Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

Volume 43 • Number 3 • July 2019

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Published by

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Department of Theological Concerns

Paternoster:
thinking faith

ERT (2019) 43:3, 253-262

Can Evangelicals Support Christian Zionism?

Gerald R. McDermott

The standard narrative about Christian Zionism describes it as a result of bad exegesis and zany theology. Although many scholars concede that the Hebrew Bible is clearly Zionist (that is, that its primary focus is on a covenant with a particular people and land, both called Israel, with the land sometimes being called Zion), they typically insist that the New Testament drops this focus on a particular land and people and replaces it with a universal vision for all peoples across the globe. *Eretz Yisrael* (Hebrew for 'the land of Israel') is said to be replaced by *ge* (Greek for 'land' or 'earth'), which is usually translated as 'the whole earth'. Concern for Jews as Jews is seen as absent from the New Testament, except to insist that there is no longer any significant difference between Jew and Greek (Gal 3:28). Hence, neither the land nor the people of Israel have any special significance after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

According to this narrative, the only people who have advocated for the idea that the New Testament maintains concern for the particular land and people of Israel are premillennial dispensationalists. Traditional dispensationalist theology has often put Israel and the church on two different tracks, which do not run at the same time, and often holds to elaborate schedules of end-time events including a rapture. This approach, developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is thought to be the origin and essence of all Christian Zionism.

Yet Christian Zionism is actually at least eighteen centuries older than dispensationalism. Its vision is rooted in the Hebrew Bible, where covenant is the central story, and at the heart of the covenant is the promise of a land. God took the initiative to call a particular people to himself, and then to promise and eventually deliver a land to this people. God drove this people off their land twice, but even in exile his prophets declared that the land was still theirs. The Jews who wrote the New Testament kept this vision in the background, with the inauguration of the church in the foreground.

I. Biblical Evidence

Just as the Hebrew Bible envisioned blessings going to the whole world through the people of this land, so too the New Testament proclaimed a blessing for the whole world coming through the Jewish messiah, whose kingdom started in Israel and would

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eventually be centred once again in Israel. These New Testament writers held on to the prophets' promises that the Jews of the Diaspora would return to the land from all over the world, establishing there a *politeia* (political entity), which one day would be transformed into a centre of blessing for the world.

Anti-Zionists concede that the Old Testament prophets, usually writing from exile, predicted a return to the land. But many of them say these prophecies of return were fulfilled when the Babylonian exiles returned to rebuild Jerusalem towards the end of the sixth century BC.

Yet there is remarkable evidence that Jesus looked to a *future* return and a restored Jerusalem. In Matthew 24, he says that when the Son of Man returns, 'all the tribes of the land will mourn', quoting Zechariah's prophecy about the inhabitants of Jerusalem mourning when 'the Lord will give salvation to the tents of Judah' (Zech 12:7, 10). In Matthew 19:28, Jesus tells his disciples that 'in the new world … you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the *twelve tribes* of Israel.' E. P. Sanders observed in *Jesus and Judaism* that these repeated references to the twelve tribes imply the restoration of Israel, particularly in Jerusalem.[1] Luke records Anna speaking of the baby Jesus 'to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem' (Lk 2:38), along with Jesus' expectation that when he returned Israel would welcome him: 'You will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"' (Lk 13:34–35). Luke suggests that the return will be in Jerusalem (Lk 21:24–28).

When Jesus' disciples asked Jesus just before his ascension, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:6), Jesus did not challenge their assumption that one day the kingdom would be restored to physical Israel. He simply said that the Father had set the date and that they did not need to know it yet. These sorts of indications in the gospels and Acts caused Oxford historian Markus Bockmuehl to write that 'the early Jesus movement evidently continued to focus upon the restoration of Israel's twelve tribes in a new messianic kingdom.'[2]

Paul, Peter and the writer of the book of Revelation had similar expectations. Paul used Isaiah 59's prophecy of restoration to declare that 'all Israel will be saved' at the end of history, when 'the deliverer will come from Zion, [and] he will banish ungodliness from Jacob' (Rom 11:26). In Acts 3, Peter looked forward to 'the times of restoration of all things which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient time' (Acts 3:21). The word Peter uses for 'restoration' is the same word (*apokatastasis*) used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which the early church used as its Bible) for God's future return of Jews from all over the world to Israel.

In Revelation, the Lamb stands 'on Mount Zion' in the final stage of history (14:1), and the new earth is centred in Jerusalem, which has twelve gates

1 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 98.

2 Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), xi.

named after 'the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel' (Rev 21:2, 12). In chapter 11, the nations 'trample' upon 'the holy city for forty-two months'. What city is this? It is the one 'where their Lord was crucified' (11:2, 8). This will take place before or during the time when 'the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ' (v. 15). So in the time of the new heavens and the new earth, that new earth is to be centred in Jerusalem and filled with markers of Jewish presence in the land of Israel.

Paul has long been cast as the apostle to the Gentiles, the man who supposedly took the focus off Judaism and showed that the gospel was really a universal message for all. According to this view of Paul's theology, Paul believed that the days of Jewish particularity were over and that the days of non-Jewish universalism had begun. God's covenant with the Jews was over, these interpreters claim, and he has transferred that covenant to the church. No longer was God concerned with the Jews, who had forfeited their covenant because they had rejected the messiah, Jesus.

This is what Christian theologian Kendall Soulen has termed the 'punitive' version of supersessionism, the idea that God made a new covenant with the church that supersedes his old covenant with Israel because he was punishing Israel for not accepting her messiah. Soulen's two other kinds of supersessionism are 'economic' (in God's economy or administration of the history of salvation, Israel's purpose was to prepare for the messiah, and so once he came, Israel had no more purpose) and 'structural' (the history of salvation is structured so as not to need Israel in any integral way, except to serve as a negative example).[3]

Although Paul has been read in this way for centuries, his letters tell a different story. In Romans 9 and 11, he laments his fellow Jews who have not accepted Jesus as messiah, saying that they cause him 'great sorrow and unceasing anguish' (9:2). Yet he says 'the covenants' still 'belong' to them (9:4), and even though they have become 'enemies of the gospel', they still 'are beloved' because of their 'election', which is 'irrevocable' (11:28–29).

Galatians is the letter most commonly used to prove that Paul has dispensed with Jewish law in favour of a church that has left Israel behind. Yet even here he says the gospel is all about 'the blessing of Abraham … com[ing] to the Gentiles' (3:14) because 'the promises [of blessing] were made to Abraham and to his offspring' (3:16), so that becoming saved means being in Abraham's family: 'If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise' (3:29). In other words, the gospel means getting connected to Israel's history, not getting away from it. Supersessionism suggests that Israel has been left behind; Galatians says otherwise.

We find the same pattern in Revelation, which is usually dated near the end of the first century. As we have already seen, John writes that the new earth is centred in Jerusalem, whose twelve gates are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (21:12). It appears, then, that a Zionist vision continued in the New Testa-

3 Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996).

ment church through at least the end of the first century.

II. Early Christian Interpretations

These are only a few of the many signs of Zionism in the New Testament, which is why early Christians continued to expect a future for Israel as a people and land.

Justin Martyr (100–165), one of the best-known second-century Christian writers, expected that the millennium would be centred in Jerusalem. Although he was one of the first replacement theologians (thinking that the church replaced Israel in some sense), his vision of the church's future included a particular city in the particular land of Israel:

> But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare. (*Dialogue with Trypho*, chapters 80 and 81)

Tertullian (160–c. 225) also saw a future for the people and land of Israel. Although he decried the Jews' ignorance in putting Jesus to death and thought that God had punished them by tearing 'from [their] throat[s] … the very land of promise,' he believed that they would one day be returned to their land:

> It will be fitting for the Christian to rejoice, and not to grieve, at the restoration of Israel, if it be true, (as it is), that the whole of our hope is intimately united with the remaining expectation of Israel. (*On Modesty,* chapter 8)

A bit later in the third century, the Egyptian bishop Nepos, who according to Robert Wilken 'was a respected and admired Christian leader', foresaw a restoration of Jerusalem and rebuilding of the temple. Millennial teaching was prevalent in that area of third-century Egypt and had been so for a long time, along with, presumably, faith in a restored Israel.[4]

This early-church Zionism came screeching to a halt with Origen (184–254), who regarded the relationship between the Jewish messiah and the promise of the land as a zero-sum game. Either one or the other could be fulfilled, not both. In Wilken's words, 'If Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the prophecies about the messianic age had already been fulfilled, and it was the task of biblical interpreters to discover what the spiritual promises meant in light of this new "fact." ' So Jerusalem did 'not designate a future political centre but a spiritual vision of heavenly bliss.' When the psalmist said 'the meek shall possess the land', Origen thought he meant the 'pure land in the pure heaven', not somewhere on planet Earth.[5]

Augustine was willing to call soil taken from Israel 'holy land', but he spiritualized the promises of land in a way similar to Origen. Once Augustine's amillennial eschatology became accepted in the medieval church, with its assertion that the millennium is simply the rule of Christ through the

4 Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 76–77, drawing on Eusebius, *The History of the Church* 7.24 and other sources.

5 Wilken, *Land Called Holy,* 70, 72, 77–78.

church, few medieval thinkers saw a future for the people or land of Israel. All Old Testament prophecies of future Israel were interpreted as predictions of the Christian church that came into existence after the resurrection of Christ.

III. Post-Reformation Views

But the Reformation's return to the plain sense of the biblical text restored confidence that there could be a future role for a particular Israel, as both a people and a land, even while Christian salvation was offered to the whole world. Pietists and Puritans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became convinced from Old Testament prophecies and Paul's writings that Jews would return to their land and would eventually be converted to Christian faith.

Long before the rise of dispensationalism in the nineteenth century, Protestants in a variety of churches foresaw a role for a particular Zion in times before the end. Then, after the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel in 1948, both Catholic and Protestant theologians recognized from Romans 11 that the rise of the church did not end God's continuing covenant with Israel. As theologians brought new focus on that covenant, many came to see that the land was integral to it.

Many in the Reformed tradition would take exception to this approach. They have usually taught that the Church *supersedes* Israel without remainder, so that the non-Jesus-accepting people of Israel and their little territory on the Mediterranean are no longer theologically significant to God. Nor, they conclude, should they be significant to evangelical and Reformed Christians.

After all, John Calvin wrote that because the Jews did not 'reciprocate' as willing partners in God's covenant, 'they deserve to be repudiated' (*Institutes* 4.2.3). There is only one covenant for Calvin, and so the New Covenant did not replace the Old, but rather the church is the new recipient of the Old Testament promises made to Jewish Israel. There is no continuing corporate election of Israel, only the election of individual Israelites who accept Christ (*Institutes* 3.21.6). Therefore, after Jesus' resurrection there could be no future for the people or land of Israel that would make any theological difference.

Beginning at the end of the sixteenth century, however, some of Calvin's theological descendants, mostly Puritans, followed a different approach. They took seriously the Reformation's emphasis on the plain sense of the Bible and therefore distinguished between promises made to Jewish Israel and those made to the new Gentile Israel. Thomas Draxe (d. 1618), a disciple of the Puritan theologian William Perkins, used Romans 11 and biblical prophecies to argue that Jesus would not come again until 'the dispersed Jewes generally converted to Christianitie', but that in the meantime they 'would be temporally restored into their owne Country, [would] rebuild Jerusalem, and have a most reformed, and flourishing, Church and Commonwealth'.[6]

6 Thomas Draxe, *An Alarum to the Last Judgement* (London: Nicholas Oakes and Matthew Law, 1615), 22, 74–77. The best analysis of seventeenth-century Zionism among Puritans is Robert O. Smith, *More Desired Than Our Owne Salvation: The Roots of Christian Zionism* (New York: Oxford Univer-

In his commentary on the book of Revelation, published posthumously in 1611, Thomas Brightman (1562–1607) wrote that Jews were the 'kings of the east' in Revelation 16:12 who would destroy Islam. He was certain they would be restored to the land of Zion: 'Shal they returne agayn to Jerusalem? There is nothing more sure: the Prophets plainly confirme it, and beat often upon it.'[7]

Henry Finch (c. 1558–1625), a member of Parliament and strong advocate of Puritan causes, rejected the ascription of all Old Testament promises to the gentile Church:

> Where *Israel, Iudah, Tsion, Ierusalem,* &c. are named in this argument, the Holy Ghost meaneth not the spirituall Israel, or Church of God collected of the Gentiles, no nor of the Iewes and Gentiles both (for each of these have their promises severally and apart) but Israel properly descended out of *Iacobs* loynes.[8]

Joseph Mede (1586–1638) similarly advanced the oft-repeated Puritan conviction that the Jews would be restored to the land of Israel after the destruction of the Turkish empire. One of Mede's students was John Milton, who in *Paradise Regained* wrote in 1670 of the return of the people of Israel to their ancient land:

> Yet He at length, time to himself best known,
> Remembering Abraham, by some wondrous call
> May bring them back, repentant and sincere,
> And at their passing cleave the Assyrian flood,
> While to their native land with joy they haste,
> As the Red Sea and Jordan once he cleft,
> When to the Promised Land their fathers passed.
> To his due time and providence I leave them.

Increase Mather wrote in his *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation* (1669) that the future conversion of 'the Jewish Nation' was 'a truth of late [that] hath gained ground much throughout the world'. This widespread acceptance was a sign that the times of the end were near, a time when 'the *Israelites* shall again possesse … the Land promised unto their *Father Abraham*.'[9]

One of Mather's theological innovations was his expectation that the Jews would regain their ancient land *before* they would convert. It would be only 'after the Israelites shall be returned to their own Land again' that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on them. Mather also warned against a supersessionist spiritualization of promises made to Israel: 'Why should we unnecessarily refuse literal interpretations?' Like Finch, Mather insisted that promises about earthly inheritance should not be spiritual-

sity Press, 2013), 69–94. This section follows his lead.

7 Thomas Brightman, *A Revelation of the Apocalyps* (Amsterdam: Hondius & Laurenss, 1611), 440, quoted in Smith, *More Desired Than Our Owne Salvation*, 75.

8 Henry Finch, *The Worlds Great Restauration, or, The Calling of the Iewes* (London: Edward Griffin and William Bladen, 1621), A2–A3, 5–6.

9 Increase Mather, *Mystery of Israel's Salvation* (London: John Allen, 1669), 43–44, 53–54.

ized away.[10]

Anglo-American Puritans in the Reformed tradition were not the only ones to depart from Calvin's version of supersessionism. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Dutch Reformed theologian Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711) published a four-volume systematic theology that presented a more nuanced view of Jewish Israel. Brakel insisted that Paul's reference to 'all Israel' in Romans 11:25 had in mind Jewish Israel as a people with a distinct future. Brakel declared emphatically that Jews would return to the land:

> Will the Jewish nation be gathered together again from all the regions of the world and from all the nations of the earth among which they have been dispersed? Will they come to and dwell in Canaan and all the lands promised to Abraham, and will Jerusalem be rebuilt? We believe that these events will transpire.[11]

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), perhaps the greatest Reformed theologian after Calvin, agreed with Brakel that Calvin's supersessionism used a hyper-spiritualist hermeneutic that rode roughshod over Scripture's plain sense. He agreed with Calvin that God had abandoned corporate Israel because their idolatry had moved him to jealousy, but he also argued that the divine abandonment would be temporary. There would be a second day of grace. Just before the millennium commenced, God would remove the veil over their eyes and soften their hearts with grace, and all Israel will then be saved. 'Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews in the eleventh chapter of Romans', he wrote.[12]

Edwards determined that the Jews would return to their homeland. This was inevitable, he reasoned, because the prophecies of land being given to them had been only partly fulfilled. It was also necessary in order for God to make them a 'visible monument' of his grace and power at their conversion. At that moment religion and learning would be at their respective peaks, and Canaan once again would be a spiritual centre of the world. Although Israel would again be a distinct nation, Christians would have free access to Jerusalem because Jews would look on Christians as their brethren.[13]

It makes sense, Edwards wrote, that corporate redemption should follow the pattern of individual redemption—or, as he would put it, that there is harmony between corporate and individual redemption. In his *Blank Bible* he wrote that just as the 'restoration' of an individual at first involves only his soul but then later his body at the general resurrection, so too 'not only shall the spiritual state

10 Mather, *Mystery*, 54, 56–57.

11 Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 4:530–31, accessed 4 January 2016, www.abrakel.com/p/christians-reasonable-service.html.

12 Jonathan Edwards, *History of the Work of Redemption,* vol. 9 in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards,* ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) 189, 469.

13 Jonathan Edwards, *The Blank Bible*, Edwards Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, 806; Edwards, *Apocalyptic Writings*, ed. Stephen J. Stein, vol. 5 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 135.

of the Jews be hereafter restored, but their external state as a nation in their own land … shall be restored by [Christ]'.[14]

Edwards and his Puritan predecessors not only focused on the plain sense of Old Testament promises but also took notice of the wide range of suggestions in the New Testament (as enumerated in the 'Biblical Evidence' section of this paper) that the people and land of Israel would have a future.

The bottom line is that there has been significant diversity in Reformed interpretation of Israel. There is ample room in the tradition for Reformed interpreters to see a future for Jewish Israel and its land while at the same time affirming Calvin's insistence that the Church has inherited many of the promises made to Old Testament Israel.

IV. Law and Land: Two Different Promises

If the Reformed theologians cited in the previous section were right, then we might conclude that previous assumptions about Israel's land—that its importance was temporary, like that of the sacrificial system or what Christians have called the 'ceremonial law'—were wrong. On closer examination of the biblical text, we might realize that the Mosaic law, with its 'ceremonial' commands about worship, was a *sign* of the covenant, but that the land was part of the covenant *itself*. In God's very first statement to Abraham, the land was central: 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house *to the land* that I will show you' (Gen 12:3).

The land continued to be at the heart of the biblical story: 'Of all the promises made to the patriarchs it was that of the land that was the most prominent and decisive.'[15] Elmer Martens estimated that *eretz* is the fourth most frequent noun or substantive in the Hebrew Bible, more dominant statistically than the idea of covenant.[16]

By my count, more than one thousand times in the Old Testament the land (*eretz*) of Israel is either stated or implied. Of the 250 times that covenant (*b'rit*) is mentioned, in seventy percent of those instances (177 times) covenant is either directly or indirectly connected to the land of Israel. Of the seventy-four times that *b'rit* appears in the Torah, seventy-three percent (or fifty-four occasions) include the gift of the land, either explicitly or implicitly.

According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 'Next to God himself, the longing for land dominates all others [in the Hebrew Bible].'[17] In other words, when the biblical God calls out a people for himself, he does so in an earthy way, by making the gift of a particular land an integral aspect of that calling.

But didn't the author of Hebrews make all this moot when he asserted

14 Jonathan Edwards, *The Blank Bible*, vol. 24 in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen Stein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 1028.

15 Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: Oliver and Boys, 1966), 79.

16 Elmer A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 97–98.

17 Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 487–88.

that the first covenant had been made 'obsolete' (Heb 8:13)? Not really. He was probably referring to the sacrificial system revealed through Moses, which Rome's destruction of the Temple in 70 AD had indeed brought to an end.

Hebrews moves directly from its statement of the first covenant being obsolete to a discussion of the tabernacle in the wilderness, where 'sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper' (Heb 9:1–2, 9). This reference to the tabernacle makes it clear that by 'covenant' the text means the Mosaic covenant, not the master covenant cut with Abraham. The land was God's principal gift in the master covenant with Abraham in Genesis, and this promise was never revoked. Jesus spoke of 'the blood of *the* covenant' (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24), suggesting there was only one fundamental (Abrahamic) covenant, and that the Mosaic law was an aspect of but not the same as that fundamental covenant.

Scripture never puts the land on the same level as Mosaic law. If the latter was binding on Jews but not on Gentiles in the same way (as it only teaches spiritual principles of holiness to Gentiles), and if the church is overwhelmingly Gentile, in one sense Gentiles can say that it has become obsolete (but not irrelevant) for them. But they can never say that about the people of Israel or the land of Israel. The Gentiles of faith have been grafted into the olive tree of the people of Israel. And the land of Israel is God's 'holy abode' (Ex 15:13). Scholars as diverse as the Catholic Gary Anderson, Lutheran Robert Jenson, and Reformed Karl Barth have argued that the New Testament authors viewed the land of Israel as continuing to be God's holy abode.

Scholars have long pointed out that Israel's *enjoyment* of the land was conditional: her people were exiled when they disobeyed the terms of the Mosaic covenant. But just as the original gift of the land was unconditional and permanent, so too the return to the land was an unconditional gift of grace. Repentance did not precede it. The Scriptures suggest instead that repentance and full spiritual renewal would take place *after* return and restoration.

In Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones, first God says he will take the people of Israel and 'bring them to their own land', and then later he 'will make them one nation in the land'. Then, even later, he 'will cleanse them' (Ezek 37:21, 22, 23). So the relationship between Israel and the land is governed by both conditional law and unconditioned promise, and fulfilment of the promise proceeds by stages.

V. Contemporary Implications

Today's 'new' Christian Zionists do not believe that the state of Israel is a perfect country; that it should not be criticized for its failures; that it is necessarily the last Jewish state we will see before the end of days; or that we know the particular timetable or political schema that will come either before or in the final days.[18]

But they are convinced that the state of Israel, which currently has

18 See Gerald R. McDermott, ed., *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

more than two million non-Jewish residents, is the institution that protects the people of Israel today, and that support for this state and its people is eroding all over the world. The modern nation of Israel lies in a region of movements and governments bent on its destruction. Mainline Protestants have withdrawn their support for it, and many evangelicals are now starting to follow their lead, using the same faulty arguments as the mainliners.

There are good prudential reasons for supporting Israel today. Israel is an island of democracy and freedom in a sea of authoritarian and despotic regimes. It needs friends as anti-Semitism rises precipitously around the world. But Christians should also recognize that there are strong *theological* reasons to believe that the people of Israel remain significant for the history of redemption, and that the land of Israel remains important to God's providential purposes.

Call for Papers

The Evangelical Review of Theology (ERT) is the WEA Theological Commission's journal. Beginning in 2019, we are more fully synthesizing the content of ERT with the work of the Theological Commission by highlighting, in each issue, a theme related to topics that the Theological Commission is addressing.

We invite articles based on these themes, although submissions on any other topics are still welcome. Submit them to editor Bruce Barron at bruce.barron0@gmail.com. Questions may be directed to Peirong Lin, research coordinator for the WEA's Department of Theological Concerns, at peironglin@worldea.org.

Engagement in the Public Space (October 2019 issue)
At the WEA, we seek to work with other international institutions like the UN as well as in many different government contexts. One important global trend today is the rise in nationalism in politics. Our faith impacts how we interact with the broader public. What does this mean for our theology? What kind of theological reflection is required in pluralistic, postmodern societies? Does one's theology change in the face of a nationalistic or closed government context? How should Christians live out their theologies in the public space? *Due date July 2019*.

Theological Education (January 2020 issue)
As evangelicals, we pride ourselves on taking the Bible seriously. At the same time, we live in a time that is different from biblical times. The world today is globalized and digitalized. How should these considerations influence our theological education? What is the role of higher criticism in theology? What is the place for contextual or systematic theology? *Due date 1 October 2019*.