

‘Christian Palestinianists’ Rebuked by Calvary Chapel Movement Founder

In a dramatic showdown last week within the Calvary Chapel movement, the leadership of the California-based association of churches distanced itself from an event held at North Coast Calvary Chapel that featured a presentation by Palestinian activists.

Called “Hope for the Holy Land,” the seminar program aims to present the Palestinian narrative to church audiences. Observers are saying that what made the North Coast event such a flashpoint was the fact that, since its inception, Calvary Chapel has been staunchly pro-Israel.

Israeli officials and American Jewish leadership have long known that Calvary Chapel is a staunch supporter of the Jewish state.

Calvary Chapel remains so, as evidenced by Chuck Smith’s public rebuke, which aired last week, just ahead of the Friday event, which spotlighted discussions by Sami Awad, Lynne Hybels and Mae Cannon.

Sponsored by the relief organization World Vision, “Hope for the Holy Land” purports to offer a balanced, nuanced view of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Some who attended the North Coast event say the presentations were heavily tilted toward the Palestinian view, which claims the “occupation” is responsible for Palestinian suffering.

On May 9, one day before the North Coast event, Smith, who founded the Calvary Chapel movement 40 years ago, denounced the decision of North Coast to hold the event. On his *World News Briefing* via HisChannel, Smith made it clear that North

Coast's approach to this issue was an anomaly for Calvary Chapel.

"I'm really shocked," he said. "I understand that one of the Calvary Chapels down in the San Diego area is having these fellows who are really friendly to the Palestinian cause, and anti-Israel, and they're having them to speak there at a church that is affiliated with the Calvary Chapels. I just have such a difficult time with that, to try to understand why a pastor would have an anti-Israel speaker, in these days."

Calvary Chapel is an ongoing supporter of the Jewish state, especially since mainline American churches have traditionally supported the Palestinians and a growing number of evangelical churches and ministries seem to be willing to listen to the Palestinian Christian perspective (as espoused by Awad and his family), which differs little from grievances long aired by the Palestine Liberation Organization and its modern manifestation, the Palestinian Authority.

Despite requests to cancel the event, North Coast Calvary Chapel proceeded on Friday, May 10, and Awad, Hybels and Cannon presented their views.

Standing With Israel will have updates on this story as information becomes available.

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