

THE ERODING EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL:
THE CAUSE AND CURE

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AUTHORS' NOTE

The scope of this paper focuses primarily on evangelical Christianity in America. References to Evangelical Christians or Evangelicals assume an American context unless specifically noted otherwise. References to Israel throughout the paper include the Jewish people individually, the land of promise and the nation.¹ The context of the usage indicates whether it refers to one, two or all three of the definitions. In fact, the three possible uses make up the larger definition of the word Israel and reference to one or more of the subsets is common throughout the Bible.

¹ Israel Inside, dir. Wayne Kopping, perf. Tal Ben Shachar, Jerusalem Online U, digital download, 2012, makes the point that the word 'Israel' speaks of the Jewish people, the land of covenant promise, the national state of Israel and all that makes them a unique people in a diverse world.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

BRIEF HISTORY OF EVANGELICAL SUPPORT OF ISRAEL

In our work with the Jewish community, we are often asked by Jewish people, “How long have there been Christians who support Israel?” Over the years, we have come to appreciate why they ask. History teaches that Christians, more than any other people group, have persecuted and tortured the Jews for the past two millennia. Almost any Jewish person will tell you the Holocaust was a Christian event.

But the issue goes much deeper than the atrocities of World War II. Christianity has been at the forefront of Jewish persecution for much of the Church Age. The rise and prominence of Replacement Theology in the second and third centuries turned love and appreciation for the Jewish people into hatred and rejection.

Over time, the legalization and eventual prominence of Christianity, the Church’s view that it had superseded Israel, and the Church’s disdain for the Jewish people coalesced into anti-Semitism and led to violence against the Jews in the name of Christ. This legacy of Christian anti-Semitism has taught Jewish people to be extremely cautious, if not fearful, of Christians.

It is no wonder they are often surprised to learn that The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry began in 1938, ten years before the modern State of Israel came into existence; and yet, from its inception, “The Friends of Israel” has been a part of our ministry name. That is why Jewish people also ask us, “You mean before there was a modern State of Israel, there were friends of Israel?”

In spite of the prominent view held by many Christians that the Church has taken Israel’s place in God’s promises, Evangelical Christians have long felt an affinity for Israel. It is not a recent phenomenon; and it did not begin in 1938. The apostles and early Church fathers had a favorable outlook on Israel, as is witnessed in the New Testament. This outlook is also evident in more modern Church history, dating to the Reformation.

A turning point in Church history came during the Reformation with the invention

of the printing press, which produced contemporary translations of the Bible and put the Word of God into the common man's hands. No longer did the masses have to rely on what the church leaders taught them about God and the Bible. In fact, they learned to read and write using the Bible as a textbook.

The open study of the Word of God in the 16th and 17th centuries led many European Christians to reject the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and define their faith on a literal reading of the biblical text. Through their study, some came to see a future for the Jewish people, clearly defined within the Word of God.

Former Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren's insightful, historical work, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present*, masterfully shows that the connection between America and the Middle East is a part of our historical and cultural fabric, dating back to the founding of our great nation. Many early settlers to the New World, seeking religious freedom, saw parallels between the Israelites fleeing the bondage of Egypt and their flight from the bondage of Europe. The Atlantic Ocean voyage was their wilderness wandering, and America was their promised land.²

The Great Awakenings that swept across America in the 18th and 19th centuries sparked the Evangelical Church in America. The name Evangelical identifies the church as one that shares or takes the good news of the gospel to a lost and dying world, and it emphasizes the duty of believers to share this great message of hope in Christ with others.

The Second Awakening in America raised up missionaries with a vision to take the gospel to the world, particularly the Middle East. There was a growing heart and burden for both Arabs and Jews to come to faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Many thought this missionary movement would lead to the restoration of a Jewish nation that would be ready for the Second Coming of Christ. This concept came to be known as *Restorationism*, and it was profoundly influential in churches.

However, life in the Middle East was difficult and took its toll on many who ventured there. Disease and death overcame some, while disillusion and discouragement chased others back home. The culture, the land, and the people were so much different

² Oren, Michael B., *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 83–85.

from the world the Americans knew.³ Despite the failures of many of the missionaries to the Middle East, the concept of Restorationism—of a restored Jewish nation according to Scripture—remained in the consciousness of many believers in America.

Restorationism is, perhaps, the reason Charles Nelson Darby's Dispensational teaching was so well received and embraced when he came to America in the 19th century. Although many factors brought about Israel's rebirth, Dispensationalism played an important role in the process. Darby's Dispensational teachings made a significant impact on the church in America and won a number of converts. Dispensationalists became advocates for Zionism—the return of the Jewish people to the land of promise to become a sovereign nation again, just as God had promised through the prophets.

Is it any wonder the Zionist movement of the 19th century began first in the Evangelical Church before it took hold in the Jewish community?⁴ Perhaps the most famous Christian Zionist, although not the first, was William E. Blackstone, born in 1841. He was a successful Chicago businessman, turned evangelist. Blackstone, an evangelical Christian from age 11, committed his life to preaching and writing about the premillennial restoration of Israel and the Rapture of the Church. He authored *Jesus Is Coming*, a popular Dispensational book based on the return of Christ.

In 1888 he visited the Holy Land with his daughter at a time when Jewish people in Russia were suffering greatly under the pogroms. His visit left him convinced that the only possible answer to the persecution of the Jewish people was their return to the Promised Land where they could defend themselves.⁵

Upon his return to the United States, Blackstone organized and held the pro-Zionist Conference on the Past, Present and Future of Israel at the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Chicago in November 1890. This was seven years before Theodor Herzl would hold the first World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Blackstone's conference, attended by both Jewish and Evangelical Christian leaders, called for the

³ Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present*, 86–97.

⁴ Thomas D. Ice, "Christian Zionism," Article Archives. Paper 30. (2009): 4, http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/pretrib_arch/30 (Accessed Nov 10, 2015).

⁵ David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History An American Cleric Presents His Own 'Balfour Declaration,'" *Haaretz*, March 5, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/this-day-in-jewish-history/> (accessed September 14, 2015).

world powers to return the land of Israel to the Jewish people.⁶

Following it, in 1891, Blackstone began a petition in support of the call to return the Holy Land to the Jewish people. It came to be called the Blackstone Memorial. Four hundred thirty-one prominent American-Christian and Jewish leaders signed the petition, including John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, Cyrus McCormick, senators, congressmen, the chief justice of the United States, leaders of all major denominations, university and seminary presidents, and editors of major newspapers—including *The Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and many others. Calling on America to support the Jewish restoration to Israel, Blackstone presented the Memorial petition to U. S. President Benjamin Harrison in March 1891.⁷

In 1916, at the behest of Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, Blackstone updated his Memorial petition, which carried the endorsement of the Presbyterian Church, and presented it to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. The petition was influential in gaining the president's support for Zionism and, in time, America's support for the Balfour Declaration in 1917.⁸

The popularity of prophecy conferences in the late 19th and early 20th centuries fueled the Zionist support of Evangelical Christians, as they learned of the significant role Israel plays in God's future plans to complete His redemptive program. Jewish mission organizations, such as the Cleveland Hebrew Mission, American Board of Missions to the Jews, American Messianic Fellowship, and The Friends of Israel Relief Society (later renamed The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry), began to minister to the Jewish people. Many were instrumental in helping the disenfranchised children of Jacob flee the clutches of the Holocaust.

Following World War II, Evangelical Christians threw their support behind the formation of the modern State of Israel. President Harry Truman, a Southern Baptist who knew the Bible, spoke of the Jewish nation being reborn and was quick to recognize Israel shortly after David Ben-Gurion declared its independence on May 14, 1947.

Sensing he was president of the United States for such a time as this and knowing his State Department opposed the formation of a Jewish nation, Truman moved quickly

⁶ Green, "This Day in Jewish History an American Cleric Presents His Own 'Balfour Declaration.'"

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

when news arrived on the evening of May 14 that Israel had declared independence. Truman immediately composed a statement and released it to the public before the U.S. State Department could intervene. America officially recognized Israel 11 minutes after Israel declared independence.

Everything was done so quickly that Truman's handwritten edits were part of the released statement. U.S. recognition of the newly formed Jewish state was vitally important to Israel's legitimacy, as other key nations soon followed Truman's lead and issued their recognitions as well.

Evangelical Christian support for Israel continues to this day and is expressed by many who feel a responsibility to act on Israel's behalf. David Brog, former chief of staff for then Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter, once said that when important issues related to Israel arose, the senator's office would receive ten phone calls from Christians in support of Israel for every call from a Jewish constituent.

There is an Evangelical affection for the Jewish people that emanates from an appreciation for what they have done to "bless all the families of the world" (Gen. 12:3b). Not only did God use them to transmit His written Word and preserve it with extreme accuracy, but He also used them to bear the Promised Redeemer of the world. It is that special encounter with a Jewish Savior that makes every believer eternally indebted to the Jewish people.

Much of the Evangelical support for Israel is born out of Israel's role in God's redemptive plan. When God made a unique covenant with Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob, Israel became God's chief agency through which He would complete His plan to redeem creation from the fall.

Evangelicals see Israel as being important not only in the past but also in the present and future. The Jewish people possess certain unique, everlasting promises from God that can only be fulfilled through physical Israel. The eternal God, who keeps His covenants, ensures that the Jewish people will always exist and that He will never cast them away (Jer. 31:35–37).

The simple facts that God loves Israel with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3) and that He promises to bless those Gentiles who bless Israel (Gen. 12:3) are sufficient motives for many to support Israel. In spite of the charge some make that the promise of blessing

in return for blessing Abraham’s descendants is motivated by selfish gain, it is clear God instructs the nations concerning how He wants them to treat His Chosen People. They are His instruments through whom He is blessing the nations. God expects the nations to respond by blessing the Jewish people, and He will judge the nations on that basis someday (Matt. 25:31–46).

Today, however, we see the winds of change sweeping across Evangelicalism in America and elsewhere. While Evangelical support for Israel still remains strong among older Evangelicals, the younger generations are not as favorable.

A 2013 Pew survey showed Evangelical support for Israel to be high, with 7 in 10 standing with Israel. However there was a significant difference between the younger and older generations. Support for Israel fell by 12 percent among people 50 to 64 years old and those 30 to 49. There was another decline of 11 percent among those 18 to 29.⁹ A 2015 survey by Lifeway Research produced similar results, in addition to showing a 22 percent gap between people 45 and older and those 18 to 24 on the question of whether there is a link between Israel and the book of Revelation.¹⁰

Dispensationalism has become a dirty word in many corners of Christian higher education. The study of eschatology is diminishing at schools that have historically been Dispensational; and the next generation of ministry leaders, at best, sees no value in studying future prophecy and, at worst, views it with disfavor—as something to be avoided entirely. Even some who want to hold on to a Dispensational, Zionist view of Israel, born out of a literal interpretation of Scripture, are quick to distance themselves from the “wild and crazy popular apocalypticism.”¹¹

⁹ “Public Remains Supportive of Israel, Wary of Iran,” Pew Research Center, 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/2013/03/19/public-remains-supportive-of-israel-wary-of-iran/> (accessed November 10).

¹⁰ Bob Smietana, “American Evangelicals Stand Behind Israel,” *Lifeway Research*, July 14, 2015, <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2015/07/14/american-evangelicals-stand-behind-israel/> (accessed November 10, 2015).

¹¹ Napp Nazworth, “New Christian Zionists Distance From ‘Wild, Crazy Popular Apocalypticism,’” *Christian Post*, April 25, 2015, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/new-christian-zionists-seek-distance-from-wild-crazy-popular-apocalypticism-138155/> (accessed November 10, 2015).

Conclusion

As the Evangelical church in America directs more attention to worldly concerns, its appreciation for the heavenly agenda is fading. This is particularly true of the Millennial generation, the 18-to 35-year-olds, who feel they want their lives, in some small way, to be used to repair a world in crisis.

To understand why Evangelical Millennials are thinking differently about Israel and Dispensationalism, it is necessary to look at how this younger generation of Evangelicals thinks and what is driving them to see Israel differently from their parents and grandparents.

CHAPTER 2

THE CAUSE FOR ERODING EVANGELICAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

We are all worried about the direction our country is going as it rapidly loosens itself from the Judeo-Christian values to which it was once firmly fastened. Not only are we concerned about the path of the United States, but we are also troubled about the trajectory of the Evangelical church. As statistics show, more and more young adults consider themselves unaffiliated with the church at large or are shifting their beliefs within Evangelicalism. Though some people may shrug their shoulders at this data, the information plays a major role in the issue of Evangelical Christian support for Israel.

WHAT WENT WRONG

Aspects of culture, theology, and politics never remain static or fixed. They can easily be altered and moved with the pressures of stress and time. Often they can be seen like a pendulum that swings back and forth with the pull of gravity.

Like a pendulum, Evangelical support for the State of Israel leans to the positive side for now; but we are seeing the pendulum beginning to swing in the other direction, and that raises our concern about the future of Evangelical support for Israel.

The biggest Evangelical shift regarding Israel appears in the attitudes of Evangelical Millennials (EMs) who resist being labeled Christian Zionists. In this section we will evaluate shifts within Evangelicalism and how the long-term effects could lead to eroding Evangelical support for the Jewish state.

Not My Parents' Beliefs; Not My Parents' Politics

If there is one group within Evangelicalism that can be identified as apathetic toward Israel it is the EMs. This apathy does not engender a negative view toward Israel but, rather, no view at all, which can be dangerous in itself. For instance, Israel's rebirth and the prophetic Scriptures concerning Israel's regathering mean nothing to EMs. The

future role Israel plays in the redemption of all things at Christ's Second Coming bears no weight with them, even though many may have grown up under such biblical teaching. This generation tends to overlook Israel's role in God's redemptive plan. How did this happen?

Not My Parents' Belief: Three Levels of Eroding Evangelical Support

It is important to see where many EMs are today—socially, politically, philosophically, and theologically—and how they have shifted both outside the walls of Evangelicalism and within it.

Unaffiliated

First, as seen above, Evangelical support for the State of Israel is intimately related to one's belief and how that belief impacts one's political leaning. Sadly, many Millennials who grew up in Evangelical, Bible-believing churches and who naturally begin to question their parents' faith, belief system, and the way they worship, end up leaving the church. As they enter adulthood, they consider themselves "unaffiliated" with any branch of Christianity. Recent Pew poll data reveals a steep decline in the number of Millennials who associate with Evangelicalism and a steady uptick in those who have dropped Christianity altogether.¹²

Evangelical support for Israel is unique because it is based on the biblical premise that God divinely granted the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. The Jewish people have a right to the Land because God promised it to them unconditionally, which makes their right eternal in nature. If a large number of Millennials leave the church, then that uniquely Evangelical view is lost. That is not to say unaffiliated Millennials may not support Israel politically, but Evangelical support for Israel goes deeper than politics. For that reason, more Evangelical Christians today believe God gave Israel to the Jewish people than do Jewish people.¹³

¹² "America's Changing Religious Landscape," *Pew Research Center*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>. (accessed August 18, 2015).

¹³ "More white evangelicals than American Jews say God gave Israel to the Jewish People," *Pew Research Center*, October 3, 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/10/03>

High Church

While statistics show many young adults are leaving the faith altogether, there is also a group of Evangelical Millennials that have retained their conservative Christian upbringing, passed down to them by their families and church. These EMs feel more comfortable dropping what they may consider the “baggage” of Evangelical Christianity, meaning elements of their parents’ views of the Bible and conservative theology.

As a result, there is a trend among Millennials to leave the Evangelical nest they had always known in order to head for a higher-church form of Christianity that fits their postmodern worldview. Millennials today are being drawn in droves to Catholicism, Anglicanism, and the Orthodox churches. These young dreamers are in search of something that they believe defines them and gives their lives meaning. Bear in mind, Millennials are not drawn to the pews of these “high” churches because of doctrinal convictions. Instead, many seek a new experience, a new way of seeing Christianity; and they think they have found it in the ancient backgrounds of high-church liturgy. Postmodern young adults find a liturgical service to be an enlightening, new, and beautiful way to worship God.

However, once in the “high,” these Millennials absorb the doctrine that emanates from the pulpit. Inevitably, they come to adopt the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox doctrines, which are steeped in Replacement Theology and see no unique future for Israel or the Jewish people. Thus the modern State of Israel becomes nothing more than a secular creation of the United Nations.

Although within the Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox denominations are small groups of outspoken supporters of Israel, their numbers do not compare to Evangelical support. In a 2013 Pew poll, a staggering 82 percent of white Evangelical Christians believed Israel was given to the Jewish people by God, compared to 38 percent of Catholics and 47 percent of mainline churches, such as the Episcopal Church.¹⁴ If

/more-white-evangelicals-than-american-jews-say-god-gave-israel-to-the-jewish-people/ (accessed August 18, 2015).

¹⁴ “More white evangelicals than American Jews say God gave Israel to the Jewish People,” *Pew Research Center*, October 3, 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/10/03>

Millennials are leaving Evangelical churches for Catholic and mainline denominations, then it is likely their biblical view of Israel—past, present, and future—will also change.

From Within the Evangelical Ranks

The previous two groups, that is Millennials who consider themselves unaffiliated and Millennials who have shifted from Evangelicalism to high church, are not affiliated within the context of Evangelicalism; but it is valuable to see how those who have shifted have distanced themselves in some ways from the broad framework of the Evangelical movement, which includes Evangelical Christian Zionists.

Gary Burge, professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and a vocal critic of Israel, wrote in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, “This younger generation is more troubled by injustice than they are inspired by prophecy.”¹⁵ Burge’s statement is true. First, Burge has been teaching at Wheaton for more than 25 years and has his finger on the pulse of EMs. Second, he has noticed a deeper desire within younger Evangelicals to focus on social issues than to see Israel as a stepping-stone in God’s eschatological plan. Therefore, instead of viewing Israel as a modern miracle and potential portent for things to come, Israel becomes nothing more than an apartheid state of injustice toward the Palestinians (at least the way Burge teaches about Israel).

Another noticeable development is that major Evangelical institutions are stepping back from supporting Israel. Wheaton College, for instance, has a strong Evangelical background, but professors like Burge are permitted to expound anti-Israel rhetoric. Lynne Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church has been active in speaking out about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. She argues her message is both pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian, but in her speeches she heavily criticizes the Israeli government and its “occupation” of the West Bank, relying mostly on emotion, rather than on history and fact. Other such Evangelical organizations include Youth With a Mission (YWAM), World Vision, and the Telos Group.

/more-white-evangelicals-than-american-jews-say-god-gave-israel-to-the-jewish-people/. (accessed August 18, 2015).

¹⁵ Gary M. Burge, “Are Evangelicals Abandoning Israel?,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, October 2014, <http://www.wrmea.org/2014-october/are-evangelicals-abandoning-israel.html>. (accessed August 18, 2015).

Additionally, young-adult Evangelical conferences like Catalyst become the pulpit for pro-Palestinian groups to come in the name of peace and blame the lack of peace on Israel.

Finally, within Evangelicalism there is a group attracting Millennials to its cause, and its leaders see no need to support and no value in supporting the modern State of Israel. Reformed churches are popping up everywhere; and their figureheads, like John Piper and Tim Keller, draw large crowds of young adults. In another section of this paper we will evaluate Neo-Calvinism and elaborate on its view of modern Israel.

Not long ago a young pastor of a Reformed church called Dispensationalism and its hermeneutic an “obstacle” for Evangelicalism.

The “obstacle” involves the interpretation of prophecy and how it affects our political understanding of Israel. Chelsen Vicari, author of *Distortion: How the New Christian Left is Twisting the Gospel & Damaging the Faith*, writes, “Research tells us that evangelicals are drifting further away from the orthodox truths their parents and grandparents held dear.”¹⁶ These “truths” Vicari mentions include the truths about Evangelical support for Israel, which leads us to our next point: Some EMs do not want to accept the political leanings of their parents or church leaders.

Not My Parents’ Politics: Moving Left of the Moral Right

One of the issues young Evangelicals are wrestling with today in churches, Bible colleges, and seminaries is the association of faith and politics. Many EMs balk at the idea that being an Evangelical Christian automatically identifies your political affiliation and that simply because you are an Evangelical Christian, you are naturally a right-wing Republican.

It must be said here that a majority of Evangelicals still consider themselves conservative, and many EMs are maintaining that legacy. However, there is a movement among EMs raised in conservative families or churches that is reacting against the automatic association of Evangelicalism and right-wing conservatism.

¹⁶ Chelsen Vicari, *Distortion: How the New Christian Left is Twisting The Gospel & Damaging the Faith* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2014), 4.

Dubbed Progressive Evangelicals, these more left-leaning Christians, led by Rob Bell, former pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church; Tony Campolo, professor emeritus at Eastern University; and Rachel Held Evans, author of *Searching for Sunday*, rely heavily on issues of social justice in order to make the church seem more relevant in today's culture; and for some Progressive Evangelicals, the so-called Palestinian plight is a social-justice issue.

Tony Campolo, for instance, wrote a piece for *Sojourners* titled "Christian Zionism: Theology That Legitimizes Oppression," in which he argues that Christian Zionists are misinformed zealots who take some form of theological pleasure in oppressing their Palestinian brothers and sisters. So, through the lens of bad theology and a misunderstanding of Dispensational history and philosophy, many young adults who sit under Campolo's teaching are influenced by his negative approach to Christian Zionism, Israel, and Dispensationalism, which he says oppress all Palestinians, especially Christian Palestinians. Campolo is not the only one preaching this message on the Christian left.¹⁷

The danger in the rise of the Evangelical left is the potential mark it can leave on the impressionable EM community, which seems to be moving politically left, all the while dragging Evangelicalism into the realm of left-leaning policies that instinctively view Israel negatively. Unfortunately, many pro-Palestinian groups have already carved inroads into the Evangelical community by using social justice to get through church doors.

Anti-Israel Gospel Spreading Beyond Judea and Samaria

Decades ago anti-Israel sentiments in the Holy Land were often reserved for discussion in the West Bank among the Arabs and in surrounding Muslim countries. Occasionally, when Israel would enter into a regional skirmish, left-leaning journalists in America would criticize the Jewish state, and mainline churches would react against Israel's so-called aggression. Today it is a different story.

Recently the anti-Israel message has started to spread beyond the West Bank into Evangelical churches. This didn't happen by accident. Evangelical churches and

¹⁷ Tony Campolo, "Christian Zionism: Theology that Legitimizes Oppression," *Sojourners*, May 2010, <https://sojo.net/articles/christian-zionism-theology-legitimizes-oppression> (accessed August 18, 2015).

institutions have been carefully targeted by pro-Palestinian organizations with intent to change their perspectives on Israel, both biblically and politically. Since EMs already have no interest in eschatological events and are focused on social issues, according to Gary Burge, Palestinian Christian oppression becomes the perfect outlet for EMs to express their postmodern mission.

Bethlehem Bible College, founded in 1979 to train Christian leaders to serve the Arab population in the Holy Land, has turned into a college associated with Palestinian-Christian activism.

This political activism has produced a yearly conference called Christ at the Checkpoint, which draws hundreds of people from a broad spectrum of Christian denominations, including a wide range of Evangelical leaders. Organizers for the Christ at the Checkpoint conference wrote in their 2012 press release, “Conference organizers challenged the evangelical community to cease looking at the Middle East through the lens of ‘end times’ prophecy and instead rallied them to join in following Jesus in the prophetic pursuance of justice, peace and reconciliation.”¹⁸

Through manipulation of the term *prophecy*, coupled with a social-justice agenda, this conference is the best way to promote an anti-Israel message to influential Christian leaders who, in turn, will share this skewed view of Israel with their Evangelical congregations and constituents.

In the same vein, many pro-peace groups that often claim to be both pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian organize special trips to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

One such organization, Sabeel, which is based in Jerusalem, encourages Evangelical Christians and other mainline branches of Christianity to visit the Holy Land, not on a biblical tour, but on a “witness trip,” which, according to Sabeel, means to “experience the realities of the Palestinian community living under Israeli Occupation: the Separation Wall, illegal settlements, checkpoints, confiscated and demolished homes, refugee camps, and environmental degradation. Learn about the loss of civil and property

¹⁸ “Christ at the Checkpoint: Hope in the Midst of Conflict: March 2012,” Bethlehem Bible College, March 9, 2012, <http://www.bethbc.org/news/press-release-christ-checkpoint-hope-midst-conflict-2012> (accessed August 18, 2015).

rights of Arab Israeli citizens.”¹⁹ The witness trip is a one-sided propaganda tour that creatively selects Arabs, Israelis, Jews, Christians, and Muslims to slander Israel.

The organization of these pro-peace but anti-Israel groups is still in its infancy, but its momentum is growing. Understanding the Evangelical Millennials’ desire to see justice and mercy realized, these groups manipulate their message to fit that mold.

Conclusion

Survey data shows a Millennial move away from the church and even a Millennial shift within the church. At the same time, pro-Palestinian groups that spread lies are using manipulated stories to cause Christians to switch their support from Israel to the directionless Palestinian cause. It is not wrong to have sympathy for the Palestinians, but often Israel is painted as the sole obstacle to peace, which is a lie.

THE DECLINE OF DISPENSATIONAL TEACHING

The teaching of Dispensational theology is falling out of favor with many Evangelicals, especially younger ones. Many Bible schools that were solidly Dispensational in the past have moved away from this position. Pluralism has taken over many leaders of Christian higher education who wish to distance their institutions from theological teaching that divides and desire that all would come together in unity and lay aside their differences for the sake of the gospel. This is an appealing goal because we all desire unity, but the price for unity is too high. Historically, such attempts have failed, as compromise and eventually liberalism have won the day.

We have experienced this transformation in our own backyard. A Christian university that was founded by C. I. Scofield and other believers in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to train Christian leaders in Dispensational truth has abandoned its Dispensational moorings. It has severed ties to its past and distanced itself from a Dispensationally based curriculum.

Pastors and ministry leaders graduating from Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries typically have little to no interest in teaching or preaching prophecy. As we

¹⁹ Sabeel, <http://www.sabeel.org/witnessvisit.php> (Accessed August 18, 2015).

travel around the country, we encounter believers who say they never hear a message on prophecy anymore. Even older pastors who studied prophecy in school seem reluctant to preach it from the pulpit. It may be that with all of the various views on prophecy, they are reluctant to stir up trouble among their congregations by taking a stand. Many pastors have told us they simply do not feel comfortable or qualified to speak on prophecy, as they consider it difficult to understand and have little time to study it.

Have we missed the boat on teaching the importance of Dispensational truth and the bigger picture of God's redemptive plan? How is it that prophecy has come to be seen as doom and gloom when it provides the only true solution and hope for peace and justice in this sin-cursed world? God has graciously revealed His plan to restore all of creation to its pre-sin condition—not through the mission of the Church, but through the redemptive work of His Son at His return. What does Scripture mean when it says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16)? To ignore God's prophetic Word is contrary to our belief that all of Scripture guides us in faith and practice.

Some see the movement away from Dispensational teaching as a leftward turn for the Evangelical church toward a growing liberalization, especially among the younger generation. Robert W. Nicholson, in his article “Evangelicals and Israel,” notes that this “New Evangelicalism” heralded by progressive leaders is typified by the emerging church movement. It seeks a restoration of Jesus' example of using love for the world to break down the divide between Evangelicals and “mainstream” American culture. Rejecting the message of heaven, hell, and salvation, these leaders desire to bring religion down to earth. They see conservative, traditional Evangelical Christianity as too judgmental and too political for their liking. They are more concerned with making the world better by making peace and justice the tenets of Christianity; and they are less interested in an inerrant, historic biblical view of history. They want to build the kingdom here and now.²⁰

When one loses Israel's historical, biblical connection to God, His promises, and the land, it is easy to see Israel as the bad guy in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The

²⁰ Robert W. Nicholas, “Evangelical and Israel: What American Jews Don't Want to Know (But Need To),” *Mosaic Magazine*, October 6, 2013, <http://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/2013/10/evangelicals-and-israel/> (accessed November 10, 2015).

younger generation of Evangelicals has never known of a time when Israel did not exist. They never witnessed Israel fighting for its existence against Arab armies with superior numbers of soldier and advanced weapons, as it did in 1948, 1967, and 1973. All they have ever known is an Israel that is a military power in the Middle East and uses its military might against the Palestinians in a way that many perceive as being harsh.

Millennials are drawn to efforts aimed at social justice, and they are quick to blame traditional beliefs, such as Evangelical Zionism, as impediments to obtaining true justice and peace on Earth. Without a Dispensational foundation to guide them, they view the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948 as an unfortunate overreaction to the Holocaust and as the root cause of the conflicts in the Middle East.

Is it any wonder that Progressive Dispensationalism has grown in popularity in recent years as many Evangelicals look for an alternative to the “doom and gloom” of traditional Dispensationalism? Progressive Dispensationalism offers a kingdom-now approach to social justice while seeking to hold on to many of the core Dispensational beliefs such, as the Second Coming of Christ, followed by a literal Millennial Kingdom.

The decline in teaching historic Dispensational truth has opened the door for EMs to embrace the Palestinian-Christian narrative of oppression under the hand of the brutal Israel Defense Forces. Those who support the Palestinian-justice cause, based on recasting Jesus as a social activist who came to preach a message of justice for the downtrodden, do not represent all Millennial Evangelicals.

It is not the numbers of Millennials who are joining the Palestinian cause that is alarming but, rather, the trend. Historically, such anti-Zionist attitudes have gotten little traction among Evangelical Christians. They were popular primarily in the liberal, mainline Protestant churches. The growing shift by some younger Evangelicals, combined with the decline in teaching Dispensational truth and the appeal of social justice to younger believers, should be concerning to all of us who hold to a literal, historical interpretation of Scripture.

Conclusion

One must ask where the next generation is going to learn Dispensational truth. How long before the shift to a social-justice gospel becomes the priority in the

mainstream Evangelical church? What can be done to turn things around before we see the majority of Evangelical Christians turn from their Zionist beliefs and, at best, become neutral toward Israel and, at worst, become anti-Zionist? These are all questions with which we should be wrestling.

In place of Dispensational teaching, there has been a resurgence in Calvinist theology, which is attracting many EMs.

THE RISE OF NEO-CALVINISM AND NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY

“Calvinism is back” is the way *Time* writer David Van Biema put it when he wrote on New Calvinism. In 2009 *Time* listed New Calvinism as one of the “10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now.”²¹ Young adults are flocking to Neo-Calvinism because it stands in contrast to the seeker-sensitive churches where they grew up. These churches, unfortunately, forgot to teach the truth of biblical doctrine. New Calvinism provides a place for budding Christians to explore the deeper theological issues with a sense of purpose, passion, and worship connected to what they are learning.

Men like John Piper, Tim Keller, and D. A. Carson are at the heart of what Collin Hanson, editorial director for The Gospel Coalition (TGC) and former associate editor for *Christianity Today*, termed “The Young, Restless, and Reformed.” Hanson’s title communicates that New Calvinism is attracting Millennials who have a passion for Christ and are interested in what Reformed teaching has to offer.

New Calvinism’s theology is devoid of Dispensational teaching. When John Piper’s website, desiringgod.org, describes different theological systems like Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism, it says John Piper has some things in common with all the views but “is probably the furthest away from dispensationalism,” although he does believe in a future Millennium.²² It must be stated there is no consistent eschatological

²¹ David Van Biema, “10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now,” *Time*, March 12, 2009 http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1884779_1884782_1884760,00.html (accessed October 23, 2015).

²² Matt Pearlman, “What does John Piper believe about dispensationalism, covenant theology, and new covenant theology?” *Desiring God*, January 23, 2006, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-john-piper-believe-about-dispensationalism-covenant-theology-and-new-covenant-theology> (accessed November 10, 2015).

view in Reformed teaching except for what the Westminster Confession offers, mainly, the physical return of Christ, resurrection of the dead, and judgment.²³

The personalities of the New Calvinism movement have been extremely purposeful in the way they communicate their message. They have designed and implemented websites like The Gospel Coalition²⁴ and Desiring God²⁵ that attract Neo-Calvinists from all around the world. Their message reaches the masses through doctrinal, biblical, and cultural blog-style articles that draw a vast audience both young and old.

Recently, TGC held its annual conference in Orlando, Florida, and drew more than 6,000 attendees. It taught on prophecy, titling its Bible conference, “The New Heavens & New Earth.” In one of his plenary messages, John Piper spoke on the failure of the Reformed movement to teach about prophecy, highlighting that most are scared to mention the subject for fear of being associated with Dispensationalists:

For two generations perhaps, we have failed to study prophecy with anything like the rigor that it deserves, we have been so afraid of being viewed as one of those Zionist, right-wing, Antichrist-sniffing, culture-denying, alarmist, leftovers from the Scofield prophecy conference era, that we give hardly any attention whatsoever to putting the pieces together.²⁶

Piper went on to admit that his generation’s paralysis to prophetic teaching was an overreaction, but he “prophesied” that a new generation of Neo-Calvinists could raise the banner of good prophetic teaching about the coming of Christ. Essentially, he and others are teaching younger Christians that Dispensationalists are to blame for their lack of prophetic teaching in the past.

²³ John Piper’s eschatological views do not define the eschatology of the Neo-Calvinists. In fact, Piper’s eschatology is probably seen as a bit unusual given his view on a future Millennium. It’s safe to say that Neo-Calvinists have such a broad doctrine of eschatology anyone’s view is welcome to the discussion table.

²⁴ For more information visit www.thegospelcoalition.org.

²⁵ For more information visit www.desiringgod.org

²⁶ The Gospel Coalition. “The Branch and the Banner of David”. Filmed [April 13, 2015]. Vimeo video 09:30-10:30. Posted [April 13, 2015]. <https://vimeo.com/125462069>.

A keyword jumps out of his statement: Zionist. If you are a Zionist, you are part of the problem. If you believe in a future for Israel inside Evangelicalism and that the Jewish people have a right, both biblically and politically, to live in their ancestral homeland today, then you are a hindrance to proper prophetic teaching.

When the leader of a movement that claims to have the attention of 30 percent of all Southern Baptist churches and the ability to influence Christian young adults around the world with his books, blogs, videos, and publications says Christian Zionists have prevented *good* biblical and prophetic teaching, then you can see why so many young Christians have a lesser view of Israel than their grandparents or parents have.

Ironically, neo-Calvinists are often extremely conservative on social issues, but as Mark Oppenheimer of *The New York Times* said, “Many neo-Calvinists shy away from politics,”²⁷ which shows how impressionable many of these “young, restless, and Reformed” really are. They are conservative on social issues; but when it comes to Israel, one negative comment from a leader like Piper can taint the way Evangelical Millennials theologically and politically interpret supporting Israel as Christians.

New Covenant Theology

Neo-Calvinism is a Calvinist resurgence in Evangelicalism, but it does not necessarily hold to the theological systems of the old Reformed movement, mainly, Covenant Theology. Just as this movement has been appropriately deemed “New Calvinism,” some within the movement—not surprisingly—have adopted a new approach to Covenant Theology.

New Covenant Theology (NCT) is a newer system of theology that has enjoyed a robust popularity over the past few decades. Proponents of NCT have been proactive in proving it is a substitute for both Covenant Theology (CT) and Dispensationalism by distinguishing it with several theological differences—such as their view on the church beginning at Pentecost, the covenants, and their stance on the discontinuity of the Mosaic Law. These theological differences tend to nudge NCT away from its CT roots.

²⁷ Mark Oppenheimer, “Evangelicals Find Themselves in the Midst of a Calvinist Revival,” *The New York Times*, January 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/us/a-calvinist-revival-for-evangelicals.html?_r=0 (accessed October 23, 2015).

Nevertheless, the theology ultimately maintains a hermeneutic that leads to Supersessionism, which is supported by CT.²⁸

Started in the late 1970s out of the Reformed Baptist movement, NCT has slowly grown in both numbers and influence.²⁹ This approach to understanding the Scriptures began in local churches, building from the ground up. More recently it has gained traction in the academic arena. Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary released a massive tome, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. In the first chapter the authors describe their brand of theology: “If we were to label our view and to plot it on the map of current evangelical discussion, it would fit broadly under the umbrella of what is called ‘new covenant theology,’ or to coin a better term, ‘progressive covenantalism.’”³⁰ Like NCT, Progressive Covenantalism desires to be the middleman that stands in the theological divide between Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology.

It is our conviction that the present ways of unpacking the biblical covenants across the Canon, especially as represented by dispensational and covenant theology (and their varieties), are not quite right. That is why we believe it is time to present an alternative reading which seeks to rethink and mediate these two theological traditions in such a way that we learn from both of them but also provide an alternative-a via media.³¹

We cannot focus on every theological difference that distinguishes NCT from CT and Dispensationalism. But we can hone in on three key theological issues that tie into the eroding Evangelical support for Israel. That is, the NCT view of the biblical covenants, Israel, and the hermeneutic its adherents employ.

²⁸ Michael J. Vlach, “New Covenant Theology Compared With Covenantalism,” *The Masters Seminary Journal* 18 no. 1 (Fall 2007): 201, <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj18i.pdf> (accessed October 23, 2015).

²⁹ Vlach, “New Covenant Theology Compared With Covenantalism,” 150.

³⁰ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 24.

³¹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 23.

New Covenant Theology and Covenants

In his book *There Really Is a Difference*, Dr. Renald Showers says that Covenant Theology attempts to develop an overall biblical philosophy through the establishment of covenants.³² Most CT scholars hold to a three-covenant view: Covenant of Works, Covenant of Grace, and Covenant of Redemption. According to CT, God established the Covenant of Works with Adam, guaranteeing him life as long as he obeyed. The Covenant of Grace was created as a result of Adam's disobedience and promises life to the elect who place their faith in Christ. The Covenant of Redemption was established in eternity past between the members of the Trinity in order to provide redemption for the human race.³³

The covenants are a key area where NCT stands apart from CT. NCT holds that these covenants are either unbiblical or a misappropriation of terms. For instance, NCT proponents hold that it is bad terminology to call the relationship God had with Adam a covenant³⁴ and that the Covenant of Redemption is completely unbiblical.³⁵ The authors of this paper believe NCT's theological convictions against the covenants, which define Covenant Theology, are positive steps for a better theological discussion on the true nature of the biblical covenants.

New Covenant Theology, Israel, and the Church

New Covenant Theology also stands apart from Covenant Theology in its view on Israel and the Church. NCT rightfully holds that the Church began at Pentecost and is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament. Therefore, according to NCT proponent Steve Lehrer, "NCT does not view Old Covenant Israel as the church. We make a distinction

³² Renald E. Showers, *There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology* (Bellmawr: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1990), 8.

³³ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology Compared With Covenantalism," 204.

³⁴ Vlach, 205.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

between Old Covenant Israel and the church.”³⁶ Again, another positive step in creating good theological dialogue between Dispensationalists and NCT supporters.

However, NCT does not believe there is a future for Israel. Michael Vlach writes concerning CT and NCT, “Both affirm that the nation Israel will never again experience a unique identity, role, or mission in the plan of God.”³⁷ NCT holds that Israel was merely an image of what the people of God would be, which is consummated in the Church. Geoff Volker writes, “Our standard NCT definition of Israel is that it is a ‘temporary, unbelieving, picture of the people of God.’”³⁸

This definition of *Israel* reveals NCT’s blatant acceptance of Supersessionism, rendering Israel obsolete. NCT supersessionist theology is supported by its hermeneutic.

New Covenant Theology’s Hermeneutic

NCT’s hermeneutic begins with the ordering of the Testaments. It holds to a New Testament priority over the Old Testament, which means it is permissible to read the New Testament text backwards first in an attempt to provide clarity to Old Testament narrative, poetry, and prophecy. As a result of this method of New Testament logical priority, NCT and CT both have no problem allowing Old Testament prophecies of Israel’s restoration to lie dormant in light of what they may consider New Testament silence on the issue by the way they implement their hermeneutic.

In addition to their New Testament priority, NCT and CT hold to a “typological interpretation,” which is a type/antitype hermeneutic.³⁹ This theory holds that Israel was nothing more than a type of what the church would become as the antitype. Thus leftover prophecies associated with Israel’s restoration have no value for the future since the church has become the fulfillment of the type and adopted the promises of Israel. Israel was merely a picture of the greater people of God that would be realized in the church.

³⁶ Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: questions answered* (n.p.: Steve Lehrer, 2006), 147.

³⁷ Vlach, “New Covenant Theology Compared With Covenantalism,” 217.

³⁸ Geoff Volker, “Does the Church Replace Israel (Part 1),” *In-Depth Studies*, March 17, 2011, <http://ids.org/author/author-geoff-volker/does-the-church-replace-israel-part-1/> (accessed November 10, 2015).

³⁹ Vlach, “New Covenant Theology Compared With Covenantalism,” 214.

So even though NCT remained true to the biblical understanding of the covenants and the distinction between Israel and the Church, its hermeneutical approach, like CT, leads to its adoption of Supersessionism. That is, with Christ's First Coming, Israel's role in God's plan was completed and has expired. Christ has fulfilled Israel's role in God's redemptive plan.

Conclusion

The rise of Neo-Calvinism and New Covenant Theology has strongly influenced young Christians from the pews to the academic world. In fact, its growth mimics the grassroots, populist expansion of Dispensationalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁴⁰ The thing to notice is that NCT no longer sounds like old CT, which was completely distinguished from Dispensationalism. The old battles between CT and Dispensationalism that draw lines in the sand are dying.

Today NCT is moving the theological conversation away from CT into a grayer area, which on the one hand gives hope theologically for a better conversation, but on the other hand still produces a supersessionist theology. As you can see from the influence and position of formidable pastor and teacher John Piper; the theology of CT and NCT; and the continued rise of the "Young, Restless, and Reformed," support for modern Israel may be waning in the coming years.

WHERE WE ARE NOW: CHRISTIAN ZIONISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

While Christian Zionism is losing its footing with the younger generation, there are movements to ensure the value of Christian Zionism remains within the churches; but at what cost?

Alive and Well, But Changing

Christian Zionism in Evangelicalism is alive and well in the 21st century. As seen in the statistics, a broad majority of Evangelical Christians currently supports the modern

⁴⁰ Glenn Kreider, "What is Dispensationalism?," in *Dispensationalism and the History of Redemption: A Developing and Diverse Tradition*, eds. D. Jeffrey Bingham, Glenn R. Kreider (Chicago: Moody, 2015), 19.

State of Israel. In fact, as we write this, the 16 Republican presidential candidates vying for the Evangelical vote are working hard to hit key words and phrases that will attract the large group of evangelicals that did not bother going to the polls in 2012. One of those phrases Evangelicals want to hear is, “I support Israel.”

Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council said 90 million Christians in America consider themselves Evangelical; and of those, 9 percent to 10 percent would consider themselves supporters of Israel based on what the Scriptures teach. Said Perkins, “That’s a large number of voters who can definitely make a difference in a primary or general election.”⁴¹ Perkins also noted that support for Israel could be one of the top five issues voters listen for when choosing whom they will back in the primary.

Those numbers alone are enough to prove that Evangelical support for Israel is alive and well and extremely influential in U.S. policy and politics. Such statistics bring us hope for now that Evangelical support for Israel is still strong and still rooted in the Scriptures.

There is a movement, however, to put a new face on Evangelical support for Israel and rework the seemingly disparaging term *Christian Zionism*.

Mark Tooley, president of the Washington DC-based conservative Christian think tank, Institute for Religion and Democracy, is trying to find new and effective ways to maintain Christian Zionism in the 21st century. He believes the days of supporting Israel based on the old adage “the Bible tells me so” are gone. Tooley argues, “It will require intellectually serious explanations as to why Israel merits survival and support in a fallen world often hostile to both Jews and to ordered democracy.”⁴²

On April 17, 2015, the Institute of Religion and Democracy held a conference titled “People of the Land: A 21st Century Case for Zionism” at Georgetown University. This conference attempted to answer tough and often divisive questions, such as Can Christian Zionism be defended in the 21st century both theologically and historically?

⁴¹ Paul Stanley, “Where is Israel on evangelical Christian voters’ list of priorities?,” *JNS.org: News Service*, August 27, 2015, <http://www.jns.org/latest-articles/2015/8/27/where-is-israel-on-evangelical-christian-voters-list-of-priorities#.VeRvsPnVknM=> (accessed November 11, 2015).

⁴² Mark Tooley, “What is the future of Christian support for Israel?” *Washington Examiner*, April 16, 2015, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/what-is-the-future-of-christian-support-for-israel/article/2563089> (accessed November 11, 2015).

Can it be defended in ways that are consistent with Scripture? Are Israel's legal, moral, and political outworkings compatible with the ideals of the biblical covenant?

A majority of the conference speakers considered themselves Evangelical, while others came from a variety of Christian denominations; all, however, considered themselves Christian Zionists.

The People of the Land conference was the first of its kind. It was Evangelical in nature and extremely pro-Israel. However, at the same time, it attempted to dissociate itself with what the speakers considered radical prophetic teaching. Mark Tooley and Gerald McDermott wrote a piece summarizing the conference for Fox News that started like this: "It's time for a new form of Christian Zionism based not on hypothetical End Times scenarios but firmly rooted in the best intellectual traditions of ecumenical Christianity."⁴³ The intentions of the conference founders and organizers was to send a clear message that there are strong, pro-Israel Christians who wish to distance themselves from what they believe is an unnecessary theology that isolates Christian Zionism.

To make it even more personal, the so-called radical, prophetic theology Tooley, McDermott, and company are attempting to disavow is the end-times theology of "traditional 'Dispensationalists'"⁴⁴ and the stigma the Left Behind Series brings to the Christian-Zionist movement.

In defense of Tooley's argument, there are branches of Dispensationalism that promote radical and unbiblical eschatological views. These branches often associate themselves with the camp of Evangelical support for Israel. However, Tooley's direct attack on Dispensationalists and proponents of a pretribulational/premillennial eschatology is absolutely unnecessary.

Tooley and McDermott believe it is time to stop associating Christian Zionism with the Left Behind theology and embrace a deeper understanding of Christian Zionism and its longstanding relationship within Church history. Tooley writes that Christian

⁴³ Mark Tooley, "The 21st century case for Christian Zionism," *Fox New Opinion*, May 6, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2015/05/06/21st-century-case-for-christian-zionism.html> (accessed November 11, 2015).

⁴⁴ Tooley, "The 21st century case for Christian Zionism."

Zionism “dates to the early Church Fathers and runs through sixteenth-and seventeenth-century Puritans and modern thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth.”⁴⁵

If Tooley and McDermott took the time to visit the Pre-Trib study group, they would find out that scholars have invested much time and energy in communicating the theology of Christian Zionism in church history and its significance in helping to bring to life our modern understanding of Christian Zionism. Yet, while it is good to see a pro-Zionist Christian conference, it is disturbing that proponents want to abandon or reject Dispensational teaching, which is the foundational theology of Evangelical support for Israel.

Conclusion

While Christian Zionism remains a bulwark in Evangelicalism statistically, there are forces attempting to change the way it looks and sounds in order to gain a broader audience of Christian support for Israel. Overall, this is not a bad thing, but it does paint Dispensationalism and pretribulational/premillennial proponents as the culprits giving Christian Zionism a bad name.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

THE CURE FOR THE ERODING EVANGELICAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

Looking at the trajectory of Evangelicalism may almost persuade us that we have lost the battle for Israel. Yet we need not feel defeated. Instead, we should be working together to find a cure for the declining support for Israel among Evangelical Millennials. In this chapter we will examine a few methods we can employ to show Christian young adults the value of modern Israel today.

THE NECESSITY OF ISRAEL TO REDEMPTIVE THEOLOGY

Most people know the Jews are God's Chosen People, but they do not know how that fact fits into God's overall plan or what it means to them as believers in Jesus the Messiah. It is not enough simply to tell people God has a future for Israel. The story we communicate must show Christians how Israel fits into God's ultimate plan to redeem all of His creation, according to the Scriptures, and how a Christian's choice to support Israel has a profound impact on their lives today.

Through the progressive revelation of His Word, God has revealed His redemptive plan, little by little. Redemption comes to be understood as the payment of a price, by one who is qualified, to liberate someone or something from bondage. In Genesis 3, we see God's opening declaration of a plan to address the damage done by man's sin through the Seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15). There is hope that all is not lost.

We are merely a few chapters into the Bible when we learn God has made a choice to raise up a unique nation through the seed of one man, Abram (Gen. 12:1–3). Within God's calling of Abram lies the revelation that through him, God will bless all the families of the world (v. 3b). Paul notes the significance of this statement when he tells the Galatians that God foresaw Gentiles being justified by faith when He preached the gospel to Abraham, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed" (Gal. 3:8).

The ultimate purpose in God's call for Abraham to leave his home and travel to a faraway land, where God will bless him abundantly and make a unique nation from his

descendants, is to justify the world. In the covenant God makes with Abraham, He promises to work through his descendants to accomplish His redemptive plan. So important is this promise to God that He confirms it in a unilateral covenant, which He binds Himself to faithfully keep (Gen. 12; 15; 17).

Israel then becomes critical to God's plan to redeem the earth. God's promises to restore Earth's pre-sin environment flow through the Jewish people. It becomes clear that only through Israel can God fulfill those promises. By God's infinite design, Israel is the nation that ultimately will lead the world in worship of the Messiah (Ex. 19:6; Zech. 8:20–23) when the restored kingdom is established. So strong is this understanding that Messiah will usher in the restored kingdom that when Christ's disciples meet with Him after His resurrection, they ask Him if He will at that time restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6).

From God's sage perspective, the best way to accomplish the redemption of this world is through a single nation and, ultimately, a Son of this single nation. If God the Son is going to shield Himself and take on the form of a man, He must be born to a people that knows God and reveres Him.

The Word of God, His primary channel for communicating with man, cannot be transmitted to an apostate nation; and the Messiah cannot be born into a godless family. So God gives Abraham's descendants a law, His Law, designed in part to ensure a righteous people will receive His Word and His Son. From a human perspective, the Law appears harsh; but it is designed to direct humanity away from apostasy and toward God.

This nation of promise—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—are in a unique relationship with God. It is through them that God will work His plan to redeem the world to restore it to its “very good” state (Gen. 1:31).

God continues to reveal His redemptive plan through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the eve of freeing Israel from bondage in Egypt, God teaches Israel one of the greatest lessons in redemption (Ex. 12). He tells Moses that His final judgment on Egypt will be the most severe: the death of all the firstborn in Egypt. However, God will deliver the Israelites from the judgment if they obey His instructions exactly as He commands.

God directs each family to sacrifice an unblemished, first-year male lamb and to place the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their homes. For the families who follow the instructions, God will pass over their homes and spare their firstborn from the judgment of death.

So important is this lesson in redemption that God ordains it as a holiday named Passover, to be celebrated every year on the same day by every Jewish family. It is the oldest holiday still being celebrated to this day.

In ordaining Passover, God was teaching each generation important lessons about redemption:

- (1) God is the One who judges man.
- (2) But He is also the one who gives man a way of deliverance from His judgment and the bondage he is under.
- (3) The price for deliverance from God's judgment comes through the blood of an innocent, unblemished substitute—a lamb.
- (4) Only those who obediently follow God's way of deliverance will avoid God's judgment.

The Law was a tutor (Gal. 3:22) to lead us to the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. One way God taught the principle of redemption was through the law of redemption for property (Lev. 25:23–28), which established God's requirements for redemption.

Because the land of Israel belonged to God and the Jewish people were merely tenants, the land could not be sold permanently. However, if a man's tenant rights to the land were sold to pay a debt, then his near kinsman had the right to buy back the tenant rights to the land. If a kinsman redeemed the land, then he held the right to take control of the land, by force if necessary, and administer it until the year of Jubilee, when the tenant rights reverted back to the original tenant or his descendants.

We see this law in action when the Lord commands Jeremiah, who at the time was in prison, to redeem his uncle's land (Jer. 32:6–16). It also becomes prominent in the book of Ruth as Boaz becomes the kinsman redeemer who buys back the land Naomi sold (Ruth 4:1–12).

God was teaching Israel that if a right of possession was lost, redemption of that right was possible through a direct relative. However, the redeemer had to be a close relative, have the means to pay the price, and be willing to do so. The Lord was teaching Israel His requirement to redeem creation from the fall. If man was going to be redeemed from his sins, then a redeemer would have to be related to man, have the means to pay the price of redemption, and be willing to make the required payment.

In the person of the Messiah, God had One who was qualified and willing to be mankind's Redeemer. During His First Advent, Jesus Christ became the unblemished Lamb by living a sinless life, thereby qualifying Him to be the blood sacrifice to atone for man's sin (Lev. 17:11). He took upon Himself the penalty for our sin when He was beaten and hung on a cross (1 Pet. 2:24). He is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). He is the Lamb who redeemed us to God by His blood (Rev. 5:8–9). His shed blood became the acceptable redemption price to purchase back man's right to dominion over the earth (5:12). His resurrection proves that God accepted His sacrifice, and He has become the first fruits of victory over death (1 Cor. 15:20–28).

However, two things are necessary for Messiah Jesus to exercise His redemptive rights to take back dominion of the earth from the great usurper, Satan, and administer it as God's representative: the repentance of the Jewish people and their acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah. On the Temple Mount, Peter taught his Jewish audience that the repentance of the Jewish people will lead to the atonement of their sins and the return of Jesus Christ for the times of refreshing, when all things will be restored (Acts 3:19–21).

Jewish refusal to accept Jesus as their Messiah and Savior in His First Advent prevented Him from ushering in the kingdom for Israel. In the Gospels, He clearly makes the offer of the kingdom to the Jewish people, but they fail to believe. However, the Lord says in Zechariah that a day is coming when they will look upon Him who they pierced, and God will pour out His Spirit of grace on all the families of Israel (12:10–14). Paul says that after the fullness of the Gentiles has come, all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:25–26).

To complete God's plan to redeem creation from the fall, the Messiah must return to Earth and take control of it by removing Satan and his adversaries. That is the Messiah's responsibility as the Kinsman Redeemer of mankind. He then can establish His

righteous reign over the earth. All of creation eagerly awaits His coming and the deliverance from the bondage of sin (Rom. 8:19–21). It is then that the world will become the “very good” place it was before the fall. The world will be restored to its pre-fall goodness.

Israel is key to the return of Jesus Christ to complete the redemption of God’s creation. Without Israel and its repentance, there can be no return of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Act. 3:19–21) to sit upon His throne of glory over Israel and the world (Mt. 19:28).

With His coming, Satan and his influence over mankind will be removed from Earth (Rev. 20:1–3), Christ will undo the curse of sin on God’s creation; and injustice, unrighteousness, disease, war, famine and disasters will cease. Christ will reign from the throne of David over the earth as the last Adam. His government will be just and righteous (Isa. 11), and of His kingdom there shall be no end (9:6–7).

It is Israel that God raised up to be the uniquely Chosen People through whom He will accomplish His plan to redeem humanity from the fall. Without a future Israel, God’s plan will remain uncompleted; and Satan will continue to rule over this world (Jn. 12:31).

Conclusion

Telling the whole story of redemption helps to connect Christians of all ages with God’s plan for Israel past, present, and future. We all desire to live in a just and righteous world, as it was in the beginning. Yet that will only be accomplished through the Second Coming of the Messiah. When He returns, then we will witness the greatest redemption story in all of human history.

This leads us to our next method for reaching Evangelical Millennials with the truth about Israel. Because of their desire to live in a just world, issues of justice have become a priority for them. But proper instruction in biblical justice is crucial for Evangelical Millennials to interact politically with Israel today.

TEACHING JUSTICE FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Earlier we mentioned Wheaton College New Testament Professor Gary Burge, who wrote that Millennials are “more troubled by injustice than they are inspired by prophecy.”⁴⁶ A crucial issue that draws criticism for the Jewish state within Evangelicalism is the matter of justice: Israel is considered unjust in its “occupation” of the West Bank and treatment of the Palestinians.

The Millennials’ desire for justice is not a bad thing. We need more Christians with a biblical worldview who are willing to act against injustice and want to see biblical justice realized. It is good when a person realizes God’s Word is the foundation of all truth. Then biblical justice has the opportunity to be implemented, even in a sinful world.

However, the challenge we face today among Christian Millennials is that the philosophy of secularism or, even more dangerous, the philosophy of the Christian left is eroding the basis for truth; and a human understanding of justice is enacted apart from God’s truth. Trying to remedy injustice apart from the truth of God’s Word or by manipulating God’s Word is a worthless endeavor and can produce disastrous results.

Paul Louis Metzger wrote in *Christianity Today* that biblical justice is making whole the individual, community, and cosmos by holding fast to goodness and impartiality.⁴⁷ The Law of God in the Old Testament and the Law of Christ in the New Testament are the outflows of God’s character, and one of the products of God’s Law is justice. For instance, all people within the community of Israel benefited from God’s Law because it treated everyone equally as humans created in the image of God (Lev. 19:15). Even God’s judgment is inextricably connected to His justice, and He shows no partiality for race, gender, color, or wealth (Rom. 2:11).

The problem we face today in educating the Church about justice is its association with social justice. In fact, in some branches of more left-leaning Christianity, *social justice* has become the term used to define God’s justice in the Scriptures. Social justice

⁴⁶ Gary M. Burge, “Are Evangelicals Abandoning Israel?,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, October 2014, <http://www.wrmea.org/2014-october/are-evangelicals-abandoning-israel.html> (Accessed August 18, 2015).

⁴⁷ Paul Lewis Metzger, “What Is Biblical Justice?,” *Christianity Today*, Summer 2010, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2010/summer/biblicaljustice.html?start=1> (accessed November 11, 2015).

has become equated with liberal positions on such issues as wealth redistribution, sexual orientation, gender identification, environmental concerns, and non-GMO foods. These liberal talking points have crept into Evangelicalism and become issues for the Church to tackle.

Teaching justice from a biblical perspective should take a twofold approach. First, the church must recognize it has been called to be truth, light, and justice. Its people should desire to behave justly and righteously in an unjust world. Second, the Church must understand that as people of truth, light, and justice, it is not our duty to *establish* justice on Earth but, rather, to *be* people of justice.

The Church: Called to be People of Justice

The Church has been called to be a light in a dark world, set apart by God through the blood of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God designed the Church to be counter-cultural to the ways of the world and to stand for the cause of the gospel. As a result, the Church should be comprised of people of justice. Justice from the Scriptures is seen in a multitude of ways.

First, Christians should work for justice for the powerless. The apostle James says, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (Jas. 1:27). When James makes this statement, he is drawing on his theology of Old Testament law and the justice it was designed to implement. For James, to be a true Christ-follower means taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves. This aspect of justice is found in a multitude of Old Testament Law texts that can be summed up in the character of God from Deuteronomy 10:18: “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.” Before modern day Social Security and welfare programs, the Church was the organism to minister to those who could not help themselves.

Second, Christians should be people of commutative justice. Justice in the eyes of God is connected to honesty in one’s private and business lives. Proverbs 20:23 says, “Unequal weights are an abomination to the LORD, and false scales are not good.” God’s justice is rooted in His truthfulness and holiness. To be a just person means to be an

honest person. The apostle James makes note of this truth in the second half of James 1:27, when he urges Christians to maintain moral purity, which can be applied to Christ-like justice in a multitude of ways.

Finally, Christians should practice impartial justice. The Scriptures are clear that everyone in light of the Law of God should be treated equally because each person is made in the image of God. James even gravitates to the justice of impartiality when he exhorts believers to remain impartial to everyone who walks through the church doors (Jas. 2:1–8).

Dr. Marvin Olasky, editor-in-chief of *World Magazine* says, “Biblically, the most important purpose of justice is to increase righteousness. Whatever decreases faith in God is unjust.”⁴⁸ Olasky’s statement is essential to educating believers, no matter what age, on the meaning of biblical justice. The righteousness of God and faith in His design is at the heart of biblical justice.

Anglican priest, Palestinian-Arab Christian, and pro-Palestinian activist Naim Ateek wrote a book on Palestinian Liberation Theology called *Justice and Only Justice*. In it, Ateek spends a chapter dealing with the issue of justice and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although he says he desires peace, he boils everything down to one idea: Israel is a land-grabbing Goliath that took everything away from the indigenous Davids. He manipulates Old Testament and New Testament verses to turn them against the presence of the Jewish people in Israel. As Ateek theologically unpacks the so-called injustice of Israel’s existence, he argues, “Why should the price of the Jewish empowerment after the Holocaust in the creation of the State of Israel be the oppression and misery of the Palestinians?”⁴⁹

Ateek argues that the establishment of Israel has been nothing more than an act of injustice toward the Arabs (he calls them Palestinians), and that the Jewish people took the misery and oppression they experienced in the Holocaust and redirected it toward the Palestinian people. Ateek’s premise alone is a revision of factual history and should

⁴⁸ Marvin Olasky, “Social Justice vs. Righteous Justice,” *The Colson Center for Christian Worldview*, December 31, 2009, <https://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/indepth/13974-social-justice-vs-righteous-justice> (accessed November 11, 2015).

⁴⁹ Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 116.

disqualify his book entirely. However, his fabrication has become the bedrock for how he addresses this issue of justice. His approach is gaining new followers and takes advantage of those who are not familiar with Israel's history or the longstanding Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

Ateek's vision of justice is built on lies about Israel. Biblical justice can only work within the realm of truth, and it is an act of injustice on Ateek's part to spread lies about the State of Israel where he is a citizen and from which he receives all the benefits of citizenship, including the most justice without discrimination available in the entire Middle East. Ateek's argument for justice has big holes in it, preventing it from holding any water.

If the purpose of biblical justice is, as Olasky stated, to increase righteousness, then Ateek's form of justice is an act of injustice since it is built on the distortion of truth. Those who advocate for Ateek's form of justice are behind the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. BDS encourages individuals, companies, and even governments to boycott goods exported from Israeli companies, divest from Israeli companies and global companies that do business in the West Bank, and sanction the Jewish state because of its "occupation" of the West Bank and its so-called apartheid policies. All of these lies about Israel are promoted in the name of justice but damage both Israelis and Palestinians.

Israel is not perfect. It certainly does not do everything right, nor does any other nation. But Israel's actions are often misrepresented. Organizations like the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, founded by Israeli lawyer, human rights activist, and Messianic believer Calev Myers, promotes justice in Israel based on truth. It hopes to cultivate and defend rule of law, human rights, freedom of conscience, and democracy for all people in Israel and its adjacent territories.⁵⁰

Myers believes events in Israel profoundly affect global issues and that Israel is a great force for good over evil. Myers argues real justice in Israel for all Israelis and Arabs will produce a brighter future for everyone worldwide.

⁵⁰ "About JIJ," Jerusalem Institute of Justice. <http://jij.org/about/> (accessed November 11, 2015).

If justice is an issue for the Church, it is important to direct believers toward organizations that truly seek justice for everyone and promote truth over lies. Then the Church can truly be a part of biblical justice for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The Church: Not the Arbiter of Justice

When Burge says that the younger generation is more interested in issues of justice than eschatology, he reveals a lack of theological education on eschatology and biblical justice. Instead of studying the two theological issues separately, considering one more important than the other, we must encourage people to see the two working together— which takes us to our second point.

Biblically, the church was never designed to be the arbiter of justice on Earth. We have been called to be people of truth and justice, but we have not been called to establish justice on Earth; this is where eschatology, ecclesiology, and justice collide.

Recently, The Friends of Israel was invited to host Lancaster Bible College's Day of Prayer. The Friends of Israel wanted to seize this opportunity to teach Bible college students about God's justice from a biblical and Dispensational perspective, but in a new and creative way. We organized the Day of Prayer around the topic Peace on Earth, a subject everyone, regardless of denomination or theological perspective, can rally behind.

Our goal was to show these impressionable college students that praying for the peace of Jerusalem from Psalm 122:6 is actually praying for the coming of Jesus Christ and that, at His coming, true justice, righteousness, and peace will be realized globally. This message was able to incorporate biblical justice with eschatology, highlighting the two, instead of separating them.

When we encourage Evangelical Millennials to equally uphold biblical prophecy and biblical justice, it results in a dynamic Church that values both while understanding that only the Messiah of Israel can enact true justice on Earth.

Conclusion

It is time for Dispensational teachers to proactively educate believers on the justice of God and the Church's role as people of justice and to anticipate true justice at the coming of our Lord's earthly reign.

DESIGNING CONFERENCES AND PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

While it is true that we want all believers to come to a favorable understanding of Israel based on a true biblical perspective, the reality is that believers under age 40 lack support for Israel. Some hold anti-Zionist convictions, but most simply do not know what they believe about Israel. It is not a significant issue to them.

More important, they do not know what the Bible says about Israel. What they do know is that they do not want older Christians telling them what to believe. They are much more interested in discovering truth through experience than through lecture. The issue for them is not clearly defined as a choice between Covenant and Dispensational Theology.

Motivated by their desire to be active in making the world better through acts of justice and compassion, these young people are open to hearing and seeing what is happening without being told what to believe. Drawing their own conclusions is of utmost importance to them.

Of course, young people have always been impressionable and idealistic. Lacking sufficient life experience, it is easy for them to create a mental image of how the world should be that fails to factor in all of the realities of life—evil and the consequences of sin being the greatest of these realities.

So how do we teach the younger generations to favor Israel when the norms of edification through teaching and preaching are ineffective at best and a real turn-off at worst? The answer is not simple. It will take a great deal of effort through an ongoing campaign by numerous people and organizations. No one person has the solution. And no one person can take the task on singlehandedly.

At The Friends of Israel, we ask this question of ourselves regularly. We realize that if we fail to reach the next generations, our days are numbered. As the older generations move on to glory, younger people must take their place or we will succumb to a lack of constituents and support. This is not an immediate threat, but failing to act now will lead to a crisis later that we may lack sufficient time to overcome.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is structuring the paradigm shift that must occur to effectively engage and reach younger believers. Not a shift in truth or our convictions in the Word of God, but a shift in methodology— in the way we communicate with and challenge the next generation’s thinking. We must never compromise the Word of God, but how we present God’s truth can and does change. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, Christian films were shown in churches to reach the lost, and they were very effective. But with the development of video technologies, people no longer needed to leave home to watch a movie, and churches quit using films as evangelistic tools.

The paradigm shift must examine the means of communication and the delivery of the message of God’s Word. Since young people do not want to be told what to believe, the traditional approach of teaching and preaching theology is falling on deaf ears. Delivering truth to them in written form, such as in books and magazines, is not even on their radar.

They process volumes of information in small digital bites, using self-developed filters to quickly decipher whether to investigate the information for a few moments or whether to let it flow by. It’s all about making judgments concerning how much time to give to discovering information. Their filters are a construct of an individual’s values, interests, and experience. If a bite of information makes it through the initial filter, the individual will devote a few more seconds to evaluate it. Most information is discarded, but occasionally something is deemed worthy of in-depth consideration.

This situation adds to the challenge of reaching the younger generation. For The Friends of Israel, historically, our most effective vehicle for connecting people with our ministry is our bimonthly magazine, *Israel My Glory*. It has a readership of over half a million and reaches more than 147 countries around the world. But to the younger generations, it presents a format that does not interest them. They are unlikely to pick it up and read it, even though we now have a digital version.

We have been in a transition to address and expand our digital-based ministry. We now have several years of *Israel My Glory* available digitally, and some Friends of Israel published books are available in digital form. We added social media a few years ago, with a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Feedburner.

Four years ago we spent \$45,000 to redesign our website, and today we are faced with the need to redesign it again to keep up with the constant change and advancement in technology. We added a blog several years ago to provide a forum for discussing key issues of the day from a biblical perspective. Our radio ministry is available through our website as a podcast.

It is interesting to see that much of the digital media, such as Facebook, the blog, and podcasts, is now predominantly the realm of the middle-aged generation. Young people do not want to spend their time keeping up with Facebook. They are looking for shorter, quicker ways to interact than by listening to a podcast or reading a blog. We continue to develop our digital media ministries with a view toward reaching younger people and are looking to move into online video.

We have been considering how to break *Israel My Glory* down into smaller bites that can be used to reach and attract the younger generations. This is an area in which we have much to learn. One of the ways we are expanding our understanding of the younger generation is by hiring younger staff. We are developing a younger face for The Friends of Israel ministry, and having younger people in ministry-development meetings is paying dividends. It helps us to understand their way of thinking and how better to reach their generation.

Three years ago we began publishing a gift catalog in the fourth quarter of the year. It organizes our ministry into compassionate projects that are touching and changing lives. We have seen a good response from younger people to the gift catalog projects and to our Israel Relief Fund. Many who never gave previously are supporting these projects financially.

We are also looking to create ministry opportunities to connect the younger generation with our mission. Nine years ago, we launched a new outreach called ORIGINS, an acronym that means “Our Resolve Is Giving Israel Never-ending Support.” It is a volunteer mission for Christians ages 18 to 28 to travel to Israel and work for two weeks at Kaplan Medical Center in Rehovot, Israel. Giving young adults an opportunity to visit Israel, work alongside Israelis, and see what life is like in Israel is a transforming experience. Before leaving Israel, we take a few days to tour the land.

Last year, we began G'Sherim, a one-year ministry internship program for Christians ages 19 to 30. Located in Las Vegas, Nevada, the program gives young adults the opportunity to do ministry within the Jewish community there without making a long-term commitment. They complete the year of service with a new understanding and appreciation for the Jewish people and Israel.

There is so much more we could do as a ministry if we had more resources, particularly people and funding. The Friends of Israel is not actively reaching the most impressionable and open generation, children under age 18, with the message of God's love and appreciation for the Jewish people. There are so many open doors for Sunday school, home school, small group, devotional, and vacation Bible school curricula.

Other ministries see the same challenge to reach the younger generations and are developing programs specifically for them. For example, Christians United for Israel (CUFI) has an on-campus ministry to connect Christian students with active support for Israel. CUFI also launched in January 2015 a new Millennial-focused program called *Israel Collective*. This program concentrates on peace between the people of Israel, both Jewish and Arab, but ultimately drives home the belief that Israel is the biggest promoter of that peace.

This spring, a new initiative was launched to take young Christian adults to Israel to visit the land and get to know the people and issues. Modeled after the Jewish Birthright program, it is called Covenant Journey; and its premise is that if young Christian adults will visit Israel and see it for themselves, they will become Zionists for life. The program has the full support of the Israeli government. Steve Green, Christian philanthropist and CEO of Hobby Lobby, and Paul Singer, Jewish philanthropist and CEO of Elliott Management Corporation, are underwriting the majority of the cost for the trips. The initial trips have proven to be very successful in opening the eyes of the participants to real issues in Israel and gaining their support for Israel's right to live in the land of promise.

These are just a few of the efforts under way to reach the younger generations by providing opportunities to discover the truth and reality of Israel through experiences that interest them. But more has to be done if we want to see Evangelical support for Israel to continue in the coming days.

With the Bethlehem Bible College's Christ at the Checkpoint annual conference and follow-up anti-Zionist conferences springing up across North America in recent months, the anti-Zionists are becoming extremely aggressive in taking their message to young people within Evangelicalism. Their base is in Israel, but we are seeing them actively seeking to reach the young Americans by bringing their message to college campuses, Christian media, anti-Zionist conferences, and the Internet.

Conclusion

Perhaps it is time we have a conversation on how we can best reach young people because if we fail to reach them, who will be left to attend the Pre-Trib Study Group a few years from now?

We are not suggesting that we change our convictions on the Word of God, only the ways in which we reach out to the next generations.

None us can do this alone. It is too big a challenge for any one person or ministry. But by working together to develop ideas, concepts, programs, and such, much can be accomplished for Lord to reach young people with the truth of God's Word.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION

With this paper, we have tried to show that Evangelical support for Israel is strong among older Evangelicals but is waning among the younger generation, particularly Millennials. This analysis should not paralyze us as Christian Zionists. The benefit to interacting with Millennial Evangelicals is that often their convictions can easily be changed if they are presented with facts. Most Millennial Evangelicals lack an understanding of the biblical history and modern history of Israel.

That reality puts us in a good place: It is not that Millennial Evangelicals overwhelmingly “support” the Palestinians over the Israelis; it is that they are only responding to what they see and hear, which often means they are receiving a preponderance of anti-Israel messages.

When it comes to Israel and Zionism, we face the challenge of developing interactive ministry opportunities that lead Millennials in a discovery of truth. God’s Word is unchanging but the world we live in is ever changing. The methods of reaching people in the past have to be retooled to connect with the younger generations and challenge their worldview.

The analysis that Millennial Evangelicals do not overwhelmingly support Israel should lead us to make our message about Christian Zionism clear, concise, and understandable so we can be convincing. We can no longer assume that because someone grew up in a Evangelical Christian home or church that supports Israel, that person will become a Christian Zionist by osmosis. However, we also believe Millennial Evangelicals are more impressionable than the youth of any other generation; so it is our duty to be the ones to impress them.

Finally, let’s not spend all of our energy judging the wave before it crashes. Currently, younger Evangelicals are not as supportive for Israel as their counterparts, but how do we know that over time their knowledge of biblical and modern Israel will not increase, garnering more allegiance. In a *New York Times* article titled *Why Teenagers Today May Grow Up Conservative*, David Leonhardt writes that many of the hippies of

the 1960s that were promoting “Flower Power” and protesting the Vietnam War voted in the 1980s for Ronald Reagan, the right-wing conservative candidate for president.⁵¹

This information puts Christian Zionists in a unique position. The future is not written for the Millennial Evangelicals. It should be our job to show the biblical and political value to being a Christian Zionist, a supporter of the Jewish state, for every generation.

⁵¹ David Leonhardt, “Why Teenagers Today May Grow Up Conservative,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/08/upshot/why-teenagers-may-be-getting-more-conservative.html?_r=0 (accessed November 11, 2015).