

# Replacement Theology

- is it a form of anti-Semitism?

One hundred years ago the evangelical churches, including vast swathes of the Church of England, Church of Scotland and the historic nonconformist denominations would have been positive towards the Jewish People, sympathetic towards the concept of the ideal of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel and warmly concerned with sharing the good news of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah with the Jewish people.

The founders of the Brethren movement & the Pentecostal churches saw Israel as God's time-clock, ticking away the years and days towards the return of Christ.

A century and more later: that is, in our own day, many of the heirs of those evangelical fathers have lost the vision. To many of them the Jewish people are a theological irrelevance, even an embarrassment and the State of Israel is seen as "*an historic accident*" with no significance to modern Christians.

John Stott, an outstanding and faithful preacher of the gospel, held this negative attitude towards Israel. Many who would call themselves "Reformed" would agree with Stott. There are Baptists for example, who would be shocked to think Spurgeon believed as he did. Anglican evangelicals, who respect the memory of Bishop John Charles Ryle, must think he was a bit crazy when it comes to his beliefs about Israel. There are also many Pentecostals in Elim and the AOG, who are embarrassed about their denominations' original prophetic understanding of Israel. Traditional Pentecostalism staunchly upheld God's positive plan for Israel.

The Revd Stephen Sizer (among various others) an evangelical minister of the Church of England, has astonished many Christians with his outspoken and often vitriolic statements about modern Israel. He has even written a book against "Christian Zionists", i.e. Christians who believe that the prophesied destiny of the Jewish people is to return to their Promised Land and there be restored eventually to their Messiah Yeshua, Jesus. The worrying thing about these various evangelical reverend gentlemen is that some of them are willing to stand on the same platform as theological liberals and even Moslems to make their points.

I hope that you have all seen the DVD "The Destiny of Britain". For many Christians it was a surprise to hear that famous evangelical figures, such as the Wesley brothers, William Wilberforce, Charles Haddon Spurgeon & Bishop John Charles Ryle of Liverpool were expectant of a restoration of Israel to its land & its Messiah. None of the men I mention were Dispensationalists, but all expected that Christ would restore Israel to its land prior to the salvation of the remnant of the Jewish people and Christ's Millennial rule from Jerusalem.

## **The new vision is the Ecumenical Movement**

Whereas our fathers were concerned with the preaching of a pure gospel, reaching

the world, including the Jewish people, for Christ, so many modern professing evangelicals are more concerned with getting into bed with the rest of Christendom – bringing the professing church together into one. The historic opinion of our forefathers, that Romanism is *antichrist* and that theological liberalism is *apostasy* is no longer believed and is completely unacceptable.

**This has gone along with a negative attitude to Israel. If we accused them of being anti-semitic they would vigorously and vehemently defend their honour. But there is no doubt the old anti-semitism has morphed into the new anti-Israelism. Replacement theology shunts the Jews into a theological siding, where they may remain forever.**

### **What are replacement theologians saying?**

The Church is the continuation of Israel. The Church *is* Israel, and the Jews are *no longer* Israel. The modern state of Israel is an historic accident. It should never have happened. It is not a fulfillment of prophecy. In fact there is to be no prophetic future for the Jewish people. Old Testament prophecies about Israel are seen as referring to the Christian Church.

Christian Zionists, who believe that God has promised that the Jews will return to the land of Israel and that there will be a great end-time national salvation of Israel through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are regarded as dangerous heretics and schismatics, i.e. those who for no good reason bring division into the church of God.

### **How can we answer them?**

First, we can show that the Jews, even in their unbelief, are still Israelites (Romans 9:1-6). Nowhere in the NT is the Church called Israel. Look at Romans 11:26-29. The same Israel, which is to be saved, is the Israel, which are “*enemies for your sakes*”. The much quoted Galatians 6:16 refers to Christian Jews, not to Christian Gentiles. Far from the Church having taken Israel’s place, Gentiles are grafted into Israel’s olive tree of faith (Romans 11). The true church is made up of Jews and Gentiles, and without Israel it has no root.

Secondly, concerning the modern state of Israel – to imagine that the Lord of History could allow an historic accident is to be theologically lacking. As for OT prophecies concerning Israel being interpreted as referring to the Church, we need a strong imagination to believe that. Jeremiah 31:35/37 is clear, as is Psalm 105:8/11. Moreover Paul tells us that “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers” Romans 15:8. Some of those promises include the title to the land of Canaan: see Genesis 15.

Thirdly, if we are heretics and schismatics because of our Zionist beliefs we are in good company. The Wesley brothers, Charles Simeon of Cambridge, Lord Shaftesbury the great champion of the poor, Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Bishop James C Ryle, to mention just a few, believed in the restoration of the Jews to their land and to Christ. The opposition to us consists of Roman Catholics, Eastern

Orthodox and professing evangelicals as well as all stripes of liberal Protestants, and they accuse us of all being Dispensationalists. Not one of the illustrious names I have quoted above believed in Dispensationalism. I even have friends, who believe in the restoration of Israel, who are Amillennialists believe it or not.

Remember that most Christians are probably not full-blown Replacement Theology people: they just have not thought it through. I remember meeting a Baptist minister, who was won round by the gracious and reasonable approach of a lady in his church. I want to make one final point: if you want to win hearts over, make sure you are not pushy, unpleasant and harsh in your approach. There are so many books, recordings & DVDs which can be used.

### **Some historic quotations from famous Christians**

#### **C. H. Spurgeon**

“Israel is now blotted out from the map of nations; her sons are scattered far and wide; her daughters mourn beside all the rivers of the earth. Her sacred song is hushed; no king reigns in Jerusalem; she bringeth forth no governors among her tribes. But she is to be restored; she is to be restored ‘as from the dead’. When her own sons have given up all hope of her, then is God to appear for her. She is to be reorganised; her scattered bones are to be brought together. There will be a native government again; there will again be the form of a body politic; a state shall be incorporated, and a king shall reign. Israel has now become alienated from her own land. Her sons, though they can never for- get the sacred dust of Palestine, yet die at a hopeless distance from her consecrated shores. But it shall not be so forever, for her sons shall again rejoice in her: her land shall be called Beulah, for as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall her sons marry her. ‘I will place you in your own land’, is God’s promise to them. They shall again walk upon her mountains, shall once more sit under her vines and rejoice under her fig trees. And they are also to be re- united. There shall not be two, nor ten, nor twelve, but one Israel praising one God, serving one king, and that one king the Son of David, the descended Messiah. They are to have a national prosperity, which shall make them famous; nay, so glorious shall they be that Egypt, and Tyre, and Greece, and Rome, shall all forget their glory in the greater splendour of the throne of David. The day shall yet come when all the high hills shall leap with envy, because this is the hill which God hath chosen, when Zion’s shrine shall again be visited by the constant feet of the pilgrim; when her valleys shall echo with songs, and her hilltops shall drop with wine and oil.”

#### **J. C. Ryle**

“I warn you that unless you interpret the prophetic portion of the Old Testament in the simple, literal meaning of its words, you will find it no easy matter to carry on an argument with an unconverted Jew... Will you dare to tell him that Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Judah, Ephraim, Israel, do not mean what they seem to mean, but mean the Church of Christ? ... O reader! If you are a man of this mind, take care what you are doing! I say again, take care! ... I think we must remember that we must reject Protestant traditions, which are not according to the Bible, as much as the traditions of the Church of Rome.

I believe it is high time for the Church of Christ to awake out of its sleep about Old Testament prophecy. From the time of the Old Fathers, Jerome and Origen down to the present day men have gone on in a pernicious habit of 'spiritualizing' the words of the Prophets until their true meaning has been well nigh buried. It is high time to lay aside the traditional methods of interpretation and to give up our blind obedience to the opinions of such writers as Pool, Henry, Scott and Clark, upon unfulfilled prophecy.

It is high time to fall back on the good old principle that Scripture generally means what it seems to mean, and to beware of that semi-sceptical argument: 'Such and such an interpretation cannot be correct, because it seems to us carnal'. It is high time for Christians to interpret unfulfilled prophecy by the light of prophecy already fulfilled.

The curses of the Jews were brought to pass literally; so also will be the blessings. The scattering was literal; so also will be the gathering. The pulling down of Zion was literal; so also will be the building up. The rejection of Israel was literal; so also will be the restoration.

**I BELIEVE** that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the great event which will wind up the present dispensation, and for which we ought *daily* to long and pray. *Thy kingdom come, Come Lord Jesus*, should be our daily prayer. We look backward, if we have faith, to Christ dying on the cross, to his resurrection from the dead; and we ought to look forward no less, if we have hope, to Christ coming again (John 14:3; 2 Timothy 4:3; 2 Peter 3:12).

**I BELIEVE** that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be a real, literal, personal, bodily coming; and that as he went away in the clouds of heaven with his body, before the eyes of men, so in like manner he will return (Acts 1:11).

**I BELIEVE** that after our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, the earth shall be renewed, and the curse removed; the devil shall be bound, the godly shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished; and that before he comes, there will be neither resurrection, judgment, nor millennium, and that not till after he comes shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (Acts 3:21; Isaiah 25:6-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Revelation 20:1, etc.).

**I BELIEVE** that the Jews shall ultimately be gathered again as a separate nation, restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ (Jeremiah 30:10-11; Romans 11:25-26)." (Quotes from J C Ryle.)

### **A prayer for All Saints' Day, in "The Liturgy and other Divine Offices of the Church" (19<sup>th</sup> Century):**

"Almighty God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, we beseech Thee on behalf of Thine ancient people, the house of Israel, of whom are the fathers, and of whom according to the flesh came Jesus Christ our Lord and

Saviour; we pray Thee to look in pity upon their low estate, suffering long under Thy righteous wrath and indignation.

We have added to their affliction; we have looked upon our brother in the day that he became a stranger; we have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their desolation; we have spoken proudly in the day of their distress.

But now we turn to Thee on their behalf; we beseech Thee, turn their hearts unto Thyself, and take away the veil, which is thereon, and remove the blindness of their mind; that they may look upon Him, whom they have pierced, and mourn for their iniquities.

Accomplish for them, we beseech Thee, all the purposes of mercy and blessing, which Thou hast yet in store for them; give unto them again the land of their inheritance; build speedily the walls of Jerusalem, and make it to be the joy of the whole earth.

Hear us O Lord for Thy name's sake, and answer us for Thine honour, through Jesus Christ. Amen”

Our godly forefathers stood firm in sound doctrine. May the Lord grant us the grace to do likewise!

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