

**American Evangelicals and Israel: A Complicated Alliance**  
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Since the late 1970s, American evangelicals have established themselves as visible and unrelenting supporters of Israel. Usually identified with the so-called "new Christian right," they have founded numerous pro-Israel organizations, held large rallies in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere, aggressively lobbied Congress and the White House, and eagerly supported candidates who promise to oppose any efforts to pressure Israel to trade land for peace. Evangelicals have also raised money to help Jews immigrate to Israel or settle on the West Bank, promoted tours to Israel, and sold millions of biblical prophecy books showing Israel's role in the "End Times," the last days leading up to the second coming of Christ. In short, the evangelicals' support of Israel is hard to miss and a force to be reckoned with.

All this is well known; but it is hardly the whole story. American evangelicals comprise a large and diverse segment of American religious life; and though they overwhelmingly support Israel, they do so for vastly different reasons and envision different futures for the Jewish state.

## **Locating Evangelicals in America's Free-Market Religious Economy**

Historians of American religion have long recognized that for the last century, American Protestantism has had three rather distinct foci. On the right are fundamentalists, who militantly oppose most forms of modernity, fiercely defend orthodoxy, and invariably separate from anyone they consider to be theologically or behaviorally deviant. On the left are liberals, who eagerly embrace modernity, prefer an ethical rather than doctrinal approach to the Christian faith, and view the Bible, theology, and social issues in progressive terms. In the middle are evangelicals, who build broad, trans-denominational coalitions, uphold a more or less traditional theology based on a strong belief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and take an activist approach to evangelism, missions, and certain kinds of social reform.<sup>1</sup>

Though all three groups can trace their roots to 19th-century mainstream Protestantism, the current divisions grew out of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early 20th century, when rival understandings of science, the Bible, and Christian theology tore the Protestant fabric apart. During the 1920s and 1930s, liberals gained control of the historic Protestant denominations, nearly all of which were classified as evangelical in the 1800s. When fundamentalists failed to stem the liberal tide, they

created an elaborate religious subculture of their own. While some evangelicals decided to remain in their now-liberal denominations as the vocal opposition, many others found a home in more theologically compatible but not always comfortable fundamentalist circles.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing remains the same for long in American religious life. By the end of the Second World War, many of the more moderate evangelicals within fundamentalism were clearly unhappy with the prevailing pessimism, separatism, and negativism of the Protestant right wing. They called for a more positive "new evangelicalism" to engage other Christians and American culture. By the mid-1970s, this "born-again movement" was being widely reported. When evangelicals helped elect Jimmy Carter, a Sunday school-teaching Southern Baptist, to the White House, even outsiders noted the "evangelical renaissance" that was underway.<sup>3</sup> Once again, evangelicals were rebuilding their old coalitions with other religious groups in hopes of playing a more constructive role in American life.<sup>4</sup>

The evangelical comeback had staying power, thanks in large part to mainstream Protestantism's huge losses in membership and cultural influence over the last forty years. In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, Walter Russell Mead noted the "monumental changes in the balance of religious power in the United States" and then elaborated:

According to *Christianity Today*, between 1960 and 2003, membership in mainline [liberal] denominations fell by more than 24 percent, from 29 million to 22 million. The drop in market share was even more dramatic. In 1960, more than 25 percent of all members of religious groups in the United States belonged to the seven leading mainline Protestant denominations; by 2003 this figure had dropped to 15 percent. The Pew Research Center reports that 59 percent of American Protestants identified themselves as mainline Protestant in 1988; by 2002-3, that percentage had fallen to 46 percent. In the same period, the percentage of Protestants who identified themselves as evangelical rose from 41 percent to 54 percent.<sup>5</sup>

Pew's recent "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey" reported similar findings. Of the 35,000 American adults surveyed, 51.3 percent identified themselves as Protestants. To be more precise, 26.3 percent of those surveyed were evangelicals, 18.1 percent were mainline Protestants, and 6.9 percent belonged to historically black churches. At present, then, evangelicals comprise the largest religious group in America, with Catholics running a close second at 23.9 percent.<sup>6</sup>

As evangelicals' market-share increased, so did their influence in American education, arts and media, business, and politics. Sociologist D. Michael Lindsay documented this trajectory of success in his book *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*. While Lindsay found that many fundamentalists and evangelicals remain focused on fighting a "culture war" against progressives, he located and interviewed hundreds of other

evangelical leaders in high places who actively interact with people unlike themselves in order to find the common ground necessary for the common good. Lindsay noted a significant difference between "movement leaders" who try to exert influence while remaining inside their religious subculture and "public leaders" who take their evangelical faith into government, business, and culture.<sup>7</sup>

Increasingly, then, evangelicals are full of surprises. Though they still rate abortion and family values as high priorities, their list of moral, ethical, and political concerns is expanding to include other issues as well. Recently the National Association of Evangelicals made headlines by affirming the crucial importance of climate change and the environment, by opposing torture, and by promoting programs to address global poverty and the AIDS crisis, especially in Africa. In May 2008, a group of eighty evangelical leaders issued an "Evangelical Manifesto" that took both fundamentalists and liberals to task for politicizing faith, "using faith to express essentially political points that have lost touch with biblical truth. That way faith loses its independence, the church becomes 'the regime at prayer,' Christians become 'useful idiots' for one political party or another, and the Christian faith becomes an ideology in its purest form. Christian beliefs are used as weapons for political interests."<sup>8</sup>

Drawing on their long history of political involvement, evangelicals have also become leaders in various causes related to U.S. policy, especially in the areas of humanitarian concerns, human

rights, and religious freedom. According to Mead, who has tracked evangelicals' rising influence in U.S. foreign policy circles, evangelicals tend to be suspicious of state-to-state aid or large-scale development efforts and favor more hands-on, grass-roots, and faith-based efforts to solve problems. Although not everyone is sanguine about the evangelicals' efforts to shape U.S. foreign policy, Mead believes that their influence will continue to grow and that they have shown signs of working well with others in achieving common goals.<sup>9</sup> In this way, 21st-century American evangelicals are reclaiming their 19th-century activist and reforming heritage.

### **Evangelical Views on Israel**

When it comes to U.S. foreign policy, evangelicals are still best known for their strong support of Israel. For the most part, this support is rooted in a variety of biblical and theological ideas about the relationship of Christians and Jews in God's ongoing redemptive program, as described below.

#### *Replacement Theology*

According to the doctrine of replacement theology, which is more formally called "supersessionism," the church is the New Israel. Most Christians since the second and third centuries of the Common Era have believed that when Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God

transferred all their rights and privileges as the chosen people to the church. Since then, becoming part of the New Israel has depended on one's faith in Jesus Christ, rather than one's genealogical descent from Abraham and Isaac. Karl Barth, a leading 20th-century Swiss Protestant theologian, summarized this doctrine:

The first Israel, constituted on the basis of physical descent from Abraham, has fulfilled its mission now that the Saviour of the world has sprung from it and its Messiah has appeared. Its members can only accept this fact with gratitude, and in confirmation of their own deepest election and calling attach themselves to the people of this Saviour, their own King, whose members the Gentiles are now called to be as well. Its mission as a natural community has now run its course and cannot be continued or repeated.<sup>10</sup>

The most obvious implication of supersessionism is that Jews as a national or ethnic entity no longer figure in God's ongoing redemptive plans. Of course, Jews may still be saved, but only as they individually trust in Jesus as the Messiah and become part of the New Israel by faith. Thus there can be no biblical or theological significance to the continuation of the Jewish people after Christ -- or the establishment of a Jewish state in the Holy Land.

Since the Second World War and the Holocaust, replacement theology has been criticized on the grounds that some Christians have used it to justify antisemitism or the targeting of Jews for evangelism. Simply put, in an age of growing interreligious

sensibilities and dialogue, replacement theology can be a huge stumbling block. Consequently, some critics of supersessionism have argued for the concept of "dual covenants": that is, when God established a new covenant with the church, he did not abrogate the old covenant with the children of Abraham. By implication, Jesus Christ is the savior of the Gentiles, but not the Messiah of the Jews; Christians no longer need to evangelize Jews because the latter never lost their special covenant relationship with God. According to its advocates, by questioning the church's standing as the New Israel, the dual covenant approach fosters mutual appreciation and replaces proselytism with respectful dialogue.<sup>11</sup>

While American evangelicals repudiate antisemitic uses of replacement theology, they overwhelmingly reject the dual covenant view, insisting that if Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jews, he cannot be the savior of the Gentiles. They also continue to affirm the biblical mandate to take the gospel of Christ to *everybody* -- Jews as well as Gentiles.<sup>12</sup> Old-style replacement theology is still held by a sizeable minority of evangelicals in the United States, especially among those in the Calvinist tradition. However, it seems unlikely that their numbers exceed 20 percent.<sup>13</sup>

### *Dispensationalism*

In contrast to replacement theology, dispensationalism, with its emphasis on biblical prophecy, places the modern state of Israel in the center of events leading to the second coming of Christ. Biblical prophecy has a special resonance among American evangelicals, especially as it relates to a future millennium, a golden age of peace and justice that is closely connected to the return of Christ. Most 19th-century evangelicals were postmillennialists who believed that the second coming would occur *after* the millennial golden age was established through the "Christianization" of the world.

Dispensationalism, a form of premillennialism, originated with John Nelson Darby, a 19th-century English Bible teacher who made a number of trips to the United States in the 1860s and 1870s and gathered a following of prominent evangelical pastors and Bible teachers. His teachings spread through the more conservative evangelical networks -- Bible conferences, Bible institutes, and popular publications such as the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909). By 1920, dispensationalism was enormously popular among those who were already calling themselves fundamentalists.

Darby's teachings could get quite complicated. He divided all biblical and subsequent history into eras (dispensations) in order to keep track of God's changing plan of redemption, which he believed contained two distinct "peoples of God" -- one "earthly" (Israel) and the other "heavenly" (the church). With Israel, God established a number of covenants that stretched from the call of Abraham to the

coming of the Messiah and beyond. However, when the messiah Jesus came, Israel rejected him. In response, God *temporarily* suspended all dealings with Israel and created a new people, the church. Unlike replacement theology, Darby's teaching stressed that, instead of transferring all of Israel's covenantal privileges to the church, God simply stopped doing business with Israel by sending it into a kind of historical hiatus -- what Darby called the "great parenthesis" of prophetic time -- during which it rightly suffered the consequences of its sin and unbelief. In time, however, God intended to resume dealing with the people Israel by restarting the prophetic "clock" and fulfilling his ancient promises to them.

Taking a more or less literal approach to interpretation, Darby combined prophecies from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to fashion a remarkably detailed scenario of the End Times. He believed that God worked with only one chosen people at a time; this necessitated the notion of the "rapture," by which means Christ would bring the church (that is, the true believers) up to heaven. This act would allow Israel to reassume center stage in God's program.

From the outset, dispensationalists' prophetic expectations have depended on the restoration of the Jews in the Holy Land. In a nutshell, the dispensationalist scenario is as follows: soon after the restoration, the new Jewish state finds itself surrounded by hostile and threatening neighbors. "Kings of the north" and "kings of the

south" (Russians and their Arab allies, according to dispensationalists since the 1830s) attack Israel in a pincers movement. But before the attackers can bring about Israel's destruction, God intervenes and destroys them. Thoroughly shaken by its close call, Israel forms an alliance with the charismatic leader of a ten-nation European confederacy (the revived Roman empire) who promises peace and security. For a while, all seems well -- but this charismatic peacemaker is really the Antichrist in disguise. One day, he suddenly enters the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem and demands to be worshipped as God; soon thereafter, he unleashes a reign of terror against all who refuse to recognize him as such. This is the Great Tribulation, a new holocaust that surpasses Hitler's. Jews in large numbers are slaughtered; those who remain beseech God to send the Messiah to save them. Finally, the Messiah does come: as the forces of Antichrist assemble at Armageddon to fight a huge army led by "kings of the east" (the Chinese), Jesus Christ returns with the previously "raptured" church and annihilates the combatants. The surviving Jewish remnant hails Jesus as its true Messiah and puts him on King David's throne in Jerusalem, where he reigns for a thousand years.<sup>14</sup>

By the 1920s, dispensationalism had become synonymous with fundamentalism, promoted by a network of fundamentalist schools, churches, and other organizations until it became an essential part of the fundamentalist subculture. Among more moderate evangelicals,

its impact was less pronounced. Nonetheless, over time, dispensational teachings made their way into popular American culture, often by means of breakout best-sellers such as Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and Tim LaHaye's twelve-volume *Left Behind* (1995-2006) fictional series. These and other dispensationalist books can now be found in Borders, Dalton Books, Barnes and Noble, Wal-Mart, and other mainstream outlets.<sup>15</sup>

Although dispensationalists often claim to speak for all evangelicals, they actually make up only a small portion of the evangelical movement. In fact, as previously noted, most dispensationalists are best classified as fundamentalists. However, whereas fundamentalists and evangelicals differ substantially in terms of style and openness to the culture, they remain close theologically. As a result, poll-takers invariably place fundamentalists in the far right wing of the broadly defined evangelical movement. According to John C. Green of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, no reliable survey has ever identified how many dispensationalists are in the United States. His estimate is that no more than 10 percent of evangelicals are committed and well-informed devotees, with possibly another 20 percent qualifying as "dispensationalists lite," that is, fundamentalists and more moderate evangelicals who have adopted parts of the dispensational system without really understanding it.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, though a distinct minority, dispensationalists often extend their reach far beyond their

own boundaries. According to historian Paul Boyer, when times turn apocalyptic, even otherwise secular people are willing to listen to the Bible teachers who say they know where the world is headed and what is going to happen next.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Evangelical Middle*

If approximately 20 percent of evangelicals accept replacement theology and 30 percent are dispensationalists, what about the other 50 percent? Despite the popular stereotype that they are obsessed with biblical prophecy, the chances are good that a majority of evangelicals rarely hear a sermon on prophetic themes.

Consequently, most evangelicals do not have a well-developed eschatology: they do believe that Jesus is coming back and that God does have a plan for the future; but they do not know or care much about the details.<sup>18</sup> So where does the widespread evangelical support for Israel come from? The short answer: from a rather intuitive and instinctive reading of the Bible.

Before 1948, most evangelicals did not expect a restored Jewish state in the Holy Land. However, when this event came about, they quickly concluded that God must be behind it. As Bible-centered people, evangelicals grew up hearing stories of ancient Israel -- the call of Abraham, slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, the conquest of Canaan, the great kings David and Solomon, the division of the

tribes, their conquest and exile, and the eventual return to the land. They mastered the maps that were found in the back of their Bibles and that were hanging on their Sunday school walls. They knew that Jesus was a son of the covenant and that the land of Israel was where all the great works of redemption took place. In deeply personal ways, evangelicals viewed (and still view) the story of Israel as vitally related to their own story. Without giving the matter much thought, most evangelicals easily concluded that the new Israeli state was somehow connected to the Israel of the Bible; in a real sense, it could be seen as a continuation and confirmation of the biblical narrative. Could such an unlikely and seemingly miraculous event occur without God's blessing and intervention? Once evangelicals answered this question, it was clear that they should support the new Jewish state.

Evangelicals, then, do not need the dispensationalist scenario in order to be pro-Israel. Instead of relying on elaborate prophetic constructs, evangelicals who occupy this middle ground frequently refer to two biblical passages as crucial: God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3) and Paul's assertion that Israel's current "blindness" is only temporary and that in the end "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 9-11). With regard to the former passage, God's promise to Abraham appears to be unconditional: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I

will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Evangelicals operate on the assumption that God's plan for Abraham and his descendants is still operational and that anyone who blesses the Jews will be blessed in return. They do not need to understand everything about God's future plan for the Jews (even the Apostle Paul called it a "great mystery"). It is enough to know that God has such a plan and that modern Israel might well be part of it; this is enough to ensure that Bible-reading evangelicals will be favorably disposed to the Jewish state.

### **Evangelical Support for Israel**

How do such beliefs translate into politics? Despite the fact that dispensationalists are a distinct minority within the evangelical movement, they have long led the way in organized political support for the Jewish state. This was not always so. For the first hundred years of their history, dispensationalist activism consisted of preaching, teaching, and writing about the future restoration of the Jews. It was only after Israeli independence in 1948 and the expansion of its borders following the 1967 Six-Day War that their activism turned aggressively political.

Dispensationalists in the 19th century were content to predict the future; only William E. Blackstone, a successful Chicago businessman, tried to make it happen. He wrote one of

dispensationalism's early best-sellers, *Jesus Is Coming* (1878), and in 1890, following an extensive tour of the Holy Land, he organized Chicago's first conference for Christians and Jews, at which he promoted the idea of a new Jewish homeland. In 1891, six years before Theodor Herzl organized the first Zionist conference in Basel, Blackstone sent a "memorial" to President Benjamin Harrison, signed by 413 prominent Americans, that advocated the establishment of a Jewish state. He sent similar petitions to Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 and Woodrow Wilson in 1916.<sup>19</sup> As a result of his efforts, Blackstone became friends with a number of Zionist leaders, who in 1918 acclaimed him a "Father of Zionism." In 1957, Israel dedicated a forest in his honor.<sup>20</sup> Blackstone also qualified as a father of Christian (or Gentile) Zionism, another name for those non-Jews, whether religious Christians or not, whose support for Israel is grounded in their prophetic views.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to Blackstone, most early 20th-century dispensationalists were talkers, not doers. They noted the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the fall of the Ottoman empire, and the rise of the British mandate in Palestine. They watched as the British tried and failed to solve the mounting problems in Palestine. When Israel finally declared its independence, dispensationalists were ecstatic, but not entirely satisfied. To conform to their prophetic expectations, Israel needed to expand its borders -- which it did, following the 1967 Six-Day War.

## *Organizing to Support Israel*

During the 1970s, dispensationalists grew even more confident about their reading of biblical prophecy. Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* set sales records, and his follow-up, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*, offered ample evidence that the pieces in dispensationalism's prophetic puzzle were falling into place. During the 1980s, several prominent believers in biblical prophecy -- among them, Jerry Falwell (Moral Majority), Ed McAteer (Religious Roundtable), and Pat Robertson (Christian Coalition) -- founded grass-roots organizations that became part of the new Christian right and placed support of the state of Israel high on their agendas.

Even before the rise of the new Christian right, American dispensationalists were building new relationships with Israeli leaders. In 1971, for instance, 1,400 Americans attended the Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy, which included a special address given by David Ben-Gurion. The conference organizer promoted it as "a ringside seat at the second coming," and most speakers agreed that Israel's existence and recent expansion were all part of God's plan.<sup>22</sup> This conference marked the beginning of a wave of evangelical tourism. The Israeli Ministry of Tourism recruited evangelical pastors for all-expenses-paid "familiarization" tours of Israel that were designed to turn them into tour guides accompanying their own flocks to the Holy Land. American

dispensationalists launched a number of new travel agencies specializing in such "Bible Prophecy Tours," and leading dispensationalist pastors, including Jerry Falwell and Chuck Smith, headed numerous tour groups that, interestingly enough, refrained from contact with Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians.<sup>23</sup> Probably the most widely publicized gathering of evangelicals in Israel is the Feast of Tabernacles conference sponsored annually by the International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem (ICEJ), an organization of Christian Zionists that, despite its name, has no formal diplomatic standing. This worldwide gathering is customarily addressed by the Israeli prime minister, and its participants (generally numbering approximately 5,000) take part in the annual "Jerusalem Parade" conducted throughout the city and its environs. Sensitive to the charge of ulterior motives, the ICEJ claim is that "[w]e are not trying to fulfill an end time agenda, but are standing on biblical principles. We proclaim a message to Zion that her modern day restoration is not a historical accident, but the fulfillment of God's word."<sup>24</sup>

In the mid-1980s, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Israel's major lobbying group in Washington, decided to cultivate Christians on the political right. In response, conservative Christians established a number of organizations to foster strong U.S.-Israeli ties, among them, Christians Concerned for Israel, Christians for Israel, and the National Unity Coalition for Israel.<sup>25</sup>

These groups dispensed information about the Middle East crisis, sent letters and faxes (and, at a later stage, emails) to the White House and members of Congress, and held rallies and meetings that sometimes numbered in the thousands. At one such event in 1998, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that "we have no greater friends and allies than the people sitting in this room."<sup>26</sup>

Other groups supported various humanitarian causes. Christian Friends of Israeli Communities linked Israeli settlements on the West Bank to American evangelical congregations, which provided money and materials for the Jewish settlers. Bridges for Peace sponsored various educational and lobbying activities for its supporters, in addition to running what it claimed to be Israel's largest food bank and assisting Jewish immigrants to the Holy Land. Undergirding these humanitarian activities were strong beliefs about Israel's place in biblical prophecy and the importance of taking an active role in bringing about the prophecies' fulfillment. As a Bridges for Peace promotional piece put it: "Don't just read about prophecy when you can be a part of it."<sup>27</sup>

One of the most successful of such groups was the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, founded in 1983 by Yechiel Eckstein, an Orthodox rabbi from Chicago. Early on recognizing the importance of evangelical support for Israel, Eckstein cultivated friendships and mounted a one-man crusade to improve evangelical-Jewish relations. Soon he had people such as Jerry

Falwell, Pat Robertson, Gary Bauer, and Pat Boone making infomercials for his organization. Eckstein has raised millions of dollars annually, mostly from evangelical sources. In 2003, for instance, he distributed \$20 million to 250 social welfare projects in Israel. His own "On Wings of Eagles" program helped bring Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel ("Just \$350 can save one Jew"), and his "Guardians of Israel" and "Isaiah 58" projects sought to help the impoverished immigrants once they arrived. In 2006, Eckstein expected revenues to reach \$80 million, thanks to advertising on the Fox News Channel and the addition of 30,000 new donors following the Israeli-Hezbollah war in Lebanon in 2006.<sup>28</sup> Eckstein knew how to appeal to Bible believers: "Your prayers and financial support will help us continue rescuing persecuted Jewish *émigrés* in the former Soviet Union . . . in fulfillment of biblical prophecy."<sup>29</sup>

In 2003, Eckstein and Ralph Reed, former head of the Christian Coalition, launched the Stand for Israel initiative to mobilize one hundred thousand churches and one million Christians to support Israel through prayer and political action. At its first Washington, D.C. briefing, participants included Israeli experts on the Middle East crisis; U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft; Congressional representatives Tom DeLay and Tom Lantos; and Janet Parshall, a prominent right-wing radio talk-show host. At about the same time, Pat Robertson teamed up with Ehud Olmert, at the time the mayor of Jerusalem, to initiate a Praying for Jerusalem campaign. In addition

to prayer, this initiative raised money for the New Jerusalem Fund, which supported various cultural and urban improvement projects in Jerusalem. Robertson made it clear that he was praying for a particular kind of peace in the Middle East: "We should not ask [Israel] to withdraw from [occupied territories] -- we should stand with them and fight." Rejecting all Palestinian claims, Robertson declared Jerusalem "the eternal, indivisible capital of the state of Israel" that "must not be divided."<sup>30</sup>

### *A Difficult Alliance*

Pro-Israel evangelical groups invariably are the subject of mixed reviews on the part of American and Israeli Jews. Critics charge that evangelical support for Israel is nothing more than a cover for evangelizing Jews or an attempt to fulfill biblical prophecies. To be sure, dispensationalists have a long history of supporting missionary organizations that target Jews,<sup>31</sup> and even Yechiel Eckstein has urged his evangelical friends to "leave the conversion of the Jews to God."<sup>32</sup> But such complaints do not dissuade most evangelicals from their conviction that God wants them to share the gospel with *all* people. Believers in biblical prophecies see no contradiction between supporting Israel, on the one hand, and attempting to lead Jews to Christ, on the other. Nevertheless, some evangelicals active in the prophecy-driven pro-Israel organizations have decided to tone down

their evangelistic activities for pragmatic reasons. For example, Christians for Israel, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, and the International Christian Embassy have explicit policies against proselytism.<sup>33</sup>

The pro-Israel groups find it more difficult to deal with their critics' allegations concerning biblical prophecy. According to their literature and their websites, these groups are deeply motivated by their understanding of prophetic texts and what they believe God is doing in the world. Yet many outsiders see a dark side to these prophecies. The future that dispensationalists envision for Israel is full of suffering and slaughter: Jews must remain in the Holy Land in order to keep their rendezvous with the Antichrist, suffer the horrors of the Great Tribulation, and, in the end, welcome Jesus as the Messiah. Such a future, of course, is quite different from that envisioned by the Jews. According to Gershom Gorenberg, a Jerusalem-based journalist, "This is incredibly dangerous to Israel. [The dispensationalists are] not interested in the survival of the State of Israel. They are interested in the Rapture, in bringing to fruition a cosmic myth of the End Times, proving that they are right with one big bang. We are merely actors in their dreams."<sup>34</sup>

Eckstein and his compatriots have often had to defend their evangelical allies against such charges, claiming that the evangelicals' love for Israel is sincere. For instance, according to Eckstein's close associate, Gary Bauer:

Among Christians, there's just a fundamental religious idea that the Jews are God's people and the land of Israel is covenant land that God granted them.

Beyond that, what drives Christian support for Israel is that Christians tend to see U.S. foreign policy in very moral terms. We believe Israel and the U.S. are facing the same types of totalitarian forces, and we as two countries that share the same values should stand against that.<sup>35</sup>

Hoping to substantiate this point of view, Eckstein commissioned the Tarrance Group in 2003 to survey evangelicals' attitudes about Israel. The poll found that whereas 28 percent cited as influencing their point of view "reasons related to the End Times," 59 percent referred to their literal belief in Gen. 12:3, where God promised to bless those who bless Abraham's descendants. This finding came as a great relief to Eckstein: "The media portrays [evangelicals] as premillennialists who do this [support Israel] to get all the Jews to Israel . . . [so] those who don't accept Jesus will be killed. It's just hogwash. If anything, it's about Genesis 12:3." Yet despite his claims, Eckstein's message seems to depend on his audience. While he assures people who are suspicious of prophecy that it plays only a minor role among his supporters, his fundraising infomercials directly appeal to the belief in biblical prophecy: "The mosaic of events we see happening today is like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle with the pieces beginning to form the exact picture foretold by the prophets."<sup>36</sup>

No one maneuvers more successfully between these different positions than John Hagee, the pastor of the 18,000-member

Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas and the head of John Hagee Ministries, founded in 1979 to manage his television and revival work. In 2006, Hagee founded Christians United for Israel (CUFI), a well-financed and high-profile organization that provides weekly email updates on news about Israel in addition to sponsoring "Nights to Honor Israel" in churches and other venues throughout the country, organizing trips to Israel ("Summit in Jerusalem"), and conducting annual gatherings in the nation's capital at which participants receive high-level briefings and have an opportunity to meet with their elected officials. When asked about his motives and the theological ideas behind CUFI, Hagee denies that biblical prophecy has anything to do with his organization, citing God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 as the bedrock on which his organization is built.<sup>37</sup> In his telecasts, however, Hagee regularly preaches on the End Times; in his numerous books on biblical prophecy, he follows the standard dispensationalist line.<sup>38</sup> In fact, for more than 25 years, Hagee has made use of the Bible to make the case for supporting Israel. He has built strong personal relationships with Israeli leaders, starting with Menachem Begin, and has traveled to Israel more than 20 times. He has also turned Cornerstone Church into a center of prophetic teaching, preaching, and pro-Israel activity. John Hagee Ministries has collected millions of dollars for its Exodus II program, which helps Jews immigrate to Israel from the former Soviet Union. By contributing to this restoration project,

Hagee claims, donors "become a part of biblical prophecy." The pledge card on which contributors indicate their level of financial support is equally explicit: "I want to be a part of the fulfillment of prophecy and the courageous effort to return Jewish families to their homeland."<sup>39</sup>

Why would Hagee separate Christians United for Israel from teachings he has been promoting for close to three decades? Clearly, it is because he seeks the broadest possible base of support for the organization. As has been seen, the dispensationalist doctrine held by Hagee is not embraced by a majority of evangelicals, whereas many of them do endorse God's blessing to Abraham.

### **Evangelical Divisions on Israel**

For many fellow evangelicals, the biggest problem with Hagee is not prophecy, but rather politics. CUFI and virtually all the other aforementioned pro-Israel groups take a hard-line approach to the Middle East crisis, to the extent that they are often accused of supporting Israel "no matter what." Their view of the prophetic future includes the expansion of Israeli territory rather than territorial concessions. Thus they reject outright George W. Bush's "road map to peace," which advocates a two-state solution. Indeed, they fiercely oppose Israel's trading *any* land for peace, defending the continued presence of Israeli settlements on the West Bank and

denouncing any concessions to the Palestinians. These views comprise what Hagee calls "God's foreign policy."<sup>40</sup>

In brief, dispensationalists believe that Israelis and their enemies are locked into an escalating conflict that no "road map to peace" or any other diplomatic initiative can resolve. The only solution to the problems of the Middle East is the return of Christ. Until then, the region will continue to fester and boil, with intensifying violence and one failed peace attempt after another. Biblical prophecy is the only "road map" that matters; and God's plans are unchangeable. Therefore, they believe, Christian options are few: support Israel, do nothing that impedes or opposes God's plan for the future, and be thankful that the rapture will occur before the horrors of the Last Days begin.

In accordance with these views, many American dispensationalist leaders have developed relationships with Israeli figures located on the far right of the religious and political spectrum, including Gershon Salomon and the late Stanley Goldfoot of the Temple Mount and the Greater Land of Israel Faithful Movement and Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, the head of the Temple Institute. High on the agenda of both groups is the rebuilding of the Jewish temple on the Temple Mount, where Muslims have their Dome of the Rock. As early as 1983, the *Jerusalem Post* noted the connection between dispensationalists and right-wing Jewish extremists: "There are growing numbers of Christians, many organized into small churches

and larger groups, who see the construction of a Third Temple as the cornerstone of these beliefs. Though there is a clear divergence in religious belief between these Christians and Jews who work toward the rebuilding of the Temple, they willingly and enthusiastically cooperate."<sup>41</sup> Although most Israelis consider such people dangerous extremists, dispensationalists view their aspirations as dovetailing with their own prophetic expectations.<sup>42</sup>

In the view of dispensationalists, tampering with biblical prophecy carries dire consequences. In October 2004, at a time when Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon had begun to explore the possibility of turning over the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian Authority, Pat Robertson and 4,000 supporters met in Jerusalem to protest. "I see the rise of Islam to destroy Israel and take the land from the Jews and give East Jerusalem to Yasser Arafat," Robertson declared. "I see that as Satan's plan to prevent the return of Jesus Christ the Lord." In fact, he continued, only God could decide if Israel should relinquish land that had been taken in the Six-Day War of June 1967: "God says, 'I'm going to judge those who carve up the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It's my land and keep your hands off it.'"<sup>43</sup> Despite Robertson's warnings, Sharon persevered in his plan, which ultimately resulted in the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces and settlers from Gaza and parts of northern Samaria in the summer of 2005. When Sharon suffered a massive stroke in January 2006, Robertson assured his television audience that the prime minister

had been punished by God. Sharon, he said, had been "dividing God's land, and I would say, 'Woe unto any prime minister of Israel who takes a similar course to appease the [European Union], the United Nations or the United States of America.'" Israelis, the White House, and fellow evangelicals were all outraged by his comments; within a week, Robertson had apologized profusely. But early on, while Robertson was still trying to ride out the storm, one of his spokespeople attempted to defend him: "What they're basically saying is, 'How dare Pat Robertson quote the Bible?' This is what the word of God says. This is nothing new to the Christian community."<sup>44</sup>

Although such sentiments are common in certain evangelical circles, recent polls have indicated that most evangelical leaders now favor a two-state solution in the Middle East. In 2002, for instance, sociologist John C. Green conducted a foreign policy survey for the Ethics and Public Policy Center. He contacted 350 leaders of evangelical organizations and found that whereas nearly two out of three (60 percent) were in favor of backing Israel over the Palestinians, slightly more than half (52 percent) favored the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. According to Green, "Evangelical elites want to see peace in the Middle East. They believe the Palestinian people have legitimate aspirations to have their own country. These elites would not support a state if it threatened Israel."<sup>45</sup> According to Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Israel is

covenantal land and God has a plan for the Jews -- but the best way to support Israel is to seek a workable, two-state solution: "I would argue that nothing could be more secure for Israel than creating a viable, self-sustaining Palestinian state that agrees to live in peace and agrees to suppress terrorism."<sup>46</sup> Although some of the evangelicals point to obvious foreign policy implications in biblical prophecy, regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state as a serious repudiation of God's plan for Israel, others are inclined to be far more flexible. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, noted that there was no theological reason either to require or forbid the creation of a Palestinian state: "The question for me is one of prudence, and not of theological principle."<sup>47</sup>

If the polls are correct and a majority of evangelical leaders favor a two-state solution, why are their views not more widely known? Most likely, this is because they are more low-key in the dissemination of their message. Rather than organizing the masses, holding rallies in Washington, D.C., or sending out email messages to tens of thousands of supporters, they tend to write letters to selected, influential people. In July 2002, for instance, some 40 evangelical leaders sent a letter to President George W. Bush titled "Evangelical Christians and Israel/Palestine." The letter advocated "an even-handed U.S. policy towards Israelis and Palestinians," condemning suicide bombings and the failure of the Palestinian Authority to stop the violence against Israeli civilians, but denouncing

as well the "unlawful and degrading Israeli settlement movement," the "theft of Palestinian land and the destruction of Palestinian homes and fields," and "the continued military occupation that daily humiliates ordinary Palestinians." The purpose of the letter was to let the president know that "the American evangelical community is not a monolithic bloc. ... Significant numbers of American evangelicals reject the way some have distorted biblical passages as their rationale for uncritical support for every policy and action of the Israeli government instead of judging all actions -- of both Israelis and Palestinians -- on the basis of biblical standards of justice." The signers included academics, CEOs of various evangelical denominations and "parachurch" organizations, and a few pastors.<sup>48</sup>

Five years later, in July 2007, 34 evangelical leaders (more than half of whom had signed the previous letter) sent another message to President Bush in which they endorsed his efforts to achieve a two-state solution. This second letter acknowledged 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." As with the previous letter, this one sought to correct the "serious misperception" that all American evangelicals think alike about the

Middle East. After embracing the biblical promise to Abraham ("I will bless those who bless you"), it declared that "perhaps the best way we can bless Israel is to encourage her to remember, as she deals with her neighbor Palestinians, the profound teaching on justice that the Hebrew prophets proclaimed so forcefully as an inestimably precious gift to the whole world."<sup>49</sup>

The idea for the second letter originated when four evangelical leaders attended the U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Qatar in early 2007. Muslims and U.S. diplomats in attendance were shocked to discover American evangelicals in favor of a Palestinian state. Ronald Sider, who was in Qatar and signed the subsequent letter, said that it would be translated into Arabic and distributed throughout the Middle East and Europe: "We think it's critical that the Muslim world realize that there are evangelical Christians in the U.S. in large numbers that want a fair solution." John Hagee, however, was not impressed. After reviewing the letter, he said that "Bible-believing evangelicals will scoff at that message."<sup>50</sup>

Yet what kind of influence do prophecy-minded evangelicals really have? They claim to have access in high places; elected officials often show up at their gatherings; and they utilize the same methods used by successful Washington lobbyists. As a result, many people are fearful that they are making a difference, forcing their views of biblical prophecy on American foreign policymakers. But this is hardly the case -- while they certainly get the attention of those

who are facing upcoming election, they have not been able to steer official Israeli or U.S. policy away from seeking a two-state solution. Richard Land's observation is correct: "I would point out that probably the most popular president ever among evangelicals is the first American president to officially make a two-state solution American foreign policy, and a majority of evangelicals support him in that."<sup>51</sup>

Not all evangelicals think alike.<sup>52</sup> While they overwhelmingly support Israel, they do so for different reasons and envision different futures in the Middle East.<sup>53</sup> Views of biblical prophecy seem to get all the press; but only a minority of evangelical believers share these views. Rather, for most evangelicals, support for Israel is founded on an intuitive reading of the Bible and some widely held political assumptions about the Middle East.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, this division of American Protestants into a mere three groups may appear foolhardy in the extreme. At best such boundaries are only suggestive; at worst they are seriously misleading. Though evangelicals are distinct from fundamentalists in terms of style and the company they keep, they share much in common with them theologically. As will be seen, this has led some analysts to view fundamentalism as the extreme right wing of

evangelicalism, which is another way of saying that while all fundamentalists are evangelicals, not all evangelicals are fundamentalists. Furthermore, even the best polls obscure the fact that mainline Protestantism contains large numbers of evangelical members and congregations. Where do African Americans fit within the three categories? While they are closest to evangelicals theologically, they are more closely identified with the social views of mainline Protestantism. Finally, Pentecostals may appear to belong to both the fundamentalist and evangelical camps. All of this notwithstanding, the three labels do identify major differences and tendencies in American Protestant religious life.

<sup>2</sup> William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge: 1976); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York: 1980); Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, vol. 2: *The Noise of Conflict, 1919-1941* (Chicago: 1991); and Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: 1997).

<sup>3</sup> George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: 1987); idem, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: 1991).

<sup>4</sup> By the early 1980s -- deeply disturbed by the legalization of abortion, the elimination of prayer from public schools, a culture-wide rejection of "family values," and what they believed to be a blatant strategy to push people of faith outside the public square -- many conservative Protestants decided to fight back by identifying a few key issues and calling the faithful to action. They formed organizations such as the Moral Majority, the Religious Roundtable, and the Christian Coalition. Thanks to their militant, "take-no-prisoners" style, the leaders of the new Christian right often looked and sounded more fundamentalist than evangelical, yet they were able to rally people from both camps to their cause. In retrospect, the new Christian right was only partially successful in attaining its goals, although its members did play an important role in electing Republicans to Congress and the White House. After the 2004 election, the movement appeared to lose steam, and many evangelicals began moving on to other concerns such as poverty, racism, global warming, and the AIDS crisis.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Russell Mead, "God's Country?," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 2006), online at [www.foreignaffairs.org/20060901faessay85504/walter-russell-mead/god-s-country.html](http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20060901faessay85504/walter-russell-mead/god-s-country.html) (except as indicated, online citations for this essay were accessed on 15 July 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey" (Philadelphia: 2008), online at <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>.

<sup>7</sup> D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (New York: 2007).

<sup>8</sup> "An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment" (Washington, D.C.: 2008), 15, online at [www.evangelicalmanifesto.com](http://www.evangelicalmanifesto.com).

<sup>9</sup> Mead, "God's Country?"

<sup>10</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, part 2 (Edinburgh: 1969), 584. A more recent explanation of supersessionism is found in the work of the evangelical Anglican bishop N.T. Wright. See his *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: 1992), 457-458.

<sup>11</sup> For an example of a rather moderate critique of supersessionism and advocacy of dual covenants, see General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), "A Theological Understanding of the Relationship between Christians and Jews" (New York: 1987), online at [www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/christiansjews.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/christiansjews.pdf). For a stronger rejection of replacement theology, see Clark Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: A Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: 1993); and James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: 2001). See also Luke Timothy

Johnson, "Christians and Jews: Starting Over -- Why the Real Dialogue Has Just Begun," *Commonweal* (31 Jan. 2003). Johnson's article may be accessed at [www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/johnson.htm](http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/johnson.htm).

<sup>12</sup> Craig Blaising, "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (Sept. 2001), 435-450.

<sup>13</sup> For a Calvinist defense of supersessionism, see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, Penn.: 2000). For a variety of evangelical views on supersessionism, see John S. Feinberg (ed.), *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Wheaton, Ill.: 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875 to 1982* (Chicago: 1987), 13-42.

<sup>15</sup> Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: 2004), 187-196.

<sup>16</sup> John C. Green is senior fellow in religion and American politics, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. He provided these observations during a phone interview on June 20, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: 1992), 1-18.

<sup>18</sup> This point was forcefully made during a symposium ("God's Country? Evangelicals and U.S. Foreign Policy") at the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. on September 26, 2006 by Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; Alan Cooperman of the *Washington Post*; and Michael Cromartie, vice president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. A transcript of their comments may be found online at <http://pewforum.org/events/?EventID=127>.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed account, see Yaakov Ariel, "William E. Blackstone and the Petition of 1916," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 7, *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning*, ed. Jonathan Frankel (New York: 1991), 68-86.

<sup>20</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 102-106.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: 2004), 70-74.

<sup>22</sup> Carl F.H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian: An Autobiography* (Waco: 1986), 334-336.

<sup>23</sup> Mark O'Keefe, "Israel's Evangelical Approach: U.S. Christian Zionists Nurtured as Political, Tourism Force," *Washington Post* (26 Jan. 2002), B11.

<sup>24</sup> This statement originally appeared on the organization's website ([www.icej.org](http://www.icej.org)), which has since been redesigned. For an extensive analysis of ICEJ, see Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians* (Scottsdale, Penn.: 1995), 96-113.

<sup>25</sup> Rod Dreher, "Evangelicals and Jews Together: An Unlikely Alliance," *National Review Online* (5 April 2002), accessed at [www.nationalreview.com/dreher/dreher040502.asp](http://www.nationalreview.com/dreher/dreher040502.asp).

<sup>26</sup> Debra Cohen, "Premier Meets with Evangelicals," *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix* (11 April 1998).

<sup>27</sup> See Bridges for Peace website: [www.bridgesforpeace.com](http://www.bridgesforpeace.com).

<sup>28</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "For Evangelicals, Supporting Israel Is 'God's Foreign Policy,'" *New York Times* (14 Nov. 2006), online at [www.nytimes.com/2006/11/14/washington/14israel.html?\\_r=1&sq=God's%20Foreign%20Policy&st=nyt&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&scp=1&adxnnlx=1210431722-M7W7VNEKHSE9HI1w0Gm/FA](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/14/washington/14israel.html?_r=1&sq=God's%20Foreign%20Policy&st=nyt&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&scp=1&adxnnlx=1210431722-M7W7VNEKHSE9HI1w0Gm/FA).

<sup>29</sup> See the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews' website: [www.ifcj.org](http://www.ifcj.org).

<sup>30</sup> "Pat Robertson Forms Alliance with Mayor of Jerusalem," and "Christian Coalition Calls for Solidarity with Israel," *Religion News Service* (11 Nov. 2002).

<sup>31</sup> Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill: 2000).

<sup>32</sup> Yechiel Eckstein, *What Christians Should Know about Jews and Judaism* (Waco: 1984), 299.

<sup>33</sup> See Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 230-232.

<sup>34</sup> Gershom Gorenberg, quoted in Craig Unger, "American 'Rapture,'" *Vanity Fair* (Dec. 2005), online at [www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2005/12/rapture200512](http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2005/12/rapture200512); see also Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (New York: 2000).

<sup>35</sup> For the Eckstein and Bauer quotes, see Max Blumenthal, "Born-again for Sharon," *Academics for Justice* (30 Oct. 2004), online at [http://dir.salon.com/story/news/feature/2004/11/01/christian\\_zionism/index.html](http://dir.salon.com/story/news/feature/2004/11/01/christian_zionism/index.html).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> The Christians United for Israel website is found at [www.cufi.org](http://www.cufi.org). See also David Brog, *Standing with Israel* (Lake Mary, Fla.: 2006).

<sup>38</sup> A sampling of Hagee's books: *From Daniel to Doomsday: The Countdown Has Begun* (Nashville: 2000); *The Battle for Jerusalem* (Nashville: 2003); and *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World* (Lake Mary, Fla.: 2006).

<sup>39</sup> See the church's website at [www.sacornestone.com](http://www.sacornestone.com); and John Hagee Ministries' website at [www.jhm.org](http://www.jhm.org).

<sup>40</sup> Kirkpatrick, "For Evangelicals, Supporting Israel is 'God's Foreign Policy.' "

<sup>41</sup> *Jerusalem Post* (30 Sept. 1983), quoted in Randall Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple* (Eugene, Ore.: 1999), 159.

<sup>42</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 249-268. See also Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days*.

<sup>43</sup> Associated Press (3 Oct. 2004), online at <http://archive.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2004/10/3/214501.shtml>.

<sup>44</sup> "Robertson Suggests God Smote Sharon," CNN (6 Jan. 2006), online at [www.cnn.com/2006/US/01/05/robertson.sharon/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/01/05/robertson.sharon/index.html) (accessed 10 Nov. 2008); "Pat Robertson Apologizes for Sharon Slam, Associated Press (12 Jan. 2006), online at [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10825240](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10825240).

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Todd Hertz, "Opinion Roundup: The Evangelical View of Israel?" *Christianity Today* (11 June 2003), online at [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/123/31.0.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/123/31.0.html) (quote on p. 2).

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* See also Jeremy D. Mayer, "Christian Fundamentalists and Public Opinion Toward the Middle East: Israel's New Best Friends?" *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (Sept. 2004), 695-712.

<sup>48</sup> "Evangelical Christians and Israel/Palestine" (12 July 2002), online at [www.cmep.org/letters/2002Jul12.htm](http://www.cmep.org/letters/2002Jul12.htm).

<sup>49</sup> "Letter to President Bush from Evangelical Leaders," *New York Times* (29 July 2007), online at [www.nytimes.com/2007/07/29/us/evangelical\\_letter.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/29/us/evangelical_letter.html).

<sup>50</sup> Laurie Goodstein, "Coalition of Evangelicals Voices Support for Palestinian State," *ibid.*, online at [www.nytimes.com/2007/07/29/us/29evangelical.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/29/us/29evangelical.html).

<sup>51</sup> "God's Country: Evangelicals and U.S. Foreign Policy" (see n. 18).

<sup>52</sup> A sampling of books that promote a different view of the Middle East than the dispensationalists include Gary M. Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told about Israel and the Palestinians* (Cleveland: 2003); Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?* (Grand Rapids: 2002); Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers: The Unforgettable Story of a Palestinian Christian Working for Peace in Israel*, expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: 2003).

<sup>53</sup> One evangelical organization that promotes this alternative future is Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding. See its website: [www.emeu.net](http://www.emeu.net).