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## The Implication of Literal Religious Interpretation

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**By Bachar Bakour**

It is generally known that the text, be religious or not, which is carried through the language vehicle, can be expressed in univocal, ambiguous, particular, general, or metaphorical terms.

As language is not always self-evident, total reliance on literalist understating, without occasional appeal to the spirit when necessary, is misleading, and sometimes has far-reaching implications.

In Muslim legal history, Zāhirī school, founded by Dāwūd ibn Alī al-Zāhirī (d. 817), unmistakably fits in here. Its adherents, abandoning other normative ways of the juristic thought and understanding, stridently advocate the apparent and literal

As far as Judeo-Christian tradition is concerned, it is to be regretted that austere and literal interpretation of the Bible could sometimes lead to incredibly utter devastation. A case in point is seen in the long-drawn-out catastrophic situation of Palestine: mass killing; torture and ill-treatment; arbitrary detention; systematic torture of prisoners; the taking of natural resources; house demolitions and deportations. All these undeniably war crimes, frequently condemned by UN General Assembly and Security Council, have been committed, for over a half century, on the basis of theological and historical accounts of the Bible, which are literally interpreted and zealously implemented.

Seeking support from Biblical literalism, Christian Zionists staunchly advocate that the creation of the state of Israel, and later its enduring existence, is legitimate, moral, and authorised by the Holy Scripture.

More dangerously, evangelic preachers and religious leaders, hinging upon the plain meaning of the words of the Scripture, have formulated and promulgated what they firmly believe to be the providential plan, or 'God's plan for the Ages' that presents a horrible scenario upon which the fate of all humanity is decided. This scenario, not open to negotiation, includes dozens of buzzwords, like 'Covenant,' 'Eschatology,' 'Rapture,' 'Tribulation,' 'Armageddon,' 'amillennialism,' 'millennium' 'dispensationalism,' 'endtimes,' 'futurism, etc.

As Professor Fuad Sha'ban correctly observes,

The Dangers inherent in this 'Judeo-Christian' literal interpretation of sacred text prophecies and the concept of the millennium can be clearly seen in the unconditional support given by the United States to Israeli policies and actions that violate the principles of human rights, international law and the UN Charter. It entices persons like Michael Rohan to set fire to the Dome of the Rock to prepare for the kingdom of the Prince of Peace in the Temple. It encourages person like Baruch Goldstein to slaughter 29 Muslims while they were praying in a Hebron mosque.

New Testament prophecy that the reconstruction of the ancient kingdom of David will usher in the ‘end times’ and the Second Coming of Christ, is a completely foolish and erroneous interpretation of the Scriptures.” Christian Zionism only thrives on a futurist and literal hermeneutic when Old Testament promises made to the ancient Jewish people are transposed on to the contemporary State of Israel. To do so it is necessary to ignore, marginalise or bi-pass the New Testament which reinterprets, annuls and fulfils those promises in and through Jesus Christ and his followers.\*\*\*

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