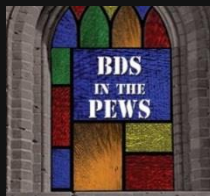


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CHRIST AT THE CHECKPOINT:
*How the U.S., U.K. and Dutch
Governments Enable Religious
Strife and Foment Mideast Conflict*

March 2014



This report was produced by

BDS in the Pews

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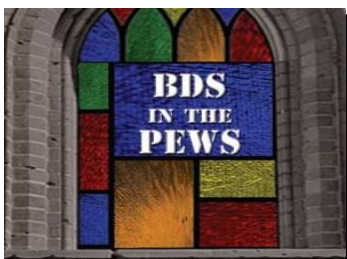
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NGO Monitor's mission is to provide information and analysis, promote accountability, and support discussion on the reports and activities of NGOs claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

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Key Points

- Christ at the Checkpoint Conference (CATC) is a bi-annual event held in Bethlehem, [launched in 2010 and organized by Bethlehem Bible College](#) and the [Holy Land Trust](#). The second CATC conference was held in 2012, and another will take place March 10-14, 2014.
- [Bethlehem Bible College](#) (BBC) and partner [Holy Land Trust](#) (HLT) have been directly and indirectly funded by the governments of the United States, the Netherlands, UK, and prominent religious institutions.
- CATC seeks to advance the Palestinian nationalist agenda within Evangelical Christian churches, while simultaneously reviving theological antisemitic themes such as replacement theology.
- At previous conferences, multiple speakers made antisemitic comments, such as “God is continuing to have a program with the Jewish people who Paul describes as enemies of the Gospel...” and “Jesus is the true vine, not Israel. He is the faithful Israelite who will accomplish all that the nation of Israel failed to do.” Other anti-Jewish themes promoted at CATC conferences include the de-Judaizing of Jesus and the promotion of a racial theory of Jewish origins.
- There is a total lack of financial transparency by Bethlehem Bible College regarding CATC. Neither monetary amounts nor financial donors are available on the BBC website.
- CATC’s long term goal appears to be the weakening of traditionally strong Evangelical Christian support for Israel in the United States and elsewhere.
- The conference offers several field trips to checkpoints, the “segregation Wall,” a Palestinian neighborhood in “East Jerusalem,” as well as meetings with Palestinian families. No visits appear to be organized to Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem, nor do there appear to be meetings with Israeli Jewish families. Moreover, there do not appear to be any visits arranged to the many sites in Jerusalem where Palestinians carried out terrorist attacks. Apart from a brief perfunctory meeting with one Israeli at a West Bank settlement, the mainstream Israeli voice is virtually absent. The only Jews conference participants will apparently meet and hear from are so-called Messianic Jews.

Governmental Funds Enabling Christ at the Checkpoint

Direct Funding

This information is qualified as HLT does not practice funding transparency, and the same is true for a number of its donors.

United Kingdom

- NGO Monitor correspondence with the British government shows that HLT [received €15,000](#) from the UK in 2010-2011. The government's [Middle East and North Africa Conflict Pool](#) (MENA CP) provided €10,000, and €5000 was provided by the Bilateral Program Budget, managed through the British Embassy in Tel Aviv or Consulate in Jerusalem.

United States

The National Endowment for Democracy, mostly funded by the U.S. Congress, granted the Holy Land Trust (HLT) the following amounts in 2006-2012:

Year	Amount
2006	\$35,000
2007	\$35,000
2008	\$37,000
2009	\$37,000
2010	\$41,000
2011	-
2012	\$46,300
2013	-
Total	\$232,300

Indirect Funding

Cordaid (Catholic Organization for Relief and Development - Netherlands):

- Cordaid received a [€345 million grant](#) from the Dutch government for 2012-2015. Cordaid's 2012 total gross income amounted to [€129.3 million](#) of which [€69.9 million](#) came from Dutch government subsidies (54% of total income). Cordaid's [2012 Annual Report](#) lists a total of €1,773,000 allocated to "Palestinian Territories/Israel" with the bulk (€1,713,000) earmarked for "Conflict transformation." (€30,000 is allocated to "Healthcare & wellbeing" and €30,000 to "Other.")
- HLT lists Cordaid as an "[international associate](#)" and "[partner](#)," but does not provide donation amounts.
- Cordaid is also a [partner](#) with the [BBC](#), though neither Cordaid nor Bethlehem Bible College provides specific funding amounts.
- The 2012 annual report refers to unspecified financial "commitments" made to named beneficiaries, including the BBC: "Religious partners are particularly indispensable for Cordaid in the programs Conflict Transformation, Emergency Aid (with and through, the

Caritas international network), and Health & Wellbeing. During the reporting year, **48 percent of our commitments** pertained to a church or church-related partner.” (emphasis added)

- In the section on BBC, the [Dutch version](#) of the 2012 annual report specifically mentions CATC: “In March 2012, under the title ‘Christ at the checkpoint...’ a meeting was held with about 500 religious and political leaders to clarify and discuss the different views and assumptions.” (ellipsis in both Dutch and English original)

Kerk in Actie (Netherlands)

- Kerk in Actie (KIA) offers the opportunity to donate to BBC via its [website for an interreligious dialogue project](#), with a goal of raising €25,000. In 2010, KIA [promoted](#) the CATC conference on its website.
- KIA’s website [states](#) that it does not receive funding from the Dutch government. Nonetheless, KIA’s annual reports document receipt of funding from unspecified governmental bodies. KIA [received](#) “subsidies from governments” (*subsidies van overheden*, in Dutch) in the amount of [€233,000](#) in 2012 and [€1,245,000 in 2011](#). Additionally, KIA [received](#) €450,000 in 2011 and 2012 in “mandatory contributions from municipalities” (*Verplichte bijdragen van gemeenten*, in Dutch).

Non-Governmental Funds Enabling Christ at the Checkpoint

Funds provided to Bethlehem Bible College from non-governmental sources

Funder	Year	Amount	Type of support
The General Board of Global Ministries (United Methodist Church) <i>This covers the period 2009-2014. The first CatC conference was held in 2010.</i> <i>The UMC also provides “individual volunteer opportunities” with BBC.</i>	2014 <i>(to date)</i>	\$ 2,591.70	Annual goal for designated giving via UMC’s Advance program is \$75,000.
	2013	\$14,236.03	
	2012	\$24,203.43	
	2011	\$26,623.13	
	2010	\$30,220.13	
	2009	\$30,619.87	
	Total	\$128,494.29	
The Outreach Foundation	2014	\$10,000	Goal for designated giving
St. Paul’s United Methodist Church	2014	Data NA	Grant
Church of the Brethren	2013	\$10,000	Grant
BMS World Mission	2011	£2,545	Grant
Mustard Seed Foundation	2011	\$3,250	Scholarship
Jerusalem Trust	2010	£25,000	Grant
Eastern Mennonite Missions	2009	\$5,000	Grant

- [Presbyterian Church in Ireland](#): “We have supported Bethlehem Bible College for a number of years, and continue to do so, providing an annual grant which helps meet the costs of running the college.”
- The Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA) [lists](#) the BBC as one of its “church partners.”
- The National Presbyterian Church [lists](#) BBC as a “mission partner.”

Background

- Website: <http://www.christatthecheckpoint.com>
- Christ at the Checkpoint is a bi-annual conference [launched and organized](#) by [BBC](#) and the [HLT](#) in 2010. The second CATC conference was held in 2012, and another will take place March 10-14, 2014.

Bethlehem Bible College

The Bethlehem Bible College [describes its mission](#) in both theological and nationalist terms:

- “Bethlehem Bible College seeks to train and prepare Christian servant-leaders for the churches and society **within an Arab context** who model Christ centeredness, Godly humility, biblical wholeness, creative mercy and justice in their jobs and ministries as life-long learners.” (emphasis added)
- “We also welcome the support and prayers of our brothers and sisters around the world, who are committed to preserving the witness of Christ **through the indigenous people of the Land of the Bible.**” (emphasis added)

Holy Land Trust

- HLT [supports anti-Israel BDS](#) (boycotts, divestment, and sanctions), including [signing a petition](#) in May 2005 calling for the academic boycott of Israel, signing the 2005 “[Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS](#),” and [supporting the Kairos Palestine document](#).
- Sami Awad, HLT’s [executive director](#) and founder, has stated that non-violent [demonstrations](#) are “**not a substitute for the armed struggle.**” Awad has also [minimized](#) Israel’s legitimate security needs as a “manipulation” of the fear of another Jewish Holocaust. (emphasis added)
- Speaking at the National Leadership Conference for the Vineyard Church in 2009, Awad [told the audience](#), “**We’ve actually done training in non-violence for Hamas leaders and other militant groups as well.**” Hamas is listed as a terrorist organization by the [U.S. State Department](#) and the [EU](#). (The United States Supreme Court [upheld a law](#) criminalizing material support for terror organizations. The law defines “material support” as including “any property, tangible or intangible, or service, including... training, expert advice or assistance...”). As noted on page 2, HLT is a recipient of U.S. government funding. (emphasis added)
- [Conducts highly politicized tours](#) promoting the Palestinian narrative and targeting church leaders and the international community, claiming to provide “cross cultural and experimental learning opportunities in both Palestine and Israel.
- [Speakers](#) include major leaders from the Evangelical world: Reverend Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary-general of the World Evangelical Alliance; William Wilson, president of Oral Roberts University; and Joseph Cumming of Yale University’s Center for Faith and Culture. The only Jewish speakers are so-called Messianic Jews.

- The conference's [stated goal](#) is to challenge "Evangelicals to take responsibility to help resolve the conflicts in Israel-Palestine." The political purpose appears to be the goal of diminishing the strong Evangelical Christian support for Israel in the United States and elsewhere.
- The [conference manifesto](#) proclaims a Christian theme of "reconciliation" appealing to Evangelicals to "reclaim the prophetic role in bringing peace, justice and reconciliation in Palestine and Israel."
 - The manifesto's language, however, paints a one-sided image of Palestinians solely as victims and Israelis solely as oppressors: "There are real injustices taking place in the Palestinian territories and the suffering of the Palestinian people can no longer be ignored" and "[f]or Palestinian Christians, the occupation is the core issue of the conflict."
 - Despite its call for "reconciliation" the manifesto does not address core issues of the conflict, including Palestinian rejection of Israel's existence as a democratic and Jewish state, and the use of terrorism against Israeli civilians by various Palestinian terror groups.
- Previous conferences in 2010 and 2012 advanced the Palestinian nationalist agenda within Evangelical Christian churches. A number of speakers also revived theological antisemitic themes such as replacement theology.
- The conference includes [several field trips](#) "conducted by our partner Holy Land Trust" to:
 - the "segregation Wall"
 - "Hebron - the Old City & the Settlement" where the group will "hear a brief explanation on the Israeli settlements," "will visit the old city's market where Israeli settler strongholds guarded by Israeli forces have squeezed the life out of the formerly thriving area," and "will visit a local family living under siege."
 - "East Jerusalem the 1948 and Present and changes to the Identities" where the group will visit the "Palestinian neighborhood" of Sheikh Jarrah. "On the way back from Jerusalem, we will walk through the main checkpoint at the entrance of the city of Bethlehem and continue to see families houses that have been segregated completely by the wall."
 - "Each morning of the conference (March 11th-14th) will offer an optional visit to the Bethlehem checkpoint."

Significantly, the only visit with Israeli Jews offered by the CATC conference organizers is a brief one-hour tour of the "Ephrata settlement where you will tour around the settlement and listen to a brief background and life style on the settlement given by a local from Ephrata." During the tour of Jerusalem no visits appear to be organized to Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem, nor do there appear to be meetings with Israeli Jewish families. Moreover, there do not appear to be any visits arranged to the many sites in Jerusalem where Palestinians carried out terrorist attacks.

Antisemitism at Christ at the Checkpoint

Expressions of overt antisemitism are not uncommon at CATC conferences. A repeated theme is [replacement theology, or supercessionism](#), a belief that by rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, the Jewish people have forfeited its status as the people of God. At least one speaker invoked racist antisemitism to discredit any Jewish *ethnic* connections to the Land of Israel. Some examples:

- **Rev Stephen Sizer¹**: At the 2010 CATC conference, Sizer spoke on the subject, “Israel and the Church: Who are God’s Chosen People?” The presentation was an argument in support of replacement theology. Some quotes from this [lecture](#) (emphases added):
 - “The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are therefore **now fulfilled only through those who follow Jesus Christ** since they alone are designated the true children of Abraham and Sarah. **Jews who reject Jesus Christ are outside the covenant of grace** and are to be regarded as children of Hagar.”
 - “The ‘dividing wall of hostility’ typified by the barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles in the Temple, has been broken down by Jesus Christ. In (sic) is ironic, if tragic that despite his willingness to comply with all the **petty Temple regulations concerning ritual purity**, that Paul would eventually be arrested for allegedly bringing Greeks into the Temple and defiling God’s house. (Acts 21:28-29). Today, **their successors in the government of Israel** are seeking to erect a much higher and longer ‘Separation Barrier’ **to preserve their racial identity** and exclusive claim to the land of Palestine.”
 - “Therefore, **Jesus is the true vine, not Israel**. He is the faithful Israelite who will accomplish all that the nation of Israel failed to do.”
- **Rev. Mitri Raheb** [offered](#) a [racial theory](#) for why Jews are not “the people of the land” at the 2010 CATC conference, which he keynoted. He said,

“I’m sure if we were to do a **DNA test between David, who was a Bethlehemite, and Jesus, born in Bethlehem, and Mitri**, born just across the street from where Jesus was born, I’m sure **the DNA will show that there is a trace**. While, if you put **King David, Jesus and Netanyahu, you will get nothing**, because Netanyahu comes from an East European tribe who converted to Judaism in the Middle Ages.”

Raheb will be speaking again at the 2014 conference.

- **Prof. Gary M. Burge**, while speaking at the 2012 CATC conference, invoked a supercessionist worldview while making the following [comments](#) about Jews and Judaism:

¹ In 2012, the Board of Deputies of British Jews brought a [formal complaint](#) against Sizer, accusing him of having “made antisemitic statements and [having] published links to racist and antisemitic websites.” The compiled [evidence](#) against him includes:

- i. linking to “an article in the Palestine Telegraph which accused Israel of killing scientists all over the world, including by causing plane crashes. The author of the article was Wayne Madsen who has accused Israel, Saudi intelligence and the CIA of being behind the attacks on 9/11.”
- ii. giving an interview to the [pro-Iranian](#) Qods News Agency which regularly denies the Holocaust;
- iii. linking to an article from the website “Window into Palestine,” which describes the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as an “important tome.”

“But Judaism holds an incomparable place in history. Because of its legacy it is not rejected but it will return to the olive tree rooted in Abraham when it embraces Christ by faith... **God is continuing to have a program with the Jewish people who Paul describes as enemies of the Gospel**, and He looks forward to the moment, that moment when Christ returns and when he does, that church is going to be a united church of Jews and Gentiles... **Judaism continues to be part of our family and like Paul we yearn for them to embrace Messiah Jesus and this is why Paul evangelizes synagogues.**”

At this year’s CATC conference, Burge is slated to participate in a “[Dialogue on Replacement Theology](#)” with [Daniel Juster](#), founding President of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, and [Yohanna Katanacho](#), Academic Dean of Bethlehem Bible College and a co-author of the [Kairos Palestine Document](#).

- **Rev. Naim Ateek**, founder of the [Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center](#), frequently employs antisemitic themes drawing from replacement theology, deicide imagery, the de-Judaization of Jesus and the denigration of Judaism. (emphases added)
 - At the [2010 CATC conference](#), he said, “there is an emphasis on that part of the Old Testament that, for me, **really reflects a tribal understanding of God.**” He also said, “**Jesus was a Palestinian who lived in Palestine... Jesus was a Palestinian** who was born under occupation. Jesus lived under occupation. Everything he taught, everything he said was done under occupation, exactly the way we live today.”
 - In 2011, Ateek [declared](#) that the “**establishment of Israel was a relapse to the most primitive concepts of an exclusive, tribal God.**”
 - In 2001, he [maintained](#): “In this season of Lent, it seems to many of us that **Jesus is on the cross again with thousands of crucified Palestinians** around him. It only takes people of insight to see the hundreds of thousands of crosses throughout the land, Palestinian men, women, and children being crucified. Palestine has become one huge Golgatha. The **Israeli government crucifixion system** (emphasis added) is operating daily. Palestine has become the place of the skull.”
- British theologian **Colin Chapman** [told the 2010](#) CATC of how the “bad experience of Palestinian Muslims with Zionist immigrants after 1880 has reminded them of Muhammad’s bad experience with the Jews of Medina, encouraging them to apply the harsh verses about Jews in the Qur’an to Israeli Jews today. **It must seem to Palestinian Muslims as if Jews of the modern period were simply repeating the hostile behavior of Jews many centuries earlier towards the Prophet.**” He also blamed Christian support for Israel for impeding missionary efforts among Muslims calling it a “major stumbling block for the gospel. Many Muslims are not willing to listen to the gospel because they cannot understand how so many Christians are supporting something that seems to them to be so fundamentally unjust.” (emphasis added)