



The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel

By Caitlin Carenen

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When Israel declared its independence in 1948, Harry Truman issued a memo recognizing the Israeli government within eleven minutes. Today, the U.S. and Israel continue on as partners in an at times controversial alliance—an alliance, many argue, that is powerfully influenced by the Christian Right. In *The Fervent Embrace*, Caitlin Carenen chronicles the American Christian relationship with Israel, tracing first mainline Protestant and then evangelical support for Zionism.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, American liberal Protestants argued that America had a moral humanitarian duty to support Israel. Christian anti-Semitism had helped bring about the Holocaust, they declared, and so Christians must help make amends. Moreover, a stable and democratic Israel would no doubt make the Middle East a safer place for future American interests. Carenen argues that it was this mainline Protestant position that laid the foundation for the current evangelical Protestant support for Israel, which is based primarily on theological grounds.

Drawing on previously unexplored archival material from the Central Zionist Archives in Israel, this volume tells the full story of the American Christian-Israel relationship, bringing the various “players”—American liberal Protestants, American Evangelicals, American Jews, and Israelis—together into one historical narrative.

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Review

"The Fervent Embrace takes a broad approach that sweeps up not simply evangelicals but also, most intriguingly, the mainline church...*The Fervent Embrace* is to be commended as thorough and evenhanded."-*Christianity Today*

"Carenen's book is particularly welcome as a call for seeing more complexity in the history of American Protestants' views of Zionism."-*H-Net Reviews*

"This will be the definitive account."-*Politics and Religion*

"Just as liberal and conservative Protestants embraced Israel at different points in the twentieth-century, so, too, will readers embrace this book for its well-written and captivating account of American Protestant support for Israel."-*American Jewish History*

"Deeply researched, insightful, and sharply focused, *The Fervent Embrace* appears at a time when foreign/international relations history is waking up to the crucial importance of religion in shaping policy. Carenen's cutting-edge, discerning analysis will prove valuable to scholars and students of foreign relations history, domestic politics, and religious studies."

-Frank Castigliola, University of Connecticut

"Stellar...With clarity of purpose and a keen eye for colorful detail and big picture significance, Carenen manages to offer historians a deeply textured and compelling assessment of this vital yet understudied dimension of religion and politics in the twentieth-century United States."-*Journal of American History*

"Carenen tells a compelling and well-documented story. She has done a service to those who study American attitudes toward Israel and Christian-Jewish relations with this complex narrative."-*The American Jewish Archives Journal*

"Highly recommended [for] all academic levels/libraries."-*CHOICE*

"...a refreshingly multilayered study which grapples with the intersections of government relations, domestic political evolution, and religious philosophies."-Michelle Mart, *Diplomatic History*

"The Fervent Embrace is the product of remarkable research and shows a commendable mastery and balance. A welcome contribution."

-Stephen Spector, Stony Brook University

"A pioneering history"-*American Historical Review*

"Carenen tells this complex story of shifting Protestant allegiances evenhandedly and, more often than not, with clarity [...] she is especially thorough in her survey of mainline Protestants."-*Christian Century*

[About the Author](#)

Caitlin Carenen is Assistant Professor of History at Eastern Connecticut State University.

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David Hedges:

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