

Partners for Imperium: B'nai Brith Canada and the Christian Right

By Stephen Scheinberg

“Obviously, I find these remarks and others deeply offensive and indefensible, and I repudiate them. I did not know of them before Reverend Hagee’s endorsement, and I feel I must reject his endorsement as well.”
John McCain, Republican presidential candidate.

“Do we still need to point out that [for Hagee and his associates] Jesus can return only after Armageddon and to this end it is best if Israel continues to be at war? ...Hagee and his lobby is not impartial. [they] reject the two-state solution ... [and] direct their funding and assistance toward a clear political agenda in Israel.”
Colette Avital, Labour MK and former presidential candidate in Israel.

“We [Jews] and Israel are not alone because of you and the tremendous leadership of Dr. McVety and Dr. Hagee.”
Frank Dimant, Executive Vice-President of B'nai Brith Canada.



Frank Dimant, Executive VP of B'nai Brith Canada.

John McCain, who in the 2000 primaries actively opposed the Christian right for their intolerance, vigorously sought their support eight years later, only to have to soon disown it. The remarks of Reverend John Hagee, attacking the Catholic Church and Muslims, or saying that Hurricane Katrina was God’s retribution for homosexual “sin,” were not the precipitating comments. When a recording was produced of Hagee stating that God had sent Adolph Hitler to help the Jews reach the Promised Land, this proved too much for McCain to stomach.ⁱ Yet here in Canada, B’nai Brith, led by Frank Dimant, carries on an active association with Hagee’s close Canadian associates, who are cut from the same clerical cloth. Their alliance is based on a common outlook of what they believe is good for Israel and to a lesser extent, on a common social conservative political agenda linking them to the Conservative Party.

B'nai Brith—From Pluralism to Partisanship

Forty or fifty years ago BBC (B’nai Brith Canada) was a major membership organization. It had lodges and institutions that it sponsored from one end of Canada to the other. The Hillel campus foundations, B’nai Brith Camps, and the B’nai Brith Youth Organization were all part of this endeavor. Annual conventions were important events, often held in a Catskill resort, and sometimes they even featured vigorous election contests.

DR. STEPHEN SCHEINBERG is Professor Emeritus in History, Concordia University. He currently serves as co-Chair of Canadian Friends of Peace Now. He was a long-time national officer of B'nai Brith, including two terms as Chair of The League for Human Rights. He resigned his post as National VP and Chair of the Montreal Executive last year.

However, like most of the major volunteer organizations, the membership of the lodges began to sharply decline. It was the phenomenon that Professor Robert Putnam refers to in his book *Bowling Alone*. That is, the bowling leagues and other such activities of voluntary associations no longer attracted the younger people who were working longer hours and preferred enhanced home entertainment (a phenomenon called cocooning). Especially when there were two working parents, maintaining organizational activity became more difficult.ⁱⁱ

As its membership declined, B’nai Brith cast off Hillel, the camps and BBYO which then all looked to the Jewish federations for funding. One exception to this trend has been B’nai Brith senior housing, which operates buildings in Toronto and Montreal. In this case, generous government grants make it possible for BBC to leverage relatively small contributions into worthwhile projects. Yet for the most part BBC, despite the adept use of publicity, is no longer an important organization in Canada.

BBC’s great loss has been in membership, with many of those who persist being octa- and nonagenarians. One exception to this would be members of sports lodges who have little or no connection to BBC affairs, other than the convenience it affords them in access to facilities and leagues. I think it is fair to say that there are only a few active BBC lodges remaining in all of Canada, and the scope of their activities is limited by the age of members and diminishing financial resources.

Presiding over B’nai Brith’s declining fortunes since 1978 has been Executive Vice-President Frank Dimant, the son of Holocaust survivors who was born in Munich just after the war. Dimant

continued on following page

matured within Montreal's Betar, the extreme right-wing Jewish youth group associated with the Revisionist-Zionist movement of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin. Revisionism advocated an Israel on both sides of the Jordan (that is, including much of today's Jordan). Jabotinsky, with his famed "Iron Wall" concept, also believed in a persistent battle with the land's occupants, and was hostile to socialism. Some in the movement even flirted with fascism and Mussolini, but so did many other Jews.¹ Several of Dimant's Betar associates made *aliyah*, especially to the West Bank settlement of Ariel, where Dimant's friend Montrealer Dina Shalit is assistant to the mayor and major fund-raiser. Ariel has enjoyed millions of dollars of support from Hagee and his fellows.

Dimant took his present position thirty years ago, an extremely long tenure in such a position but testifying to his skill at wielding power. He distributes offices and awards, and even helps his loyal followers gain places in B'nai Brith International, organizes meetings with government officials, and also has ties to the Conservative Party, which could help secure a nomination for parliament. At least two of his followers, to my knowledge, have nominations for the next election.

In the 1980s, when I first came to BBC, attracted by its work for human rights, it was a pluralistic organization. Around the League for Human Rights table I found mostly liberals—a few, such as myself, with more activist backgrounds—and a sprinkling of conservatives. Most of the conservatives were part of the other side of BBC political work, the Institute for International Affairs, and since most of that group's work was Israel advocacy, it was where Dimant's own Betar views predominated. I think many, like myself, in the League accepted this, believing that the Institute was Frank Dimant's small corner of B'nai Brith, but unfortunately that corner has become what today's B'nai Brith is all about.

The League for Human Rights had, since its founding, liberals as its directors, first journalist and social democrat Sol Littman, and then active Liberals Rev. Roland de Corneille and Alan Sheffman. An outstanding human rights expert, Dr. Karen Mock, headed the League during much of my tenure. To be sure, Dr. Mock often had to fight Dimant to maintain her programs and finances, but she did so much to raise BBC's profile and bring in grants that Dimant did not threaten the people she had gathered around her. Frankly, there was also a certain shared sentiment between those of us in the League and Frank Dimant. We, as well as Dimant, resented those community *machers* who might prefer to smooth matters over rather than to confront anti-Semitism in an uncompromising fashion. It was something that the right and left had in common.ⁱⁱⁱ

Beginning of the Alliance

This state of pluralism in B'nai Brith lasted until about five years ago. (It has now been totally eliminated with the expulsion of eight dissenting members—see sidebar.) At a rump national board meet-

ing, with a bare quorum, Dimant introduced a resolution to forge an alliance with the Christian right in Canada. Knowing something of their American counterparts, I challenged the motion, but was the only one to do so. I turned to well-known Liberal human rights lawyer David Matas of Winnipeg, but he was not similarly alarmed, perhaps because his own unabashedly pro-Israel position was consistent with such an alliance, or perhaps he did not share my fears. Dimant and others tried to assure me that the alliance was only for Israel advocacy.

I soon learned that was not the case. One day I received a phone call from NDP MP Svend Robinson, inviting me as Chair of the League for Human Rights to come to Ottawa to testify in favour of his bill to include gays and lesbians among those protected from hate speech. I readily agreed, because it had always been BBC policy to support their inclusion, but I was in for a surprise. It was clear that the main group opposed to Robinson's bill was the Christian right, and that BBC, that is Mr. Dimant, would not support the bill without protection being given to the speech of anti-gay clergy. I, though much embarrassed, had to notify Robinson that I was unable to appear at the hearings as a representative of BBC. It would have been a good time to resign, but perhaps mistakenly, I hung in.

Meanwhile, Dimant received a honorary doctorate from the Canada Christian College, but unlike most recipients of such degrees, he often uses the title "Dr." Joint tours of Israel, exchanges of speakers and of course mutual support of the Conservative Party have furthered the linkage. The anti-gay, anti-feminist, pro-censorship stance of Reverend Charles McVety of the Canada Christian College did not seem to bother Dimant, who heads a League for Human Rights.

A key person in furthering the alliance was Joseph Ben-Ami, a bearded, pleasant individual and an Orthodox Jew who took on the role of BBC's government affairs representative in Ottawa. He had worked previously for Stephen Harper and then for Stockwell Day as a policy aide, and played a leading role in Day's leadership campaign. I believe that Ben-Ami was central to the effort to build this alliance. He would go on to work for two of the numerous front organizations established by Rev. McVety—the Canadian Centre for Policy Studies and the Institute for Canadian Values.^{iv} McVety seems to believe that his multiple groups will further the belief in the power and influence of the Christian right here in Canada. According to a 2006 article in *Walrus*, McVety's Institute was established as "a direct riposte to bill C-38" which legalized same-sex marriage.^v

In any event, McVety and some of his pastoral colleagues, especially Reverends John Tweedie and Dean Bye, became favoured speakers at BBC events. They helped create the illusion that, at long

¹Italian Jews were over-represented in Mussolini's March on Rome. Professor George Mosse, one of the leading experts on Nazism, once stated that "given the opportunity, many German Jews would have become Nazis." Italian and German Jews were not that much different from other Italians or Germans. — Steve Scheinberg

last, Canadian churches were giving their unconditional support to Israel. The truth of the matter is that they do not represent the mainstream denominations; they are only (fortunately) a minority faction among Canadian evangelicals. It is the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada that represents three million Canadians, and McVety's denomination and church are not part of it. According to Don Hutchinson, a director of the Fellowship: "There's a broad spectrum on the evangelical meter. Charles may be representative of one end, probably one extreme end of that spectrum." ^{vi} Certainly, they are at the extreme end on Israel affairs, at least in Canada, and even in the U.S. many evangelical leaders, in July 2007, declared "that both Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate rights stretching back for millennia to the lands of Israel/Palestine. Both Israelis and Palestinians have committed violence and injustice against each other. The only way to bring the tragic cycle of violence to an end is for Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate a just, lasting agreement that guarantees both sides viable, independent, secure states" (letter to *New York Times*, July 29, 2007, signed by 34 evangelical leaders).

The Canadian Dispensationalists

McVety and his associates are associated with the dispensationalist brand of the evangelical movement, a grouping sometimes termed Christian Zionists. They are fundamentalists, believing in the authority of an error-free scripture and opposed to abortion access, gay marriage, or use of embryonic stem cells for medical research, while favouring traditional roles for women and protection of the public from what **they** deem to be pornography. In addition to their fundamentalism, the dispensational premillenarians believe that God has related to his children through a series of covenants or dispensations, including God's original covenant with Israel, which remains in effect. In the words of theologian Stephen Sizer, they believe "that **the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham and his descendants will be literally instituted** [my emphasis] and that Jesus Christ will return to a literal and theocratic Jewish kingdom centered on Jerusalem." Of course, this will only follow on a great apocalypse, the battle of Armageddon and other such "benign events" which the dispen-

continued on following page

B'nai Brith Expulsions

There has been a less political movement within the ranks of B'nai Brith, pitting some of its rank-and-file members against Frank Dimant and his board. The board has now expelled eight dissidents who prefer to style themselves "whistle-blowers." Their ranks include at least three former national presidents of the organization, Harvey Crestohl of Montreal, Morley Wolf of Toronto and one of the most honoured volunteers in the history of BBC, Lou Ronson, who is now 93 years old. Lou is a thoughtful, and distinguished individual who joined BBC back in 1939, was a Vice-Chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and has undertaken countless community responsibilities. Dimant's paranoia seems unlimited. Can one imagine purge trials in any other Canadian volunteer association—shades of Joseph Stalin! Almost all of the objects of the purge have stronger and longer associations with B'nai Brith than Dimant and his chosen board. Certainly Dimant & Co. might have taken another course—that of tolerating internal dissent as long as the discourse remained civil and not libelous—but toleration is not in their vocabulary.

At this point the dissidents are now heading towards a civil process. They are demanding audited financial statements and membership records and claim that as a public corporation, BBC must produce them. It is likely that this action might wind up in the courts, but that would be expensive for the individuals, while Dimant would be able to draw on the individual and corporate contributions which sustain not only BBC but also his own substantial salary, which goes unreported. Imagine if those who bought tables at B'nai Brith dinners (the major source of BBC funding) knew that their contributions would be used to subvert internal democracy.

The internal political issue is not ideological but rather a battle for control of the organization. The dilemma of Dimant and the B'nai Brith board is that they would like to be more like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the U.S., governed by a "macherocracy" (big donors and their hangers-on) or for that matter like CJC-CIJA. The problem in achieving that end is that B'nai Brith Canada does not have ADL's credibility in research, human rights programming, and staffing to merit respect on such grounds. BBC is a membership organization burdened with a constitution and legal responsibilities attached to that status. Meanwhile, B'nai Brith continues to portray itself as a representative body of Canadian Jews, while it denies the right of those it supposedly "represents" to a role in the governance of the organization. CJC, the one-time "parliament of Canadian Jewry," was never really a membership organization, but BBC was and is. It cannot claim to represent a large section of Canadian Jews while trying to strip them of any voice. Who, then, will it represent—some wealthy Jewish Tories?

The board purports to operate under a constitution that was never properly approved, according to the dissidents. B'nai Brith International's court, a not very judicial body, issued a one-paragraph decision supporting Dimant and his board, although the dissidents had submitted a lengthy and documented appeal which surely deserved not only a full hearing but a more thorough rebuttal. It is probable that the court did not want to disturb or interfere in the operations of one of its constituent groups.

Democracy is in short supply in Jewish organizational life, and there are both important social and individual forces undermining it. CJC went through a process of having a group of representatives declare they would be irrelevant to future decision-making. BBC with its latest purge trials carry us and our community to new depths, as a group supposedly dedicated to uniting brothers and sisters of the covenant has now purged some of its brothers and sisters without the least regard for natural justice. ♦

sationalists, following God's word, are mandated to implement.^{vii}

The appeal of these extremist Christians to the Jewish right is obvious, since the prophecies of the former cannot be implemented until the return of all the Jewish people to all the lands of ancient Israel. Perhaps the Tigris and Euphrates are in their sight. Thus Dimant, the follower of the rather secular Ze'ev Jabotinsky, but himself an Orthodox Jew, embraces the support of those who will join with him in the fight to preserve all the settlements, illegal outposts and, if possible, all the Palestinian lands of the West Bank. No matter that the agenda of Canada's Christian right is totally at variance with the values held by most Canadian Jews or probably even many of those who remain in the depleting ranks of B'nai Brith.

Canadian dispensationalist clergy are part of Hagee's Christians United for Israel and claim to have taken a lead in establishing that organization, beginning with a telephone call from McVety to Hagee in November of 2005 to notify him that there would be a Toronto "Night to Honour Israel" the following May. Hagee is said to have replied that "there's no reason why we can't do the same thing in every major city of North America." Subsequently, on February 7, 2006, 400 pastors and others joined together at Hagee's Cornerstone Church to establish Christians United for Israel with Christian rightist leaders Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson prominently included^{viii} and with Charles McVety named National Chairman for Canada. Others in the Canadian group are John Howarth (Executive Director), who is on the faculty of McVety's college, Reverend John Tweedie of Brampton (National Chairman) and Reverend Dean Bye of Centralia, Ontario.

It might be instructive to look in some detail at the ideas of some of these Christian right leaders who have collaborated with B'nai Brith, such as the Reverend Dean Bye, who heads the aptly named Return Ministries. Bye's brand of theology is best revealed in a 2006 article "Weathering the Times". He takes as his text the ordeal of Jonah, which he interprets as Jonah turning his back on God and fleeing on board ship to Tarshish, but Jonah was tossed overboard (to be swallowed by a great fish) because he was the cause of the great tempest which beset the ship. "Throughout history," writes Bye, "the weather has been one means which the LORD has used to remind man that He is God and to call man to the attention of the times." Like Hagee he attributes recent natural disasters to God calling man's attention to the times and their sins, including most prominently the conceding of Israel's most extensive land claims: "although America, along with many other nations, stands guilty of a multitude of sins, pressuring Israel to divide God's land is a terrifying example of blatant arrogance and lack of respect for His covenant with Israel.... Such pressure invites weather patterns that bring devastation. The Roadmap to Peace in the Middle East has, in fact, become a roadmap to

terror and destruction." Even George W. Bush would have problems with that formulation.

Reverend Bye's Return Ministries features a rather strange "Aliyah department." Now, many Jewish organizations have such departments, but what is a Christian ministry doing in the business of encouraging and supporting Jews who will emigrate to Israel? "It is estimated," Bye continues, "that upwards of six million Jewish people are still dwelling (or sleeping like Jonah) in North America." That is, North American Jews must recognize they must all "return" to Israel and he warns: "the time of the U.S.A. being a safe haven for the Jews has ended!" I am not sure whether Bye is making a threat or a promise, but his reading of the signs is that 9/11, Katrina and the evacuation of 5000 Jews from New Orleans, Hurricane Rita, and the evacuation of Jews from Houston, all indicate that this is the time for them to leave North America. He adds that "we don't throw them overboard [like Jonah] but lovingly assist them home to Israel." I believe that Bye's implicit judgment, then, is that like Jonah North American Jews have turned their backs on God and must recognize that their only true home is in Israel. Unfortunately for Dean Bye, most of the Jewish community has not responded to his generous proposal that they leave their homes for *aliyah* to Israel.^{ix}

Bye is echoed by the Rev. John Tweedie of Brantford, Ontario, who is the chairman of Christians United for Israel International, which links the American movement of Hagee, Pat Robertson, the Falwell brothers and Rod Parsley to their foreign sympathizers. Tweedie recently told a Jewish audience: "God will help Gentile neighbours to help Jews to come home." The Jewish listeners probably didn't even "get it," that Tweedie, like Bye, was saying that their real home was not in Canada but in Israel. Later he earned their applause, criticizing the evacuation from Gaza and contending that "Israel cannot pull out anymore."^x This was, of course, the same uncompromising position of all the dispensationalists who require all the lands of ancient Israel for their prophecies to unfold.

In an article for the *Evangelical Christian Magazine* Tweedie further expounded his beliefs in an article "Why Israel? What Time is It?" Tweedie employs the well-known Doomsday Clock of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* which the scientists utilize to express the dangers threatening humankind, now including climate change as well as nuclear incineration. But Tweedie uses it in quite another way: "If these experts suggest the world is moving closer to Doomsday, then what time is it on the prophetic calendar?" His answer is that it signifies that the signs "point inevitably to Armageddon" but unlike those of us who are alerted by the clock to prevent disaster, Tweedie comforts his flock with the words of scripture: "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened for those things must take

**The agenda of
Canada's Christian
right is totally at
variance with the
values held by most
Canadian Jews.**

continued on page 37

place, but that is not yet the end ...” Even the rise of Hamas and Hezbollah are welcomed for “even these developments can be seen as fitting into the prophetic timetable.” Tweedie does not similarly welcome either efforts to divide Jerusalem or establish a Palestinian state, directly criticizing President Bush and his Annapolis conference, but even here he seems to take comfort because an “international push for a Palestinian State may well become the political slippery slope that leads eventually to World War 3 or, in the biblical scenario, to Armageddon.”^{x1}

Reverend Charles McVety, president of Canada Christian College, is the best known of Canada’s dispensationalists and the closest to B’nai Brith. The college has conferred an honorary doctorate on Frank Dimant, and this year McVety also announced that it was establishing a Chair in Israel Studies. It is not surprising that the first occupant of the chair will be the very same Dr. Frank Dimant.^{xii}

Tory Ties

McVety is well known because he often leads the charge on behalf of religious conservatism on Parliament Hill. There he has recently fought for curtailing government grants on the basis of morality tests, although current legislation clearly excludes pornography. He strongly opposed gay marriage, and had also expressed himself against protecting gays from hate speech. McVety takes credit for the push to raise the age of consent in Canada, presenting Harper with a petition with over 700,000 signatures, but blames its delay on “the Liberals fighting so hard to keep sex with 14-year-olds legal,” a charge without foundation. McVety was also a VIP guest of Finance Minister Jim Flaherty when the Tories scuttled the Liberal plan for a national child care program in favour of its own more conservative policy of giving tax breaks to women with children. McVety

was an opponent of the Court Challenges Program, and the government obliged him and other social conservatives by cancelling it.^{xiii} Incidentally, B’nai Brith had always favoured this program, which allowed women’s groups, visible minorities and others without access to large sums of money to launch Charter challenges.

McVety and Dimant’s most recent collaboration was also one of the most extreme examples of how far their partnership had gone. The former led a protest in front of the Charles Darwin exhibition of Toronto’s Royal Ontario Museum. He charged Darwin with racism, inspiration of Nazi doctrine and even genocide. McVety also took over the nearby Varsity theatre for a showing of an anti-Darwinist film (*Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*) and B’nai Brith staff and members attended. However, BBC’s major gesture of support for the protest was to make it the page one story in their newspaper *The Jewish Tribune*. This article did not quote one scientific critic of McVety or even a rebuttal from a ROM spokesman. It did not indicate any understanding that social Darwinism, eugenics and Nazi racial doctrines could not be attributed to the father of natural selection. Nor did the *Tribune* indicate that the film had been called by the *New York Times*, “a conspiracy theory rant,” and was similarly panned by other reviewers.^{xiv}

Thus Dimant has overtly allied himself and B’nai Brith with the benighted forces of the creationist—or as they now prefer, “intelligent design”—lobby. Is this just political pandering to his friends at Christian College, or a new appreciation for their rather discredited views? A mere gesture of recognition of McVety’s protest on an inside page of the *Tribune* was not enough for Dimant, who evidently wanted to make his backing more evident. Lower down on the same front page was a more typical BBC story, with President Gerry Weinstein praising the Harper government’s apology to the aboriginal peoples. The object, as always, was to show BBC support for the Tories.

It is no surprise that Reverend McVety also has close ties to the Conservative Party. Liberal MP Garth Turner claimed that McVety told him that he can call and get Prime Minister Harper on the phone within minutes. Turner may not have accurately captured McVety’s remark, but it is surely true that he has influence. A good many of the party’s candidates in the last election were social conservatives, including several current cabinet members, for example Attorney General Vic Toews, Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and Flaherty. It was perhaps through Day that McVety made his connections to Ben-Ami and then his alliance with B’nai Brith.^{xv}

It would be a mistake, however, to exaggerate the influence of this right-wing religious alliance within the Conservative Party. Harper certainly knows that they are not a major source of new votes and certainly not as influential as their American cousins. McVety is reported to be unhappy that the government is not, at least for the present, pursuing his anti-abortion agenda or fight against gay marriage. It is likely that he will therefore continue to pursue the strategy of securing more religious conservative nominees, in order to have more clout within the Conservative Party.^{xvi}

Both BBC and its Christian allies are probably more satisfied with the Harper government’s support for Israel. Much of the right wing in the Jewish community had resented the Liberal Party’s attempts to be even handed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They wanted, and have received, Stephen Harper’s full commitment to Israel. B’nai Brith shows its appreciation on the front page of *The Jewish Tribune*, which frequently runs photos of Harper or Stockwell Day on its front page but not those of the Liberal or NDP opposition leaders. This Tory government which has at times been outspoken in defence of human rights in Tibet, Darfur and elsewhere has been, not so strangely, silent on Palestinian human rights, an issue they have never addressed but is surely high on any objective list-

continued on following page

ing of human rights problems around the world. Moreover, the PM unabashedly defended Israel during the second Lebanon War and recently, in good McCarthyite fashion, stated that members of Parliament who were critical of Israel during that conflict included anti-Semites. Liberal Bob Rae condemned the “blanket smear” and asked the government to name the anti-semites. “I also don’t think it’s fair to say that everybody who has concerns...about Israeli foreign policy is anti-Semitic; if that were true, three-quarters of the population of Israel would be anti-Semitic by the Prime Minister’s definition.”^{xvii} Harper’s smear, however, probably played well among the Christian and Jewish right.

As of now, the Harpercons keep the Christian Right and its allies at arms length, unless their aid is needed on particular pieces of legislation. It is clear that open espousal of their agenda by the Conservative Party would be counter-productive and work against securing a majority government, as it had isolated the old Reform Party. Still, a conservative Jewish-Christian right alliance offers a means for the Tories to cultivate substantial blocks of voters and gather some funding. However, the two allied groups are held together more by Israeli than Canadian politics.

Dispensationalists place Israel front and center on their agenda. Their vision of the second coming cannot be achieved until all Jews return to all of the ancient land of Israel. It is also clear that the Jewish right, with its commitment to settlements and all of the land of what they term Judea and Samaria (West Bank) has a similar interest.^{xviii} Some critics have pointed out that the apocalyptic doctrines of Hagee-McVety, *et. al.* force Jews to accept Christ or be destroyed, but the pragmatic Jewish right prefers the dispensationalist money and support in the here and now. Ariel and other settlements are the recipients of millions of dollars from North American Christian rightists who believe the settlers are doing God’s work.

It is not so obvious, however,

to mainstream Jews, who are not settler enthusiasts, that Hagee, McVety and the like are anything other than good Christian friends of Israel. It makes Jewish audiences feel good to have Christian pastors stand before them and defend Israel, even if they do have some nutty doctrines. The problem is that Jewish audiences do not realize that they are acting in the here and now to realize these doctrines. Thus Labour MK Colette Avital was happy to see it revealed that Reverend Hagee argued that Hitler and the Holocaust were the instruments of God for restoring the Jewish people to Israel. But Avital’s main concern is that the Christian Right is not acting for the interests of Israel as a whole but for “specific leaders and policies.” Similarly Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, slammed Hagee and his ilk as “extremists” saying that “Israel’s greatest friends and most important defenders are not the fundamentalists and extremists and those who take their orders directly from God, but those who work for an end to this terrible conflict.”^{xix} The Christian Right actively opposes a two-state solution, an option favored (under the right circumstances) by a majority of Israelis.

Moreover, noted Christian scholar of dispensationalism Timothy Weber points out that “dispensationalists are supporting some of the most dangerous elements in Israeli society,” including those who would “liberate” or even bomb the Temple Mount, perhaps bringing us closer to their longed-for Armageddon. Weber also points out that they believe that “anyone who pushes for peace” through territorial compromise “is ignoring or defying God’s plan for the end of the age.”^{xx} Thus support for Hagee, Tweedie and their followers is not support for Israel but support for a particular right-wing agenda.

It is also troubling that despite their professions of friendship for the Jewish people, their doctrine contains elements of anti-Semitism. In fairness, I must add that they do not understand it that way, but when Bye, Tweedie and

Hagee declare in the latter’s words that “Jeremiah declared that the Jews must return to Israel before Messiah comes,” and Bye’s Aliyah department works to return us to Israel, I understand that North America should be *Judenrein* (empty of Jews) in order to fulfill their prophecy. They love us but would love to see us, not as Canadian friends and neighbors, but as residents of Judea and Samaria. Again, quoting Weber, “dispensationalists could use the same argument as anti-Semites, but claim they were not being anti-Semites.” In other words, in working to fulfill their doctrines they get rid of the Jews.

Jews in Canada should follow John McCain’s path and sever relations with the Christian Right. He said that he had originally sought their support because they were strong supporters of Israel, but he should have known that it is a conditional support for a particular brand of Israeli politics. Jews in Canada or the U.S. have little in common with those who brand the Roman Catholic Church “the great whore” or a “false cult system” or argue that Hurricane Katrina was God’s retribution for homosexual “sin.” Their anti-quoted and repressive social agenda is not that of most Canadian Jews, even if it suits the right-wing agenda of Frank Dimant and the Harpercons.

Some small numbers of Canadian Jews still support B’nai Brith because they believe that it is an effective lobby for Israel. It makes much noise lobbying, not for Israel but for the settlements and against accommodation. Moreover, no lobbying organization that ties its fortunes so closely to one Canadian political party can be effective in the long run. At some point the Liberals will return to power and will have little use or time for an organization so closely related not only to their political opponents but also to the venomous illiberalism of the Christian Right. ♦

ⁱ “McCain Rejects Endorsements From Hagee, Parsley,” *Huffington Post*, May 22, 2008.

ⁱⁱ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Com-*

- munity (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
- iii The foregoing is based on my many years of participation in B'nai Brith.
- iv See Wikipedia entry on Joseph Ben-Ami.
- v Marci McDonald, "Stephen Harper and the Theo-Cons," *Walrus*, Oct 2006.
- vi Tim Shufelt, "When Lobbyists Speak in Tongues," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 12, 2008.
- vii The basic doctrines are nicely laid out by Bill Moyers
Journal, www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/1005207/profile.html
- viii John Howarth, "Christians United for Israel: A New Call to Put God's Word into Action," *Evangelical Christian Magazine*, February-March 2007, p. 29.
- ix Dean Bye, "Weathering the Times," on website of Return Ministries, www.return.co.il/article3/html
- x Rick Kardonne, "Israel Cannot Pull Out Anymore, Pastor Declares," *Jewish Tribune*, May 21, 2008.
- xi John Tweedie, "Why Israel? What Time Is It?," *Evangelical Christian Magazine*, January-February 2008, p. 18.
- xii See CUFI website or www.campus-watch.org/article/id/5102
- xiii For "sex with 14 year olds" see *Evan-*

- gelical Christian Magazine*, November-December, 2007, p18. On McVety and film censorship see Ian Austen, "Tax Bill Fuels a Canadian Debate on Film Censorship," *New York Times*, May 3, 2008. On McVety's social conservative activism see Dennis Gruending, "McVety, Charles - Evangelical Heavyweight Roams in Harper's Halls of Power," www.harperindex.ca/viewarticle.cfm?ref.00144
- xiv Adina Klein, "ROM's exhibit is 'sugar coating' Darwin's theory, McVety charges," *Jewish Tribune*, June 17, 2008. The story by Brianna Goldberg, "Protesters Rail Against Darwin Exhibition," *National Post*, June 13, 2008, showed critical awareness of McVety's charges and noted the critical reviews of the film.
- xv Ann Porter, "The Harper Government: Towards a New Social Order," *Dawn Ontario*, May 22, 2006/
- xvi Here I take issue with Marci McDonald, Gruending and others who believe that Harper is more directly tied to the Christian Right. He may indeed share some of their social conservative outlook but he keeps his distance from them. Jason Kenney is his point man

- in keeping cordial relations with both the Jewish and Christian rightists. Whether a Harper majority government would deliver on the Christian right social agenda is an open question. Certainly, however, he does deliver on Israel.
- xvii Tonda MacCharles, "Rae Objects to Harper's Smear," *The Star*, May 10, 2008.
- xviii The Jewish right has cultivated this alliance with American dispensationalists for many years, but it was late in coming to Canada. See Colin Shindler, "Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 5, #1, 2000, pp. 153-182.
- xix Colette Avital, "They Only Appear to Be Supporters," *Haaretz*, June 3, 2008. Eric Yoffie, "Christian Zionism? Is it Good for North American Jews and Good for Israel? CCAR April 2, 2008. <www.urjorg/articlesindex.cfm?id.19553>.
- xx Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, (Baker Academic, 2004) excerpt on www.beliefnet.com/story/151/story_15165.html

POYLN

Continued from page 30

male madness and patriarchal abuse. As opposed to the insatiable sexual appetites in the work of his friend Isaac Bashevis Singer (Bashevis suggested that the title character in his story "Gimpel the Fool" was based on Trunk), Trunk is reluctant to talk about sexuality, even though he expatiates in great detail on how difficult it was to get his mother's wedding dress on her. *Poyln* takes place in an extremely patriarchal world where husbands and wives are usually locked in bitter conflict or estrangement and male prodigies are extravagantly worshipped.

Poyln inaugurates a new series on Jewish Poland at the University of Toronto Press, and even in translation the book moves to the sweet inflections of Yiddish thought and phrasing. There are a few infelicitous constructions, a few typos; I wish that the scholarly notes were devoted to something more historical and contextual than the location of place names and definitions of terms of Jewish belief and ritual. The translator, Anna Clarke, is an Emeritus Professor of Carleton University. ♦

Jottings by Sylvia Friedman

Well, Summer has finally arrived here on the West Coast, thankfully making life a lot more pleasant. And since it's time to think about vacation, lucky for me there isn't very much to tell you.

* First off, we would like to apologize to all our contributors who met the deadline for this issue but do not appear in these pages. We found ourselves with an abundance of riches and were really hard-put to decide whether to publish a double-sized issue or postpone printing a number of articles to the next issue. Unfortunately, our budget made the decision for us, and we had to choose the latter option. This definitely was a case of the Yiddish expression: *A khisor, di kaleh iz tsu sheyn* (A fault, the Bride is too beautiful!)

* We received a nice little note from ABE PADOLSKY'S son BARRY. Abe, formerly from Winnipeg, has been living in Ottawa for the last several years. Barry writes, "*Outlook* is amazingly good! I read excerpts to my father ... who was 100 years old on March 2, 2008." And as my mother would say, *keyn ayn-hore*. We wish you good health, Abe, *biz a hundert-untsvantik-yor!*

* BEA LEVIS of Toronto, who is one of the most active people we know, was forced to take a leave of absence in order to have a hip operation, and we are happy to report that it was successful. Husband TERRI thought it would be a good idea to take a rest at the same time, and had a fall which landed him in the hospital as well, but unfortunately, not in the same hospital, thus forcing their daughters KIM and DONA to run from one bedside to another. We wish you ALL a speedy recovery!

And we understand that BEN SHEK also had a mishap and broke his upper arm, but happily, not so badly so that he can still manage to use his computer. I hope your arm mends quickly, Ben.

* It has come to our attention that our readers in the United States did not receive their January-February 2008 issues of *Outlook*. It seems that the whole kit and caboodle got misplaced or lost somewhere, so we will be mailing out replacement copies shortly.

Have a great summer, at least what's left of it. Bye for now!

Sylvia