

**Carroll, James, *Jerusalem, Jerusalem:*
*How the Ancient City Ignited the Modern World.***

Melbourne: Scribe, 2011. Softcover; 418 pages;

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Carroll's profoundly significant book catapults the *mythos* surrounding Jerusalem into the centre of current events. He smoothly traces the threads of religiously-driven national ideologies of violence - from Augustine, to medieval Europe, to the US Civil War, and through to modern times - and shows how Jerusalem is a key aspect of the US vision of 'freedom'. Carroll is, however, no defender of this violence, and undermines many prevailing myths about the intentions of Jefferson, Wilson and the West in general. This book is essential reading because the author shows how deeply implicated religion is in nationalist ideology, especially of the US, and, thus, how deeply entrenched religion is in a worldview of committing violence for the sake of peace - the "peace of Jerusalem".

Some of Carroll's explanations could seem far-fetched if not for his extensive use of quotes. When he quotes Woodrow Wilson on US exceptionalism – "I believe that God has planted in us the vision of liberty... we are chosen, and prominently chosen, to show the way to the nations of the world how they shall walk in the paths of liberty" - it is easier to understand contemporary US foreign policy in Iraq. Carroll traces the history of such messianic visions from the founding of the US through to contemporary US impact on world events, and shows how important Jerusalem was to this vision. He details many little-known facts: the last words of Abraham Lincoln to his wife were how he longed to visit Jerusalem.

Modern history is founded on medieval events and Carroll excellently conveys the place of Jerusalem in the Crusade and post-Crusade imagination. He clearly shows how indeed “theological readings have consequences” (p. 139) and his extensive use of sources leads naturally to his conclusions, such as the power of “Christian paranoid fantasy” (p. 135).

There are, however, some annoying and seriously misleading parts of Carroll’s work. He makes many gross generalisations and numerous outright errors of fact that somewhat undermine his effort. While Carroll’s US history is sound, his religious knowledge is often poorly researched. Contrary to Carroll’s assertion, John the Baptist was not an anti-Roman terrorist “zealot” (p. 78). Neither was the church “disorganised” until Constantine, as any history of the church in Persia and outside the Roman Empire will show (p. 16). Carroll’s claim that the Jews “recognised the sanctity of Jerusalem only when they lost it” is also historically false (p. 15). He anachronistically retrojects thirteenth-century Latin notions of atonement back into the early church, and repeatedly equates Christianity with just the Roman Catholic Church, ignoring the long history of the Orthodox and Oriental churches and their important and long associations with Islam (pp. 94-97). His assertion that “the gospels were composed as a literature of violence, as wartime literature” is simply laughable (p. 85). It makes the reader wonder if his other pages are as historically invalid.

The reductionism of his claim that “violence is the problem the Bible is addressing” (p. 50) is only exceeded by his assertions that the Bible’s “subject” is ambivalence about violence (p. 54), and that “[t]he Bible is so full of violence because it came into being to resist violence” (p. 307). His text would have been far more valuable if he

omitted these nonsense claims. Overall, Carroll's history is far better than his theology, which is often out-dated and incorrect.

Despite these and many other errors, this is a book that should be read by all historians, politicians and indeed every school and university student, for it shows just how much current events are shaped by an almost unconscious US worldview of apocalyptic expectation and violent *mythos* centred on the city of Jerusalem. Carroll argues his case convincingly, uses extensive source material and endnotes, and writes in an engaging style. His work is compelling and needs to be taken seriously.

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