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Box 16, Folder 12, Eckstein, Yechiel, 1984.

Chicago Catholic

Two works enrich Jewish-Christian understanding

A *DICTIONARY OF THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE*, edited by Leon Klenicki and Geoffrey Wigoder. Paulist Press (Ramsey, N.J., 1984). 213 pp., \$7.95.

WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JEWS AND JUDAISM, by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein. Word Books (Waco, Texas). 322 pp., \$13.95.

Reviewed by Sister Anna Marie Erst, S.H.C.J.

These two books might well be considered companion volumes which would enlighten, enrich and enable Jewish-Christian dialogue groups to achieve their goals of mutual understanding and respect. Both are very readable, written with clarity and sensitivity.

The "Dictionary" treats concepts that arise in Jewish-Christian dialogue, e.g. God, creation, the Bible, Christ, afterlife, etc. — 34 in all.

Each is discussed in two brief essays, one by a Jewish scholar and one by a Christian scholar.

Thus the reader is made aware of the points upon which Christians and Jews agree and those upon which they disagree and the reasons for disagreement.

THE "DICTIONARY" is a handy, quick-reference book: the concepts are dealt with in alphabetical order, a general index lists over 200 topics and another index lists almost 100 Hebrew terms, both indicating which essays discuss the topic and/or explain the terms.

A note about each of the contributors is included but not necessary because of the excellence of their essays.

"What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism" by the Orthodox Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, is a resource book containing a wealth of information about modern Judaism very interestingly written.

Though Rabbi Eckstein addresses Evangelicals in particular, all non-Jews can gain much from reading this book. It is an excellent follow-up to the "Dictionary."

The same concepts and more are found here — enriched by being placed in context as the rabbi leads us from the foundations of Jewish belief on through the centuries to the present day Jewish denominations and the attempts to heal the rift between Christians and Jews.

NOT THAT THERE will be total agreement between them or that Jews will be converted to Christianity. Rather, that an understanding, appreciation and respect will continue to grow between all Christians and Jews — a spirit of cooperation in making God known to all and extending his kingdom throughout the world.

The spiritual richness of Judaism, so evident in the rabbi's writing, I found enhancing my own beliefs as a Catholic. As Pius XI declared: "Spiritually, we are all Semites."

Sister Anna Marie Erst is director of the National Institute for Catholic Jewish Education.

What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism.

By Yechiel Eckstein. Word. 336 pp., \$13.95.

The Christian CENTURY

OCTOBER 10, 1984

Many Christians are aware of the historic document *Nostrae Aetate*, issued by Vatican II, which condemned anti-Semitism in any form and called for "mutual understanding and respect" between Christians and Jews. In 1975 the Vatican set forth some guidelines for Christian-Jewish dialogue and admitted that "the Church . . . searching into its own mystery . . . comes upon the mystery of Israel."

What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism will contribute significantly to this dialogue and to the church's search for its roots. To begin with, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein writes not only from a thorough knowledge of Judaism, but also from a heart and life deeply committed to Jewish spirituality. Like Martin Buber and Abraham Heschel, he makes no apology for his faith commitment; rather, he represents it intelligently, faithfully and thoroughly. Consequently, this book challenges one to a life-permeating faith, a spirituality that embraces wholeness.

What makes Eckstein's book distinctive is his thorough acquaintance with Christian faith and practice. He has been involved deeply in Christian-Jewish dialogue. His knowledge of Christianity is derived not only from the New Testament and from books about the Christian faith, but from firsthand contact with Christians. Nor does he write to only one segment of the faith. He has rubbed shoulders with Catholics, mainline Protestants, evangelicals and fundamentalists (no mention is made of the Orthodox churches). Consequently, the book is sensitive to Christian beliefs and feelings.

In Part I Eckstein sets forth a summary of the Jewish faith, discussing such issues as Jewish beliefs, spirituality, sabbath festivals, life cycle, holocausts, and the rise of Jewish denominations. This section of the book is encyclopedic. Eckstein's frequent quotes from the rabbis and his understanding of the Jewish mind (much of which is filled with humor) make for delightful reading.

In Part II he tackles the Jewish-Christian questions head on. He writes forthrightly about the differences and the partings of the way, discusses Jewish views of Jesus, addresses the problem of anti-Semitism, reasons about Jewish missions, and ends with an up-to-date account of Jewish-Christian relations.

In this definitive introductory book Eckstein has outlined the issues, distinguished the polarities, and set the agenda for more detailed discussion. What is more, he writes compellingly, interestingly and clearly.

Robert Webber.

OVER

BOOKS

SPECIAL SECTION

What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism, by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein (Word, 1984, 336 pp.; \$13.95).



Threatening collapse at the slightest misunderstanding or show of insensitivity, interfaith bridge building is nevertheless the consuming passion of a growing number of evangelicals and Jews. Little wonder, then, that the carefully researched and highly read-

In the final analysis, Eckstein's carefully placed brick in the interfaith bridge will do much to make evangelicals more aware of their own Jewish heritage. It will also give the reader the perspective of a man who seeks conciliation—more than compromise...

able *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism* receives praise and commendation from a broad range of evangelical leaders.

Adding to the book's credibility (and visibility) is Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein's own avowed passion for strengthening Jewish-evangelical relations. His call to cooperate comes through loud and clear in an earlier "primer" written to the Jewish community, entitled *Understanding Evangelicals: A Guide for the Jewish Community*, and now actively made manifest in his teaching post at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Throughout the first, and largest, section of this, his most recent book, Eckstein gives evangelicals a greater appreciation for the Jew's commitment to Jewish law, Israel, and tradition. In the concluding chapters, he reminds Christians of the painful lessons to be learned from the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, all the while examining the potentials and pitfalls of Jewish-evangelical dialogue.

Of particular interest to evangelicals will be Eckstein's views on missions. "Whatever the motivation," writes the author, "Christian missions that single Jews out for conversion are regarded by Jews as a form of anti-Semitism—yet another attempt to destroy them."

While evangelicals may disagree with these and certain other assessments (for example, Eckstein refers to "messianic Judaism" as an "assault against the quintessence of the Jewish faith—the uniqueness and oneness of God"), the sensitive reader cannot help but come away feeling that greater compassion and sensitivity are at hand.

In the final analysis, Eckstein's carefully placed brick in the interfaith bridge will do much to make evangelicals more aware of their own Jewish heritage. It will also give the reader the perspective of a man who seeks conciliation—more than compromise—between Christians and Jews.

An Excerpt: Some Jews view theological conversations with Christians as futile, or even worse, as potentially divisive and harmful. They believe that the sole intent of Christians in such forums is to convert them and that "dialogue" under such conditions will accomplish nothing.

Still others treat dialogue as an act of civility in a pluralistic society, something one engages in gracefully, albeit ephemerally....

Christians come to dialogue with Jews for a variety of reasons, as well. ... Personal experience has taught me that some Christians view dialogue as a means of reconciliation, a healing bridge, enabling them to make amends for their tradition's past and to become sensitized to issues of anti-Semitism in the present and future. ... For others, dialogue provides a respectable forum within which they can fulfill their Christian obligation to preach the gospel.

3 of rival faiths reply at Falwell invitation

Three Chicagoans—Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin, historian Martin E. Marty and Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein—expressed their views of fundamentalism in the December issue of the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Fundamentalist Journal.

In a preface to the critiques by the Chicagoans and evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry, Falwell said that fundamentalists "should not flee from criticism, but welcome it. . . . Refusing to listen is a sign of weakness and insecurity."

To buttress his case for a new kind of fundamentalism, Falwell wrote that "Our Lord was an expert at dealing with his critics. In Matthew 22, Jesus outwitted the Herodians, Sadducees and Pharisees—all in the same day! He was never afraid of his critics, nor did he overreact in dealing with them. He was so confident of the truth of his position that he never degenerated into petty squabbles with his critics. Instead he stood for the truth with grace and dignity that gave insight to even his harshest opponents."

All the critics affirm various aspects of fundamentalism before citing their points of difference.

Marty, a former minister in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who switched to the Association of Evangelical Lutherans when the synod divided over doctrinal issues, said that fundamentalism's emphasis on biblical inerrancy "reinforces fanaticism. . . . Many of us have experienced fundamentalists using it not as a doctrine but as a weapon against other Christians."

Marty also criticized "the new

RELIGION DESK

worldliness of many fundamentalists. . . . Watchers of television, readers of fundamentalist books. . . are seeing fundamentalists get the reputation for being among the most materialistic, success-minded, appearance-obsessed religious movements around. How ironic and tragic if, at the moment when fundamentalism is winning some part of the whole world, it would lose a whole part of its soul."

Bernardin said "the differences between us are more in the areas of approach, style and emphases than in the substance of the gospel we proclaim."

In its missionary strategy, Bernardin stated, "the Catholic community tries to avoid any evangelistic style or technique that is intrusive, judgmental, demeaning, or in any way pejorative to an individual or group."

Fundamentalism and Catholicism agree, Bernardin said, on the "importance of conversion in the Christian life," but Catholics believe "conversion is both an event and a process . . . the work of a lifetime."

The cardinal also contrasted fundamentalism's "literal approach to interpreting the Bible" with Catholicism's "contextual approach, paying close attention to the literary, historical, canonical and theological context of any given passage."

Jewish misgivings about fundamentalists, Eckstein wrote, are reinforced "by fundamentalists who,

wittingly or unwittingly, make insensitive or intolerant remarks about Jews and Judaism or who, by their statements and policies, threaten the foundation of religious pluralism in America."

The rabbi, president of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, criticized fundamentalists who urge Christians to make America into a "Christian nation," who say that "God does not hear the prayers of a Jew," and who charge that "Jews control the media and the city of New York or that Jews are an ungodly people concerned only with money and power."

Fundamentalists let 4 sit in judgment

"FUNDAMENTALIST" has become one of the longest four-letter words in the English language. Its original religious meaning has been obscured as the news media and others have appropriated it as a code-word for sulfur-breathed fanaticism and bigotry born of mean-spirited, drooling ignorance.

There are, of course, sufficient numbers of ill-mannered Bible-bashers on television to endow such a caricature with at least a mustard seed of truth.

But it is no more accurate to suggest that all fundamentalist Christians are narrow-minded illiterates than it is to assert that all journalists are Communist-sympathizing liberals and secular humanist conspirators.

Yet, there is such a widely held perception of conservative Christianity, and television evangelist Jerry Falwell, a fundamentalist of impeccable pedigree, has now acknowledged that the criticism, in some cases, is painfully on the money.

"WE ARE RELUCTANT to listen to criticism or to admit that we may have weaknesses within our own system," Falwell, the founder of the Moral Majority political lobby, wrote in the December issue of Fundamentalist Journal. "We are all too often known for what we are against, rather than what we affirm. We must learn to stand for truth without driving people away."

The controversial evangelist did not advise feisty fundamentalists to enroll in charm school or even a Dale Carnegie course, but rather to be still for a moment and listen carefully to the critiques from outside the high walls of their religious camp.

"For too many years, we fundamentalists have existed in our hermetically sealed world and promoted the attitude that we do not care what anyone else thinks about anything," said Edward Dobson, a senior editor of the Fundamentalist Journal, a 2-year-old monthly publication representing the moderate strain of American Protestant fundamentalism. "We must start listening to others."



Bruce Buursma
Religion writer

To that end, the magazine invited four leading religious figures to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of conservative Christianity and to speak candidly of their own image of fundamentalists.

It proved to be, on balance, an exercise in civility and charity on the part of the "outsiders," three of whom are from Chicago.

"I THINK THE DIFFERENCES between us are more in the areas of approach, style and emphasis rather than in the substance of the gospel we proclaim," said Chicago's Roman Catholic archbishop, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. "The fundamentalist movement has reminded all Christians about the excitement of Christianity—how by its very nature it is something to be shared and multiplied with people near and far," the Chicago prelate continued.

The cardinal conceded that Roman Catholicism differs from fundamentalism in its approach to the interpretation of the Bible and the meaning of conversion.

"While fundamentalism favors a literalist approach to interpreting the Bible, Catholics take a contextual approach, paying close attention to the literary, historical, canonical and theological context of any particular passage," Cardinal Bernardin observed.

As for Christian conversion, commonly described by fundamentalists as the act of being "born again," the cardinal said it is "both an event and a process. . . . Initial conversion may be a sudden event, but thorough, ongoing conversion is the work of a lifetime."

Prof. Martin E. Marty, a University of Chicago church historian, also hailed fundamentalism for producing adherents of "winsome and constant character, people down the block on whom one can count for quiet acts of love in Christ, for firm words of testimony to the Word of God."

MARTY WARNED, however, that many fundamentalists appear to have embraced a "new worldliness," particularly when they are viewed on television ministries.

"Observers of the scene are seeing fundamentalists get the reputation for being among the most materialistic, success-minded, appearance-obsessed religious movements around," said Marty.

The Lutheran scholar also faulted hard-shell fundamentalists for using the doctrine of an error-free Bible as "a weapon against other Christians, including many classically conservative ones."

In addition, Orthodox Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, president of the Chicago-based Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, asserted that many Jews have a "visceral reaction toward Christian fundamentalists, seeking as they do to convert them from their Jewish faith—frequently through overly aggressive, offensive means."

The rabbi called for a broadening of Jewish-fundamentalist discussions to "develop accurate perceptions of each other and a genuine appreciation for each other's values and religious traditions."

The final observer, Dr. Carl F.H. Henry, is a conservative evangelical theologian, and the closest kin of all. He keenly regretted the conflicts that have separated evangelicals from fundamentalists.

"I would have to say with sad heart that some fundamentalist leaders have deplored me as an apostate, a rationalist and even a 'pinko,'" Henry said. "Perhaps we should all just opt for scriptural orthodoxy or biblical theism while . . . unscriptural vagabonds play theological games with words."

over

Conversations
With

Chicago Authors

The Chicago Public Library

A series of informal, lunch-hour dialogues between authors and the public, featuring a different Chicago writer on the second Thursday of every month at 12:15 p.m.



October 11
Louise B. Young

Louise Young is a generalist in science, an area devoted almost exclusively to specialists. She has edited and authored works in several scientific fields, and her most recent book, The Blue Planet, offers a lively look at the earth sciences, covering topics from the ocean's floor and the feeding of prehistoric sharks, to volcanic eruptions, gems and evolution.



November 8
Saul Bellow

Winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976, Saul Bellow's honors for his literary works are numerous. His ninth novel, The Dean's December, was first published in 1982. In May, 1984, the collection, Him with His Foot in His Mouth and Other Stories, was released. Born in Canada, Bellow was raised in Chicago and educated at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. He is world famous as an author, educator and scholar.



December 13
Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein's book, What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism, was published in March, 1984. He has written and lectured extensively on such topics as the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, Israel and the Middle East, Indochinese refugees, Jewish-Christian relations and the Moral Majority. Rabbi Eckstein is founder and president of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, and is known as an important bridge builder between Christians and Jews.

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The Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews

cordially invites you to participate in a citywide

"MORNING OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH SOLIDARITY WITH ISRAEL"

Tuesday August 7 8:00 - 10:00 A.M.
Grand Ballroom, Union League Club
65 West Jackson Blvd.

Dr. Robert Billings
GUEST SPEAKER: ~~REV. JERRY ROSE~~

Breakfast will be served.

Couvert \$15

The Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, a new national organization based in Chicago, was founded in 1983 by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein together with a number of leaders from the Christian and Jewish communities. It was created out of the felt need for an interfaith effort that would develop a climate of better relations and understanding between Christians and Jews and which would educate both communities on matters concerning Israel and Christian-Jewish relations.

The Holyland Fellowship seeks to:

***Promote** dialogue, reconciliation and better understanding between Christians and Jews.

***Provide** Christians and Jews with an appropriate institutional vehicle through which they can together demonstrate their solidarity with Israel and her people.

***Link** both communities in greater bonds of friendship through their shared appreciation of the holyland as the common place of origin and source of inspiration for both traditions.

***Unite** Christians and Jews in humanitarian efforts aimed at improving the quality of life in Israel.

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founder and President of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, is the former national co-director of Interreligious Affairs for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and author of *What Christians Should Know About Jews & Judaism* and *Understanding Evangelicals; A Guide For the Jewish Community*. He is widely acknowledged as one of the leading bridge-builders between the Christian and Jewish communities.

Opening Prayer

Rev. Robert Schmidgall, Pastor
Calvary Church, Naperville

Breakfast

Welcome

Rev. Jerry K. Rose
President, WCFC TV 38

Greetings

Ald. Roman C. Pucinski
President, Polish American Congress

Charles H. Goodman
President, Jewish Federation of
Metropolitan Chicago

Dr. Ronald Miller
Director, Common Ground

Hon. Emanuel Zippori
Consul General of Israel

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein
President, Holyland Fellowship of
Christians and Jews

Organization Report

Introduction of Guest Speaker

Morris Beschloss
President, Condec Flow Control

Guest Speaker

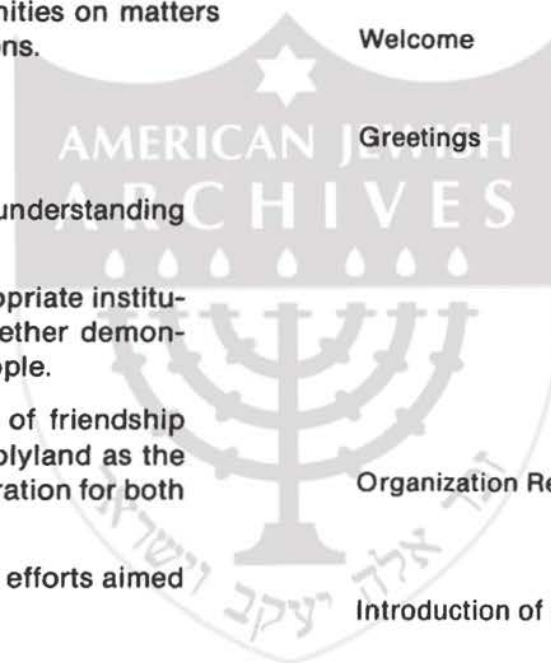
Rev. Jerry Falwell
Pastor, Thomas Road Baptist Church

Closing Benediction

Rabbi Lawrence Charney,
Vice President, Chicago Board of Rabbis.

The program will conclude promptly by 10:00 A.M.

PROGRAM



the Chicago Catholic

Editorials

October 21, 1983

Where Christians, Jews meet

So who needs another organization? A number of Christians and Jews, who want to increase interfaith understanding and cooperation, think that the time has come for working together in a specific area.

It is an area that arouses emotions and controversies, and that's a principal reason for exploring ways to talk and work together.

The new organization is the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Its director is known throughout the country, having served as national co-director of interreligious activities for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

He is Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, whose writings are familiar to readers of the Chicago Sun-Times and Chicago Catholic. His books, "What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism" and "Explaining Evangelicals to Jews," will be released soon.

MANY WILL ARGUE the wisdom of Israel's policies, especially as they relate to Lebanon and to Jewish settlements in lands claimed by Palestinians. Some will agree, others will disagree.

Israel faces growing political and military pressures. Tensions remain high in the Middle East despite the work of diplomats and negotiators.

The Holyland Fellowship wants to develop a different kind of work, a practical kind of participation in person-to-person projects in Israel. Its thrust is humanitarian rather than political.

The plan, as Rabbi Eckstein explains it, is to provide grassroots moral and financial support to such humanitarian centers in Israel as day care, geriatric, medical and educational facilities.

ADVANCING THE CAUSE of Christian-Jewish relations in the United States and Israel is one of the aims of the Holyland Fellowship.

It plans to work with church groups, individuals, foundations and others interested in "adopting" specific humanitarian, non-governmental projects in Israel.

Rabbi Eckstein reports that church groups in Illinois, Texas and Oklahoma already have made financial commitments.

An office has been established at 36 South Wabash, Suite 626, Chicago, Ill. 60603.

Americans find themselves in touch, often in personal ways scarcely experienced a generation ago, with men and women of all religious convictions and of none.

Most Americans seek wider understanding and deeper friendships in this country, which is home to so many races and religions.

This new organization should be a welcome addition to the interfaith community, helping it become more active and more fruitful.

THE HOLYLAND FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

36 S. Wabash Street Suite 626 · Chicago, Illinois 60603 (312) 346-7693

New books promote

Religion

religious understanding

By ADON TAFT
Herald Religion Writer

Understanding between differing groups is one of the most needed things in the world today. It is especially urgent among religious groups.

One of the best efforts ever in that direction is a new book entitled *What Christians Should Know about Jews and Judaism*, written by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein. Significantly, it is produced by Word Books, a basically evangelical Christian publishing house, in hardback for \$13.95.

Eckstein is an Orthodox rabbi with wide ecumenical experience as a lecturer at the Northern Baptist Seminary and Chicago Theological Seminary and founder of the Holy Land Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

First of all, he gives a concise yet far from superficial account of the history of Jews, their Bible, their beliefs, their practices, and their differences. He covers not only the Jews of Biblical days, but those of the past 19 centuries, an area often neglected by even those Christians who know much about the Biblical Jews.

The rabbi also discuss Jewish views of Jesus, how they look at Christians and Christianity, and the Jewish outlook on missionary activity and interfaith dialogue.

One of the distinguishing marks of this book is that Christian views are presented fairly — if not always completely — as are the variety of Jewish views. All of it is done without polemics, which is exceptional.

A handy index and a list of additional books to read in connection with each chapter — though marred by the absence of those written by evangelical Christians — add to the usefulness of this book.

While scholarly, *What Christians Should Know* is also very readable. It should be required reading not only in every Christian Sunday school but in every Jewish one as well. It is especially important in an area like Miami where there is such a religious mix.

Rabbi's book seeks to foster interfaith understanding

By JIM JONES
Star-Telegram Writer

When a former Southern Baptist president said that God does not hear the prayer of a Jew, it created a storm of controversy.

But the remarks by the Rev. Bailey Smith of Del City, Okla., four years ago also resulted in greater efforts by evangelical Christians and Jews to understand one another.

One indirect result of those fence-mending efforts is a new book, *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism*, by Rabbi Yechiel Ecstein of Chicago.

Ecstein, an orthodox rabbi, said in a recent interview that the purpose of his book is to avoid misunderstandings which are usually caused by a lack of knowledge of Christians and Jews about each other's faiths.

Words are often unwittingly used by Christians which are "bitingly offensive" to Jews, Ecstein says in the preface to his book.

Ecstein tells of overhearing a Christian minister in a Jerusalem market place use the term "Jewed him down."

"Knowing the minister as I do, I am certain that his comment did not reflect a deep-seated, unconscious contempt for Jews.... Rather I believe it came from a complete unawareness of the derivations and implications of his remark," Ecstein wrote.

Ecstein was co-chairman of inter-religious affairs for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith during the Smith controversy and helped to organize dialogues among Southern Baptists and Jews and also a trip to Israel for Baptist leaders.

He also spoke at Smith's Oklahoma church and received an enthusiastic response.

But when Smith told the congregation that he would like to invite Ecstein back for one of the church's crusades, Ecstein didn't quite understand.

Although the minister was using the term *crusade* to mean an evangelical rally, its principal meaning to Ecstein was the historical Crusades

when Christians slaughtered Jews in the 11th and 12th centuries.

Jews have learned through experience to take words seriously, said Ecstein. During pre-World War II days, Jews were told not to take seriously the words of Nazi leaders who ultimately carried out the Holocaust.

Ecstein's book, which is published by Word Books of Waco, a basically evangelical Christian publishing house, has a number of endorsements from Christian ministers, including Smith and Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas.

Smith, pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., calls the book "... the finest summary of Jewish beliefs, practices, attitudes and relations with Christians I have ever encountered."

The book includes a scholarly but readable account of Jewish history, explanations of the major Jewish holidays, and — in what will be the most controversial section — the Jewish attitudes toward Jesus, Christians and Christianity.

Ecstein said that "from a Jewish perspective, the New Testament is neither inspired nor Holy Writ but rather, an indirect source written by people with a definite bias against the Jewish community...."

"While not disclaiming Jesus' miracles, the rabbis in the Talmud attributed them to magic and sorcery," Ecstein writes. "In their eyes, Jesus was a blasphemer and rebel who seduced his followers into practicing *avodah zarah*, which literally means 'foreign worship,' one of the three cardinal sins for which a Jew must sacrifice his life rather than transgress."

Ecstein writes that the Talmud tells little about Jesus' trial and death "other than to say that, like all other trials of this kind, a messenger was sent out forty days in advance, searching for witnesses to speak out on behalf of his innocence. This is in stark contrast to the Gospel narratives, which portray Jesus' trial as a foregone conclusion and a rushed, one-night affair."

Ecstein has given up his post with the Anti-Defamation League and has formed a new Chicago-based organization, the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, which is the first organization devoted to bettering relations between Jews and evangelical Christians.

"Christian-Jewish relations need to be viewed in the context of 2,000 years of history — often a very sad history," said Ecstein. "Christian-Jewish relations (on a positive level) are in the embryonic stage and that certainly is true as far as evangelicals are concerned."

Ecstein also addresses Jewish misunderstanding of evangelical Christians, and he has written a new booklet published by the National Jewish Resource Center, which is titled *Understanding Evangelicals: A Guide for the Jewish Community*.

"We need to consolidate the gains we have made in understanding our faith, and we have to be patient with each other," Ecstein said.



YECHIEL ECSTEIN
... promotes understanding

METRO NEWS

Church leaders denounce Farrakhan

By LISA ELLIS

Staff Writer

A virtual "Who's Who" of fundamentalist Southern Baptist leaders joined Tuesday to condemn recent remarks by Louis Farrakhan, a supporter of the Rev. Jesse Jackson, that referred to the creation of Israel as an "outlaw act."

"As Bible-believing Christian Americans, we reaffirm our absolute commitment to the welfare and security of the state of Israel," the leaders said in a statement released Tuesday at First Baptist Church of Dallas.

"We urge all Americans to reaffirm their solidarity with Israel, our sole trusted democratic ally in the Middle East, and urge prayer for the peace of Jerusalem," the statement continued. "We are ever mindful of God's promise that he will bless those who bless the Jewish people and curse those who curse them, according to Genesis 12:3."

The denunciation of Farrakhan, was the second within a week made by religious leaders in the Dallas area. Jackson has also disavowed Farrakhan's remarks.

On Friday, the Greater Dallas Community of Churches, the area's largest ecumenical organization, released a statement deploring Farrakhan's "irresponsible and hate-laden actions."

Attending the press conference Tuesday were the Rev. Charles Stanley of Atlanta, recently elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention; Orthodox Rabbi Yechiel Echelein, director of the Holy Land Fellowship of Christians and Jews, an organization that promotes good will between evangelicals and Jews; and Russell Kaemmerling, editor of the Dallas-based conservative journal *The Southern Baptist Advocate*.

Signers of the statement not present included the Rev. Bailey Smith of Del City, Okla., the former Southern Baptist Convention president who stirred controversy several years ago with his remark that "God does not hear the prayers of Jews."

The Rev. James Draper Jr. of Euless, immediate past president of the Southern Baptists, also signed, as did the Rev. W.A. Criswell of First Baptist, Dallas; Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical

Studies in Dallas; Judge Paul Pressler, a fundamentalist leader from Houston; Zig Ziglar of Dallas, first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention; and Ed McAteer, a Baptist who heads the religious-right lobby group known as The Roundtable.

Despite its long list of influential signers, the statement immediately drew criticism from R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, who said it "implies partiality to one nation to the exclusion of others" and could endanger the safety of Baptist missionaries in Arab countries.

Kaemmerling discounted the possibility of danger to missionaries, saying, "We're not taking issue with any Arab nation. We're only taking solidarity with the Jewish people who have been victims of malicious slander."

In the press conference, Stanley denounced Farrakhan's "divisive remarks that pit people against each other" and commended past Baptist presidents, especially Draper and Smith, for their work "to improve the climate of relations between Southern Baptists and Jews."

Baptists, rabbi assail Farrakhan

By Ed Timms

Staff Writer of The News

Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley denounced Black Muslim minister Louis Farrakhan for making anti-Semitic remarks.

Stanley was joined in the criticism of the Chicago Black Muslim minister by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founder of the Fellowship of Christians and Jews, at First Baptist Church of Dallas on Tuesday.

In recent months, according to news accounts, Farrakhan has described Adolph Hitler as "a great man... wickedly great," called Israel an "outlaw" nation, alleged that Jewish writers and editors distort the news and predicted a race war in the United States by 1986.

"Let it be known that we Southern Baptists utterly repudiate such anti-Jewish sentiments and find them abhorrent and despicable to both Christian and American sensibilities," Stanley said Tuesday.

The statement prompted concerns by some members of the SBC foreign mission board that it could undermine missionary efforts in Arab countries.

Keith Parks, president of the SBC foreign mission board, said the board's concern was not with Stanley's comments about Farrakhan or his denunciation of bigotry but with the tone of remarks

■ Farrakhan called a racist. 11A

■ Mondale criticizes Farrakhan. 18A

about support of Israel.

"As Bible-believing, Christian Americans, we affirm our absolute commitment to the welfare and security of the state of Israel," Stanley read from a statement signed by several prominent Southern Baptist leaders. "We urge all Americans to demonstrate their solidarity with Israel, our sole trusted ally in the Middle East, and urge prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. We are mindful of God's promise that he will bless those who bless the Jewish people and curse those who curse them, according to Genesis 12:3."

Parks said board members on Tuesday agreed that the statement Stanley read could be misinterpreted.

Parks said the board opposed any statement — such as Farrakhan's — that "slanders any religious group."

"At the same time, we would strongly resist any statement that expresses partiality to one group," he said.

Stanley's statement, Parks said, "implies we would reject the Arab nations... and certainly does not reflect the view of the missionary board."

"We have missionaries serving in many of the Arab nations," Parks said.



Charles Stanley



Yechiel Eckstein

At the news conference in the First Baptist Church of Dallas complex, Eckstein said there are "many issues to be discussed between Moslems and Jews in this country."

Unfortunately, he said, there is no dialogue. "I guess perhaps feelings are too intense at this point," he said.

Chicago's 'unorthodox' rabbi

HE DREAMS OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

"One of my daughters had a friend over for the Sabbath weekend, and somehow we began talking about a person who's not Jewish. The friend said, 'Oh, she's a goya.' My daughter asked, 'What's a goya?' and I said, 'It's like a Christian.' And then the other child asked, 'What's a Christian?' That was such a telling exchange. I am convinced that we pass along our biases generation to generation, sometimes without even realizing it. I'm saying, 'Isn't it time to stop and examine that?'"

Yechiel Eckstein

By Mary Gillespie

Yechiel Eckstein knows he has developed a reputation for being... well... different. "I think I've become sort of a curiosity, like 'Oh, here comes Eckstein, what's he up to now?'" admits the handsome, 33-year-old Orthodox rabbi. "What I'm doing is unique, and it is controversial."

What he's doing is religious bridge-building. It's a pursuit he hopes will help span the religious and cultural chasm separating Jews from Christians—especially evangelical and fundamentalist Christians.

This month, Eckstein is celebrating the first anniversary of his Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Essentially a one-man operation housed in a small downtown office, the fellowship represents his lifelong quest to chip away at what he believes are America's outdated and counterproductive religious barriers. It can be a risky business at times, he admits, both financially and socially. He left a stable job with B'nai Brith's Anti-Defamation League to launch the fellowship, and now is dependent on benefactors to fund it. (They've provided a heartening \$85,000 this year, he reports.)

Then there are the sidelong glances from those who just don't understand—or approve—what he's doing. One of those, he admits with a wry smile, is his father-in-law, well-known American Jewish Congress leader Henry Siegman.

"I'm not trying to homogenize religions," stresses the eighth-generation rabbi, the first of his clan to be born in this country, who calls himself the "black sheep" of his Orthodox family. "I'm trying to engender a little understanding and respect between them."

"I started out with a dream (of starting the fellowship) and no money," he recalls. "Even to me, it sometimes seemed preposterous to dream that we could bring Jews and Christians together in understanding. In the case of fundamentalists and evangelicals, it was virgin territory, uncultivated field. I came to realize how large a body of the American population hadn't been exposed to any dialogue with Jews—or, for that matter, to Jews."

Eckstein's recently released book, *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism*, lights the path for such Christians who may wonder, as Eckstein puts it, "what makes Jews tick." It is a practical treatise on Jewish culture, beliefs and traditions that is helpful for all non-Jews—but especially so for fundamentalist and evangelical Christians, who typically have far less contact with Jews than Catholics and main-line Protestants.

"Language, for instance, can be totally different in the context of one or another community," he explains. "Several years ago, after Bailey Smith (then leader of America's Southern Baptist Convention) made his much-publicized remark about God not bearing the prayers of Jews, I convinced him and some of his associates to join us on a tour of Israel."

"At one point, I stopped in the marketplace near Jerusalem, and came out with a present for my kids. One of the Baptists traveling with us asked me how much it cost,



Each morning, the rabbi spends a few quiet moments with his prayers. The phylacteries are wrapped about the head and arms to symbolize how the scriptures should remain close to the mind and heart.

and I said \$10. He replied, 'Oh, you could have Jewed them down to \$5.'"

"There are so many instances like that—quite often innocent misunderstandings based on ignorance or misinformation," Eckstein says with a sigh, then a smile. "That's the struggle."

For Jews' part, he adds, there's plenty to learn about Christians—especially those who believe they've been "born again"—with whom they must coexist.

"Right here in Chicagoland we have what is frequently called 'the Vatican of the evangelical movement.' There are more than 30 major evangelical institutions based in or near Wheaton."

"The image of them as some kind of rednecks is just not based in reality. The current president of the United States is an evangelical Christian; the immediate past president is a Southern Baptist evangelical. I'm not even talking about the administrations with which they surround themselves."

"Jews can no longer afford the luxury of having no contact with or understanding of the estimated 50 million people in this country who call themselves evangelicals," he adds. "It's not enough for a Jew to say, 'A goy is a goy' or for a non-Jew to say that 'Jews are insular, they won't change.' Those who do are living dangerously in the past."

Eckstein has become well-known for his pragmatic approach to Jewish-Christian understanding; he responds to current events swiftly and with action.

After Nation of Islam minister Louis Farrakhan made his recent scathing remarks about Israel and the Jewish religion, for instance, Eckstein flew to Dallas and enlisted the support of leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination, boasting about 14.5 million members. They issued a statement, which was carried in many newspapers across the country, deploring Farrakhan and urging all Christians to support Israel.

Such savvy in handling the media and swaying politicians to publicly support his cause has enabled Eckstein to put the Holyland Fellowship on the national map within a single year. Where did he acquire such aplomb?

He pauses, pondering the question. Then, he answers simply, "I believe in what I do. That's all. It's like sex, I guess—if you use all the books and make it mechanical, you lose all the passion. Everyone must be passionate about something. What good is work, or life, if there is no passion?"

Despite long workdays and ever-heavier workloads, Eckstein is as passionate about making time for his family—wife Bonnie and

daughters Tamar, 7, Telia, 4, and 2-month-old Yael—as he is about his many other personal and professional pursuits. For the foreseeable future, he says, his work is here. His once-fond dream of moving to Israel will have to wait.

There are other dreams, too, waiting in the wings.

"There was a time when I dreamed about being a senator. Then I realized how many compromises politicians are forced to make. But I'm still young..."

Meanwhile, besides running the fellowship, Eckstein serves as chief rabbi at Michigan Ave.'s Park Synagogue. He is on the faculty of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard and the Chicago Theological Seminary. He serves on the American Refugee Committee, which provides medical aid to displaced Thais and Cambodians. A former cantor, he also is an accomplished guitarist who entertained Israeli troops during the 1973 war. He has recorded four albums of Israeli-Hasidic music.

But it is the fellowship—and the vision behind it—that is his true love.

"I dream, I pray, that a day will come when I can be freed of the mechanical things—the fund-raising, the office work—and just be able to pursue the vision. The best and truest work is in following that vision."



The lighting of the Sabbath candles is a moment full of anticipation for Yechiel and Bonnie Eckstein's daughters: 4-year-old Telia (from left), 2-month-old Yael and 7-year-old Tamar.

Chicagoan a Jewish apostle to Gentiles

RABBI YECHIEL ECKSTEIN is a modern Orthodox Jew who often has occupied Christian pulpits, appeared on major fundamentalist television talk shows and doggedly charted a course over the rugged American interfaith terrain that has left him disappointed at times but never daunted.

At 33, the Chicago-based rabbi has emerged as a major American Jewish apostle to the Gentiles, a relentless proponent of closer cooperation and deeper understanding between the adherents of two of the world's major religious groups.

When Rev. Bailey Smith, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, declared that God does not hear Jewish prayers, Rabbi Eckstein invited Rev. Smith to accompany him on a tour of sacred sites in Israel.

Since then, the rabbi has preached in Rev. Smith's home church in Oklahoma, and the repentant Southern Baptist pastor has signed on as a board member of Rabbi Eckstein's new foundation, the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

THE NATIONAL organization, based in Chicago's Loop, is sponsoring a prayer breakfast and rally Tuesday in the Union League Club here. The invitation-only event is called a "Morning of Christian and Jewish Solidarity with Israel."

The gathering will bring together an improbable mixture, including Msgr. John Egan of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago; Rev. Robert Schmidgall of Naperville's Calvary Assembly of God Temple; Charles H. Goodman, president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago; Israeli Consul General Emanuel Zippori; and, by videotape, Rev. Jerry Falwell, the outspoken political activist and evangelist from Lynchburg, Va.

The keynote speaker will be Robert Billings, a former administrator of the fundamentalist Hyles-Anderson College near Hammond and a founder of Moral Majority Inc. Billings is an appointee of the Reagan administration in the U.S. Department of Education.

"We're trying to bring to a head Christian-Jewish relations in Chicago," said Rabbi Eckstein. "We want to move away from business-as-usual and force people on both sides to ask the hard questions. Do Jews want to engage in dialogue with Christians? Are Christians willing to repudiate anti-Semitism?"

FOR A LONG time, Rabbi Eckstein has been centrally involved in formal and informal Jewish-Christian encounters, working for seven years in Chicago as the national codirector of interreligious affairs for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

In that time, he was instrumental in establishing Jewish contacts with leaders of evangelical and fundamentalist Christian groups, a conservative segment of American Christianity. The alliances forged from that effort have stirred controversy in both religious communities, but Rabbi Eckstein contends that the possibilities for cooperation outweigh painful past divisions between the two camps.

For example, the rabbi's recently published book, "What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism," was issued by Word Books, a major evangelical communications company in Waco, Tex. And the fundamentalist Christian affection for Israel, growing out of the importance placed on the establishment of the Jewish state in the fundamentalist's interpretation of biblical prophecy, appears to have increased in recent years, at a time when many mainline Christian figures are speaking out for greater attention to the Palestinian cause in the Middle East.

The security and prosperity of Israel is a critical concern for most American Jews, and despite misgivings over the ultimate theological intentions of fundamentalists, many have embraced these conservative Christians as allies on that issue.

"BY AND LARGE, American Jews are still suspicious of fundamentalist Christians and leery about cooperating with them," Rabbi Eckstein acknowledged.

"Many still bear deep-rooted scars from prior Jewish encounters with Christian orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Inquisitions, Crusades, pogroms, blood libels, ghettos, degradation, humiliation, intolerance, death- and martyrdom—these are some of the images conjured in the minds of Jews when they consider those who seek to 'win the world for Jesus Christ.'"

But the rabbi said that through frank face-to-face exchanges, a fresh understanding can be accomplished. "Change is possible," he said. "There have been more bridges built between Jews and Chris-



Bruce Buursma
Religion writer

tians in the last 20 years than the previous 2,000 years.

"We don't want to homogenize the faiths. We want Christians to be better Christians and Jews to be better Jews, because if they are, we can perhaps respect and even love each other and in the midst of such a relationship, find the one living God. Creator of all humanity."

OVER

Rabb' racks sh'ft in Jews' alliance among Christians

By Bill Walsh
and Clay Thompson
The Phoenix Gazette

Unconditional support of Israel is a "litmus test" many liberal Christians fail in their attempts to establish a dialogue with the Jewish community, according to Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein.

Eckstein, author of "What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism" and founder of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, was the keynote speaker Tuesday for the annual meeting of the community relations committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix.

Eckstein said the Jewish community is becoming increasingly cool toward liberals — their traditional allies — and that fundamentalist and evangelical Christian groups are gaining favor.

His comments drew sharp criticism from Rick Ross, coordinator of prisoner services for Jewish Children and Family Services.

Ross, who has done extensive study of efforts by some Christian organizations to proselytize Jews, said Eckstein's approach to evangelical or fundamentalist Christian groups is "suicidal."

Eckstein told the audience at Temple Beth Israel that "Israel often is a source of friction with the liberal Christian community."

"Must the liberal Christian community be another voice calling for a policy that most Jews feel would be destructive to Israel?" he asked.

He called for sincere but cautious attempts to build a relationship with the 50 million fundamentalist and evangelical Christians in the United States.

That number, he noted, includes President Reagan, former President Carter and 60 of the 100 members of the U.S. Senate.

"For good or for ill, we Jews have pretty much decided to mold our relationships with other groups according to their attitude toward Israel," Eckstein said.

"It is no longer possible today to be pro-Jewish and anti-Israel."

Eckstein cited four probable rea-

sons for the support for Israel from the right:

- The fundamentalists' strict interpretation of the Bible.

He cited a verse from Genesis that reads: "Those who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse Israel will be cursed."

"Those evangelicals take their scripture very seriously," he said.

- Political conservatism and devotion to U.S. allies. "They don't want to abandon Taiwan, either," he said.

- Fundamentalists' belief that, in the end, Jews will come to accept Jesus.

- The moral and humanitarian links established by shared Western values.

He also said that some apparently anti-Semitic remarks can be chalked up to ignorance.

Eckstein told of the time he received a standing ovation from a Southern Baptist congregation he had addressed, only to hear the minister say: "Wasn't he wonderful? We have to invite him to our next crusade."

The preacher simply did not know how Jews feel about proselytizing, Eckstein said.

A "prominent" Baptist leader he would not name accompanied Eckstein to Israel recently.

The minister asked him how much he paid for an item at a market. Eckstein said \$10, and the minister responded, "You could have Jewed him down to 5," not even realizing how offensive his comment was, Eckstein said.

Finally, a black minister once told Eckstein he could not understand the "bad press" given to Israel. "You Jews control the media," he said.

Eckstein says he always allows people to reconsider such remarks before he passes judgment.

"Some will dig their heels in — those are the ones we have to oppose and fight," he said.

He applauded the fact that anti-Semitism is generally recognized as anti-Christian now.

"If Christians would be better Christians and Jews would be better Jews, we would have better Christian-Jewish relations and a better world as a whole."

Ross, who said he was speaking for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which he said represents about 1.25 million American Jews, later said he was "shocked" by Eckstein's speech.

By associating with fundamentalist Christian groups bent on converting Jews, Eckstein is "flirting with disaster," he said.

"I think he is being manipulated, and I think through his manipulation, other people are being manipulated," Ross said.

Ross also said the "social agenda of the fundamentalist right is one that sharply contrasts with most of the Jewish community."

"I think what most Israeli Jews and American Jews are looking for in the Middle East is a peaceful future, and that is not what the fundamentalists and evangelicals foresee in their end-time philosophy," Ross said.

However, Rabbi Albert Plotkin of Temple Beth Israel said after the speech he admired Eckstein for "his courage and I admire his determination to create some sort of dialogue between Christian fundamentalists and Jews."

Plotkin said he understood the concern that any affiliation with fundamentalists might "spill over" into proselytizing, but he also said Eckstein had done "extraordinary" work in creating a dialogue between Jews and Christian fundamentalists.

over

Evangelist narrows gap between Christians, Jews

By James D. Davis
Religion Writer

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein began with the goal of explaining his people's beliefs to conservative Christians.

Somewhere along the line, he also took on the flip-side task: explaining Christian motives to fellow Jews.

Those dual roles have given Eckstein prominence in an unusual — some might say unenviable — field of Jewish-evangelical relations. An author, rally speaker and frequent talk show guest, Eckstein is convinced he has helped create a breakthrough in interfaith events.

"We need each other," said Eckstein, whose new book, *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism*, this summer became the first book by a rabbi to be published by the Christian-oriented Word Books of Waco, Texas.

"Jews and Christians can act as a balance for one another," Eckstein said.

"Christians, out of their theology, tend to emphasize individual, spiritual salvation; they need the Jewish emphasis on making this world holy," the Orthodox rabbi said, by telephone from his office in Chicago. "Jews, out of their theology, tend to become too involved in worldly pursuits, but forget the spiritual dimension."

"We can serve as prophets for each other on proper religious living. But to do that, we have to have personal contact and dialogue. We have to clear away the misinformation. We have to be willing to understand."

Eckstein is the founder and president of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, an alliance of conservative Christians and Orthodox Jews who have been largely left out of past ecumenical efforts. Last week he was a guest on the Christian Broadcasting Network; last night he was to do a telephone interview with Chris Sloan on radio station WINZ-AM, Miami. And upcoming issues of *Christian Life* and Jerry Falwell's *Fundamentalist Journal* will feature his articles.

On the Jewish side, Eckstein sponsored a conference between rabbis and Christian theologians in 1978,

when he was national interreligious affairs director for the Anti-Defamation League. Last year he produced a report on Christians for the Israeli government; the study, titled *Understanding Evangelicals: A Guide for the Jewish Community*, was published this May in New York.

Eckstein is the rabbi who took action in 1980 when the Rev. Bailey Smith, then president of the 14 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, thundered that "God does not hear the prayers of a Jew."

While other Jewish leaders — and some of Smith's fellow Baptists — opened fire, Eckstein invited Smith and other top Baptist leaders on a tour of Israel. The trip brought them new understanding of the Jewish viewpoint, Eckstein said.

One gauge of his success came this summer, when Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan denounced Jews and Israel. Eckstein flew to Dallas and got Baptist leaders to issue a statement condemning Farrakhan's remarks and urging all Christians to support Israel.

Eckstein also points with pride to a 1981 editorial in *Christianity Today*, flagship magazine of the evangelical movement, asserting the bonds of Jews and Christians. "To attack Jews, the editorial said, 'is to attack evangelicals.'"

Despite their differences, Eckstein said evangelicals and Orthodox Jews are natural allies. "They are similar in their views on abortion, homosexuality, school prayer and support of Israel. They're part of the overall trend in America toward conservatism, in politics and economics."

"Most Jews tend toward liberalism, both in political and religious orientation. When they see conservatives have a greater impact on public policy, it alarms them."

"There's reason to be concerned if Christians try to impose their religion on the country, but most of their leaders, like Jerry Falwell, say they don't want to do that. In many instances Jewish leaders simply believe spiritual values should be individualized, not guiding the nation. But I believe that a balance of power between secularism and religion is best for Jewish survival."

Eckstein agreed that the bottom line for many evangelicals remains evangelism: preaching the gospel to everyone, including — sometimes especially — Jews. His book *What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism* suggests a fallback to dialogue as the best setting for such discussions. He also calls for Christians to shun "deception, manipulation or overly aggressive methods" in evangelism.

"Every evangelical theologian I've checked with has said that Christians' job is not to convert people," Eckstein said. "They are to preach the gospel, then let God do the converting through the Holy Spirit. If Christians talk about their faith responsibly, not offensively, Jews will respect that."

For their part, Jews must approach dialogue with an equally open mind, Eckstein added. "When Jews talk with Christians just to get support for Israel, that's not dialogue, it's an alliance."

Rabbi serves as bridge between Christians, Jews



Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein

sidered the incident an opportunity to bring about good, instead of increasing hostility.

Eckstein believes the growing willingness of Jews to deal with evangelicals is largely due to the latter groups' support of Israel, even if that support is often in the context of perceived "Christian" duty. "Many fundamentalists feel a biblical need to support Israel," he says. "In Genesis it says 'Those who bless Israel will be blessed; those who curse Israel will be cursed.' Evangelicals take their Bible very seriously."

A belief in shared Western values, plus a conservative tradition of support for Israel are other reasons for support of the state, Eckstein notes. The thing to avoid he stresses, is Christian support for Israel that is focused on conversion of the Jews.

"Often," he adds, "there is a lack of awareness (by Christians) of the role of Israel in the Jewish mind." For Christians to understand Jews they should look at their own link between death and resurrection and compare it to the Jewish link between death at Auschwitz and rebirth in Israel."

Eckstein is the author of "What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism," published by Word, Inc., a book which he hopes will eliminate some of the more common misunderstandings between the two groups. "I wrote it because there was no overall guide to the Jewish viewpoint available to Christians," he says. "But I have found that Jews frequently get a lot more out of the book than non-Jews."

"The thing to remember," Eckstein emphasizes, "is that Christian-Jewish relations have changed dramatically and for the better. We have to look at them in the context of a 2,000-year framework. The progress is remarkable. Preachers no longer spout anti-Semitism from the pulpit, the deicide charge ('Christ-killers') is no longer applied. To be anti-Semitic today is generally considered by Christians to be anti-Christian. These are major accomplishments that should not be minimized."

"I really feel divinely compelled," he continues. "Something is happening in Jewish-Christian relations today that is exciting."

A primary reason for Eckstein's visit to Phoenix was his admiration for the Valley's "exceptional" interfaith trips and activities, sponsored for the past nine years by the local CRC. "I felt the Phoenix Jewish community would be especially receptive," he told GPJN.

The Holyland Fellowship currently has 200 supporters, 65 percent of them Jewish. "We're working toward a nice balance," Eckstein says. "Initially the support was 85 percent Jewish."

The rabbi's organization — a one-man operation with a part-

time secretary — doesn't yet have the funding for many of the programs he wants to implement, such as seminars, speakers and interfaith missions. "That's the frustrating part of it," he says. "We're trying to build a broad base of support, and it's difficult. We need to walk before we can run."

Anyone interested in more information on the fellowship may contact Eckstein at the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, 36 S. Wabash, Suite 626, Chicago, Ill. 60603, telephone (312) 346-7693.

"The second year is very critical," Eckstein concludes. "It's a new effort, a new vision. We hope that people who believe in this vision will help."

'For Christians to understand Jews they should look at their own link between death and resurrection, and compare it to the Jewish link between death at Auschwitz and rebirth in Israel.'



Eckstein lightens the atmosphere with a sing-a-long following his speech.

'Survivalist tactics' for better Jewish-Christian relations



By STACI ELDER

Jews in America comprise less than 3 percent of the population.

Keeping this in mind, "survivalist tactics" dictate a relationship with Christian groups in the United States, be they Protestant or Catholic, liberal or fundamentalist.

This is the basic message of Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, 33, the soft-spoken youthful founder and president of the year-old Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, who spoke recently before a full house at Temple Beth Israel. He was guest speaker at an open meeting of the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix.

Eckstein, a Chicago-based, fourth generation Orthodox rabbi with an eight-year history of involvement in Jewish-Christian relations, is a staunch supporter of increased interfaith dialogue. His belief in the necessity of such interaction led him to leave a secure directorship with B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League to promote his fledgling association.

"What amazed me was the realization that there were 50 million people in this country whose beliefs we (Jews) knew nothing about," Eckstein says.

Many Jews, he finds, are responding to growing Christian fundamentalist influence by either "giving in" or taking a "let's use them for Israel" attitude.

"I believe there is a third way — it led me to form this organization," he says with conviction. "We must oppose what stifles pluralism and Jewish civil rights in America. We must join with those (Christians) who agree on common issues (i.e. Israel), and we must educate them, teach, interact."

In an interview with the GPJN the following day, Eckstein repeated his conviction that the major problem between Christians and Jews "is simply ignorance, not prejudice." He points out that many fundamentalist, right-wing Christians have "literally never met a Jew in their lives," leading to natural misconceptions and stereotypes.

Another problem he cites is insensitive language, an example being the expression "jewing" someone down, meaning to bargain or fleece.

"We have to be patient with each other as we learn the language, as we teach each other what it is that brings us pain and what gives us joy," Eckstein says. "There will be religious and political differences even after dialogue. However, there are quite a few issues that will change after dialogue."

Eckstein has spoken with people from all branches of Protestantism and is steadily strengthening relations with the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest evangelical-oriented organization in the country. He cites disagreement about Israel as the major cause of strife between Jews and liberal Protestants, but believes this occurs only at the national level, and "is not reflective of where most of the people are at."

A new source of tension he finds, is that many liberal Protestants are "not so keen" on Jews interacting with evangelicals. "There is a friction between liberal and fundamentalist Christians, and Jews may be unwittingly caught in the middle; neither side wants the Jews working with the other."

Since its conception, Eckstein's Holyland Fellowship already has brought about some positive change, its founder asserts. Shortly after former Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith's much-publicized statement that "God doesn't hear the prayers of Jews," Eckstein accompanied Smith on an interfaith trip to Israel. Upon their return Smith, who had previously visited only the Christian sites in the country, told Eckstein that he had "been to the Holy Land eight times before, but he had never been to Israel." Smith then added that he "would go to the death for the right of Jews to pray as they wished."

Since then, Eckstein has been a frequent guest speaker at Smith's Del City, Okla. church. The rabbi stresses that he con-

over

Accommodation Is Hope

Truce With Evangelicals Possible

NEW YORK — An answer for the evident conflict between the Evangelists and Jews was contained in a long report by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein who called on the Evangelists to drop "evangelizing efforts that involve any sort of manipulation, deception or excessively aggressive tactics."

This was the conclusion reached by the president of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, a new Chicago organization, in a paper released by the National Jewish Resource Center here. It calls on Jews and Evangelists to engage in a give and take process.

ON THE PART OF THE Evangelists, the Jews, according to Rabbi Eckstein who is former national co-director of Interreligious Affairs for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, will ask them to "regard dialogue as the proper forum in which to 'preach the gospel' and to abandon the zealous and even cultic techniques often employed in attempts to convert Jews.

Continuing, he wrote "Certainly Jews will ask responsible Evangelicals to be especially alert to evangelizing efforts that involve any sort of manipulations, deception or excessively aggressive tactics and to refrain from giving moral and financial support to the many Hebrew Christian para-church groups that target Jews for conversion."

AS FOR JEWS, they "will acknowledge that in a democratic country such as America, people have a right to preach as they believe while others have the right to ignore them and to disregard their remarks. Jews must also become more aware of the centrality of mission for many Christians and sensitive to the fact they regard it as their duty to fulfill that mandate."

Rabbi Eckstein, whose book, "What Chris-

tians Should Know About Jews and Judaism," has just been released, pointed out that "various Christian thinkers have argued that Christianity is an additional covenant or an opening up — not a suppression of the Jewish covenant. It follows that Jews are not in need of adopting Christianity to achieve fulfillment and salvation. Jews, will, undoubtedly, bid Evangelicals to make a theological attempt to adopt some form of this double covenant theory and to acknowledge the continuing validity of the divine covenant with the Jewish people as many liberal Protestants and Catholics have."

HE WAS MOST OUTSPOKEN in asserting that "It is unconscionable for an Israeli-oriented Jewish organization to give a testimonial to a Hebrew-Christian group and to justify such action on the grounds that great sums of money were raised for Israel. This was done by one well-known national Jewish organization. While proselytizing Christian groups may offer support to the State of Israel, and while Israel may accept such support for reasons of state, it does not behoove American Jews to 'honor' such factions and to give them the legitimacy they crave."

Dr. Eckstein divided the Evangelicals into right and left and centrist groups and urged better accommodation to the centrists while pointing out that a dialogue with the Evangelical left could be explored despite the fact that differences may exist on the subject of Israel. "Political coalitions with the Evangelical left are legitimate extensions of Jewish liberalism and might even lead to better understanding for Israel," he said.

Rabbi Eckstein is Adjunct Professor at the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained by Yeshiva University.

June 27, 1984 Jewish Post And Opinion Page 3

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Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein,  
Holyland Fellowship of Christians & Jews

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1984

# Politics, preachers may mix for good

BY ROY LARSON

It's a story that may comfort the afflicted who are disturbed about the role of Protestant fundamentalists in the current political campaign.

The story is told by Chicago Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, some of whose best friends are fundamentalists.

It goes back to 1980 when the Rev. Bailey Smith, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention, aroused a furor by saying that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew."

At first, Jewish religious leaders understandably responded with anger. But then some of them began to take a more subtle tack. Not the least of these was Eckstein, then co-director of interreligious affairs for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Before long, Smith, with a wing and a prayer, was on his way to Israel. When he came back, he was singing the Lord's song in a different key.

During the trip, Smith and Eckstein got to know each other. In short order, Eckstein was invited to speak at Smith's church in Del City, Okla.

At the end of the speech, Eckstein received a sustained round of applause. Effusively thanking his guest, Smith told the congregation, "We'll have to have him back for one of our crusades."

"Crusades?"

Recalling the incident in his new book, *What Christians Should*

*Know About Jews and Judaism*, Eckstein comments: "Conducting a crusade may be the most natural display of Christian faith for a Baptist. For the Jew, however, such language evokes an entirely different response. It reminds him of the slaughter and suffering of his ancestors in the 11th and 12th centuries."

It's doubtful Smith will make the same mistake again. And therein lies the moral of the story: You can take the boy out of the small town and you can take some of the worst parts of the small town out of the boy, too.

I speak with authority. I'm a small-town boy. I grew up in a WASP ghetto where anybody different was an object of suspicion. We could air our prejudices, swap our stories, and tell our jokes without even thinking about a negative response. Everybody in hearing distance reinforced our beliefs.

Eventually, a series of humiliating experiences taught me that people who spend all their time in the same Amen Corner should don dunce caps. A dummy is a dummy is a dummy, no matter how pious his sentiments, no matter how patriotic his utterances.

I try to remember my early pratfalls from grace now as I watch fundamentalist preachers, small-town boys at heart, leave the safety

of their ghettos and throw themselves headlong into the arena of presidential politics. Before it's over, I suspect several of them are going to get badly roughed up. But I also think that the best of them, in the process of getting roughed up, may also lose some of their rough edges.

At 65, Dr. Billy Graham is not only older but wiser than he was when he first stepped into the national limelight. Currently, he is preaching the gospel in the Soviet Union, which he formerly anathematized.

Age-wise and wise-wise, Dr. Jerry Falwell still has a ways to go. But there are signs of hope. The theme of an upcoming issue of Falwell's *Fundamentalist Journal* is "Perceptions of Fundamentalists in Other Communities." Contributors include historian Martin Marty, for mainline Protestantism; theologian Carl F. H. Henry, for Protestant evangelicalism; Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin, for Roman Catholicism, and Eckstein for Judaism.

To those who believe nothing good can come out of Lynchburg, Va., I say, "Wait and see."

The best thing about the participation of fundamentalists in politics is not what they will do unto others, but what the rough-and-tumble process will do unto them. Eventually, it will baptize them in the waters of the mainstream and they probably will emerge from that experience speaking in civil tongues.



A Special Issue  
November 1984  
CHRISTIAN LIFE Magazine

# THE LAND

An in-depth view of the Holy Land from a Christian and Jewish perspective. You may not agree totally with all these expressions of concern. But we believe you will be challenged by them.

Prepared under the direction of a panel of consulting editors:



Dr. Pat Robertson  
Christian Broadcasting Network



Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein  
Holyland Fellowship of Christians  
and Jews



Dr. Jerry Falwell  
Moral Majority

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# The Evangelicals in perspective

By Geoffrey Wigoder

## SPOTLIGHT

**DURING THE** Feast of Tabernacles (Succot), thousands of evangelical Christians are participating in what has become an annual celebration organized by the International Christian Embassy. Colourful groups from different parts of the world have converged on Jerusalem a week of meeting, celebration and prayer.

Israelis welcome this expression of identification with the State of Israel although many are confused by these groups and their attitude towards Jews. A useful recently issued publication is *Understanding Evangelicals: A Guide for the Jewish Community* by Yechiel Eckstein.

Although there are very many variations of evangelicals, he writes, three ideological characteristics distinguish the evangelical from the "mainstream" Christians: the centrality of Scripture, the stress on the person of Jesus, and the experience of being "born again" which means that it is not enough to have been baptized while a baby but the individual on reaching maturity must make a personal decision to accept Jesus as his personal saviour.

Underlying all these principles is the belief in the Christian imperative to actively disseminate the gospel, or "good news" of Christianity. Eckstein is careful to differentiate the evangelist from the fundamentalist. Until a few decades ago the terms were used interchangeably – and still are in some circles. The fundamentalists originally implied a return to the fundamentals of the church (as opposed to liberal Christians who were seen as having over-accommodated themselves to modernity). Now the more generic term is "evangelical," with "fundamentalist" reserved for the more

conservative right-wing of the evangelical community. Indeed, "fundamentalist" today often has the pejorative connotation of "backward."

**THERE IS A** wide spectrum of evangelicals, who are said to number 40-50 million in the U.S. alone (although all figures must be treated with caution). The major theological issue dividing the "liberal" from the "conservative" evangelical is whether Scripture is infallible. Major differences divide the various groups of evangelicals and it is wrong to lump them together. According to a recent Gallup poll, 20 per cent of evangelicals regard themselves as "left of centre," 31 per cent as "middle of the road" and 37 per cent as "right of centre" on the evangelical scale.

The left are concerned with issues of peace and justice, and oppose many of Israel's policies. On the other hand, they tend to be close to the American Jewish establishment on many domestic and social-justice issues. Those in the centre (he mentions the late Dr. Douglas Young as an outstanding example) are inclined to support Jews and Israel, though not uncritically.

Their solidarity stems more from their sense of justice for the Jewish people and for moral, strategic and geopolitical reasons than from eschatological considerations (i.e. the return of the Jews to their land as a necessary stage preceding the Second Coming of Jesus) – although the latter aspect is not absent. In the U.S. a number of dialogues have been conducted between Jews and this segment of evangelism.

Although the members of this group will not – and could not – agree to end evangelism to Jews, its members rarely engage in aggressive, proselytizing efforts which single out the Jews for missionary activities.

The evangelical centre is generally supportive of Israel – but not unqualifiedly so. It is the evangelical right which is most sold on Israel – and on missionizing. They are aggressive in

the U.S. on behalf of right-wing causes, hoping to bring America back to what they often call its "Judeo-Christian" moral foundations. They were particularly visible in the U.S. during election times, including the present.

The largest of the Christian far right groups calls itself the Moral Majority which claims a membership of four million. It has become so well-known that other evangelicals complain that the public tends to confuse them with the Moral Majority, towards which they themselves have mixed feelings.

**MANY OF THESE** right-wing evangelicals believe America has been blessed because it has treated Jews and Israel favourably and they express support for Jews. However, anti-Semitic remarks have been heard in their ranks. Some Jews such as Eckstein excuse these as inadvertent or naive; others take them as betraying a basic underlying anti-Semitism.

However, there is no gainsaying the genuineness of their Zionist enthusiasm, derived from biblical promises and expectations – drawn from both the Old and New Testaments. Events in the Middle East are interpreted as signs of the imminent return of Jesus, the battle of Armageddon and the ultimate conversion of the Jews. Evangelicals differ as to the order in which these events will take place and this can affect the priority given to missionizing. The evangelical right, which received enthusiastic endorsement from Menachem Begin, is the most politically active pro-Israel evangelical group, expressing its support through political lobbying, tourism, and positive media presentations of Israel and its policies (often supporting "Greater Israel" policies as fulfillment of biblical prophecy).

Eckstein points out, however, that

on the Awacs issue, the most significant showdown over Israel between the Reagan Administration and the

over



American Jewish establishment, all the evangelical representatives and senators supported the Democratic administration against the declared interests of Israel.

Jews in America are concerned with the declared objective of the evangelical right to "Christianize America." The Moral Majority has spoken of its desire to establish a "Christian republic," although it explains this as an attempt to arrest the moral decline in the country. Most official Jewish groups oppose its programme which supports prayers in schools, and opposes abortion, equal women's rights, and rights for homosexuals. One Jewish group, the right-wing Orthodox, Rabbinical Alliance, however, has affirmed its support for much of the Moral Majority's agenda.

In general, much confusion reigns among the Jewish community (as elsewhere) about evangelicals. Many Jews oppose cooperation with evangelicals, especially its right wing. These include Reform leaders and the American Jewish Congress, who are alarmed at the use of religion as an instrument of political coercion and the endorsement of reactionary causes.

ECKSTEIN DESCRIBES divergent Jewish views. Some warn against "selling their souls" to the Christian Right just because of its strong support for Israel. Others feel that the beleaguered State of Israel should ignore their underlying motivations and expectations and accept their support. Still others feel that Jews should seek out responsible evangelical circles and hold a dialogue with them on a variety of issues, which could prove potentially helpful.

Many Jews are uneasy about becoming involved in the evangelical world-view and suspect that inasmuch as the support for Israel may be related to the hope for the conver-

sion of the Jews, when this does not happen, the relationship could misfire and Jews would be blamed as delaying the final redemption of the world—leading to strong resentment of the Jews for their "backsliding." Others fear that at a certain point the evangelicals will "call the chips in" and ask Jews to support various ultra-conservative causes as a *quid pro quo* for their support for Israel.

Eckstein himself optimistically feels that the development of dialogue will bring new understanding for Jewish concerns for pluralism and civil liberties and the dispelling of anxieties on either side. He recognizes that the relationship is based on a basic conflict—the determination to evangelize versus the Jewish determination to survive—but feels that a *modus vivendi* can be built up, involving give and take on both sides.

Jews, he suggests, will have to recognize the centrality of mission for many Christians but in turn will demand the cessation of crude frontal activities in this direction and its restriction to frameworks of dialogue, model and example, without insistence on conversion. Jews, he feels, should develop the relationship but without compromising their own central Jewish commitments (although he feels that certain Israel-oriented Jewish groups have gone too far in giving legitimation to missionizing Hebrew-Christian groups on the basis of their pro-Israel activities).

Here in Israel, much can be learned from this document. We must be aware of the perception of a growth in missionary activity expressed in certain quarters but at the same time should keep the entire issue in proper perspective and not be drawn into panicky steps which play into the hands of anti-democratic tendencies in our midst.

*The writer is editor-in-chief of the Encyclopedia Judaica and a regular contributor to The Jerusalem Post.*

## BOOKS

# Telling Christians about Judaism

"WHAT CHRISTIANS  
SHOULD KNOW ABOUT  
JEWS AND JUDAISM"

by  
RABBI YECHIEL  
ECKSTEIN

Reviewed by Rabbi William  
Frankel.

Recently, a local newspaper referred to Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein as "A New Apostle to the Gentiles." While the term may exaggerate his role, his recently published book will be a source of enlightenment to the Christian world.

The main body of "What Christians Should Know About Jews And Judaism" provides vital information on Jewish life. Regrettably, most Christians derive their knowledge of Judaism from, what they call, the "Old Testament," and hence, know little of the Jewish experience during the past 2,000 years. Eckstein fills that void by providing information on Judaism and Jews of today.

What makes the book particularly helpful are the sections dealing with "Christian Missions and the Jews" and "Christian - Jewish Relations Today," with particular emphasis on Evangelical Christians.

Eckstein brings to the subject a background of extensive dealings with Evangelicals. As founder and president of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews and former co-director of Inter-religious Affairs for the Anti Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, he has developed an ongoing relationship with the Evangelical community who have grown and attracted a great deal of attention in recent years. Though a bridge-builder between Jews and the Christian Right, Eckstein is quite outspoken about Jewish reservations on Evangelical Christianity.

### What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism

He insists that there can be no dialogue with Christians who overtly or covertly try to convert Jews or who consider Jewish legitimacy to have ended with the birth of Christianity. He is particularly critical of the so-called Hebrew Christians who use deceptive methods in posing as Jews, using Jewish symbols and Jewish names in appealing to unsuspecting young Jews. In some cases, those groups receive financial aid and other support from fundamentalist groups.

The author cautions, however, against lumping all Evangelicals together as a monolith or even associating them all with the Moral Majority. As a matter of fact, as many other religious denominations, Evangelicals cover a wide spectrum, left, center and right.

The "left of the center" Evangelicals best identified with the "Sojourners" community in Washington, share with liberal Protestants a certain degree of sympathy for the Third World and the Palestinian cause.

The "Evangelical Center" is identified by Eckstein with Billy Graham's Wheaton College and the late Dr. G. Douglas Young who settled in Israel and founded the Institute for Holy Land studies in Jerusalem. They are inclined to support Jews and Israel

for humanitarian reasons as well as political and theological ones. For all practical purposes, Eckstein asserts, many "centrists" have given up conversionary work among Jews, preferring to fulfill their missionary impulse toward Jews through dialogue.

Then there is the "Evangelical Right" which is associated with Conservative Southern Baptists and groups such as the Moral Majority. The Rev. Jerry Falwell is one of the most prominent spokesmen for that point of view. The rationale for his interest in Jews and Israel is theological and is to be found in Genesis 12:3 "And I (G-d) will bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse her....". "G-d has raised up America in these last days for the cause of world evangelization, and for the protection of His people, the Jews. I don't think America has any other right or reason for existence other than these two purposes."

That statement has not kept members of that group from uttering anti-Semitic sentiments. Rev. Daniel Fore, a past Moral Majority leader, once stated that "Jews have a G-d-given, almost supernatural, ability to make money." While Falwell condemned that statement, he stated publicly that he understood why some disliked the Jew. "He can make more money accidentally than you can on purpose. I want to stand with the Jews. If that's where G-d blesses, I want to walk close." Falwell affirmed that "one cannot belong to the Moral Majority, Inc., without making the commitment to support the State of Israel in its battle for survival .... No anti-Semitic influence is allowed in Moral Majority, Inc."

We owe Eckstein a debt for writing a book which while reflecting his own Orthodox orientation, covers the complete spectrum of Jewish life and gives fair treatment to the Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform positions as well as all political views in the Jewish community. "What Christians Should Know about Jews and Judaism" is a valuable source of information to Christians. It is also helpful to Jews for their understanding of their own heritage and in their daily contacts with Christians.

*Rabbi William Frankel of Am Yisrael Congregation in Northfield is a past vice president of the Jewish Federation.*



# Perspectives



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AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

## UNDERSTANDING EVANGELICALS: A GUIDE FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

BY

RABBI YECHIEL ECKSTEIN

President, Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews



## THE CENTER FOR LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

Founded in 1974 in the conviction that a new era of Jewish life has emerged after the Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel, the National Jewish Resource Center seeks to deepen the Jewish knowledge and religious experience of Jewish communal leadership. Its two major components are SHAMOR: The Center for Jewish Enrichment, and ZACHOR: The Holocaust Resource Center. The work of SHAMOR includes lay leadership education and CHEVRA, rabbinic dialogue circles which bring together Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform rabbis for learning and exploring community issues together. NJRC is currently establishing CLAL: The Center for Learning and Leadership, a retreat center and "think tank" for the national Jewish community.

RABBI YECHIEL ECKSTEIN is founder and President of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, a new organization headquartered at 36 S. Wabash in Chicago, and dedicated to building bridges between Jews and Christians, and a broad base of united support for the State of Israel. He is the Rabbi of the Park Synagogue, and Adjunct Professor at the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained at Yeshiva University in New York and is a doctoral candidate in religion at Columbia University. A former national co-director of Interreligious Affairs for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, his book, What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism (Word, Inc.) has just been released.



**UNDERSTANDING EVANGELICALS:  
A GUIDE FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Until recently, it was common to characterize the American religious scene with the familiar categories popularized by Will Herberg's book, Catholic, Protestant, Jew. Today, this is no longer the case. With the emergence of an influential and highly visible fourth group, we now must divide the Christian community further into Catholics, Protestants, and Evangelicals.

The rise of the Evangelicals in recent years has prompted mainstream Christians and Jews alike to respond with a mixture of fascination and fear. Evangelicals are certain to have a major impact on the social fabric of this country; they ought, therefore, to be taken seriously. Understanding --rather than negative or positive stereotyping--would be helpful.

Most people remain ignorant about the Evangelical community. In its 1982 joint program plan, for example, the National Jewish Community Relations Council admitted its lack of knowledge, stating, "There remains a great need for a thorough examination of the Evangelical movement with a view to providing guidance for Jewish groups in establishing and maintaining relationships with suitable elements within that movement,...we renew our recommendation of last year that such an examination be undertaken by national members agencies that have the resources to do so."

The Jewish community, by and large, has viewed the rise of the Evangelicals with a special degree of anxiety. While a small minority view them as allies and give them unqualified support, most Jews are more guarded and leery about cooperating with them. Still others, deeply alarmed by the religious intolerance potential in fundamentalism, coupled with the Evangelicals' growing political power, refuse to have anything to do with them.

Jewish anxieties with regard to Evangelicals have demographic, sociological, and political roots, as much as theological ones. Jews and Evangelicals have only recently begun to live in the same geographic areas, to meet one another, and to conduct dialogues with one another. It is probably fair to say that until recently most Jews had never met an Evangelical before, and vice versa. The absence of contact contributed to the ignorance of each other that the two communities often share.



It would be a mistake to conclude that no dialogue is possible between the two communities. There have been many noteworthy changes in past decades in Christian-Jewish relations as a whole and even in the manner in which interreligious programming is conducted. What once was marked by an attempt to homogenize the two faith communities on the basis of tolerance, civility and brotherhood has more recently become an institutionalized movement seeking to advance substantive dialogue and genuine understanding and cooperation among Christians and Jews. Change is possible.

But before the Jewish community rushes to "dialogue" with the Evangelical community, certain questions must be answered. For example, are all Evangelicals right-wing? How do Evangelicals differ, theologically and politically, from Catholics and liberal Protestants, as well as among themselves? We should also be critically discerning as to which Evangelical groups actively support Hebrew-Christian outreach groups like Jews for Jesus or seek to transform America into a "Christian nation," and which do not.

With which segments of the Evangelical community should the Jewish community cooperate and with which should it not? Is the rather prevalent view that Evangelicals generally have anti-Semitic attitudes accurate?

To put it simply: is the Evangelical movement good or bad for the Jews?

The Evangelical-Jewish relationship is still in its embryonic stages. Certain Jewish groups have sponsored conferences and trips to Israel with Evangelicals. Others oppose such cooperative efforts. Nevertheless, as the dialogue between the communities matures, some of the negative stereotypes we have of one another, and many--though not necessarily all--of our fears and anxieties may be dispelled.

Constant monitoring of fringe elements will still be necessary. But serious inroads can be made in nurturing a positive relationship between Jews and most segments of Evangelicals through dialogue and joint cooperation on efforts of mutual enrichment and concern.

## II. WHO ARE THE EVANGELICALS?

The word "evangelical" stems from the Greek root "evangelium" meaning "good news" or gospel, with the implication being the spreading of that gospel. Evangelicals differ as to the precise meaning of the word, since it can describe a person, a position, or a movement. A more historical approach to the term would define it as a movement which evolved as a defense of historic Christian orthodoxy in response to the Enlightenment. At the core of the concept, both ideologically and etymologically, is the stress on the Bible, especially the New Testament. In that sense, it can be said that the Protestant Reformation was an "evangelical" event, in that it stressed the return to Bible (*sola scriptura*), using the term broadly.

At the heart of the Evangelical worldview is the belief that everything in life should be shaped by the gospel of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Whether it be liturgy, social action, politics or science, all are measured by and viewed through the prism of the (Christian) Bible, and all are subject to its authority.

Religion can be described as the glasses through which we view the world. Our concepts of reality and ultimate meaning are filtered through faith. For traditional Jews, the Torah serves as "the Jewish glasses," and for this reason the scroll occupies "center stage" in the synagogue (i.e., the Ark). Central to the Christian ethos, and particularly to the Evangelical view, is the person of Jesus and the authority of Scripture.

There is no typical Evangelical nor is there a consensus on what constitutes Evangelical belief. There are, however, three ideological characteristics which distinguish the Evangelical from the "mainstream" Catholic or Protestant Christian. However, the distinction between Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians frequently lies in the degree to which these three principles are stressed, rather than in their very presence.

- 1) Centrality of Scripture--The world is viewed through the lens of of Scripture, the Word of God, not the opposite. The centrality of the Bible is the key to all Evangelical affirmations and the Bible serves as the principal source of religious authority.
- 2) A stress on the person of Jesus or on God's immanence more than on God's transcendence. It is for this reason that Evangelicals



often speak of Jesus in very personal terms as they might talk of a close friend.

- 3) Being "born again"--which can best be understood as a personal experience of a commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior and a spiritual rebirth by a regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. The term stems from the New Testament Book of John 3:1-8 which quotes Jesus as saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God ...you must be born again." Non-Evangelicals understand this to refer to the act of baptism which can be performed on a child, and which fulfills the concept of "water and spirit." Baptists and Evangelicals, however, would be inclined to require of the individual not just the physical act of baptism (i.e., water) but a personal decision to accept the Lordship of Jesus (i.e., Spirit). Rather than being baptized as infants, most Baptists and Evangelicals choose to be baptized. In this judgement, baptism can only be performed when individuals are adults and can consciously accept Jesus as their personal savior.

Despite the lack of consensus regarding the term "evangelical," it is fair to say that an Evangelical is one who upholds Scripture (the Word of God) over a humanistic tradition that accommodates the Christian faith unduly, relates the person of Jesus as against Jesus as paradigm, and stresses regeneration or being "born again" by the Spirit of God as against man as his own deliverer. Undergirding all these principles is the belief in the Christian imperative to actively disseminate this threefold gospel or good news. The Jewish community should keep in mind, therefore, that central to the Evangelical Christian's identity is the commission to evangelize all non-Christians.

### III. "EVANGELICALS" or "FUNDAMENTALISTS"?

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Christians who followed these three principles were generally referred to as Fundamentalists, with the connotation being those who returned to the fundamentals of the Church. The fundamentalist movement stood in opposition to the Modernist one, comprised of liberal Christians, who were viewed as having over-accommodated to modernity at the expense of rigid Biblical doctrine. More recently, however, the generic term used to describe such Christians is "evangelical," while "fundamentalist" is reserved for the more conservative, right-wing of the Evangelical community. The nomenclature, "fundamentalist," today also often conveys the pejorative connotation of "backward," unlike its original positive connotation of "those who returned to the Christian fundamentals."\*

In other words, there has been a significant change in the way we characterize Christian believers of the sort described above. While today nearly all fundamentalists would regard themselves as evangelical, the opposite is no longer the case. Some Evangelicals, especially those in the center and left wings, would take offense at being referred to as fundamentalists, and vice versa. When in doubt, therefore, it is wiser simply to use the term "Christian," which is appropriate for all such people, including fundamentalists.

As with most religious groups, there is a wide spectrum to the Evangelical community. Evangelicalism crosses all sectarian lines and is not a "denomination" in its own right (although certain denominations tend to be almost entirely evangelical). Thus, for example, there are Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and even Catholic Evangelicals (although most Catholics with such views characterize themselves as Charismatic). The largest group of Evangelical Christians in America comes from the Southern Baptist movement, itself the largest Protestant body in the country. The Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal groups that stress faith healing and "speaking in tongues" are among the fastest growing Evangelical groups.

It is estimated that there are between 40-50 million Americans in the United States who describe themselves as Evangelical Christians, though they are far from being a cohesive body. While most, particularly conservative Evangelicals, come from the rural South, this concentration is changing as Evangelicals gradually enter more and more into mainstream urban life and society.

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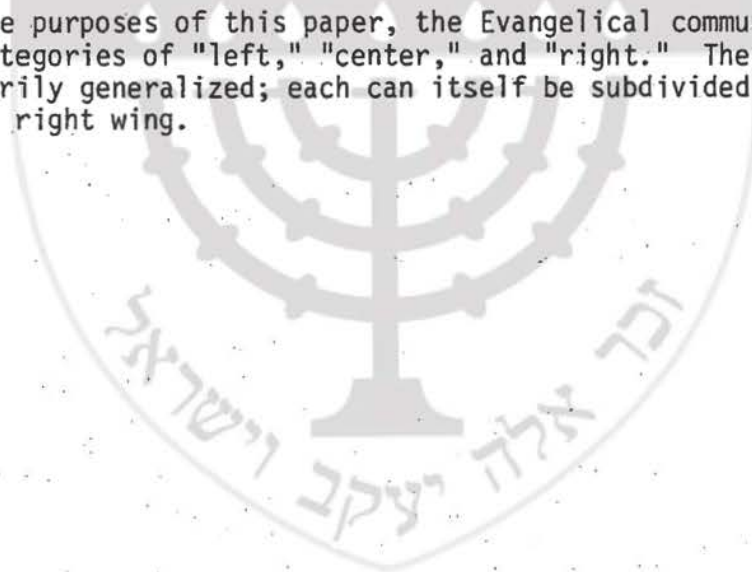
\*While the term "fundamentalist" carries a negative overtone among liberals, many on the evangelical Right prefer this designation. In this paper, fundamentalists are included in the rubric "evangelical Right."



The major theological issue currently dividing "liberal" from "conservative" Evangelicals is whether Scripture is inerrant and infallible. Conservatives would insist that, in the words of Evangelical theologian Harold Lindsell, the bible is "without error historically or scientifically." However, attitudinal, cultural and stylistic factors, perhaps even more than theological ones, are the real dividing lines separating Evangelicals from Fundamentalists.

According to a recent Gallup poll, 20% of Evangelicals regard themselves as "left of center," 31% as "middle of the road," and 37% as "right of center," on the Evangelical spectrum. Non-Evangelicals, however, often mistakenly lump all Evangelicals together as a monolith (much to the distress of both liberal and conservative Evangelicals, neither of whom wish to be associated with the other). There are fundamental differences between Jerry Falwell and Billy Graham, Christianity Today and Moody Monthly magazines, Pat Robertson and Bob Jones, or between Criswell Center and Wheaton College, to give just a few examples. Their differences are especially pronounced when it comes to Jews, Judaism, and Israel. It is, therefore, crucial that the Jewish community become aware of the multifaceted nature of the Evangelical community--its institutions, leadership and power centers--and relate to each segment appropriately.

For the purposes of this paper, the Evangelical community is divided into the categories of "left," "center," and "right." These categories are necessarily generalized; each can itself be subdivided into a left, center, and right wing.



#### IV. THE EVANGELICAL LEFT

The left wing of the Evangelical spectrum is most widely associated with the Sojourners community in Washington, D.C., which has only recently begun to receive media coverage and public attention. Their magazine, Sojourners, stresses a variety of ethical and social justice issues such as the exploitation of the third world, nuclear armaments, abortion, poverty, apartheid, pacifism, as well as the issue of Palestinian Arab rights. They are a responsible group of devout Christians concerned with world peace and justice, though they oppose the liberation theology invoked by liberal Protestant groups such as the National Council of Churches, which is the umbrella organization for thirty-two Protestant groups. The Sojourners community and the Evangelical left as a whole are a small minority among Evangelicals, in terms both of numbers and influence. They oppose many of Israel's policies, particularly criticizing its treatment of Palestinian Arabs, and the escalating arms race in the Middle East and throughout the world. Also, Sojourners' editorials and articles have at times been extremely critical of Israel, and the magazine has sponsored a number of programs such as the two "La Grange Conferences" (1979, 1981) with the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign, with the intent of attracting Christians to the Palestinian Arab cause.

The principal non-theological issue separating mainstream Jewish organizations and left-wing Evangelicals is the Arab-Israeli conflict, though the latter would also tend to be more pacifist than the organized Jewish community. There would be overall agreement on a host of domestic and social-justice issues, though the two groups have rarely, if ever, worked together. The "left" might be the most inclined of Evangelicals to accept religious pluralism and the right of Jews to fulfill themselves through their Jewish faith. (The Evangelical Left's ideological overlap with most segments of liberal Protestantism is striking. We can probably look forward to more cooperative efforts on the part of those two Christian groups in the years ahead, especially on the issues of poverty, nuclear policy, and the Mideast.)



## V. THE EVANGELICAL CENTER

The Evangelical center has its own Left, Center, and Right wings. It is most visibly identified with personalities such as Billy Graham and Carl Henry, institutions such as Wheaton, Fuller, and Trinity, magazines such as Christianity Today, and organizations such as the Evangelical Theological Society and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) which is an umbrella organization of thirty-nine Evangelical denominations and numerous churches and individuals. (The NAE publishes a quarterly newsletter, "United Evangelical Action," as well as a monthly, "NAE Washington Insight" which deals with public and political affairs.)

One of the lesser-known but highly beloved "centrist" Evangelicals in the eyes of Jews was the late Dr. G. Douglas Young, former dean of Trinity Seminary, who moved to Israel in the early 1950s to express solidarity with the Jewish people. Young founded The Holy Land Institute and Bridges for Peace organizations in order to increase Evangelical understanding and support for Israel. Dr. Young, a resident of Jerusalem for almost thirty years, was given an award by Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kolleck, and was respected by the Jewish community in Israel and the United States. Like most "centrists," he did not actively attempt to proselytize Jews and, as a result, was widely trusted by them.

Christianity Today is the major magazine published by this segment of the Evangelical community and is the religious publication with one of the largest circulations in America. It is an extremely thoughtful and responsible publication which is highly regarded even by non-Evangelicals. Some of the greatest Evangelical scholars of our time have served as its editors, including Carl Henry, Harold Lindsell, and Kenneth Kantzer. The publication generally takes a balanced, middle-of-the-road approach and its editorial posture on various socio-economic and political issues tends to be in agreement with mainstream Jewish sensibilities. While many fundamentalists view Christianity Today (and the centrist movement as a whole) as having "gone soft" on evangelicalism, most still have great respect for it.

Centrists are inclined to support Jews and Israel, though not uncritically, and not for the same theological, prophetic reasons often motivating the "Right." Their solidarity stems more from their sense of justice for the Jewish people, and for geopolitical, moral, and strategic reasons than it does from eschatological considerations, although these motives are not totally absent.

A number of dialogue conferences have been held in recent years

between Jews and this segment of Evangelicalism. As a result, there is perhaps now a greater awareness and appreciation for the Jewish condition on their part than can be found among either the "Right" or "Left." Following one such conference, Christianity Today published a four-page editorial entitled "Concerning Evangelicals and Jews" (April 24, 1981) stating that it "sorrowfully acknowledges anti-Semitic statements and actions on the part of some Evangelicals" and calling for "repentance, restitution, and action which will ferret out, expose and actively oppose incipient and overt anti-Semitism that creeps into society."

"To attack Jews," the editorial continued, "is to attack Evangelicals, and such attacks will be resisted by Evangelicals as attacks against themselves." (See further in my book, What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism.)

While this centrist group will in all likelihood never issue a formal call for an end to evangelism of Jews, rarely if ever do its members participate in aggressive, proselytizing efforts which single out Jews for missionary activity. Moreover, such Evangelicals would be inclined to repudiate proselytizing efforts which apply "unworthy pressure," "manipulation," "bribery," or "deception." The same Christianity Today editorial, for example, states that, "a small minority of Jewish-Christians disguise their Christianity to attract unsuspecting Jews to Christianity. This is deceitful, contrary to the New Testament teaching unworthy of evangelical Christians. We must insist on ethical integrity as the first law of any Christian witness."

While the Evangelical center can be counted on to play an active role in defending Jews and even Judaism, its attitude toward Israel, while generally positive, is not unqualifiedly so. Moreover, on those occasions when centrist support for Israel is forthcoming, it is generally not in the politically aggressive form taken by the Evangelical Right. Petitions, telegram campaigns, and other forms of lobbying on political issues affecting Israel, for example, are more likely to emanate from the Evangelical "Right" than from the "Center."



## VI. THE EVANGELICAL RIGHT

There is little that distinguishes the Evangelical "Right" from "Center" on purely theological issues, except, perhaps, the Biblical inerrancy question cited earlier. On the socio-cultural, demographic and political levels, however, there are major differences. While the Centrists have been quietly involved in political affairs for decades, the Evangelical Right has, in recent years, begun employing aggressive tactics on behalf of right-wing causes. They have mastered a variety of political techniques which they hope will bring America back to what they often refer to as the "Judeo-Christian" moral foundations upon which the United States was built. Their means of achieving this goal include political action training seminars, voter registration drives, "hit lists" of political candidates, legislative alerts and telephone networks to mobilize the public, full use of the television airwaves, newsletters and fund raising letters which posit the scriptural framework for the desired action, rallies, and more. Although they are sometimes referred to as the "Christian Right," the "Evangelical Right" is, perhaps, a more appropriate term. Another useful term might be "Christian extreme Right," though Jerry Falwell once retorted that, "They have labeled Moral Majority the Extreme Right because we speak out against Extreme Wrong."

### 1. Moral Majority

The Moral Majority, reportedly the largest of the Christian far right political groups and certainly the best-known, was founded in 1979 by Rev. Jerry Falwell, a Lynchburg, Virginia, pastor and host of the "Old Time Gospel Hour" TV show, together with Dr. Robert Billings, who left the organization a few months later to become the regional liaison with the U.S. Department of Education. The Moral Majority aims to "bring America back to God" by mobilizing support at local, state and national levels, for favorable candidates and legislation. Moral Majority membership is around four million. It has a sophisticated network reaching all fifty states, and claims to have registered millions of new voters. While its impact on the outcome of the 1980 Presidential elections has been widely debated, it certainly played a decisive role in a limited number of Congressional areas, such as Alaska, where Moral Majority members comprised the majority of delegates to the State Republican convention.

There is widespread confusion regarding this group, to the point that many people mistakenly view all Evangelicals as members of the Moral Majority, or at least ideologically and politically compatible with it. One of the most common complaints raised by Evangelicals at dialogue meetings is the public's tendency to confuse them with the Moral Majority.

The following is a list of Reverend Falwell's organizational ministry: Pres., Moral Majority, Inc.; Chancellor, Liberty Baptist College; Pastor, Thomas Road Baptist Church; Pres., Elim Inc.; Pres., Lynchburg Christian Academy; Pres., Treasure Island Youth Camp; Pres., Liberty Home Bible Institute; Chancellor, Liberty Baptist Seminary; Pres., The Old-Time Gospel Hour, Inc. This institutional empire reflects Falwell's long-time commitment to what he calls "saturation evangelism," which he once described as "preaching the gospel to every available person at every available time by every available means."

The Moral Majority is anathema to many Christians; the majority of Evangelicals probably view it with mixed feelings. On the one hand, many of them are fed up with policies which they believe have led to a deterioration in the moral fabric of our society and with laws which have relegated religion solely to the confines of the church, synagogue, or family. On the other hand, they also wish to preserve certain constitutional freedoms, especially those relating to the separation of church and state. Most Jews share in the dilemma of finding the proper role of religion in public policy. However, Jews are especially concerned with the Moral Majority and the Evangelical Right's views of Jews, Israel, and constitutional rights.

#### *a. Place of Jews*

Jerry Falwell has said, "I support the Jews, first for biblical reasons; I take the Abrahamic covenant literally, God has blessed America because we have blessed the Jews...God has raised up America in these last days for the cause of world evangelization and for the protection of His people, the Jews. I don't think America has any other right or reason for existence other than these two purposes." (Interview, *Christianity Today*, September 4, 1981) One of the most commonly invoked Biblical passages used by conservative Christians to undergird their support for Jews and Israel is, "And I (God) will bless those who bless you (Israel) and curse those who curse you (Israel)." (Genesis 12:3) In other words, many Evangelicals genuinely believe that the reason America has been blessed as it has, is because it has treated Jews and Israel favorably.

But regional Moral Majority representatives have made statements which are anti-Semitic, or--to be charitable--unwittingly exhibit such prejudices. Rev. Daniel Fore, once chairman of New York's Moral Majority, has said that "Jews have a God-given, almost supernatural ability to make money," and that "Jews control the media in this city (New York)." Falwell repudiated Fore and later apologized for his remarks, characterizing them as "naive and uninformed." Fore no longer serves on the staff of the Moral Majority.

Falwell has repeatedly denied that he or any part of the Moral Majority is anti-Semitic, citing his support for Israel and the fact that Jews and even rabbis are among the Moral Majority's membership. But Falwell himself has been known to let slip an anti-Semitic remark or two, although, I believe, naively and unintentionally. Speaking at an "I Love America" rally on the steps of the state capital in Richmond, Virginia, Falwell



said, "I know a few of you here today who don't like Jews. And I know why. He can make more money accidentally than you can on purpose." In that very talk, however, Falwell added that, "I want to stand with the Jews. If that's where God blesses, I want to walk close."

The Moral Majority has placed full-page newspaper advertisements across the country asserting that "One cannot belong to Moral Majority, Inc., without making the commitment to support the State of Israel in its battle for survival and to support the human and civil rights of Jewish people everywhere. No anti-Semitic influence is allowed in Moral Majority, Inc."

There are those (myself included) who view many of the hostile statements expressing negative stereotypical attitudes towards Jews as inadvertent and reflective of the Right's cultural naivete and lack of awareness of the historical abuses of such canards and of Jewish sensitivities to them. Others view them as expressions of the duplicitous and/or anti-Semitic character of the Evangelical Right.

#### *b. Place of Israel*

At a time when many liberal Christian groups have been unduly critical of Israel, the Moral Majority and Evangelical Right remain among its staunchest, most ardent and most vocal Christian supporters. Much of the theological underpinning for this support is derived from the biblical promise that God would bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse her. Another theological rationale is that the rise of the State of Israel as well as other events transpiring in the Middle East, are viewed as the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. Sometimes, even trivial events in the Middle East are interpreted as signs of the imminent return of Jesus, battle of Armageddon, rapture, period of tribulation, and of the ultimate conversion of the Jews. (Evangelicals differ on the precise order in which these events are to take place.)

Many Evangelical-Right supporters of Israel insist that their commitment to Israel and the Jewish people is also based on humanitarian considerations. Thus, the previously cited newspaper ad spelling out the Moral Majority's basic convictions also states that, "Many Moral Majority, Inc. members, because of their theological convictions are committed to the Jewish people. Others stand upon the human and civil rights of all persons as a premise for support of the State of Israel. Others support Israel because of historical and legal arguments. Regardless, one cannot belong to Moral Majority, Inc. without making the commitment to support the State of Israel in its battle for survival..." Similarly, in his interview with Christianity Today (September 4, 1981) Falwell said, "I also support the Jews because I think, historically, the evidence is on their side that Palestine belongs to them. Legally, they have had the right to be in the land since 1948. I also support the Jews because from the humanitarian perspective, they have the right to exist, and there are a hundred million neighbors who are committed to their extinction. I also support the Jews because they are the only friends America has in the Middle East."



Today, the Evangelical Right includes the most politically active of pro-Israel Evangelical groups. It shows its support of Israel through Holy Land tourism, promotion of Israel's cause on television, and by letter writing and telegram campaigns. The potential for building an even greater pro-Israel moral, humanitarian, and political involvement among this segment of Evangelicals is extremely great. It was this goal that underlay the founding of the Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

However, in the AWACS campaign, arguably the most significant battle the Jewish community has had with the Reagan Administration thus far, the Evangelical Representatives and Senators all voted with the President, against the interests of Israel. While the Congressmen insisted that their votes were cast in support of the President, not against Israel, the fact remains that in this crucial instance the traditional Democratic alliance of labor, liberals, and blacks proved to be the more reliable ally. Individuals such as Falwell lobbied against the sale--but how hard they lobbied is arguable. Whether Evangelical politicians and lay people would respond in a similar manner to other future controversial issues affecting Israel's security still remains to be seen. The AWACS vote pattern set back those Jews who have argued for pursuing a new alliance with the Christian Right even at the expense of the old Jewish-liberal coalitions.

Despite the fact that the Moral Majority and some other segments of the Christian Right have no formal "hit list," the causes they espouse, and the allies they attract, have at times adversely affected congressional support of Israel. In 1980, for example, the New Right played a significant role in turning out of office Senators Frank Church (former Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee), Dick Clark, and Birch Bayh; Church, Clark, and Bayh had strong pro-Israel records.

It appears that while the Evangelical Right may, in fact, be genuinely pro-Israel, when it comes to electoral politics it tends to apply its muscle on social, family, and religion-oriented issues almost to the exclusion of Israel-related ones.

### *c. Constitutional Rights and Domestic Issues*

Along with many Americans, Jews are deeply concerned with the Evangelical Right's attempt to Christianize America. The Moral Majority has, on a number of occasions, spoken of its desire to establish a "Christian Republic." It has also issued a "Christian Bill of Rights." When challenged, however, it generally claims that it does not seek to establish a theocracy, to erode personal liberties or to promote "Christian-only" government officials or political candidates. Rather, it wishes to redress what it considers to be the moral decline in America. In the words of the Moral Majority, it seeks "to serve as a special interest group providing a voice for a return to moral sanity in these United States of America." It is anti-drugs, anti-pornography, anti-abortion, anti-ERA and certain homosexual rights, and it strongly supports voluntary school prayer and greater defense budgets. It insists that those sharing these and other common concerns--be they Catholics, Jews, Protestants, or Mormons--are welcome in the movement.



Furthermore, the Moral Majority claims that it does not have a "hit list" of candidates disagreeing with its policies; that it is committed to pluralism; that it desires to influence, not control, government; that it does not wish to deprive women or homosexuals of their civil rights; that it is not a censorship organization. In its own words, the group has stated that it does "not believe that individuals or organizations which disagree with Moral Majority, Inc. belong to an immoral minority." However, these summaries of Moral Majority positions at times contradict other statements emanating from Moral Majority representatives. The spokesmen often try to hold on to both sides of an issue without alienating people on either side and without violating the organization's tax exempt status. At times this has been most difficult.

There are other vocal fundamentalist groups to the right of the Moral Majority which actively try to censor certain school and library books, deprive homosexuals of their constitutional rights, and alter the constitution or bypass the Supreme Court in light of their positions on various social and political issues. Such forces must be watched especially closely by the Jewish community.

The Moral Majority, on the other hand, gives assurances that it does not seek to abrogate or curtail constitutional rights nor to ban or censor books, but that its members are well within their own constitutional rights to press through all legal means for causes they believe in.

Along with the Moral Majority, Southern Baptists recently joined the battle on behalf of issues such as school prayer. At a recent Southern Baptist Convention meeting, the organization, the largest Protestant body in America, with fourteen and one-half million members, reversed its long-held opposition to school prayer and became the first major religious group to endorse President Reagan's proposal for a constitutional amendment allowing non-denominational school prayer. The most curious aspect of the development is that Southern Baptists, along with many other segments of Evangelicalism, have historically been among the staunchest advocates of the principle of separation of church and state. What these trends portend is uncertain, as the SBC is fraught with internal division between liberals and conservatives who differ on such issues.

## **2. Other Major Groups and Personalities of the Evangelical Right**

There are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of groups promoting the cause of the Evangelical Right. Some of the more noteworthy follow:

The National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), headed by Terry Dolan, has become the largest conservative PAC in America. The AFL-CIO once described it as the first "organization base of the Right that is in place and ready for action at a moment's notice in any campaign, at any level, anywhere in the country." NCPAC spearheaded the 1980 drives to unseat Senators McGovern, Church, Bayh, Culver, Eagleton, and Cranston, and has also conducted training sessions on the political process and on how to win elections. Even before the 1980 presidential elections, NCPAC had distributed \$1.2 million in cash and more in advertising and other areas to get conservatives elected.



The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, founded in 1974, is directed by Paul Weyrich, often regarded as the "architect" of the Fundamentalist movement. The group provides funds, technical assistance, and guidance to conservative candidates and claims to have helped thirty-one conservative candidates in 1978. Richard Viguerie, fundraising strategist, has a sophisticated direct-mail operation in Falls Church, Virginia, which includes over twenty million names, cross-indexed according to the conservative goals they support. He is reported to have raised over forty million dollars in 1980 alone.

Christian Voice is a Los Angeles-based political lobby founded in 1979 and headed by Rev. Robert Grant and Washington lobbyist Gary Jarmin. It is best known for its "report card" of members of Congress based on their positions on fourteen key moral issues. It claims membership of over 325,000 including 41,000 ministers.

The Religious Roundtable was founded in 1979 by conservative businessman and activist Ed McAteer and T.V. evangelist James Robison, and includes many of the leading fundamentalist political activists. Its goal is to train leadership by briefing religious leaders on public policy issues and by sponsoring conferences and seminars devoted to issues such as abortion, national defense, and school prayer. McAteer is especially known to the Jewish community for his strong support of Israel and for the Roundtable's sponsorship of prayer breakfasts for Israel which are held in different parts of the country. Many representatives of the Israeli government and the American Jewish community have participated in these functions. McAteer is currently a candidate in Tennessee for Howard Baker's Senatorial seat.

The Conservative Caucus, Inc., based in Washington, D.C., is headed by Howard Phillips, advocates conservative causes, and claims a membership of 400,000.

In addition, there are many Evangelical para-church groups which relate to the political process and/or to Jews and Israel, including:

Christians United for Israel, Bridges for Peace, Lovers of Zion, Institute for Holyland Studies, Tav Ministries, and numerous others. One group in particular exhibits the core of the dilemma Jews face in regard to the question of relating to Evangelicals. It is called the "American Association for Jewish Evangelism" (A.A.J.E.), and has offices throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Israel. However, it also has a second name, "Christian Friends of Israel," as well as two sets of stationery. While this group appears to be, by definition, duplicitous, it is genuinely committed to both dimensions of its evangelical agenda--Jewish evangelism and support for Israel. This dual Evangelical mission is at the heart of Jewish anxieties about the Evangelicals.



## VII. THE ELECTRONIC CHURCH

In recent years, there has been a boom in religious broadcasting, which is a key ingredient of the Evangelical Right's program. The "electronic church," a term coined by Rev. Ben Armstrong, director of the National Religious Broadcasters (see below) comprises some 1300 religious radio stations, thirty-six television channels devoted to religious programming, and over 700 programs distributed to secular stations. Richard Hirsch, Secretary of Communications for the U.S. Catholic Conference, described the electronic church as "primarily evangelical Christian in orientation, personality-centered and self-supported by contributions from listeners and viewers." For years the networks restricted most of their free-time programming allotment to mainline Jewish and Christian organizations, leaving Evangelicals with the sole option of purchasing air time--which many did. As a result of their early recognition of television's value as a communications tool, Evangelicals now dominate the "electronic church." Estimates of the percentage of Americans who watch or listen to at least one religious program per week run as high as 50%, but the actual number of regular viewers is approximately 13.6 million or 6.2% of those households with televisions.

Dr. William Martin of Rice University, a recognized authority on the electronic church, reports (The Atlantic, June 1981) surveys indicating that audience estimates for the major Christian shows are highly inflated. Martin, with Jeffrey Hadden and Charles Swann, wrote in Prime Time Preachers: The Rising Power of Televangelism (1981), that not only is the viewing audience much smaller than previously assumed, but it is declining and funds are drying up. Electronic Church personalities would dispute these figures and claims.

The "big seven" electronic evangelists are:

- 1) Jimmy Swaggart, based in Louisiana, today has the largest viewership of all the TV preachers. He is intensely Charismatic in stressing faith healing. He has also been known to at times make derogatory remarks

about Catholics and, on at least one occasion, about Jews.

2) Robert Schuller, California-based, is famous for his glass cathedral with two ninety-foot, electronically-controlled doors which open to let in drive-in churchgoers. His basic message of positive thinking and his overall moderate stance have brought him a large following in the mainline Christian community as well.

3) Pat Robertson is the host of "700 Club" based in Virginia, and is the force behind Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), a twenty-four hour service which offers religious programming to cable systems. Robertson is credited with bringing the electronic church into prime-time and anticipating the potential of TV's new technologies. He is widely regarded as one of the most culturally sophisticated of the electronic church preachers, having received his law degree from Yale and been greatly influenced by his father, who was a U.S. Senator. Like most of the other T.V. evangelists, Robertson is an ardent supporter of Israel who believes that events surrounding the Middle East are all pointing to the very imminent return of Jesus, the battle of Armageddon, tribulations, etc.

4) Rex Humbard, based in Akron, Ohio. (One of the few with a northern base, Humbard's is the earliest established television ministry.)

5) Oral Roberts, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he has built his own university and a hospital.

6) Jim Bakker, host of the PTL (Praise the Lord) Club, founder of Heritage Village, USA, has struggled recently with charges about his finances. He has been a strong supporter of Israel and also frequently condemned anti-Semitism and spoke out publicly on the tragedy of the Holocaust.

7) Jerry Falwell, of Virginia, is host of the "Old Time Gospel Hour."

Jerry Falwell is the evangelist most frequently identified with political activities while others have distanced themselves from the political arena. Robertson, for example, resigned from the Religious Roundtable, asserting that he did not want to cause confusion regarding his primary spiritual mission. Bakker refused to endorse candidates in the 1980 elections, stating that, "I don't think God is a Republican or Democrat."

Major organizations in the electronic church include:

The National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), based in Morristown, New Jersey and headed by Dr. Ben Armstrong, a warm, intelligent, and moderate Evangelical. The NRB comprises over 900 organizations producing religious programs and is responsible for more than 75% of all religious radio and TV in the United States. It publishes Religious Broadcasting, and News



From NRB, and sponsors regional conferences as well as an annual national convention held in Washington, D.C., for thousands of leaders of the Electronic Church.

The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), based in Virginia Beach, is headed by Rev. Pat Robertson. The network is regarded as one of the most electronically sophisticated in the world, with computers and satellites used to produce and transmit CBN's flagship program, "The 700 Club," to more than 150 domestic and international stations and more than 2500 cable television stations.



## VIII. EVANGELICALS AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Evangelical attitudes toward politics and other public policy issues are influenced by the fundamental question of what is the proper role of the Church in this country. There are two commonly held opinions on this matter.

- 1) The church is in but not of the world. Therefore, it is appropriate for Christians to criticize, support, and even lobby governmental institutions and authorities on behalf of Christian values and ideals, but they should avoid becoming a part of that political establishment. For this same reason, Pope John Paul ordered Father Drinan and others to leave their political posts since they were too closely identified with the powers-that-be.

Those sharing this first outlook are inclined to oppose groups such as the Moral Majority which they view as too closely identified with this-worldly power structures. They also oppose liberal groups like the National Council of Churches, for the same reasons.

- 2) The Church is in and of the world. The Christian is therefore obliged to become part of the system, if necessary, in order to change it for the better. He must be prepared to choose specific worldly means, instruments, and philosophies in order to achieve the desired Christian goals. Liberation theology, a popular world-view, especially in the Third World, suggests that Christianity must actively pursue the liberation of the oppressed as the Biblical exodus motif has taught.

This question of the role of the church vis-a-vis politics and the governing authorities is especially important for Catholics in Latin America. The Pope has taken a moderate, balanced position by lending conditional support to liberation theology provided that it not become too closely aligned with the existing powers, or "Caesar's world."

It would be hard to find a consensus among Evangelicals on the question of what should be the proper relationship between the Church and society. Sectors of the Evangelical Right come very close to identifying capitalism



as "God's way," while many on the Evangelical Left seem to promote some form of socialism as the divine will.

Whatever the theological framework for their political involvements, clearly Evangelicals have become more deeply involved in recent years in lobbying and political action for candidates and for values expressing their religious positions. And while they have a significant impact on public policy, Evangelical political clout can be exaggerated.

In the March 1981 issue of Commentary, Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab assert that "the electoral swing toward conservatism and the emergence of a political Evangelical movement were parallel developments which may have been mutually reinforcing rather than related to one another as cause and effect... The Political Evangelical groups...did not create the Republican landslide (of 1980). Rather, it reflected the country's conservative political swing, which occurred among all groups - and more, as we have seen, among non-Evangelicals than among born-again." In other words, the resurgence of conservatism in America and the rise of the political right, may have very little or nothing at all to do with the rise of the Evangelical movement, notwithstanding the Moral Majority.

The Gallup Poll found no differences between Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals on key issues such as nuclear power, capital punishment, and domestic government spending, though Gallup did find that Evangelicals were nearly five times as likely as non-Evangelicals to regard the "decline in morals" as one of the most important problems facing our nation. The differences between Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals lie primarily in areas relating to personal behavior such as homosexuality, abortion, prayer in public schools, and the like--but Evangelicals are not monolithic even on these issues.

## IX. JEWISH RESPONSES TO EVANGELICALS

There remains a good deal of confusion among Jews about Evangelicals. Of course, lack of understanding is not limited to the Jewish community. Due to demographic, sociological and theological factors, and because of deep-seated fears especially harbored by European-born Jews toward the more devout Christians, Evangelicals remain largely misunderstood by Jews, and Evangelical motives for supporting Israel are perceived as unclear and suspect. And while friendly, frank, and meaningful dialogue conferences as well as other cooperative programs have recently developed between Jews and Evangelicals, the relationship must still be described as in its incipient stages. One thing remains abundantly clear--Jews are anything but dispassionate on the subject of Evangelicals and on the Moral Majority and "Evangelical Right" in particular.

Many Jews oppose cooperating with Evangelicals, particularly the Evangelical Right, which they view as a threat to Jewish interests. Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform) and past chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, for example, has written that "the Moral Majority and those other religious and political organizations with which they are in coalition reveal themselves to be a threat to American democracy, to America's Jews and therefore, also to Israel."

While Schindler did not accuse Falwell outright of being anti-Semitic, he insisted that Falwell's "exclusivist emphasis on a Christian America and the tools he chooses to build it...create a climate of opinion which is hostile to religious tolerance... Such a climate is bad for civil liberties, human rights, social justice, interfaith understanding and mutual respect among Americans. Therefore, it is bad for Jews."

Echoing Schindler's feelings, Albert Vorspan, director of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, castigated "those Jews willing to embrace the Moral Majority because it is strong on Israel" when, in fact, it "cannibalizes American politics, fosters division and exclusivity and promotes reactionary causes."

The American Jewish Congress denounced the Moral Majority outright in a policy statement. While acknowledging the Moral Majority's support for Israel, the AJC statement condemned it for "using religion as an in-



strument of political coercion" and pledged "to oppose the movement on many of its domestic policies and practices."

On the other hand, Jewish advocates of alliance with the Evangelical Right can be found among the Orthodox who are similarly concerned with what they perceive to be the moral deterioration of society. Some right-wing Orthodox Jews likewise seek to redress this climate by supporting legislation promoting school prayer, and opposing ERA, drugs, and abortions.

Right-wing Orthodox Rabbi Abraham Hecht, president of the Rabbinic Alliance, for example, is an advocate of much of the Moral Majority agenda. He once characterized the leaders of the Moral Majority as "men of integrity, sharing many traditional beliefs of the Jewish people...values which have long ago been rejected out of hand by Schindler and his ilk." Hecht denounced as "false and absolutely without foundation" Schindler's accusations that the Moral Majority fosters anti-Semitism. He also stated that, "As one who has met and cooperated with the Moral Majority, I can safely state that the ominous threats created by Schindler's fantasy are totally unfounded and without proof."

Zionist organizations and leaders have also treated the Moral Majority and other groups on the Evangelical Right quite favorably. Some Zionist organizations tend to put aside Evangelicals' theological motives for supporting Israel and positions on civil liberties, and instead to confine their relationship solely to practical matters benefitting Israel. In a widely publicized and controversial gesture, former Prime Minister Begin bestowed the Jabotinsky award on Jerry Falwell. While this act shocked many liberal Jews, it must be acknowledged that Falwell and others on the Evangelical Right have been outspoken in their support for Israel. At times, the Christian Right sounds even more hawkish than many Jews, as when they insist that Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and all of Judea and Samaria should be annexed to Israel. Zionist groups have by and large committed themselves to working closely with this segment of the Christian community, which they perceive as Israel's best friend in the Christian community today.

## X. CONCLUSION

This paper began with a series of queries, the overarching one being whether the emergence of the Evangelical movement is good or bad for the Jews. Obviously, views diverge. There are those (Jews and non-Jews alike) who warn Jews not to "sell their souls" to the Christian Right just because of its strong support for Israel. Others insist that just as a drowning person does not stop to ask who manufactured the life preserver but grabs onto it and swims to safety, so too when Evangelicals offer to help the beleaguered State of Israel Jews should ignore their underlying theological motivations and expectations and accept their support. Still others maintain that Jews should actively seek out responsible Evangelical support for Israel, enter into dialogue with them on a variety of other matters, and even pay tribute to those Evangelical leaders who are especially helpful.

The Evangelical Right's aggressive involvement in political affairs on behalf of ultra-conservative causes, for example, has clearly been deeply disquieting for most Jews. While appreciating Evangelical support for Israel, many Jews are uneasy about being intricately involved in another community's world-view and divine eschatological plan of salvation. They also suspect that Evangelical support for Israel may be part of a ploy to convert the Jews. Moreover, they fear that the eventual failure of Jews to convert en masse could be viewed as the principal factor delaying Jesus' Second Coming, in which case the Jews might be seen as obstructing the final redemption of the world. In short, a large number of Jews fear that the relationship could backfire and Evangelicals could come to resent Jews when they find that, despite their love for the Jewish people and strong support for Israel, Jews do not convert. Many scholars believe that this dynamic also prompted Martin Luther and Mohammed to initially love, and subsequently despise, Jews.

Still other Jews are convinced that at a certain point Evangelicals will "call their chips in" and ask Jews to support various ultra-conservative social and political causes as a quid pro quo for their support of Israel. If and when they find such support not forthcoming, the likelihood of a falling-out between the two communities will be increased. There are also many Jews who believe that Evangelicals treat Israel as an expendable instrument of God and would be inclined to passively accept Israel's destruction and the Jew's suffering, and to reinterpret them as part of God's will and divine plan rather than to actively pursue defending Israel in what may be Armageddon.

Jewish dialogue with mainstream Evangelicals, however, has already produced some very gratifying results. As the dialogue with the Evangelical Right matures, it is hoped that they, too, will become more sensitive to



Jewish concerns for pluralism and civil liberties. With increased contact, many Jewish apprehensions about Evangelicals can be alleviated. As the relationship between these two great faith communities evolves, and they pursue a course of dialogue with one another, they will learn that many of their shared anxieties were either unfounded in the first place or can be addressed without rancor or fear.

Long term, the key to a healthy relationship is realism in expectations. Evangelicals and Jews will perforce have to come to the recognition that while they may share much in common, their central commissions, in fact, clash. For the principal conviction shaping the backbone of the evangelical identity is world evangelism, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people, including Jews. The central force guiding Jewish life today, especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust, is to survive as Jews. This clash does not necessarily mean, however, that Evangelical-Jewish relations are ultimately doomed to failure. It is possible to build a modus vivendi despite the conflict between the two communities' core self-definitions.

To sustain any kind of positive relationship, however, both will have to engage in a "give and take" process, affirming their central commissions, albeit in a way that is least objectionable to the other. Jews will acknowledge that in a democratic country such as America, people have the right to preach as they believe while others have the right to ignore them and to disregard their remarks. Jews must also become more aware of the centrality of mission for many Christians and sensitive to the fact they regard it as their duty to fulfill that mandate. On the other hand, various Christian thinkers have argued that Christianity is an additional divine covenant or an opening up--not a suppression of the Jewish covenant. It follows that Jews are not in need of adopting Christianity to achieve fulfillment and salvation. Jews will, undoubtedly, bid Evangelicals to make a theological attempt to adopt some form of this double covenant theory and to acknowledge the continuing validity of the divine covenant with the Jewish people as many liberal Protestants and Catholics have. Jews will ask Christians to refrain from missionary efforts towards Jews "until the full number of Gentiles enter in" (Rom. 11:25). Should this prove to be theologically too difficult, Jews will request that Evangelicals regard dialogue as the proper forum in which to "preach the gospel" to Jews and abandon the zealous and even cultic techniques often employed in attempts to convert them. In truth, it is the Christian's commission to testify through words and deeds to the truth of the Christian message while it is God's prerogative to act upon the individual through the Holy Spirit and possibly bring about his conversion. It is reasonable, therefore, for Jews to demand that Evangelicals fulfill their missionary commission decently and courteously, through dialogue, by model, teaching, and joint cooperation and without the insistence on converting them. Certainly, Jews will ask responsible Evangelicals to be especially alert to evangelizing efforts that involve any sort of manipulation, deception, or excessively aggressive tactics and to refrain from giving moral and financial support to the many Hebrew Christian para-church groups that target Jews for conversion.



Despite the many ambivalences and anxieties Jews harbor toward Evangelicals, the relationship is an important one to both communities. The dialogue that has evolved is in the process of maturing and already beginning to bear fruit. And while there remain many areas in need of further joint exploration and others upon which there is irreconcilable disagreement, there is certainly a greater spirit of cooperation, understanding, appreciation, and respect evident among members of both communities toward each other today than there was just a few years ago.

Jewish community policies vis-a-vis Evangelicals should begin to build positively on the pluralism of religious and political views found in both communities. Some segments of the Orthodox community will find commonalities with mainstream and right-wing Evangelicals on a variety of social and domestic issues, including school prayer, ERA, and abortion. In fact, meetings have already taken place between certain leaders of the Orthodox Jewish and Evangelical Christian communities. In all likelihood, such coalitions between the two groups, focused as they are on specific issues of mutual benefit, will grow. Mainstream Jews, as well as the vast majority of Jewish community relations organizations comprising the National Jewish Community Relations Council, strongly oppose the social agenda of the Evangelical Right although they share a good deal more in common with the Evangelical Center and Left than they suspect. In all cases, however, it is critical that Jews conduct their relationship with Evangelicals with integrity and without compromising their own central Jewish commitments.

A) There has been surprisingly little, if any, dialogue between Jews and the Evangelical Left, though their common liberalism and concern for social justice links them profoundly. Such a dialogue should be explored, despite the fact that differences may exist on the subject of Israel. Political coalitions with the Evangelical Left are legitimate extensions of Jewish liberalism and might even lead to better understanding for Israel.

B) Dialogue with the "Evangelical Center" has the potential for tremendous benefits and can lead to genuine enrichment for both communities as well as to the formation of new alliances on issues of common concern. Jews often turn to Christian neighbors for support. Pragmatic reasons sufficiently justify that Jews contact this segment of the Evangelical community on the national as well as local levels, and build deeper relationships with them. Moreover, there remains much theological territory to be covered with this group as has already been traversed with Catholics and liberal Protestants. In many respects, the relationship with centrist Evangelicals must begin with "aleph bet" basic teachings of Judaism. Jews



can expect them to continue to be good friends of Israel though not always lending her automatic, unqualified support for all its policies. While centrist Evangelicals are far less aggressive politically than their right-wing co-religionists, dialogue as well as joint efforts on issues of mutual concern--including Israel--can prove most productive.

C) The Jewish relationship with the Evangelical Right should be nurtured, though not with all its factions nor, necessarily, in all ways. It is unconscionable, for instance, for an Israeli-oriented Jewish organization to give a testimonial dinner to a Hebrew-Christian group and to then justify such action on the grounds that great sums of money were raised for Israel. (This was done by one well-known national Jewish organization.) While proselytizing Christian groups may offer support to the state of Israel, and while Israel may accept such support for reasons of state, it does not behoove American Jews to "honor" such factions and to give them the legitimacy they crave. Such recognition gives missionary work strength it otherwise would not and should not have. On the other hand, the Jewish community should work with people like Jerry Falwell and conservative institutions like Criswell Center as well as with other responsible elements of the Evangelical Right, always making clear areas of agreement and disagreement with them. Both communities can learn from each other in the process. Jews should not cooperate with those fringe elements on the Evangelical extreme right which are bigoted, anti-Semitic, which threaten the democratic or pluralistic fabric of our society, which try to deny civil liberties and due process, or which engage in aggressive proselytizing efforts targeting Jews. Indeed, we should do everything in our power to stand in opposition against such forces.

D) Jews should work far more closely than Jews presently do with the Christian media. The "electronic church" reaches millions of Christians and can provide an excellent opportunity to explain Jewish faith, describe positions on social and domestic issues, and gain support for a variety of Jewish causes.

## XI. ON A MORE PERSONAL NOTE

Over the past seven years, I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with and befriend Evangelical religious leaders and lay people from various parts of the ideological spectrum. I also had occasion to spend two weeks in Israel with a number of leading conservative Southern Baptist ministers, including Reverend Bailey Smith, former President of the Southern Baptist Convention, whose widely publicized remark that God does not hear the prayers of a Jew brought the entire issue of Evangelical-Jewish dialogue into overall question and disrepute. To my pleasant surprise, I find that while I remain unalterably opposed to the theological intolerance of much of the Evangelical Far Right, many of my other preconceptions were totally unfounded. Bailey Smith, for example, is a warm and sensitive individual who was deeply hurt by the entire episode and who, in my estimation, is a genuine friend of Israel and of the Jewish people. And while he might still maintain that God does not answer the prayers of those who do not call out to Him through Jesus, including Jews, I believe him when he says that he would "go to the death for the right of Jews to pray as they wish." Bailey Smith is not an anti-Semite, nor is his successor, Jimmy Draper, a warm, thoughtful and conservative-minded individual who is current President of the SBC. While they and most Evangelicals deeply hope for ultimate Jewish acceptance of Christianity, their portrayal in the Jewish community as ogres and anti-Semites is, in my estimation, totally inaccurate and unfair. The same is true of the millions of Centrist Evangelicals who often are associated with the Fundamentalists on the right. There are enough real anti-Semites, as well as those who target and aggressively proselytize Jews for conversion, around for Jews to fight. The Holyland Fellowship of Christians and Jews, which I head, is actually designed to address this issue. Included among its central objectives is the goal of bringing about better Christian understanding and support of Jews, Judaism, and Israel. The Jewish community should also seek to facilitate a better Jewish understanding of the Christian community, particularly its conservative wing, and a deeper awareness of its diversity and potential for cooperating with Jews on a variety of mutually beneficial concerns, especially Israel.

Jews need not create false enemies by lumping all Evangelicals together in one mass stereotype of evil intent.

While many Jews are deeply troubled by the emergence of the Evangelical Right, and in certain instances legitimately so, it must be acknowledged that Christians have successfully highlighted some of the key moral issues facing American society today. For at the root of their "success" lies the deep disenchantment many Americans feel toward governmental, religious, and cultural institutions.

Some Christians and Jews in the (liberal) mainstream are suffering



from a crisis of faith, having rejected fundamentalism and extremism of any kind but still lacking a spiritual center to their lives. Many of those who call themselves believers in God have effectively become secular and materialistic; their religious mores have become "civil," urbane, compartmentalized and personalized, while their tolerance for other viewpoints has often led to apathy and relativism for their own.

The Moral Majority, and other fundamentalist groups, are clearly addressing the concerns of many Americans. They have brought into focus issues which the mainline groups have either neglected or not been able to fully resolve. They have credibly diagnosed aspects of the American condition and tried to capitalize on the widespread mood of insecurity and frustration over society's moral decay. We have, in fact, become dangerously vulnerable to demagogues and platforms professing a return to a nostalgic past. Addressing the issues and learning from the responsible Evangelicals could protect against excesses. Some of the vehemence of Jewish reaction to Evangelicals reflects discomfort at the discovery of a certain values crisis within.

Church historian Martin Marty has noted that the religious problem of our age is that the tolerant often lack commitment and the committed often lack tolerance. This is true. I sometimes wonder, however, whether much of the vociferous Jewish opposition to Evangelicals stems not only from a fear of the unknown but from feelings of insecurity with Jewishness, not only from anxiety over the imposition of Christianity in society but out of a fear lest society be undergirded with religious values of any kind. Some Jews camouflage their disdain for transcendence and religion in absolutist interpretations of the First Amendment which call for the separation between the realms of the church and state.

The issue of rethinking Jewish attitudes on church-state issues would take a monograph unto itself--and much more. All Jews have a legitimate concern that a good purpose, i.e., inserting religious values into American life, not end up as inserting Christian values, thus excluding Jews and violating the conscience of non-believers. But absolutist approaches to the separation issue can mask aggressive secularism. Triumphalist secular values--as in the Soviet Union--have often been inimical to Jewish rights in their own way--just as aggressive imposition of religious values has hurt Jews. One might say then that a balance of power between secularism and religion creates the best setting for Jewish safety and creative survival.

My last comments, then, are not to suggest that the Jewish community should necessarily change its posture vis-a-vis church-state matters, but that Jews begin to explore motives and fears which affect Jewish reactions to Evangelicals.

Jews should feel a debt of gratitude to the Evangelical community for drawing attention to issues of great importance to our society. A question which ought to challenge Jews today is how to find meaningful alternative solutions, rooted in Judaism and nurtured by distinctively Jewish values and traditions, to the moral dilemmas of our day. That will only come about when Jews take a fresh, critical look at our Jewish institutions and work for religious revival and spiritual renewal in the Jewish community.