Structures of Loyalty: A Comparative Study of Jewish and Palestinian Evangelicals' Acquiescence to Fundamentalist and Authoritarian Values

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Article

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A Comparative Study of Jewish and Palestinian Evangelicals' Acquiescence to Fundamentalist and Authoritarian Values

Anders P. Lundberg[*] and Kristian Steiner[†]

This is a qualitative comparative study of two evangelical movements in Israel and in the West Bank: the Israeli Messianic (IM) movement and the Palestinian Evangelical (PE) movement. Through interviews on how informants understand the Middle Eastern conflict, our aim is (1) to compare the prevalence of fundamentalist/authoritarian (F/A) values in the IM and PE movements and (2) to understand how a particular socio-political context —Israel and the West Bank—might affect the acquiescence to a F/A mindset amongst the two movements. To accomplish this, we created a F/A construct that measures five values: literalism, social withdrawal, authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism. We found that the IM scores higher on all five F/A values. To explain the difference, we point out the importance of structures of loyalty: the difference in how IMs

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and PEs connect to key societal groups affects the way they acquiesce to fundamentalist and authoritarian values.

INTRODUCTION

Evangelicals have recently come into the spotlight for their tendency to support and vote for authoritarian leaders. Most notably, the persistent U.S. evangelical support for Donald Trump (Martínez and Smith 2016; Martí 2019; Braunstein 2018; Whitehead et al 2018; Braunstein and Taylor 2017) has led some commentators to ask whether evangelical Christianity has become "sociopathic" (Rymel 2017).

Evangelicalism evolved out of Methodism in the 1730s, its faith being characterised by conversionism, biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism. Nevertheless, there have been important differences within evangelicalism over the past 300 years. Up to the late nineteenth century, evangelicalism had great social impact on Great Britain, the United States, and northern Europe, enjoying remarkable respectability and influence (Smith 1998; Martin 2005; Himmelfarb 2008). Present-day evangelicalism is the result of what Bebbington (1989: 182) called "the great reversal," where conservative evangelicals in the interwar period, in response to German biblical criticism, wished to emphasise the fundamentals of faith, giving name to a new phenomenon: fundamentalism. Some conservative evangelicals were concerned with premillennialism and the immanent return of Christ, fostering withdrawal from public concerns into "an esoteric world of speculation" (1989: 85). Dispensational premillennialism held the idea that the Jews will return to the Middle East, establish a Jewish state, and rebuild the temple (Weber 2004). These developments led to a split between liberal and conservative evangelicals. As the liberal wing continued to emphasise the need for social reform, conservatives shunned such a focus on the this-worldly, which, they felt, was leaving Jesus Christ out (Smith 1998; Fitzgerald 2017). Today, it is the conservative group that retains the label "evangelical."

Present-day evangelicals are often portrayed as fundamentalists. Although fundamentalism is a contested epithet, Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2005) specifically pinpoint "protestant fundamentalist denominations such as Baptist, Pentecostal" as harbouring individuals with a religious fundamentalist attitude. Likewise, Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2005) find a strong correlation between religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism. These evangelicals are "dogmatic, ethnocentric about religion, hostile towards homosexuals, and racially prejudiced" (2005: 385). Other studies within

psychology of religion confirm that religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism are intertwined (Wink et al 2007), that fundamentalism and authoritarianism have virtually identical personality correlates, and that fundamentalism should be viewed as religious authoritarianism (Krauss et al 2006; Blogowsa and Saroglu 2013; Burch-Brown and Baker 2016).

Particularly important is the research done by Altemeyer (1981). Based on Adorno et al's (1950) classic and controversial *The Authoritarian Personality*, Altemeyer created the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 2005), which has become a standard measure (Leak and Randall 1995; Dunwoody and Funke 2016). Following the RWA scale, Altemeyer defines authoritarianism as a construct that involves the "covariation" of "authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism" (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 2005: 386). Thus, being prone to submission, people who score high on the scale tend to trust and support established authorities stronger and longer than most do; they support unjust and illegal acts by government, as well as police who abuse their power; and in emergent leadership situations, they usually sit quietly and let others assume command. Furthermore, the tendency towards aggression means that high RWA scorers tend to harbour prejudices against minorities, strongly believe in punishment, and admit that they derive personal pleasure from administering it to wrongdoers. In addition, high scorers adopt the conventions of their society more than most do, especially those backed by established authority. They are more likely to help governments persecute a wide variety of unconventional victims, they endorse traditional sex roles and conformity to traditional practices, and they believe strongly in group cohesiveness and in following group norms. Simply discovering that their attitudes differ significantly from some group average causes high scorers to shift toward the norm. Politically, they tend to have right-wing economic philosophies and to favour conservative political parties (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 2005).

Nonetheless, evangelicalism is not a monolith. According to Bebbington (1989: 276), "fundamentalism is merely one feature among many, in some times and in some places, of evangelical religion." Smith (1998) recalls instances where young evangelicals grapple with the fundamentalist tendencies of the previous generation, such as the 1940s engaged orthodoxy of Billy Graham and the other neo-evangelicals. Other examples include the 1960s youth culture (Bebbington 1989) and "the new evangelicalism" of the

2010s, engaging in poverty, the aids epidemic, and environmental change (Fitzgerald 2017). Social context is pivotal. Edgell (2017: 1) warns that although religious belief is clearly an important component of meaning-making, it is also necessary to look at "how social location influences which aspects of religious belief are understood as relevant and to analyze the culture work that links specific beliefs to political preferences, social attitudes, and behaviors."

Thus, besides the evidence of an authoritarian tendency among evangelicals, we need to be sensitive to contextual differences and seek to understand the social mechanisms that restrain or evoke fundamentalist or authoritarian tendencies among evangelicals. So far, most research on evangelicalism, authoritarianism, and fundamentalism has taken place in the United States. In this article, we propose to go beyond the American case. Adopting a comparative approach, we have studied two evangelical movements that share the same socio-political context but differ in social location due to ethnic and political reasons: the Israeli Messianic (IM) movement in Israel and the Palestinian Evangelical (PE) movement in Israel and the West Bank.

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

This study has two aims, one descriptive and one explanatory. First, we aim to describe the prevalence of fundamentalist/authoritarian (F/A) values (explained below) in the IM and PE movements and to identify similarities and differences. Second, we aim to explain how two different social locations might affect the acquiescence to a F/A mindset among the two movements.

Our data is drawn from interviews with IM and PE members that we carried out in Israel and in the West Bank during four visits between 2015 and 2018. Evidence suggests that both movements are inherently evangelical: [1] they are conversionist, biblicist, crucicentrist, and activist, and they share a conservative theology as regards, for example, gender and sexual relations. Faith to an evangelical often influences the whole of the believer, as opposed to a "thin Christianity" that mainly serves ideological purposes (DeHanas and Shterin 2018:178).

Although relationships are severed due to socio-political circumstances, IMs and PEs often know one another, occasionally worship together, and sometimes attend the same bible school. The two movements differ in style of worship and in whether they emphasise the gifts of the Holy Spirit or not, but they share evangelical theology. The PE movement

consists of Baptist, Brethren, Nazarene, Pentecostal, and non-denominational Charismatic churches. Unconfirmed sources put the number of PEs in Israel at three thousand to five thousand members distributed largely among thirty-five congregations. There are another eight hundred to a thousand members in the West Bank, and around fifty people on the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, the IM movement consists of congregations and house-groups identifying themselves as Israeli Messianic. They are less inclined to think in denominational terms and generally prefer to be organisationally independent. These groups are overwhelmingly evangelical in theology while adhering to a Jewish cultural heritage, including the observance and celebration of life-cycle events, the Sabbath, and the Jewish feasts (Kollontai 2004: 195); a few groups go further and develop Judaising tendencies. The IM congregations, although often referred to as Messianic Jewish (Feher 1998), gather approximately fifty percent non-Jews, and unconfirmed estimates put the number of IMs in Israel between six thousand and twenty thousand across 150 congregations.

In all, we interviewed twenty-one Palestinian and twenty-one Messianic pastors and leaders, including nine women. The criteria for selecting the interviewees were representation. We wanted to include voices from all parts of Israel and the West bank. Also, we wanted to include men and women. Pseudonyms are used for all participants and specific places within this study. The focus of the interviews was to understand how PEs and IMs understand the Middle East (ME) conflicts, and we focused on five themes:

1. the meaning of peace
2. the onset and essence of the ME conflicts
3. the character of ingroups and outgroups in the conflicts
4. expected future developments in the ME conflicts
5. morally acceptable responses to the conflicts

In this study, we go back to the interviews that we collected for our study of PE and IM understanding of the ME conflict.[2] Thus, we derive our analysis of the prevalence of F/A values among PE and IM members from our previous study of their understanding of the ME conflict.

Based on the research presented at the outset of this article, we have created an ideal type (Weber 2001), *the F/A construct*, that allows us to study how well the two groups

match or deviate from F/A values. We are not psychologists like Altemeyer and Hunsberger; therefore, like Owen, Wald, and Hill (1991), we focus on "authority-mindedness" – namely, an ideological commitment due to socialisation, as opposed to a psychological trait. We treat this authority-mindedness as an impulse or response to particular situations, as a resource in the guise of values that are ready for use when called for.

Our construct, the F/A ideal type, consists of the following five items:

- *Literalism* relates to how informants use the Bible. Is it being contextualised and interpreted, or is it used in a literal, 'self-evident' way?
- *Social withdrawal* relates to how and when the evangelicals engage in, or withdraw from engaging in, social and political life.
- *Authoritarian submission* relates to how informants respond to arbitrary, sometimes violent, actions from the authorities, in this case Israeli authorities and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).
- *Authoritarian aggression* relates to how informants approach minorities. Specifically, we look for how they talk about referential others.
- *Conventionalism* relates to how informants relate to non-conventional or deviant others.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

In this section, we will focus on the interviews and how IMs and PEs understand the ME conflict. We occasionally allude to the prevalence of F/A values in the data, although a full analysis will come in the last section of this article.

THE MEANING OF PEACE

Common among IMs was a biblically informed and *literal* understanding of peace as opposed to a more ordinary, common-sense, and *other-worldly* understanding. This made it difficult to settle for imperfect political compromise since the IM movement stood for a peace that is "not the peace that the world is talking about." Rather, peace is a state of complete harmony or "unity" that one may achieve only by faith in Yeshua or after His return.

This biblical and utopian understanding of peace is contrasted with political attempts to make peace in the ME, which are labelled "false" or "temporary." God's peace is different. For instance, Robert, a pastor in the South, concluded that "Jesus died on the cross and gave his blood. That is God's peace plan. Either you believe that or, [if] you don't believe, you don't have peace." Elchanan, another pastor, adds that "if both of us have peace with God […] then we both have fellowship next to the feet of Christ." He adds, "real peace is having no enmity between us and God." Thus, to the IM movement, peace is something that lies in the eschatological future, not here and now.

Among the PEs, too, there is a *literalist* biblical colouring of the meaning of peace. Nonetheless, peace is not *only* understood as utopian; there is no contradiction in waiting for biblical, perfect peace and working for imperfect peace here and now. On the one hand, the PE movement tends to underline that *real* peace is more than a political agreement: perfect peace is the peace of the Lord, eternal peace given by God and received by knowing Him. On the other hand, it underlines that Christians are not called to other-worldly escapism but are supposed to be peace makers, working for peace in this world even if this peace is imperfect. Nasser, a movement intellectual, concluded that "peace is not only in heaven and in the heart. Peace (is) also in the community and in politics." Moreover, a few PE interviewees emphasised that the *results* of peace need to be beneficial to all and improve quality of life. To Massad, a prominent Arab-Israeli Baptist, dignity and political rights for all parties are pivotal. Elissa, a PE who lives in the West Bank and is involved in reconciliation work among women, even calls herself a peace activist.

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THE ONSET AND ESSENCE OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN CONFLICTS

Most of the IM interviewees view the ME conflict as *eternal and spiritual* rather than bounded and natural. With two or three exceptions, the IM interviewees located the onset of the conflict in ancient history; namely, they believe the conflict started fourteen hundred years ago, with the foundation of Islam or even earlier, "at the time of Abraham, and Isaac, and Ishmael." A *literalist* reading connects the present ME conflicts with biblical historiography: the conflict has always been there. Consequently, in the words of IM Pastor Andrej, the conflict appears "endless," maybe even permanent.

When we asked the PE interviewees about the *onset* of the conflict, there were a few who, similar to the IMs, view the conflicts as ancient, starting at the time of Ishmael or Muhammed. However, the majority of the PEs saw the conflict as *bounded* and *natural* —as a modern, territorial, and ethno-national conflict. Accordingly, the onset of the ME conflicts takes place at the beginning of the twentieth century or later, starting either after the Balfour declaration, right after the First World War, in the 1930s, or after the proclamation of Israel.

Regarding the *essence* of the conflicts, the IM interviewees are divided. Approximately as many emphasised its *worldly and human* essence (social, national,

political, ethical, and psychological) as those who stressed its *spiritual*, even *demonic* and *apocalyptic* essence. Russel, an intellectual belonging to the first group, explained that the conflict is basically a fight over territory. Emma, a well-respected IM, sees the conflict as having two sides: it is about safety for the Jews and about justice for the Palestinians. Nevertheless, for about half of the interviewed IMs, the conflict is *spiritual*; they emphasised the *literalist* premillennialist idea of God's salvation history as a key to understanding the conflict, the basic idea being that the Jewish people play a key role in the eschatological end-time drama leading up to the return of Christ. Particularly, Islam is a problem. Amelia, one of the female leaders, explained that there is no way of making peace with "the ideology of Islam, which can never allow the existence of this nation." Elchanan went a step further: "They [Muslims] want to divert, break God's plan. We [the Jews] are a part of this plan, so we are receiving the clashes." It is a fight where "the spirit at work is against the Lord," fighting "against Judo-Christian biblical truth."

In contrast, the PE informants downplayed the spiritual reasons for the conflict. They underlined *natural*, *territorial* aspects of the conflict—that Jewish immigrants took Palestinian land and that the Jewish immigration affected the ethnic balance, causing tensions and conflicts. However, the interviewed PEs also underlined the inherent *complexity* of the conflict, seemingly ruling out simple analyses or solutions. According to Masih, a Bible teacher, the Middle East is the focal point of economic, religious, and territorial interests, all adding to the complexity of the conflict. To Massad, the problem is that "Jordan has an interest. Syria has an interest. America, Russia, everybody wants something in relation to here."

THE CHARACTER OF OUT-GOUPS AND IN-GROUPS

As the IM interviewees talked about out-groups, they focused primarily on Islam and Muslims and, to some extent, on Palestinians and Arabs in general. Often, *Arab*, *Palestinian*, and *Muslim* overlap in the Messianic discourse. The IM interviewees rarely discussed PEs; there was some talk about Christian Palestinians (that is members of the historic churches), but this was usually done in passing. Nor was there much talk about the Israeli Jewish majority group; namely, although there was resentment against Orthodox Jews, they were never depicted as representative of the Israeli Jewish population.

In the IM interviews, we found evidence of strong opinions about Muslims, bordering on prejudice or even *authoritarian aggression*. The most recurrent characteristic

ascribed by IM informants to the Muslim out-group is *violence*. Initially, the interviewees seemed to uphold a distinction between Islam's allegedly violent creeds and individual Muslims, with whom they claimed to maintain good relations or even love. However, declarations of love and good relations were often followed by assertions that "Islam is evil. Islam is an evil religion" and "it is not the people, it is Islam. …they say again and again they want to destroy you." According to some of our IM interviewees, "blood." "bloodlust," and 'ISIS' are valid illustrations of Islam in general and of core Islamic values. Other alleged Islamic characteristics are *expansionism* and *dominance*. For instance, one of the IM leaders warned us that, although she does not dislike the Palestinians, they are becoming too many around her area, even insisting on building mosques. Further, Arabs and Muslims were repeatedly depicted as *morally and intellectually inferior*. To Benjamin, an IM pastor, Muslims are 'primitive', and in order to reach a Muslim, "we [must] come down to his level." Inherent in the IM depiction of Islam is the idea that it is static and unable to change or develop.

The IMs themselves are a religious minority in Israel. When they talked about themselves, they did so in terms of what it means to be a believer in Yeshua and a minority in Israel. Orthodox Jews allegedly loathe the IM movement, and we heard personal testimonies of an attempted murder (documented in Israeli media) and of bombed-out worship buildings and cars. Even for a rabbinically approved Jew, professing faith in Yeshua may be considered by the authorities as grounds for having forfeited one's Jewishness. We met or heard of several Jewish IMs who were fighting the authorities for their right to stay in Israel. It is an oxymoron that possibly less than half of the IM members are actually Jewish, despite the fact that the movement is commonly known as "Messianic Jewish" (Feher 1998). This calls for some ingenuity and seems to lead to *conventionalism*. The problem of the IM movement's link to Jewishness is largely solved by adhering to a Jewish nationalism which emphasises the land, the Hebrew language, the national feasts and holidays, and joining the IDF. In Elazar's words, being a good IM is a matter of serving in the army, keeping the national holidays, and celebrating the land.

The PE interviewees, like the IM ones, relate to Islam and Muslims as a major out-group. However, although some agree with those IMs who portrayed Muslims as radical, violent, and unable to change and reform, the image proposed by the PEs is usually more carefully elaborated, less static, and allowing for more complexity. For instance, Nasser underlined that Islam is dynamic, diversified, and different in time and space.

Khalil, an Arab-Israeli Baptist leader, and Tariq, from the West Bank**,** both view Islam as diversified, although the extremists tend to be the ones that are heard in public.

The way the PE interviewees talked about the Jews matches the way they described the conflicts and their causes: The Jews have "taken land and inheritance" away from Palestinians, and they are "unwilling to have Palestinians integrate and (be) part of the Israeli community." Moreover, the Jews are prejudiced, as "they look at the Palestinians as thirsty for blood, violent, anti-Jewish…fundamentalist." In addition, the interviewees conveyed a feeling that Jews are drawing more and more towards the right. When talking about IMs in particular, the complaints are similar. First, allegedly, the IMs have become more nationalist over the years, resulting in a "Zionist DNA," which has a negative effect on their will to peace. Second, the IMs, like the majority of Israeli society, are moving towards the right. Third, the IM movement's concern with Jewish identity and acceptance within the Israeli Jewish society has led them to avoid close ties with the PE movement, which the PE interviewees felt to be detrimental to the relationship with the body of Christ. Despite the complaints, we heard no actual resentment towards Jews as such. None of the Palestinians we interviewed expressed any resentment towards the Jewish presence in Israel. Rather, they were concerned with equal rights for all and with solving the situation in the West Bank.

When constructing *themselves*, the PE interviewees did so from the position of being a minority within a minority. In Israel, Palestinians make up slightly less than twenty per cent of the population, and among the Palestinians, around ten per cent are Christians— that is, slightly less than two per cent of the total population, or 108,000 in 2008. Out of this larger Christian group, the evangelicals make up a small fraction: three thousand to five thousand people. In the West Bank, the numbers are even smaller: 1.7 percent of the population, or 41,000 people, are Christians, out of which eight hundred to a thousand are evangelicals (Raheb 2017). This situation is likely to create conflicts of interest for the PEs. Yara, an Arab-Israeli woman, explained how difficult it is for her to orient herself. On the one hand, there is the loyalty to the Palestinian people in light of the *Naqba* in 1948 and the occupation of the West Bank in 1967. On the other hand, since the conflict has become religious rather than secular-nationalist, there is no room for an evangelical Christian in the struggle. Moreover, since she is an Israeli citizen, enjoying certain political rights, there may be misunderstandings with evangelicals living in the West Bank. In Yara's words,

"you're caught in the middle, [and] part of you is here, part of you there. You want to be bridging both sides, but you don't know how to do it."

THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE EATERN CONFLICTS

Most of the interviewees were pessimistic about the chances for peace. One particular theme kept recurring among those of the IM movement who emphasised *spiritual* influence over the ME: the idea of an apocalypse and the belief that the biblical Armageddon will come to pass. Those who emphasised the apocalypse were unable to see any chances for peace before the return of Christ; there may be shorter peaceful periods, but eventually things will explode. Elchanan recounted the premillennial dispensationalist interpretation of the "seven-year period" that the Book of Revelations mentions:

> Within seven years, about two thirds of all the population of the world
>
> will be dead. In today's number, it's something above five billion people.
>
> Above five billion people! Can you understand it? (Elchanan)

Pessimism dominated among the PE as well as among the IM interviewees, but for different reasons. Although a few referred to end-time scenarios, eschatology was generally dismissed as it was considered to be manipulative and speculative. In Pentecostal Pastor Samir's words, the passages about Armageddon, Gog, and Magog are not to be understood literally: "Come on, give me a break! This is symbolic language!" Instead, the PE interviewees largely focused on imminent reasons for their pessimism. For instance, Khalil stated that the Israeli government maintains an incomprehensible and destructive policy, "making the lives of Palestinians worse, more miserable, taking more land, and putting more restrictions," in the West Bank as well as in Gaza. Further, Manal, an Arab-Israeli, foresaw history repeating itself, anticipating a "1948 part two." Nonetheless, not all is pitch black. Tariq had some hope: "Eventually, there will be some kind of peace. Already, Egypt and Jordan have peace with Israel." Masih, too, saw the possibility of the two peoples coming to terms with the fact that both are living on the Land: "And they will seek to find one or another formula where they will be living together." Masih continued, "Jews want security (and) Palestinians want justice. We need to find a formula that addresses those two things."

THE ETHICALLY ACCEPTABLE RESPONSES TO THE MIDDLE EASTERN CONLICTS

All of the interviewed IMs were Zionists, believing Israel to be a homeland for the Jewish people. The dominant view among the IMs is that Israel is and should be a *Jewish* state. Almost all IM interviewees were fiery opponents of territorial concessions and a Palestinian state. Andrej argued, "we should not give up anything." One argument against concessions was that God had said so and that He wanted Israel to manage the whole land. A few of the IMs even pointed out that the territory promised in the Old Testament extends beyond Israel's recognised borders to the areas beyond the West Bank, including parts of neighbouring countries.

Although the IM interviewees expressed support for the one-state solution, they struggled with its implications. A few interviewees showed an awareness of the demographic problems associated with the one-state solution. Yuri, an old hippie-turned-pastor, struggled with the question, "Within my life experience, I have a passion for the equality of human beings. That is unquestionably part of what drives me." However, the demographic effects of including all the Palestinians under Israel would imply that there would "theoretically be so many Arab citizens of Israel that the nature of the state would change." In the end, Yuri's solution was limited Palestinian self-rule without citizenship and equal rights. Adam and Dov, pastoring the same church, agreed with Yuri in that there is a contradiction in trying to combine democracy with a Greater *Jewish* Israel. Therefore, they explicitly rejected citizenship for Palestinians on the West Bank "because that would be the end of the Jewish state" and would threaten the security of Israeli Jews.

Often, the IM interviewees appeared unprepared or hesitant to discuss the matter, as if they had never reflected on it. Even among those most benevolent towards the Palestinian cause, the disinterest in the concrete situation in the West Bank alarmed us and seemed to border on a certain *authoritarian submissiveness*. In theory, most of the interviewed IMs seemed able to imagine all Palestinians becoming Israeli citizens, but then they cited so many reservations that this solution became highly improbable. For example, Elazar said his heart's desire was to see Palestinians treated equally, but only on condition that Palestinians be willing to live in a Jewish state, under Israeli laws. Since he believed such willingness to be absent, he seemed finally to lean towards the status quo, that is, continued occupation.

In contrast, all PE interviewees agreed that the occupation of the West Bank has to stop. Most interviewees supported a two-states solution, although there were a few exceptions: One interviewee, living in the West Bank, had lost faith in the two-state solution and rather envisioned open borders between Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank and the freedom to travel. Another interviewee living in the West Bank said he would even be prepared to live under Israel, without citizenship, just to get "right of movement and so on. I am willing to live under Israel, because I am tired of this war." He agreed with Nasser that a one-state solution would have to include justice and righteousness, equal rights for Jews and Palestinians.

Generally, the PE interviewees seemed to oppose the notion that the Jews have a divine right to the land. However, no PE questioned the legitimacy of Israel. Rather, the issue is with the occupation of the West Bank and with lack of equal rights for anyone living in Israel and the occupied territories. Sabbagh, a pastor in the West Bank, said he was not opposed to God bringing the Jews to Israel, and Masih, an Israeli citizen, did not oppose the Israeli state, only "the way it was founded."

Related to the land issue is the question of how people relate to the authorities, including the IDF. None of the interviewed IMs were pacifists, and some even spoke favourably of making a career within the IDF. All who had the legal duty to serve in the IDF had done so. There is a tendency towards *authoritarian submission* here, as all of the IM interviewees considered Israel's military operations necessary. According to Elazar, the IDF had undeniably been killing large numbers of civilian Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, but because of the context, Israel was not to be blamed:

> There is *no* room for manoeuvre. They are using the mosques, they are using schools, they are using hospitals, they are using civilian homes to shoot from … We hold ourselves from retaliating, [but] eventually you have to put a stop to it, so it is a scenario every few years. (Elazar)

Lay Pastor Efrayim, rather than considering fair treatment or justice for the Palestinians in the West Bank, emphasised that the ME conflicts are mainly a spiritual problem: "I do not pray about how Israel should treat the West Bank. … I pray for the salvation of the people." When asked if he prays for justice, Efrayim answered, "For God's justice. For God's will to be done." Charlotte, an IM leader, summarised the way many of our IM interviewees relate to the Israeli authorities: it is her duty not to interfere in politics but to bless the Israeli government.

It needs to be said that although almost all of the interviewed IMs understood violence as necessary to the protection of Israel, *none* of them suggested using violence to further God's purpose in salvation history or to hasten the apocalypse and the end of history.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we will first analyse the data in terms of the F/A construct: literalism, social withdrawal, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism. Then, we will suggest one way of understanding how social context affects the acquiescence to F/A values.

PREVALENCE OF FUNDAMENTALIST /AUTHORITARIAN VALUES

Looking for *literalism* in the data, we found that when informants talked about peace, they oscillated between an understanding of peace as politically achievable and a literalist understanding of *perfect peace* either as a relationship between a believer and God or as achievable only at the end of time. A certain measure of literalism is present in both groups of believers. However, on the whole, the PEs put less emphasis on biblical arguments and are more prone to develop arguments aside of biblical references. On the other hand, the IMs referred heavily to literalist-inspired arguments regarding the essence of peace.

Literalism in turn connects with the second F/A item, *social withdrawal*. As literalism varies between the two groups, so does their understanding of the nature of the ME conflicts. The informants oscillated between an understanding of the conflicts as either eternal or bounded, spiritual or natural, simple or complex. Overall, we found that the IM informants, who expressed a stronger literalist leaning, are prone to understand the ME conflicts as eternal, spiritual, and simple. This understanding seems to lead up to a sense of *social withdrawal* in that political peace cannot be accomplished and should not be sought. Surely, the IMs are involved in public concerns in as far as they are furthering God's salvation plan, but their motive in this involvement is instrumental and eschatological. In contrast, the PEs, being less inclined towards literalism, tend to see the conflicts as bounded, natural, and complex. As a result, they have a higher degree of support for action on social and political issues. For them, peace and justice have an intrinsic value, not merely an instrumental one.

Regarding *authoritarian submission*, we did not find any explicit or general calls for violence in the PE group. However, among IMs, we found a support for the occupation

and a vindication for the IDF, which is not to blame for the violence that erupts from time to time. We also found among the IM group a passivity regarding the occupation and its consequences, which we understand as *authoritarian submission*. Namely, quite a few of these informants avoided talking about political matters *strictu sensu,* such as the situation on the West Bank. When such matters *were* discussed, they were spiritualised. Although not all IMs are supportive of the idea of a Greater Israel, including the West Bank or "Judea and Samaria," without giving equal rights to the Palestinians living there, even among those supportive of social justice, we were surprised to find a seeming disinterest or even ignorance regarding the practical situation in the West Bank. It appeared as if even one or two of those most supportive of justice had not thought the matter through: how would a one-state or two-state solution actually work?

Authoritarian aggression in Altemeyer's vocabulary (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 2005) relates to stereotypical depictions of minority groups. Since both the IM and the PE informants themselves are minorities, we instead investigated how the informants portrayed an imagined referential other. What groups do they talk about other than themselves? The number one out-group among the interviewed IMs and PEs were Muslims. There was, seemingly, plenty of prejudice when IMs talked about Arabs, Palestinians, and Muslims interchangeably and when they described Muslims as static, violent, corrupt, and primitive. The PEs partly agreed that Islam is static or unable to change, but their descriptions were generally more carefully elaborated, less static, and less prejudiced and allowed for more complexity or less *authoritarian aggression*, as it may seem. The PE informants did talk about the Israeli Jews as becoming more right wing and as unwilling to engage in peace work, and they accused Israeli Jews of having stolen Palestinian land; however, the sentiments expressed towards Israeli Jews never seemed to aim at the core of Jewishness or at the core of Jewish people. Not one PE questioned the legitimacy of Israel or the Jewish presence in Israel.

Both IMs and PEs are morally *conventional* on issues such as sexuality and gender relations: same-sex relationships are condemned, and women are subjugated to men. More importantly, we considered how being a minority affects the IMs and PEs. We found that the IM informants are eager to be accepted by the conservative Israeli/Jewish camp, leading to *conventionalism*—evident in their emphasis on being "good" Israeli citizens and adhering to Jewish custom: they are all Zionists, they do military service, and many of them seem to be right-wing hardliners. The PE informants are also a minority, but

their situation is different as they have few possible allies. Palestinian nationalism has become religious rather than secular, making it difficult for evangelical Christians to fit in (Litvak 2010). Furthermore, both evangelicals in the West and historic Christians in the region are suspicious of the PE movement, instead directing their support at the IM. PEs are sometimes considered a liability by the IMs as they attempt to fit into the majority Jewish society. The would-be target group, or object, of a PE *conventionalism* is less clear than for the IMs.

EFFECTS OF SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The second aim of this study is to understand how socio-political contexts—in this case, the Palestinian context (in Israel and in the West Bank) and the Israeli Jewish context—might affect the acquiescence to a F/A mindset and explain the differences between the two movements in this regard.[3] Needless to say, answering the *why* question is more delicate and theory-dependant. Nevertheless, we can safely suggest that the differing social, economic, and political positions draw out and sustain different ideologies and patterns of interpretation of the scriptures, of political events, and of referential others. A first explanation is that F/A values—literalism, withdrawal, submission, aggression, and conventionalism—serve the IM side better. Maintaining the occupation of the West Bank causes less suffering on the Israeli side than on the Palestinian and might provide Israel with a sense of safety. Second, F/A values also seem compatible with the IM premillennialist idea of God's salvation history and the idea that the Jewish people play a key role in the eschatological end-time drama. Thus, for the IM movement, the Jewish quest for security gets priority over the Palestinian quest for justice, and this may be legitimised by taking recourse to evangelical F/A values. Bluntly speaking, we might say that there is reason for IMs *not* to consider the destiny of the Palestinians.

However, these two explanations do not suffice. PE and IM members are vulnerable minorities in asymmetric and strained relationships with their respective majority societies. Their different levels of acquiescence to a F/A mindset may also be understood as strategies to coordinate their theology in order to secure group membership (Yzerbyt 2010: 153–54) into their respective safety-providing communities. In other words, under threat, it becomes difficult to uphold non-F/A Christian values of loving thy neighbour or of walking the second mile.

For an IM to demand justice for the Palestinians on the West Bank might mean persecution. We heard testimonies of how associating with a Palestinian might hamper career opportunities for a young IM. For a PE in the West Bank, it might be perilous to be critical of Islam, to express disillusion over the state of the Palestinian National Authority, or to associate with an IM. Furthermore, for those PEs living in Israel, the situation is a proper political minefield: they are squeezed between a loyalty towards the Israeli state and the Palestinian people.

Thus, there seems to be three sets of loyalties: an IM loyalty towards Israel, a PE loyalty towards the pledge of the Palestinian people, and an Arab-Israeli PE loyalty towards both. For PEs, as Christians and particularly as evangelicals, the chance of being accepted and protected by the Jewish or Muslim majorities seems slim, particularly as Palestinian nationalism has gone from secular to religious. The group that at least *potentially* seems to have a chance of receiving acceptance from their majority community and of receiving their protection are the IMs. Maintaining F/A values like having a literalist premillennial eschatology, championing Zionism, and joining the present right-wing surge in Israel might seem like a possible way for IMs to secure acceptance from the Israeli society and thus find protection and security. In contrast, F/A values could never have this function or potential for PEs.

What can the Israeli/Palestinian case teach us? We believe that the experience of being under threat, physical as well as cultural, is critical. Threat draws out the worst in us, including *authoritarian submission*, *authoritarian aggression*, and *conventionalism*. Furthermore, we believe that we have shown the importance of minority status, particularly relating to structures of loyalty, and how they shape the acquiescence to F/A values.

One last reflection—we see the difference between the IM and PE movements as a matter of proximity to power. The IMs are in no way powerful—they are largely despised by the Jewish community—but as the argument about structures of loyalty above shows, their claim to protection is much more plausible than that of the PEs. Thus, we connect to an old question: does the proximity to power corrupt religion?

NOTES

1. Evangelical is a disputed term. Here we use it in the way we have described earlier in this paper.

2. Around one third of the interviews (IM, only men) have been used in Author A and Author B (20XX).

3. We understand that there are contexts outside the Middle East that also can explain F/A mindset.

ETHICAL REVIEW

We have obtained approval from the Swedish Ethical Review Authority. (Etikprovningsmyndigheten) https://etikprovningsmyndigheten.se/ Dnr 2020-04842

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