

Opposing Joshua—The Modern Evangelical War on Israel
By Jim Fletcher

Dave Hunt, Pre-Trib 2005:

I have been criticized for years by those who complain, "Deal with prophecy, if you wish, but stick to your subject-don't mix in apostasy!" In fact, one cannot adequately deal with the former while ignoring the latter. When asked by His disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world,"[5] the first words from Christ identified apostasy as the foremost sign of the last days.¹

In an era in Church history in which so many momentous events are unfolding, there is one that is largely overlooked. In fact, it is arguably the biggest underreported story in the American Church today.

That story is the erosion of support for the state of Israel,

During a sweep of speaking events in American churches in the past few years, Palestinian Christian Sami Awad, a resident of Bethlehem, reveals to attentive audiences that the little town where Christ was born is a "big, open-air prison," surrounded as it is on all four sides by Israel's security fence.

Except that it isn't.

The drive to implant the so-called "Palestinian Narrative" within American evangelical churches is a new and shocking threat to traditional support for Israel among Southern Baptists, Pentecostals, and other evangelical denominations and associations.

To fully understand the true nature of this threat to Israel and to Bible-believing Christians, we must understand the roots of it. Why are things the way they are? We did not arrive here overnight. The beginning of that journey started literally at the beginning, in the Book of Beginnings, when the serpent asked Eve, “Did God really say...?”

In his analysis of the modern Methodist movement, *Beyond the Point of No Return*, Calvin Johnson recognized that liberalism had infected the mainline a hundred years ago. He spoke of the tendency to relegate Genesis 1-11, and later, Genesis 12-50, to the realm of myth or semi-legend. Johnson also documented that these early attacks on the Bible’s credibility inevitably led to New Testament assaults:

“Neo-Orthodoxy gave credence to two Biblical truths – the sinfulness of man and the need for a life-changing encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. However, it did not accept the miracles and the historical events of the Bible as true.”²

The stage for these unorthodox views was set in the 19th century, and was led by the leading clergy of the day, including Henry Ward Beecher.

Barry Werth wrote about Beecher’s slide to liberal theology in his book, *Banquet at Delmonico’s*, which details the marketing of Darwinian philosophy to American seminaries and churches. Here we learn of Beecher’s embrace of unorthodox views:

“To tell me that back of Christ is a God who for unnumbered centuries has gone on creating men and sweeping them like dead flies—nay, like living ones—into Hell is to ask me to worship a being as much worse than the conception of any medieval devil as can be imagined.”³

Against these backdrops emerged a tendency to view the Old Testament passages dealing with Israel as symbolic, or metaphor. Replacement Theology was the result.

Still, for decades — and especially in the days following Israel's 1948 War for Independence and The Six Day War — rank-and-file Christians and many pastors viewed the specialness of Israel and the Jews in biblical terms.

In 1993, with the canonization of the so-called Oslo Accords in international diplomacy, decades of Palestinian propaganda efforts (aided in no small part by Soviet specialists who schooled Yasser Arafat in psychological warfare techniques) began to pay dividends.

These dividends even found their way into the church and it seems obvious that forces backing Palestinian nationalism made the infiltration of the American evangelical community a top priority.

At the same time, a “twin attack” developed, in which alongside the marginalization of Israel and her Christian Zionist friends emerged a related struggle: attacks on the teaching of Bible prophecy, specifically the Pre-Trib view.

Targeting the Millennial Generation, top evangelical leaders began a ceaseless attack on predictive prophecy, since it didn't fit their Dominionist worldview.

(The current marginalization of Israel and Bible prophecy in the United States is eerily similar to the efforts of the so-called “German Christian Movement,” in pre-War Europe, in which the Old Testament was largely ignored or spiritualized, thus

paving the way for the Nazis to characterize the Jews as having no historical credibility, save their “Christ-killers” label.⁴⁾

Almost immediately after the passing of pro Israel leaders like Jerry Falwell and Adrian Rogers, pro-Palestinian advocates emerged within evangelicalism (and the term “evangelical” came to be used as a tool by Brian McLaren, Tony Campolo, and others, who among other issues, bash Israel consistently) to introduce the Palestinian Narrative.

The Narrative features heart-tugging stories of the alleged Israeli “occupation” as being the core struggle in the Middle East. It also emphasizes the need to “help our suffering Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters” in the Holy Land. This combination of largely undocumented tales of brutality at the hands of the IDF, along with appeals to help fellow believers is a powerful influence on evangelical audiences.

Sami Awad, director of the Holy Land Trust and a self-described peace activist, figures prominently in the efforts to infiltrate American churches, aided as he is by powerful friends like Lynne Hybels of Willow Creek, and Todd Deatherage, director of the Telos Group.

Their efforts are enhanced by a host of well-placed influencers within evangelicalism:

- Donald Miller, author of the 2004 bestseller, *Blue Like Jazz*. In a November 19, 2012 blog, Miller alleged that the IDF shoots Palestinian women and children, and that Israel controls the daily caloric intake of Gazans. Miller has also visited what he calls “Israel/Palestine” with groups coordinated by Hybels and Deatherage. Miller, to date, has refused to provide documentation for his war crimes charges against Israel.

- Cameron Strang, publisher of Relevant magazine, is the son of well-known Charismatic publisher Stephen Strang (himself a long-time advocate for Israel). Cameron Strang never misses an opportunity to mock Bible prophecy teachers in the pages of his magazine (regularly skewering the actor Nicholas Cage for his recent appearance in “Left Behind”) and his advocacy for the Palestinians also compels him to demonize Israel, including the December, 2009 blood libel, in which the magazine published a brief story, pulled from a European newspaper, regarding Israel’s past policy of harvesting body parts from deceased individuals (including Israelis). Relevant, however, ran the headline: “Israel’s Reprehensible Organ Program,”⁵ to characterize the Israelis as harvesters of dead Palestinians.

In 2014, Cameron Strang wrote and published a cover story⁶ heavily slanted against Israel. In the backlash that followed, he shut down a regularly scheduled podcast to discuss the article, and has thus far refused all my interview requests.

- Dr. Paul Alexander, the Ronald J. Sider Professor of Social Ethics and Public Policy at Palmer Theological Seminary (the seminary of Eastern University, home of Tony Campolo), is a long-time advocate for the Palestinians and was, until 2014, a credentialed minister within the Assemblies of God. Alexander is young, energetic, charismatic, and radically opposed to Israel.

- Bill Hybels, co-founder of the Willow Creek Association. Hybels and his wife, Lynne, have been mentored by Palestinian activists since the genesis of Willow Creek in 1975. His vast influence in the evangelical culture also touches secular venues and networks.

- Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in southern California. Warren's disdain for Bible prophecy is well-documented, but his Twitter messages to Cameron Strang and other young activists, and his embrace of imams and other Islamist leaders is a strong indication that he is no friend of Israel.

- Steven Furtick, founder of Elevation Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, is not classically anti-Israel, but his growing influence among Millennials, and his close friendship with Palestinian activists like Pastor Jonathan Martin (Renovatus Church, Charlotte, NC) are troubling signs. Further, Furtick's brand of "sermon" is laced with what I call "Christian Self-Help," in which he distorts Scripture. In particular, Furtick is expert at co-opting OT passages regarding Israel and the Jewish people, and making them his own, thus obscuring the true meaning of the text from his congregation. Furtick is being mainstreamed and mentored by Hybels and Warren, among others.

- Bob Roberts, Jr., pastor of NorthWood Church in Keller, Texas. Roberts is perhaps the leading networker among evangelicals seeking to dialogue with Muslim leaders, including Muslim Brotherhood operatives. His 2012 handshake with Egypt's Morsi, and his inclusion of radical Muslims at his "Global Faith Forum" at NorthWood are troubling, as are his mocking social media messages regarding Bible prophecy teachers.

- Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, in Nashville. Stetzer has emerged as a key networker and bridge-builder in the drive toward ecumenical unity. As a top leader in the Southern Baptist Convention, Stetzer has also discussed his disdain for "one-note" congregants (such as Bible prophecy students, who wish to see more of this teaching in the church).

In an interview with Bob Roberts, Jr., Stetzer chided Christians who equate Muslims with terrorists, quoting favorably Eboo Patel. Patel was appointed in 2009 by Barack Obama to the president's Advisory Council on Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships. Patel also routinely plays the moral equivalency card, and has spoken at conference with Muslim radicals. He also has praised Marxist radicals like Van Jones.

But Ed Stetzer favorably quotes him.

- Mart Green, CEO of Mardel Christian and Educational Supply, and of Every Tribe Entertainment, and an heir to the Hobby Lobby fortune. In 2010, Green's film company, EGM Films, produced the anti-Israel film, "Little Town of Bethlehem," featuring a Palestinian Muslim, a Palestinian Christian, and an Israeli. All three parroted the PA/PLO narrative. Green became chairman of the board of trustees at Oral Roberts University, after his family gave upwards of \$100 million to the school.

Green's director for "Little Town of Bethlehem," Jim Hanon, began his interviews with the project by traveling to Beirut, where he met with Sheik Nasrallah, whom he described as "personable."

As with every other "Christian Palestinianist"⁷ leader I have attempted to interview, Green has refused my many requests.

- Todd Deatherage, co-founder of the Telos Group, based in Washington, D.C. A life-long evangelical, Deatherage worked in the State Department during the George W. Bush years, and now advocates full-time for the Palestinians.

- Catalyst, the leadership forum solidly entrenched within evangelicalism. Hosting three major conferences a year, along

with several one-day seminars featuring Andy Stanley and Craig Groeschel, the Catalyst team invites center-left speakers, who engage up to 45,000 senior pastors and youth leaders, and reach many more online. Catalyst routinely invites anti-Israel speakers like Lynne Hybels, and includes radical leftists like Dr. Cornel West. At Catalyst Dallas, in May, 2014, New Age teaching materials were placed in the Catalyst “Experience Kit.”

All attempts to ask Catalyst leadership why they host radicals, including Palestinian advocates, has been met with silence.

The effort to hijack pro Israel support in American churches is systemic, highly organized, well funded, and relentless. Prediction: if something isn’t done soon to counter the Palestinian propaganda within American evangelicalism, the Southern Baptist Convention, Assemblies of God (and other Pentecostal groups), and independent evangelical churches will emerge pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel.

Notes

1. <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/current-end-time-apostasy-of-church>
2. Calvin B. Johnson, *Beyond the Point of No Return* (C.B. Johnson, 1997), 46.
3. Barry Werth, *Banquet at Delmonico’s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 261.

4. Carol Rittner, *The Holocaust and the Christian World* (Continuum Intl Publishing Group, 2000).

5. <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/main/slices/politics/19534-israels-reprehensible-organ-program>

6. <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/current/peace-possible>

7. A term apparently coined by British scholar Dr. Paul Wilkinson.