led "War on terrorism" after the events of 11 September 2001[4].

Arnold J. Toynbee addressed the issue of Islam's place in history and its relations with the West in his 1948 monumental "A Study of History", which has been acknowledged as one of the greatest achievements of modern scholarship. He wrote:

"In the past, Islam and our Western society have acted and reacted upon one another several times in succession, in different situations and alternating roles. The first encounter between them occurred when the Western society was at its infancy and when Islam was the distinctive religion of the Arabs in their heroic age (...) Thereafter, when the Western civilization has surmounted the premature extinction and had entered upon a vigorous growth, while the would-be Islamic state was declining towards its fall, the tables were turned"[5].

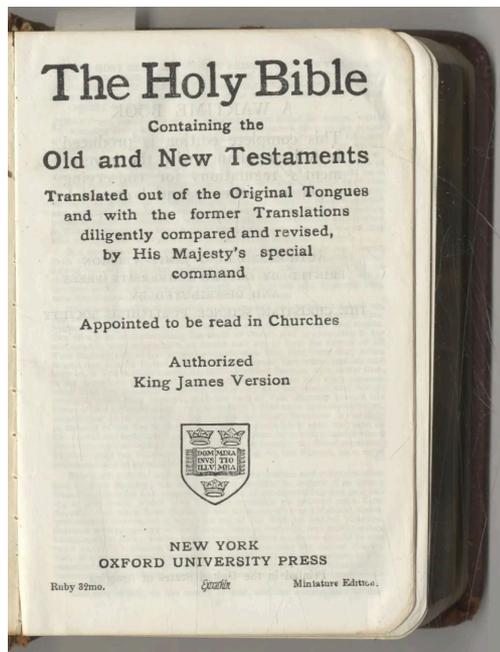
The British historian further noted that in that life-and-death struggle, Islam, like Christendom before it, had triumphantly survived. Yet, this was not the last act in the play, for "the attempt made by the medieval West to exterminate Islam failed as signally as the Arab empire-builders' attempt to capture the cradle of a nascent Western civilization has failed before; once more, a counter-attack was provoked by the unsuccessful offensive. This time, Islam was represented by the Ottoman descendants of the converted Central Asian nomads." After the final failure of the Crusades, Western Christendom stood on the defensive against this Ottoman attack during the late medieval and early modern ages of Western history. The Westerners managed to bring the Ottoman offensive to a halt in the wake of the battle of Vienna that lasted from 1683 until 1699 when a peace treaty between the Sublime Porte and the Holy League was signed at Karlowitz. Thereafter, having encircled the Islamic world and cast their net about it, they proceeded to attack their old adversary in its native lair.

The concentric attack of the modern West upon the Islamic world, according to Toynbee, has inaugurated the present encounter between the two civilizations, which he saw as "part of a still larger and more ambitious movement, in which the Western civilization is aiming at nothing less than the incorporation of all mankind in a single great society, and the control of everything in the earth, air and sea which mankind can turn to account by means of modern Western technique". Thus, the contemporary encounter between Islam and the West "is not only more active and intimate than any phase of their contact in the past, it is also distinctive in being an incident in the attempt by the Western man to 'westernize' the world –

an enterprise which will possibly rank as the most momentous, and almost certainly as the most interesting feature in history, even for a generation that has lived through two world wars."

Toynbee drew the conclusion that Islam is once more facing the West its back to the wall; but this time the odds are more heavily against it than they were "even at the most critical moments of the Crusades, for the modern West is superior to it not only in arms, but also in technique of economic life, on which military science ultimately depends, and above all in spiritual culture – the inward force which alone creates and sustains the outward manifestations of what is called civilization".

On this particular topic, Anthony Pagden points out that by the seventeenth century, with the decline of the Church, the contest has shifted from religion to philosophy: the West's scientific rationality in contrast to those who sought ultimate guidance in the words of God. Thus, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the disintegration of the great Muslim empires – the Ottoman, the Mughal, and the Safavid – and the increasing Western domination of the whole of Asia. The resultant attempt to mix Islam and Western modernism sparked off a struggle in the Islamic world between reformers and traditionalists which persists to this day. The wars between East and West, Pagden concludes, "have not only been the longest and most costly in human history, they have also formed the West's vision of itself as independent, free, secular, and now democratic. They have shaped, and continue to shape, the nature of the modern world".



In this long sequence of interaction between East and West, or Orient and Occident, Western powers – and Jewish Zionists following in their footsteps – have used the Bible (in both its Old and New Testament) profusely, for close to 2000 years, to justify the conquest of land in the Islamic world and everywhere else.

All along, the biblical claim of a so-called "divine promise" of land was integrally linked with the claim of a "divine mandate" to exterminate the indigenous populations of the conquered territorial possessions. This, unavoidably, resulted in the suffering of millions of people and the loss of respect for a Bible depicting God as a merciless and ferocious warrior Yahweh, making covenants with "His chosen people", granting them other people's lands, and commanding them to slaughter and pillage with His blessing and assistance! Expressed in particularly gruesome language, Exodus 20 to 33, for example, deal with what Yahweh told prophet Moses:

"If you listen carefully to what [My angel] says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span. I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild

animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates River. I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you."

The Yahweh depicted in the books between Judges and Deuteronomy is a god whose actions are taught in religious and secular schools in Israel, says Australian senior lecturer in history in the school of social and international studies at Deakin University in Geelong, David Wetherell. A modern secular Israeli, he presumes, may not subscribe to such a god who commands the maltreatment/extermination of the original Canaanites and Hittites but still support Israel's expansion into the lands of the indigenous Palestinians. Still, a citizen of Israel does not need to be a religious Jew to endorse the national mythology, and "the deeds of Israel's national heroes in the Bible have come to non-religious Jews as a means of organizing biblical history to provide moral legitimacy for the walling in of indigenous Palestinians".[6]

In his compelling book[7], Michael Prior issued a profound challenge to theologians, biblical specialists, and everyone interested in reading and understanding the Bible, in particular regarding the moral dimension of the interpretation of those biblical claims. In this book Prior protests at the neglect of the moral question in conventional biblical studies, and attempts to rescue the Bible from being a blunt instrument in the oppression of people. He affirms that said land traditions whose legitimization had the authority of "sacred scripture" and have been deployed in support of barbaric behaviour in a wide variety of contexts, pose fundamental moral questions relating to one's understanding of the nature of God, of His dealings with humankind and of human behaviour. Prior believes that the communities which have preserved and promulgated those biblical traditions must shoulder some of the responsibility for what has been done in alleged conformity with the values contained within them; because, he rightly notes, "according to modern secular standards of human and political rights, what the biblical narrative calls for are war crimes and crimes against humanity", whether it be for the enduring consequences of the bloody colonization of Latin America, of the fabricated Afrikaner nationalism erected as an ideological structure justifying the abhorrent apartheid regime in South Africa and Rhodesia, or, even more so, of the nightmarish and genocidal settler-colonialism in Palestine instigated by political Zionism with the decisive support of the Christian governments of the Western world.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, the type of settler-colonialism established in the Arab land of Palestine has proved to be infinitely more inextricable than all the other – already resolved – similar cases. Indeed, while the Bible is not the only justification, "it certainly is the most powerful one, without which Zionism is only a conquering ideology. Read at face value and without recourse to doctrines of human rights, the Old Testament appears to propose that the taking possession of the Promised Land and the forcible expulsion of the indigenous population is the fulfillment of a biblical mandate"[8]. It logically follows then, as remarked by Caitlin Johnstone, that

"Everything about Israel is fake. It's a completely synthetic nation created without any regard for the organic socio-political movements of the land and its people, slapped rootless atop an ancient pre-existing civilization with deep roots. That's why it cannot exist without being artificially propped up by nonstop propaganda, lobbying, online influence operations, and mass military violence".[9]

How Jewish Zionism Was Created by Christian Evangelicals

Many readers of the following lines will surely be surprised to learn that many well-established facts regarding much of the core beliefs of the Zionist ideology that Zionists try to erase from history do not actually come from Judaism, but from Evangelical Christianity. In effect, as the already existing literature and some newly-disclosed Western archives show beyond any doubt, Christian Zionism was in existence centuries before any Jew ever thought of Zionism.

Image: Rabbi Shapiro with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Yom Yerushalayim celebration at Mercaz HaRav (Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

American orthodox **Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro**, who has attained an enviable place among both rabbinic scholars in orthodoxy and anti-Zionist public intellectuals, did an outstanding job in going over the history and the ideology of Western Christian Zionism and its influence on the Jews across the world.

In tackling such a daunting task, he starts with defining what it means to be a Jew. A Jew, he explains, is not a nationality or a race or an ethnicity or a culture. Rather, a Jew is anyone who accepts and keeps the 613 commandments (mitzvot) of the Torah, including the Ten Commandments given by God to Prophet Moses at Mount Sinai, not one less. Shapiro calls it a "job description" – and it's a tough one indeed. It is therefore an anti-nationalist and anti-racist definition of Judaism; anti-Zionist in short.



Rabbi Shapiro then informs that it was the European Christian Evangelicals that first tied the existence of Israel to the Jewish Bible – the Old Testament as the Christians call it – because in Judaism no Jewish authority ever has done such a thing. Indeed, the Evangelicals believe that the Jews must be assembled in their Holy Land, having a state in Palestine, before the Messiah comes either to kill or convert all the Jews to Christianity. On the contrary, the Jews never wanted to return to the Holy Land en masse until the Jewish Messiah (Ha-mashiach) often referred to as King Messiah arrives and peace would reign in the world, and the universe would be ruled by a spirit of God.

The ideology of modern Zionism is thus much more Christian Evangelical than it is traditional Jewish. In fact, a 2013 Pew Research Center survey[10] even concluded that "twice as many white evangelical Protestants as Jews say that Israel was given to the Jewish people by God (82% vs. 40%). Some of the discrepancy is attributable to Jews' lower levels of belief in God overall; virtually all Evangelicals say they believe in God, compared with 72% of Jews (23% say they do not believe in God and 5% say they don't know or decline to answer the question). But even Jews who do believe in God are less likely than Evangelicals to believe that God gave the land that is now Israel to the Jewish people (55% vs. 82%)".

It emerges from the historical compilation made by Shapiro and from other sources that:

- As early as 1585, a man by the name of Reverend Francis Kett – who was burned for heresy – published a book called "The Glorious and Beautiful Garland of Man's Glorification", in which he discusses the Jewish national return to Palestine;
- In 1611, English clergyman and biblical commentator Thomas Brightman's pamphlet called "Apocalipsis Apocalypseos" was published. It described the process of the Jews' so-called return to the Holy Land and their subsequent conversion to Christianity, saying: "Only if this happens would England be blessed by their God";
- In 1621, lawyer and member of the Parliament of England for Canterbury, Sir Henry Finch, published a book whose title was "The World's Great Restauration, or Calling of the Jews, and with them of all Nations and Kingdoms of the Earth to the Faith of Christ", in which he called for the Jews to invoke their rightful claims to the Promised Land, reestablish themselves there, and convert to Christianity;
- In 1649, English puritan Christians who lived in Holland, Johanna Cartwright and her son Ebenezer, presented a petition to the English parliament of Oliver Cromwell to allow the Jews to England, so that England, with the help of Holland, could then transport the Jews to Palestine where they needed to be, according to the Christian Evangelical belief;
- In 1771, Joseph Eyre, a minister of the Church of England, published a book titled "Observations Upon the Prophecies Relating to the Restoration of the Jews", in which he reiterated that according to Christianity, the Jews are going to return to Palestine from the lands of their dispersion;
- During the years 1793-1795, Baptist minister James Bicheno published a book called "The Signs of the Times" predicting the imminent overthrow of the Pope and the ingathering of the Jews from their exile, in preparation for their conversion to Christianity;
- At the end of the 1700s, after the traumatic changes engendered by the American and French revolutions, the British, like many other Europeans, believed that the world was in the middle of a great upheaval. And as is usually the case at the turn of each and every millennium, people would turn to their religions to seek stability and psychological comfort. In particular, the invasion and occupation of the Ottoman territories of Egypt and Syria (1798-1801) by the Napoléon Bonaparte-led forces of the French First Republic were viewed as a sign that the Jews were coming back to the Holy Land. All the more so as Napoléon appealed to the Jews of Africa and Asia to join him in marching against Syria and restoring the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Jews, however, showed no interest in Napoléon's offer: the religious among them knew that they belonged in exile all over the world and that their return to the Promised Land bore no resemblance to what Napoléon offered them; and the non-religious Jews, or the assimilated Jews of Germany and Western Europe, had no interest in abandoning their plans to be assimilated in European society;
- The early and mid-1800s saw increasingly more Christian Zionist activity in the attempt to both liberate the Jews from their exile and reestablish them in Palestine as well as to convert them to Christianity. And so, on 15 February 1809, the "London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews" was founded with the main aim to convert the Jews to Christianity. The Society changed its name several times since its inception. It still exists today and is known as "The Church's Ministry Among Jewish people" (CMJ). It is one of the 10 official mission agencies of the Church of England. Besides the UK, it has branches in Israel, the US, Ireland, France, Canada, South Africa, Hong Kong and Australia. The Society is not only the precursor of Zionism, but also the initiator of what is now the "messianic Jewish movement". Messianic Jews consider themselves Jews and not Christians; they don't believe in most of the Torah and consider Jesus as the Messiah. Their declared mandate, as published on their website, reads as follows: "We believe the mandate God has given to us is to be a witness to the Jewish People about the Messiah, and to educate the Church on the Jewish roots of her faith and understanding that God has not finished with Israel. We also believe that God is doing a restorative work between His people, as through Yeshua the dividing walls between us are being broken down";
- In 1830, the British-born John Thomas, who was then living in New York, founded yet another Christian sect called the "Christadelphians", a Restorationist and nontrinitarian denomination. Thomas wrote a book titled "Hope of Israel", in which he suggested that the Jewish nation could successfully be reconstituted in its so-called ancestral homeland through the political assistance of England;
- In 1839, the Church of Scotland itself published a memorandum to the Protestant monarchs of Europe for the restoration of the Jews to Palestine;
- In 1848, British Tory politician and pre-millennial Evangelical Anglican Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, became president of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. He, more than anybody else, is responsible not only for pushing the idea of the creation of the state of Israel, but also for successfully getting Christian Zionism to become the official political policy of England. In 1853,

he wrote to the Prime minister, Lord Aberdeen, that Greater Syria was “a country without a nation” in need of “a nation without a country... Is there such a thing? To be sure there is, the ancient and rightful lords of the soil, the Jews!” In his diary that year he wrote: “these vast and fertile regions will soon be without a ruler, without a known and acknowledged power to claim dominion. The territory must be assigned to someone or other... There is a country without a nation; and God now in his wisdom and mercy, directs us to a nation without a country.” This is commonly cited as an early use of the phrase “A land without a people for a people without a land” by which Lord Shaftesbury was echoing another British proponent of the restoration of the Jews to Palestine: Dr Alexander Keith;

- In 1851, the Italian politician Benedetto Musolino wrote a book[11] in which he called for a Jewish municipality in the Holy Land, under the sovereignty of the Ottoman empire, where the national religion would be Judaism and the national language would be Hebrew;
- In 1884, William Henry Hechler, who was a Restorationist Anglican clergyman and promoter of Zionism, published a book called “The Restoration of the Jews to Palestine According to Prophecy”. In it, he called for the Jews to return to Palestine as a prerequisite for the coming of the Christian Messiah, and based on complex calculations of scriptural interpretation, held that in 1897 or 1898 the Jews would be returned to Palestine. It is important to note that this Protestant pastor, who undertook missionary work in Germany, was also the personal tutor of Prince Ludwig, the son of the Grand Duke of Baden and the uncle of the future Kaiser of Germany William II;
- In 1887, shortly after the outbreak of the Russian pogroms, American Christian Zionist William E. Blackstone authored a book called “Jesus is Coming” in which he insisted Jews have a biblical right to Palestine. He sent a petition to President Benjamin Harrison with over 400 signatures, lobbying for the US to work together with the European countries to return Palestine to the Jews. In this petition, Blackstone used the argument that the Jewish refugees from persecution, which comprised about 2 million Russian Jews, had nowhere to go and that the only solution to their plight was a Jewish state in Palestine;
- In 1895, British Prime minister Benjamin Disraeli bought controlling interests in the Suez Canal, and two years later the British gained control of Cyprus, thereby establishing themselves as a key player in areas in and around the Holy Land and boosting significantly the expectation of the achievement of the long-sought creation of a Jewish state in Palestine;
- It is against such a backdrop that Theodor Herzl published his pamphlet “Der Judenstaat”[12] in 1896, which, according to William Hechler, was a clear fulfilment of the Christian prophecy. Hechler thereupon sought out to inform Herzl of this “miracle”! Herzl recorded in his diary his first meeting with the Reverend: “The Rev. William H. Hechler, chaplain to the British Embassy in Vienna, called on me. A likeable, sensitive man with the long grey beard of a prophet. He waxed enthusiastic over my solution. He, too, regards my movement as a ‘prophetic crisis’ – one he foretold two years ago. For he had calculated in accordance with a prophecy dating from Omar’s reign (634-644) that after 42 prophetic months, that is, 1,260 years, Palestine would be restored to the Jews. This would make it 1897-1898. When he read my book, he immediately hurried to Ambassador Monson (British Ambassador in Vienna) and told him: the fore-ordained movement is here! Hechler declares my movement to be a ‘Biblical’ one, even though I proceed rationally in all points. He wants to place my tract in the hands of some German princes. He used to be a tutor in the household of the Grand Duke of Baden; he knows the German Kaiser and thinks he can get me an audience”. So, besides granting Herzl access to powerful leaders, Hechler did his own lobbying among the high-ranking state leaders he knew, in particular among the Protestants of Germany, England and the US. The US, by and large, has always supported Zionism. President John Quincy Adams said that he would like it if the Jews were again an independent government and no longer persecuted. For his part, Abraham Lincoln said to the Canadian Christian Zionist Henry Wentworth Monk: “Restoring the Jews to their homeland is a noble dream shared by many Americans”;
- Last but certainly not least, 1909 saw the publication by Oxford University Press of the “Scofield Reference Bible”, edited and annotated by the American Bible student Cyrus Ingerson Scofield. It is a widely circulated Bible containing the entire text of the traditional, Protestant King James version published in 1611, and is known for having popularized dispensationalism at the beginning of the 20th century. It was revised by the author in 1917, and sales of it are said to have exceeded two million copies by the end of World War II. One of its most innovative features is that it comprises what amounts to a commentary on the biblical text alongside the Bible instead of in a separate volume, the first to do so in English since the Geneva Bible of 1560. More significantly, central to Christian Zionist belief is Scofield’s commentary (italicized below) on Genesis 12:3: “‘I will bless them that bless thee.’ *In fulfilment closely related to the next clause, ‘And curse him that curseth thee.’ Wonderfully fulfilled in the history of the dispersion. It has invariably fared ill with the people who have persecuted the Jew – well with those who have protected him. The future will still more remarkably prove this principle.*” Drawing on Scofield’s tendentious interpretation, American Christian Zionist John Hagee claims that “The man or nation that lifts a voice or hand against Israel invites the wrath of God.”[13] But as Stephen Sizer rightly points out in his definitive critique[14], “The promise, when referring to Abraham’s descendants, speaks of God blessing them, not of entire nations ‘blessing’ the Hebrew nation, still less the contemporary and secular state of Israel”. It might be worthwhile to add to Sizer’s reflection the important fact that the Arabs – of whom the Palestinians – are also descendants of Abraham through his first son Ishmael.

Britain’s (and France’s) Promises and Betrayals

So, after centuries of relentless preaching and planning on the part of Western Christian Evangelicals, the early twentieth century finally provided them with the Jewish cooperation they needed – mainly after the formation of the British Zionist Federation in 1899 – to fulfill their desire to see the Jews restored in Palestine, which represents the beginning of the “redemption” according to Protestant Restorationist Christianity. This is how Britain issued the ominous Balfour Declaration in 1917. **Lord Balfour** himself, as we mentioned earlier, was a devout Christian[15], a racist and a Zionist. In 1906, as the then leader of the opposition, Balfour met with **Chaim Weizmann**[16] – together with Jewish MP and Minister **Herbert Samuels** and banker **Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild** – who lobbied him to support the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. After the meeting, Balfour commented:

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“Their love for their country refused to be satisfied by the Uganda scheme. It was Weizmann’s absolute refusal to even look at it which impressed me”.

Foreign Office,

November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.



Balfour declaration (From the Public Domain)

The Declaration was quite simply just a letter from the Foreign Secretary to Lord Rothschild, thus having no legal legitimacy. Later, when it was incorporated into the 1922 Mandate of Palestine, what was initially a mere political sentiment was transformed into British policy[17] promising the Jews a land which was at the time an integral part of Syria and belonging to the Ottoman Empire, of which Britain had no legal right to give away. [18]

The exploration of the British archival documents held in the National Archives in Kew Garden – which detail the drafting stages of the Declaration – amply demonstrates the vast oversights, insincerity and a complete lack of consideration for the Palestinian people that has ignited and fuelled decades of violence and injustice in the Middle East region. Historian Elizabeth Monroe has described the Declaration as “one of the greatest mistakes in our [British] imperial history”. [19]

In the years preceding the publication of the Declaration, the British government had already entered into two very opposing agreements in the Levant. The first was the notorious Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, in which British statesman Sir Mike Sykes and French politician François Georges-Picot drew with pencils and carved up the map of the Middle East between France and Britain, assuming that the Ottoman Empire would fall.[20] The second agreement was named the Hussein-McMahon agreement. It comprised of a series of correspondences and formal pledges made between **Hussein bin Ali, the Sherif of Mecca, and Sir Henry McMahon**, the High Commissioner for Egypt.[21] As the Great War commenced, Britain realized that Arab nationalists could be of benefit to them; they therefore solicited their loyalty to fight the Ottomans and in return McMahon promised to Hussein Arab independence on the advent of the Ottoman Empire being defeated. The British had therefore “already double crossed and betrayed two peoples before a third agreement on the destiny of Palestine had even been declared”. [22]

Over the last one hundred years, historical propaganda and biased colonial discourse have constructed the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and written its dominant narrative. This discourse, both within historiography and academia, has proven to be a powerful tool serving to manipulate our understanding of this conflict and to justify the continued denial of basic rights to the Palestinian people. However, as Noam Chomsky wrote in the book [23] he co-authored with Ilan Pappé: “Anyone who dares to dive into the ocean of words to be found in the political and diplomatic documents in the various national archives understands how precarious is the story extracted from these heaps of documents left behind by the chattering classes that shaped our lives over the last two centuries”.

As a matter of fact, among the above-mentioned British archival documents, especially those included in the War Cabinet files, are various letters written by **Lord Edwin Samuel Montagu**, who was then the only Jewish member of the Cabinet and in which he opposed the Declaration, saying: “I have never heard it suggested even by their most fervent admirers, that either Mr. Balfour or Lord Rothschild would prove to be the Messiah”. [24] Alongside his protests – both before and after the Declaration was made public – was a list of forty-five prominent British Jews who vehemently expressed their opposition to the Declaration and abhorrence of Zionism, as well as figures showing that just six percent of the Jewish population of Great Britain supported Zionism. One of those prominent Jewish anti-Zionists was philanthropist, scholar and founding President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Claude Montefiore.[25]

A closer look at the different archives reveals the following main arguments:

- Said 45 Jewish people ardently resented Zionist efforts to convince Jews that they were an ethnic-racial group who constituted a nation. They believed it was an injustice to turn over control of a land to those who then constituted only 7% of the population[26], and distinguished that the Holy Land is holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. They further articulated the practical implications of Zionism and the challenge both for those who would emigrate to Palestine and those assimilationist Jews who wouldn't leave their countries of residence;
- Zionism was viewed by many Jews, and primarily by rabbis, as an anti-Jewish rebellion comparable to Luther's challenge to the Church of Rome. Looking outside the British Jewish community, Montagu gives the testimony of Italy's second Jewish Prime minister Luigi Luzzatti: “Jews must acquire everywhere full religious liberty as existing in the United States and in Italy. In Palestine, delivered from the Turks, Jews will live, not as sovereigns but as free citizens, to fertilize their fathers' land. Judaism is not a Nationality but a Religion”;[27]

- With regard to Judaism and politics, Chief Rabbi Dr Hermann Adler was of the opinion that “When we dwelt in the Holy Land, we had a political organization of our own: we had judges and kings to rule over us. But ever since the conquest of Palestine by the Romans, we have ceased to be a body politic; we are citizens of the country in which we dwell (...) To Mr. Goldwin Smith’s question, ‘What is the political bearing of Judaism?’, I would reply that Judaism has no political bearing whatever. The great bond which unites us is not one of race, but the bond of a common religion. We regard all mankind as brethren. We consider ourselves citizens of the country in which we dwell, in the highest and fullest sense of the term, and esteem it our dearest privilege and duty to labor for its welfare”:[28]
- At the time of the drafting of the Declaration all British foreign policy was created along lines that sought to benefit the Empire, and Palestine was viewed as a territory of the utmost importance to the future security and wellbeing of the British Empire.[29] This line of argument finds that it was the British government who invited the Zionists into the negotiations and opened up the debate, thus contradicting common claims that it was Zionist leaders who courted and persuaded the Cabinet to fulfil their desires. Indeed, the archives show that the War Cabinet gained its first introduction to the idea of a Jewish Palestine by Herbert Samuels. In a memorandum in 1915 titled “The Future of Palestine”, Samuels wrote: “From the standpoint of British interests there are several arguments for this policy [annexation of Palestine to the British Empire] if wider considerations should allow it to be pursued: 1. It would enable England to fulfil in yet another sphere her historic part of civilizer of the backward countries; 2. (...) Palestine, small as it is in area, bulks so large in the world’s imagination, that no Empire is so great but its prestige would be raised by its possession (...) particularly if it were avowedly a means of aiding the Jews to reoccupy the country; 3. (...) Although Great Britain did not enter the conflict [World War I] with any purpose of territorial expansion, being in it and having made immense sacrifices, there would be profound disappointment in the country if the outcome were to be the securing of great advantages by our allies, and not for ourselves (...) Certain of the German colonies must no doubt be retained for strategic reasons. But if Great Britain can obtain the compensations, which public opinion will demand, in Mesopotamia and Palestine, and not in German East Africa and West Africa, there is more likelihood of a lasting peace; 4. The belt of desert to the east of the Suez Canal is an admirable strategic frontier for Egypt. But it would be an inadequate defense if a great European Power [that is, France] were established on the further side; 5. The course which is advocated would win for England the lasting gratitude of the Jews throughout the world. In the United States where they number about 2,000,000, and in all the other land where they are scattered, they would form a body of opinion whose bias, where the interest of the country of which they were citizens was not involved, would be favorable to the British Empire”.[30] The minutes from War Cabinet meeting 245 seemed to concur with Samuels’ analysis: “(...) The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that he gathered that everyone was now agreed that, from a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it was desirable that some declaration favorable to the aspirations of the Jewish nationalists should now be made. The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as, indeed, all over the world, now appeared to be favorable to Zionism. If we could make a declaration favorable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and America.”[31] Moreover, the archives show that the Foreign Office sent influential Zionists on mission to achieve these aims. Aaron Aaronsohn was one such Zionist who was sent to both the US and Russia by the Foreign Office to spy and infiltrate Jewish communities:[32]
- The discovery of oil in Persia by the British company Anglo-Persian in 1908 may have played a latent role in the formulation of Zionist policy. In a Foreign Office memorandum titled “The Oilfields of Russia and Mesopotamia” it was explained that the “security of this country and the British Empire is dependent on oil”:[33]

With regard to the no less perfidious and duplicitous attitude of France vis-à-vis the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general and the support given to Zionism in particular, Lord Montagu writes in a document labelled “SECRET” and titled “ZIONISM”[34] he circulated on the 9th of October 1917: “The Cabinet has been informed that the French Government are in sympathy with Zionist aspirations. It has recently come to my knowledge officially that the French Ambassador has approached our Foreign Office with a proposal to establish a Jewish nation in El Hasa in Arabia [in today’s Saudi Arabia], oblivious of the fact that although this is technically Turkish territory, we have concluded so recently as 1915 a treaty which roughly promises to support Bin Saud and his followers in the occupation of the country. I quote this to prove that the French are anxious to establish Jews anywhere if only to have an excuse for getting rid of them, or large numbers of them”.

Through this testimony Montagu was most probably just confirming the content of a letter[35] addressed on June 4, 1917, by Jules Cambon, then secretary general of the French Quai d’Orsay, to Polish-born Nahum Sokolow, a leader of the Zionist movement who publicly supported the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. In this letter which precedes by five months the Balfour declaration, the French diplomat wrote: “You were good enough to present the project to which you are devoting your efforts, which has for its object the development of Jewish colonization in Palestine. You consider that, circumstances permitting, and the independence of the Holy Places being safeguarded on the other hand, it would be a deed of justice and of reparation to assist, by the protection of the Allied Powers, in the renaissance of the Jewish nationality in that Land from which the people of Israel were exiled so many centuries ago. The French Government, which entered this present war to defend a people wrongfully attacked, and which continues the struggle to assure the victory of right over might, can but feel sympathy for your cause, the triumph of which is bound up with that of the Allies. I am happy to give you herewith such assurance”.

At the time, the letter was not released for publication, and it was no sooner sent than regretted as the French Quai d’Orsay returned to its habitual anxiety and duplicity on the subject, as recounted by David Pryce-Jones in a book.[36] Indeed, on 15 January 1919, Foreign minister Stephen Pichon instructed Pierre Paul Cambon, the French ambassador in London, to draw to the British government’s attention that Zionist propaganda should not be allowed to become cause for trouble in the Middle East, saying: “The allied authorities should abstain from all actions or declarations which might arouse unrealizable expectations in the Jews (...) The Zionists must understand once and for all that there could be no question of constituting an independent Jewish state in Palestine, nor even forming some sovereign Jewish body”. Three days later Cambon wrote to Pichon that he could hardly believe the conversation he had just had with Lord Balfour, who reportedly said to him: “It would be interesting to be present at the reconstitution of the Kingdom of Jerusalem”. Cambon replied that according to the Apocalypse such a reconstitution would signal the end of the world, and Balfour came back: “It would be still more interesting to be present at the end of the world”!

In sum, the examination of the British archival documents clearly shows that the Balfour Declaration was a product of four key mindsets: desperation for victory in World War I, imperialism, antisemitism and Orientalism.

In her speech[37] at a dinner organized in London on 2 November 2017 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, **Prime minister Theresa May said that the Declaration was “one of the most important letters in history”, that “we are proud of our pioneering role in the creation of Israel”, and that she will “absolutely not” apologize for this landmark document.** She also slammed the BDS movement and considered “abhorrent” a “new and pernicious form of anti-Semitism which uses criticism of the actions of Israeli government as a despicable justification for questioning the very right of Israel to exist”. No wonder then that Benjamin Netanyahu flew to London to attend the dinner, and that no Palestinian leader was invited to the same event.

May’s exclusion of Palestinians from her celebration reflects with uncanny accuracy the scornful neglect of the same people from the Balfour Declaration one hundred years ago. The British “treated the Palestinians as non-people then, and still treat them as non-people today”.[38]

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One Month Before Global Research's Anniversary

Amir Nour is an Algerian researcher in international relations, author of the books "L'Orient et l'Occident à l'heure d'un nouveau Sykes-Picot" (The Orient and the Occident in Time of a New Sykes-Picot) Editions Alem El Afkar, Algiers, 2014 and "L'Islam et l'ordre du monde" (Islam and the Order of the World), Editions Alem El Afkar, Algiers, 2021.

Notes

- [1] Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West". To read the whole poem: kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_eastwest.htm
- [2] Anthony Pagden, "Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle between East & West", Oxford University Press, 2008.
- [3] As recounted by Ian Worthington in his book titled "Alexander the Great: A Reader", Routledge, 2011, the Susa weddings were arranged by Alexander the Great in 324 BCE, shortly after he conquered the Achaemenid Empire. In an attempt to wed Greek culture with Persian culture, he and his officers held a large gathering at Susa and took Persian noblewomen in matrimony. The collective weddings involved 80 couples and blended various Greek and Persian traditions. Celebrating his own Persian wife, Alexander intended for these new unions to help him begin identifying himself as a son of Persia and thereby legitimize his claim as the heir of the Persian kings of the Achaemenid dynasty. It was also expected that any children produced from these marriages would, as the progeny of both Greece and Persia, serve as a symbol of the two civilizations coming together under Alexander's Macedonian Empire.
- [4] See my related articles titled: "Islam and the West: What Went Wrong and Why", 6 March 2018: <https://www.islamicity.org/14457/islam-and-the-west-what-went-wrong-and-why/> and "9/11 and the Green Scare: It's High Time for a Paradigm Shift", 13 March 2018: <https://www.globalresearch.ca/911-and-the-green-scare-its-high-time-for-a-paradigm-shift/5631878>
- [5] Arnold J. Toynbee, "Islam and the West, and the Future", in "Civilization on Trial", Oxford University Press, 1948.
- [6] David Wetherell, "Israel and the God of War", Financial Review, 23 December 2004.
- [7] Michael Prior, CM, "The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique", Sheffield Academic Press, England, 1997.
- [8] David Wetherell, *idem*.
- [9] Caitlin Johnstone, "Everything About Israel Is Fake", Globalresearch.ca, 11 June 2024.
- [10] Michael Lipka, "More white Evangelicals than American Jews say God gave Israel to the Jewish people", Pew Research Center, 3 October 2013.
- [11] Benedetto Musolino, "Gerusalemme ed il Popolo Ebreo" (Jerusalem and the Jewish People), La Rassegna Mensile d'Israël, Roma, 1951.
- [12] It's worth indicating here that the first Zionist books that were printed before Herzl's pamphlet – that's to say centuries after the Evangelical literature we have summarily mentioned – were Moses Hess's "Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question" published in Leipzig, Germany, in 1862, in which he argued for the Jews to return to Palestine and proposed a socialist country, and Russian-Polish Leo Pinker's "Auto-Emancipation" published in Berlin, Germany, in 1882 and considered as a founding document of modern Jewish nationalism, especially Zionism.
- [13] Maidhc O Cathail, "The Scofield Bible – The Book That Made Zionists of America's Evangelical Christians", Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, October 2015.
- [14] Stephen Sizer, "Christian Zionism: Road-Map to Armageddon?", Intervarsity Press Academic, 2004.
- [15] He wrote a book on Christian theology in 1894 called "The Foundations of Belief: Being Notes Introductory to the Study of Theology".
- [16] Chaim Azriel Weizmann was born in Motol (Russian empire) in 1874. He settled in London upon taking up a science appointment at the University of Manchester. Being a chemist by training, he gave valuable assistance to the British munitions industry during World War I. This achievement signally aided the Zionist political negotiations he was then conducting with the British government. In 1917, he was President of the British Zionist Federation, and he headed the World Zionist Organization in 1920. He later became the first President of the state of Israel (from 1949 to 1952).
- [17] See Janko Scepanovic, "Sentiments and Geopolitics and the Formulation and Realization of the Balfour Declaration", CUNY Academic Works, 2014.
- [18] Kathy Durkin, "The Ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration: Who Caused it and Why?", CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.
- [19] Elizabeth Monroe, "Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956", Chatto & Windus, London, 1963.
- [20] Joe Stork, "Understanding the Balfour Declaration", Middle East Research and Information Project, 1972.
- [21] See Hussein-McMahon Agreement (1915-1916): <http://www1.udel.edu/History-old/figal/Hist104/assets/pdf/readings/13mcmahonhussein.pdf>
- [22] Hannah Bowler, in "Giving Away Other People's Land: The Making of the Balfour Declaration", edited by Sameh Habeeb and Pietro Stefanini, The Palestinian Return Centre, 2017.
- [23] Noam Chomsky & Ilan Pappé, "Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians", Haymarket Books, Chicago, Illinois, 2010.
- [24] NA CAB 21/58 Pamphlet written by Edwin S. Montagu (1917).
- [25] In his works "Nation or Religious Community?" and "Race, Nation, Religion and the Jews" published, respectively, in 1917 and 1918, he stated that "The establishment of a 'National Home for the Jewish Race' in Palestine presupposes that the Jews are a nation, which I deny, and that they are homeless, which implies that in the countries where they enjoy religious liberty and the full rights of citizenship, they are separate entities, unidentified with the interests of the nations of which they form parts, an implication which I repudiate". See CAB/58 letter from Lenard Cohen (October 1917).
- [26] Michael Meyer, "Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism", Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990.
- [27] CAB21/58 booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled "Zionism" (1917).
- [28] D. Z. Gillon, "The Balfour Declaration and Its Makers", Middle Eastern Studies, 1970.

[29] CAB21/58 "Judaism and Politics" Views of the Chief Rabbi Dr Hermann Adler (July 1878).

[30] D.Z. Gillon, "The Antecedents of the Balfour Declaration", Middle Eastern Studies, 1970.

[31] CAB/37/123/43 Memorandum by Herbert Samuels, 21st January 1915.

[32] NA FO141/805/1 Draft telegram from the High Commissioner for Egypt, June 22nd 1917.

[33] NA FO608/97 Memorandum on Oilfields of Russia and Mesopotamia (1919).

[34] British Record Office, Cab. No. 24/28

[35] See copy of the original letter: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambon_letter#/media/File:Cambon_Letter.jpg

[36] David Pryce-Jones, "Betrayal: France, the Arabs, and the Jews", Encounter Books, New York, 2006.

[37] To read the full text of the speech: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-mays-speech-at-balfour-declaration-centenary-dinner/>

[38] Peter Osborne, "100 years after Balfour: the reality which still shames Israel", OpenDemocracy, 2 November 2017.

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