

From the House of Jacob to the Iowa Caucuses: The Future of Israel in Contemporary Evangelical Political Ethics

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In the year 2000, then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton revealed in her financial disclosure statements for her campaign for the United States Senate from New York that she had received a contribution from the “American Museum Association.” The New York press corps painted the spelling error, actually the American *Muslim* Association, as an artful dodge designed to protect the candidate from too close an alliance with what is seen as an anti-Israel group in a state with a large Jewish population. This was especially relevant for Clinton, given the fact that her budding political career had been jeopardized by a videotaped image of her kissing the cheek of the “First Lady” of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, a group dedicated to the destruction of the State of Israel. This was significant because Israel is more than just another foreign policy concern, and Jewish voters are more than just another ethnic constituency. Wrapped up in a politician’s support for Israel—or lack thereof—is an entire set of foreign and domestic policy commitments. And in the background of every decision related to Israel is a twentieth-century of bloody state-sponsored anti-Semitic genocide and a twenty-first century of potentially nuclear-armed nations devoted to the destruction of the Israeli state. A candidate’s views on the

security of Israel signal in many ways that candidate’s vision for the future—and his or her view of the past.

If Israel is complicated for candidates for public office in the national political arena, though, it is even more so among evangelical Christians seeking to apply a “Christian worldview” to the social and political arenas of the era. A comprehensively Christian approach to socio-political concerns cannot ignore the most politically incendiary stretch of land on the globe, particularly when the name of the stretch of land takes up one-third of the pages in one’s Bible concordance. Unlike some issues—such as the sanctity of unborn life, for instance—evangelicals have longstanding internal divisions over the nation of Israel. Moreover, these divisions are not incidental to the theological background of evangelical political engagement but run right through the middle of such questions. Even as evangelicals have overcome some seemingly intractable theological divisions that were impediments to a unified approach to political engagement, the question of Israel remains open.¹ As evangelical theologians seek to apply the biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God to the present political structures, how can they ignore a theological question so foundational to understanding the nature

of the Kingdom? Can evangelicals who reject a dispensationalist account of a future for political Israel still counteract anti-Semitism? Does an understanding of a future for Israel mean automatic support for all Israeli policies? These questions require an examination of the future for Israel in a Christian understanding of God's Kingdom purposes. This article will survey current evangelical options on the politics of Israel's future, followed by a proposal for an ethic toward Israel that centers on Jesus as the ultimate Israel of God.

The Politics of Israel's Future: An Historical Appraisal

An evangelical Christian political ethic is more concerned with the nation of Israel than with the nation of, say, Norway. All Christians agree that there will be Norwegians in the Kingdom of God for which we are to seek first. But most Christians also agree that there will not be a *Norway* there. By contrast, all Christians agree that there will be Israelites in the Kingdom of Christ. Evangelicals disagree though whether there will be a nation of Israel there. This question has everything to do with how conservative Protestants see world events, a just response to them, and, more importantly, the nature of biblical promise itself. Before evangelicals can contribute to the stance the international community ought to have toward the state of Israel, they must ask whether the Scripture reveals a particular place for this nation in the script of the end-times. For many evangelicals, the answer to that question is yes—a “yes” that is determinative of an array of public policy decisions. The politics of Israel's future is further complicated by ongoing controversies over evangelical theology itself, particu-

larly over whether the apocalypticism of popular fundamentalism is itself driving U.S. geopolitical commitments in the Middle East.

The majority position in the history of the Christian church, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox, is that the blessings promised in the end-times to Israel are to be received by all those who are found in Christ. Within contemporary evangelicalism, this perspective is seen perhaps most clearly in Reformed theology. The covenant theology of Reformed confessionalism maintains that the church, not any current or future geo-political entity, is the “new Israel,” the inheritor of Israel's covenant promises. “The modern Jewish state is not a part of the messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ,” contends Reformed theologian O. Palmer Robertson. “Although it may be affirmed that this particular civil government came into being under the sovereignty of the God of the Bible, it would be a denial of Jesus' affirmation that his kingdom is not of this world order (John 18:36) to assert that this government is part of his messianic kingdom.”² At the 1971 Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy, for example, Reformed theologian Herman Ridderbos expressed “embarrassment” with the conference since the evangelicals there were focused on Israel's place in prophecy rather than on an evangelistic endeavor to convert the Jews to Christ.³ For Ridderbos, in continuity with Reformed theologians throughout the ages, the future for Israel is found just where it is for Gentiles, in Christ, not in a tract of land in the Middle East. Even those covenant theologians who believe Romans 11 teaches a mass conversion of Jews at the end of the age (John Murray, for example) still tend to see this future for Israel as an ethnic

rather than a political reality.⁴ That is, they would see large numbers of Jews turning to faith in Christ and thus joining with the one Body of Christ in receiving the promises to Abraham rather than seeing the restoration of a state of Israel in the land of Palestine.

Most people interested in the political ramifications of an evangelical theology of Israel, however, are concerned more with the *Scofield Reference Bible* than with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. For evangelicals influenced by dispensationalist theology, the future of Israel as both an ethnic identity and as a nation-state is assured and indisputable from the Old Testament promises—which commit to the offspring of Abraham the land of Canaan and peace from enemies. New Testament passages such as Romans 9-11 seem to reconfirm the national and political character of these promises. Dispensationalist evangelicals—and those influenced by their eschatology—affirm an earthly millennial reign of Christ, centered on a reconstituted national Israel upon which God will lavish the geo-political promises He pledged to them in the Hebrew Scriptures. This eschatology of a future Israelite hope plays an unlikely role in the history of the contemporary state of Israel, and lurks in the background of ongoing debates over the place of America and the international community in the Middle East.

As from the beginning of the movement, some contemporary dispensationalist leaders warn against a “replacement theology” that sees Israel’s future as belonging to the church. In a volume endorsed by influential pastor John MacArthur and leaders of several Messianic Jewish organizations, Barry Horner argues for a “Judeo-centric eschatology”

as a “unifying teaching of Scripture” and labels “replacement theology” as “anti-Judaism.”⁵ Indeed, in a forward to Horner’s book, Messianic Jewish leader Moishe Rosen labels any understanding of a fulfillment of the Old Testament eschatological promises to those who are in Christ to be “theological anti-Semitism.”⁶ Rosen sees this kind of “thievery” of Christians from the promises to the Jews in, among other places, children’s Sunday school “where small children are taught to sing the song, ‘Every promise in the book is mine, every chapter, every verse, every line.’”⁷ This understanding would be more nuanced in the mainstream of dispensational scholarship. Progressive dispensationalists—led by theologians and biblical scholars such as Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock—argue for a more unified understanding of the people of God, and away from the language of “two peoples” with two sets of promises as articulated by earlier generations of dispensationalists. Nonetheless, progressive dispensationalists still maintain a unique future for political Israel. Indeed, the Israelite character of the Millennium may be the distinguishing feature of progressive dispensationalism from historic premillennialism. One dispensationalist argues that Israel’s future is to serve a “mediatorial role” to the other nations in the coming millennial kingdom of Christ.⁸ This special function does not make Israel superior to the other nations, he contends, any more than a complementarian view of male headship means that men are essentially superior to women.⁹ For progressive dispensationalists, the future restoration of Israel as a political body is itself a corrective to the political isolationism of previous generations of conservative Protestants. The very existence of a political

rule of Jesus over a nation of Israel—with a government in Jerusalem and a global foreign policy—repels any notion that the gospel is unconcerned with politics or that redemption is focused simply on private “spiritual” matters. Blaising, for instance, contrasts the political nature of a dispensational understanding of millennial hope with the mystical “spiritual visionary hope” of Augustinian amillennialism, which reduces Christian expectation to inward spiritual blessing rather than historical political resolution.¹⁰ While other Christians may hold to a “not yet” vision of Christ ruling the nations with a “rod of iron,” dispensationalists, including the newer forms, can claim continuity with the specific politico-redemptive purposes initiated with Israel’s past. Thus, the bookends of an imperfectly ruled Israelite theocracy in the Old Testament and a perfectly ruled Israelite Christocracy in the Millennium can provide, in the dispensationalist scheme, a standard of political righteousness by which to judge current claims to political justice.

History would seem to bear out something of the claim that an emphasis on future Israel has a politicizing effect on even the most politically isolationist forms of conservative Protestantism. The hope of a future for Israeli Zion contributed to the transformation of dispensationalists from a politically withdrawn and spiritually focused sect to the driving force behind both the call for a secure Israeli homeland abroad and the Religious Right populist electoral movement at home. Historian Timothy Weber demonstrates how the rise of dispensationalism—originating with the separatist theology of Anglican dissident J. N. Darby—gained ground among some English and American Protestants in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries because it offered a

“‘sure word of Bible prophecy’ to help them interpret world events and show how such events were leading to Christ’s return.”¹¹ A restored Israel seemed as distant and futuristic as the antichrist does to contemporary evangelicals, and so dispensationalist arguments seemed more focused on prophecy charts than on the daily newspapers. “For the first one hundred years of their movement, then, they were observers, not shapers, of events,” Weber asserts.¹² This was not to continue throughout the twentieth-century. Weber continues,

But that all changed after Israel reclaimed its place in Palestine and expanded its borders. For the first time, dispensationalists believed that it was necessary to leave the bleachers and get onto the playing field to make sure the game ended according to the divine script. As the world edged closer and closer to the end, dispensationalists became important players in their own game plan. When they shifted from observers to participants, they ran the risk of turning their predictions into self-fulfilling prophecies.¹³

For dispensationalists, the establishment of Israel in 1948 seemed to be a verification of a prophetic timetable in which most elements are, by definition, unverifiable until the Rapture. Indeed, dispensationalists were so sure of the truth of their prophetic futurism—and that it was at hand—that they fueled American support for a Jewish homeland. Thus, the activism of dispensationalists such as William Blackstone in the early 1880s toward a Christian Zionism can be traced directly to the eventual fulfillment in an Israeli state.¹⁴ As historian Martin Marty notes, mainline Protestantism before and after World War II (such as the editorial board of *The Christian Century* magazine) received talk of Zionism with

ambivalence, if not outright hostility. Marty writes, "Protestant fundamentalists, who backed Zionism, gave a theological interpretation of events that was friendly to Israel but that no Jew could accept."¹⁵ Clearly, few Protestant liberals could accept it either.

The support for a Jewish homeland, precisely because of its place in prophetic fulfillment, continued throughout the twentieth-century. Harold J. Ockenga, for example, proclaimed at a Jerusalem prophecy conference organized by Carl F. H. Henry, that the "restoration" of national Israel was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of the budding of the fig tree (Luke 21:29-34). Thus, the establishment of the Israeli state paved the way for the return of Christ. "If the fig tree represents Israel, as we believe it does, then the return of Israel to Palestine, in fulfillment of many passages of Scripture, is the putting forth of shoots by the fig tree," he said.¹⁶ Ockenga, hardly an exemplar of reckless apocalyptic speculation, represented in this viewpoint a broad number of evangelicals nationwide. Evangelical political support for Israel found further theological anchoring in the flurry of end-times interest in the 1970s and 1980s, led by popular writer Hal Lindsey. Lindsey applied Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 that "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" to mean that the "Countdown to Armageddon" began with the establishment of Israel in 1948. "A generation in the Bible is something like forty years," he argued. "If this is a correct deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place. Many scholars who have studied prophecy all their lives believe that this is so."¹⁷ The doctrinal roots of Lindsey's support of the Israeli state led him to

accuse covenant theology of a dangerous anti-Semitism replete with terrifying geo-political consequences.¹⁸ Lindsey's Israel-centric eschatology tapped into the imagination of the evangelical consumer base with the *Left Behind* series of novels penned by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in the 1990s and shortly thereafter.

Support for Israel became a key component of the political agenda of the so-called Religious Right. Though Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority attempted to make clear that their movement rested on "no common theological premise," the organization acknowledged that many Moral Majority members supported the Jewish state "because of their theological convictions."¹⁹ Under siege from opponents ranging from the Palestinian Liberation Organization to the United Nations, the Israeli government happily accepted evangelical support regardless of its theological foundation, especially in light of the influence the Religious Right had on American political leaders such as Ronald Reagan. The Israeli government bought tourism advertisements in *Christianity Today* and other evangelical publications while Israeli Prime Ministers such as Benjamin Netanyahu met with evangelical leaders such as Falwell and Pat Robertson. Jewish journalist Zev Chafets argues that these alliances were driven by the strategic plans of Israeli leaders who were more concerned about national security than about American evangelical prophecy beliefs or about American liberal sensibilities. Chafets contrasts Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's courting of evangelical Christian leaders with the disdain that greeted these evangelicals from traditional American power centers. Begin "didn't judge Christians by where they went to college, their rural accents,

or, for that matter, what political party they belonged to (at this stage, the late 1970s, many, including Pat Robertson, were still Democrats, although they were quickly trending Republican). The Christian Zionists supported Begin's policies, and that was enough."²⁰

American Jewish leaders seemed ambivalent to evangelical support for Israel. Some, such as the signatories of the pre-September 11th-era *Dabru Emet* statement on Jewish-Christian relations, hailed evangelicals for recognizing that the Palestinian land is part of an eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people. "Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics," they noted. "As Jews, we applaud this support."²¹ Other American Jews have charged pro-Israel evangelical political leaders with an ironic anti-Semitism, pointing to, among other items, Jerry Falwell's suggestion that the antichrist would be Jewish, Pat Robertson's cryptic writings about a conspiratorial cabal of international bankers, and former Southern Baptist Convention president Bailey Smith's (most often reported out of context) declaration that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew."

Critics of Christian political activism, such as Karen Armstrong, warn that dispensational support for Israel masks "genocidal tendencies," which are equally informed by dispensational prophecy charts. "At the same time as Protestant fundamentalists celebrated the birth of the new Israel, they were cultivating fantasies of a final genocide at the end of time," she notes. "The Jewish state had come into existence purely to further a Christian fulfillment."²² Others object that prophetic support for Israel

is counterproductive because it fuels the already apocalyptic religious tensions in the Middle East.²³ Israel's American critics on both the left and the right of the political spectrum have been frustrated by what they consider to be the political *carte blanche* given by evangelicals to the Israeli state. Former United States Congressman Paul Findley (R-Ill.), for example, in a critique of the powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), blames the prophetic beliefs of evangelicals for helping to make support for Israel the untouchable third rail of American foreign policy.²⁴ As conservative commentator Patrick J. Buchanan attacked the Israeli "amen corner" in the United States for "beating the drum" for war in the Persian Gulf in 1990, he must have realized that much of that "amen corner" was composed of conservative evangelicals whose support he would court in the next three primary campaigns for the Republican presidential nomination. While not seeing Christian Zionists as significant as the so-called "Israel lobby," controversial academic critics of Israel John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt nonetheless call dispensationalist evangelicalism "an important 'junior partner' to the various pro-Israel groups in the American Jewish community."²⁵

The period of war and tumult following the attack on the United States by Islamic jihadists refocused attention on the eschatological bases for evangelical political thought, especially in the arena of geo-politics. British ethicist Michael Northcutt argues that the foreign policy of American President George W. Bush is motivated by a dispensationalist apocalyptic eschatology envisioned for Bush in a theology fleshed out by Bush religious advisers such as Franklin Graham and

James Robison. “Even the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, and terrorist acts against the invading nations, is interpreted by dispensationalists as an end time event, because Revelation 9:14-15 speaks of the release of ‘four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates’ who will destroy one-third of men on the earth.”²⁶ This apocalypticism supported by state action is because, Northcutt contends, the theologically oriented Bush Administration is committed “financially and strategically to rebuilding Zion as the State of Israel,” in fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Mainline Protestant theologian Gary Dorrien also sees dispensationalist futurism behind Bush Administration foreign policy, Zionism, and “American imperialism.” Dorrien implies a dual meaning behind a purported statement by Bush Administration national security advisers that “the road to Jerusalem runs through Baghdad.”²⁷

Some have seen two forms of apocalyptic utopianism, one Christian and one secular, coming together in a neo-conservative/Religious Right alliance for conservative internationalism in support of Israel. “In building on the biblical foundations for an apocalyptic confrontation in the Middle East, the Christian Right came to support the neo-conservative agenda concerning Israel after having little interest in foreign policy during the 1980s and the early 1990s,” write foreign policy analysts Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke.²⁸ Halper and Clarke call this a “marriage of convenience” between evangelicals who draw on a missionary zeal and an apocalyptic Israel-centric eschatology to support the aggressive interventionism of the neoconservatives.²⁹ Dorrien argues that Jewish neo-conservatives such as Norman Podhoretz

overlooked the fact that the restoration of Israel in the dispensationalist eschatology of Religious Right leaders such as Pat Robertson is “a prelude to Christ’s second coming at which Jews would be converted to Christianity or condemned to hell” in order to claim Christian support for the Israeli state and a united front against Islamic jihad.³⁰ Apparently, this accommodation works both ways, as in late 2007 Robertson endorsed Podhoretz’s candidate for President of the United States, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, despite the candidate’s support for abortion rights, long a central plank of the Religious Right’s public agenda. Robertson said the “global war on terror” was now the most important issue facing the country, and the decisive factor in his choice of the socially liberal, thrice-married New Yorker.

There is no question that social and religious conservatives—led by evangelical Protestants—and foreign policy hawks—led by the so-called neoconservatives—have in recent years shared as part of an alliance within the Republican Party. Regardless of whether one supports the foreign policy proposals of the Bush Administration or the Republican Party platform, though, it is an exaggeration to say that this is the result on the part of evangelicals of an apocalyptic end-times scenario centering on the nation of Israel. First of all, claims to evangelical “engineering” of Armageddon are themselves a popular apocalyptic conspiracy theory worthy of the 1970s-era *Thief in the Night*. One must remember that the very same language now used of dispensationalist influence on foreign policy was also used during the Reagan Administration. Critics of President Ronald Reagan’s hawkish Cold Warrior foreign policy and of his

closeness to the then-novel evangelical political movement warned of a scary Armageddon scenario in which a religiously-motivated Reagan might force the end-times confrontation between Israel and “Gog and Magog,” a nuclear Soviet Union. On the one hand, such warnings seemed to have some justification. After all, as historian Garry Wills points out, Reagan made statements such as this to a pro-Israel lobbyist:

You know, I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if we’re the generation that’s going to see that come about. I don’t know if you’ve noted any of these prophecies lately, but believe me, they certainly describe the times we’re going through.³¹

And yet, if Reagan were driven by a fanatical prophetic conviction, he quite obviously failed. The Reagan Administration did support Israel, but Israel’s interests did not, for better or for worse, drive American foreign policy in every instance, as the American withdrawal from Lebanon demonstrated. Reagan did employ clear language against the Soviet Union, but if he believed the “Evil Empire” to be the Gog of Ezekiel’s oracle, destined for a nuclear showdown with the Israeli state, then why did the Administration spend so much time in peace negotiations with this Gog? And why did Reagan invest so much effort in the idea of a space-based “shield” of nuclear arms? Yes, Reagan and Bush utilized language drawn from dispensationalist evangelical eschatology from time to time, but is this because they are mapping out foreign policy with a *Scofield Bible* or a Tim LaHaye novel or is it because—whatever their personal religious convictions—they are also politicians for whom evangelical Christians

are an important constituency? Perhaps a healthy dose of cynicism and political realism could help some secular and liberal religious observers to see a more nuanced situation, and enable a more carefully thought through consideration of the wisdom, or lack thereof, of American involvement in Palestine, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere.

Second, much that has been written about the alleged dispensationalist apocalyptic and Israel-supportive influence on American foreign policy fails to take into account the waning influence of dispensationalism as a theological system in contemporary American evangelicalism. Previous generations of evangelicals included large figures who incorporated a dispensationalist understanding of Bible prophecy into primary aspects of their teaching ministries. These would include, for example, W. A. Criswell of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, and even (for a time) evangelist Billy Graham. In the contemporary era, however, the sources of theological energy in American evangelicalism include such disparate streams as a resurgent Reformed theology (as in the ministry of John Piper and an array of conferences and publishers around the country), a semi-liberalizing theology (as in some forms of postmodernist “emerging church” accommodation), and a missional pragmatism that hardly touches on any theological concerns eschatological or otherwise. Even those evangelical leaders who are clearly dispensationalist have identities in the evangelical world in which their dispensationalism is almost incidental; not the core of their support. Dispensationalists are still around in evangelical leadership, but they are more likely to be leading a seminar on cell group ministry or a breakout session on

effectual calling than a conference on the place of Israel in biblical prophecy.

In this sense, some professional “evangelical watchers” treat dispensationalism much the way they treat, to a greater degree, theonomic Reconstructionism. While a small minority of evangelical Christians are theonomists or Reconstructionists, sociologists and political scientists have made a cottage industry sorting through the writings of Rousas Rushdoony and others, warning of a “dominionist” influence on American foreign and domestic policy. There is no doubt that there are multitudes more dispensationalist premillennialists than theonomic postmillennialists in America today (as both sides of that equation would affirm), but often the same paradigm is at work in some critics of American evangelicalism. Often the very same critics charge the Religious Right with *both* a pessimistic apocalypticism dragging the world toward nuclear winter *and* a domineering cultural mandate hurling the world toward stoning pits for adulterers without ever seeming to realize how incoherent these two theological systems are.³² A more careful analysis of the politics of Christian eschatology should view the ideological motives and inclinations of evangelical Protestants with the same kind of complexity with which one analyzes the ideological motives and inclinations of, for example, America’s Catholic or Jewish populations.

Third, assessments of evangelical support for Israel often fail to take into account the evangelical reaction to seemingly overwhelming anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli ideologies rooted in counter-biblical mythologies—whether those mythologies are nationalistic Islam or anti-supernaturalistic Christian liberal-

ism. When evangelicals hear the speech about Jews on some Arabic television stations, they hear—accurately, I think—echoes of an idolatrously murderous Third Reich. Yes, some conservative evangelicals have applied incorrectly the Old Testament promises directly to the current Israeli state. But what of mainline Protestant denominations who boycott the “Israeli occupation” by diverting funds, often by canonizing the Palestinians as new Israelites in bondage to a rather ironically cast new Pharaoh. One can hardly blame conservative evangelicals for seeing the silliness of a Presbyterian Church (USA) that reconfigures the Trinity and embraces religious pluralism but warns its church members that the *Left Behind* series is “not in accord with our Reformed understanding of covenant theology.”³³

The Politics of Israel’s Future: A Theological Reappraisal

A vision of Israel’s future has played a significant role in an evangelical ethic of political involvement, even if, for some evangelicals, this understanding of Israel was more at the level of intuition than at the level of full-orbed theological reflection. It could be that somewhere in the future there will be resurgence of dispensational premillennialism, but this seems unlikely in the near term. Rather, it appears that among the younger generation of evangelical Protestants, covenant theologian Vern Poythress’s prediction has proven true: progressive dispensationalism has “progressed” all the way out of anything recognizable as dispensationalism and toward historic premillennialism or even amillennialism.³⁴ If so, does this mean that Israel as a political body would occupy the same

place as, say, a more strategically located Norway in an evangelical political ethic? How should post-dispensationalist evangelicals understand Israel as the nation relates to their theological identity and to their ethical engagement?

One of the positive contributions of some of the more orthodox forms of the so-called “emerging church” is a reemphasis on the centrality of narrative to biblical truth. This insight is, of course, not unique to “postmodern” forms of Christianity—see the Patristic writings or, closer to our own era, those of C. S. Lewis. Seeing the Scripture as a story—a true story—rather than as simply a systematic theology to be mined is the first step to getting beyond some of the disputes over a future for Israel, disputes that at times have tended to ignore the literary unity of the text. The story of Israel’s God shows us that God’s cosmic purposes are also intensely personal and particular, seen in the way God has chosen to bring about these purposes through covenant promise and fulfillment, mediated through the line of Abraham.³⁵ After demonstrating God’s creational origin of the whole universe—and his salvation of all animal and human life through the Noahic flood, God builds a vision of the end of all things through covenant promises with a chosen people, beginning with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant promised material land, a name of great renown, and a multitude of offspring (Gen 12:1-7; 17:1-14). Thus, faith itself is defined as forward-looking and eschatological from the very beginning—as Abraham offers up the promised son, knowing God could raise him from the dead (Gen 22:1-19; Heb 11:17-19) and as Joseph pleads with his brothers to carry his bones into the promised land, knowing that his death could not annul God’s

covenant purposes for Israel (Gen 50:25; Josh 23:32; Heb 11:22).

With the foundation of the Abrahamic promise, God further reveals the contours of biblical hope. Through the Mosaic covenant, he outlines the blessings of an obedient nation and the curses of a disobedient people. In the Davidic covenant, he promises a son to David who will build a dwelling-place for God, who will defeat God’s enemies, and rule the people in the wisdom of the Spirit (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 2, Psalm 73; Psalm 89). In the prophesied new covenant, God promises to unite the fractured nations of Israel and Judah into one people, a people who all know Yahweh, are forgiven of their sins, and are restored as a nation in the promised land (Jer 31:31-40).

The covenants look forward—past Israel’s then-present disobedience—to the day in which the vine of God bears fruit (Ps 80:8-19; Isa 5:1-7; 27:6; Ezek 15:1-8; 17:1-24; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1-2), the harlot of God’s people is a faithful bride washed of all uncleanness (Isa 54:5-6; Jer 3:20; Ezek 16:1-63; Hosea 2:1-23), the exiled refugees are returned to a secure homeland, and the flock of God is united under one Davidic shepherd who will feed them and divide them from the goats (Jer 3:15-19; 23:1-8; Ezek 34:1-31; Micah 5:2-4; 7:14-17). In this coming future, Israel will be what she is called to be, the light of the world, a light that the darkness cannot overcome (Isa 60:1-3). In this future, God’s favor on Israel is clear to the nations because he is present with his people. The repeated promise of the covenants is “I will be your God and you will be my people.” As Joel prophesies, “You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, that I am the Lord your God and there is none else” (Joel 2:27). With this in view, the covenants

picture their fulfillment not just in terms of inheritance blessings, but also in terms of a restoration of Eden (Ezek 36:33-36; 37:22-23), the building of a glorious temple (2 Sam 7:13; Ezek 40:1-47:12), the return of a remnant from exile (Isa 11:12-16), and the construction of a holy city of Zion in which Yahweh dwells with his people in splendor (Ps 48:1-14; 74:2; Isa 18:7; Lam 5:17-22; Ezek 48:30-35).³⁶ The covenants will come to their goal when Israel is judged for sin, raised from the dead, and anointed with the Spirit of Yahweh—a public act in the face of hostile nations (Ezek 20:21, 35-49; 37:11-27). These covenant promises are then inherently eschatological and messianic—a truth seen in the fact that the patriarchs themselves died and rotted away without seeing the realization of the promises (Heb 11:13-16).

The gospels apply the covenant fulfillments to Jesus directly, equating him with Israel itself. Indeed, Jesus recapitulates the life of Israel. Like Israel under pagan rule, he escapes from a baby-murdering tyrant, and is brought out of Egypt. “Out of Egypt, I have called my son,” says Hosea, referencing the exodus of God’s “son” Israel from Egypt, and yet Matthew applies this prophetically to the young Jesus (Matt 2:15; Hosea 11:1). The nations, represented by eastern Magi, stream to Jesus and give him gifts of frankincense and myrrh (Matt 2:1-12), exactly as Isaiah had promised would be true of Israel in the last days (Isa 60:1-6). Like Israel, Jesus passes through the Jordan River (Matt 3:13-4:1). In the temptation accounts, Jesus wanders for forty days in the wilderness, where he is tempted (1) with food, (2) with proving God’s vindication of him, and (3) with grasping for the Kingdom promises (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). He explicitly ties these events to Israel’s wilderness

wanderings when Israel believed their present plight annulled their revealed eschatology. Jesus, however, overcomes. Advancing forward God’s Kingdom, Jesus applies temple language to himself—to his own body (Matt 12:6). Like Ezekiel’s eschatological temple, the living water of the Spirit flows from Jesus bringing life as it streams toward the Tree of Life (John 7:37-39; Ezek 47:1-12). He applies the vine language of Israel to himself—and to his disciples as branches sharing the blessings with him. He speaks of himself as the Davidic shepherd-king who will fight the wolves and establish the flock of Israel under one head (Mark 14:27; John 10:1-21). Like the prophecy of Israel’s latter day glory, Jesus announces that he is the “light of the world” in whom the nations will see God (John 8:12-20). Jesus applies Israel’s language of the coming restoration of the nation by the Spirit to personal regeneration and entrance into the Kingdom itself. He confronts a teacher of Israel inquiring why he would not know that only the regenerate remnant of the nation can enter the promised Kingdom (John 3:1-13). When Jesus is rejected by Israel, he announces that the prophets of old foresaw this aspect of the Kingdom as well (John 12:36-43).

Jesus applies the inheritance language of Israel (the meek inheriting the land, Ps 37:11, 22) directly to his followers now (the meek shall inherit the earth, Matt 5:5). Jesus demonstrates that, unlike for Adam, nature itself is “under his feet,” as his voice itself commands tumultuous winds and waves to be still (Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41). He has authority over death as he turns back disease and raises those who have died, just as the prophets promised would happen in the last days (Luke 7:1-23; 8:40-56). He casts

out demons through his Spirit anointing and announces to the religious authorities of Israel, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). When asked by the Pharisees when the promised Kingdom would come, Jesus told them “the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:2-22). When followers mention the eschatological day of resurrection, Jesus says, “I am the Resurrection” and “I am the Way” (John 11:24-25; 14:6). Jesus speaks of his inauguration of the Kingdom as signaling the judgment and eviction of Satan as the “ruler of this world” (Mark 2:22-30; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), as God is once again restoring his rule through a human mediatorial King. This is seen in Jesus’ triumphal entry into the holy city Jerusalem, when he fulfills the prophet Zechariah’s promise of a humble messianic King riding to victory, foreshadowing the global rule that is to follow (Matt 21:1-11).

At his crucifixion, Jesus relives the attack of the nations and the abandonment by God typified by his ancestor David. The curses of the Mosaic Law come upon Israel there. With Day of the Lord imagery, the sky turns dark and the earth quakes. As David was warned, the kingly son of David is beaten with rods as the discipline of God, though not for his own sins but the sins of the world (2 Sam 7:14-15; Ps 89:32-33; Matt 27:29-30; Mark 15:18). The Gentile nations deride him—even gambling for the faux royal garments with which they had mocked his claimed kingship (John 19:16-24). He is a hanged man and thus, according to Deuteronomy, exempt from the inheritance promises of Israel—and indeed the very sight of such a cursed man imperils the nation’s inheritance of the Land (Deut

21:22-23). He must be removed and buried immediately. Jesus speaks prospectively of this crucifixion as a fiery baptism he must undergo in order to receive his Kingdom (Matt 3:11-12; Mark 10:35-40; Luke 12:49-50), evoking the language used by the prophets of the coming fiery judgment of God upon his people Israel (Ezek 20:48).

By his resurrection, Jesus marks the cataclysmic onset of the new Kingdom order. Like Israel was promised, the righteous remnant—one man—is raised from the dead through the Spirit in view of the nations. Upon his resurrection, Jesus identifies his disciples as his “brothers” (John 20:17)—language used in the Old Testament to identify the parameters of the inheritance, the people of Israel (Lev 25:46; Deut 17:15, 20). He eats with his disciples and commands Peter to “feed my sheep”—royal imagery that speaks of the coming of the last days glory of Jerusalem in a restored Israel (Jer 3:15-18). When Jesus’ disciples ask him if he plans now to restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus points to the coming of the Holy Spirit and the apostolic authority to proclaim the kingdom to the nations (Acts 1:6-8).

In Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, the apostles see the onset of the last days—the enthronement of the promised messianic king. At Pentecost, the disciples proclaim that the long-awaited eschatological Spirit has now been poured out on Jesus’ followers, thus signaling that God has vindicated him as the true Israel, the righteous Son of David, and the faithful King whom God will not abandon to the grave (Acts 2:14-41; Rom 1:1-4). The coming of the Spirit is seen as a sign that God’s anointing was upon Jesus, an anointing he has now poured out on those who identify with him (Acts 2:34). This means that Jesus

is the Davidic messiah whose enemies will be made a footstool for his feet, in keeping with the ancient prophecies. Peter identifies the coming of the Spirit with the prophet Joel's promise of the last days, and the climactic Day of the Lord (Acts 2:16-21). In the resurrection, the apostles preach God is keeping his promises to Abraham and to David, and through it God will bring about the promised restoration of Israel (Acts 3:17-26).

The Apostle Paul explains that the resurrection of Jesus is inherently eschatological; indeed, it is the very hoped for last-days resurrection of the dead anticipated for centuries by the twelve tribes of Israel (Acts 26:6-8). Paul sees those among the Gentile nations turning to Christ as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise to bless all peoples through Abraham's seed (Rom 15:8-13; Gal 3:7-4:7). The apostles, meeting at the Jerusalem Council, identify the Gentile conversions as evidence that God, as promised, has granted the Davidic throne to Jesus in a global, indisputable latter-day reign (Acts 15:1-29). They see this as the rebuilding of David's tent, the promise of a restored Israel. This is why Jew/Gentile unity in the new covenant church is about more than human relational harmony. Instead, it acknowledges that God's kingdom purposes are *in Christ*. He is the Last Man and the True Israel, the bearer of the Spirit. A Jewish person who clings to the tribal markings of the old covenant acts as though the eschaton has not arrived, as though one were still waiting for the promised seed. Both Jews and Gentiles must instead see their identities not in themselves or in the flesh, but in Jesus Christ and in him alone. Jesus is the descendant of Abraham, the one who deserves the throne of David. *He* is the obedient Israel who inherits the

blessings of the Mosaic covenant. *He* is the propitiation of God's wrath. *He* is the firstborn from the dead, the resurrection and the life. Those who are in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—receive with him all the eschatological blessings that are due to him. In him, they are all, whether Jew or Gentile, sons of God—not only in terms of relationship with the Father but also in terms of promised inheritance (Rom 8:12-17). In Christ, they all—whether Jew or Gentile—are sons of Abraham, the true circumcision, the holy nation, and the household and commonwealth of God (Gal 3:23-4:7; Eph 2-3; Col 2:6-15; 3:3-11; 1 Pet 2:9-10). In the church, the eschatological temple is built, this time with “living stones” indwelt by the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet 2:4-5; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16-18). The church now experiences what Israel longed for, the “ends of the ages” have come upon them (1 Cor 10:11). The church is the Israelite vine that bears the promised “fruit” of the eschaton, that of a dawning age of the Spirit as opposed to the collapsing age of the flesh (Gal 5:15-24).

The place of Israel in an evangelical theology and an evangelical political ethic must start with the understanding that the future has a name: Jesus of Nazareth. We must further recognize that *Israel* has a name: again, Jesus of Nazareth. All Christians everywhere believe in a future for Israel. Where Christians disagree is on exactly who *Israel* is. Dispensationalists insist that Romans 9-11 reaffirms the OT covenant promises to Abraham's genetic descendants—promises of a rebuilt temple, a restored theocracy, and reclaimed geography. For dispensational premillennialists, this is a primary purpose of the Millennium—ethnic Israel is reconstituted as a political state and

serves as a mediator of God's blessings to the rest of the nations. Some dispensationalists further argue that this future for Israel demands current support for Israeli claims to all of what once was Canaan—along with virtual *carte blanche* support for Israeli policies since “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse” (Gen 12:3). Covenant theologians argue that the future restoration of Israel will be fulfilled—but fulfilled in the church, a largely Gentile body that has “replaced” the Jewish theocracy since the nation rejected her Messiah at Jesus’ first advent. Covenant theology then (quite wrongly) sees great continuity between Old Testament Israel and the new covenant church—both are mixed bodies of regenerate and unregenerate members (believers and their children), and the sign of circumcision is replaced with the sign of baptism (and, like circumcision applied to new converts and to covenant children).

Both covenant theology and dispensationalism, however, often discuss Israel and the church without taking into account the Christocentric nature of biblical eschatology. The future restoration of Israel has *never* been promised to the unfaithful, unregenerate members of the nation (John 3:3-10; Rom 2:25-29)—but only to the faithful remnant. The church is not Israel, at least not in a direct, unmediated sense. The remnant of Israel—a biological descendant of Abraham, a circumcised Jewish firstborn son who is approved of by God for his obedience to the covenant—receives *all* of the promises due to him. Israel is Jesus of Nazareth, who, as promised to Israel, is raised from the dead and marked out with the Spirit (Ezek 37:13-14; Rom 1:2-4). *All* the promises of God “find their Yes in him”

(2 Cor 1:20), as Paul puts it, and this yes establishes a Jew like Paul with Gentiles like the Corinthians “in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor 1:21-22). The Spirit guarantees what? It guarantees that all who share the Spirit of Christ are “joint heirs with Christ” of his promised inheritance (Rom 8:17 NKJV).

This is the radical nature of the gospel in the New Testament. Dispensationalists are right that only ethnic Jews receive the promised future restoration, but Paul makes clear that the “seed of Abraham” is singular, not plural (Gal 3:16). Only the circumcised can inherit the promised future for Israel. All believers—Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female—are forensically Jewish firstborn sons of God (Gal 3:28). They are *in Christ*. Circumcision is not irrelevant. Instead, both Jews and Gentiles in Christ *are* “the circumcision” because they have “the circumcision of Christ” (Col 2:11-12). In Christ, I inherit all the promises due to Abraham’s offspring because I am “hidden” in Abraham’s promised offspring so that everything that is true of him is true of me. As Paul puts it, “Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11). It is not that God changes his mind about a rebuilt temple. He fulfills it—in the temple of Christ’s body, a temple Jesus builds with living stones. Thus, dispensationalists are right to argue for a Judeo-centric eschatology, provided they center it around one particular Jew; just as Christians are right to argue for an anthropocentric theology provided they center it on one particular Man.

The future of Israel then does belong to Gentile believers but only because they are in union with a Jewish Messiah. Paul speaks of a future conversion of Jewish

people, but he is careful to denote this salvation as the growth of a single olive vine with a Jewish root—with a grafting on now of Gentiles and a future grafting on of more Jews. The church, as Israel was promised, does now “bear fruit”—the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5)—but it does so only because Jesus is the vine of Israel. We share his inheritance because we are the branches, united to him by faith (John 15:1-11). Is there a future for Israel? Yes. Does this future mean material and political blessings? Yes. Does this future mean the granting of all the land promised to Abraham in Canaan? Yes, along with the entire rest of the cosmos (Rom 4:13). Does this promise apply to ethnic Jews? Yes, one ethnic Jew whose name is Jesus. Do Gentile believers share in this inheritance? Yes, if they are in Christ, one-flesh with him through faith (Eph 5:22-33), they receive the inheritance that belongs to him (Eph 1:11).

This kind of focus on Christ as Israel puts evangelical Christians in line with the oldest apologists of the church, such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Justin Martyr. In his dialogue with Trypho, a Jewish interlocutor who argued that the lack of a political restoration of Israel means the Messiah the Old Testament promised could not have come, Justin laid out an “already/not yet” framework of inaugurated eschatology and also carefully delineated the meaning of “Israel”—a meaning found not in genetic bloodlines but in union with a Jewish Messiah.³⁷ As patristic scholar Robert Lewis Wilken points out, a turning point in the dialogue between Trypho and Justin came when the Jewish thinker realizes that they have two divergent views of Israel.³⁸ While Trypho assumed “Israel” refers only to descendants of Abraham, according to the

flesh, he asked Justin, “What is this? Are *you* Israel and is he speaking these things about *you*?” To this, Justin answered in the affirmative.³⁹ Justin identified Israel with Jesus, literally translating “Israel” as the One who overcomes in power, a name merited by Jesus alone.⁴⁰ In this is recognition of what the Protestant Reformers would later rally the churches around: *solus Christus*.

So would a Christocentric evangelical eschatology mean that evangelicals would abandon support for the contemporary Israeli state? By no means should this be the case. Dispensationalists have served the church by pointing us to our responsibility to support the Jewish people and the nation of Israel through a century that has seen the most horrific anti-Semitic violence imaginable. We need not hold to a dispensationalist view of the future restoration of Israel to agree that such support is a necessary part of a Christian eschatology. Novelist Walker Percy pointed to the continuing existence of Jewish people as a sign of God’s presence in the world. There are no Hittites walking about on the streets of New York, he remarked.⁴¹ There does appear to be a promise of a future conversion of Jewish people to Christ (Romans 9-11), although they are part of the same vine onto which we are grafted. The current secular state of Israel is not the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham; Jesus is. Nonetheless, the state of Israel is the guardian of post-Holocaust world Judaism. This does not necessitate that we support every political decision of the Israeli government. It does mean that we stand with Israel against every form of anti-Semitic violence because we know that these are the kinsmen according to the flesh of our Messiah. And it means that even as we support Israel we keep

our even more urgent commitment to proclaim the gospel of our global Messiah “to the Jew first” (Rom 1:16), repudiating as the truest form of anti-Semitism any notion that our Jewish neighbors can approach God without the only Mediator through whom any sinner—Jew or Gentile—can approach a holy God. This is the spirit evidenced in a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) resolution against anti-Semitism, adopted surprisingly as early as 1873. The SBC resolution asserts “our unspeakable indebtedness to the seed of Abraham” and recognizes “their peculiar claims upon the sympathies and prayers of all Gentile Christians,” while longing for “the day when the superscription of the Cross shall be the confession of all Israel, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’”⁴²

Evangelicals must also recognize that Romans 13 is as important for our understanding of the contemporary Middle East crisis as is Romans 11. The Israeli people are currently under ongoing terrorist attack by groups devoted by their own declaration to the destruction of the Israeli state. When Israel, with justice and temperance, defends itself against terrorist groups, the nation bears the sword with the authority of God Himself (Rom 13:1-5). This authority is limited and derivative, but real. The Southern Baptist Convention, then, was correct in a 2002 resolution of support for Israel to maintain both that “Israel must always be accountable to the same standards of national righteousness as any other nation, particularly in light of the Old Testament mandate that Israel maintain justice for the strangers and aliens in her midst” and that the Convention supports “the right of sovereignty to use force to defend themselves” against “inexcusable, barbaric, and

cowardly acts” of terrorism.⁴³ American evangelicals—as long as they are rooted in a biblical worldview—understand supporting legitimate authority, even as they understand speaking truth to power. As long as this is the case, American evangelicals will support the Israeli state so long as it maintains democratic principles and a commitment to human dignity.

Conclusion

The perception of a recklessly apocalyptic evangelical Christianity, supportive of the State of Israel unconditionally to the point of nuclear meltdown, is not based in reality. Evangelicals, informed by dispensationalist eschatology, have seen uniqueness to the contemporary state of Israel, and a unique responsibility to stand against violence directed toward the Jewish people and their homeland. This impulse is biblically justified, even for those of us who reject a particularly dispensationalist understanding of the last days. Evangelical Protestants should recognize the promises to Israel as finding their Alpha and Omega in a virgin-conceived Man, not in a United Nations-initiated state. Our commitment to the Christic fulfillment of all the promises of God ought not to cause us to turn our backs on our Lord’s kinsmen according to the flesh, but to redouble our efforts to support them when they are attacked by the forces of anti-Semitic hatred. In so doing, we are focused, ultimately, not on geopolitics but on Jesus. We are reminded of what our Christmas hymn tells us of a small Israeli village: “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”

ENDNOTES

¹For a discussion of the evangelical consensus on the Kingdom of God, see

- Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).
- ²O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2000), 194.
- ³Herman Ridderbos, "The Future of Israel (View I)," in *Prophecy in the Making: The Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy* (ed. Carl F. H. Henry; Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971), 321-22. Ridderbos's view was placed alongside John Walvoord's dispensationalist defense of a future for national Israel.
- ⁴John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
- ⁵Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007).
- ⁶*Ibid.*, foreword.
- ⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁸Robert L. Saucy, "A Rationale for the Future of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985): 438-39.
- ⁹Robert L. Saucy, "Response to Understanding Dispensationalists by Vern S. Poythress," *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (1989): 140.
- ¹⁰Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (ed. Darrell L. Bock; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 162-63.
- ¹¹Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 15.
- ¹²*Ibid.*
- ¹³*Ibid.*
- ¹⁴Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism* (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 92-97.
- ¹⁵Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion*, Vol. 3, *Under God, Indivisible* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 63-64.
- ¹⁶Harold J. Ockenga, "Fulfilled and Unfulfilled Prophecy," in *Prophecy in the Making*, 308.
- ¹⁷Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 53-54.
- ¹⁸Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust* (New York: Bantam, 1989). It should be noted that this polemical volume was published one year after the biblical "generation" from the founding of Israel had passed. Reconstructionists Steve Schlissel and David Brown responded to Lindsey with a counter-polemic, *Hal Lindsey and the Restoration of the Jews* (Edmonton: Still Water Revival Books, 1990).
- ¹⁹Carl Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 37-38.
- ²⁰Zev Chafets, *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists, and One Man's Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 11.
- ²¹"Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity" (paid advertisement), *New York Times*, 10 September 2000, 23.
- ²²Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 218.
- ²³Daniel Wojcik, for example, gives the rather extreme example of premillennialist support for renegade Israeli groups bent on destroying the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in order that their prophetic expectations regarding the Jewish Temple might be expedited. See Wojcik's *The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University, 1997), 146.
- ²⁴Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1985), 238-64.
- ²⁵John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2007), 132.
- ²⁶Michael Northcutt, *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and the American Empire* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 67.
- ²⁷Garry Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 182.
- ²⁸Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the New Global Order* (New York: Cambridge University, 2004), 109.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, 70.
- ³⁰Dorrien, *Imperial Designs*, 205.
- ³¹Garry Wills, *Head and Heart: American Christianities* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 374.
- ³²For instance, John Gray, *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).
- ³³Overture 01-25, "The Left Behind Series" from the Presbytery of Sierra Blanca to the 213th General Assembly of the Presbyterian

Church (USA), *Church and Society* 91 (2001): 108-09.

³⁴Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 137.

³⁵Much of the biblical material to follow is adapted from Russell D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church* (ed. Daniel L. Akin; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 858-926.

³⁶For an excellent discussion of an Old Testament eschatology of temple and presence, see Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

³⁷For a good translation of this seminal work, see Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* (trans. Thomas P. Halton; Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2003).

³⁸Robert L. Wilken, "In novissimis diebus: Biblical Promises, Jewish Hopes, and Early Christian Exegesis," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 15.

³⁹Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 184-86.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 188.

⁴¹Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other* (New York: Picador, 1954), 6.

⁴²"On Anti-Semitism," resolution adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Mobile, Alabama, May 1873.

⁴³"On Praying for Peace in the Middle East," resolution adopted by

the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, June 2002.